

Determinants of Child Marriage Using Ecological Theory: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Indonesia is one of the ten countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Efforts to prevent the practice of child marriage can be done through intervention on the determinants of child marriage. This article aims to examine and explain the factors that influence child marriage referring to ecological theory. The research method used is a literature review. Article searches were conducted on online journal databases found in Pubmed, Proquest, ScienceDirect, and Willey Online Library with the keyword "determinants of child marriage" and published in 2017-2021. The search results of articles discussing the determinants of child marriage found 13 articles that matched the inclusion criteria. The results of the article examination found that individual education and knowledge factors were part of the microsystem, household welfare factors and the attachment of children's relationships with parents were part of the mesosystem, rural living environment factors, social, cultural, and religious norms as an exosystem, and security factors, state, and regulations or laws as part of the macrosystem. The conclusion obtained is that the problem of child marriage is a multidimensional problem including individual, family, community, and state factors.

Keywords

determinants of child marriage;
ecological theory



I. Introduction

Eliminating all harmful practices including child marriage is one of the goals to be achieved in the SDGs (Bappenas, 2017). Child marriage is contrary to the mandate of Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection which states that every child has the right to live, grow, develop, and participate optimally in accordance with human dignity and protection, as well as protection from violence and discrimination. The practice of child marriage violates children's human rights, limits their choices and opportunities, and makes them vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse (UNICEF, 2021).

Based on one study, it was stated that globally, 650 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday. Recent data shows that there is progress in reducing child marriage globally. Based on the latest data available from individual countries, 21 percent of young women (ages 20 to 24) married as children. It represents a decrease from 25 percent 10 years ago (UNICEF, 2018). However, the fact that despite progress, the rate is decreasing should accelerate up to 11 times their current trajectory for the elimination target to be reached by 2030.

Indonesia is one of the ten countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world (Plan International, 2021). The trend of child marriage over the last ten years shows a relatively small achievement of 3.46 percentage points from 14.67 percent in 2008 to 11.21

percent in 2018. If broken down by province, then there are 20 provinces with the percentage of child marriages above the national figure (BPS et al., 2020).

The impact of child marriage is not only experienced by children who will be married but also on the sustainability of development. Some of the other SDG goals will be difficult to accomplish if the rate of child marriage remains high. The goals of the SDGs that will be affected are ending poverty; ending hunger; ensure a healthy life; quality education; gender equality; decent work and economic growth; reduced inequality; and peace, justice, and strong institutions (BPS et al., 2020). Research conducted by Wodon in 2017 concluded that from 18 countries the most dominant impacts of child marriage are fertility, population growth rate, reproductive health, education, labor participation, and investment (Wodon et al., 2017). Other research states that problems caused by child marriage are fertility, maternal and infant mortality, reproductive health and vulnerability to HIV (Chari et al., 2017; Irani & Roudsari, 2019; Kamal & Ulas, 2021; Liang et al., 2019; Onagoruwa & Wodon, 2017; Paul, 2019; Yaya et al., 2019).

Marriage is the process by which two people make their relationship public, official, and permanent. It is the joining of two people in a bond that putatively lasts until death, but in practice is increasingly cut short by divorce. Over the course of a relationship that can last as many as seven or eight decades, a lot happens. Personalities change, bodies age, and romantic love waxes and wanes. And no marriage is free of conflict. What enables a couple to endure is how they handle that conflict. (Jamaluddin, 2018)

One of the efforts to prevent the practice of child marriage is through intervention on the determinants of child marriage. The practice of child marriage cannot be separated from the environment in which children are raised. The ecological theory states that the growth and development of children are influenced by four types of interrelated environments, namely microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems (Ettedal, 2017). For this reason, comprehensive and systematic information is needed regarding the factors that influence child marriage with reference to ecological theory.

Literature review studies that discuss the determinants of child marriage in Indonesia are still limited in number and none of them refer to ecological theory. Research conducted by Fitriani, et al., in 2020 using a literature review concluded that child marriage in Ponorogo was dominated by pregnancy out of wedlock (Linda Fitriani, 2020). Hernawati in 2020 using the literature study method concluded that early marriage was caused by the influence of peers, education, social environment, and parents' income (Hernawati, 2020). Research conducted by Hardianti and Nunung in 2020 through a literature study concluded that the triggering factors for early marriage are culture, parents, economy, education, and factors from within the individual (Hardianti & Nurwati, 2020). Hedo's research in 2020 showed that adolescents who have limited access to information and are in poor families are vulnerable to the practice of child marriage (Hedo, 2020). Research by Bahriyah, et al., in 2021 through the scope review method concluded that early marriage is influenced by the economy, level of education, inadequate implementation of health programs, culture, parents, and religious beliefs (Bahriyah et al. 2021).

There are two formulations of the problem in this research. First, identify the factors that influence child marriage. Second, how these factors are mapped into the four types of environment in the ecological system. To answer the gap between these problems, this article aims to examine and determine matters that refer to the theory of ecological systems. By identifying the determinants of child marriage, it is hoped that it will become a consideration in determining policies related to the prevention of child marriage. So that it can be used as an effort to reduce the prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia.

II. Research Methods

The method in this article uses a literature review. The stages used include tracing, examining, and classifying the determinants of child marriage that refer to ecological theory. The search was carried out on online journal databases, namely PubMed, Proquest, ScienceDirect, and Wiley Online Library. The article search was conducted in July 2021. The criteria for article inclusion were the keywords “determinants of child marriage”, publication range from 2017 to 2021, in English, and openly accessible. Article examination was carried out by examining the relevance of the article to the research topic, examining multiple articles, and examining the determinants of child marriage.

The last step is the determination of child marriage into four types of environment which refers to the theory of ecological systems. Ecological systems theory includes four types of environment, namely microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. The most proximal ecological level is the microsystem which includes the settings in which it interacts directly. Moving at the ecological level Bronfenbrenner is the mesosystem, which involves processes that occur between multiple microsystems in which individuals are embedded. Exosystems “trickle-down” to influence development through other people involved in the individual's life. The outermost system is the macrosystem, which is defined as a comprehensive set of rules and policies (Ettetal, 2017).

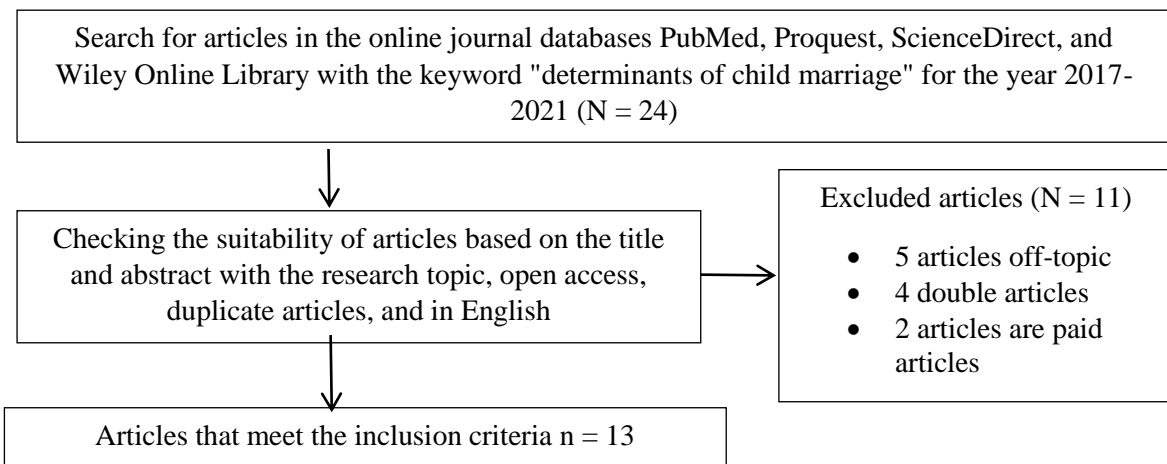


Figure 1. Flowchart of Searching and Checking Articles

III. Result and Discussion

Based on the results of the search and examination of articles, there were thirteen articles that met the inclusion criteria, namely the topic of discussion regarding the determination of children's books, the year published in the 2017-2021 period, in English, and accessible openly. Based on publications, three articles were published in 2018, three articles in 2019, five articles in 2020, and two articles in 2021. Of the thirteen articles, nine articles were quantitative research and four were qualitative articles. Articles with qualitative methods tend to use a smaller number of respondents compared to quantitative methods. However, the results of qualitative research provide information that is more in-depth than quantitative.

Table 1. Review Article

No	Researcher, Year and Title	Method	Results
1	Wibowo, et al. 2021 One household, two worlds: Differences of perception towards child marriage among adolescent children and adults in Indonesia	Quantitative cross section data with 1,004 respondents	The perceptions of parents and adolescents do not differ regarding child marriage. Where, social norms dominate the practice of child marriage both according to parents and children
2	Lebni, et al. 2020 Qualitative study of social determinants of child marriage in Kurdish regions of Iran: Evidence for health promotion interventions	Qualitative with interview techniques to 30 women	The triggers of child marriage are categorized into five groups, namely economic, socio-cultural factors, individual knowledge of reproductive health, family, and access to education.
3	Seth, et al. 2018 Social determinants of child marriage in rural India	Qualitative with case studies	Patriarchy, social norms, as the main factor in the occurrence of child marriage
4	Rumble, et al. 2018 An empirical exploration of female child marriage determinants in Indonesia	Quantitative with a sample of 6,578 women aged 20-24 years	Education, economic welfare, and media exposure have a protective effect on the practice of child marriage. Meanwhile, rural areas are a risk factor for child marriage
5	Kohno, et al. 2020 Investigation of the key factors that influence the girls to enter into child marriage: A meta-synthesis of qualitative evidence	Qualitative literature review	State insecurity and conflict conditions, poverty, law, family values, religious beliefs, individual knowledge, and social norms as determinants of child marriage
6	Mulenga, et al. 2018 Too young to be wife! Analysis of the factors influencing child marriages and its influence on the preferred number of children among women in Zambia	Quantitative with binary logistic analysis method with a sample of 17,064 women aged 15-49 years	Education level and rural area are significant factors influencing child marriage
7	Modak Purnendu. 2019 Determinants of girl-child marriage in high prevalence states in India	Quantitative binary logistic method with a sample size of 125,549 women	Rural residences, education, religion, and caste culture are the triggers for child marriage
8	Zegeye, et al. 2021 Individual/household and community-level factors associated with child marriage in Mali: Evedence from demographic and health survey	Quantitative with binary logistics a sample of 8,350 women 18-49 years	Education level, family size, women's occupation as significant factors influencing child marriage
9	Kohno, et al. 2020 Why girls get marriage early in Sarawak, Malaysia – an exploratory qualitative study	Qualitative with semi-structured interviews on 22 respondents	Risky sexual behavior (premarital sex), poor households, and dropping out of school as triggers for child marriage
10	Muchomba. 2020 Parents' assets and child marriage: Are mother's assets more protective than father's assets	Quantitative with logistic binary to 4,293 women	By increasing the ownership of a mother's assets, it will reduce child marriage, especially in areas where they think that the marriage dowry is income

11	Bhan, et al. 2019 Effect of parent-child relationships on child marriage of girls in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam: Evidence from a prospective cohort	Quantitative with 1,648 samples with multinomial regression analysis method	Girls who have good communication with their parents will have a lower risk of child marriage
12	Rasmussen, et al. 2019 Evaluating the employment benefits of education and targeted interventions to reduce child marriage	Quantitative with time series data	Both intervention through education and family economy are able to jointly suppress child marriage
13	Shakya, et al. 2020 Associations between village-level norms on marital age and marital choice outcomes among adolescent wives in rural Niger	Quantitative with 582 sample	Social norms in rural areas are related to the choice of marriage where adult men will choose teenage girls to marry

The first article concludes that child marriage is due to the perception of parents and children, who married women, are ready to be married. There is a societal norm that girls who are 18 years old but not yet married are considered a burden on the family (Wibowo et al., 2021). The second article concludes that girls and families who enter into child marriage have no consequences related to children. By increasing the awareness of children and families on the impact of marriage and the use of media as a means of disseminating information, it is hoped that it will reduce the prevalence of child marriage (Lebni et al., 2020). The third article shows that especially gender in a patriarchal culture which marginalizes the position of women triggers the occurrence of child marriage (Seth et al., 2018).

The fourth article is the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of child marriage. The strategy proposed in the article is structured handling to prevent child marriage, especially in rural areas (Rumble et al., 2018). The fifth article shows that the determination of child marriage is interrelated and those multi-sectoral interventions are needed to prevent the practice of child marriage (Kohno, Techasrivichien, et al., 2020). The article concludes that women with low education, having premarital sex, and living in rural areas will be more at risk of child marriage (Mulenga et al., 2018).

This article states that girls who come from households with low welfare levels will be vulnerable to child marriage (Modak, 2019). This article recommends that to reduce the prevalence of child marriage is to provide equal opportunities for girls to access education and empower women by involving them in employment (Zegeye et al., 2021). The ninth article emphasizes that the influence of the attachment relationship between adolescent girls and their parents plays a role in preventing child marriage. Providing education and knowledge about sex will protect girls from child marriage (Kohno, Dahlui, et al., 2020).

The article emphasizes economically that the relationship between assets and child marriage depends on the gender of the parents who own the assets. Gender equality related to increasing women's asset ownership and eliminating children shows the realization of the gender targets in the SDGs (Muchomba, 2020). The eleventh article shows that the quality of communication between girls and their parents will protect them from child marriage. The main intervention to prevent child marriage can focus on improving the relationship between parents and children (Bhan et al., 2019). The twelfth article provides recommendations in suppressing the practice of child marriage through economic and educational improvements (Rasmussen et al., 2019). The thirteenth article contains social norms regarding the consequences for women to marry at a young age (Shakya et al., 2020).

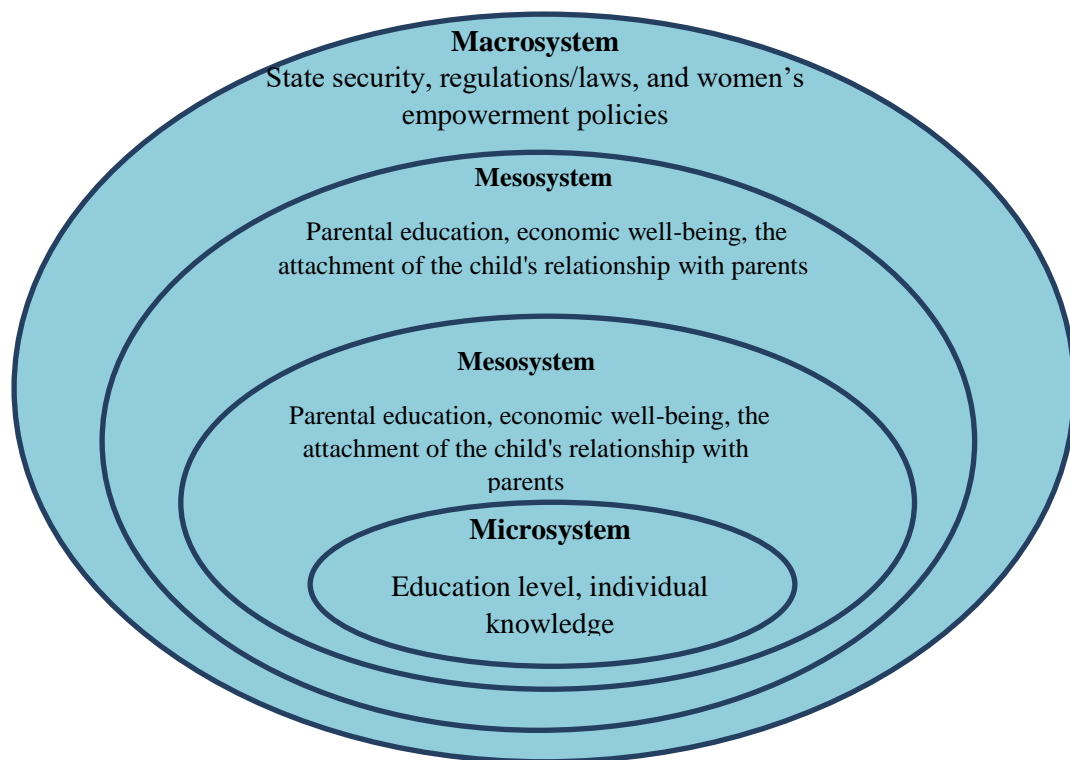


Figure 2. Determinants of Child Marriage in the Framework of Ecological Theory

The results of the synthesis of thirteen articles show that the determinants of child marriage consist of individual, family, community, and state factors. The four factors are in line with the ecological theory, namely microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. Individual factors are microsystems, family factors are mesosystems, community factors are exosystems, and state factors are macrosystems.

In microsystems, it takes strengthening of children to be tough, able to be agents of change, and make decisions for their future. To support this, education, knowledge related to reproductive health, and information on the impact of child marriage are needed. One of the best ways to end child marriage is to send girls to school. By sending girls to school, they will have better opportunities for safety and security, health and education, and can make decisions for themselves (Bank, 2017). Research conducted by UNICEF in 2019 states that one out of two girls does not understand that menstruation is a physical sign that girls can get pregnant causing the high number of child marriages in Bone (NU & UNICEF, 2020). This indicates that knowledge of reproductive health is needed to prevent child marriage.

The mesosystem looks at how the function of the family can affect child marriage. According to the BKKBN, there are eight functions of the family, namely the function of religion, socio-culture, love and affection, protection, reproduction, education, economy, and environmental preservation (BKKBN, 2018). In the case of child marriage, the family economy or the level of household welfare is a factor in child marriage. Poverty and economic insecurity play an important role in child marriage. Parents of daughters see child marriage as a way to maintain and remove the economic burden. For poor households, marrying daughters means they will have fewer household members to feed. Meanwhile, they consider marriage dowries as income for poor households. In addition to family economic factors, namely the function of education and family protection, it is also important to prevent

child marriage with communication and attachment between parents and children so that children are protected from harm.

In the exosystem, look at how social norms, culture, religion, and patriarchal systems affect the practice of child marriage, especially for girls who live in rural areas. There is a misunderstanding regarding the concept of adulthood where the adult size for women is menstruation which is the cause of child marriage. Social and cultural norms that if a girl is not married before the age of 18, she will be a disgrace to the family (NU & UNICEF, 2020). Child marriage is often the result of deep-rooted gender inequality. Child marriage leaves girls disproportionately affected by the practice. Globally, the prevalence of boy marriage is only one-sixth of that of girls. In some communities where the practice of child marriage occurs, girls feel that they have no value compared to boys. Girls are seen as a burden on the family (Plan International, 2020).

The macrosystem is a factor in government policies, laws and regulations, and the security conditions of a country that affect child marriage. The Indonesian government seeks to reduce the prevalence of child marriage by passing Law No. 16 of 2019 as an amendment to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. Changes in the minimum age limit for women who will marry from 16 to 19 years as a concrete step by the government in preventing child marriage. Government policies related to women's empowerment through education and involvement in labor participation can be a strategy in preventing child marriage (Stark, 2018).

IV. Conclusion

The conclusion from this literature review illustrates that child marriage is a complex problem and affects each other in every child's ecological system. Therefore, it requires collaboration between families, communities, and government in a holistic and systematic way. It takes the role of the family, especially parents in carrying out family functions, the community in narrating culture and religion that the ideal marriage is carried out when an adult and the government in implementing regulations and policies related to women's empowerment and socialization about reproductive health and the impact of child marriage.

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