

DYNAMICS OF EARLY MARRIAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD QUALITY OF LIFE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ACHIEVEMENT IN SAMBIREJO TIMUR VILLAGE, PERCUT SEI TUAN DISTRICT

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-04-2026

Revised : 07-05-2026

Accepted : 26-06-2026

KEYWORDS

Marriage;

Family;

Resilience;

Sociology;

SDGs;

ABSTRACT

Early marriage remains a significant social issue in Indonesia, affecting household quality of life and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study aims to analyze the dynamics of early marriage and its implications for household quality of life from the perspective of SDGs in Sambirejo Timur Village, Percut Sei Tuan District. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Thirteen informants were selected through purposive sampling, including the neighborhood head, young married couples, and community members. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that early marriage is influenced by economic hardship, low educational attainment, social environment, and community norms that continue to tolerate the practice. Young couples experienced various challenges, including unstable economic conditions, marital adjustment, child-rearing responsibilities, and psychological pressure associated with assuming family roles at an early age. Despite these challenges, family support, effective communication, and mutual cooperation helped strengthen household resilience. The study also reveals that early marriage affects the achievement of several SDGs, particularly No Poverty, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Reduced Inequalities. Strengthening education, family economic empowerment, reproductive health education, premarital counseling, and family resilience programs is essential to reducing early marriage and supporting sustainable development at the local level.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the fundamental social institutions that plays a crucial role in establishing social order through the formation of the family as the smallest social unit. The family serves not only as a setting for the relationships between husband, wife, and children but also performs strategic functions, including value socialization, character development, economic support, protection, and intergenerational social reproduction (Alfirdaus, 2018). From the perspective of family sociology, the family's ability to perform these functions determines the quality of life of its members while contributing to broader social stability. Consequently, changes in social structure, economic development, and cultural dynamics influence family formation patterns, including the practice of early marriage. This phenomenon indicates that the decision to marry is determined not only by an individual's biological, psychological, and social readiness but also by the social environment in which individuals grow and develop (Muntamah & Suryanto, 2023). Therefore, early marriage should not be understood merely as a personal choice but rather as a social phenomenon with significant implications for family well-being and human development.

Early marriage remains a major challenge in many developing countries characterized by diverse social, economic, and cultural contexts (Tarigan, 2023). Every year, millions of girls enter marriage before reaching adulthood despite the implementation of various child protection policies worldwide (Faisal, 2025). In Indonesia, the government has attempted to reduce this practice through Law Number 16 of 2019, which raised the minimum legal age of marriage as part of efforts to strengthen child protection and improve family quality (Beddu, 2023). Nevertheless, early marriage continues to occur in many regions, particularly in rural communities with relatively low educational attainment and socioeconomic status (Rohiq et al., 2025). Although the prevalence of child marriage has declined in recent years, the reduction has not been evenly distributed across regions, indicating persistent geographical disparities (Amini et al., 2023). These conditions suggest that formal regulations alone have not been sufficient to address early marriage because the practice is deeply rooted in prevailing social norms, cultural values, and socioeconomic conditions.

Previous studies consistently demonstrate that early marriage is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of cultural, economic, educational, and social environmental factors. In many communities, early marriage is still perceived as a means of preserving family honor, maintaining cultural traditions, or alleviating household economic burdens (Lailiyah et al., 2025). At the same time, limited family financial resources often restrict adolescents' access to higher education, making marriage appear to be a viable alternative that offers economic security. Alfansyah & Wicaksono (2025) found that lower educational attainment is associated with a higher risk of early marriage and contributes to the intergenerational cycle of poverty (A. M. Jamil, 2025). argued that poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to education are the primary determinants of child marriage across developing countries. Nevertheless, most previous studies have examined these determinants separately according to their disciplinary focus, leaving limited understanding of how these interacting factors shape family life after marriage. From the perspective of Structuration Theory, the decision to marry at a young age results from the interaction between individual agency and social structures represented by rules, norms, and resources continuously reproduced within society. Therefore, early marriage should be understood not through a single determinant but as the outcome of a complex relationship between social structures and individual agency (Chairani & Pertiwi, 2025).

The complexity of these contributing factors extends to various aspects of family life following marriage. Numerous studies indicate that couples who marry at a relatively young age are more vulnerable to economic hardship, health problems, psychological distress, communication difficulties, and parenting challenges than those who marry later in life (Rahayu et al., 2025). These difficulties are closely associated with insufficient emotional and social preparedness to assume the roles of husband, wife, and parent (Suharman & Akil, 2025). Limited experience in conflict management and decision-making frequently affects the quality of family communication, while inadequate education and employment opportunities reduce the ability to meet household economic needs. Moreover, pregnancy at a young age increases the risk of maternal and infant health complications and negatively affects overall family well-being (Feber et al., 2025). Hidayat (2025) also reported that young couples often encounter difficulties in implementing effective parenting practices due to limited experience and knowledge. These findings indicate that the consequences of early marriage are multidimensional rather than confined to a single aspect of life. However, most previous studies

have examined these consequences from sectoral perspectives, resulting in limited understanding of the interrelationships among economic conditions, family communication, health, gender relations, and family functioning (Rizqiah & Salsabiila, 2025).

These issues can be further understood through the perspective of Life Course Theory, which explains that individuals progress through developmental stages that ideally involve biological, psychological, social, and economic readiness before assuming the roles of husband, wife, and parent. When the transition into marriage occurs before individuals reach adequate maturity, the process of adapting to family responsibilities becomes considerably more challenging. Previous studies have shown that young married couples experience greater difficulties in establishing effective communication, resolving conflicts, negotiating domestic roles, and making family decisions (Nurmayani & Maulida, 2025). Situasi tersebut dapat memengaruhi kemampuan keluarga dalam menjalankan fungsi afeksi, perlindungan, sosialisasi, dan pemenuhan kebutuhan ekonomi secara seimbang. Dany, (2024) likewise found that the quality of communication among young couples is closely associated with the level of marital harmony they achieve. These findings suggest that the success of a marriage depends not only on its legal status but also on the couple's readiness to navigate each stage of family life. Nevertheless, previous research has largely emphasized the relationship between age at marriage and marital quality without adequately linking it to broader family functioning. Consequently, the adaptation process of young couples throughout the family life cycle remains insufficiently understood.

From the perspective of family sociology, household quality of life results from the interaction of multiple dimensions, including economic conditions, interpersonal relationships, gender relations, and social support. Structural Functionalism views the family as a social system that functions effectively only when each member fulfills his or her roles and responsibilities in a balanced manner (Ziauddin & Wahyuni, 2024). Conversely, dysfunction in one aspect of family life may disrupt other family functions, ultimately affecting household stability. Such conditions are frequently experienced by young married couples because limited educational attainment and restricted access to decent employment often hinder their ability to fulfill household economic needs (Alfaris & Rosyid, 2024). Economic pressures subsequently contribute to psychological stress, ineffective communication patterns, unequal role distribution, and poor household decision-making. Sunariyah (2024) further demonstrated that women who marry at a young age generally possess weaker bargaining positions in domestic and economic decision-making. These findings indicate that household quality of life emerges from the interaction of multiple interconnected dimensions. Nevertheless, previous studies have tended to examine these dimensions separately, leaving limited understanding of how their interaction shapes the resilience of young families.

In addition to social and economic aspects, health constitutes another important dimension in understanding the consequences of early marriage. The World Health Organization has emphasized that adolescent pregnancy remains a major contributor to pregnancy complications, childbirth risks, and maternal and infant health problems, particularly in developing countries (Effendi & Ahmadi, 2024). Indawati (2024) reported that early pregnancy affects not only women's reproductive health but also long-term family well-being. At the same time, young couples often face challenges in implementing responsive parenting practices because of limited experience and inadequate readiness for parenthood (Azizah et al., 2024). Therefore, support from extended families, local communities, and access to health and family education services plays a critical role in strengthening young couples' capacity to cope with these challenges (Ariesa et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate that the implications of early marriage extend beyond the marital relationship itself, influencing health, child-rearing practices, and the continuity of family functioning. However, the relationships among these dimensions have generally been examined independently, providing only a fragmented understanding of the quality of life experienced by young married couples.

The multidimensional consequences of early marriage are also closely associated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which prioritize improving people's quality of life as a central objective of sustainable development (Hasbiyalla et al., 2024). Early marriage is directly related to the achievement of Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Syarda, 2024). Bappenas (2021) emphasized that reducing child marriage is an essential prerequisite for improving Indonesia's human resource quality. Previous studies likewise demonstrate that early marriage contributes

to gender inequality, limited educational opportunities, and lower economic participation among women (Faturohman et al., 2024). Meanwhile, existing prevention programs continue to face substantial challenges due to deeply rooted cultural values, economic constraints, and local social norms (R. S. Jamil & Purwadinata, 2024). These conditions indicate that early marriage is not merely a family issue but also a development challenge. Nevertheless, the relationship between the dynamics of young married couples' family life and the achievement of SDG indicators remains underexplored, particularly in rural communities. Such an approach is essential for understanding how family functioning contributes to sustainable development at the community level.

Early marriage remains a social reality in many rural areas, including Sambirejo Timur Village, Percut Sei Tuan District, Deli Serdang Regency. The community's strong family values, cultural norms, and socioeconomic conditions shape the perception that early marriage can reduce household economic burdens, preserve family honor, and provide greater certainty for children's futures. These perceptions coexist with limited access to higher education, reproductive health information, and decent employment opportunities. Consequently, the decision to marry at a young age reflects not merely individual choice but also the interaction of social, cultural, and economic structures within the local community. Accordingly, Sambirejo Timur Village provides an important empirical context for examining the dynamics of family life among young married couples in rural settings.

Previous studies have examined early marriage from various perspectives, including marriage law, reproductive health, education, family psychology, and socioeconomic determinants (Rachman, 2024; Rahmatullah et al., 2024; I. Sari & Situmorang, 2024; Septriani et al., 2024; Yanti et al., 2024). These studies have made valuable contributions to understanding both the causes and consequences of early marriage. However, most have investigated these dimensions separately, providing limited explanation of how social, economic, gender, communication, health, and social support factors collectively shape the quality of family life among young married couples. Furthermore, studies integrating family sociology with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly within rural communities in Deli Serdang Regency, remain limited. This gap provides an opportunity for more comprehensive research.

Addressing this gap, the present study offers a novel contribution by integrating the perspectives of family sociology and sustainable development in examining the dynamics of early marriage. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on either the determinants or the consequences of early marriage, this study investigates how social, economic, cultural, gender, communication, health, and social support factors interact in shaping the quality of household life among young married couples. Furthermore, it links these dynamics to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the village level, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between family institutions and sustainable development in local contexts.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of early marriage and its implications for household quality of life from the perspective of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Sambirejo Timur Village, Percut Sei Tuan District. The analysis focuses on the factors influencing early marriage, the adaptation process of young couples in fulfilling family functions, and the implications of these dynamics for household well-being. The findings are expected to enrich the field of family sociology while providing valuable insights for local governments, village authorities, and other stakeholders in formulating strategies to prevent early marriage, strengthen family resilience, and support the achievement of sustainable development targets at both the local and national levels.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design (Sugiyono, 2024). A qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of early marriage and the quality of household life among couples who married at a young age in Sambirejo Timur Village, Percut Sei Tuan District. The study focused on the experiences, perspectives, and social conditions of young married couples and the surrounding community. Accordingly, the data consisted of descriptive information collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The research was conducted in Hamlet IV Anggrek, Sambirejo Timur Village,

Percut Sei Tuan District, Deli Serdang Regency. The research site was selected purposively because the practice of early marriage remains relatively prevalent in the area, making it appropriate for addressing the objectives of this study.

The informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Thomas, 2022), whereby participants were chosen based on their knowledge, experiences, and direct involvement with the phenomenon under investigation. The key informants met the following criteria: (1) they had experienced early marriage in accordance with the focus of the study; (2) they resided in Hamlet IV Anggrek, Sambirejo Timur Village; and (3) they were willing to participate and provide information openly throughout the research process. In addition, the characteristics of the informants were described based on their age at marriage, length of marriage, number of children, and educational background to provide a more comprehensive profile of the participants. The primary informant was selected because of his knowledge of the community's social conditions and the prevalence of early marriage in the research setting, while the supporting informants were chosen to obtain community perspectives regarding the phenomenon. A total of 13 informants participated in this study, consisting of one primary informant, namely the Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek; seven key informants, who were individuals married at a young age; and five supporting informants, comprising parents, a local trader, and community members. The characteristics of the research informants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Research Informants

No.	Informant	Category	Description	Age
1	Budi Utomo	Primary Informant	Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek	48 years
2	Sarah Rahmadahni	Key Informant	Married at the age of 17	21 years
3	Della Mufti	Key Informant	Married at the age of 18	24 years
4	Devi Aulia	Key Informant	Married at the age of 16	27 years
5	Dinda Sasmita	Key Informant	Married at the age of 15	19 years
6	Erika Ulandari	Key Informant	Married at the age of 19	25 years
7	Syahrah Nabila	Key Informant	Married at the age of 16	17 years
8	Saski Kirana Putri	Key Informant	Married at the age of 19	22 years
9	Yurnalis	Supporting Informant	Parent	59 years
10	Maryati	Supporting Informant	Community member	53 years
11	Sri Wahyuningsih	Supporting Informant	Local trader	47 years
12	Surpani	Supporting Informant	Community member	46 years
13	Ernita	Supporting Informant	Community member	52 years

Source: Researcher, 2026

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to obtain an overview of the social conditions of the research site. In-depth interviews served as the primary data collection technique to explore the factors contributing to early marriage, the dynamics of household life, and the quality of family life based on the lived experiences of the informants. Documentation was used as supporting evidence, including field notes, research documents, photographs, and other relevant records generated during the research process. The data were analyzed interactively using the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data condensation stage, all interview recordings were transcribed, after which open coding was conducted by assigning codes to segments of data related to the research focus, including the determinants of early marriage, household dynamics, family communication, economic conditions, gender relations, health, parenting, and social support. Subsequently, codes with similar meanings were grouped through a categorization process to generate broader analytical categories representing the major themes of the study. These categories were then analyzed to identify patterns and relationships among themes that explained the dynamics of early marriage and the quality of household life among young married couples. The organized data were subsequently presented in narrative form to facilitate

interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified by reviewing the entire dataset to ensure consistency between the findings and the objectives of the study (Sulistiyawati, 2023). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed source triangulation by comparing information obtained from the primary informant, key informants, and supporting informants. In addition, interview findings were cross-checked with observational and documentary data to enhance the credibility and dependability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Dynamics of Early Marriage in Sambirejo Timur Village

Early marriage remains a prominent social phenomenon within the community of Sambirejo Timur Village, Percut Sei Tuan District, particularly in Hamlet IV Anggrek. The findings indicate that marriages occurring below the minimum legal age established by the government continue to take place and have become an integral part of the community's social life. This phenomenon is reflected not only in the considerable number of adolescents entering marriage at an early age but also in the community's acceptance of the practice, which is no longer perceived as a social deviation. Budi Utomo, the Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek, explained that cases of early marriage are still reported almost every year. According to him, some young people even decide to marry before completing their formal education. He stated,

"Based on the current situation, early marriage is still quite common in this community. Almost every year there are young couples who get married at an early age. Some marry after graduating from school, while others marry before completing their education. It has become something ordinary in this community and is no longer considered unusual. Most of those who marry are under the age of 16, even though the government has set the minimum marriage age at around 19–20 years. In Hamlet IV Anggrek, approximately 50% of marriages are still categorized as early marriages"

This statement indicates that early marriage is not an isolated or incidental occurrence but rather a recurring social pattern that has become embedded within the local community. The high prevalence of early marriage reflects the persistence of social norms that continue to accommodate the practice, resulting in little or no social resistance toward adolescents who choose to marry at an early age. These findings are consistent with Alfirdaus, (2018) and Situmeang, (2021) who argue that in communities where early marriage has become culturally normalized, the practice tends to be perceived as part of the local tradition and is therefore continuously reproduced through social interaction. The findings also reveal that economic conditions constitute the most dominant factor contributing to early marriage. Most informants explained that limited household income leads many families to perceive marriage as a practical solution for reducing the economic burden on parents. The Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek noted that many families believe that once their daughters marry, financial responsibility shifts to the husband, thereby easing the family's economic obligations. He explained, *"In my opinion, the primary factor is the economy because many families believe that marrying off their children will reduce the financial burden on the household."* This explanation is supported by the experience of Sarah Rahmadahni, who married at the age of 17. Sarah explained that her decision to marry was closely related to her family's economic situation, as she was raised by a single mother and felt responsible for helping reduce her mother's burden. She stated: *"My mother was a single parent, and that was when I decided to get married so that I could lessen her burden, even though I did not really understand what married life would be like."* A similar experience was shared by Della Mufti, who decided to marry after leaving school and working to help support her parents because of the family's limited financial resources. These findings demonstrate that economic hardship not only affects a family's ability to meet daily needs but also shapes adolescents' perceptions of their future. Under conditions of economic deprivation, marriage is often viewed as a more realistic alternative than continuing formal education. This finding supports the studies of Apriyanti, (2021) and Tan, (2021) which identify poor household economic conditions as one of the principal drivers of early marriage within society.

In addition to economic factors, low educational attainment also contributes significantly to the high prevalence of early marriage in Sambirejo Timur Village. Nearly all key informants reported that they did not pursue higher levels

of education, thereby limiting their opportunities to obtain stable and better-paying employment. According to the Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek, many adolescents choose to marry after dropping out of school because they no longer have educational aspirations or alternative life goals. Similar experiences were reported by Sarah Rahmadahni, Della Mufti, Dinda Sasmita, and Syahrah Nabila, all of whom discontinued their education before entering marriage. Syahrah Nabila explained,

"I dropped out of junior high school and started doing temporary jobs. Later, my parents encouraged me to get married so that my life would have a clearer direction"

This statement illustrates that low educational attainment not only limits employment opportunities but also influences adolescents' ability to make important life decisions. The lower an individual's educational level, the more limited their understanding of the social, economic, and health risks associated with early marriage. These findings support the studies conducted by Larashati (2022) Rachman (2022), and Yudianingsih (2022) which emphasize that education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' ways of thinking, decision-making abilities, and readiness before entering married life. Another important factor identified in this study is the influence of peer relationships and the surrounding social environment. Based on the interview findings, several informants explained that early marriage often resulted from long-term dating relationships, premarital pregnancy, or pressure from family members who encouraged adolescents to marry in order to avoid behaviors considered socially inappropriate. The Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek reported that several marriages occurred after couples experienced premarital pregnancy, prompting families to accelerate the marriage process. This finding was reinforced by Sarah Rahmadahni, who admitted that her decision to marry was influenced by unhealthy peer associations. Likewise, Dinda Sasmita explained that her decision was largely driven by her family's encouragement due to difficult family circumstances. These findings indicate that the decision to marry at a young age does not always arise from personal choice but is often influenced by social and familial pressures. In communities where family honor remains a dominant social value, marriage is frequently regarded as a means of preventing social stigma. This finding is consistent with the studies of Hardaningtyas (2023) and Mansur (2023) which conclude that peer influence, social environments, and prevailing community norms significantly contribute to the persistence of early marriage, particularly within rural communities.

Quality of Household Life among Young Married Couples

Family Economic Well-being

Economic conditions constitute one of the most important dimensions determining the quality of household life among couples who marry at a young age (Ayuningtyas, 2023). The findings indicate that the economic situation experienced by most young couples after marriage did not always meet their expectations. Limited educational attainment restricted their opportunities to secure stable employment, resulting in most couples working in the informal sector with relatively low and unstable incomes. Consequently, many households experienced difficulties in meeting their basic needs, including food, clothing, healthcare expenses, and children's educational costs. Several couples also remained financially dependent on their parents or extended family, particularly during the early years of marriage. These findings suggest that early marriage is often accompanied by inadequate economic preparedness, making the process of achieving household financial independence considerably more challenging. These findings were supported by an interview with Budi Utomo, the Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek, who explained that most young married couples experience difficulty obtaining decent employment because of their relatively low educational attainment. As a result, many of them work as daily laborers, casual workers, or engage in other informal occupations with unstable incomes. He stated.

"Most people who marry young have relatively low educational backgrounds. After marriage, they usually work as construction laborers, plantation workers, or small-scale traders, so their income is uncertain. Sometimes they earn enough, and sometimes they do not. Consequently, many of them still receive financial assistance from their parents."

This statement demonstrates that limited educational attainment significantly restricts young couples' access to stable employment opportunities. Consequently, household income tends to fluctuate and is often insufficient to independently meet all family needs. These findings indicate that family economic well-being is determined not merely by employment status but also by job quality, income level, and the sustainability of household earnings. A similar experience was described by Sarah Rahmadahni, who explained that after marriage she and her husband had to adjust their household expenditures to their limited income. During the early years of their marriage, they frequently relied on financial assistance from her mother to meet their daily needs. Sarah explained

"The beginning of our marriage was difficult because my husband's income was not stable. When he had work, we had money, but when there was no work, we had to be very careful with our spending. Sometimes my mother also helped us with our daily necessities, especially when our child was still very young."

This experience indicates that young married couples often lack financial independence when entering married life. Support from the extended family becomes an important coping strategy for maintaining household stability, particularly when the couple's income is insufficient to cover basic living expenses. Although such support provides short-term benefits, prolonged dependence on extended family assistance may delay the development of household economic independence. Similar circumstances were described by Della Mufti, who explained that financial hardship had characterized her family even before marriage. Consequently, she had become accustomed to helping her parents earn a living. After marriage, little changed because her husband's income also remained unstable, requiring careful household financial management. She stated:

"Our family's financial condition had always been modest. After marriage, we had to manage our money carefully. Whenever we had extra income, we tried to save it, but when earnings were low, we reduced unnecessary expenses. The most important thing was ensuring that our child's needs were always met."

This statement illustrates how young couples develop economic adaptation strategies according to their available resources. Careful financial planning, reducing non-essential expenditures, and prioritizing children's needs represent important adaptive strategies for maintaining household stability. These findings suggest that effective financial management constitutes one of the key indicators of family resilience among couples who marry at a young age. Another informant, Devi Aulia, also explained that economic hardship frequently became a source of stress within her household. According to her, unstable income required both spouses to work harder in order to meet their family's daily needs. She stated.

"The biggest challenge is definitely our financial situation. Sometimes my husband has work, and sometimes he does not. Therefore, we have to understand each other and continue working together so that our family's needs can still be met."

These interview findings indicate that economic limitations influence not only household welfare but also the quality of interactions between husbands and wives. When family needs cannot be adequately fulfilled, couples are required to adapt, communicate effectively, and cooperate in managing their household finances. Such adaptive capacities play an essential role in strengthening the resilience of young families facing economic pressures. The findings of this study are consistent with Chistanti (2023) and Yasin (2024) who reported that low educational attainment restricts access to decent employment, thereby increasing the economic vulnerability of couples who marry at a young age. Likewise Achmad (2024) and Sulandari (2024) argued that economic pressure functions not only as a major factor contributing to early marriage but also as one of the greatest challenges encountered after couples establish their households. Furthermore Nur (2024) emphasized that support from the extended family represents an important form of social capital that enables young couples to cope with financial hardship, although prolonged dependence may hinder the development of household self-reliance.

Marital Harmony

Marital harmony constitutes one of the key indicators of household quality among couples who marry at a young age (Ratnaningsih & Sholihah, 2024). The findings reveal that harmonious family relationships do not develop instantly but emerge through a gradual process of adjustment. Nearly all informants acknowledged that the early years

of marriage were characterized by various challenges related to differences in personality, ways of thinking, communication patterns, and the distribution of household responsibilities. These challenges were further intensified because most couples entered marriage during late adolescence, a developmental stage in which emotional maturity and conflict management skills are still evolving. Nevertheless, as the duration of marriage increased, many couples gradually established more stable relationships through mutual understanding, improved communication, and a stronger commitment to preserving their families.

Sarah Rahmadahni explained that the initial stage of marriage was the most difficult period because she and her husband were still learning to understand each other's personalities. She admitted that differences in perspectives frequently led to misunderstandings, particularly when dealing with financial problems and the division of household responsibilities. She stated:

"At the beginning of our marriage, misunderstandings happened quite often because we were both still very young. Even small problems could become major arguments because we did not yet know how to express our opinions properly. Over time, we gradually learned to understand each other, and now whenever problems arise, we prefer to discuss them calmly."

This statement suggests that conflicts experienced by young married couples are largely associated with the process of adapting to their new roles as husband and wife. Emotional immaturity during the early stage of marriage often causes couples to react impulsively to everyday challenges. However, shared life experiences gradually strengthen their ability to understand one another, resulting in more constructive communication than during the initial years of marriage. A similar experience was described by Della Mufti, who explained that conflicts are inevitable in married life, particularly when the family experiences financial difficulties. Nevertheless, she regarded open communication as the most important factor in maintaining marital harmony. She stated:

"Every marriage has its own problems. The most common issue is financial hardship, especially when my husband's income decreases. However, we try not to blame each other. Whenever there is a problem, we prefer discussing it rather than keeping it to ourselves."

These findings indicate that effective communication serves as essential social capital for strengthening family resilience among young married couples. Open communication enables spouses to express their feelings, identify solutions collaboratively, and minimize the possibility of prolonged conflict. Conversely, ineffective communication may intensify misunderstandings and ultimately reduce marital satisfaction. In addition to communication, the findings demonstrate that economic hardship represents the most common source of conflict within young households. Devi Aulia explained that unstable household income often generated emotional pressure because family needs had to be fulfilled despite uncertain earnings. She stated:

"Whenever our expenses increase while our income is insufficient, we both become more emotional. But after calming down, we always try to find a solution together. I also try to help my husband so that he does not have to carry the burden alone."

This statement illustrates that financial pressure affects not only household welfare but also the quality of interaction between spouses. Economic hardship increases the likelihood of conflict when couples lack effective communication and emotional regulation skills. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that most couples preferred resolving disagreements through discussion, mutual understanding, and shared responsibility, preventing conflicts from escalating into more serious marital problems. Another noteworthy finding concerns the important role of the extended family in helping young couples resolve marital conflicts. Several informants admitted that they continued to seek advice from their parents whenever they encountered problems that they could not resolve independently. This finding suggests that the extended family continues to play a significant role in supporting young households, particularly during the early years of marriage when couples are still developing their problem-solving abilities. This perspective was also expressed by Yurnalis, one of the supporting informants:

"Whenever they have problems, they usually come to their parents and talk about them. We do not interfere too much, but we try to give advice so that they do not make important decisions while they are still emotional."

This finding indicates that the role of the extended family extends beyond financial assistance to include emotional support for young couples adjusting to married life. Guidance provided by parents frequently helps couples identify appropriate solutions to marital conflicts. Nevertheless, such involvement should remain proportional so that couples can gradually develop independence in making household decisions. The findings further demonstrate that couples' conflict-resolution abilities improve as their marriages progress. Several informants explained that living together over time enabled them to better understand each other's personalities, resulting in a gradual decline in the frequency of conflicts. Erika Ulandari stated.

"Compared to the beginning of our marriage, we are much calmer now. We already understand each other's personalities, so whenever problems arise, we no longer become angry immediately. Instead, we discuss them together so that they can be resolved quickly."

This experience demonstrates that marital harmony is the outcome of a continuous learning process. Young couples do not automatically possess the skills required to establish harmonious relationships when entering marriage; rather, these competencies are gradually developed through shared experiences, continuous adaptation, and learning to cope with various family challenges. These findings are consistent with the studies conducted by Junedi (2024) and Sari (2024) which reported that couples who marry at a young age frequently encounter challenges related to emotional regulation because their psychological maturity has not yet fully developed. Their studies further indicate that marital conflicts are commonly triggered by ineffective communication, financial pressure, and inadequate readiness to perform the roles of husband and wife. Likewise, the findings support Putra (2025) who emphasized that interpersonal communication, mutual respect, and collaborative conflict resolution are fundamental factors in maintaining stable marital relationships among young couples. From the perspective of family sociology, these findings suggest that the affective and socialization functions of the family develop gradually through continuous interaction among family members. Accordingly, marital harmony should not be understood merely as the absence of conflict but rather as the couple's ability to cooperate, support one another, and adapt constructively to the various changes and challenges encountered throughout family life

Parenting Practices

Parenting practices represent one of the key dimensions reflecting the quality of household life among couples who marry at a young age (Al-Falah, 2025). The findings indicate that most young couples were still in the process of learning to fulfill their roles as parents. This condition is closely associated with their relatively young age at the time of marriage, which limited their parenting experience and knowledge. Nevertheless, all informants demonstrated an awareness that parenting is a shared responsibility that must be carried out collaboratively to support children's optimal growth and development. Parenthood was understood not only as fulfilling children's physical needs but also as providing affection, attention, and early education. However, the ability of young couples to perform these responsibilities remained strongly influenced by their economic circumstances, educational background, and support received from the surrounding social environment. Sarah Rahmadahni explained that becoming a mother for the first time was a confusing experience because she had no previous childcare experience. Most of her parenting knowledge was obtained from her mother and other family members who had already raised children. She stated:

"When my first child was born, I was completely confused because I had never taken care of a baby before. I asked my mother about almost everything—from bathing the baby and feeding the child to what I should do whenever my child became ill. Gradually, I became more confident because I kept learning little by little."

This statement demonstrates that the transition to parenthood among young married couples occurs through a continuous learning process. Their limited parenting experience makes them highly dependent on guidance from the extended family, particularly their parents. Consequently, the extended family serves as an important source of knowledge, experience, and emotional support during the early stages of child-rearing. A similar experience was reported by Della Mufti. She explained that raising a child became particularly challenging because she had to balance childcare responsibilities with the need to contribute to the family's economic well-being. She stated:

"When a child is still very young, they require constant attention. Sometimes I feel exhausted because I also have to take care of household chores. Nevertheless, I always try to ensure that my child receives sufficient attention. Whenever I am unsure about something, I usually ask my parents for advice."

This statement indicates that young couples face dual responsibilities in fulfilling family functions: providing economic support while simultaneously ensuring adequate childcare. Such circumstances require effective time management, a balanced division of responsibilities, and strong cooperation between husband and wife so that children's needs can be met appropriately. Besides limited parenting experience, economic conditions also influence parenting practices among young couples. Devi Aulia explained that limited household income required her family to prioritize the most essential needs of their child. Despite these financial constraints, she remained committed to providing the necessities according to the family's capabilities. She stated.

"For our child, we always prioritize the most essential needs first, such as milk, food, and eventually school expenses. We cannot fulfill every wish our child has, but we always do our best to ensure that our child never lacks basic necessities.."

This statement illustrates that economic limitations do not diminish young parents' commitment to fulfilling their parental responsibilities. Most couples consistently prioritize their children's fundamental needs despite having to adjust their household expenditures according to their financial circumstances. These findings suggest that parenting quality is determined not only by economic capacity but also by parents' commitment and sense of responsibility toward their children's well-being. The findings further indicate that support from the extended family plays a substantial role in facilitating effective parenting among young couples. Parents of the young couples frequently provided assistance in caring for grandchildren as well as financial support whenever economic difficulties arose. This was confirmed by Yurnalis, one of the supporting informants, who stated.

"Whenever the young couples are still unsure about how to take care of their children, we, as parents, always help them. Sometimes we look after the grandchildren while they are working, and sometimes we teach them how to care for the children properly. They are still young, so naturally they still need guidance."

This statement demonstrates that intergenerational relationships continue to play an essential role in supporting young families. Such support not only reduces the childcare burden experienced by young parents but also facilitates the transfer of parenting knowledge and experience from one generation to the next. Nevertheless, the involvement of the extended family should remain supportive rather than substitutive, enabling young couples to gradually develop independence in performing their parenting responsibilities. Another important finding is that most young couples expressed a strong aspiration for their children to attain a higher level of education than they themselves had achieved. Their personal experiences of marrying at a young age motivated them to ensure that their children would have better educational opportunities and future prospects. Erika Ulandari explained.

"I hope my child can pursue the highest level of education possible. I do not want my child to marry young like I did. I want my child to have dreams first and build a better future."

This statement reflects a meaningful shift in the perspectives of young parents regarding their children's future. Their experiences of early marriage have encouraged them to adopt parenting practices that place greater emphasis on education and long-term human development. These findings suggest that early marriage does not inevitably result in negative parenting outcomes; rather, it may also motivate parents to provide better opportunities and improved living conditions for the next generation. These findings are consistent with those reported by Latifa (2025) and Rahman (2025) who found that couples who marry at a young age often experience limited parenting knowledge and therefore require substantial support from the extended family. Their studies also emphasize that parenting quality is influenced by economic conditions, educational attainment, and parents' psychological readiness. Furthermore, the findings support those of Iwannudin (2025) and Setyawan (2025) who argued that family social capital, particularly support from parents and close relatives, plays a significant role in strengthening parenting practices among young couples. From the perspective of family sociology, these findings indicate that the family's socialization and educational functions are not carried out solely by parents but are collectively shaped through interactions among members of the

extended family. Consequently, children's character development represents a collaborative process in which various family members contribute to the transmission of values, knowledge, and parenting practices across generations.

Implications of Early Marriage from the Perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The findings indicate that early marriage in Sambirejo Timur Village affects not only the lives of the couples involved but also has broader implications for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These implications are evident in the areas of education, health, economic well-being, gender equality, and human resource development. Based on the interview findings, most informants acknowledged that marrying at a young age forced them to discontinue their formal education, thereby limiting their opportunities to obtain better employment in the future. Consequently, this condition also affected their household economic well-being after marriage. These findings suggest that early marriage influences not only individual life trajectories but also has the potential to hinder the achievement of several SDGs, particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) (Saptandari et al., 2025). This finding is reinforced by the experience of Sarah Rahmadahni, who explained that after getting married she no longer had the opportunity to continue her education because she was required to fulfill her responsibilities as a wife and mother. She stated.

"Now my priority is taking care of my household and my child. I once wanted to continue my education, but after getting married it became very difficult because I had to focus on my family."

This statement demonstrates that early marriage directly disrupts adolescents' educational trajectories. The inability to complete formal education restricts opportunities to improve knowledge, develop professional competencies, and enhance competitiveness in the labor market. Consequently, these findings illustrate the close relationship between early marriage and the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education). Educational discontinuation during adolescence not only limits individual capacity development but also affects household productivity and long-term economic mobility. These findings are consistent with the studies of Ashrisnaini (2025) and Islami (2025) which conclude that early marriage contributes to low educational participation and limited social mobility among economically disadvantaged communities. The study also demonstrates that early marriage has significant implications for household economic conditions. The Head of Hamlet IV Anggrek explained that this situation remains common within the local community because most young couples enter the labor market with limited educational qualifications. He stated:

"Once they marry at a young age, they usually take whatever job is available just to earn an income. However, because their education is limited, most of them can only find casual work. As a result, their financial situation remains unstable, and many still depend on support from their families."

These findings indicate that limited educational attainment restricts access to decent and stable employment. Consequently, young married couples become more vulnerable to economic instability, which may perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty. This condition is closely related to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The findings are consistent with (2026) who argues that economic hardship functions not only as a driving force behind early marriage but also as a persistent consequence experienced throughout married life. Another important implication concerns reproductive health and family well-being. Several female informants reported experiencing considerable difficulties during their first pregnancies because of their young age and limited knowledge of reproductive health. In addition, the responsibility of caring for children at an early age generated both physical and psychological exhaustion. Della Mufti explained.

"When I became pregnant for the first time, I was still very young and confused. There were many things I did not understand, so I often asked my parents and the midwife how to take care of my pregnancy and how to care for my baby."

This experience demonstrates that pregnancy during adolescence requires adequate physical, psychological, and social preparedness, as well as continuous support from both family members and healthcare providers. Accordingly, these findings are closely associated with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), which emphasizes the

importance of improving maternal and child health as a fundamental component of sustainable human development. These findings support the studies of Ramadhan (2026) and Mustapa (2026) which reported that pregnancies occurring at a young age involve higher reproductive health risks and therefore require greater attention from families and healthcare professionals.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that early marriage in Sambirejo Timur Village cannot be explained by a single causal factor but rather results from the interaction of multiple social conditions that collectively shape adolescents' decisions to marry at a young age. Economic hardship, limited educational attainment, and the strong influence of the surrounding social environment form a chain of interconnected circumstances that encourage early marriage. These findings indicate that the decision to marry at a young age is not merely an individual choice but also a response to the broader social structures operating within the community. This interpretation reinforces the perspective of Structuration Theory, which argues that individual actions are continuously shaped by rules, norms, and social resources that are reproduced through everyday social interactions. Consequently, the practice of early marriage persists because it has become embedded within the social reality of the community (Chairani & Pertiwi, 2025).

Furthermore, the community's acceptance of early marriage demonstrates that social norms exert a stronger influence than formal regulations governing the minimum legal age for marriage. Although the Indonesian government has increased the minimum legal age for marriage through Law Number 16 of 2019, the findings reveal that cultural values and household economic conditions remain the primary considerations influencing families' decisions regarding marriage. Therefore, the effectiveness of legal regulations depends not only on their implementation but also on the ability of policymakers, educational institutions, community leaders, and families to transform public perceptions regarding the importance of educational attainment, economic readiness, and psychological maturity before marriage. These findings are consistent with the arguments proposed by Alfirdaus (2018) and Situmeang (2021), who explain that practices which have become culturally normalized tend to be reproduced across generations through continuous social interaction, making them difficult to eliminate solely through legal intervention.

From the perspective of family sociology, the findings suggest that early marriage reflects the close interrelationship between family institutions, social environments, and broader societal structures. Decisions to marry at a young age are influenced not only by internal family circumstances but also by economic pressures, prevailing social expectations, and educational opportunities available within the local community. Consequently, efforts to reduce the prevalence of early marriage require a multidimensional approach that extends beyond regulatory enforcement. Such efforts should include improving access to education, strengthening family economic empowerment, expanding reproductive health education, and enhancing community capacity to raise awareness regarding the importance of adequate preparation before marriage. Addressing these interconnected dimensions is particularly important because the findings demonstrate that early marriage is sustained through the combined influence of economic constraints, educational limitations, and deeply rooted social norms. Therefore, comprehensive interventions that simultaneously address these structural factors are more likely to contribute to sustainable reductions in early marriage while strengthening family resilience and supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that early marriage in Sambirejo Timur Village is a social phenomenon that cannot be understood merely as an individual decision but rather as the consequence of the interaction between economic constraints, limited educational attainment, social environmental influences, and cultural norms that continue to legitimize the practice. The findings indicate that the household dynamics of young married couples are shaped by a gradual process of adaptation in performing family functions. Although these couples face various challenges,

particularly in terms of economic limitations and emotional readiness, their ability to establish effective communication, foster spousal cooperation, and utilize support from the extended family serves as important social capital in strengthening family resilience. Therefore, the quality of household life among young married couples is determined not solely by the age at marriage but also by the family's capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and overcome various life challenges.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that early marriage has implications extending beyond the family sphere, as it is closely associated with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to quality education, good health and well-being, gender equality, poverty reduction, and the improvement of human resources. Consequently, efforts to prevent early marriage should not rely exclusively on regulatory approaches but should adopt a multidimensional strategy through strengthening access to education, promoting family economic empowerment, providing premarital counseling services, improving reproductive health education, and enhancing the roles of families and communities in preparing adolescents for marriage. These findings underscore that strengthening family functions constitutes an essential component of sustainable development strategies aimed at improving the quality of life within local communities.

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