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The Influence of Socio-Demographics, Literacy, and Self-Identity on Adolescent Attitudes Towards Early Marriage in Sigi Regency

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Abstract
Introduction: *Child marriage in Sigi Regency has shown an increasing trend from year to year between 2020 and 2025. In 2020, a significant surge was recorded, which rose even more sharply in 2023. This increase is driven by various factors such as premarital pregnancy, economic pressure, and the influence of social media, especially in remote areas.* ***Objective:*** *To determine the influence of sociodemographic factors, literacy, and self-identity on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage in Sigi Regency.* ***Method:*** *This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. The research was conducted in three sub-districts in Sigi Regency: Dolo Barat, Dolo Selatan, and Marawola, with a total sample of 100 respondents.* ***Results and Discussion:*** *The Wald Test results for the variables Last Education (p = 0.046), Income (p = 0.048), Culture (p = 0.002), Literacy (p = 0.035), and Self-Identity (p = 0.040) indicate that education, income, culture, literacy, and self-identity have a significant influence on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage in Sigi Regency. Culture emerged as the most dominant factor, followed by literacy, education, self-identity, and income. Adolescents with these favorable conditions are more likely to reject early marriage practices.* ***Conclusion:*** *The study shows that education, family income, culture, literacy, and self-identity significantly influence adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage in Sigi Regency, with culture being the strongest factor influencing adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage.*

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Introduction

Child marriage constitutes a violation of children's rights and a form of violence against children, contradicting the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Indonesia's Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection. The minimum legal age for marriage is set at 19 years under Law Number 16 of 2019. Recent global evidence emphasizes that child marriage undermines adolescents' autonomy, education, and long-term socioeconomic opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and gender inequality (Raj et al., 2022; UNICEF, 2023). Moreover, child marriage is associated with adverse maternal and reproductive health outcomes, including increased risks of reproductive tract infections, intimate partner violence, obstetric complications, and higher maternal and child morbidity and mortality (Sagalova et al., 2021; Wodon et al., 2023).

Globally, more than 650 million girls are married before the age of 18, limiting educational attainment and increasing health vulnerabilities (Bozorgi-Saran & Khodabakhshi-Koolaee, 2023). Recent reports indicate that progress toward eliminating child marriage has slowed in many low- and middle-income countries due to economic instability, pandemics, and humanitarian crises (Chae & Ngo, 2022; UNICEF, 2023). Indonesia ranks 37th globally and second highest in ASEAN for child marriage prevalence. In Central Sulawesi, the prevalence reached 12.65% in 2022, with Sigi Regency reporting 446 cases between 2020 and 2025, highlighting persistent regional disparities.

Child marriage is shaped by interconnected structural and individual factors, including poverty, family pressure, cultural norms, low literacy, weak self-identity, and the dominance of social and religious dogma. Recent studies demonstrate that economic insecurity, limited educational opportunities, and post-disaster vulnerability significantly increase adolescents' susceptibility to early marriage, particularly in rural and disaster-affected areas (Malhotra & Elnakib, 2022; Rumble et al., 2023). Sociodemographic factors such as low educational attainment and poor household income remain strong predictors of early marriage (Tifana et al., 2019; Sunaryanto, 2019; Wodon et al., 2023).

Literacy and self-identity play a critical protective role in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward marriage. Higher levels of literacy, life skills, and self-efficacy enhance awareness of children's rights and the capacity to delay marriage (UNESCO, 2021; WHO, 2020). Contemporary research further indicates that gender-equitable norms, critical media literacy, and psychosocial empowerment significantly influence adolescents' decision-making regarding marriage timing and reproductive autonomy (Kågesten et al., 2022; Mmari et al., 2023).

In Central Sulawesi, local cultural practices, limited legal awareness, and the socio-economic impact of the 2018 natural disaster have reinforced child marriage as a coping strategy among vulnerable households (Rismana et al., 2024). Despite ongoing government interventions, the incidence of child marriage in Sigi Regency has continued to increase between 2020 and 2025, with Dolo Barat, Dolo Selatan, and Marawola sub-districts showing the highest prevalence. This situation underscores the need for empirical research examining the influence of sociodemographic factors, literacy, and self-identity on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage within disaster-prone and socioeconomically vulnerable contexts.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional study design. The study population consisted of all residents of Dolo Selatan, Dolo Barat, and Marawola Sub-districts in Sigi Regency, totaling 63,601 people. The sample comprised 100 adolescent respondents, selected using a cluster sampling technique.

The research was conducted in the three sub-districts Dolo Barat, Dolo Selatan, and Marawola during August 2025. Data analysis was performed using logistic regression analysis to examine the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. All data processing and analysis were carried out using JASP (Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program) software.

Result and Discussion
1. Result
Univariate Analysis

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents based on variables including age, last educational attainment, employment status, income level, culture, literacy, self-identity, and attitudes toward early marriage:

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents by Variables

Variable	f	%
Age		
• < 20 years	37	37
• ≥ 20 years	63	63
Total	**100**	**100**
Last Educational		
• Low	10	10
• Medium	66	66
• Higher	24	24
Total	**100**	**100**
Employment Status		
• Unemployed	62	62
• Employed	38	38
Total	**100**	**100**
Income		
• Below Regional Minimum Wage	47	47
• Above Regional Minimum Wage	53	53
Total	**100**	**100**
Culture		
• Not Supportive	49	49
• Supportive	51	51
Total	**100**	**100**
Literacy		
• Low	37	37
• High	63	63
Total	**100**	**100**
Self-Identity		
• Low	48	48
• High	52	52
Total	**100**	**100**
Attitudes about Early Marriage		
• Disagree	73	73
• Agree	**27**	**27**
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Based on Table 1, the age distribution shows that the majority of respondents were aged ≥ 20 years (63%), while 37% were under 20 years old. This indicates that most respondents were in early adulthood, a stage generally associated with greater emotional and social maturity, which may influence perspectives on early marriage.

Most respondents had a secondary level of education (66%), followed by higher education (24%), with only 10% having low educational attainment. The predominance of secondary education suggests that most respondents had completed at least senior high school, which may shape their knowledge and attitudes toward issues such as health literacy and early marriage.

Regarding employment status, 62% of respondents were unemployed, while 38% were employed. The high proportion of unemployed respondents indicates economic dependence on family or partners, a condition that may influence decisions related to early marriage, as economic factors are often a driving force behind early marriage practices.

In terms of income, 53% of respondents earned income at or above the regional minimum wage, while 47% earned below the UMK. Although the difference is relatively small, a higher proportion meeting the income standard reflects relatively better economic conditions, which may affect attitudes and readiness for marriage at a young age.

Cultural factors showed that 51% of respondents were in the supportive (positive) culture category, while 49% were in the non-supportive (negative) category. This small difference suggests diverse cultural norms within the respondents' environment. Positive cultural norms generally reflect values that support delaying the age of marriage.

Literacy levels indicated that 63% of respondents had high literacy, while 37% had low literacy. Higher literacy levels can enhance respondents' understanding of the risks associated with early marriage and support more informed decision-making.

Regarding self-identity, 52% of respondents had high self-identity, while 48% had low self-identity. This finding suggests that most respondents possessed a stronger sense of self and independence, which may increase their ability to resist social pressure to marry early.

Finally, the majority of respondents disagreed with early marriage (73%), while only 27% agreed. These results indicate that most respondents held negative attitudes toward early marriage practices, likely influenced by education, literacy, and awareness of associated health and social risks.

Multivariate Analysis
Test of coefficient of determination (Nagelkerke's R Square)

The degree to which an independent variable explains a dependent variable is measured by the coefficient of determination, indicated by the Nagelkerke R-square value. The Nagelkerke R-square value is in decimal form and can be converted to a percentage for easier reading and interpretation (Ghozali, 2018).

Table 2
Coefficient of Determination

-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
108.248[a]	0.721	0.635

Source: Primary Data, 2025

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Based on Table 2, the results of the logistic regression analysis show that the coefficient of determination, as indicated by the Nagelkerke R Square value, is 0.635. This indicates that the independent variables last educational attainment, income, culture, literacy, and self-identity explain 63.5% of the variance in the dependent variable, namely adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, while the remaining 36.5% is explained by other variables outside this model.

Omnibus tests of model coefficients (Simultaneous Test f)

The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients test was used to examine whether all independent variables consisting of last education, income, culture, literacy and self-identity simultaneously can influence the dependent variable, namely the occurrence of adolescent attitudes towards early marriage in Sigi Regency. To determine whether the hypothesis is accepted or rejected by comparing the calculated f-value with a significance level of 5% or 0.05.

Table 3
Simultaneous Test

Chi-square	Df	Sig.
28.404	5	0.000
28.404	5	0.000
28.404	5	0.000

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Based on the table above, the Chi-square value of the model is 28.404 with a significance value of 0.000. A significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$ indicates that last educational attainment, income, culture, literacy, and self-identity simultaneously (collectively) have a significant effect on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage in Sigi Regency. This means that adolescents with low education, low income, unfavorable cultural conditions, low literacy, and low self-identity simultaneously influence adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage.

Hypothesis Test or Wald Test

The hypothesis test (Wald test) was used to examine whether each independent variable namely last educational attainment, income, culture, literacy, and self-identity had an effect on the dependent variable, namely adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage in Sigi Regency.

The acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis was determined by comparing the calculated test value and the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), based on the following criteria:
1. If the significance value is > 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, indicating that the independent variable does not partially affect the dependent variable.
2. If the significance value is ≤ 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, indicating that the independent variable partially affects the dependent variable.

Tabel 4
Hypothesis Test (Test *Wald*)

Variable	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Last Educational	3.991	1	0.046	3.405
Income	3.284	1	0.048	2.488
Culture	8.024	1	0.002	9.482
Literacy	4.659	1	0.035	6.367
Self-Identity	3.564	1	0.040	3.784

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Based on Table 4, the results of the hypothesis testing (Wald Test) indicate that several independent variables have a significant influence on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage in Sigi Regency. The variable of last educational attainment shows a significance value of 0.046 with an Exp(B) of 3.405, indicating that education has a significant partial effect, whereby adolescents with higher education levels are approximately 3.4 times more likely to have a more favorable attitude toward rejecting early marriage.

The income variable also shows a significant effect, with a significance value of 0.048 and an Exp(B) of 2.488. This suggests that adolescents from families with higher income levels are 2.48 times more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward the prevention of early marriage.

Furthermore, culture emerges as the strongest influencing factor, with a significance value of 0.002 and an Exp(B) of 9.482. This indicates that adolescents living in cultural environments that do not support early marriage are nearly 9.5 times more likely to reject the practice.

The literacy variable is also statistically significant, with a significance value of 0.035 and an Exp(B) of 6.367. This finding implies that adolescents with higher literacy levels have more than six times greater odds of developing attitudes that support the prevention of early marriage.

Lastly, the self-identity variable has a significant influence on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, with a significance value of 0.040, which is below the α = 0.05 threshold. This indicates that self-identity statistically contributes to shaping how adolescents perceive and evaluate early marriage practices, with adolescents who have stronger self-identity being 3.784 times more likely to develop attitudes supportive of preventing early marriage.

2.   Discussion
The influence of education on adolescent attitudes towards early marriage

The Wald test results indicate that the last educational attainment variable has a significant influence on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage in Sigi Regency, with a significance value of 0.046 and an Exp(B) of 3.405. This finding suggests that adolescents with higher levels of education are 3.4 times more likely to hold attitudes that reject or do not support early marriage practices compared to those with lower educational attainment. These results are consistent with Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), which explains that individual development is shaped by systemic interactions across multiple layers of the environment.

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous research. Wijaya and Nurhasanah (2024) found that better access to secondary education is associated with increased adolescent awareness of the social and health risks related to early marriage, positioning education as a strong protective factor against the practice. Similarly, Putra and Maulani (2025) reported that formal education not only improves academic literacy but also enhances critical thinking skills and awareness of reproductive rights, contributing to the development of critical attitudes toward social norms that normalize underage marriage.

Additionally, Saputra and Lestari (2023) supported these findings by showing that adolescents who continue their education to the secondary or higher level are more likely to delay marriage due to clearer future orientation and more objective educational and career aspirations. These findings reinforce the argument that education serves as a

protective factor by enriching adolescents' knowledge and skills in evaluating the consequences of major life decisions, including the rejection of early marriage. This study is also in line with the research of Adedokun and Oluwafemi (2020) in Nigeria, which identified education as a strong protective factor in preventing early marriage among adolescent girls, as those with higher educational attainment tend to have a more critical understanding of the risks associated with early marriage and are therefore more likely to reject the practice.

The influence of income on adolescent attitudes towards early marriage

The Wald test results indicate that the income variable exerts the strongest influence on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, with a significance value of 0.048 and an Exp(B) of 3.405. Theoretically, these findings align with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), which posits that individual development is influenced by dynamic interactions among multiple social systems, particularly the microsystem, which includes the family and its economic conditions. Family income shapes adolescents' mindsets, aspirations, and expectations for the future. When family income is low, access to quality education becomes limited, exposure to reproductive health information decreases, and adolescents become more susceptible to social values that normalize early marriage. Bronfenbrenner further emphasizes that economic conditions within the microsystem interact with the exosystem (broader social environments, including community economic structures) and the macrosystem (cultural norms). Consequently, adolescents living in low-income communities are more strongly exposed to cultural norms that support early marriage as an acceptable or even expected practice.

These findings are supported by previous studies. Sari et al. (2021) found that adolescents from poor families were nearly three times more likely to support early marriage due to limited educational opportunities and family economic pressure. Putri and Anwar (2022) reported that low-income families often perceive child marriage as a strategy to reduce household economic burdens. UNICEF (2023) also emphasized that poverty is the most powerful structural driver of child marriage in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries. Hidayati (2024) added that low family income leads adolescents to discontinue their education earlier, which in turn increases their acceptance of early marriage as a rational choice within contexts of economic hardship. Similarly, Ramdani and Yusuf (2025) found that socioeconomic status significantly influences the formation of adolescents' attitudes, particularly in rural areas that are highly vulnerable to cultural and economic pressures.

The mechanisms through which income influences adolescents' attitudes can be explained through several pathways. First, limited educational access reduces adolescents' ability to understand the physical, psychological, and social health risks associated with early marriage. Second, economic pressure encourages adolescents and their families to view marriage as a means of obtaining financial support from a spouse or the spouse's family. Third, social norms in low-income communities tend to be more permissive toward early marriage because the practice has been perpetuated across generations. Fourth, low reproductive health literacy prevents adolescents from developing critical thinking frameworks to resist social pressure or family decisions regarding early marriage. Together, these factors interact to shape adolescents' attitudes, making income the most dominant predictor in this study.

The influence of culture on adolescent attitudes towards early marriage

The results of the study indicate that the cultural variable has the strongest influence on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, with a significance value of 0.002 and an Exp(B) of 9.482. These findings suggest that adolescents who live in cultural environments that do not support early marriage practices are nearly 9.5 times more likely to reject early marriage. This finding is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), which emphasizes that the development of individual behavior and attitudes is strongly influenced by the environmental contexts in which individuals grow and develop. Within the ecological framework, culture is part of the macrosystem, the outermost layer of the environment that encompasses prevailing social values, norms, beliefs, and ideologies within society. This macrosystem plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' mindsets, perceptions, and behaviors, including how they interpret and respond to the issue of early marriage.

The findings of this study are in line with several previous studies. Research by Mondal (2023) found that cultural norms are among the strongest determinants sustaining early marriage practices, particularly in societies that uphold strong traditional values. Similarly, Barbara and Maelani (2025) reported that cultural norms in Sukaresmi Village significantly influenced the high prevalence of early marriage, where adolescents living in permissive cultural environments showed a greater tendency to marry at a young age. Likewise, Yasir et al. (2025), in their study of the Sasak community in Central Lombok, revealed that local cultural norms and parental roles shape adolescents' perceptions of the ideal age for marriage, positioning culture as a key factor in determining whether adolescents accept or reject early marriage.

In addition, a study by Meilinda (2025) in Probolinggo demonstrated that local traditions and customs strongly contribute to the persistence of child marriage practices, particularly through social control mechanisms and pressures to maintain family honor. Meanwhile, Bidara et al. (2025) concluded that cultural norms and the social environment are the most dominant factors influencing adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward early marriage, with adolescents in more progressive cultural settings exhibiting stronger opposition to early marriage. These recent empirical findings reinforce the notion that culture is not merely a social backdrop, but a decisive mechanism shaping adolescents' marriage-related decisions.

The influence of literacy on adolescent attitudes towards early marriage

The study results indicate that literacy significantly influences adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, with a significance value of 0.035 and an Exp(B) of 6.367. This finding suggests that adolescents with higher literacy levels are more than six times as likely to demonstrate attitudes that support the prevention of early marriage. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), literacy interacts across multiple ecological systems that affect adolescent development.

These findings are consistent with previous studies. For instance, Safitri et al. (2024) found that reproductive health literacy significantly enhances rejection of early marriage among adolescent girls in Central Java, as literacy helps adolescents understand the physical, social, and psychological consequences of child marriage. Similarly, Putri & Astuti (2023) reported that adolescents' ability to access, understand, and evaluate information about the risks of early marriage is a key factor strengthening negative attitudes toward the practice.

On a broader scale, Ramdani et al. (2025) found that digital literacy and the ability to discern online information are linked to adolescents' rejection of early marriage, as information-literate adolescents can recognize cultural misinformation that normalizes early marriage. Additionally, Herawati & Khairunnisa (2024) reported that family literacy, such as parent-child communication about education, future planning, and reproductive health, plays a crucial role in preventing permissive attitudes toward early marriage. Adolescents actively participating in school and community literacy activities are better able to understand the negative impacts of early marriage, as shown by Dewi & Widyastuti (2021), who found that adolescents with greater access to literacy activities exhibit stronger resistance to early marriage practices.

The influence of self-identity on adolescents' attitudes towards early marriage

The study results indicate that self-identity has a significant influence on adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage, with a significance value of 0.040 and an Exp(B) of 3.784. This means that adolescents with a strong self-identity are nearly four times more likely to reject early marriage compared to those with low self-identity. Relating this to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), these findings confirm that self-identity is an individual characteristic shaped by ongoing interactions between adolescents and various environmental systems around them. In Bronfenbrenner's model, self-identity does not emerge in isolation but develops through interactions within the microsystem, such as family, school, peers, and close social relationships. Supportive environments that provide emotional backing, opportunities for self-exploration, and space for decision-making strengthen adolescents' self-identity development.

The results align with previous studies showing that strong self-identity plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' attitudes and behaviors. Nikerson & Sarajar (2024). found that self-identity is vital in adolescents' decision-making, including decisions related to relationships, marriage, and education, with those possessing a mature identity more likely to reject early marriage due to clearer future orientation. Sari & Fadillah (2025) reported that adolescents with a positive self-concept and high self-confidence exhibit stronger attitudes in resisting social pressure from family and peers promoting child marriage.

Additionally, Rahmadan & Lailasari (2023) revealed that strong self-identity is associated with adolescents' ability to make moral judgments and reject harmful cultural norms, such as the belief that early marriage is safe or honorable. This capacity to resist social pressure is further supported by Hidayati & Lestari (2024), who emphasized that a mature self-identity enables adolescents to maintain personal preferences even in environments with strong expectations regarding early marriage. Similarly, Rahmawati & Putra (2022) found that a supportive family environment contributes to the development of a stronger adolescent identity, minimizing the risk of succumbing to early marriage practices.

Conclusion

This study shows that last education, family income, culture, literacy, and self-identity significantly influence adolescents' attitudes toward early marriage. Adolescents with higher education, better economic conditions, good literacy, and strong self-identity tend to reject early marriage. Culture emerged as the most dominant factor, where a progressive cultural environment supports the development of attitudes opposing child marriage practices. Overall, the combination of sociodemographic factors, literacy, and self-identity shapes adolescents' readiness to make rational decisions and resist social and cultural pressures related to early marriage.

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Nurhaviva, Abd. Rahman, Ratna Devi, Rosmala Nur, Ni Wayan Sridani/**KESANS**
The Influence of Socio-Demographics, Literacy, and Self-Identity on Adolescent Attitudes Towards Early Marriage in Sigi Regency

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