

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Determinants of early marriage in rural areas Aceh Province Indonesia

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## Abstract

Early marriage often occurs in the low and middle income countries because of the tradition and cultural belief that girls must be married off immediately. The data was obtained from the Aceh Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion, from a population of all married women under the age of 19 years, totaling 507 respondents. The study used a total sampling technique. Data analysis consisted of the use of collinearity tests, chi-square, and multiple logistic regression analysis. The results showed that parental and economic factors have significant relationships to early marriage. The poorest women are 2.23 times more likely to experience early marriages than the richest women. Poor women are 1.68 times more vulnerable to early marriage than the richest women. Women who have parents with a very strong role have a risk of early marriage of 10.34 times compared to women whose parents do not play much of a role, namely 9.10 times. We conclude that parental factors play dominant in the incidence of early marriage in Aceh Province in Indonesia. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2024; 28[10s]: 168-174).

**Keywords:** Early marriage, economics, parents role, tradition

## Résumé

Les mariages précoces sont fréquents dans les pays à revenus faibles et moyens en raison de la tradition et de la croyance culturelle selon lesquelles les filles doivent être mariées immédiatement. Les données ont été obtenues auprès du bureau régional d'Aceh du ministère de la religion, à partir d'une population de toutes les femmes mariées âgées de moins de 19 ans, soit un total de 507 personnes interrogées. L'étude a utilisé une technique d'échantillonnage total. L'analyse des données a consisté en l'utilisation de tests de colinéarité, du chi-carré et d'une analyse de régression logistique multiple. Les résultats ont montré que les facteurs parentaux et économiques ont une relation significative avec le mariage précoce. Les femmes les plus pauvres ont 2,23 fois plus de chances d'être mariées tôt que les femmes les plus riches. Les femmes dont les parents jouent un rôle très important ont un risque de mariage précoce de 10,34 fois par rapport aux femmes dont les parents ne jouent pas un rôle important, à savoir 9,10 fois. Nous concluons que les facteurs parentaux jouent un rôle dominant dans l'incidence du mariage précoce dans la province d'Aceh en Indonésie. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2024; 28 [10s]: 168-174).

**Mots-clés:** Mariage précoce, économie, rôle des parents, tradition

## Introduction

According to Indonesian law, early marriage is a marriage performed before the age of 19. This age limit refers to Law 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage<sup>1</sup>. Early marriage is a global problem that is still prevalent in various low-and middle income countries, including Indonesia, especially in Eastern Indonesia<sup>2</sup>. Early marriage deprives adolescent girls the right to health, nutrition, education, vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and abuse<sup>3</sup>. The high percentage of child marriage in Indonesia cannot be separated from several

factors that affect it. One of the factors considered to play a role in the occurrence of early marriage in Indonesia is cultural factors in several regions in Indonesia<sup>4</sup>. In addition to cultural factors, parents do not have enough knowledge about the consequences of marriage if an adolescent girl is married too early<sup>5</sup>.

The Aceh Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office recorded that the marriage rate of girls aged 16-18 years reached 19.53% while those aged 15 years and below were 3.98%<sup>6</sup>. The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) Aceh in 2022 stated that the rate of child marriage in Aceh in 2021 reached 6.59 percent (an increase from 2020 which was at

5.29 percent). Meanwhile, Aceh's Child Profile for 2022-DP3A Aceh reported that the highest percentage of child marriage age was in Pidie at 39.39 percent, followed by Aceh Singkil 38.09 percent, Pidie 37.35 percent, Aceh Barat Daya (Abdya) 36.23 percent, and Aceh Jaya 36.14 percent<sup>7</sup>.

Child marriage has negative consequences both for girls and for their environment. Child marriage is a serious violation of human rights, interferes with education, increases the risk for adverse reproductive health outcomes, and lowers employment opportunities for women<sup>3</sup>. Domestic violence often occurs when girls marry older men and live together with increased responsibility, without autonomy or decision-making power, especially in the event of unwanted pregnancies, but driven by socio-cultural factors and poverty<sup>8</sup>. This can be a severe obstacle to the health of girls and social well-being of women who have not yet reached maturity. Another risk of marrying at a young age is the increased risk of transmission of sexual diseases including HIV /AIDS<sup>9</sup>.

The culture of making decisions to marry in communities with various ethnic groups in Indonesia is taken by parents and often without asking for consent from the child to be married, thus making parents the party who has the right to make the main decision to marry children<sup>10</sup>. The culture of decision-making by teenage parents is not unique to Indonesia, but is also common in many countries. According to the results of research conducted by Pesando, teenage girls around the world only contribute 3% to participate in making decisions to get married<sup>11</sup>. Teenagers in Phalombe and Thyolo in Malawi receive equal treatment in terms of making the decision to marry taken by parents. By contrast, the decision to marry teenagers in the country of Sudan as well as in The Gambia is determined by the parents of the teenagers<sup>12</sup>.

Early marriage often occurs due to the low socioeconomic status of the family, so it is considered to be one of the solutions to escape economic difficulties, especially for female families<sup>13</sup>. The hope for families is not only to release the economic burden from one family member, but married daughters are expected to help the economies of family members. Previous research has found that the practice of early

marriage is more common in rural areas than in urban areas<sup>12</sup>. When compared to urban areas, the practice of marriage in rural areas is very thick with cultural elements that are more permissive towards early marriage.

Rural women who are approaching their 20s but unmarried will be considered spinsters. Living in rural areas is also synonymous with limited access to health services and information about health, including information on adolescent reproductive health<sup>14</sup>. Adolescent reproductive health is often associated with unwanted pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, and reproductive health services. International research has detailed the determinants of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy. In sub-Saharan Africa, socio-cultural, economic, individual and health service-related factors are critical factors that predispose to early marriage<sup>15</sup>. Early marriages have been reported to result in higher school dropout rates, low wages and high unemployment rates, not to mention the poor health status and higher crime rates against women<sup>16</sup>.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship of socio factors and parental status to the incidence of early marriage in rural areas of Indonesia.

## Methods

This study used secondary data from the Regional Office (Kanwil) of the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) of Aceh<sup>17</sup>. Sampling was carried out using stratification and multistage random sampling methods. The unit of analysis in this study was carried out with married women under the age of 19 years totaling 507 respondents. The selection of analysis units with age categories starting from 19 years was intended consistency with the lower limit of age of marriage in Indonesia.

The dependent variable in this study was the early marriage of respondents. The definition of early marriage in this study refers to Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, namely marriages carried out before the age of 19 years. Three independent variables were analyzed in this study, namely economic status, parental role, and tradition.

The economic status of respondents is determined based on income or with regional UMR benchmarks. The role of parents was defined as the act of parental involvement in determining the age of child marriage and any encouragement given to their children to marry immediately under various considerations. Tradition is a habit of a society where there is a habit of women having to marry immediately so as not to become spinsters so that they will no longer sell. In this study, the tradition factor is one of the determining elements in the form of culture that causes parents to marry off their children at an early age.

The initial stage of analysis was to conduct a collinearity test to ensure there is no strong correlation between independent variables. Furthermore, bivariate analysis was carried out with a chi-square test to see the relationship between early marital status and all other variables analyzed. The final stage was a multivariate analysis using multiple logistic regression tests. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS-21 software.

### ***Ethics approval and consent to participate***

This survey was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine at Syiah Kuala University Banda Aceh in 2022. Administrative approval and technical support were provided by the KUA and the BKKBN Aceh office and the Regional Office (Kanwil) of the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) of Aceh. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained in accordance with the revised declaration of Airlangga University on Public Health Research Ethics.

### **Results**

A total of 507 respondents in this study were married women aged less than 19 years in rural areas of Aceh. Table 1 displays the collinearity test results of all independent variables tested. The results of this test show that there is no strong correlation between independent variables, namely economic status, parental roles and tradition. The tolerance value of the whole variable, independent is greater than 0.10. While the variance inflation

**Table 1:** *Collinearity* test results between independent variables (n = 507)

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Economic status	0.932	1.073
Parental roles	0.934	1.071
Tradition	0.998	1.002

factor (VIF) value for all independent variables is less than 10.00. From the results of this test, it was concluded that there is no multicollinearity between independent variables in this regression model.

The characteristics of respondents were obtained from the results of the chi-square test between early marriage status and economic status, parental roles and traditions (Table 2). Marriage is significantly related to economic status and tradition. Early marriage is dominated by respondents with the poorest economic status, (35 percent) and the proportion decreases as the economic status of respondents increases, which is 9 percent in respondents with the richest economy. While based on parental roles dominated by the role category at 73 percent, and based on tradition nominated by strong tradition at 79 percent.

Furthermore, multiple logistic regression tests were carried out to determine the relationship between independent variables and early marriage status in women under the age of 19 years in rural Aceh. The predictors involved in this analysis were variables of economic status and parental role. Tradition was not included in multivariate analyses because the results of the analyses did not show significant results at the bivariate analysis stage. In the dependent variable, the reference (ref) chosen is "not experiencing early marriage" while in the independent variable chosen as a reference (ref) is the richest economic status and level of college education.

Table 3 shows that women under 19 with the poorest economic status are 2.23 times more likely to experience early marriage than the wealthiest women under 19 (OR 2.23; 95%CI: 1.70-2.92). Poor women under 19 were 1.68 times more likely to experience early marriage than the wealthiest women under 19 (OR 1.68; 95%CI: 1.28-2.22). Meanwhile, women under the age of 19 with middle and wealthy economic status were not significantly associated with early marriage. The results of this study show that women under the age

**Table 2:** Respondent Characteristics (n = 507)

Characteristics of Respondents	No		Yes		P-value
	n	%	N	%	
<b>Economic status</b>					< 0.001
The poorest	123	24	179	35	
Poor	109	21	105	21	
Intermediate	98	20	99	20	
Rich	95	19	79	15	
Most rich	32	16	45	9	
<b>The role of parents</b>					< 0.001
Out of play	429	85	139	27	
Role	78	15	368	73	
<b>Tradition</b>					0.392
Strong	159	31	399	79	
Not Strong	348	69	108	21	

Chi-square test, significant at p < 0.05

**Table 3:** Relationship between independent variable and early marriage (n = 507)

	Odds Ratio (OR)	95%CI	p-value
The poorest Economic Status	2.23	1.70 - 2.92	< 0.001
Poor Economic Status	1.68	1.28 - 2.22	< 0.001
Medium Economic Status	1.20	0.91 - 1.59	0.205
Rich Economic Status	0.93	0.69 - 1.24	0.602
Status of the richest Economy	Ref		
The Role of Parents Plays a Role	10.34	4.58 - 23.33	< 0.001
The Role of Parents Does Not Play a Role	9.10	4.55 - 7.13	< 0.001

Multiple logistic regression test, CI = confidence interval; Significant at p<0.05

of 19 with poor economic status in rural Aceh have a higher likelihood of experiencing early marriage compared to women under 19 years old with other economic statuses.

In addition to economic status, the role of parents is significantly related to early marriage in rural Aceh. Women under 19 whose parents played a role were 10.34 times more likely to experience early marriage compared to women under 19 whose parents did not play a role (OR 10.34; 95% CI: 4.58 – 2 \3.33).

## Discussion

The results of this study show that women under the age of 19 years in rural Aceh whose parents play a role in the marriage were more likely to experience early marriage as compared those whose parents do not play a role. Based on the odds ratio (OR), parental role factors are more dominant in relation

to early marriage in women under the age of 19 years in rural Aceh compared to economic status factors.

The results of the analysis found that economic status was associated with the incidence of early marriage in women under the age of 19 years living in rural Aceh<sup>18</sup>. Poverty is a risk factor for women in rural areas of Aceh to experience early marriage. Several previous studies have also found similar information, namely that poverty is a risk factor for early marriage, especially in rural areas<sup>19</sup>. Previous studies have shown that poverty is a major factor forcing young rural girls to engage in early marriage and the practice is common in developing countries, such as India, Iran, and Indonesia<sup>20</sup>.

Early marriage is a solution to get out of poverty for parents who have daughters. Marrying off one of your daughters is the most practical way out to reduce the family's economic burden<sup>21</sup>. The

effect of economic status on the occurrence of early marriage is also closely related to the economic value of children to parents<sup>22</sup>. Some indigenous Indonesian tribes are known to consider that girls are assets. The economic value of children is related to the high dowry required when there is a man who will ask for his daughter<sup>23</sup>. This can be seen in the Lani tribe in Lani Jaya Regency and the Muya tribe in Boven Digoel, Papua, the demand for tukon or commonly called a wedding dowry can be worth up to hundreds of millions of rupiah, in the form of dozens of pigs or a stone house. Likewise in Aceh which relies on dowry given from the side of men<sup>24</sup>.

In addition to economic status, the study also showed that the role of parents was significantly associated with the incidence of early marriage among women under the age of 19 in rural Aceh. The greater the role of parents, the higher the risk of the woman experiencing early marriage<sup>25</sup>. Economic status and parental roles are often found to go hand in hand to influence performance in the health sector. A person with good socioeconomic status is often also highly educated and thus has good health output<sup>26</sup>. While low socioeconomic status and education levels are often found to be barriers to achieving quality health output. A study conducted in Indramayu, West Java confirms the phenomenon. The study showed that early marriage was associated with education level and family wealth status.

Early marriage is more common in rural areas. This condition is related to the strong patriarchal social system in rural areas which provides greater opportunities for men to develop, including the opportunity to take part Better education. Such a situation also paraded the incidence and practice of early marriage in rural areas in Indonesia, especially the Aceh region.

This research also has some strength. Adolescent married women on the coast of Aceh are vulnerable to forced reproduction from their partners resulting in poor reproduction. This study using diadic data from teenage wives and their husbands.

On a large scale. By studying samples of married teenagers in rural Aceh, the study provides new contributions to gender equality and reproductive health associated with the risk of early marriage.

The last strength of this research is the use of a representative sample of a geographical region whose territory is assigned to a rural area so that the results can be generalized to a teenage girl who's been married in another countryside.

Although our findings provide insight into the impact of equality of couples on reproductive health in Aceh, important study constraints need attention. As a cross-sectional survey, we cannot build a temporal relationship between the predictor and the proposed outcome and can only be able to measure a two-way relationship. In addition, all the data is self-reported and thus subject to the memory bias of the participants. This is a problem that requires further study. Another limitation is the language used by respondents who use the local language of Aceh and then translated orally into Indonesian.

Early marriage is an issue that is still considered private by some people so there are limitations when conducting surveys. This is a limitation that should be taken into account when using these results. Furthermore, the involvement of religious, customary, and other people in digging deeper information about early marriages is an obstacle that also needs to be considered.

## Conclusion

There is a relationship between economic status and the role of parents of women under the age of 19 with the occurrence of early marriages. The better the economy, the less likely it is for early marriages in the countryside, and women whose parents are involved in the child marriage are more likely to experience early marriage than non-parents. Parent role factors are more dominant than economic status factors in relation to early marriages in rural Aceh.

## Authors' contributions

Idawati: Conception and design of the study; data collection; statistical analysis; manuscript preparation

Lutfi Agus Salim: Conception and design of the study; data collection; data analysis and interpretation; manuscript preparation

Shrimarti Rukmini Devy: Conception and design of the study; data analysis and interpretation; manuscript preparation  
Yuliana: Data collection; manuscript preparation.

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