

EARLY-AGE MARRIAGE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN INDONESIA: 2020-2021 KATADATA ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Early marriage is marriage at the age of less than 18 years. Child marriage in Indonesia is still high, and maternal and infant deaths are caused by pregnancy and childbirth. There is no picture of early marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. This study aims to describe the incidence of early marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic. This type of research uses a narrative approach with a literature review using articles related to early marriage and secondary data from infographic data. Results: Indonesia is one of the countries with the most active cases of COVID-19. The highest number of married girls is in South Kalimantan Province. The dispensation for child marriage in 2020 has tripled from 2019 and is still high in 2021. Indonesian children who marry for the first time are under 15 years old. Girls marry earlier than boys, followed by 1 million teenage pregnancies and four million births in Indonesia. Conclusion: Indonesia is one of the countries with the most active COVID-19 cases in the world, and there has been an increase in cases of early marriage due to applications for child marriages from the lower class, as well as an increase in pregnancies and childbirth.

Keyword: *COVID-19 pandemic; Early Marriage, Analysis.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). WHO declared the spread of this virus as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) (Keputusan Menteri Kesehatan Republik Indonesia Nomor Hk.01.07/Menkes/104/2020 Tentang Penetapan Infeksi Novel Coronavirus (Infeksi 2019-Ncov) Sebagai Penyakit Yang Dapat Menimbulkan Wabah Dan Upaya Penanggulangannya, 2020). Indonesia had a policy of implementing Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to suppress the increasingly widespread spread of COVID-19 (RI, 2020). In addition, it also quarantines people suspected of being infected, has restrictions on domestic and international travel, prohibitions on gatherings in groups and crowds, and closes schools, factories, restaurants, and public spaces (UNICEF, 2020a). The COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia has affected political, economic, social, cultural, defense, and security aspects, as well as the welfare of the people in Indonesia (RI, 2020). There are 80 million children in Indonesia (about 30 percent of the entire population) who have the potential to experience severe impacts due to short-term and long-term secondary impacts (UNICEF, 2020a). The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kementerian PPPA) reported an increase in the number of child marriages during the COVID-19 pandemic (Andina, 2021).

Children are someone who is not yet 18 years old, including a child who is still in the womb. Whereas Law Number 16 of 2019 Article 7 states that marriage is only permitted if a man and a woman have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years. According to the 2018 National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS), child marriage is a formal or informal marriage where one or both parties are under 18 years (BPS, 2020). Indonesian girls aged 15-19 years who are married are ranked 81st in the world (9.3%) in 2017 (UNICEF, 2019). When viewed from the first marriage, around 36.62 percent of girls aged 10-17 years had been married at the age of 15 years or less. Approximately 39.92 percent married when they were 16 years old, and 23.46

percent married when they were aged 17 years. West Java Province has the highest absolute number, estimated at 273,300 child marriages. The prevalence of child marriage is women aged 20-24 years who were married before aged 18 years divided by the number of women aged 20-24 years. The prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia is estimated to be 1,220,900 girls who marry before they are aged 18 years (56%). About 11% or 1 in 9 women or about 1% or 1 in 100 men aged 20-24 were married before they were aged 18 years. Approximately 99.26% of girls aged 10-17 years are not married, 0.70% are married, and 0.04% of those who divorce are either dead or divorced. The impact of child marriage is the death of girls aged 15-19 years due to pregnancy and childbirth at a young age, babies born to mothers under 20 years are almost twice more likely to die during the first 28 days than babies born to mothers aged 20-29 years (BPS, 2020). Married girls are more vulnerable to domestic violence (Kidman, 2017). Based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'s target 5.3 has a goal of eliminating all harmful practices, including child marriage 2030 (Union, 2015). The Government of Indonesia is committed to achieving the targets in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan / National RPJM, one of which is to increase quality and competitive human resources with the target of reducing child marriage from 11.2% in 2018 to 8.74% in 2024 (Bappenas, 2014). In 2019–2024 the Ministry of PPPA has five priority development issues for women's empowerment and child protection. The five priority issues are: (1) increasing women's empowerment in entrepreneurship; (2) increasing the role of parents in children's education; (3) reduction of violence against women and children; (4) decrease in child labor; and (5) prevention of child marriage (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2019).

Based on previous studies reporting that the causes of early age/child marriage are households with lower expenditure quintiles, those in rural areas, and low education (Statistik Kesejahteraan Rakyat Welfare Statistics 2018, 2018). Low maternal education can lead to poor maternal knowledge about the impact of early marriage on reproductive health (Harahap et al., 2018). The highest education level is only junior high school, reaching 51.88%, meaning that half of the girls aged 10-17 years have experienced marriage and only have education up to junior high school. Meanwhile, the percentage of those who graduated from high school and above was around 3%. In the divorce status, half of the divorced girls only graduated from elementary school. The same pattern occurs in rural areas. Child marriage has limited children's rights to continue their education (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2019). Meanwhile, the existence of a supportive attitude towards young women towards early marriage does not rule out the possibility that young women will marry early (Noor et al., 2018).

However, it is not yet known which features of early marriage have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers are interested in studying the description of early marriage in Indonesia during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic.

B. METHOD

This study is the descriptive method using a narrative literature review approach to describe early marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Literature reviews can address broader and more abstract questions, engage in more post hoc theory without the danger of taking advantage of opportunities, make a stronger case for null hypothesis conclusions, and better appreciate and use methodological diversity (Baumeister & Leary, 2015). This research started from January to November 2022 in all regions of Indonesia. Information was from several published articles about early marriage and combined with data from the Infographic Katadata as secondary data. The data used comes from the Infographic Data Catalog based on survey results by official Indonesian government agencies such as the Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey (IDHS) and the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS)

in the form of graphs and analysis. The considerations for selecting subjects and situations in this study were due to time and research budget limitations in collecting data from all provinces in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Population and sample are taken based on data from infographic data. The research sample is data from the Indonesian Economic and Business Data Center at <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/>. The variables used in this study include the COVID-19 pandemic, the incidence of early marriage per province in Indonesia, the application of child marriage, age & sex characteristics, and their impact on early marriage. The COVID-19 pandemic is an outbreak of disease caused by COVID-19 in several countries and has spread widely throughout the world with an overview of active cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia. Early marriage is the number of cases of marriage before a child reaches the age of 18 and before the child is physically, physiologically, and psychologically mature to be responsible for the marriage and children from the marriage in the ten provinces with the most cases in Indonesia. Application for child marriage or marriage dispensation means an exception for prospective brides not yet 19 years old to enter into marriage. Based on the age and gender categories of children who marry before a child reaches the age of 18, namely the biological characteristics seen from the external appearance of children who marry at an early age. The data from infographics, data, and articles related to early marriage is edited, and checked for completeness and sequence. Then cleaning is carried out to ensure that the data taken for analysis is appropriate and there are no errors. Data analysis used in this study was carried out situationally by summarizing information into narrative article reviews.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on f no 1, the first human case of COVID-19 was reported in China and spread worldwide (World Health Organization, 2020). Indonesia is also included in the ranks of the 20 countries with the highest active cases in the world in 2020 and will be 26th in 2022 (Worldmeter, 2022).

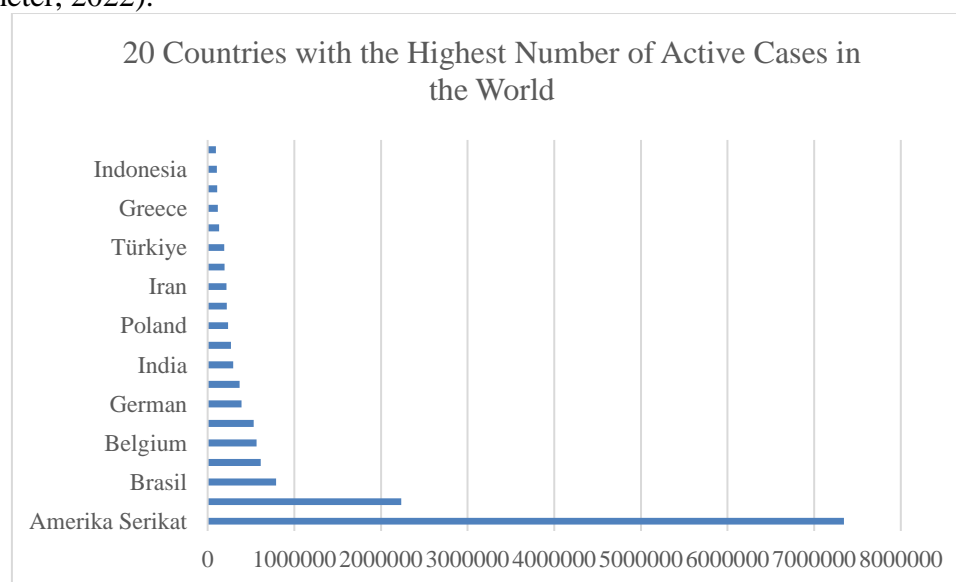


Figure 1. Total Active Cases of COVID 19 in Indonesia

According to picture no 2, based on the National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS) Cor 2020, 8.19% of Indonesian women marry for the first time between the ages of 7-15. The highest number of early married was in South Kalimantan, reaching 12.52% in 2020. It is a decrease compared to the previous year of 13.18% (Kusnandar, 2021a).

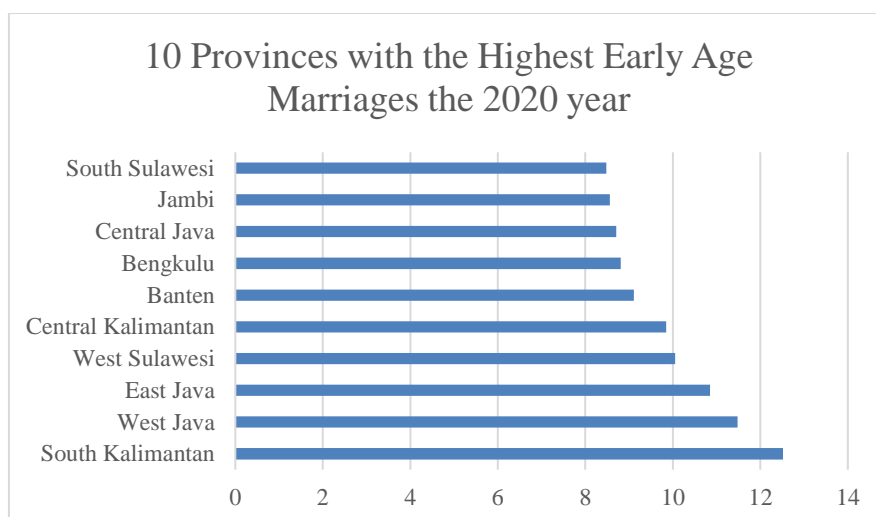


Figure 2. Provinces with Early Childhood Marriage in Indonesia in 2020

Source: Kusnandar (2021a)

Figure no 3 shows, Marriage Dispensation means relief given to prospective brides under 19 years of age to get married. It is in Article 7 of Law (UU) Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. Data from the Religious Courts Agency recorded 64.2 thousand dispensations for child marriages in 2020. This figure has increased from 2019 by around three times (totaling 23.1 thousand) (Jayani, 2021b). Furthermore, according to the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas), women reported that the number of child marriage dispensations granted by the Religious Courts was 59,709 cases in 2021. This figure has decreased by 7.01% from 64,211 cases in 2020. With this decrease, the number of child marriages in 2021 stays high (Dihni, 2022).

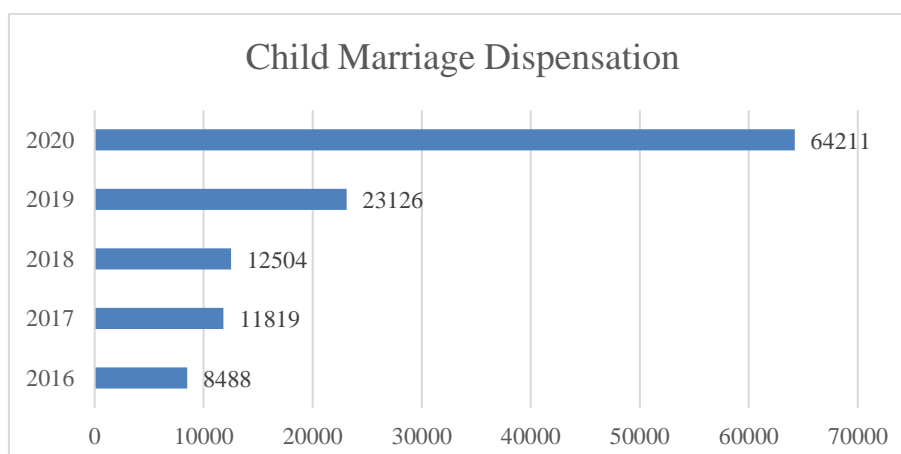


Figure 3. Frequency Distribution of Child Marriage Applications in Indonesia

Source: Jayani (2021b)

Young people from the lowest expenditure group marry earlier than those from the highest expenditure group, see chart number 4. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) noted that 3.06% of Indonesian youth who married for the first time aged less than 15 years came from the lowest 40% of the household expenditure group in 2020. Meanwhile, the lower middle class only made up 1.85% of 40%, as well as 0.91% of the top 20% of the economic group. A similar thing happened to teenagers who married for the first time aged 16-18 years. The majority (25.79%) came from the bottom 40% of the economic group, and only 9.27% came from the top 20% (Annur, 2022; Jayani, 2021c). The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) notes that based on gender, women tend to marry earlier than men in Indonesia. BPS reported that 3.22% of women were married under 15 years in 2020. Meanwhile, only 0.34% of men were married at

that age. Then, 27.35% of women married aged 16-18 years. Meanwhile, only 6.40% of men are married in this age category (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020; Bayu, 2020; Jayani, 2021c).

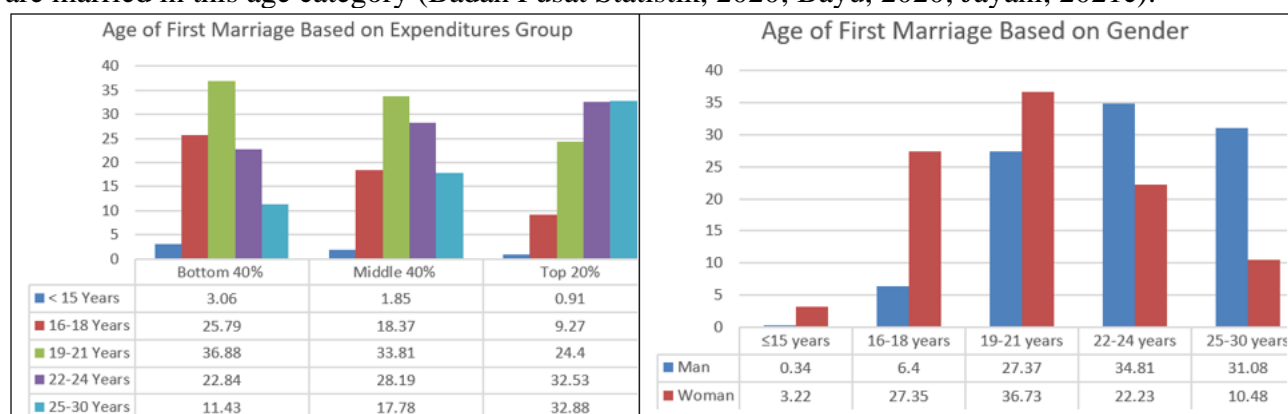


Figure 4. Frequency Distribution of the Characteristics of Adolescents Who Undertake Early Marriage during the COVID-19 Pandemic According to Age and Gender

Source: (Annur, 2022; Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020; Bayu, 2020; Jayani, 2021c)

According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in The World Factbook report released in 2021 (figure number 5), women have the youngest first child, aged 18.1 years in Chad. In the 2020 report, the youngest woman to give birth in this country average 17.9 years old (Mutia, 2022). Save the Children in the 2020 Global Girlhood Report predicts that 1.04 million women will experience teenage pregnancies in the past year. It was the impact of the rise of early marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is prediction the number of women with the potential to experience the highest teenage pregnancies is in the East and South Africa region, reaching 282 thousand people. In West and Central Africa, there are an estimated 260,000 pregnancies. For the record, the estimation made by Save The Children's estimates only looks at the effect of household income on the increase in teenage pregnancies during the corona pandemic. The prediction does not take into account other risks as school closures. It is an amount that is less than the actual amount (Jayani, 2021a).

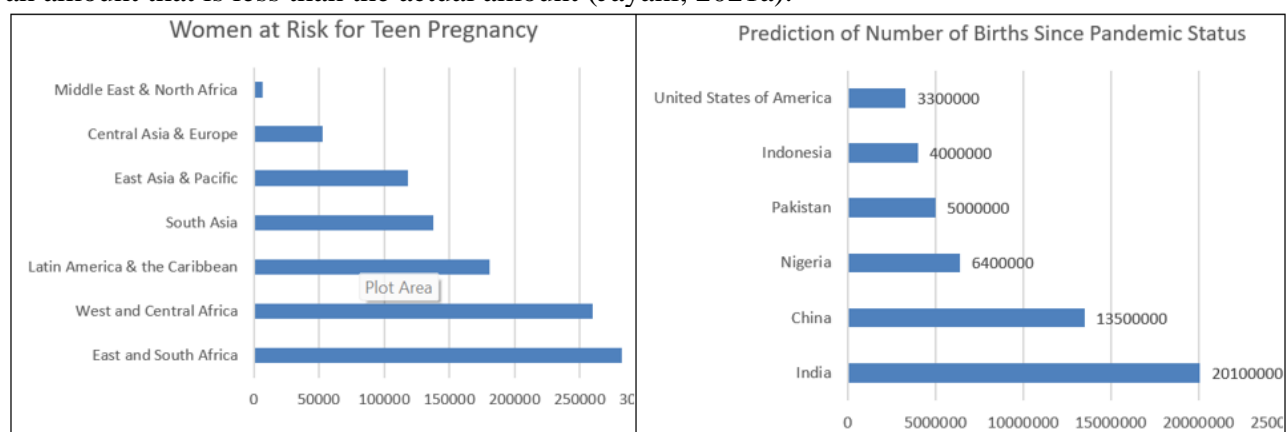


Figure 5. Frequency Distribution of The Impact of Early Marriage

Source: Women at Risk for Teen Pregnancy (Jayani, 2021a; Save the Children, 2020), and Prediction of number of birth since pandemic status (Pusparisa, 2020a; UNICEF, 2020b)

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new phenomenon of "baby boom" or a surge in the baby birth rate of the population. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) predicts that around 116 million babies will be born during this pandemic since COVID-19 became a pandemic in March. UNICEF assumes that there are six countries with the highest number of births. The number of births in India is predicted to be the largest, up to 20.1 million births. China (13.5 million births), Nigeria (6.4 million births), Pakistan (5 million births), and Indonesia (4 million births). Pregnant women are at the same risk as the general population for

the transmission of COVID-19. UNICEF reminded us that the government can still guarantee the process of prenatal checks until after birth (Pusparisa, 2020a). According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics 2021, around 2.22 percent of youth in Indonesia are married under the age of 16, as many as 4.19 percent of youth in the 16-19 year group have ever given birth, around 12.63 percent of young women have given birth to babies with low birth weight (LBW) and more than half (51.58 percent) of youth in the 16-19 year age group have never participated in a family planning program. According to WHO 2018, children less than 20 years of age have reproductive organs not functioning optimally, so if pregnancy and childbirth will more easily experience complications and can even cause death in young women globally (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021).

The Indonesian government has taken the right policy in handling the COVID-19 pandemic and the behavior of the Indonesian people who obey the regulations set by the state despite the various existing social cultures. Based on the case report of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Developments in handling the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia continue to improve with indicators of active cases and recovery (Tim Komunikasi Komite Penanganan Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) dan Pemulihan Ekonomi Nasional, 2021). The deteriorating economy during the COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to early marriage ((Jayani, 2021c). UNFPA estimates show that COVID-19 will undermine efforts to end child marriage, potentially resulting in an additional 13 million child marriages occurring between 2020 and 2030 that could otherwise be prevented ((UNICEF, 2021).

Handling the COVID-19 pandemic and all its impacts must be supported by good community behavior and compliance with state policies. One of them is the practice of marrying off their daughters for cultural and socio-economic reasons. Survey results in several countries state that a child who experienced hunger four weeks before the survey has a 60% chance of getting married compared to their peers who do not hunger. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the pressure on parents, mentally and financially, thereby reducing their ability to provide financial and emotional support to children (Shaw, 2021).

Article 7 point (2) of the new Marriage Law stipulates that marriage dispensations are for urgent reasons with claims and supporting evidence. Sufficient supporting evidence is a statement proving that the age of the prospective bride and groom is still below the statutory provisions and a written statement from the health worker supporting the parents' statement that the marriage is very urgent to take place. In addition, the testimony of other witnesses (Yasin, 2019). According to researchers, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused parents to reduce their income, and marrying off their children will decrease the burden on the family, and the cost of celebrating marriages during the COVID-19 pandemic will be cheaper due to the limited number of invitations/mass crowds. Apart from that, because children experience boredom with online learning and the ease and freedom of children in accessing the internet, especially pornographic content, it is worrying. Komnas Perempuan noted that several factors led to an increase in the dispensation for marriage in 2020. First, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic caused children to be unable to attend face-to-face school, and families experienced economic difficulties. Second, there is a possibility that the child may be exposed to a device so that it responds more quickly to various information that is not yet understood, resulting in an unwanted pregnancy. Another factor is the uneven distribution of programs and a comprehensive understanding of sexual rights and reproductive health. Finally, there is a misuse of incomplete information in several religions about sexuality (Jayani, 2021b). In addition, the increase in dispensation for early marriage is due to the ease with which requests for dispensation of marriage are allowed. It is by several things, including urgent situations such as a girl who is pregnant, a child at risk, or has had sexual intercourse, so that the child and partner already love each other. Parents' assumptions that children have at risk of violating religious and social norms or avoiding adultery are also suspected to be reasons (Dihni, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused school closures, minimal activity, various local norms, and family economic problems. Economic problem pressure during a crisis pushes parents to marry off their children (Pusparisa, 2020b). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to social restriction policies that impact the family economy, a policy of studying at home by accessing the internet freely. It makes children uncontrollable to access pornographic content, and parents marry off their children early because of the high cost of living.

This early marriage is likely to be carried out due to the exacerbated economic pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the reason for parents to lighten the burden on their families by marrying off their daughters. Although according to the latest regulations, namely Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning marriage is only permitted if the man and woman are 19 years old. Various reasons for women in Indonesia marrying underage include customs, the economy, and other things that are not desirable (Kusnandar, 2021a). In addition, early marriage occurs among women of childbearing age who live in villages, do not work, are very poor, do not attend school, do not work, and do not attend school (Hermambang et al., 2021).

According to BPS, early marriage can occur due to the perspective of families with low economic status. They generally cannot afford education costs and tend to see girls as a burden on the family that must be handled immediately through marriage as early as possible (Annur, 2022). Previous studies reported that the factors of women deciding to marry early were their desires on the grounds of consensual husband candidates and the low desire of women to continue their education at the formal level. The influence of the peer environment is a consideration that influences the decision to marry. The most important factor that causes rural women to get married soon is The culture is pro towards early marriage (Marta, 2017). Early marriage in Indonesia is may because of the perception of the Indonesian people that girls will become wives who do not have to carry the burden of supporting the family.

The increase in early marriage will directly increase the rate of teenage pregnancy and childbirth with its various complications, then will increase the mortality and morbidity of mothers and their babies. According to BPS, having sexual activity too early can cause various sexually transmitted diseases and the risk of pregnancy at too young an age, which increases the risk of complications of pregnancy and childbirth and can cause the risk of death for mothers and children (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). The practice of early marriage carries the risk of pregnancy and even doubles in the group of women aged 15-19 years (Rizaty, 2022). As of March 2020, BPS recorded that 4.77% of women aged 16-19 had given birth. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as quoted by BPS, pregnancy, and childbirth women aged 10-19 years are at higher risk of experiencing eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections than those aged 20-24 years (Jayani, 2021c).

Marriage at an early age also results in the non-fulfillment of children's priority human rights as protection of the right to protection from violence, children's civil rights, health rights, education rights, and children's social rights (Kusnandar, 2021b). Childbirth at a young age as a result of early marriage and an increase in the dispensation of early marry, and then to be followed by various physical, psychological, social, and economic impacts.

D. CONCLUSION

Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest number of active cases since the COVID-19 pandemic. It was followed by an increase in cases of early marriage due to the high number of child marriage proposals by dominant girls from the lowest household expenditure group and increased predictions of teenage pregnancy and childbirth. This study presents an overview of early marriage with data from all over Indonesia, but it uses secondary data from several institutions at <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/>, and the sample sizes are different in the variables studied. Even so, it appears that it is likely that community behavior plays a role in improving the future of Indonesian children by delaying early marriage. The results of this

study are useful as basic research that requires further assessment to contribute to preventing morbidity and mortality of mothers and children born as a result of early marriage and its complications.

Indonesia has taken the right policy in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. It needs to be supported by the behavior of the Indonesian people who comply with regulations, especially in implementing health protocols set by the state with various socio-cultural differences. Society should also contribute to preventing early pregnancy and reducing poor reproductive outcomes, including delaying marriage before 18 years and pregnancy before 20 years.

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