



UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND PROMOTING EDUCATION TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDRAMAYU, WEST JAVA*

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Abstract: The problem of child marriage in Indonesia is complex. There are many factors affecting the incidence of child marriage, such as poverty, lack of education, religious belief, social pressure, and limited employment opportunities. This paper aims to understand the complexities of child marriage in Indramayu, West Java. The Indonesian government has tried to eliminate child marriage, such as by amending the Law on the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 19 years old for girls. This paper argues that due to the complex problems of child marriage, eliminating child marriage requires many efforts to address the causes of child marriage, not only by amending the Law. This research is feminist research, which combines knowledge production with activism. It does not merely produce "knowledge what" but also "knowledge for" by encouraging girls to continue their studies to prevent child marriage. The finding shows that most women regretted marrying underage because they were financially unprepared. This implies that child marriage can result in economic insecurity, leading to a cycle of poverty in society.

Keywords: Child Marriage, Education, Feminist Methodology

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Introduction

INDRAMAYU is one of the regencies in West Java. Indramayu Regency is located at $107^{\circ} 52' - 108^{\circ} 36'$ East Longitude and $6^{\circ} 15' - 6^{\circ} 40'$ South latitude and is primarily a plain or sloping area with an average land slope of 0-2 percent. Even though Indramayu is located in Java and is not very far from Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, uneven Indonesian development can be seen in this

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region, such as in the difficulty of accessing educational facilities and poor public transportation. This is based on our field research on 26 February 2022, in which some of our research participants informed us that secondary school is inaccessible due to the extended distance from the village and poor public transportation. In addition, poverty also prevented them from accessing education.

Education is one of the indicators that plays a significant role in the success of human development. Primary, secondary, and higher education are the three levels of formal education in Indonesia. General, vocational, academic, professional, vocational, religious, and special education are all taught in Indramayu.¹ The data from the Ministry of Education and Culture on the number of all school levels in Indramayu is as follows:

No.	Level of Education	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
1.	Elementary School	893	164.556	8.401
2.	Junior High School	212	62.824	3.835
3.	Senior High School	52	18.906	1.195
4.	Vocational High School	136	50.120	2.120

The above data shows that the higher the school level, the fewer the number of schools, students, and teachers, with a sharp decrease in the number of students from elementary to junior high school (164.556 to 62.824 students), confirming the data from the above preliminary research. However, there is an increase from 62.824 junior high school students to 69.026 senior high school students, mainly vocational high school students (50.120). This is due to the additional number of students who move from other areas and the participation of students in the center for community learning activities (*Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat*), who then receive certificate Package B, which is equivalent to a junior high school certificate. Regarding learner-to-teacher ratios, all school

¹ BPS Kabupaten Indramayu, "Indramayu Dalam Angka Tahun 2021," Website *Kabupaten Indramayu* (blog), 2021, <https://indramayukab.go.id/download/indramayu-dalam-angka-tahun-2021/>.

levels have ideal student-teacher ratios except the vocational schools, which have a ratio of 23.6: 1, while the ideal is 20:1.²

Most employment requires knowledge and skills that are gained from education. When only a Senior High School population is educated, they need help accessing employment. This can be seen in the case of Indramayu, which has a very high unemployment rate. In Indramayu, there are 86.661 open unemployment levels of the working-age population. In addition, 412.201 working-age people are economically inactive.³ When there is no access to school and work opportunities, girls are more vulnerable to being victims of child marriage.

Child marriage is a marriage undertaken before the age of 18 because the definition of a child, according to Article 1 (1) Indonesian Law No. 23 of 2002, is those who are under 18 years old. In Indonesia, marriage is only permitted if men and women have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years (Law No. 16 of 2019 on the Amendments to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage), a new change from the previous age of 16 for girls and 19 for boys.

Indramayu is well-known for the cases of child marriage. In 2021, a total of 236 minors were married.⁴ In addition, it is reported that the number of marriage dispensation cases received by the Indramayu Regency Religious Court in 2020, or the pandemic year, was 761 cases, with a total of 753 cases decided.⁵ This high case of child marriage in Indramayu is confirmed by the research conducted by Waraswati, Herawati, and Kurniasih that the incidence of early marriage is mostly as many as 48 respondents (54.5 percent). This research also shows that adolescents in Indramayu District Indramayu Regency marry before the age of 16 for women and before the age of 19 for men, with many risks from

² "Peraturan Pemerintah (PP) Nomor 74 Tahun 2008 tentang Guru," accessed February 19, 2024, <http://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/4892/pp-no-74-tahun-2008>.

³ BPS Kabupaten Indramayu, "Indramayu Dalam Angka Tahun 2021."

⁴ BPS Kabupaten Indramayu.

⁵ Chandra Iswinarno, "Gegara Aturan Baru, Pernikahan Dini di Indramayu Tahun 2020 Melonjak Tajam," Suarajabar.id, January 18, 2021, <https://jabar.suara.com/read/2021/01/18/173252/gegara-aturan-baru-pernikahan-dini-di-indramayu-tahun-2020-melonjak-tajam>.

this practice.⁶ Some of these risks are, for example, after getting married, the teens are likely to be pregnant; the earlier the teens have pregnancies, the more risk they face of having cervical cancer, giving birth to premature or disabled babies with low body weight; the teens themselves are at risk of bleeding while giving birth, eclampsia, depression, and even death because their reproductive organ is not being fully developed yet.⁷

There have been many studies on child marriage in Indonesia⁸ and in other countries.⁹ In this research, Parson et al. pointed out that less is known about the contexts in which girls themselves decide to marry.¹⁰ Therefore, the researchers are interested in

⁶ Diah Warastuti, Yulia Herawati, and Evi Kurniasih, "Kejadian Pernikahan Usia Dini di Indramayu Tahun 2020," *Jurnal Kesehatan dan Kebidanan (Journal of Health and Midwifery)* 10, no. 2 (2021): 1–11, <https://smrh.e-journal.id/Jkk/article/view/142>.

⁷ Nawal Nour, "Health Consequences of Child Marriage in Africa," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 12, no. 11 (2006): 1644–49, <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1211.060510>.

⁸ See, for example, Anthin Lathifah, Briliyan Ernawati, and Anwar Masduki, "Problems with the Islamic Legal System Regarding Child Marriages in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic Period," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 22, no. 2 (December 2, 2022): 155–76, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v22i2.155-176>; Kamaruddin Kamaruddin, "The Early Marriage of the Tolaki Konawe Community in the Perspective of Critical Islamic Law," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 22, no. 2 (December 20, 2022): 255–70, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v22i2.255-270>; M. Anwar Nawawi et al., "Harmonization of Islam and Human Rights: Judges' Legal Arguments in Rejecting Child Marriage Dispensation in Sukadana, Indonesia," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 22, no. 1 (September 1, 2022): 117–34, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v22i1.117-134> and Warastuti, Herawati, and Kurniasih, "Kejadian Pernikahan Usia Dini di Indramayu Tahun 2020."

⁹ Sanni Yaya, Emmanuel Kolawole Odusina, and Ghose Bishwajit, "Prevalence of Child Marriage and Its Impact on Fertility Outcomes in 34 Sub-Saharan African Countries," *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 19, no. 1 (December 2019): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-019-0219-1>; Beniamino Cislaghi et al., "Why Context Matters for Social Norms Interventions: The Case of Child Marriage in Cameroon," *Global Public Health* 15, no. 4 (April 2, 2020): 532–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2019.1704818>; Pintu Paul, "Effects of Education and Poverty on the Prevalence of Girl Child Marriage in India: A District-Level Analysis," *Children and Youth Services Review* 100 (2019): 16–21, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.02.033>.

¹⁰ Jennifer Parsons et al., "Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: A Review of

finding out directly from the victims of child marriage why they decided to marry at an early age and in exploring the contexts where they live in Indramayu, which leads to child marriage, to find possible solutions to prevent child marriage. Furthermore, this research aims to investigate the causes of the incidence of child marriage in Indramayu; and the conditions of women who were married before the age of 18 on their educational level, occupation, economic level, number of children, and health condition.

Knowing that child marriage has many negative impacts on those who are not ready to marry, it is necessary to identify the root of the problem by investigating the causes of child marriage. There have been many studies on child marriage in Indonesia¹¹ and the causes of child marriage.¹² According to these studies, among the causes of child marriage are pregnancy outside marriage (marriage by accident), a broken home, a lack of religious practice, socio-cultural factors such as low level of education, poverty, the force from the child's family, lack of community leaders' roles (village officials) in preventing child marriage, lack of health workers' roles in educating the community, lack of knowledge on the danger of child marriage, religious beliefs that

the Literature," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 12–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2015.1075757>.

¹¹ Ani Yumarni and Endeh Suhartini, "Perkawinan Bawah Umur dan Potensi Perceraian (Studi Kewenangan KUA Wilayah Kota Bogor)," *Jurnal Hukum IUS QUILA IUSTUM* 26, no. 1 (2019): 193–211, <https://doi.org/10.20885/iustum.vol26.iss1.art10>; Fadillatul Nisa and Rini Marlena, "Fenomena Pengantin Muda: Menelusuri Praktik Pernikahan dan Poligami Pada Pasangan di Bawah Umur," *AGENDA: Jurnal Analisis Gender dan Agama* 1, no. 1 (2017): 99–106, <https://doi.org/10.31958/agenda.v1i1.942>; Sri Ahyani, "Pertimbangan Pengadilan Agama Atas Dispensasi Pernikahan Usia Dini Akibat Kehamilan di Luar Nikah," *Jurnal Wawasan Yuridika* 34, no. 1 (December 15, 2016): 31, <https://doi.org/10.25072/jwy.v34i1.107>.

¹² Asrul Hamid, Raja Ritonga, and Khairul Bahri Nasution, "Penguatan Pemahaman Terhadap Dampak Pernikahan Dini," *MONSU'ANI TANO Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 5, no. 1 (2022): 44, <https://doi.org/10.32529/tano.v5i1.1543>; Mies Grijns and Hoko Horii, "Child Marriage in a Village in West Java (Indonesia): Compromises between Legal Obligations and Religious Concerns," *Asian Journal of Law and Society* 5, no. 2 (November 2018): 453–66, <https://doi.org/10.1017/als.2018.9>.

child marriage is justified and surrounding communities' tolerance of child marriage.

Other studies have focused on the impact of child marriage on the education of children of the child's parents.¹³ Children who become parents (child parents) still need guidance to be a parent. These child parents tend not to provide affection for their children because child parents who marry early are still thinking about themselves. Moreover, child marriage hurts children's reproductive health. According to this study, the children's reproductive organs are not ready biologically. They are not ready for sexual intercourse, even more for pregnancy and childbirth. If this happens, there will be trauma, extensive birth canal tears, and infections that harm their reproductive organs and endanger their lives. Another impact of child marriage is family breakup¹⁴ due to the escalation of violence against child wives, which can lead to divorce with negative consequences for their children because of this family break up.¹⁵

Regardless of the danger of child marriage to the well-being of the children, many Muslims still believe that it is acceptable to marry off their daughter at an early age for at least three reasons.

¹³ Hamid, Ritonga, and Nasution, "Penguatan Pemahaman Terhadap Dampak Pernikahan Dini"; Juliana Lubis, "Pengaruh Pendidikan Orang Tua Terhadap Orang Tua Menikahkan Anak Pada Usia Muda Di Desa Bangun Rejo Kecamatan Tanjung Morawa," *Jurnal Maternitas Kebidanan* 5, no. 1 (2022): 34–39, <https://doi.org/10.34012/jumkep.v5i1.979>; Yanti Yanti, Hamidah Hamidah, and Wiwita Wiwita, "Analisis Faktor Penyebab Dan Dampak Pernikahan Dini Di Kecamatan Kandis Kabupaten Siak," *JURNAL IBU DAN ANAK* 6, no. 2 (2018): 96–103, <https://doi.org/10.36929/jia.v6i2.94>; Parsons et al., "Economic Impacts of Child Marriage."

¹⁴ Fathur Rahman Alfa, "Pernikahan Dini dan Perceraian di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ahwal Syakhshiyah (JAS)* 1, no. 1 (2019): 49, <https://doi.org/10.33474/jas.v1i1.2740>; Nour, "Health Consequences of Child Marriage in Africa"; Shafa Yuandina Sekarayu and Nunung Nurwati, "Dampak Pernikahan Usia Dini terhadap Kesehatan Reproduksi," *Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (JPPM)* 2, no. 1 (2021): 37, <https://doi.org/10.24198/jppm.v2i1.33436>.

¹⁵ See for example Muhammad Fauzinudin Faiz, Zezen Zainul Ali, and Muhammad Taufiq, "Underage Widows and Widowers before the Law: Problem, Contestation and Legal Certainty in Marriage Dispensation," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 22, no. 2 (December 15, 2023): 223–34, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v22i2.9097>.

First, they think it is better to marry off their daughter for fear that they are committing *zina* (having sex outside marriage).¹⁶ Second, they believe that Aisyah married our Prophet at the age of six and was together with the Prophet at the age of nine. This belief is based on the hadith, which has become controversial because the narrator of this hadith, Husyam bin Urwah, was very old when he narrated this hadith, and he might have forgotten the age of Aisyah when she was married by the Prophet.¹⁷ In addition, several studies show that Aisyah was not married at such young age, but some time between 14 and 21 years old. These studies done such as by comparing the age of Aisyah and the age of her sister, Asma, and that Aisyah was born before the coming of Islam, which show that Aisyah was married at least at the age of 14 years old.¹⁸ Third, based on classical *fiqh*, many Muslims believe that a male is matured when he has had a wet dream, while a female is considered matured after having the first menstruation.¹⁹

We argue on the need to differentiate between maturity of being *mukallaf* (a person who has been obliged to do Islamic worship such as pray, fast, give alms, and go on pilgrimage if this person is financially capable) from being matured to get married. To get married, a person needs to be matured not only physically, but also emotionally and financially (economically independent). Even though the Qur'an does not specify the ideal age for a person to get married, the Qur'an 4: 6²⁰ indicates that a person can be

¹⁶ Elisabeth Putri Lahitani Tampubolon, "Permasalahan Perkawinan Dini di Indonesia," *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains* 2, no. 5 (2021): 738–46, <https://doi.org/10.36418/jiss.v2i5.279>.

¹⁷ Yusuf Hanafi, "Kontroversi Usia Kawin Aisyah Ra dan Kaitannya dengan Legalitas Perkawinan Anak di Bawah Umur dalam Islam," *Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam IAIN Mataram* 15, no. 2 (December 2016): 296–319, <https://www.neliti.com/id/publications/70424>.

¹⁸ Miftah Faridl, *Poligami: Catatan Pengalaman dan Interpretasi Ajaran* (Bandung: Pustaka, 2007).

¹⁹ Destroyer Theme, "Al-Mausu'ah al-Fiqiyah al-Kuwaitiyah," *Kitab Salaf* (blog), 1980, <https://www.kitabsalaf.id/2016/03/al-mausu-al-fiqiyah-al-kuwaitiyah.html>.

²⁰ وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَمَّى حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ أَسْتُمْ مَنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْعُوْا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهُمْ إِسْرَافًا وَإِذَا رَأَوْا أَنْ يَكْرِهُوا وَمَنْ كَانَ عَنِّيَا فَلَيُسْتَعْفَفْ فَوَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهُدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَكُفِّيْ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

considered matured when he/she is capable of managing wealth. This age can vary from time to time and in different places. In Indonesia, the revised Marriage Law set the minimum age of marriage for both males and females is 19 (which was previously 16 for females and 19 for males).²¹ However, the 1974 Marriage Law Article 6 (2) considers maturity in the Indonesian context to be 21 years old. Therefore, the Law regulates that marriage under 21 years old has to ask for the parents' permission.²² We agree with this ideal minimum age of marriage stated in the 1974 Marriage Law, 21 years old, because after getting married, the woman may be pregnant. Physically, according to many health experts, the ideal time for women to be pregnant is between 20-35 years old.²³

This research uses feminist methodology. Feminist methodology is an emerging research methodology that is developed from qualitative methodology, based on postpositivist paradigm.²⁴ Because feminist methodology is the development of qualitative methodology, feminist research also claims that research is subjective and that knowledge is not value-free, but the context, interest and background of the knowledge producers influences it.²⁵ The researchers of this study consist of two women who have an interest in ending child marriage because we know the danger of this practice on women's reproductive health and the vulnerability of the victims of child marriage to divorce and domestic violence.

Feminist methodology criticizes the invisibility of women,

²¹ "Undang-undang (UU) Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 tentang Perubahan atas Undang-undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan," accessed February 19, 2024, <http://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/122740/uu-no-16-tahun-2019>.

²² "Undang-undang (UU) Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan," accessed February 19, 2024, <http://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/47406/uu-no-1-tahun-1974>.

²³ Shandra Riestya Prihandini, Wahyu Pujiastuti, and Tulus Puji Hastuti, "Usia Reproduksi Tidak Sehat dan Jarak Kehamilan Yang Terlalu Dekat Meningkatkan Kejadian Abortus di Rumah Sakit Tentara Dokter Soedjono Magelang," *Jurnal Kebidanan* 5, no. 10 (2016): 47-57, <https://doi.org/10.31983/jkb.v5i10.1147>.

²⁴ Sotiriou Sarantakos, *Social Research* (Brisbane: MacMillan Education Australia, 1993).

²⁵ Ben Agger, *A Critical Theory of Public Life. Knowledge, Discourse, and Politics in an Age of Decline* (UK: The Falmer Press, 1991).

both as an object and as a social scientist: the development from "a sociology about women to a sociology for women".²⁶ This is emphasized also by Stanley that in feminist research, "knowledge" is not simply means "knowledge what" but also "knowledge for".²⁷ Therefore, the aims of this research are not merely to find out the data about the complexities of child marriage in Indramayu, but also to seek solution and intervention to prevent child marriage. In line with Malhotra et al.,²⁸ who argue for the importance of educating and mobilizing parents and community members in opposition to the practice, we provided intervention to educate the teens on reproductive health and motivate them to study. We collaborated with the local health professional to deliver the session on reproductive health, while both researchers speak about their educational experiences to motivate the teens to study.

In this research, we interviewed 30 women who are victims of child marriage. This consists of eight women who were interviewed in our preliminary study. This interview, other than to collect data, also aimed to develop a better interview guide. On our second visit, after revising our interview guide, we interviewed another 22 women who was victims of child marriage, eight of their parents, and three women who could avoid child marriage. The interview aimed to find out the causes of child marriage and to investigate how the impacts of child marriage on the women's condition such as their educational level, occupation, income level, their number of children, and health condition. In

²⁶ Sherry Gorelick, "Contradictions of Feminist Methodology," *Gender & Society* 5, no. 4 (December 1991): 459–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124391005004002>. On the use of this approach in the study of Islamic law, see, for instance, Fuady Abdullah, Nova Anggraini Putri, and Youssouf Salhein, "Revisiting 'Iddah: A Critical Analysis of Gender Equality in Indonesian Feminist Islamic Legal Discourse," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 22, no. 2 (December 15, 2023): 275–90, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v22i2.10320>.

²⁷ Liz Stanley, ed., *Feminist Praxis (RLE Feminist Theory): Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203094020>.

²⁸ Malhotra, A. et al., "Solutions to End Child Marriage" (International Center for Research on Women, 2011), <https://www.icrw.org/publications/solutions-to-end-child-marriage-2/>.

addition, we undertook Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with 76 teens and parents, including the above interviewees, to discuss their future expectations for their children and to mobilize them to oppose the practice of child marriage. Because this FGD may have policy implications, we invited representatives of the local Indramayu government to attend this session.

The data was analyzed by organizing and classifying them to see the pattern, theme, and category²⁹ in answering the research questions. We adopted an interactive model of data analysis, which began at the same time as the data collection; then we did data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification with the process of coming back and forth throughout the research.³⁰ To protect the privacy, all informant's names are not revealed in full.

The Causes of the Incidence of Child Marriage in Indramayu

The causes of the incidence of child marriage can be seen in the following Table 4.2

Table 4.2

No.	Name	Age of Marriage	Current Age	Reasons for early marriage
1.	To	16	30	Having too close a relationship with her boyfriend
2.	Du	17	34	Having a too-close relationship with her boyfriend and did not want to continue her studies.
3.	Ra	13	45	Being matched by her parent because they do not want their child to be labeled as an old virgin
4.	Tri	17	17	Having a too-close relationship with her boyfriend and rarely returns home
5.	Su	16	42	Having a too-close relationship with her boyfriend
6.	Sut	15	23	Had too close a relationship with her

²⁹ Lexi J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung, Indonesia: Remaja Rosda Karya, 2002).

³⁰ A. Huberman and Matthew Miles, *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion* (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2002), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986274>.

			boyfriend and did not want to continue her study
7. Sun	17	31	Being matched by her parent
8. Tar	15	48	Being matched by her parent
9. San	14	45	Being matched by her parent
10. Ir	17	26	Having too close a relationship
11. Ca	15	38	Her parents ordered her to marry so that someone would provide for her.
12. Ta	14	60	Being matched by her parent
13. Yat	17	40	Fear of being mocked by the old virgin
14. Sar	14	60	Feeling afraid that if she rejected a man's proposal, no one would propose again
15. Wat	13	46	Their parents cannot afford the costs of continuing their education
16. Cah	17	25	lazy to go to school and leave her needs to someone else
17. Cas	15	39	Having a too-close relationship with her boyfriend
18. Wan	17	19	Expecting someone can support her needs
19. War	14	41	Not understanding the risks of getting married
20. Wa	16	37	Having a too-close relationship with her boyfriend
21. Da	15	42	Being matched by her parents
22. Kat	17	60	Being matched by her parents

Based on Table 4.2 above, we know that there were eight women who married early because they had too close love relationships with their boyfriends and seven others because their parents matched them. Some of them were doing this because they were afraid that their children would be labeled as old virgins (*spinster/perawan tua*). Two of them married because their parents told them to, but they were married to men of their choice in order for them to have someone who would provide for them and take responsibility for their needs. One of them was afraid of being mocked and labeled as an old virgin. Another one married out of fear that if they refused a man's proposal, no one would want to marry them. Another one was married because they were too lazy to go to school and needed someone to look after their needs. Another one wanted to continue her education, but her parents could not afford it, so she decided to get married. Last but not

least, one woman married because they did not understand the risks of early marriage.

The causes of child marriage in Indramayu are complex. However, the most common cause is that girls have relationships that are too close with their boyfriends. The age of the respondents who reported this cause is in their teens, twenties, thirties, and forties. This means that from year to year, child intercourse was the major cause of child marriage. Based on these incidents, parents are afraid that something unwanted will happen to their child, such as committing adultery or getting pregnant out of wedlock, which will cause more significant problems, especially if their boyfriend refuses to take responsibility. As a result, when girls have too close relationship with their boyfriends, their parents will force their daughter to marry early, as reported by the following research participant:

"Before I got married, I rarely went home and liked to be alone with my boyfriend. Because of this, my parents asked me to get married soon to prevent unwanted things from happening.³¹

The above data also find that another major cause of child marriage is that the children are matched (*dijodohkan*) by their parents. It happened with respondents who are now in their thirties, forties, and sixties. Matchmaking appears to be obsolete among respondents in their teens and twenties. It suggests that arranged marriages have resulted in more early marriages in the last twenty years. The reason for the parents to match their child was also complicated: some do it because they were afraid of their child becoming an old virgin, as reported by the following respondent:

"I was married under the age of 19 because it was common to marry around that age, and if I got married at the age of more than 15 years, I would be ridiculed and labeled as an old virgin. Therefore, I was betrothed by my parents when I was 13 years old".³²

³¹ "Sebelum saya menikah, saya jarang pulang ke rumah dan suka pacaran. Oleh karena itu orang tua saya bilang ke saya untuk segera menikah saja daripada terjadi hal yang tidak diinginkan" (Tri)

³² "Saya menikah di bawah usia 19 tahun karena dulu sangat umum menikah di bawah umur demikian, kalau lebih dari 15 tahun belum menikah maka akan diejek

Other parents also forced their children to marry before the age of 19 with their chosen man to ensure their children's needs and lives were met by their husbands. This is stated by one of the respondents below:

"I decided to get married because my parents could not afford to send me to school. Finally, my parents advised me to get married to have a husband who is responsible for fulfilling my daily expenses. Fortunately, I married my chosen one, not being matched".³³

Furthermore, some respondents were married to avoid being labeled as old virgins. This happened to the respondent, who is now in their forties. Fear of being labeled an old virgin does not appear to exist in respondents who are now in their teens, twenties, and thirties. It implies that the fear of being labeled an old virgin by society is starting to fade. Some respondents were concerned that if they rejected a man's proposal, they were worried that no man would want to propose to her again. Because of these worries, the respondent decided to marry, as stated below:

"I was married because someone proposed to me. I was married to someone of my parent's choice, not on my initiative, and I agreed to marry him because I was embarrassed if I did not accept the man's proposal. I was also afraid that anyone would not marry me if I refused it".³⁴

Another respondent married because they were too lazy to attend school and needed someone to financially support her. In addition, another respondent wanted to continue her education, but her parents could not afford it, so she got married as a solution. It implies that both the child and the parents should be aware of the importance of education: the children should have a learning spirit and parental support so that neither the child nor

perawan tua oleh karena itu saya dijodohkan oleh orang tua saya ketika umur saya 13 tahun" (Ra)

³³ *"Saya memutuskan untuk menikah karena orang tua sudah ada modal untuk menyekolahkan saya. Akhirnya orang tua menyuruh saya untuk menikah agar ada suami yang ngasih nafkah dan bertanggung jawab atas kebutuhan saya. Saya menikah dengan orang pilihan saya dan tidak dijodohkan" (Ca)*

³⁴ *"Saya menikah karena ada yang melamar saya. Saya menikah dengan pilihan orang tua saya bukan atas inisiatif sendiri dan saya setuju untuk dinikahkan karena saya malu kalau tidak menerimanya lamaran laki-laki dan juga saya takut saya tidak laku kalau saya menolak lamaran laki-laki" (Sar)*

the parent sees marriage as a solution when their children no longer go to school or work. Last but not least, education about marriage is crucial to inform children about the risks of early marriage so they can consider whether or not she is truly ready to get married. This occurred to one of the respondents, and she is married because she did not understand the risks of early marriage and the problems they face after getting married, as stated in the following statement:

"I was married because I did not understand the risks of marriage; I believe that as long as I am happy, I should marry on my initiative rather than being matched".³⁵

From the above elaboration, we can conclude that the leading causes of underaged marriage are lack of education and difficulty in accessing education. The lack of education can result in the fear of being labeled a spinster or old virgin or the fear that if a woman rejects a man's proposal, this may negatively affect her future by having no one propose to get married. In addition, having no access to education and employment results in having much time to do nothing. Therefore, they escape from this boredom to have an intimate relationship with their boyfriends, resulting in a too-close relationship or having sex before marriage and leads to child marriage because of the society negative attitude to pregnancy outside marriage.

The Conditions of Women Who Were Married Before the Age of 18

The conditions of women who were married before the age of 18 in terms of educational level, occupation, economic level, number of children, and health condition can be seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Women's Conditions

No	Name	Education	Occupation	Income	N Children	Health Condition
1.	To	Grade 2 of Senior High School	She is a housewife and sometimes	Between Rp. 30,000 to 70,000 and sometimes no income at all	3 children	Healthy

³⁵ *"Saya ingin menikah karena saya tidak paham resiko menikah, saya pikirnya asal saya senang, saya menikah atas inisiatif sendiri tidak dijodohkan" (War)*

2	Du	Senior High School	works casually; her husband also works casually.	Rp. 90,000 per day.	2	Her health is deteriorating as she suffers from stomach ulcers and liver disease.
3	Ra	Primary School	Housewife , and her husband used to work as an online driver.	About 10 million per month (Rp. 33,000/day)	6 children	Good health
4	Tri	Primary School	The housewife and her husband work casually in PT Bulog	Rp.150,000-200,000 per two days.	0	Good health
5	Kur	Primary School	Chicken noodle seller, while her husband works casually	Husband: Rp.150,000 to Rp. 200,000/day and wife: Rp. 50,000 per day	6 children	Rheumatism
6	Sut	Primary School	The housewife and her husband work casually	Rp. 100,000/day	0	Good health
7	Sun	Primary School	Snacks seller	Rp 100,000/day	3 children	Good health
8	Tar	Primary School	Farm laborers	Occasionally: Rp. 50,000 to 100,000 per day	3 children	Good health
9	San	Primary School	Farmer	Per harvest season: Rp. 12,000,000/6 months (Rp. 2,000,000/month = Rp. 67,000 per day)	One child	Good health
10	Ir	Senior High School	She is a shop owner, while her husband is a farmer	Rp. 300,000 per day	0	Good health
11	Ca	Primary School	Farmer	Rp. 60,000/day	2 children	Renal impairment
12	Ta	Primary School	Farmer	Rp. 2,000,000 million/month (Rp. 67,000)	3 children	Gout
13	Yat	Primary	Farmer	Rp. 1,000,000/month	3	Good health

14.	Sar	School Primary School	Farmer	(Rp. 34,000/day) Rp. 20,000,000/6 Months/seasonal (Rp. 112,000/day)	children 3 children	Good health
15	Wat	Not graduated from elementary school	Farmer	Rp. 10,000,000/6 months (Rp. 56,000/day)	One child	Good health
16	Ca	Junior High School	The housewife and her husband sell chicken and tuna waste,	husband's income: Rp. 2,500,000/ week (Rp. 179.000 per day)	2 children	Good Health
17	Cas	Primary School	Farmer	Rp. 20,000.000/six months (Rp. 111,000/day)	3 children	Good health
18	Wan	Junior High School	The housewife and her husband, a fisherman	Rp. 5,000,000/3 months (Rp. 55,000/day)	One child	Good health
19	War	Primary School	Farmer	combined income: Rp. 3.000,000/6 months (Rp. 500,000/month or Rp. 16.700/day), not enough to cover their needs, and therefore they owe money from the local bank	2 children	Good health
20	Wa	Primary School	Casual job	Her income is Rp.60,000 and her husband's Rp.100,000 per day	3 children	Good health
21	Da	Junior High School	The housewife and her husband is are driver	Rp. 3,000,000 per month (Rp. 100,000/day)	3 children	Good health
22	Kat	She did not go to School	Farm laborers	Her income Rp. 50.000-100.000 per day	One child	Good health

Women's Educational Level

The above table shows the current condition of women who were married under the age of 18. On their educational level, most respondents (14 people) have only completed elementary school, and two of them have not completed it at all. In addition, three of

them graduated from junior high school, and three others graduated from senior high school. None of them, of course, has a bachelor's degree. This finding indicates that most victims of child marriage in Indramayu have low level of education.

Women's Occupation

In terms of occupation, most women work as farmers, which is consistent with what researchers stated in the introduction to this paper, that Indramayu people rely on agriculture as their primary source of income. A farmer's wife also has a farmer's husband. A farmer is a person who owns farmland. Furthermore, two respondents are farm laborers who work for landowners. Based on our data, respondents who work as farmers earn a per-season income: their earnings range from Rp. 3,000,000 to Rp. 20,000,000 per season, depending on how large the land they own. Women who work as farm laborers have their daily income, which is only obtained if there are farmers who need their help, which can be occasional and seasonal. The income they have ranges from Rp. 60,000 to 100,000 per day. Aside from being farmers, being a homemaker is the most common occupation among female respondents. These women do not have a certificate of completion or special skills that can be used to earn money because they lack education and work experience, and therefore, they become housewives. One of the reasons they stay at home and become homemakers or housewives is that they have minor children to look after.

Furthermore, three respondents had casual jobs, meaning they worked on anything that paid. Of course, the income from casual jobs is unreliable. The income per day from respondents who had casual jobs ranges from not making any money to Rp. 90,000 per day. Last but not least, two respondents work as sellers: one sells household goods in the store, and another sells chicken noodles. Based on the interviews, most women reported that they regretted marrying early because they were economically unprepared, resulting in insufficient income to meet their daily needs. It causes further complicated situations, such as becoming entangled in debt with banks and loan sharks. This suggests that child marriage

can lead to economic insecurity and a cycle of poverty in society. This is expressed by one of the respondents below:

"I regretted getting married when I was too young, but I could not say no to my parents' desire that I should get married. After getting married, my income is sometimes insufficient to meet my daily needs, especially if there is no work in the rice fields. In this situation, I will borrow money to a mobile bank or a farmer".³⁶

The lower level of education caused these women's difficulties in finding jobs with high salaries. They primarily work casually in seasonal/occasional farming jobs. When there is no job, they are just housewives who rely on their life based on the small income of their husband, if the husband has an income. If not, they have to borrow money from the local personal bank with very high interest, which they pay when they have a job. They mostly have difficulties to survive.

Number of Children and Women's Health Conditions

Three respondents had no children, four had only one child, four others had two children, nine had three children, and two had six children. This finding negates our assumption that the earlier women got married and the less educated women were, they would tend to have more children. This is not the case in Soge Village, which shows their awareness of the importance of using contraception. Furthermore, most respondents are in good health and have no severe disease. This may be because most respondents are still considered young. However, some respondents have health problems such as kidney disorders, rheumatic disease, ulcers, and liver disease. Up to this point, no respondents have reproductive disorders due to underage marriage.

The findings regarding the causes of child marriage in Indramayu encompass intimate relationships, social stigma, parental influence and arranged marriages, economic factors and lack of education, fear of rejection and social exclusion, and lack of

³⁶ "Saya menyesal karena saya menikah disaat saya terlalu muda tapi saya juga tidak bisa menolak keinginan orang tua saya untuk menikahkan saya. Penghasilan saya kadang tidak cukup untuk memenuhi kebutuhan sehari-hari apalagi jika tidak ada kerjaan di sawah maka saya tidak punya uang dan tidak ada pemasukan dan jika begitu saya akan hutang ke bank keliling atau hutang ke petani" (Tris)

understanding and awareness. These findings contribute to the issue of child marriage by adding various related factors given from previous studies, such as broken homes, a lack of religious practice, the absence of community leaders' roles (village officials) in preventing child marriage, the inadequate involvement of health workers in educating the community, religious beliefs that justify child marriage, and surrounding communities' tolerance of child marriage.³⁷

Furthermore, this study indicates that close romantic relationships with boyfriends caused most cases of child marriage. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that they got married due to pregnancy outside of marriage, as commonly reported in previous studies.³⁸ Instead, parents play a significant role in marrying off their children when they engage in intimate relationships. This situation differs from matchmaking, which is the second-highest cause of child marriage in Indramayu. Matchmaking involves parents arranging marriages for their children, which may be against the girl's will. In contrast, in cases of intimate relationships, parents probably do not select their children's partners, but they still marry off their daughters to avoid pregnancy outside of marriage. This decision is influenced by their belief that engaging in intimate relationships outside of marriage is prohibited. They seek to prevent undesirable

³⁷ Hamid, Ritonga, and Nasution, "Penguatan Pemahaman Terhadap Dampak Pernikahan Dini," 44. See also Syahrul Mubarak Subeitan, "Forced Marriage: Implementation of the Mandatory Provisions of the Bride's Consent in Indonesia," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 21, no. 1 (June 10, 2022): 77–87, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v21i1.5581>.

³⁸ Aditi Wahi et al., "The Lived Experience of Child Marriage in the United States," *Social Work in Public Health* 34, no. 3 (April 3, 2019): 201–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2019.1575312>; Irwan M Hidayana et al., "Factors Influencing Child Marriage, Teenage Pregnancy and Female Genital Mutilation/Circumcision in Lombok Barat and Sukabumi Districts, Indonesia," 2016, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.28878.92480>; Babatunde Ahonsi et al., "Child Marriage in Ghana: Evidence from a Multi-Method Study," *BMC Women's Health* 19, no. 1 (November 12, 2019): 126, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-019-0823-1>; Nilla S. D. Iustitiani and Clara R. P. Ajisuksmo, "Supporting Factors and Consequences of Child Marriage," *ANIMA Indonesian Psychological Journal* 33, no. 2 (January 25, 2018): 100–111, <https://doi.org/10.24123/aipj.v33i2.1581>.

outcomes, such as the refusal of the boyfriend to marry the pregnant girl, by arranging marriage swiftly.

Therefore, one of the interventions we did was education on reproductive health, emphasizing the ideal age for pregnancy. It is a condition and state of perfect physical, mental, and social well-being, not solely free from disease or disability but encompassing all aspects related to the reproductive system, its functions, and processes.³⁹ Although the results of the intervention cannot be seen immediately, it is considered one of the effective strategies to prevent child marriage.⁴⁰ Furthermore, given that the cause of child marriage in Indramayu is complex, motivating girls to study is another intervention, as girls from more educated homes are less likely to get married in their childhood.⁴¹

Possible Solutions to End the Practices of Child Marriage in Indramayu

Several solutions have been identified to stop the practice of child marriage in Indramayu. The first and most important thing is to provide comprehensive sex education, which is the most common cause, to overcome intimate relationships. This can not only be implemented in intervention format as we have done but

³⁹ United Nations, "International Conference on Population and Development 5-13 September 1994, Cairo, Egypt," United Nations (United Nations, 1994), <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/population/cairo1994>; "Keputusan Menteri Kesehatan Republik Indonesia Nomor HK.02.02/Menkes/73/2015 Tentang Pedoman Nasional Pelayanan Kedokteran Jiwa" (2015), http://hukor.kemkes.go.id/uploads/produk_hukum/KMK_No._HK_.02_.02-MENKES-73-2015_ttg_Pedoman_Nasional_Pelayanan_Kedokteran_Jiwa_.pdf.

⁴⁰ Garumma Tolu Feyissa et al., "Effectiveness of Interventions to Reduce Child Marriage and Teen Pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Review of Quantitative Evidence," *Frontiers in Reproductive Health* 5 (2023): 1105390, <https://doi.org/10.3389/frph.2023.1105390>; UNICEF, "Evidence Review: Child Marriage Interventions and Research from 2020 to 2022," UNICEF, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/documents/evidence-review-child-marriage-interventions-and-research-2020-2022>.

⁴¹ Karoline Hassfurter, "The Power of Education to End Child Marriage," UNICEF DATA, September 19, 2022, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-marriage-and-education-data-brief/>.

can also be implemented in school programs.⁴² This involves maximizing religious studies by emphasizing moral and ethical education as well as promoting a good understanding of prohibitions in Islam that intimate relationships before marriage and other practices can lead to child marriage. Additionally, the role of teachers must also be maximized, including the role of guidance and counseling teachers who must strive to assist students not only in developing learning activities but also in their personal and social lives.

Furthermore, the complexities that cause child marriage include lack of education, with economic factors being one of the leading causes. Thus, prioritizing education involves removing barriers such as poverty and lack of access to schooling. This can be achieved through initiatives like girls' education, as mentioned by respondents, which may include scholarships, stipends, and incentives to encourage girls to stay in school and complete their education. Better-educated women marry later and have their first child later, partly due to their growing economic independence from better education.⁴³ In other words, educated girls are more likely to delay marriage, achieve economic independence, and make informed choices about their lives.

Child marriage is also closely related to societal stigma and myths, such as the term "spinster" and the fear of not being able to get married if one does not marry by a certain age. Therefore, community awareness must be raised through programs that challenge traditional norms and practices perpetuating child marriage. These programs can involve the integration of parents, teachers, religious leaders, and local stakeholders in discussions to challenge harmful beliefs.

⁴² Trisha E. Mueller, Lorrie E. Gavin, and Aniket Kulkarni, "The Association Between Sex Education and Youth's Engagement in Sexual Intercourse, Age at First Intercourse, and Birth Control Use at First Sex," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 42, no. 1 (January 2008): 89–96, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2007.08.002>.

⁴³ Hans-Peter Blossfeld and Ursula Jaenichen, "Educational Expansion and Changes in Women's Entry into Marriage and Motherhood in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 54, no. 2 (May 1992): 302, <https://doi.org/10.2307/353062>.

Moreover, considering the prevalence of marriage dispensations for minors in Indramayu,⁴⁴ there must be policy advocacy and reform. This involves enforcing a program to formulate regional regulations regarding family resilience that can create quality families. This includes creating principles for a couple's readiness before building a family, with an emphasis on knowledge, economic readiness, and other factors that can contribute to household welfare.

The Different Conditions of Women who Marry in Childhood from Women who Could Avoid Child Marriage

The finding of this study confirms the theory that better-educated women marry later partly due to their growing economic independence.⁴⁵ None of the respondents who married in their childhood pursue higher education, and their economic status is vulnerable and unstable. Even though most of the respondents claimed to have an income that, if calculated per day and multiplied by 30 days, would exceed the Indramayu regency minimum wage of IDR 2,623,697, the income from their jobs is not constant. The income of casual workers, agricultural laborers, farmers, and shop owners, is not always stable and can vary due

⁴⁴ Handhika Rahman and Hermawan Aksan, "Tekan Tingginya Dispensasi Nikah Anak, DPRD Indramayu Buat Perda Ketahanan Keluarga," KOMPAS.com, January 21, 2023, <https://bandung.kompas.com/read/2023/01/21/141005778/tekan-tingginya-dispensasi-nikah-anak-dprd-indramayu-buat-perda-ketahanan>; Handhika Rahman, "Awal 2023 Pengajuan Dispensasi Nikah Di Indramayu Masih Tinggi, Rata-Rata Karena Hamil Di Luar Nikah," Tribunjabar.id, May 2, 2023, <https://jabar.tribunnews.com/2023/05/02/awal-2023-pengajuan-dispensasi-nikah-di-indramayu-masih-tinggi-rata-rata-karena-hamil-di-luar-nikah>; Handhika Rahman and Hermawan Aksan, "Ratusan Anak di Bawah 19 Tahun di Indramayu Ajukan Dispensasi Nikah Dini, Ketua DPRD Angkat Bicara," Tribunjabar.id, January 19, 2023, <https://jabar.tribunnews.com/2023/01/19/ratusan-anak-di-bawah-19-tahun-di-indramayu-ajukan-dispensasi-nikah-dini-ketua-dprd-angkat-bicara>; Muhammad Syahri Romdhon and David Oliver Purba, "572 Anak di Indramayu Ajukan Dispensasi Nikah, Sebagian Besar Hamil Duluan," KOMPAS.com, January 17, 2023, <https://bandung.kompas.com/read/2023/01/17/185523478/572-anak-di-indramayu-ajukan-dispensasi-nikah-sebagian-besar-hamil-duluan>.

⁴⁵ Blossfeld and Jaenichen, "Educational Expansion and Changes in Women's Entry into Marriage and Motherhood in the Federal Republic of Germany."

to certain factors such as season and market demand. In contrast, most women who can avoid child marriage have a bachelor's degree, and one of them has completed senior high school. They have more stable occupations, such as working as pharmacists and tellers in a bank.

The educational background has influenced the respondents' understanding of marriage. The women who marry in their childhood, did so because, as discussed earlier, most of them consider women who don't get married yet after the age of 20 to be spinsters. On the other hand, the women who can avoid child marriage have an ideal marriage age: above the age of 25. This discrepancy in the perfect marriage age arises due to the different life contexts. The respondents who pursue higher education often live outside their hometown for several years. They pursue their bachelor's degrees, and some now reside and work in Jakarta, exposing them to different social norms in their new environment. Exposure to varying social norms is everyday when individuals find themselves in new environments, and communication serves as a mechanism for spreading information about these norms, ultimately shaping behavior.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The interview results show that the causes of child marriage in Indramayu are complex, such as having too close love relationships with boyfriends and the parents matching their children because they were afraid their children would be labeled old virgins (*spinster/perawan tua*). On the other hand, some parents advise their children to marry men of their choice to have someone

⁴⁶ Henk Aarts and Ap Dijksterhuis, "The Silence of the Library: Environment, Situational Norm, and Social Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 1 (2003): 18–28, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.18>; Erin L. Mead et al., "Understanding the Sources of Normative Influence on Behavior: The Example of Tobacco," *Social Science & Medicine* 115 (August 2014): 139–43, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.05.030>; Robert Axelrod, "An Evolutionary Approach to Norms," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1, 1986): 1095–1111, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1960858>; Maria Knight Lapinski and Rajiv N. Rimal, "An Explication of Social Norms," *Communication Theory* 15, no. 2 (May 2005): 127–47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2005.tb00329.x>.

to provide for and take responsibility for their needs. There is also a stigma that if they refuse a man's proposal, no one will want to marry them. This forces them to accept a male proposal. Some of them are too lazy to go to school and want someone to financially care for them, while others want to continue their education, but their parents cannot afford it, so they see marriage as a solution. Another reason is a lack of understanding about the risks of early marriage. What they only know was that marriage is beautiful in which someone can be responsible to fulfill their needs. In reality, not all husbands can give maintenance to their wives, causing them to live below the poverty line.

Regarding occupation, homemakers are the most common among female respondents, followed by women working as farmers and farm laborers. These women do not have any certificate of completion or special skills to earn money because they lack education and work experience, so most become homemakers. In addition, having children to look after is another reason why they do not go to work and are only homemakers. Aside from farming and farm labor, which is what most Soge people do, some respondents have casual jobs, meaning they work on anything that pays and sells. Based on our interviews, most women regretted marrying early because they were financially unprepared, resulting in insufficient income to meet their daily needs. This implies that child marriage can result in economic insecurity, leading to a cycle of poverty in society.

Regarding the number of children, the researcher assumed that less educated women would have more children. However, the finding shows that they mostly have 1-3 children, and only two of them have six children because they know the importance of using contraception to limit the number of children. Furthermore, in terms of health, most respondents are in good health and have no serious diseases. This could be because the respondents are still considered young.

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BPS Kabupaten Indramayu. “Indramayu Dalam Angka Tahun 2021.” Website Kabupaten Indramayu (blog), 2021. <https://indramayukab.go.id/download/indramayu-dalam-angka-tahun-2021/>.

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