

Original Research

# The Role of Stakeholders in Preventive Effort Againsts Early Marriage

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## Abstract

**Background:** Early marriage continues to pose significant public health and social challenges in Indonesia, contributing to domestic violence, divorce, poverty, school dropout, and high-risk pregnancies among adolescents.

**Objective:** This study explored the roles of stakeholders in preventing early marriage across seven villages in Pare District, Kediri Regency

**Methods:** utilizing a descriptive qualitative design. Participants included village heads, village officials, village midwives, heads of public health centers, and religious leaders. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and analyzed using data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification.

**Results:** The results indicate that effective prevention of early marriage requires cross-sector collaboration, educational interventions, and structured policy implementation. Key stakeholders, such as village governments, health cadres, community leaders, and educational institutions, contribute through educational and socialization initiatives, including youth-integrated health posts, youth organizations, and school-based counseling. While stakeholder collaboration has demonstrated effectiveness, persistent challenges include limited public awareness, inadequate intersectoral coordination, and uneven program distribution

**Conclusion:** Education emerged as a strategic element, with schools supporting prevention efforts through formal instruction, extracurricular activities, and promotion of legal awareness. Strengthening program evaluation by using measurable, data-driven indicators is recommended.

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Article info :

Received: 09 Dec 2025 | Revised: 04 Feb 2026 | Accepted: 12 Apr 2026

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## Keywords

Stakeholder; Early Marriage; Preventive

## Background

Early marriage is a serious problem in developing countries, including Indonesia, and has significant impacts on society, including maternal and infant mortality. Factors contributing to early marriage include poverty, limited access to education, gender inequality, and social and cultural norms that reinforce certain stereotypes (1). Among ASEAN countries, Indonesia ranks second after Cambodia, with a child marriage rate of 27.6%, and approximately 23 million children were married in Indonesia in 2018. The rate of early marriage in rural areas is 17%, which is higher than the 7.15% in urban areas. Marriage at a young age is a serious issue because it increases social, economic, psychological, and especially reproductive health risks. Women who marry early and become pregnant before the age of 19 are at greater risk of death, premature birth, miscarriage, and hemorrhage during childbirth. The practice of early marriage remains common in Indonesia. Its causes include economic factors, unintended pregnancy, and the influence of mass media (2,3).

Early marriage is defined as the union of individuals under the age of 19 who are not yet prepared for the responsibilities of married life. Adolescence is a period marked by increased risk of pregnancy, often as a consequence of early marriage. For some adolescents, early marriage is perceived as a means to avoid the stigma associated with premarital sex, while others enter marriage due to unintended pregnancies. Although this phenomenon is widespread, marriage should be understood not only as an *ijab qabul* ceremony but as a moral and material commitment to shared responsibilities with a life partner (4,5). In rural communities, early marriage predominantly occurs among lower-middle-income groups and is frequently linked to the transfer of responsibility for daughters from their families to their husbands. In urban settings, early marriage is generally associated with “married by accident” cases resulting from unhealthy adolescent relationships (6,7).

Early marriage has become a social custom and tradition in many communities, making it difficult to eradicate. It is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include education, knowledge, and religion, whereas external factors include parents' level of education, family socioeconomic status, place of residence, culture, decision-making patterns, access to information, and free social interaction. Education is one of the most important factors influencing a person's decision to marry. Educational level reflects an individual's maturity, insight, and understanding of the surrounding environment. The education of both adolescents and parents is essential in helping children develop and think independently. Therefore, the educational level of adolescents and their parents influences the quality of education passed on to the next generation. Low levels of education and knowledge among parents, children, and the community reduce awareness of the risks associated with adolescent pregnancy and child marriage, thereby contributing to adverse health, psychological, educational, and

economic outcomes (3,6,7). Although local governments and village authorities have made various efforts to address early marriage, the phenomenon remains common, especially in remote areas. Early marriage continues to occur in both rural and urban areas of Indonesia (8).

Early marriage in Indonesia remains a complex issue influenced by factors such as culture, economic conditions, educational levels, and public understanding of the law. From the perspective of law enforcement and child protection, children who marry before the legal age are at risk of having their rights violated. The government's role is crucial in reducing the rate of early marriage through the implementation of regulations, such as raising the minimum legal age for marriage and providing public education. In addition, law enforcement should be accompanied by protective measures to ensure that children are protected not only from early marriage but also have adequate access to education, health services, and opportunities for self-development. This perspective highlights the importance of synergy between legal regulation, social intervention, and education in addressing child marriage in Indonesia (9).

Failure to comply with existing laws and the normalization of early marriage in society have contributed to the increasing number of early marriage cases. Children who are considered mature enough or have reached puberty are often viewed as being ready to establish a family, thereby reducing the burden and responsibility of their parents. Consequently, parents may relinquish their responsibility for caring for and educating their children (10)(11). Given these issues and the many problems associated with early marriage, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled "The Role of Stakeholders in Preventive Efforts Against Early Marriage."

## Methods

A descriptive qualitative research design was used in this study to explore in depth the role of stakeholders in preventing early marriage. The research was conducted in seven villages in Pare District, Kediri Regency. To gain comprehensive insights, participants included stakeholders from each village, such as village heads, village officials, village midwives, heads of public health centers, and religious leaders. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving these stakeholders. Subsequently, the data were processed and analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification.

## Result and Discussion

### *Respondent Characteristics*

**Table 1.** Distribution of Respondent Characteristics (n =15)

No	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	1. <20 Years	0	
		2. 20-35 Years	5	33%
		3. >35 Years	10	67%
2	Gender	1. Man	10	67%
		2. Woman	5	33%

3	Education	1. Elementary School	0	0%
		2. Junior High School	0	0%
		3. Senior High School	4	27%
		4. Bachelor	9	60%
		5. Postgraduate	2	13%

Table 1. Shows that the majority of respondents are aged >35 years (67%), have a Bachelor's degree (60%), and are male (67%).

**Focus Group Discussion Participants**



**Figure 1.** Distribution of Focus Group Discussion Participants

**Conclusion of FGD Results Based on Questions: The Role of Stakeholders in Preventive Efforts Against Early Marriage**

**Table 2.** Theme, Category and Information

No	Theme	Category	Information
1	The Role of Stakeholders in Prevention Early-age marriage	Socialization and Education	Almost all respondents play a role in give socialization about danger wedding early to teenagers , parents , and society general . Delivery information done through integrated health post teenagers , coral cadets , activities at the RT/RW level , religious studies , and institutions education .
		Reproductive Health Counseling	Counseling health reproduction in schools and integrated health posts teenager Lots mentioned as method effective For give understanding to teenager about risk wedding early .
		Supervision and Monitoring	several stakeholders, especially government village and cadres health , plays a role in monitor submission

			wedding early through KUA data and submission wedding in the village .
2	Collaboration between stakeholders	Cross-Sector Engagement	Government village , midwife village , religious figures , figures community , cadres health , devices village , coral cadets and institutions education reported involved in a way active . For example , there is cooperation with institutions education in give counseling at school .
		The Role of Integrated Health Posts Teenagers and TP PKK	Integrated Health Post teenager often called as center collaboration between various parties , such as cadre health , TP PKK, and figures society , in give education related wedding early .
		Strengthening Connection with School	Government village and cadres health Work The same with school For convey information to student through counseling health reproduction and impact wedding early .
3	Village Programs and Policies	Special Programs Prevention Early-age marriage	A number of village has have programs like Integrated Health Post Teenagers /ILP and regular socialization regarding danger wedding early . However , many a village that is still limited to give education general without own policy or special integrated programs .
		Formulation Policies at the Village Level	More villages proceed has incorporate prevention programs wedding early to in Budget Village Income and Expenditure ( APBDes ), although formulation policy This Not yet nature comprehensive in all village .
4	Challenges Faced	Lack of Public Knowledge	Most of the public Still not enough understand risk wedding early , good from aspect health , social , and economy .
		Myths and Traditions	A number of public still support wedding early Because tradition or lack of understanding of religion appropriate .
		The lack of Support Family	Many parents do not prioritize education child women and tend to marry they are at the age young For reduce burden economy .
		Lack of Coordination between parties	The lack of synergy between government village , institution education , religious figures , and organizations public become obstacle main in program implementation .
5	The Role of Education and Public Awareness	Integration of Material in Curriculum School	Several stakeholders work The same with school For teach importance health reproduction and impact wedding early . However , the material This often not yet enter in formal curriculum .
		Activity Extracurricular	Recommendation For provide activity like sports , arts , or businessman mentioned as method For divert

			attention teenager from pressure social For Marry .
		Improvement Parental Understanding	Counseling to parents about danger wedding early considered crucial For change paradigm public .
6	Monitoring and Evaluation	Indicator Monitoring	Government village monitor number wedding early through licensing data marriage and survey by cadres health .
		Program Evaluation	When the program is considered not enough successful , meeting coordination between government village , midwife village and cadres health done For look for solutions . Some the village also does routine evaluation of effectiveness socialization at integrated health posts .
7	Hopes and Recommendations	Strengthening Collaboration	Involving more Lots parties , such as religious figures , figures communities , NGOs, and institutions education , in campaign prevention wedding early .
		Improvement Activity Education	Provide more Lots activity education , both at school and society , for increase understanding teenagers and parents .
		Special Program Procurement	Developing integrated village programs with budget special For prevention wedding early .
		Change Community Paradigm	Change view public from consider wedding early as solution become see it as challenges that must be prevented through education and empowerment teenager .
		Approach Sanctions	Enforce sanctions to age limit violation marriage regulated by law .

## Discussions

Early marriage is a critical issue that requires cross-sectoral collaboration, education-based approaches, and structured policies to reduce its prevalence. This data analysis reveals stakeholder roles, the challenges faced, and strategic steps to prevent early marriage.

### *The Role of Stakeholders in the Prevention of Early Marriage*

Stakeholders actively engage in various activities, especially in socializing information and educating the public. Almost all respondents actively provide information about the dangers of early marriage through youth integrated health posts (*posyandu remaja*), youth organizations (*karang taruna*), RT/RW-level activities, and educational institutions. These activities aim to inform teenagers and parents about the negative impacts of early marriage, including reproductive health risks and socio-economic losses. In addition, village governments and health cadres supervise by monitoring KUA (Religious Affairs Office) data and marriage applications. Their data-driven approach enables stakeholders to identify and prevent potential early marriages (11,12).

### ***Collaboration Between Stakeholders***

Cross-sectoral collaboration is crucial for effective early marriage prevention because it enables stakeholders, including village governments, village midwives, religious leaders, community figures, health cadres, and educational institutions, to jointly support anti-early marriage campaigns. This coordinated strategy, demonstrated through school-based counseling and educational initiatives at youth-integrated health posts and TP PKK centers, ensures that educational messages about early marriage reach a wide range of groups. Partnerships with educational institutions facilitate targeted information delivery to students; however, consistent implementation remains a challenge.

### ***Village Programs and Policies***

Several villages have implemented programs such as Youth Integrated Health Posts and regular educational campaigns addressing the risks of early marriage. In contrast, many villages continue to offer only general education, lacking specific and integrated policies or targeted programs. Some villages have demonstrated greater progress by allocating funds from the Village Budget (APBDes) to support early marriage prevention initiatives, although these efforts remain limited in scope. Developing more integrated policies is likely to enhance program effectiveness. This approach is consistent with the community-based strategy recommended by the World Health Organization, which emphasizes the importance of local context and community participation in policy development (13,14).

### ***Challenges Encountered***

A primary challenge in preventing early marriage is insufficient public awareness of its associated risks. Many individuals continue to adhere to traditions or myths that perpetuate the practice. Furthermore, inadequate family support, particularly from parents who do not prioritize their daughters' education, intensifies the issue. The absence of effective collaboration among village governments, educational institutions, religious leaders, and community organizations further impedes program implementation. These factors underscore the necessity for improved coordination mechanisms to facilitate effective collaboration at the village level (14,15).

### ***The Role of Education and Public Awareness***

Education serves as a strategic instrument for preventing early marriage. Multiple stakeholders collaborate with schools to promote awareness of reproductive health and the risks associated with early marriage. Despite these efforts, such content is frequently excluded from the formal curriculum and is instead offered as supplementary material in extracurricular programs. Schools are educational institutions that deliver systematic, sustainable learning experiences. To facilitate effective interaction, schools are equipped with various facilities that support teaching and learning processes. School responsibilities include organizing educational activities through teacher-student collaboration to achieve defined learning objectives. Additionally, parents entrust schools

with the development of children into intelligent, principled, and capable individuals who are prepared to address increasingly complex life challenges (16).

Schools, as educational institutions, require robust legal regulations to ensure the effective operation of their primary functions. Within the legal framework, Indonesia, as a constitutional state, establishes governing, binding, and enforceable regulations to create a safe and orderly environment, including within the education sector. Legal certainty is essential for advancing education in Indonesia. Schools may provide extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, and entrepreneurship, to redirect adolescents' focus away from social pressures to marry. Furthermore, educating parents about the consequences of early marriage is essential for transforming public perceptions.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

The number of early marriages is monitored using marriage licensing data from the KUA and surveys conducted by health cadres. Program evaluation occurs through cross-sectoral coordination meetings that assess the effectiveness of implemented programs (14)(17). However, these evaluations are currently informal and require the incorporation of more measurable indicators.

## **Conclusion**

Early marriage is a serious challenge that requires cross-sectoral collaboration, educational approaches, and structured policies to reduce its prevalence. Stakeholders such as village governments, health cadres, community leaders, and educational institutions play important roles through socialization and educational activities. Youth integrated health posts, youth organizations, and school-based counseling are the primary strategies used to increase public awareness of the negative impacts of early marriage. Collaboration among stakeholders demonstrates considerable potential in prevention. However, these efforts still face obstacles, including limited public understanding, weak cross-sectoral coordination, and unequal distribution of educational programs. Therefore, it is essential that stakeholders intensify coordination, develop measurable evaluation criteria, and implement integrated, data-driven policies. All parties are urged to prioritize comprehensive education through schools, focusing on legal awareness and reproductive health knowledge among adolescents, and actively participate in creating supportive environments to prevent early marriage.

### **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest declare

### **Funding**

This research was funded by the *Bantuan Operasional Perguruan Tinggi Negeri*.

### **Author Contributions**

DDC,GK contributed to the study's conception and design, data acquisition, and data analysis, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, revised the final draft, and gave final approval of the version to be published.

### Data Availability Statement

The dataset generated and analysed during the current study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### Declaration of the Use of AI in Scientific Writing

There is nothing to declare.

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### How to Cite This Article :

Cahyani DD, Kostania G. The Role of Stakeholders in Preventive Effort Agains Early Marriage. *An Idea Nursing Journal.* 2026; 5(1): 13-21.doi: 10.53690/inj.v5i01.451