

The Perceptions of Husbands Regarding Early Marriage in Community Settings in Bengkulu, Indonesia: A Case-Control Study

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Abstract

Background: In Bengkulu, Indonesia, husbands' views on early marriage are influenced by cultural norms. Many perceive early marriage as a rite of passage into adulthood, with family and community pressures encouraging them to marry young and assume the responsibility of providing for their families. However, young husbands often struggle to meet the financial and emotional demands of family life. Traditional gender roles further discourage them from seeking help, leading to increased stress. Engaging men in gender equality discussions and offering educational and career opportunities can help reduce the incidence of early marriage and foster healthier relationships.

Objective: This study aims to examine the correlation between husbands' perspectives and early marriage in the community setting of Bengkulu, Indonesia.

Methods: This research employs a quantitative methodology with a case-control study design. Conducted in Bengkulu Province, the study included 892 respondents, divided into two groups: 669 in the case group and 223 in the control group, selected through multistage random sampling. The research was conducted over five months, from February to June 2024. Data were collected using questionnaires, and analysis was carried out through univariate, bivariate, and multivariate tests using Stata 17 as the analytical software.

Results: In the case group, social stigma (COR: 6.4; 95%CI: 1.1-13.4; p-value: 0.0016) was significantly associated with husbands' perspectives. Other significant factors included ethnicity (COR: 6.3; 95%CI: 1.2-10.3; p-value: 0.026), quality of life (COR: 6.2; 95%CI: 2.1-13.2; p-value: 0.001), acceptable health literacy (COR: 5.7; 95%CI: 1.4-9.8; p-value: 0.001), and stress level (COR: 4.9; 95%CI: 1.3-7.9; p-value: 0.011). In the control group, the strongest correlation with husbands' perspectives was stress (COR: 5.8; 95%CI: 2.1-12.5; p-value: 0.021), followed by quality of life (COR: 5.5; 95%CI: 1.2-12.7; p-value: 0.001), ethnicity (COR: 4.6; 95%CI: 1.3-11.2; p-value: 0.0003), moderate health literacy (COR: 4.5; 95%CI: 1.1-9.8; p-value: 0.001), and social stigma (COR: 4.3; 95%CI: 1.1-10.1; p-value: 0.013).

Conclusion: In Bengkulu, Indonesia, young men face significant pressure to marry early due to cultural norms, societal expectations, and economic factors. While these early marriages fulfill traditional roles of providing and protecting, they often result in personal, emotional, and financial challenges for the husbands involved.

Keywords: community; early marriage; husbands' perspectives; social stigma

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Background

Early marriage constitutes a multifaceted societal issue impacting millions globally. It transpires when one or both parties marry prior to reaching the age of 18, frequently resulting in enduring social, economic, and psychological difficulties. The involvement of men in the continuation of early marriage customs is often examined through the perspective of power dynamics across different cultures. To successfully address the root reasons of early marriage, it is crucial to comprehend the motives, problems, and cultural pressures confronting young men (Gastón et al., 2019).

This issue is especially pertinent in areas such as Bengkulu, Indonesia, where early marriage persists due to a confluence of cultural, economic, and social influences. In several civilizations, young males are anticipated to marry early as an emblem of adulthood and duty. This anticipation arises from conventional norms that perceive marriage as a rite of passage, signifying the transition into maturity (Sojais et al., 2023). For young boys, the decision to marry is not merely a personal choice but a manifestation of societal expectations, familial pressures, and cultural conventions. In Bengkulu, similar to other regions globally, a young man who marries at an early age is frequently regarded as completing his obligations to his family and community, thereby gaining respect and asserting his role as a provider. The decision is shaped by personal aspirations as well as familial honor and social standing, with numerous parents urging their sons to marry early to reinforce familial ties or establish relationships with other families (Bakhtiar et al., 2024).

From an economic standpoint, early marriage may appear to be a pragmatic answer in regions characterized by poverty and restricted prospects. In many areas, like as Bengkulu, marriage can provide financial security, particularly due to traditional gender norms that designate men as the principal earners (Sojais et al., 2023). For several young men, marriage serves as a means to ensure their future, especially in rural areas with limited educational or employment opportunities. Nonetheless, the economic burdens linked to early marriage frequently result in considerable difficulties. A considerable number of young men are inadequately equipped for the financial obligations of marriage and family life, especially when they lack the education or technical skills required for steady employment. Consequently, early marriage may perpetuate a cycle of poverty and economic instability (Monirah & Sofyan, 2020).

Although early marriage may provide immediate social and economic advantages, it frequently entails considerable personal sacrifices. Young men who marry prematurely sometimes relinquish prospects for higher education, job progression, and personal growth. Marriage and parental duties may restrict individuals from pursuing further education or professional training, leading to low-wage employment and constrained economic mobility. These challenges may exert enduring impacts on their quality of life (Musthofa & Lutfiah, 2024). Furthermore, the emotional and psychological burden on young husbands is frequently undervalued. A multitude of young male's encounter stress and feelings of inadequacy while attempting to fulfill societal expectations of being providers and guardians. These constraints may inhibit individuals from seeking assistance or revealing vulnerability, so exacerbating mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression (Samandari et al., 2020).

A significant impediment in early marriages is the power disparity that frequently prevails between spouses. Husbands are generally older than their women, resulting in a dynamic where the husband possesses considerable authority in the partnership. This power disparity frequently leads to inequitable decision-making and communication inside the marriage. This relationship can be frustrating for young spouses, especially when they feel ill-equipped for the obligations of marriage (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2023). Women in early marriages may encounter distinct obstacles, grappling with internal conflicts over their roles and marital responsibilities, irrespective of cultural expectations (Ernawati et al., 2022).

Conventional notions of masculinity significantly influence young men's choices regarding early marriage. In Bengkulu, similar to several other cultures, men are anticipated to exhibit strength, self-sufficiency, and leadership within their households (Suyanto et al., 2023). These expectations impose pressure on young men to marry prematurely to exhibit their manhood and assert power within the family. Nonetheless, these inflexible concepts of masculinity can be constraining and detrimental, affecting not only young men but also their families. Societal pressure to comply may inhibit young males from recognizing their vulnerabilities or seeking assistance, resulting in emotional isolation and troubled relationships (Hasoloan & Rozzaqi, 2022).

In some instances, early marriage also entails the supplementary obligation of fatherhood at a youthful age. For young men, the dual responsibilities of parenting and personal development can be daunting, as many feel ill-equipped to meet the challenges of fatherhood. The financial obligations of family support, along with the challenges of young fatherhood, can significantly restrict prospects for personal and professional growth (Maulina & Rejeki, 2024).

To effectively tackle the issue of early marriage, it is essential to understand the viewpoints of the spouses involved and engage young men in initiatives to oppose the trend. Numerous initiatives aimed at mitigating early marriage have predominantly concentrated on young women; nevertheless, omitting men from these discussions may hinder their effectiveness. Initiatives that involve young men in dialogues regarding gender equality, healthy

relationships, and the advantages of postponing marriage can foster more equitable partnerships and diminish the prevalence of early marriage. Initiatives that encourage shared decision-making, effective communication, and mutual respect in marriage help cultivate healthier relationships (Nabila et al., 2022).

Policymakers should also contemplate the involvement of men in early marriage when formulating ways to mitigate its prevalence. Policymakers can mitigate the economic constraints prompting early marriage by offering young men educational and occupational possibilities. Furthermore, advocating for gender equality and contesting conventional concepts of masculinity may motivate young men to postpone marriage until they are adequately equipped for its associated obligations. Social interventions that promote the mental health of young spouses might alleviate the emotional burden of early marriage and foster a supportive atmosphere for young men to articulate their difficulties and seek help (Decha Anggraeni et al., 2024).

In conclusion, early marriage is a profound social issue necessitating a thorough comprehension of the causes affecting both young men and women. While extensive research has been conducted on the implications of early marriage for females, the experiences and viewpoints of young spouses have garnered insufficient focus. This study seeks to analyze the involvement of young men in early marriages in Bengkulu, Indonesia, investigating the societal pressures, economic difficulties, and cultural expectations that influence their choices. Incorporating young men into the dialogue can foster comprehensive strategies to mitigate early marriage and encourage better, more equitable relationships for both genders.

Methods

Study Design

This study employs a case-control approach, differentiating between a rural case group and an urban control group. The research examines independent variables that may affect the husband's viewpoint on early marriage, encompassing education, ethnicity, average income, societal stigma, stress levels, familial support, health literacy, and quality of life. The husband's viewpoint on early marriage functions as the dependent variable. We chose these independent variables based on previous research indicating their possible influence on views toward early marriage. We will analyze the relationship between these variables and the husband's viewpoint to ascertain their predictiveness or correlation with views toward early marriage.

Setting

The study is done in Bengkulu Province, comprising 8 districts and 1 regency: Kaur District, South Bengkulu District, Seluma District, Central Bengkulu District, Kepahiang District, North Bengkulu District, Rejang Lebong District, Mukomuko District, and Bengkulu Regency. The research was conducted from February to June 2024. Fifteen facilitators participated in the study, each holding a master's degree in health and pertinent certificates. Furthermore, eight investigators possessing master's degrees in public health participated, including two who held a CITI certificate in social and behavioral research. The remaining seven enumerators possess master's degrees in nursing.

Participants

The research examines husbands who have engaged in early marriages. We utilized the Lameshow formula to ascertain the requisite sample size, considering a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, culminating in a final sample size of 892 participants. Participants were chosen by multistage random sampling. The sample is divided into two groups at a 3:1 ratio: the case group consists of 669 husbands from rural regions with elevated early marriage rates, whereas the control group comprises 223 husbands from metropolitan areas. To mitigate the potential confounding influence of urban-rural disparities, we posit that the case and control groups, categorized by geographical location, are analogous for socio-economic characteristics. The inclusion criteria for participants are a minimum two-year residency in the research area, literacy, and effective communication skills. Exclusion criteria encompass physical or mental sickness, disability, or refusal to participate, with strategies implemented to address refusals and mitigate selection bias.

Instrument

Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire that encompassed many characteristics, including demographic information (education, ethnicity, income), social stigma, stress levels, familial support, health literacy, quality of life, and the husband's viewpoint on early marriage.

The Social Stigma Questionnaire comprises 15 items evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, dislike = 2, strongly disagree = 1). The Stress Level Questionnaire employs the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), consisting of 10 items assessed on a Likert scale from 1 (never) to 2 (almost never). The Family Support Questionnaire comprises 17 items, evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1). The Health Literacy Questionnaire, derived from the European Health Literacy Survey (HSL-EU), comprises 47 items evaluated on a Likert scale (very difficult = 1, tough = 2, simple = 3, plain = 4). The WHOQOL framework underpins the Quality of Life Questionnaire, with 47 items. The Husband's Perspective on

Early Marriage Questionnaire comprises 27 items, evaluated using a Likert scale (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1).

The instruments underwent stringent validation and reliability assessments. The Cronbach's alpha for the total questionnaire was determined to be 0.9831, signifying exceptional internal consistency. Moreover, validity assessments, encompassing expert evaluations and pilot testing, confirmed the instruments' suitability for the intended population.

Data analysis

We conducted normality and homogeneity tests before performing data analysis. We evaluated normality by the Shapiro-Wilk test, which indicated a normal distribution of the data with a p-value exceeding 0.05. Levene's test validated the homogeneity of variance among groups, with a p-value over 0.05. The results prompted the choice of logistic regression as the principal analytical technique for both bivariate and multivariate analysis. Logistic regression is suitable for this investigation since the dependent variable (the husband's viewpoint on early marriage) is categorical. The analysis will examine the correlations between independent factors and the dependent variable.

Ethical consideration

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Science of Dehasen University, Bengkulu Province, issued ethical permission (permission Number: 0138/D-KEPK/FD/12/2023). We secured informed consent from all participants, guaranteeing confidentiality via secure data storage and anonymization protocols. We meticulously ensured that the informed consent process was transparent, considering the sensitive nature of the subject, and all participants were fully cognizant of their right to withdraw at any moment. Furthermore, we mitigated participant risks by providing access to psychological support as necessary.

Result

Univariate Test

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondent Characteristics

| Characteristics | Case group | | Control group | |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Education | | | | |
| Higher | 65 | 9.71 | 85 | 38.11 |
| Middle | 179 | 26.76 | 40 | 17.94 |
| Lower | 425 | 63.53 | 98 | 43.95 |
| Ethnic | | | | |
| Nonlocal ethnic | 239 | 35.72 | 98 | 43.95 |
| Local ethnic | 430 | 64.28 | 125 | 56.05 |
| Average income | | | | |
| ≥ The regional minimum wage | 211 | 31.54 | 101 | 45.29 |
| < The regional minimum wage | 458 | 68.46 | 122 | 54.71 |
| Social Stigma | | | | |
| Negative | 234 | 34.98 | 95 | 42.61 |
| Positive | 435 | 65.02 | 128 | 57.39 |
| Stress Level | | | | |
| Low | 219 | 32.74 | 90 | 40.36 |
| Medium | 450 | 67.26 | 133 | 59.64 |
| Family support | | | | |
| Not support | 243 | 36.32 | 99 | 44.40 |
| Support | 426 | 63.68 | 124 | 56.60 |
| Health literacy | | | | |
| Good | 89 | 13.30 | 85 | 38.12 |
| Enough | 137 | 20.48 | 55 | 24.66 |
| Not good | 443 | 66.22 | 83 | 47.22 |
| Quality of life | | | | |
| High | 227 | 33.93 | 93 | 41.70 |
| Low | 442 | 66.07 | 130 | 53.30 |
| Husband's Perspective | | | | |
| Negative | 221 | 33.03 | 89 | 39.91 |
| Positive | 448 | 66.97 | 134 | 60.09 |
| Total | 669 | 100 | 223 | 100 |

Table 1 indicates that, within the case group, over fifty percent of respondents possessed low educational attainment, were predominantly local tribes, had average incomes below the regional minimum wage, experienced

community stigma favouring early marriage, exhibited moderate stress levels, had families endorsing early marriage, demonstrated inadequate health literacy, reported poor quality of life, and maintained a favourable view of early marriage. In the control group, nearly fifty percent of respondents possessed low educational attainment, over fifty percent belonged to local tribes, more than fifty percent earned below the regional minimum wage, over fifty percent exhibited favourable community attitudes towards early marriage, more than fifty percent experienced moderate stress, over fifty percent had familial support for early marriage, more than fifty percent demonstrated inadequate health literacy, over fifty percent reported a low quality of life, and more than fifty percent held a positive view of early marriage.

Table 2 indicates that in the case group, social stigma (COR: 6.4; 95% CI: 1.1-13.4; p-value: 0.0016) exhibited a significant association with the husband's perspective. This was succeeded by ethnicity (COR: 6.3; 95% CI: 1.2-10.32; p-value: 0.026), quality of life (COR: 6.2; 95% CI: 2.1-13.2; p-value: 0.001), acceptable health literacy (COR: 5.7; 95% CI: 1.4-9.8; p-value: 0.001), and stress level (COR: 4.9; 95% CI: 1.3-7.9; p-value: 0.011). The control group exhibiting a predominant relationship with the husband's perspective includes stress (COR: 5.8; 95%CI: 2.1-12.5; p-value: 0.021), followed by quality of life (COR: 5.5; 95%CI: 1.2-12.7; p-value: 0.001), ethnicity (COR: 4.6; 95%CI: 1.3-11.2; p-value: 0.0003), moderate health literacy (COR: 4.5; 95%CI: 1.1-9.8; p-value: 0.001), and social stigma (COR: 4.3; 95%CI: 1.1-10.1; p-value: 0.013).

Multivariate Test

Table 2. Relationship between independent variables and Husband's Perspective of Early Marriage

| Variable | Case | | | | | | | Control | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|-----|-----------|---------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|-----|-----------|---------|
| | Positive Perspective | | Negative Perspective | | COR | 95%CI | p-value | Positive Perspective | | Negative Perspective | | COR | 95%CI | p-value |
| | n | % | n | % | | | | n | % | n | % | | | |
| Education | | | | | | | 0.001 | | | | | | | 0.012 |
| Higher | 15 | 23.08 | 50 | 76.92 | | | | 35 | 41.18 | 50 | 58.85 | | | |
| Middle | 121 | 67.60 | 58 | 32.40 | 4.7 | 1.6-7.8 | | 19 | 47.5 | 21 | 52.5 | 3.2 | 1.1- 6.7 | |
| Lower | 312 | 73.41 | 113 | 26.59 | 5.1 | 1.1-10.3 | | 80 | 81.63 | 18 | 18.37 | 4.2 | 1.3-9.8 | |
| Ethnic | | | | | | | 0.026 | | | | | | | 0.0003 |
| Nonlocal ethnic | 127 | 53.14 | 112 | 46.86 | | | | 52 | 53.06 | 46 | 43.94 | | | |
| Local ethnic | 321 | 76.65 | 109 | 23.35 | 6.3 | 1.2-10.32 | | 82 | 65.5 | 43 | 34.5 | 4.6 | 1.3- 11.2 | - |
| Average income | | | | | | | 0.0031 | | | | | | | 0.0012 |
| ≥ The regional minimum wage | 110 | 52.13 | 101 | 47.87 | | | | 56 | 62.92 | 33 | 37.08 | | | |
| < The regional minimum wage | 338 | 73.80 | 120 | 26.60 | 4.3 | 1.1-6.9 | | 78 | 58.21 | 56 | 41.79 | 3.1 | 1.3- 8.7 | |
| Social Stigma | | | | | | | 0.0016 | | | | | | | 0.013 |
| Negative | 131 | 55.98 | 103 | 44.02 | | | | 43 | 48.31 | 46 | 51.69 | | | |
| Positive | 317 | 72.87 | 118 | 27.13 | 6.4 | 1.1- 13.4 | - | 91 | 67.91 | 43 | 32.09 | 4.3 | 1.1- 10.1 | - |
| Stress Level | | | | | | | 0.011 | | | | | | | 0.021 |
| Low | 127 | 57.99 | 92 | 42.01 | | | | 34 | 38.20 | 55 | 61.98 | | | |
| Medium | 321 | 71.33 | 129 | 28.67 | 4.9 | 1.3- 7.9 | | 100 | 74.63 | 34 | 25.37 | 5.8 | 2.1- 12.5 | - |
| Family support | | | | | | | 0.0002 | | | | | | | 0.003 |
| Not support | 109 | 44.86 | 134 | 55.14 | | | | 39 | 43.82 | 50 | 56.18 | | | |
| Support | 339 | 79.56 | 87 | 20.44 | 4.5 | 1.3-8.3 | | 95 | 70.90 | 39 | 29.10 | 3.7 | 1.1-7.8 | |
| Health literacy | | | | | | | 0.001 | | | | | | | 0.001 |
| Good | 64 | 71.91 | 25 | 28.09 | | | | 30 | 35.29 | 55 | 64.71 | | | |
| Enough | 108 | 78.83 | 29 | 21.17 | 5.7 | 1.4-9.8 | | 27 | 49.09 | 28 | 50.91 | 4.5 | 1.1-9.8 | |
| Not good | 276 | 62.30 | 167 | 37.70 | 2.1 | 1.1-5.8 | | 77 | 92.77 | 6 | 7.23 | 2.1 | 1.1-4.7 | |
| Quality of life | | | | | | | 0.001 | | | | | | | 0.001 |
| High | 123 | 54.19 | 104 | 45.81 | | | | 41 | 46.07 | 48 | 53.93 | | | |
| Low | 325 | 73.53 | 117 | 26.47 | 6.2 | 2.1-13.2 | | 93 | 69.40 | 41 | 40.60 | 5.5 | 1.2-12.7 | |

Dicussion

Early marriage is a widespread problem all across the world, and it is frequently brought to attention because of the impact it has on young girls and women. On the other hand, the viewpoint of spouses who are involved in these marriages is not addressed as frequently, despite the fact that it is equally significant. In order to have a complete understanding of the full spectrum of this practice, it is essential to have an understanding of the reasons why men enter into early marriages, the pressures they face, and the problems they confront. An investigation of the viewpoint of the spouse can provide a more comprehensive strategy for resolving the issue of early marriage in areas such as

Bengkulu, Indonesia (Sojais et al., 2023), where cultural and socioeconomic variables play a significant role in the decision-making process regarding marriage (Wibowo et al., 2021).

A significant number of traditional countries have well ingrained cultural norms and societal expectations that encourage young males to get married at a young age. When it comes to husbands in locations like Bengkulu, getting married at a young age is frequently regarded as a sign of maturity and responsibility. As soon as they reach the age of majority, men are expected to take on the responsibilities of being the primary breadwinner, protector, and head of the household. Having this expectation is not merely a matter of personal choice; rather, it is a societal obligation (Shakya et al., 2020). The young men in question view marriage as a means of demonstrating their maturity and living up to the expectations of their families and communities of origin. The importance of family honour cannot be overstated in relation to these cultural norms. There are several instances in which parents encourage their sons to get married at a young age in order to establish connections amongst families or to preserve the reputation of their family. Additional reinforcement of this expectation may come from the pressure exerted by members of the extended family. Because of this, young men feel obligated to get married, not necessarily because they are ready to do so on their own, but rather because of the pressure that society puts on them to conform to these cultural norms (Susilo et al., 2021).

A significant amount of the decision for young men to get married at a young age is highly influenced not just by cultural reasons but also by economic pressures. Opportunities for education and work are scarce in rural areas of Indonesia, including Bengkulu, according to the Indonesian government. There are a lot of young guys who believe that getting married at a young age is a solution to their financial problems (Sojais et al., 2023). According to their point of view, getting married at a young age may provide immediate economic benefits by allowing families to combine their resources or by lessening the financial stress that the family is under. Having said that, this economic drive frequently comes with difficulties that last for a long time. Young husbands usually discover that they are unprepared for the financial responsibilities that come with marriage, particularly when they do not have a steady employment situation (Suyanto & Wirawan, 2024). The fact that many of these young men have limited educational possibilities and are unable to find professions that pay well contributes to the economic instability that exists within the institution of marriage. This financial burden can, over time, cause tension and conflict within the relationship, further entrenching the couple in cycles of poverty and more cementing their position in the cycle (Banlanjo, 2022).

A husbands who were get married at an early age may experience substantial limitations on their personal and professional development. Despite the fact that they may be forced into marriage by cultural and economic considerations, the human cost is frequently quite significant. Men who get married at a young age frequently miss out on opportunities to further their education and enhance their careers (Angkasa, 2021). They are unable to seek higher education or vocational training because they are burdened with the responsibility of sustaining a family, which can lead to their being trapped in low-paying occupations or informal sectors of the working economy. Getting married at a young age can not only interfere with one's professional potential but also hinder one's personal growth. Because they are thrown into the demanding responsibilities of provider and parent at a time when they are still navigating their own personal growth, young husbands may miss out on the opportunity to explore their identities and objectives. There is a possibility that they will miss out on this opportunity. As a result, individuals may experience feelings of frustration and discontent as they come to terms with the compromises, they have made in order to achieve the expectations of society (Pourtaheri et al., 2023).

The imbalance of power that exists between husbands and wives is one of the distinguishing aspects of early marriage. This is especially true when there is a considerable age gap between the marriage partners. A significant number of the time, husbands who are in early marriages are significantly older than their wives, which can lead to an imbalance of power in terms of decision-making within the relationship (Basazinewu, 2018). Men are expected to be the dominating figure in the household, with the responsibility of making important choices and managing the resources of the family, according to the traditional gender norms. At first glance, this dynamic could appear to be advantageous for the spouse; nonetheless, it frequently results in obstacles that are difficult to overcome. One of the potential sources of stress in a marriage is the obligation of maintaining power within the marriage. This is especially true in situations where the young husband does not have the necessary experience or understanding to negotiate the complexity of married life. The relationship may also be put under strain as a result of this power imbalance since there may be a lack of communication and mutual respect between the partners, which can result in feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction for both parties (Hussein et al., 2023).

Another important factor that should be taken into consideration is the psychological and emotional impact that getting married at a young age has on young, married men. A great number of young men get married without having a complete knowledge of the mental and emotional problems that they will experience in their marriage. A substantial amount of stress can be caused by the pressure that women feel to provide for their family, to fulfil the expectations of their culture, and to preserve their authority within the household. On the other hand, societal

standards that place an emphasis on manly stoicism can inhibit spouses from seeking assistance or acknowledging the difficulties they are experiencing (Wells et al., 2022). Despite the fact that young spouses in early marriages frequently experience mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and emotional burnout, these issues are frequently not addressed because of the stigma that surrounds them. Men may be discouraged from seeking support or addressing their emotional issues because of the notion that they should be able to withstand adversity and remain emotionally detached. Over the course of time, this might result in long-term psychological anguish, which may have an impact on the husband's capacity to maintain healthy connections with his wife and children (Escaño et al., 2022).

The responsibilities that come with becoming a father are another important component that plays a role in shaping the experiences of spouses in early marriages. A big responsibility, the raising of children can be an overwhelming load for young men who are still navigating their own personal growth. This is especially true for young men who are in their teenage years (Saleh et al., 2022). A significant number of young spouses discover that they are neither emotionally nor financially ready to meet the challenges that come with becoming parents. The additional financial load of raising children while also providing for a wife might make the difficulties that these young husbands are already experiencing much more difficult. The need to provide for the family, in conjunction with the difficulties of raising children, can put a strain on the marriage and further restrict the husband's ability to seek personal and professional development. In many instances, young husbands find themselves in a position where they are unable to successfully combine their roles as providers and fathers, which can result in feelings of inadequacy and stress (Edmeades et al., 2022).

In early marriages, the experiences of young husbands are significantly influenced by traditional conceptions of masculinity. This is especially true for younger husbands. The expectation that men should exhibit characteristics such as strength, independence, and authority is prevalent in many cultures, including the Bengkulu culture. Because of these rigid gender norms, young men may find it difficult to communicate their vulnerability or to seek assistance when they are experiencing difficulties. For the purpose of fostering stronger relationships among early marriages, it is vital to reframe the concept of masculinity so that it include characteristics such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and partnership. By encouraging husbands to perceive marriage as a partnership rather than a hierarchical structure, it is possible to help lessen the power imbalances that are frequently associated with early marriages. We can make it possible for men to express their feelings, seek support, and develop more equitable relationships with their spouses if we challenge the traditional gender conventions that have been established (Gastón et al., 2019).

In order to effectively address the issue of early marriage, a comprehensive approach that involves both young men and women is required. The empowerment of young women has been the sole focus of many programmes that have been designed to reduce the number of marriages that occur at a young age; however, the exclusion of men from the conversation reduces the effectiveness of these efforts. Young men should be encouraged to participate in conversations on gender equality, healthy relationships, and the advantages of delaying marriage in order to assist in challenging the social norms that continue to encourage early marriage. It is also possible for educational and vocational programmes that are geared towards young men to play a significant part in lowering the rate of early marriage (Edmeades et al., 2022). The economic pressures that lead to early marriage can be alleviated through the implementation of these treatments, which involve providing young men with the skills and opportunity necessary to pursue employment. In addition, programmes that raise awareness about mental health and provide emotional support to young husbands can assist them in navigating the problems that come with getting married at a young age and aid them in developing relationships with their wives that are healthier and more equal (Misunas et al., 2019). When it comes to tackling the issue of early marriage, policymakers need to acknowledge the significance of the husband's point of view. It is possible to contribute to the development of more sustainable solutions by developing comprehensive programmes that target both young men and young women. Young husbands can be empowered to make informed decisions regarding marriage and family life if they are provided with educational possibilities, opportunity to expand their careers, and assistance for their mental health. Furthermore, the societal norms that continue to support the practice of early marriage can be challenged by promoting gender equality through public campaigns and increased community engagement (Cordova-Pozo et al., 2023).

In order to handle the problem of early marriage in a way that is both holistic and effective, it is vital to have a good understanding of the perspective of the husband. Young men are also profoundly impacted by the societal pressures and expectations that are the driving force behind the practice of early marriage, despite the fact that young girls and women are typically seen to be the primary victims of this practice. We can build more inclusive methods that promote healthier, more equitable relationships and help lower the prevalence of early marriage if we investigate the motives, problems, and experiences of husbands. This will allow us to develop strategies that are more inclusive (Mrema et al., 2023). Young men will not only gain from participating in efforts to delay marriage and promote gender equality, but they will also contribute to greater social and economic improvement if they are active participants in these activities. In order to break the cycle of poverty and inequality that early marriage perpetuates, it is vital to

include both genders in the debate. This will help reduce the occurrence of early marriage. We may create a future in which early marriage is no longer considered a required or desirable option by empowering young men and women to make educated decisions about marriage and challenging damaging social conventions. This will allow us to create a future in which early marriage occurs (van Daalen et al., 2022). The findings were conducted only in the Bengkulu region and cannot be generalized, so this is a limitation of our research.

Conclusion

Understanding husbands' perspectives on the issue of early marriage in Bengkulu, Indonesia, can improve the quality of life for young men who are often forced into early marriage due to cultural expectations, societal pressures, and economic reasons. While marriage is seen as a means of fulfilling traditional responsibilities as providers and protectors, it is often accompanied by significant personal, emotional, and financial problems for the husbands involved. Men may experience feelings of stress, dissatisfaction, and inadequacy as the expectations placed on them in the married couple (maintaining power, providing for the family, and upholding the family's honor) become a psychological burden. Another factor contributing to long-term mental health problems is the prevalence of conventional gender norms that encourage stoicism and emotional resilience in men. These standards prevent many young couples from seeking help or expressing vulnerability, which in turn contributes to the problem. There is a need for therapies that involve men in programs to promote gender equality programs aimed at reducing the number of marriages. Supporting the mental health of young husbands through support and counseling services that are tailored to their needs is urgently needed and needs to be supported by the government.

Conflict of interests

No conflicts of interest.

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All authors participated in this research. JS and SS were responsible for design, conceptualisation, and field investigations. SA, RI, and ALP performed the literature review. NRP, MID, and LS authored the document. ST and DBP performed the data analysis.

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