THE EFFECT OF ATTITUDE AND SUBJECTIVE NORM ON PARENTS' INTENTION TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE IN PIDIE REGENCY

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Abstract

Child marriage remains a public health concern influenced by individual, family, social, and cultural factors. Parents play an important role in decisions concerning their children's marriage; therefore, understanding the factors that shape parents' intention to prevent child marriage is essential. This study aimed to analyze the effects of attitude and subjective norm on parents' intention to prevent child marriage in Pidie Regency. A quantitative cross-sectional design was used. The respondents were 194 parents of adolescents aged 10–18 years living in the coastal areas of Pidie Regency, covering Simpang Tiga, Kembang Tanjong, Batee, and Muara Tiga subdistricts, and were recruited using total sampling. Attitude was measured through behavioral beliefs and evaluations of behavior, whereas subjective norm was measured through normative beliefs and motivation to comply. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS version 4.0. The results showed that 46.9% of respondents had a good intention and 26.8% had a very good intention to prevent child marriage. Attitude had a positive path coefficient toward intention (β = 0.342), while subjective norm also had a positive path coefficient (β = 0.204). The path coefficient for attitude was higher than that for subjective norm in the structural model. These findings indicate that more favorable parental attitudes and more supportive subjective norms are associated with stronger intentions to prevent child marriage. Prevention efforts should strengthen parental attitudes and reinforce social support from families and communities.

Keywords: Attitude; Subjective Norm; Intention; Child Marriage; Parents

1. INTRODUCTION

Child marriage remains a public health and social concern with broad consequences for adolescents, particularly girls. The practice is associated with interrupted education, increased vulnerability to violence, restricted social and economic opportunities, and reproductive health risks arising from pregnancy and childbirth at a young age. Preventing child marriage is also an important development priority because the practice has long-term consequences for health, well-being, and the quality of life of women and future generations [1].

In Indonesia, child marriage continues to occur despite the government's increase of the minimum legal age of marriage to 19 years for both men and women through Law No. 16 of 2019. Child marriage is not solely a regulatory issue; it is also influenced by cultural, economic, educational, knowledge-related, religious, and family social-environment factors. In Aceh, Pidie Regency is among the areas facing this issue. The data used in this study indicated that the proportion of child marriage in Pidie reached 39.39%, and applications for underage marriage dispensation were still recorded. These conditions suggest that preventing child marriage cannot rely on regulation alone, but must also consider the social and family factors underlying decisions concerning child marriage [2].

Parents play an important role because decisions concerning child marriage within the family are not always determined entirely by adolescents themselves. Economic conditions, poverty, social norms, culture, religious values, concerns about adolescent relationships, and community views regarding the appropriate age of marriage may influence family decisions. The preliminary study also identified parental considerations related to household economic capacity, dowry, children's education, concerns about premarital sexual relationships, and social perceptions of unmarried girls. These findings indicate that parents may serve as key decision-makers in either supporting or preventing child marriage [3].

To understand how parents' intention to prevent child marriage is formed, this study applied the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Within TPB, intention is an important determinant that precedes behavior and is influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of a behavior and is shaped by behavioral beliefs and evaluations of behavioral consequences. Subjective norm reflects an individual's perception of the expectations or social pressure of significant others in deciding whether to perform a behavior. Accordingly, a more favorable attitude toward preventing child marriage and supportive social norms may strengthen parents' intention to prevent child marriage [4].

Several previous studies support an association between attitude, subjective norm, and intention in relation to child marriage. Ngalimatul (2018) reported that attitude and subjective norm positively influenced the intention to prevent child marriage. Research in coastal communities has also shown that attitude and subjective norm contribute to changes in parents' intention regarding child marriage [5]. However, Stacia (2016) reported somewhat different findings: when TPB components were analyzed jointly, they were associated with intention, whereas subjective norm was not associated with child-marriage intention when analyzed separately. These differences suggest that the relationships of attitude and subjective norm with intention may vary according to individual characteristics and the social and cultural context [6].

Although previous studies have identified various factors associated with child marriage, research specifically focusing on parents' intention to prevent it remains relatively limited. Earlier studies have more often examined intention or decision-making from the adolescent perspective or have assessed general factors related to age at marriage. Yet within the family context, parents play an important role in decisions concerning their children's marriage. Research on delaying the age of marriage has also shown that knowledge and psychosocial factors are related to the formation of intentions to marry or postpone marriage [7].

Against this background, understanding parental attitude and subjective norm is important for designing child-marriage prevention strategies that are grounded in family and community social contexts. Examining these two constructs can provide insight into how parents' beliefs about the consequences of prevention, together with social support or pressure from family and the surrounding environment, shape their intention to take preventive action, as described in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the effects of attitude and subjective norm on parents' intention to prevent child marriage in Pidie Regency.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative observational approach with a cross-sectional design, in which the independent and dependent variables were measured during the same period. The study was conducted in the coastal areas of Pidie Regency across four subdistricts: Simpang Tiga, Kembang Tanjong, Batee, and Muara Tiga. Quantitative data were collected from December 2023 to June 2024. The analysis presented in this article focuses on the effects of attitude and subjective norm on parents' intention to prevent child marriage as part of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model used in the main study.

The study population comprised all parents of adolescents aged 10–18 years who lived in the study area. Based on data from the Gampong Information System (SIGAP), 194 families met the population criteria, and the entire population was included using total sampling, resulting in a sample of 194 parents. The respondents included 54 parents from Simpang Tiga, 41 from Kembang Tanjong, 50 from Batee, and 49 from Muara Tiga. The inclusion criteria were: being a parent of an adolescent and residing

in the study area; being the parent (father or mother) who predominantly made decisions related to the child's marriage; being able to read and write; being present at the study site; and voluntarily agreeing to participate.

The independent variables analyzed in this article were attitude and subjective norm, while the dependent variable was parents' intention to prevent child marriage. Attitude was measured through two TPB components, namely behavioral beliefs and evaluations of behavior. Subjective norm was measured through normative beliefs and motivation to comply. Intention was defined as the desire that motivates parents to take action to prevent child marriage. Measurements were obtained using a four-point questionnaire containing favorable and unfavorable statements. Scores for each construct were subsequently categorized as very good, good, poor, or very poor according to the cut-off values established in the study instrument.

The study instrument was pretested among 30 respondents in Trienggadeng Subdistrict, Pidie Jaya Regency. Validity was assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, with an r-table value of 0.361. All items measuring attitude, subjective norm, and intention were declared valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded values of 0.767 for behavioral beliefs, 0.695 for evaluations of behavior, 0.841 for normative beliefs, 0.876 for motivation to comply, and 0.721 for intention to prevent child marriage. All values exceeded the reliability threshold of 0.60, indicating acceptable instrument reliability.

Data were collected once from each respondent using a researcher-administered questionnaire. Before data collection, respondents received an explanation of the study objectives and procedures and subsequently provided informed consent. The study underwent ethical review by the Health Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Dental Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, and research permission was obtained from the relevant authorities in Pidie Regency. Respondent confidentiality was maintained through identity coding, and the data were used solely for research purposes.

Data processing involved editing, coding, data entry, and verification. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the distribution of parental attitude, subjective norm, and intention. Relationships among variables were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS version 4.0. Evaluation of the measurement model included factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity, and composite reliability, whereas the structural model was used to estimate the direction and magnitude of the relationships of attitude and subjective norm with intention to prevent child marriage.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the main findings in a systematic sequence, including respondent characteristics, the distributions of attitude, subjective norm, and intention, patterns among their components, and the structural analysis of attitude and subjective norm in relation to parents' intention to prevent child marriage.

1.1 Respondent characteristics

The characteristics of the 194 study respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Respondent characteristics (n = 194)*

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	21–35 years	15	7.7
	36–45 years	68	35.1
	46–65 years	111	57.2
Education	No formal education	15	7.7
	Elementary school	43	22.2
	Junior high school	67	34.5
	Senior high school	52	26.8
	Diploma/Bachelor's degree	17	8.8
Parity	1 child	34	17.5
	>1–4 children	69	35.6
	>4 children	91	46.9
Income	Low	106	54.6
	High	88	45.4

Most respondents were aged 46–65 years (57.2%), followed by those aged 36–45 years (35.1%) and 21–35 years (7.7%). Regarding educational attainment, the largest proportion had completed junior high school (34.5%), followed by senior high school (26.8%) and elementary school (22.2%). A total of 46.9% of respondents had more than four children, while 54.6% were classified as having low household income.

1.2 Distribution of attitude, subjective norm, and intention

The distributions of the main study variables are presented in Table 2. Attitude was measured through behavioral beliefs and evaluations of behavior, whereas subjective norm was measured through normative beliefs and motivation to comply.

Table 2. *Distribution of attitude, subjective norm, and intention to prevent child marriage (n = 194)*

Main variable	Component	Very poor n (%)	Poor n (%)	Good n (%)	Very good n (%)
Attitude	*Behavioral beliefs*	3 (1.5)	51 (26.3)	96 (49.5)	44 (22.7)
	Evaluations of behavior	4 (2.1)	49 (25.3)	92 (47.4)	49 (25.3)
Subjective norm	*Normative beliefs*	0 (0.0)	54 (27.8)	66 (34.0)	74 (38.1)
	Motivation to comply	17 (8.8)	47 (24.2)	51 (26.3)	79 (40.7)
Intention	-	4 (2.1)	47 (24.2)	91 (46.9)	52 (26.8)

For attitude, 49.5% of respondents had good behavioral beliefs and 47.4% had good evaluations of behavior. For subjective norm, 38.1% of respondents had very good normative beliefs and 40.7% had very good motivation to comply. Regarding intention to prevent child marriage, 46.9% of respondents were categorized as good and 26.8% as very good.

Descriptively, the predominance of good and very good categories across attitude, subjective norm, and intention indicates that most parents had orientations supportive of child-marriage prevention. In the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitude is shaped by beliefs about behavioral consequences and evaluations of those consequences, whereas subjective norm is related to normative beliefs and motivation to comply with the expectations of significant others [8], [9]. Thus, the distribution in Table 2 provides an initial indication that both personal beliefs and social influences are

relevant to the formation of intention. Nevertheless, 26.3% of respondents still had poor or very poor intention, indicating that favorable attitudes and supportive social norms require further strengthening.

1.3 Patterns among attitude, subjective norm, and intention

Cross-tabulation showed a consistent pattern among the components of attitude, subjective norm, and intention. Among respondents with good behavioral beliefs, 72.9% also had good intention, while 70.5% of those with very good behavioral beliefs had very good intention. For evaluations of behavior, the corresponding proportions were 67.4% and 65.3%, respectively. Regarding subjective norm, 75.9% of respondents with poor normative beliefs also had poor intention, whereas 77.3% of those with good normative beliefs had good intention. For motivation to comply, 84.3% of respondents in the good category had good intention, while 57.0% of those in the very good category had very good intention. This pattern indicates that more supportive components of attitude and subjective norm tended to accompany stronger intention to prevent child marriage.

This pattern is consistent with the study by Sary [10] in a coastal community, which reported that attitude and subjective norm contributed to changes in parents' intention regarding child marriage, with regression coefficients of 0.277 and 0.198, respectively. The finding also supports the view that decisions concerning child marriage are influenced not only by individual evaluations but also by social expectations and norms within families and communities [11]. However, the cross-tabulations in the present study are descriptive; therefore, these patterns are not interpreted as evidence of statistical significance or causal relationships, but rather as contextual information for interpreting the structural model.

1.4 Effect of attitude and subjective norm on intention

The effects of attitude and subjective norm on intention were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), and the resulting path coefficients are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Path coefficients of attitude and subjective norm on parents' intention to prevent child marriage*

Relationship	Path coefficient (β)	Direction
Attitude → Intention	0.342	Positive
Subjective norm → Intention	0.204	Positive

The results showed a positive path coefficient from attitude to intention (β = 0.342) and from subjective norm to intention (β = 0.204). Of the two variables examined in this article, attitude had the larger path coefficient. Thus, a more favorable attitude and a stronger subjective norm were associated with stronger parental intention to prevent child marriage.

These findings are consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which positions attitude and subjective norm as determinants of intention [8], [9]. The larger coefficient for attitude indicates that parents' evaluation of the consequences of preventing child marriage made a stronger structural contribution to intention than perceived social pressure or support. The direction of these findings is also consistent with Sary [10], who reported coefficients of 0.277 for attitude and 0.198 for subjective norm in a model of changes in parental intention in a coastal community. This similarity in direction underscores the importance of considering both personal and social factors when examining parents' intention to prevent child marriage [12].

From a practical perspective, these results indicate that child-marriage prevention programs should strengthen parents' beliefs regarding the benefits of delaying marriage while simultaneously building social support from families and communities. The literature on child marriage also emphasizes that social norms and environmental expectations can influence marriage-related decisions [13]. Given the cross-sectional design of this study, the path coefficients should be interpreted as structural relationships within the SEM-PLS model rather than as evidence of causality.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that parental attitude and subjective norm were positively associated with parents' intention to prevent child marriage in the study areas of Pidie Regency. Attitude had a positive path coefficient toward intention (β = 0.342), and subjective norm also had a positive path coefficient (β = 0.204). The path coefficient for attitude was higher than that for subjective norm, indicating a stronger structural contribution of attitude to parental intention within the model.

These findings highlight the importance of strengthening parental attitudes that support the prevention of child marriage and fostering supportive social norms within families and communities. Prevention efforts should therefore not only provide information to parents but also reinforce beliefs about the benefits of delaying marriage and encourage social support from family members and the wider community to strengthen parents' intention to prevent child marriage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge all parties who supported this research. Appreciation is extended to the local government and relevant institutions in Pidie Regency, including subdistrict and village administrations, health authorities, religious affairs offices, women and child empowerment and protection agencies, health professionals, village midwives, and community health cadres who supported the research process. Special thanks are extended to all parents who participated as respondents and generously contributed their time and information to this study.

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