



## The Influence of Peer Group Education on Adolescents' Knowledge of Early Marriage

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### ABSTRACT

Early marriage remains a public health issue with negative impacts on adolescents, particularly in terms of reproductive health, education, and social well-being. Preventing early marriage requires effective educational strategies tailored to the characteristics of adolescents. This study aims to analyze the effect of peer group education on increasing adolescents' knowledge about early marriage. A quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group approach was used, conducted in Borongloe Subdistrict, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency. The sample consisted of 100 adolescents aged 15–18 years, divided equally into intervention and control groups, with 50 participants each. The intervention was carried out through peer group discussions facilitated by trained peer educators, covering materials on reproductive health and the impacts of early marriage. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires and analyzed using the Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney tests. The results showed a significant increase in knowledge in the intervention group compared to the control group. These findings indicate that peer group education is an effective and inclusive method that can enhance adolescents' understanding of the risks of early marriage. Peer group education is recommended as an intervention strategy in child marriage prevention programs, especially in areas with strong social norms.

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### INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is a global social issue that remains a serious concern, particularly due to its impact on the reproductive health, education, and social well-being of adolescent girls. According to a 2021 UNICEF report, around 12 million girls worldwide are married before the age of 18 every year (Nur 2024). The World Health Organization (WHO) also emphasizes that child marriage increases the risk of pregnancy and childbirth complications, as well as contributes to higher maternal and infant mortality rates (UNICEF, 2021). South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Nepal report the highest prevalence, indicating that this phenomenon is deeply rooted in cultural and social factors (UNICEF, 2021).

In Indonesia, child marriage remains a significant challenge in the protection of children's rights and the development of sustainable human resources. Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2020 indicated that approximately 11% of women aged 20–24 were married before the age of 18. This situation has a substantial impact on adolescent health, limited access to education, and the increase in structural poverty. Various policies have been implemented, including raising the legal minimum age of marriage through Law No. 16 of 2019. However, implementation at the local level continues to face major obstacles, particularly in areas where social norms still permit such practices. In South Sulawesi Province, the rate of child marriage remains high. According to data from the South Sulawesi Office for Women Empowerment and Child Protection in 2022, around 15% of adolescent girls were married before the age of 18. Gowa Regency is one of the areas with a concerning prevalence of early marriage. BPS Gowa data from 2024 shows that the proportion of child marriage remains significant, with a spike in cases during the COVID-19 pandemic.(Hasbi,2019) This increase was particularly evident in villages such as Malakaji and Paranglompoo, which reported high school dropout rates due to early marriage.(Juwita.etc,2024)

Several factors contribute to the high rate of child marriage in Gowa, including low levels of education, poor family economic conditions, and deeply rooted social norms. Previous research in Borongloe Urban Village, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency, revealed that early marriage correlates with low education levels and increased risk of child stunting (10). However, there is still a lack of studies specifically evaluating the effectiveness of educational interventions in this area. One promising educational approach is the peer group education method. This method focuses on empowering adolescents through peer discussions to communicate information about reproductive health and the risks of early marriage in a more contextual and interactive manner. Several studies have shown that peer group interventions can significantly improve adolescents' knowledge and attitudes. Group discussions offer a safe space for young people to talk about sensitive issues and strengthen their decision-making capacities(Ouyang.etc,2023) However, to date, few studies have specifically explored the implementation of this method in Gowa Regency, which has its own unique socio-cultural characteristics. This study aims to examine the influence of peer group education on adolescents' knowledge regarding the risks of child marriage in Gowa Regency. It is expected to fill the gap in previous research and contribute to the development of more effective and context-based educational intervention strategies.

## METHODS

This study is quantitative research with a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design, conducted in Borongloe Urban Village, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, from January to March 2025. The sample consisted of 100 adolescents aged 15–18 years, selected purposively and divided into two groups: 50 in the intervention group and 50 in the control group. The intervention involved reproductive health education delivered through peer group discussions, facilitated by trained peer educators using a module developed based on relevant literature and national guidelines. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire, administered before and after the intervention. Data analysis was performed using the Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney tests, and the results are presented in a descriptive narrative format.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Characteristics

| Karakteristik         |                                           | Kontrol |    | Intervensi |    |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|----|------------|----|
|                       |                                           | N       | %  | N          | %  |
| Usia                  | 15 Tahun                                  | 10      | 20 | 9          | 18 |
|                       | 16 tahun                                  | 15      | 30 | 14         | 28 |
|                       | 17 Tahun                                  | 17      | 34 | 18         | 36 |
|                       | 18 Tahun                                  | 8       | 16 | 9          | 18 |
| Jenis Kelamin         | Laki-laki                                 | 12      | 24 | 15         | 30 |
|                       | Perempuan                                 | 38      | 76 | 35         | 70 |
| Pendidikan Orang tua  | Tidak Sekolah                             | 3       | 6  | 2          | 4  |
|                       | Tamat SD                                  | 6       | 12 | 7          | 14 |
|                       | SMP/Sederajat                             | 26      | 52 | 22         | 44 |
|                       | SMA/Sederajat                             | 13      | 26 | 18         | 36 |
|                       | Perguruan Tinggi                          | 2       | 4  | 1          | 2  |
| Pekerjaan Orang tua   | Tidak bekerja                             | 6       | 12 | 2          | 4  |
|                       | Buruh/kuli/pekerja tidak tetap            | 29      | 58 | 30         | 60 |
|                       | Pegawai swasta/pedagang kecil/ojek        | 14      | 28 | 14         | 28 |
|                       | Pegawai negeri/wiraswasta mapan/pengusaha | 1       | 2  | 4          | 8  |
| Penghasilan Orang tua | < Rp1.000.000                             | 22      | 44 | 18         | 36 |
|                       | Rp1.000.000 – Rp2.999.999                 | 19      | 38 | 21         | 42 |
|                       | Rp3.000.000 – Rp4.999.999                 | 7       | 14 | 7          | 14 |
|                       | Rp5.000.000                               | 2       | 4  | 4          | 8  |
| Kepemilikan Rumah     | Tidak memiliki (menumpang/sewa)           | 2       | 4  | 12         | 24 |
|                       | Rumah kontrak/kos tanpa sertifikat        | 10      | 20 | 6          | 12 |
|                       | Rumah milik sendiri (belum bersertifikat) | 12      | 24 | 17         | 34 |
|                       | Rumah milik sendiri (dengan sertifikat)   | 26      | 52 | 15         | 30 |

A total of 100 adolescents aged 15–18 years participated in this study, proportionally divided into two groups, with 50 respondents in each group. The majority of respondents were aged 16–17 years and predominantly female in both the control and intervention groups. Most parents had a low level of education, with the majority having completed only junior high school, and were primarily employed in the informal sector. Household income was largely below IDR 1,000,000 per month, indicating a low economic status. Home ownership status varied, with most respondents living in their own homes, whether officially certified or not, reflecting a diverse yet vulnerable socioeconomic background.

### Description of Adolescents' Knowledge Data Before and After Peer Group Education

Table 2. Distribution of Adolescents' Knowledge Data Before and After Peer Group Education

| Tingkat Pengetahuan Remaja | intervensi     |    |                 |     | Kontrol        |    |                 |    |
|----------------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|-----|----------------|----|-----------------|----|
|                            | Pretest (n=50) | %  | Posttest (n=50) | %   | Pretest (n=50) | %  | Posttest (n=50) | %  |
| Baik                       | 0              | 0  | 50              | 100 | 0              | 0  | 0               | 0  |
| Cukup                      | 17             | 34 | 0               | 0   | 21             | 42 | 35              | 70 |
| Kurang                     | 33             | 66 | 0               | 0   | 29             | 58 | 15              | 30 |

The results and discussion should be presented in the same part, clearly and briefly. The discussion part should contain the benefit of the research result, not the repeat result part. The

results and discussion part can be written in the same part to avoid the extensive quotation. Tables or graphs must present different results. The results of data analysis must be reliable in answering research problems. References to the discussion should not repeat the references in the introduction. Comparisons to the findings of previous studies must be included.

The analysis of knowledge level distribution revealed a significant improvement in the intervention group after receiving peer group education. All respondents (100%) shifted to the “good” knowledge category, compared to the pre-test where the majority (66%) were in the “poor” category. In contrast, the control group showed only limited improvement, with 70% of respondents reaching the “fair” category in the post-test, but none achieving the “good” category. These findings highlight the effectiveness of the educational intervention in substantially enhancing adolescents’ understanding, as opposed to natural changes without intervention.

### Statistical Test of the Effect of Peer Group Education on Adolescents’ Knowledge

#### Normality Test

Table 3 Normality Test

| Variabel                     | Statistik K-S | N  | Sig. (p-value) |
|------------------------------|---------------|----|----------------|
| Pretest Kelompok Intervensi  | 0.079         | 50 | 0.200*         |
| Posttest Kelompok Intervensi | 0.120         | 50 | 0.070          |
| Pretest Kelompok Kontrol     | 0.172         | 50 | 0.001          |
| Posttest Kelompok Kontrol    | 0.100         | 50 | 0.200*         |

Data normality tests were conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors correction to determine whether the data were normally distributed as a prerequisite for parametric testing. The test results showed that several variables, particularly the pretest for the control group ( $p = 0.001$ ) and the posttest for the intervention group ( $p = 0.070$ ), had a significance value  $\leq 0.05$ , indicating that the data were not normally distributed.

#### Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to examine differences in knowledge before and after the intervention within the intervention group (pre-test vs. post-test). This test is a non-parametric alternative to the paired t-test, applied when the data are not normally distributed and involve paired or dependent samples.

Table 4 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

| Ranks                                        |                | N               | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Kelompok Intervensi -<br>Kelompok Intervensi | Negative Ranks | 0 <sup>a</sup>  | .00       | .00          |
|                                              | Positive Ranks | 50 <sup>b</sup> | 25.50     | 1275.00      |
|                                              | Ties           | 0 <sup>c</sup>  |           |              |
|                                              | Total          | 50              |           |              |
| a. Kelompok Intervensi < Kelompok Intervensi |                |                 |           |              |
| b. Kelompok Intervensi > Kelompok Intervensi |                |                 |           |              |
| c. Kelompok Intervensi = Kelompok Intervensi |                |                 |           |              |

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, all 50 respondents in the intervention group (100%) showed an increase in knowledge scores after receiving the peer group education intervention. This was reflected in 50 positive ranks, 0 negative ranks, and no ties (no unchanged scores). The mean rank was 25.50, with a sum of ranks of 1275.00.

These results indicate that none of the respondents experienced a decline or stagnation in knowledge, and all improvements occurred consistently and evenly across the group. Statistically, the Wilcoxon test produced a p-value of  $< 0.001$ , which is well below the 0.05 significance threshold. This suggests that the observed increase in knowledge was not due to chance, but rather represents a real effect of the intervention.

These findings clearly support the conclusion that peer group education has a significant impact on improving adolescents' knowledge regarding early marriage.

### Mann-Whitney U Test

Table 5. Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test

| Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>   |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
|                                | Hasil    |
| Mann-Whitney U                 | 650.000  |
| Wilcoxon W                     | 1925.000 |
| Z                              | -4.146   |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000     |
| a. Grouping Variable: Kelompok |          |

The test results showed a U value of 650.000 and a Z statistic of -4.146, with a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a highly significant difference in adolescents' knowledge levels between the intervention and control groups after the intervention. These findings indicate that the knowledge level of adolescents who received peer group education was significantly higher than that of those who did not receive the intervention. This result highlights the important role of peer group education in enhancing adolescents' understanding of early marriage.

### Analysis of Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Peer Group Education Parental Education and Parental Occupation

Table 6. Chi-Square Test of Parental Education and Occupation

#### Chi-Square Tests

|                              | Value               | df | Asymptotic<br>Significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 12.191 <sup>a</sup> | 12 | .430                                 |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 12.872              | 12 | .378                                 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .769                | 1  | .380                                 |
| N of Valid Cases             | 100                 |    |                                      |

a. 15 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .15.

The Pearson Chi-Square test showed a  $\chi^2$  value of 12.191 with 12 degrees of freedom (df = 12) and a significance level of  $p = 0.430$ . Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, there is no statistically significant relationship between parental education level or occupation and the effectiveness of the peer group education intervention. These findings indicate that the success of peer education in increasing adolescents' knowledge about early marriage is not significantly influenced by the parents' educational background or employment status. In other words, the

peer-based educational approach demonstrates egalitarian strength, effectively reaching participants from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in an inclusive and impactful manner.

### Parental Income and Home Ownership Status

Table 7. Chi-Square Test Results of Parental Income and Home Ownership Status

#### Chi-Square Tests

|                              | Value               | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 15.189 <sup>a</sup> | 9  | .086                              |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 16.121              | 9  | .064                              |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 8.049               | 1  | .005                              |
| N of Valid Cases             | 100                 |    |                                   |

a. 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .84.

The Pearson Chi-Square test produced a  $\chi^2$  value of 15.189 with 9 degrees of freedom ( $df = 9$ ) and a p-value of 0.086, which is slightly above the 0.05 significance threshold. This indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between parental income and home ownership status. However, the Linear-by-Linear Association value of 8.049 ( $p = 0.005$ ) suggests a significant linear trend—namely, that higher parental income tends to be associated with improved home ownership status.

These findings indicate that income and housing conditions are not directly correlated with the effectiveness of the peer group education intervention in improving adolescents' knowledge. This supports the assumption that the peer group method functions transversally across economic classes, reaching adolescents from diverse social backgrounds without discrimination in terms of access to or reception of educational content.

#### Family Support

Table 8. Results of Spearman Rank Correlation (Rho) Test on Family Support

#### Correlations

|                |                                       |                         | Dukungan keluarga kelompok Intervensi | Dukungan Keluarga kelompok kontrol |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Spearman's rho | Dukungan keluarga kelompok Intervensi | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000                                 | -.009                              |
|                |                                       | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .                                     | .952                               |
|                |                                       | N                       | 50                                    | 50                                 |
|                | Dukungan Keluarga kelompok kontrol    | Correlation Coefficient | -.009                                 | 1.000                              |
|                |                                       | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .952                                  | .                                  |
|                |                                       | N                       | 50                                    | 50                                 |

The Spearman correlation test showed no significant relationship between family support and adolescents' knowledge levels in either the intervention or control groups ( $r = -0.009$ ;  $p = 0.952$ ). The correlation coefficient being close to zero, along with a p-value well above 0.05, indicates that family support did not influence the increase in knowledge. This suggests that the

effectiveness of the peer group education intervention operates independently, demonstrating its capacity to improve adolescent knowledge without reliance on family involvement.

#### Cultural and Normative Values

Table 9. Results of Spearman Rank Correlation (Rho) Test on Cultural and Normative Values  
**Correlations**

|                |                                            | Nilai Norma<br>dan Budaya<br>kelompok<br>intervensi | Nilai Norma<br>dan Budaya<br>kelompok<br>kontrol |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Spearman's rho | Nilai Norma dan Budaya kelompok intervensi | 1.000                                               | -.030                                            |
|                | Sig. (2-tailed)                            | .                                                   | .838                                             |
|                | N                                          | 50                                                  | 50                                               |
|                | Nilai Norma dan Budaya kelompok kontrol    | -.030                                               | 1.000                                            |
|                | Sig. (2-tailed)                            | .838                                                | .                                                |
|                | N                                          | 50                                                  | 50                                               |

The Spearman correlation test showed no significant relationship between normative and cultural values and adolescents' knowledge in either group ( $r = -0.030$ ;  $p = 0.838$ ). This indicates that the internalization of norms and cultural values did not have a direct impact on knowledge levels regarding early marriage within the context of the peer group educational intervention.

#### Peer Influence

Table 10. Results of Spearman Rank Correlation (Rho) Test on Peer Influence  
**Correlations**

|                |                                    | Pengaruh<br>teman sebaya<br>kelompok<br>intervensi | Pengaruh<br>teman sebaya<br>kelompok<br>kontrol. |
|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Spearman's rho | Pengaruh teman kelompok intervensi | 1.000                                              | .022                                             |
|                | Sig. (2-tailed)                    | .                                                  | .877                                             |
|                | N                                  | 50                                                 | 50                                               |
|                | pengaruh teman kelompok kontrol.   | .022                                               | 1.000                                            |
|                | Sig. (2-tailed)                    | .877                                               | .                                                |
|                | N                                  | 50                                                 | 50                                               |

The Spearman correlation test showed no significant relationship between adolescents' perceptions of peer influence and their knowledge levels in both groups ( $r = 0.022$ ;  $p = 0.877$ ). This indicates that adolescents' perceptions of peer influence did not directly contribute to the increase in knowledge about early marriage.

## Influence of Media and Technology

Table 11. Results of Spearman Rank Correlation (Rho) Test on the Influence of Media and Technology

| <b>Correlations</b> |                                             | Media dan<br>Tekhnologi<br>kelompok<br>intervensi | Media dan<br>Tekhnologi<br>kelompok<br>Kontrol |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Spearman's rho      | Media dan Tekhnologi<br>kelompok intervensi | Correlation Coefficient                           | 1.000                                          |
|                     |                                             | Sig. (2-tailed)                                   | -.089                                          |
|                     |                                             | N                                                 | .538                                           |
|                     | Media dan Tekhnologi<br>kelompok Kontrol    | Correlation Coefficient                           | 50                                             |
|                     |                                             | Sig. (2-tailed)                                   | -.089                                          |
|                     |                                             | N                                                 | .538                                           |

The Spearman correlation test showed a weak negative correlation between the influence of media technology and adolescents' knowledge ( $r = -0.089$ ;  $p = 0.538$ ), indicating no statistically significant relationship. Thus, media technology did not make a meaningful contribution to the increase in adolescents' knowledge about early marriage in either group.

## Discussion

### The Impact of Peer Group Education on Adolescents' Knowledge

The study findings indicate that peer group education is effective in increasing adolescents' knowledge about early marriage. This method promotes participatory and emotionally engaging learning through interaction with peers who are perceived as equals and relevant, thereby facilitating the internalization of information. In social learning theory, peer facilitators serve as role models who reinforce positive attitudes toward delaying marriage during adolescence. In contrast, the control group showed no significant improvement due to the lack of educational stimuli and limited access to information. These findings are consistent with studies by Ummah et al. and Eren et al., which demonstrate that peer-based approaches can enhance critical awareness and reshape adolescents' perceptions of reproductive health issues. The strength of this approach lies in its alignment with local culture and adolescent communication styles, making it an inclusive strategy with the potential to foster sustainable behavioral change—particularly in regions such as Gowa Regency.

### Differences in Knowledge Between the Intervention and Control Groups

The difference in knowledge levels between the intervention and control groups in this study highlights the significant impact of peer group education on adolescents' understanding of early marriage. This can be explained through the lens of Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful through equal social interaction. Discussions facilitated by peers allow for a more natural exchange of ideas due to shared age, experiences, and communication patterns among participants.

The improvement in the intervention group suggests that educational messages delivered within a peer context are more easily received and internalized. From the perspective of

persuasive communication, individuals are generally more receptive to information presented by someone with whom they share emotional and social closeness. The content delivered through group discussions not only addresses cognitive aspects but is also relevant to the adolescents' everyday realities, thereby enhancing information retention. Conversely, the limited improvement in the control group reinforces the assumption that passive, non-interactive education is less effective in engaging adolescents, especially on sensitive issues such as early marriage. The lack of access to information and absence of discussion spaces left their understanding at a basic level, with no significant development.

These results not only reinforce the effectiveness of peer group education in enhancing adolescents' knowledge, but also offer practical recommendations for educational institutions, health educators, and policymakers to integrate this approach into formal and informal programs. Peer group education has proven to be an innovative strategy capable of fostering behavioral change through natural, participatory, and trust-based social mechanisms. These findings make a valuable contribution to designing more contextual and participatory educational strategies. Peer group education has been shown not only to improve knowledge but also to create a critical and supportive dialogue space for adolescents.

### **Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Peer Group Education on Adolescent Knowledge**

The analysis showed that socio-economic background variables, parental education, family support, and cultural values had no significant relationship with the increase in adolescents' knowledge after the intervention. This confirms that the peer group education approach is inclusive, independent of participants' social status, and relies more on the quality of interaction among adolescents than on external influences from family or culture.

The effectiveness of peer group education is not determined by socio-demographic background but rather by participatory message delivery and equality in communication among participants. The learning process within peer groups is horizontal and responsive, allowing adolescents to form understanding through reflective and autonomous engagement. The interaction within these structured groups differs from informal peer influence outside the group, as it is more focused and systematic. Therefore, peer group education can overcome literacy barriers within families and cultural pressures that often restrict adolescent access to reproductive health information.

### **Implications of Peer Group Education for Early Marriage Prevention Strategies**

The findings of this study reinforce the role of peer group education as a relevant and effective strategy in preventing early marriage, particularly in regions with strong social norms and limited access to information. The peer group approach not only increases adolescent knowledge but also builds critical thinking skills and empowers adolescents to make informed decisions regarding their reproductive health and future.

The practical implication of these findings is the need to integrate peer group education methods into both formal and informal adolescent education programs—whether in schools, community health centers, or local communities. This method can strengthen early marriage prevention efforts through a more participatory, inclusive, and context-based approach. In addition, the involvement of trained peer facilitators can create educational spaces that are more acceptable to adolescents compared to top-down, instructive methods.

By positively leveraging adolescent social dynamics, peer group education can engage both cognitive and affective domains simultaneously, making the intervention more sustainable and meaningful. Therefore, this strategy should be scaled up and adapted to local characteristics to effectively address the specific challenges faced by communities in reducing early marriage rates.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that peer group education is effective in improving adolescent knowledge about early marriage, particularly in areas with strong social norms and limited access to information. The intervention promotes critical understanding through participatory discussions among peers. The effectiveness of this approach is not influenced by socio-demographic background, making it an inclusive and adaptive educational strategy. Therefore, peer group education should be integrated into adolescent health programs in schools, communities, and healthcare services. Further research is recommended to evaluate the long-term impact and to develop a more structured model tailored to local cultural contexts.

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