The Social Construction of Early Marriage in Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency

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JISI JURNAL ILMU SOSIAL INDONESIA

p-ISSN: 2808-9529 (Printed)
e-ISSN: 2808-8816 (Online)

Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI)
http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/jisi
VOL. 7, NO. 2 (2026)

Page: 202 - 213

Recommended Citation (APA Style):
The Social Construction of Early Marriage in Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency. (2026). Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI), 7(2), 202-213. https://doi.org/10.15408/jisi.v7i2.53498

Available at:
https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/jisi/article/view/53498

Article History:
Received: 2026-05-10
Accepted: 2026-11-03
Available online: 2026-11-18

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Abstract. *Early marriage in Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency, is understood through diverse perspectives and social considerations that shape its acceptance. This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to understand the experiences, meanings, perspectives, and social processes underlying the acceptance or rejection of early marriage rather than to measure relationships between variables. This study aims to analyze community perceptions of early marriage and the social construction processes underlying them, drawing on Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of social construction. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The findings indicate that informants hold varied perceptions of early marriage. Some accept it based on personal experiences and particular considerations, while others emphasize the importance of readiness and responsibility in marriage. Some also believe that children should be given room to make their own decisions based on their readiness. These differing perspectives are analyzed through the three dialectical moments of social construction: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. The findings suggest that the meanings attached to early marriage are shaped by diverse experiences and social considerations; therefore, its acceptance cannot be generalized as representing the views of the entire community.*

Keywords*: Early Marriage; Social Construction; Batang-Batang Village*

Abstrak. Pernikahan dini di masyarakat Desa Batang-Batang, Kabupaten Sumenep, berkaitan dengan beragam pandangan dan pertimbangan sosial yang memengaruhi penerimaannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis persepsi masyarakat terhadap pernikahan dini serta proses konstruksi sosial yang menyertainya berdasarkan teori konstruksi sosial Peter L. Berger dan Thomas Luckmann. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi informan terhadap pernikahan dini tidak seragam. Sebagian informan menerimanya berdasarkan pengalaman pribadi dan pertimbangan tertentu, sedangkan informan lain menekankan pentingnya kesiapan serta tanggung jawab dalam perkawinan. Terdapat pula pandangan yang memberikan ruang bagi anak untuk menentukan keputusan berdasarkan kesiapannya. Perbedaan pandangan tersebut dianalisis melalui tiga momen dialektis konstruksi sosial, yaitu eksternalisasi, objektivasi, dan internalisasi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pemaknaan terhadap pernikahan dini terbentuk melalui pengalaman dan pertimbangan sosial yang beragam, sehingga penerimaannya tidak dapat digeneralisasi sebagai pandangan seluruh masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Pernikahan Dini; Konstruksi Sosial; Desa Batang-Batang

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a social institution that plays a vital role in society because it relates to family formation, social reproduction, and the intergenerational transmission of values and norms (Octaviani & Nurwati, 2020). In its development, the practice of marriage is influenced not only by legal and religious provisions but also by cultural values, traditions, and social constructions that evolve within society. Thus, early marriage must be examined not merely as an issue of marriage age but also as a social practice that derives meaning through an individual's interaction with their surrounding environment.

Marriage is shaped not only by individual choices but also by social constructions that influence expectations surrounding marriage, particularly for women. forcing individuals particularly women to marry as a consequence of these constructs. (Octaviani & Nurwati, 2020) The average age at marriage can reflect the socioeconomic conditions of a region; the higher the proportion of young people getting married, the more this is seen as indicative of less favorable socioeconomic conditions. The belief that the sooner one marries, the better, along with concerns about premarital sex, serves as one of the driving forces behind the persistence of early marriage practices amid shifting values regarding marriage itself.

Early marriage is often viewed as a social issue because the decision to marry at a young age is not always based on readiness and overlooks psychological factors and other preparations necessary for young brides and grooms; it is also frequently accompanied by administrative issues, such as the failure to register the marriage at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) or obtain a marriage dispensation from the Religious Court (PA), thereby requiring marriage validation at a later date. Although Law No. 16 of 2019 has set the minimum marriage age for both men and women at 19 years, the practice of early marriage continues through various mechanisms, including marriage dispensations filed with the Religious Court (PA) (Grijns, et al. 2018). This phenomenon indicates that the existence of formal regulations is not always followed by changes in social practices at the community level, especially when such practices have gained cultural and moral legitimacy in daily life.

Early marriage remains a relevant social issue to study in Indonesia. According to the *People's Welfare Indicators 2024* report published by Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2024), in 2024, 8.16% of women aged 10 and older who had ever been married entered their first marriage between the ages of 10 and 15, while 25.08% entered their first marriage between the ages of 16 and 18. Combining these two age groups, approximately 33.24% of ever-married women in this population group had their first marriage before the age of 19. This figure is slightly lower than in 2023, when the combined total for both groups reached 33.87%.

This data is relevant to the Indonesian legal context. Law No. 16 of 2019 Amending Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage stipulates that marriage is permitted only if both the man and the woman have reached the age of 19. Therefore, marriages conducted before that age must be examined in light of applicable legal provisions, including the mechanism for marriage dispensations that may be granted by a court for specific reasons. Although BPS data indicates a decline in the proportion of women marrying before the age of 19, these figures do not explain how the practice of early marriage is understood and perpetuated within the social fabric of the community.

In the context of Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency, this issue must be examined not only through the lens of economic, educational, or cultural factors but also through the process of constructing social meanings surrounding early marriage. The perspectives of families and the community can influence whether marriage at a young age is viewed as a reasonable choice, a step to uphold social norms, or a decision that actually warrants reconsideration. Using the social constructionist perspective of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, this study aims to understand how such meanings are shaped through social interaction, institutionalized in community customs, and internalized by individuals. Thus, the focus of the research extends beyond identifying factors related to early marriage to examining the social processes that shape both acceptance and rejection of this practice.

Research on early marriage in Indonesia

indicates that the practice of marriage cannot be separated from the interplay of social norms, family structures, culture, religion, economic conditions, and state regulations. Rofika dan Hariastuti (2020), through a study on child marriage in Sumenep, elucidate the interconnection between sociocultural factors and the persistence of this practice. These findings suggest that marriage decisions occur within a social environment characterized by specific values and customs, and thus cannot be fully understood as purely individual choices. Similarly, Wibowo et al. (2021), through a study of 1,004 respondents— comprising parents and adolescents in Indonesia—demonstrated that perceptions supporting child marriage were present in both groups. These findings suggest that acceptance of child marriage can persist across generations through social interactions. Nevertheless, these two studies do not yet provide a sufficient basis to specifically explain how acceptance of early marriage is formed, institutionalized, and accepted as a social reality in the community of Batang-Batang Village.

At the family level, Amirah, Wahyuni, and Herawati (2025) demonstrate that decisions regarding child marriage in Bogor are linked to family structure, education, economic conditions, as well as cultural and religious norms. The family can serve as the space where marriage decisions are shaped through considerations of honor, morality, and household circumstances. This study highlights the importance of the family's role in shaping marriage decisions; however, its research context differs from that of the Batang Batang community. Furthermore, an explanation of the family's role in decision-making does not, in and of itself, elucidate how the values underpinning these decisions acquire social legitimacy and are subsequently accepted by individuals as normal. It is this aspect that requires further examination through a social constructionist perspective.

Research that directly employs a social constructionist perspective provides a theoretical foundation more closely aligned with this study. Falahudin and Damaiyanti (2024), in a study conducted in Karang Rejo Village, Tanah Laut Regency, explain how child marriage has become normalized within the community. Meanwhile, Hilmi, Karyadi, and Salsabila (2025), through their research on the sociocultural construction of child marriage among Generation Z in North Lombok, demonstrate that local traditions, religious legitimization, stigmas regarding marriage age, and gender relations collectively shape young people's perceptions of child marriage. Both studies emphasize that the practice of child marriage is not only related to causal factors but also to the social processes that shape acceptance of the practice. However, differences in geographical context and community characteristics mean that the findings of these two studies cannot be directly applied to explain the social reality in Batang-Batang Village. This study therefore needs to position the Batang-Batang community as a distinct empirical context, by examining how early marriage is interpreted and reproduced in local social life.

In the Maduran context, particularly in Sumenep Regency, several studies have explained the persistence of child marriage through sociocultural factors. Nafis (2024), using an ethnographic approach, examined the existence of child marriage in Sumenep society and highlighted the importance of traditions and customs in perpetuating the practice. Windari and Effendi (2023) also identified several factors related to child marriage, including the tan-pangantanan tradition, changes in the meaning of the tompangan tradition, the influence of religious leaders, education, economic interests, and concerns about promiscuity. Both studies share geographical and social proximity with the research conducted in Batang-Batang Village. Their contribution lies in explaining the cultural and social conditions related to the persistence of child marriage in Sumenep. However, based on the research focus presented, further analysis is still needed regarding how these elements operate in shaping social reality at the community level, including how communities produce meaning, maintain social acceptance, or question the acceptability of marriage at a young age.

The relationship between social norms and state regulations has also been a focus of previous research. Grijns and Horii (2018) demonstrate that the practice of child marriage in West Java occurs at the intersection of legal obligations, local norms, and religious considerations regarding adolescent sexuality. Horii (2020) further examines the relationship

between the legal system, religion, and customary law in the practice of religious courts in Indonesia. The study by Ahmad et al. (2023) on the "bunting lolo" practice in South Sulawesi, as well as the study by Van Bemmelen and Grijns (2018), also demonstrate that child marriage must be understood within the interplay of state law, religious law, and customary norms. This literature is important for explaining that the implementation of regulations does not occur in a social vacuum but rather engages with the values, authorities, and understandings that are alive within society. Nevertheless, these studies have different contexts and focuses from this research. Therefore, their findings are used as points of comparison to understand the relationship between social norms and regulations, not as direct evidence regarding the practice of early marriage in Batang-Batang.

Based on these studies, research on child marriage in Indonesia has addressed sociocultural factors, the role of the family, intergenerational perceptions, the normalization of marriage practices, and the relationship between local norms and state law. Research in Sumenep has also provided insights into the roles of tradition, religion, education, and economics in the persistence of child marriage. Thus, the gap in this study does not lie in the assumption that these factors have never been examined, but rather in the need to understand the process of the formation and persistence of the social meaning of early marriage within the context of Batang-Batang village society. Based on the reviewed literature, the issue that requires further exploration is how values, experiences, and social customs regarding early marriage are manifested in everyday actions, gain recognition as a prevailing reality within society, and are either accepted or questioned by individuals.

To address these issues, this study employs Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1967) social construction theory, which views social reality as the result of a dialectical process between the individual and society through externalization, objectification, and internalization. Externalization is used to analyze how meanings regarding early marriage are expressed through social actions and interactions. Objectification is used to examine how these meanings gain social legitimacy, are reproduced through customary practices, and come to be regarded as an established social reality within the community.

Meanwhile, internalization is used to examine how individuals accept, interpret, negotiate, or question this social reality. Through this framework, the research not only identifies factors related to early marriage but also analyzes the social processes that make this practice acceptable to some members of society while potentially subject to challenge by others. This focus is expected to provide a more contextual explanation of the social construction of early marriage in Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency.

Based on these studies, there is scope to deepen the analysis of how views on early marriage are formed and gain social legitimacy, as well as how those views are interpreted differently by individuals within the same community. Previous research in Sumenep has provided insights into the sociocultural factors related to the persistence of child marriage, while studies in other regions have employed a social constructionist perspective to understand the normalization and reproduction of the meaning of marriage. However, the relationship between the processes of social reality formation and variations in individual responses still requires further examination within the context of Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency. Thus, the research gap here does not lie in the assumption that sociocultural factors have never been studied, but rather in the need to explain how these factors and norms manifest in social interactions, gain recognition as something normal, and are accepted, negotiated, or questioned by individuals.

To analyze this issue, this study employs Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1967) theory of social construction. This theory explains the formation of social reality through three interrelated processes: externalization, objectification, and internalization. Externalization is used to understand how views on early marriage are expressed and reproduced through actions and social interactions. Objectivation is used to examine how these views gain social recognition and are treated as a reality considered normal in society. Meanwhile, internalization is used to understand how individuals absorb, interpret, accept, or question

the social reality that develops in their environment. These three processes serve as an analytical framework to explain the relationship between societal conditions and the diversity of individual interpretations of early marriage.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the social construction of early marriage in Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency, through the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization. This study focuses on two questions: how are views on early marriage formed and legitimized in the social interactions of the Batang-Batang community, and how do individuals accept, negotiate, or reject these views. The contribution of this study lies in its explanation of the relationship between the construction of social reality and variations in individual interpretations. Thus, early marriage is understood not only through factors related to its persistence but also through the social processes that lead some individuals to view the practice as normal, while others may question it or interpret it differently.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design. Descriptive research aims to depict, describe, or present the state of the research subject as it is, in accordance with the situation and conditions at the time the research was conducted (Sugiono, 2017). A qualitative approach was chosen because the study is not aimed at measuring relationships between variables, but rather at understanding the experiences, meanings, perspectives, and social processes underlying the acceptance or rejection of early marriage. In qualitative research, social reality is understood through the perspectives of the actors involved and the social context in which an action takes place (Creswell & Poth, 2018) ; therefore, this study focuses on the experiences of the community, parents, and couples who have experienced early marriage as the primary source for understanding how a marriage practice acquires meaning and is accepted in everyday life.

The research was conducted from September to October 2024 in Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency, East Java. The research location was selected purposefully, taking into account its relevance to the issue of early marriage within the social context of the local community. These considerations included kinship ties, interactions between families, religious and moral considerations, and the prevalence of early marriage practices, which were the focus of the study. The selection of this location was not intended to generalize the findings to the entire population of Sumenep Regency, but rather to gain a contextual understanding of the process by which early marriage acquires meaning within the studied community. In a qualitative approach, social context plays a crucial role in understanding individual actions and interpretations, as both are closely tied to the experiences and environments in which individuals interact (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on their experiences, knowledge, and relevance to the research focus. This study involved 11 informants, consisting of individuals or community members who hold views on early marriage, individuals or couples who have experienced marriage at a young age, and family members who are familiar with the marriage decision-making process. The selection of informants from diverse social positions and experiences was intended to yield data that includes not only normative judgments but also concrete experiences and the social considerations that accompany marriage decisions. As explained by Creswell and Poth (2018), the selection of participants in qualitative research must consider their ability to provide information relevant to the phenomenon under study. The 11 informants in this study were identified using the initials SA, HN, RT, EW, BS, F, FH, HW, RD, S, and SR to maintain anonymity in the presentation of the research results.

Data were collected through observation, in depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to understand the social context and interactions related to the interpretation of early marriage within the community. In-depth interviews were used to explore the informants' experiences, perspectives, considerations, and reasons for understanding this practice, including the roles of family and the social environment in shaping marriage decisions. Meanwhile, documentation

served as supporting data to supplement the information obtained from interviews and observations. The use of these three techniques allowed the researcher to compare the information obtained through informants' accounts with the available context and documents. In practice, the interview data were not treated merely as statements regarding the rightness or wrongness of early marriage, but also as material for understanding how informants construct and explain the meaning of this practice based on their social experiences.

Data analysis was conducted interactively, following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and the derivation and verification of conclusions, as developed in the qualitative data analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. During the data reduction stage, information from interviews, observations, and documentation was sorted based on its relevance to the research focus, then grouped into themes related to the interpretation of early marriage, the role of the family, social norms, religious and moral considerations, and acceptance or rejection of the practice. In the data presentation stage, the results of the grouping were organized narratively and thematically, taking into account both the similarities and differences in perspectives among informants. The next stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by re-examining the relationships between themes and checking their consistency with the available data. This analytical process was used to identify patterns of social meaning without disregarding the differences in the informants' experiences and positions.

The analytical framework is then linked to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1967) theory of social construction, specifically the concepts of externalization, objectification, and internalization. Externalization serves as a lens for examining how meanings regarding early marriage are expressed through actions, statements, and social interactions. Objectivation is used to examine how certain meanings gain social recognition, become repeated in customs, and are viewed as normal or valid within society. Internalization, meanwhile, is used to understand how individuals accept, interpret, negotiate, or question the values and meanings that develop in their environment. These three concepts are not treated as categories that automatically apply to every informant, but rather as an interpretive framework for identifying patterns emerging from the empirical data. In this way, theory is used to explain the process of social reality formation, not merely to categorize interview excerpts into three theoretical terms.

Data validity was examined through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information from informants with different experiences or social positions, such as individuals who had experienced early marriage, parents or family members, and community members familiar with the practice. Methodological triangulation involved comparing interview data with available observational data and documentation. These procedures were used to examine similarities, differences, and inconsistencies in the information obtained. Both triangulation techniques are used to assess the consistency of the information while understanding contextual differences in the data. Differences in accounts among informants are not automatically considered errors but are examined as possible reflections of differences in experience, interests, and social interpretations. Through this procedure, the research interpretation is formulated by considering the interrelationships between empirical data, social context, and the theoretical framework used.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Perceptions of the Batang-Batang Community Regarding Early Marriage

Based on the interviews, three broad tendencies were identified in the informants' views on early marriage. Some informants accepted early marriage or considered it normal under certain circumstances. Others emphasized the importance of readiness and responsibility in marriage. A third group believed that children should be allowed to make their own decisions, taking their readiness into account. In communities that accept or normalize early marriage, personal experience is a particularly strong factor. SA, for example, views marriage as a good choice when a couple feels they are a good match. She also draws on her own marriage experience as a basis for her views on marrying at a young

age.

"Mon la pade cocok apana se ekatako'e apapole akabin rea parkara se begus katembheng acarpacaran tak nanto detthi jhuduna..." ("If you're already compatible, what's there to worry about? Besides, marriage is a better option than dating, which offers no guarantee of a lasting relationship. I also got married when I was young, but to this day, thank God, my marriage is still going strong, and we even have children.") — SA

SA's experience shows that marriage at a young age can be viewed positively based on personal experience. SA considers marriage to be a good thing if the couple is compatible. SA's experience of remaining in a lasting marriage and having children serves as the basis for this view. However, this experience cannot be directly used to conclude that the entire Batang-Batang community shares a similar perspective. This finding is better understood as a form of acceptance of early marriage based on individual experience. From the perspective of Berger and Luckmann (1991), repeated experiences in daily life can become common knowledge and are subsequently used as a basis for understanding social reality. This finding aligns with Falahudin and Damaiyanti (2024), who show that child marriage can undergo a process of normalization when the practice remains a constant presence in community life. However, in the case of Batang Batang, personal experience also appears to be a key factor in maintaining this perspective. Economic reasons also play a role in families' decisions to marry off their children. RT acknowledges that the child is actually still too young, but economic circumstances lead them to view marriage as one option that might provide a better life.

"Saongghuna lakar kanak ghelluk se epakabina, tape beremmana pole cong mon kabedeen ngak rea..." ("Actually, it really is too early to marry them off, but what can we do—this is the situation we're in. It's hard to find work, so to prevent my child from ending up like me, hopefully by getting married, my child will at least have a better future.") — RT

RT's statement shows that economic considerations also influence marriage decisions within her family's experience. Limited job opportunities and the hope that her child will have a better life are part of these considerations. This finding suggests that decisions regarding marriage may be linked to the family's economic conditions. However, data from RT alone is not sufficient to conclude that economic factors are the dominant cause of early marriage throughout the village of Batang Batang. This finding aligns with the research by Amirah et al. (2025), which shows that economic conditions and family practices can influence children's marriage decisions. In the context of Batang-Batang, these economic conditions intersect with parents' experiences and hopes for their children's future. In addition to family and economic factors, the peer group also influences how children view marriage. EW explained that her desire to marry developed after she saw her friends getting married and experienced teasing from her peer group.

"Ngabesaghi nak kanak sa kanca'an pade akabin kapphi la, detthina nkok terro keya wa pade'e ben se laen melle tak ecokoco malolo moso nak kanak." ("Seeing that all my friends have gotten married, I also want to be like the others so that when we meet, I won't keep getting teased by my friends.") — EW

EW's experience demonstrates that one's social circle can influence how a person views marriage. The desire to marry after seeing friends get married—including to avoid being the subject of ridicule—reveals the presence of social influence in this individual's experience. However, this finding cannot yet be generalized as a pattern experienced by all adolescents in Batang-Batang. If FH's experience is also used to support arguments regarding the influence of peers or economic independence, the explanation must be aligned with FH's actual interview statements as recorded. In the process of social construction, experiences that recur in daily interactions can come to be regarded as normal (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). This aligns with the findings of Wibowo et al. (2021), who identified differing perceptions regarding early marriage between children and adults. The findings in Batang-Batang indicate that the peer group also plays a role in shaping these perceptions. In contrast to the group that accepts it, some

members of the community have begun to question or reject early marriage. BS, for example, observes that the custom of marrying off children at a young age is no longer entirely appropriate for the circumstances of children today. In his view, children need to be prepared before entering married life. This perspective indicates a shift in how society understands marriage. Marriage is no longer viewed merely as a continuation of family customs or traditions but is also linked to an individual's readiness. A more emphatic view is expressed by HN, who stresses that marriage is not just a matter of the marriage vows but responsibilities after marriage.

"Oreng abinia rea tak ghempang cong... bhekal detthie reng toa detthie contoh ka ana' binina sokkor dettie conoth e masyarakat." "Marriage isn't easy… it's not just about reciting the marriage vows in front of the officiant. If the goal is simply to have children, anyone can do that—even animals, like cats, can. Once married, living with a wife means providing for her, educating her children, and fulfilling other responsibilities; it means becoming a parent and a role model for one's wife and children—and, if all goes well, a role model for the community.") — HN

The views of BS and HN emphasize the importance of readiness and responsibility in marriage. HN interprets marriage not merely as the performance of the marriage vows, but also as a commitment to provide for one's wife, educate one's children, and serve as a role model within the family. These views demonstrate that marriage is understood as a relationship that demands responsibility after the wedding ceremony has taken place. However, the statements from these two informants are not sufficient to prove that the views of the Batang Batang community have changed historically. These findings more accurately indicate the existence of a perspective that places readiness and responsibility as important considerations in marriage. Meanwhile, there are also communities that do not directly accept or reject early marriage. They tend to leave the decision up to the child, provided the child is considered ready. F stated:

"Mon cakna nkok la terserah nak kanak, mon lakar siap akabin ye eparantaa se penting tak neko-neko. Mon anak seneng reng toa pagghun norok senneng." "In my opinion, it's up to the children to decide; if they're truly ready to marry, then the necessary preparations should be made—the important thing is not to make a fuss. If the children are happy, the parents are happy too." — F

F's perspective indicates that the decision to marry can be left to the child, taking their readiness into account, while the parents express their willingness to support that decision. This account demonstrates that there is room for individual consideration in decision-making regarding marriage. However, a single informant's account is not sufficient to conclude that this attitude represents a general pattern among families in Batang-Batang or is directly related to the family's age and economic circumstances.

Externalization of Views on Early Marriage

In Berger and Luckmann's (1991) framework, externalization can be understood as the process by which individuals express their views and interpretations of social reality. Based on the interviews, this process is evident in the ways informants explained their reasons for accepting, considering, or leaving marriage decisions up to their children. The economic considerations expressed by RT, EW's social experiences, and HN's emphasis on family responsibility demonstrate that interpretations of marriage are expressed through diverse experiences and considerations. These findings indicate variations in interpretations among the informants; however, they are not yet sufficient to confirm that all these perspectives have become a shared understanding within the Batang-Batang community. These perspectives do not emerge all at once but are shaped through repeated interactions. Stories about young people, the experiences of families who have married off their children, conversations among neighbors, and the experiences of those who are already married become the knowledge the community draws upon when making decisions. Because they are continually discussed and encountered in daily life, these perspectives eventually become something that is collectively recognized and understood. This aligns with research by Rofika and Hariastuti (2020) in Sumenep, which highlights the strong influence of social and cultural

factors on the practice of child marriage. Research by Windari and Effendi (2023) also indicates that the practice of child marriage in Sumenep is linked to various social, cultural, educational, and economic factors, as well as concerns about promiscuity. This study further reveals that these various factors are not only causes but also shape how the community perceives early marriage in their daily lives.

The Objectification of Early Marriage as Something Considered Normal

Objectification, in Berger and Luckmann's theory, refers to the process by which human interpretations are viewed as social realities existing independently of the individual. In this study, HW's perspective—which views marriage as a choice to avoid behavior considered deviant—reveals a moral justification for marriage in certain situations. Meanwhile, SA's experience reflects acceptance based on personal marital experience. Both accounts reveal different forms of justification, but they are not yet sufficient to assert that early marriage has become an objective norm collectively accepted by the entire Batang-Batang community. Claims regarding a shared norm need to be supported by data on recurring practices, social interactions, or broader recognition from informants.

"Kan pade tao thibik jheman kan la aobe, nak kanak ngode la pade ngarte ka cinta-cintaan. Detthi katembhang aperrean ka hal-hal se ressem mending langsung akabin." ("We all know times have changed; young people already understand romance. So rather than getting caught up in bad situations, it's better to just get married.") — HW

This statement indicates that changes in young people's social behavior are seen as a reason to expedite marriage. Marriage is then positioned as a safer path compared to allowing a child to remain in a relationship deemed problematic. At this stage, early marriage is no longer merely an individual decision but gains justification through evolving moral values within society. The same perspective is evident among some informants who link marriage to efforts to avoid adultery and preserve the family's reputation. As these views are repeatedly emphasized and accepted within the community, early marriage can be viewed as a reasonable action and even considered a form of parental responsibility. Horii (2020) demonstrates that the practice of child marriage can gain legitimacy through the intersection of local norms, religious considerations, and the legal system. Grijns and Horii (2018) also highlight the negotiation between legal obligations and religious considerations in the practice of child marriage. In the context of Batang-Batang, this objectification is also evident in the fact that many families have previously arranged marriages at a young age. These experiences then serve as a reference for other families when they face similar situations. Because the practice has been repeated, early marriage is not always viewed as something that needs to be questioned. However, this process of objectification does not entirely lead to consensus. The perspectives of BS and HN show that what is considered normal by some members of the community can still be questioned by others.

Uneven Internalization of Acceptance

Internalization refers to the process by which individuals absorb and interpret social reality within their consciousness. S's statement—that she married because she felt ready, not due to coercion or the opinions of others—indicates that personal readiness was a key factor in her decision to marry. However, this statement does not automatically prove that S's decision was entirely independent of the values and influences of her social environment. This finding is better understood as an emphasis on personal considerations in making marriage decisions. Thus, internalization in this study should be interpreted through the lens of how each informant makes sense of marriage based on their own experiences and considerations.

"Mon nkok la tak terlalu mekkere oca'na oreng. Jhek nkok abini tadek paksaan deri sapa-sapa keng lakar la apangrasa siap akeluarga." "I don't really care what people say. I got married purely because I felt ready to start a family, without any pressure from anyone." — S

S's statement shows that the values prevalent in society are not accepted uncritically. She remains within a social

environment that holds certain views on marriage, but her final decision is grounded in her personal readiness. Thus, internalization does not always mean that an individual accepts all societal views wholesale. Social values may be accepted but are then reinterpreted based on individual experiences (Sutoyib, 2025) and considerations

These findings are a crucial part of this study because they demonstrate that social constructions regarding early marriage in Batang Batang are not uniform. The study by Falahudin and Damaiyanti (2024) emphasizes the process of normalizing child marriage within society, while the study by Hilmi et al. (2025) shows that sociocultural constructions regarding marriage can also vary in the experiences of the younger generation. This study shows that within the same community, the practice of early marriage may be accepted based on personal experience, considered due to family circumstances, rejected due to issues of readiness, or negotiated by giving the child a say in the decision. (Anshary, 2026)

This, the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization do not proceed linearly and do not result in identical perspectives among all individuals. Narratives regarding morality, economics, family, social interactions, and marital experiences are first shaped through social interaction. (These narratives can then become a reality considered normal, but when they enter an individual's experience, that reality can still be accepted, negotiated, or reinterpreted. It is here that the research findings in Batang Batang reveal that the social construction of early marriage is not merely a process of normalization but also a process of negotiation between societal customs and personal considerations.

4. CONCLUSION

Early marriage in the village of Batang-Batang, Sumenep Regency, is shaped through a process of social construction that is not uniform across the community. Referring to Berger and Luckmann's three dialectical processes, during the stage of externalization, views on early marriage are formed through social interactions related to concerns about young people's socializing, out-of wedlock pregnancies, economic conditions, family experiences, and the influence of peer groups. These views then develop into knowledge that the community uses to understand and make decisions regarding marriage.

During the objectification stage, views that are constantly repeated in family and community life eventually gain legitimacy and come to be seen as normal. Early marriage, for example, is understood by some members of society as a way to protect children from social interactions deemed risky and to prevent unwanted behavior. The experiences of families who have married off their children at a young age also reinforce the perception that this practice is commonplace. However, this objectification does not mean that the entire community shares the same view. Some informants actually question early marriage and emphasize the importance of being prepared to fulfill responsibilities after marriage. During the internalization stage, the social realities that have developed in society are then accepted and reinterpreted by individuals. Research findings indicate that this process does not occur uniformly. Some informants accept the practice of early marriage because they are accustomed to it in their social environment, while others make decisions based on personal readiness and willingness. Thus, early marriage in Batang-Batang can be understood not only as the result of inherited social customs but also as the result of a negotiation process between values that have developed in society and individual considerations.

Internalization refers to the process by which individuals absorb and interpret social reality within their consciousness. Informant S's statement that she married because she felt ready—not due to coercion or the opinions of others—indicates that personal readiness was a key factor in her decision to marry. However, this statement does not automatically prove that S's decision was entirely independent of the values and influences of her social environment. This finding is better understood as an emphasis on personal considerations in making marriage decisions. Thus, internalization in this study must be interpreted through the lens of how each informant makes sense of marriage based on their own experiences and considerations. In practical terms, preventing early marriage requires more than simply emphasizing

prohibitions or expressing concerns about young people's social interactions. Such efforts must be accompanied by strengthened education, an understanding of readiness for family life, and space for children and families to consider marriage decisions more carefully. Thus, prevention is not only aimed at changing the decision to marry but also at building a social understanding that prioritizes individual readiness and the quality of family life as crucial considerations.

This study is limited by the scope of its informants and research setting, which is confined to Batang-Batang Village, Sumenep Regency. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to the entire population of Sumenep Regency. Therefore, the study's findings are not intended to represent the entire population of Sumenep. Future research could expand the sample of informants and compare communities from different age groups or regions to further examine changes in the social construction of early marriage.

5. ETHICS STATEMENT

This study underwent a retrospective ethical review conducted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, on September 25, 2026 (Reference No. B-14/F.11/TL.00/9/2026). The study was classified as involving a moderate level of ethical risk because it included interviews with individuals concerning early marriage.

The ethical considerations addressed in this study included obtaining informed consent from participants, maintaining the confidentiality of their identities, and providing special protection for participants who were minors. The researchers were also required to ensure that all data were presented in a non-stigmatizing, objective, and responsible manner, without causing harm to participants or the communities studied. Following a review of the submitted research documents, the Research Ethics Committee concluded that no ethical concerns were identified.

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