

## **EFFECT OF EXPOSURE TO MARITAL MATURITY INFORMATION ON ADOLESCENTS' INTENTION TO MARRY: DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In Indonesia, the rate of child marriage currently posing a risk to family welfare remains high. Therefore, interventions to prevent child marriage continue to be carried out. This study aims to examine the effect of exposure to information on Marital Maturity given by the Ambassadors for Generation with Plans on adolescents' intention to marry mediated by some factors based on the theory of planned behavior. The method used to answer the research question was the cross-sectional survey with a questionnaire distributed to 118 respondents aged 17-18 years studying at SMK Negeri 1 Cijati. Based on the model testing and path analysis on SmartPLS, it was found that exposure to marital maturity information predicted the attitude and perceived behavioral control related to child marriage. In addition, information exposure affected adolescents' intention to marry mediated by perceived behavioral control. This research also has theoretical and practical implications that the managers of the program can use as the basis for providing interventions to reduce the rate of child marriage.

**Keywords:** child marriage; information exposure; marital maturity; peer counselor.

### **INTRODUCTION**

UNICEF (2023) defines child marriage as a union involving at least one party under 18 years of age, regardless of the other party's age. Meanwhile, Indonesian Law Number 16 of 2019 indicates that child marriage is a marriage between individual under 19 years old, which is prohibited unless a special dispensation is granted. Additionally, the National Population and Family Planning Board states that the recommended age of marriage is 21 years for women and 25 years for men. This recommendation is based on achieving optimal physical, mental, and economic for building a stable family and raising children (BKKBN, 2022).

Regretfully, child marriage is still very common in Indonesia. West Java had the highest absolute rate of child marriage, with a frequency of 11.21%, according to statistics from the 2018 National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS) (Central Statistics Agency, 2018). With an expected 273,300 marriages, the incidence of child marriage has the greatest absolute rate when compared to the region's projected population. This is consistent with data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA), which shows that the provinces of South Sulawesi, East Java, and West Java have the most child marriage dispensations issued by the Religious Courts (Belia, 2023). An official from the Office of Population Control, Family Planning, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection (DPPKBP3A) of Cianjur Regency confirms that Cianjur Regency is one of the regencies contributing to the high rate of child marriage in West Java, with the percentage of child marriage reaching 48% in 2021, becoming the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate of child marriage in the province (Mukminin, 2022).

Child marriage is influenced by a few factors. Rumble et al. (2018) found that while living in rural areas is a risk factor for child marriage, education, affluence, and exposure to educational media are protective variables that prevent it. This is consistent with research by Wahyudi et al. (2019) and Bennet (2014), which demonstrate that poverty, work, education, and residential area are the main factors influencing child marriage in Indonesia. Furthermore, the decision to participate in child marriage is influenced by cultural and religious factors (Bennet, 2014; Ratnawaty, 2019). According to studies by Hidayana et al. (2016), unintended adolescent pregnancies are another common cause of child marriage. Most of the participant in the study agree that adolescent pregnancy can be solved by early marriage.

Child marriage has many negative impacts in terms of economy, health, and welfare. Some studies have proved that the marriage of a child under 18 years is closely related to school dropout rate, limited employment opportunity, at-risk pregnancy, and birth to stunted children (Cameron et al., 2023; Sunder, 2019). Given the impacts, various parties have made efforts to prevent child marriage. One of the government agencies that play a role in child marriage prevention efforts in West Java is the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) of West Java Province. Among the campaigns intensively conducted is the Marital Maturity campaign which continues to be disseminated through the activity groups fostered by BKKBN and the staff. For example, the Youth Information and Counseling Center (PIK-R) is an activity group that has been established in various regions in West Java. The counseling in this group generally contains information on how to maintain reproductive health, life planning for adolescents, the dangers of child marriage, and safe contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies. The campaign is organized by the ambassadors for Generation with Plans (GenRe) who are part of PIK-R and act as an educator and peer counselor. They usually disseminate information through face-to-face gatherings or videos and posters shared on social media. To date, studies of the success of such interventions remain limited. This study therefore aims to evaluate one of the intervention programs conducted by the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) of West Java to prevent child marriage.

This study refers to the Theory of Planned Behavior. This is a theory that emerges to complement the theory of reasoned action which can be used to predict the occurrence of a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The theory of planned behavior (TPB) can be developed with other variables provided that the TPB becomes a factor between the development variables and the measured intention (Conner & J., 1998). The TPB per se explains that when a behavior is not visible even though the attitude appears to be positive, there is another variable called intention which becomes the determinant of a behavior. Intention describes a person's motivation in consciously planning a behavior. Other than attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are also determinants of a person's intention in a behavior.

Recent studies of child marriage reveal that attitude is one of the factors that encourage child marriage. A qualitative study (Schaffnit et al., 2019) shows that adolescent girls in the rural areas of Tanzania have no problem with marriage under the age of 18 because they think that women can marry when their reproductive organs are ready (starting around the age of 14) and because marriage can bring benefits to them. Meanwhile, another study defines attitude towards child marriage as adolescents' tendency to view or belief in assessing marriage under the age of 18 (Abdurahman et al., 2023; Shahrabadi et al., 2017). The study shows that there is a positive correlation between positive attitude towards child marriage and intention to marry early ( $\beta=0.217$ ;  $p=0.001$ ,  $APR=1.30$ ;  $95\% CI=1.09, 1.52$ ).

Social pressure is also one of the important variables that determine adolescents' intention to marry (Abdurahman et al., 2023; Gage, 2013; Shahrabadi et al., 2017). The pressure to get married in the age of adolescence can come from various parties around the adolescents, including the parents, brothers, or religious leaders (Amzat, 2020; Schaffnit et al., 2019). The presence of friends who marry early or support child marriage can also encourage adolescents to have a desire to get married at an early age (Abdurahman et al., 2023). This social pressure can arise because there is a perception that marrying off a girl can reduce family expenses or prevent

adolescents from unwanted pregnancies which remain a taboo in some societies (Madut, 2020; Schaffnit et al., 2019; Tai et al., 2019).

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to the extent to which the control in adolescents exists to determine by themselves the right time to get married as well as their power perception of the factors that make adolescents worthy of marriage. When an adolescent has the perception that he/she can determine by himself/herself the time of marriage, refuse child marriage, and feel that he/she has inadequate resources to get married, then the intention to marry at the age of adolescence will decrease (Abdurahman et al., 2023; Berhane et al., 2019; Shahrabadi et al., 2017; Xie & Hong, 2022).

Information exposure is a condition when an audience is exposed to messages disseminated by the mass media. Meanwhile, according to Rakhmat in Anggraeni (2017) media exposure refers to the use of media by an audience which includes the amount of time used, the type of media content, and the relationship between the audience and the media consumed or the media as a whole. This is in line with the dimension explained by Liliweri (1992) which suggests that media exposure is measured by observing the intensity of message acceptance, message content, and the attractiveness of the information conveyed.

The 2017 Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey (SDKI) shows that adolescents often use such media as television (81% of adolescent girls, 77% of adolescent boys) and the internet (85% of adolescent girls, 84% of adolescent boys) to access information (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2018). The use of media to improve knowledge about child marriage and adolescent pregnancy has proved to be effective in some regions, including in India (Mehra et al., 2018), the Philippines (Pepito et al., 2022), and Ethiopia (Gage, 2013). A study by Gage (2013) explains that the use of several diverse and well-segmented media can give a better effect on increasing parents/guardians' knowledge to prevent adolescent marriage. Easily-accessed mass media is a way for adolescents and their families to be aware of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy problems, and it encourages them to fight the social pressure to marry early (Mehra et al., 2018)

Besides information exposure through certain media, community-based or interpersonal communication also has an impact on the knowledge, intention, and behavior related to child marriage or pregnancy. For example, in the research of Mehra et al. (2018), community-based interventions have a significant influence on the low rate of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, and such interventions increase the length of school time among adolescents

Based on the review of these previous studies, this research focuses on answering the research questions: 1) What is the effect of exposure to marital maturity information by the GenRe ambassadors to the adolescents' attitude towards child marriage and their perceived behavioral control? and 2) What is the effect of information exposure, adolescents' attitude towards marriage, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to the early marriage intention?

## **METHOD**

This study used a cross-sectional method with a survey and questionnaire completed by the respondents themselves. The data collection process was conducted in December 2023. The research was carried out in one of the districts in the southern rural area of Cianjur Regency named the District of Cijati.

The population in this study was adolescents aged 17-18 years attending SMK N 1 Cijati (vocational high school). Married adolescents and adolescents who were unable to fill out the questionnaire due to health reasons were excluded from this study. Meanwhile, for sampling, the researchers used the accidental sampling method and obtained a sample of 118 people.

The data collection was carried out by providing an online questionnaire for the respondents through different Google Forms for male and female students because they had different

standards of the age of marriage. The questionnaire was completed independently by the respondents who met the researchers at the school. To guarantee the research ethics, an informed consent page was provided when completing the questionnaire, thus allowing the respondents to refuse to complete the questionnaire if they were unwilling. The researchers also gave a reward in the form of phone credit as much as IDR 25,000 for 8 selected respondents.

The research questionnaire per se was taken from previous studies with some adjustments. The dependent variable in this study was the intention to marry before reaching the age recommended by BKKBN. The measurement of marriage intention was observed from the adolescents' readiness to marry under the age of 21 years for women and 25 years for men adopted from previous research (Xie & Hong, 2022). There were three statements used in the questionnaire, each of which was measured with 5 response choices based on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Meanwhile, the independent variables in this study consisted of the constructs of attitude towards marriage (5 statement items), subjective norms of marriage (6 statement items), and perceived behavioral control of marriage (6 statement items) taken from a study by Abdurahman et al., (2023). The construct of information exposure to marital maturity was measured using 7 statement items that observed the exposure to marital maturity information based on the frequency, duration, as well as completeness and attractiveness of the content by referring to a study by Anggraeni (2017) with several adjustments. In addition, there were questions about the demographic data of the adolescents consisting of their age, the educational attainment of their father and mother, and the distance of their home to school. The data collection lasted for 10 days from December 4 to 13, 2023.

The data collected in the Google Form was then processed and analyzed on SmartPLS version 4. The data processing included the descriptive statistical data and the model processing to obtain the confirmatory factor analysis, fit model values, as well as the correlation among variables and the path analysis both directly and indirectly to obtain the mediation effect.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Data

The descriptive analysis of the data can be seen in Table 1 presenting the frequency of the respondents' demographics which consisted of gender, age, distance from home to school, and the educational attainment of the father and mother. As seen in the table, the majority of the respondents in this study were female, teenagers aged 17 years, traveling more than 10 km from home to school, and their parents completed the elementary school level or equivalent. In addition, there were descriptive statistical results of the reliability score of each construct, the average variance extracted (AVE), and the loading factor of each construct.

Table 1 Demographics of the Respondents.

Demography	Frequency (N=118)
Sex	
Female	69
Male	49
Age	
17 years old	100
18 years old	18
House-to-school radius	
Less than 1 km	16
1-5 km	34

6-10 km	17
More than 10 km	51
Father's last education	
Not completed primary education	13
Completed primary education	52
Completed lower secondary education	18
Completed higher secondary education	31
Completed higher	4
Mother's last education	
Not completed primary education	6
Completed primary education	52
Completed lower secondary education	26
Completed higher secondary education	31
Completed higher	3

Source: Researcher's Collection, 2023.

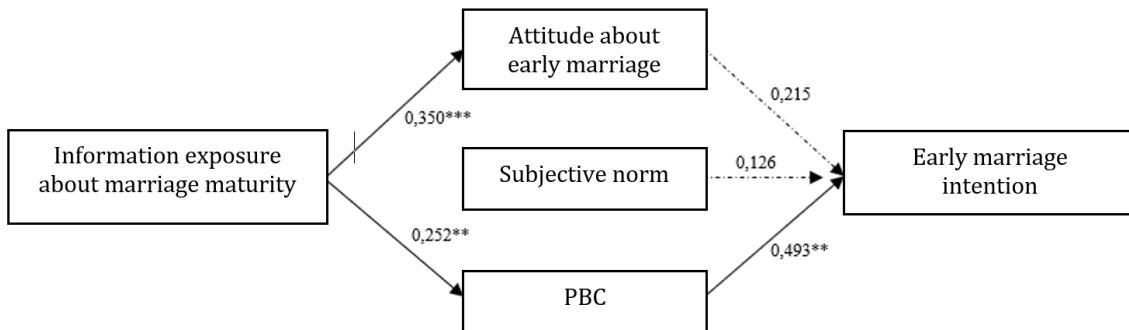
Table 2 Descriptive statistics and Fornell-Larcker values.

Variable	Rho-c	( $\alpha$ )	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. Information exposure	0.834	0.765	0,527	<b>0,653</b>				
2. Attitude	0.861	0.799	0.553	0,350	<b>0,744</b>			
3. Subjective norm	0.864	0.810	0.523	0,144	0,381	<b>0,752</b>		
4. PBC	0.886	0.844	0.566	0,323	0,434	0,532	<b>0,723</b>	
5. Intention to marry	0.914	0.859	0.780	0,182	0,452	0,460	0,631	<b>0,883</b>

Source: Data Processing, 2023.

Table 2 shows the values of the validity and reliability of the data. The reliability of the data was analyzed from the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values. CR and alpha values above 0.7 indicate that the data has sufficient reliability. Meanwhile, the validity of the data in this study was measured by looking at the convergent validity and discriminant validity. The convergent validity was obtained by observing the average variance extracted (AVE) which showed a value above 0.5. There was also a loading factor of above 0.6. Some studies suggest that a good result of loading factor is usually above 0.7. However, in explanatory research, a score above 0.6 is sufficiently good. This shows that the items in this study are quite good and can be analyzed. Meanwhile, the cross-loading data or Fornell-Larcker criterion indicates that a construct actually measures the construct that is desired to be measured because it has a greater correlation value between the constructs than the correlation value of the construct and other constructs. Therefore, the measurement model of this study is deemed to have fulfilled the discriminant validity.

Figure 1 Structural equation model with path coefficient and statistical significance (\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001).



Source: Researcher's collection, 2023.

### Direct Effects

The intention to marry at the age under the recommendation from BKKBN was significantly predicted positively by the perceived behavioral control ( $\beta = .493$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but it was statistically insignificantly predicted by the attitude ( $\beta = .215$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and subjective norms ( $\beta = .126$ ,  $p > .05$ ). In addition, the exposure to marital maturity information from the GenRe ambassadors also predicted significantly positively towards the attitude ( $\beta = .350$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and perceived behavioral control ( $\beta = .252$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### Indirect Effects

The researchers bootstrapped the data and replicated the sample 5000 times to examine the indirect effects of information exposure on intention to marry. The results of the bootstrapping showed that there was an effect between exposure to marital maturity information and intention to marry which was statistically significantly mediated by the perceived behavioral control ( $\beta = .124$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and statistically insignificantly mediated by the attitude ( $\beta = .075$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

This study found that exposure to marital maturity information given by the GenRe ambassadors was sufficient to influence adolescents' attitude and perceived behavioral control related to child marriage. The perceived behavioral control affected the intention to marry early, which is in line with the model of TPB. However, in contrast to this theory, attitude and subjective norms did not affect the intention to marry early. These findings show the positive impact of information exposure received by adolescents because exposure to marital maturity information is sufficient to affect the attitude and perceived behavioral control (PBC) of adolescents although not all of these two important aspects eventually affect the intention to marry early.

The effect of exposure on perceived behavioral control is also found in other studies. Strong perceived behavioral control means that adolescents have control over the time to get married. According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavioral control is related to adolescents' self-confidence and efficacy in which adolescents can be strongly encouraged to feel confident that they have the ability to decide the time to get married according to their needs. The significance of adolescents' freedom to determine the time to get married is also revealed in a study (Schaffnit et al., 2019) which focuses on the point of view of women who are active in determining when and with whom they will marry.

The influence between each variable is also in line with some previous studies (Abdurahman et al., 2023; Shahrabadi et al., 2017; Xie & Hong, 2022), with different correlation strengths. Abdurahman et al. (2023) and Shahrabadi (2017) show that the predictor of intention to marry

is subjective norms. Subjective norms are an individual's belief about his social encouragement to perform an action. In this study, the trust from the nearest environment did not have a significant effect on the intention of marrying early among adolescents. This is similar with the attitude of adolescents regarding child marriage. This means that as long as they feel they have the power to determine the right time to get married, the intention to marry will also be in line with their confidence.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that exposure to information on marital maturity predicted the attitude as well as the perceived behavioral control related to child marriage. In addition, information exposure affected the intention to marry early, mediated by the perceived behavioral control. This indicates that the GenRe ambassadors have an important role in determining the attitude and perceived behavioral control over child marriage, thereby allowing exposure to marital maturity to continue. Although not all aspects of TPB affect the intention to marry among adolescents, the strong influence of perceived behavioral control (PBC) on intention indicates that the GenRe ambassadors and Family Planning officers can promote messages that increase the confidence of adolescents to marry at the right time. If adolescents believe that marriage can be entered into when they are physically, psychologically, and socially ready, then they can decide to get married when such maturity has been achieved. Further research on similar topics can examine which information has a greater influence on adolescents' attitude toward child marriage. The development of the instrument in this research also needs to be conducted continuously to obtain greater validity, especially in the information exposure dimension.

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