



Theological Construction of Women: Sexuality and Power in Early Marriage

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Received: May 12, 2026; Revised: July 7, 2026, Accepted: July 7, 2026, Published: July 13, 2026

Abstract: This study examines early marriage as a social practice constructed and sustained through patriarchal systems of knowledge. It analyzes how religious discourse, cultural traditions, and power relations legitimize early marriage as a socially accepted norm while proposing a more egalitarian reconstruction of theological knowledge. This research employs a qualitative method, using a descriptive-critical approach and Michel Foucault's discourse analysis, to investigate how knowledge about women's bodies, sexuality, morality, and marriage is produced, disseminated, and regulated through families, religious authorities, cultural leaders, and social institutions. Data were collected through a literature review of scholarly publications, legal regulations, and documented social phenomena related to early marriage. The findings demonstrate that early marriage is not merely driven by economic hardship or limited educational opportunities but is deeply embedded in patriarchal knowledge systems that reinforce unequal gender relations. Dominant discourses concerning sexual morality, family honor, female virginity, and marriage as the primary solution to moral concerns create strong social pressure on young women to marry at an early age. These narratives position women as objects of social control while legitimizing gender inequality through religious and cultural interpretations. Therefore, preventing early marriage requires more than legal reform or economic intervention. It also demands the reconstruction of theological, educational, and cultural knowledge that challenges patriarchal assumptions and promotes gender justice. Such transformation should involve families, educational institutions, religious leaders, communities, and the state in fostering egalitarian values, strengthening child protection, expanding women's autonomy, protecting human dignity, for future generations.

Keywords: construction; discursive; early-age marriage; normative; sexuality; theological.

Introduction

Wedding early still becomes problem social serious in Indonesia because influenced by religious, cultural, economic, educational and construction factors social about women. In Lots society, women often positioned as the party that must quick married to protect honor family. View This born from culture patriarchal and religious interpretation normative which places Woman especially as wife and mother (Himawan & Surijah, 2022). As a result, marriage early considered reasonable even viewed as solution on problem social certain. Child marriage remains a significant and complex social challenge in Indonesia, driven by a deep-seated confluence of religious, cultural, economic, and educational factors. Within many communities, the social construction of gender often positions women as the primary guardians of family honor, leading to immense pressure to marry young as a means of safeguarding a family's reputation. This phenomenon is largely rooted in a patriarchal culture and normative religious interpretations that narrowly define a woman's societal value through her roles as a wife and mother (Becker et al., 2026). Consequently, instead of being viewed as a

violation of rights, early marriage is frequently perceived as a reasonable—and sometimes even necessary—solution to various social and financial pressures.

In addition, the construction social about sexuality participates strengthen practice said. Women often viewed as symbol honor family, so when happen connection teenagers who are considered violate norms or pregnancy outside of marriage, the road selected exit is marry children at the age of young. This is show that body and future Woman often controlled by social norms, not choice personal they alone (Rohmaniyah, 2022). Furthermore, the social construction of sexuality significantly reinforces the practice of child marriage. Women are frequently viewed as the ultimate symbols of family honor; as a result, when teenagers engage in relationships deemed to violate social norms, or in cases of unintended pregnancy, early marriage is often treated as the primary "exit strategy" to restore the family's standing. This underscores a reality where a woman's body and future are largely dictated by rigid social expectations rather than her own personal agency or choice. Consequently, marriage becomes a tool for social control, prioritizing the preservation of communal reputation over the long-term well-being and developmental rights of the young girls involved (Baird et al., 2024).

Phenomenon wedding early is also related to family as institutions social main. Family should become place education, protection and guidance value. However, when function family weakening, in fact appear encouragement marry child Because reason economy, tradition, or pressure environment. In Islamic perspective, family own position important as foundation community and place build a healthy, educated, and moral generation (Nurhuda, 2023). However, some public understand religious teachings in general narrow so that used for justify wedding early without consider readiness physical, mental, and social child.

The phenomenon of early marriage is also intrinsically linked to the family's role as a primary social institution. Ideally, the family serves as a sanctuary for education, protection, and the cultivation of values; however, when these functions are compromised, the family may instead push for a child's marriage due to economic hardship, deep-seated tradition, or external environmental pressure. From an Islamic perspective, the family holds a vital position as the foundation of society, intended to nurture a healthy, educated, and morally upright generation (Qoyimah, 2025). Nevertheless, some segments of the public interpret religious teachings in a narrow sense, using them to justify early unions while neglecting the critical importance of a child's physical, mental, and social readiness for such a lifelong commitment.

The data shows that number wedding early in Indonesia still high. Unicef once placing Indonesia as one of the countries with number wedding early the highest in the world. The 2010 Riskesdas data released by the BKKBN shows that the age of marriage first ages 15–19 years reached 41.9 percent. Practice this more lots happened in the countryside compared to urban, which shows connection close between education, poverty, and limitations access information.

A number of area experience impact real. In West Nusa Tenggara, the height wedding early associated with increasing number death mother and divorce. In Yogyakarta, the application dispensation marry enough high, many of them because pregnancy no desired. In Ponorogo, East Java, the majority dispensation mating is also triggered pregnancy teenagers, even increased during the pandemic. This fact show that wedding early often made into solution fast on problem teenagers, even though precisely cause problem new (Amanit & Willyam, 2025).

Several regions across Indonesia are currently experiencing the tangible and devastating impacts of this phenomenon, revealing that early marriage is often a misguided "quick fix" that inevitably triggers a cycle of new, more complex problems. In West Nusa Tenggara, the high prevalence of early marriage is directly correlated with a distressing surge in maternal mortality rates and a rise in instability within the home, leading to frequent divorces. Similarly, in Yogyakarta, the rate of marriage dispensations remains alarmingly high, with a significant number of these cases being driven by unintended pregnancies. This trend is mirrored in Ponorogo, East Java, where the demand for marriage dispensations—primarily triggered by adolescent pregnancies—actually saw a sharp increase during the pandemic. These facts underscore a troubling reality: rather than acting as a sustainable solution for social or economic challenges, early marriage often sacrifices the long-term health and stability of the youth for a temporary resolution to immediate social pressures (Ngidi et al., 2025).

Impact wedding early very broad, especially for women. From the side health, pregnancy age young risky tall cause complications childbirth and death Mother and baby. From the side education, children married women early tend separated school so that lost chance increase quality live. From the side psychologically, they lost adolescence and had to face not quite enough answer House ladder when not yet ripe in a way emotional. From the side economy, couple young generally not yet own work still so that prone to experience conflict house household, violence, and divorce (Syarifudin et al., 2025).

In a way overall, marriage early is form gender inequality because rob right child Woman on education, health, development self and freedom determine the future. Therefore that, the handling must done in a way comprehensive through strengthening family, improvement access education, empowerment economy community, protection law to children, and a deeper understanding of religion fair and contextual. With step said, practice wedding early can pressed and quality Indonesian families can improved.

Method

Study This use approach qualitative with type study descriptive-critical approach This chosen because study aim for understand and reveal in a way deep construction theological normative woman in practice wedding early, especially in relation with sexuality and relationships growing power in Society. This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing a descriptive-critical framework. This methodology was specifically selected to facilitate a profound understanding and a rigorous unveiling of the normative theological constructions of women within the practice of early marriage (Nicmanis, 2024). By adopting a critical lens, the research delves deep into how these constructions intersect with female sexuality and the prevailing power dynamics within society.

The goal is not merely to describe the phenomenon but to interrogate the underlying systems of knowledge that legitimize early marriage, specifically looking at how power is distributed and exercised to regulate the female body. Through this approach, the study seeks to expose the structural and ideological roots that perpetuate these practices, providing a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between religious interpretation, social norms, and the marginalization of young women (Nicmanis, 2024). When marriage is framed as the ultimate theological solution for managing sexual desire, the concept of a woman's individual agency—her right to choose her path, her timing, and her partner—is significantly eroded. The dominant narrative focuses on the "safety" of the community and the family's honor, effectively silencing the girl's aspirations and emotional readiness. This results in a social environment where a woman's value is determined by her adherence to these protective norms rather than her contributions as an independent individual.

Framework analysis used referring to the analysis discourse critical Michel Foucault's perspective, which emphasizes that knowledge, including knowledge religious, no nature neutral, but rather produced through relation power and function for control as well as arrange behavior social. Through approach this research make an effort identify How discourse about women, sexuality, and marriage early constructed, disseminated, and legitimized in room social. Data sources in study This consists of on secondary data, which was obtained through studies literature to various document scientific, such as books, journals academic, report research, regulation government, as well as publication institution relevant related with issue wedding early, gender, and sexuality. In addition, the data is also strengthened with phenomenon social development in society as context analysis. Data collection techniques are carried out through studies documentation, namely with trace, identify, and examine various source written related with focus research. The collected data Then analyzed use technique analysis discourse, which includes a number of stages, namely: (1) identification discourse dominant related women and marriage early; (2) analysis relation between knowledge and power in formation of social norms; and (3) interpretation critical to implications discourse the to practice social and gender inequality (Braun & Clarke, 2025).

For guard data validity, this research use triangulation source, namely with compare various different references and perspectives in order to obtain comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, the results analysis served in a way descriptive-analytical with emphasize on efforts deconstruction to discourse patriarchal as well as offer reconstruction more knowledge egalitarian and gender-just (Schlunegger et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

Marriage and Dimensional Construction Woman

1. *Diversity of Perspectives in the Discourse on Understanding Children*

Wedding early is marriages conducted by individuals who are still classified as children according to provision age certain. Definition children in Indonesia still diverse in various regulation legislation. Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection said child as someone who has not 18 years old. In line with that, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) defines wedding early as marriage under age 18 years, when child Woman Not yet Ready in a way physical, physiological, and psychological for undergo not quite enough answer marriage and childbirth (Gunawan & Bahri, 2023).

Early marriage is fundamentally defined as a marital union involving individuals who are still legally classified as children under specific age provisions. In the Indonesian context, the definition of a "child" has historically varied across different legislative frameworks, creating a degree of legal ambiguity; however, Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection explicitly defines a child as any person who has not yet reached the age of 18. This domestic standard aligns with the global perspective held by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), which characterizes early marriage as any union occurring before the age of 18 (Lansdown & Vaghri, 2022). The core concern of this definition lies in the fact that, at this stage of development, a young woman is often not yet physically, physiologically, or psychologically prepared to shoulder the profound responsibilities of marriage and the health risks associated with early childbirth. By formalizing these age thresholds, both national law and international organizations emphasize that entering into marriage during childhood deprives individuals of their formative years and poses a significant threat to their long-term well-being and developmental potential.

The establishment of a 18-year age threshold emphasizes that, from the dual perspectives of children's rights and gender justice, marriage should fundamentally be prohibited before reaching this stage of maturity. While a young woman may be biologically capable of conceiving, she is often significantly underprepared—both mentally and socially—to navigate the complex, demanding roles of a wife and mother. Despite this, the definition of childhood remains inconsistent across the Indonesian legal landscape; for instance, Law No. 4 of 1979 considers individuals as children until they reach 21, provided they are unmarried (Ropei et al., 2023).

This sits in stark contrast to the older Marriage Law, which historically permitted men to marry at 19 and women at just 16 years of age (Mieth et al., 2025). Such legal discrepancies reveal a deep-seated contestation in state policy regarding the protection of minors. Consequently, the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) has harshly criticized these lower age limits, arguing that they effectively legalize child marriage and violate a girl's fundamental right to grow, develop, and live a life free from violence and systemic discrimination.

Age limit 18 years show that from perspective right children and gender justice, marriage should no done before age said. Although teenager Woman Possible has ripe in a way biological, often they not yet ready both mentally and social for become wife and mother. However, the definition child in other regulations are different. Law No. 4 of 1979 states child is those who have not 21 years old and not yet married (Van Roost et al., 2022). Meanwhile Constitution Long marriage permits man married at the age of 19 years and women at 16 years (Moelyono et al., 2022). The difference This show existence contestation state policy regarding age limits children. The National Commission on Violence Against Women criticized rule the because considered legalize marriage children and violate right child woman for grow, develop, and get protection from violence and discrimination (Zai & Lawalata, 2025).

2. *Sexuality and Power Relations*

In a way etymological, sexuality originate from the word "sex" which refers to differences biological between men and women. However, the meaning sexuality develop morewide since 18th century. Michel Foucault through *The History of Sexuality* explain that sexuality No just problem biological, but construction related social with knowledge, norms, behavior, and subjectivity human (Foucault, 1978). Sexuality covers values, rules, and norms that govern behavior sexual in society. Through sexuality, society determine actions that are considered reasonable or deviate, when activity sexual

considered proper done, as well as how express it. Therefore, sexuality is greatly influenced culture, religion, law, education, and systems social others. Different with sex that focuses on aspects biological and gender related with role social men and women, sexuality own coverage morebroad. Sexuality covering aspect biological, psychological, social, cultural, identity self, as well as relation between individuals. According to Foucault, sexuality related close with connection knowledge and power. Every rule about morality, purity, relationships sexuality, and gender roles are results system power formed by the state, religion, family and education. he explained three element main sexuality: formation knowledge about sex, the system of norms that regulates behavior sexual, and individual processes recognize himself as subject sexual. With thus, sexuality is experience historical events that continue shaped by culture and power (Shiddieqy et al., 2025).

3. *Discourse Sexuality in System Power Knowledge*

Sexuality related close with construction values, norms, and ethics that determine behavior which sexual orientation is considered normal, ideal, or deviate in society. The norms formed by agents or institutions that have power, such as family, religion, state, and education, then made into tool for arrange practice sexuality. According to Michel Foucault, discourse is commodities politics at work through mechanism restrictions, prohibitions, and exceptions. Therefore, the relationship sexual in marriage often considered valid, whereas Premarital pregnancy is seen as immoral (Foucault, 1975).

The concept of sexuality is inextricably linked to the social construction of values, norms, and ethics that dictate which behaviors and orientations are deemed normal, ideal, or deviant within a given society. These norms are not naturally occurring; rather, they are meticulously crafted by influential institutions—such as the family, religious organizations, the state, and the education system—which utilize their power to regulate and discipline sexual practices. Drawing on the theories of Michel Foucault, these sexual discourses function as political commodities that operate through complex mechanisms of restriction, prohibition, and systemic exclusion (Sargiacomo, 2009). By establishing what is "permissible," these institutions exert control over the individual body. Consequently, within this framework, sexual relations are only validated and sanctioned when they occur within the legal and religious confines of marriage. Conversely, premarital pregnancy is stigmatized as a profound moral failure, not necessarily because of the act itself, but because it exists outside the rigid boundaries of the "valid" sexual discourse established by those in power (Foucault, 1991).

Sexuality own dimensions wide, covering biological, psychological, social, cultural, and political. In general biological, sexuality related with reproductive organs and functions body. In a way psychological, sexuality concerning identity self, feelings, and experiences sexual individual (Foucault, 1991). In social culture, sexuality influenced constructed meaning public about with who, when, and how connection sexual may carried out. Norms of masculinity, femininity, and religious teachings also form view public to sexuality, including issue polygamy, sex premarital and marriage early (Ashari, 2024).

Foucault asserts that power omnipresent and working through practice social everyday. Therefore, the behavior sexual no solely choice personal, but influenced class social, religious, gender, and cultural analysis sexuality aim reveal who is speaking about sexuality, institutions what legitimizes, as well as how knowledge the form control social and relations power in public (Sarigol, 2022).

Patriarchy in Religious Interpretation

1. *Wedding Early Childhood as a Stimulus for Women's Worship*

Discourse wedding in mainstream Islamic views main generally understood as bond holy between men and women who have base theological strong. One of the legitimacy normative there is in Qs. An-Nisa' verse 21 which mentions marriage as *mitsaqan ghalizha* or solid agreement. Based on understanding this, the majority Muslim society views wedding as religious orders and their implementation has the value of worship (Widjaja, 2023).

In mainstream Islamic discourse, marriage is predominantly understood as a sacred and hallowed bond between a man and a woman, anchored by a profound theological foundation. One of the primary sources of normative legitimacy for this view is found in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah An-Nisa, verse 21, which characterizes marriage as *mitsaqan ghalizha*—a "solemn covenant" or a firm and weighty agreement (Musthofa & Syafi'i, 2023). This terminology elevates the marital union

beyond a mere social contract, imbuing it with deep spiritual significance. Consequently, the vast majority of Muslim society perceives marriage not only as a fulfillment of religious tradition but as a fundamental act of worship (ibadah). By viewing marriage through this sacred lens, the implementation of the wedding and the subsequent commitment to family life are seen as essential steps in achieving spiritual completion and adhering to divine command, further reinforcing its central importance within the community's social and religious fabric.

Knowledge about Marry as a form of worship as well as strengthened by religious figures, institutions religious and government through various social strategies. Views the Then standardized become norms, rules and ethics that regulate behavior society. As a result, it was formed system discursive that places wedding as standard normality social, whereas individuals who have not Marry often considered not ideal or deviate from hope public. Strengthening discourse ongoing through mechanism cultural, religious, and political. In general cultural, marriage norms embedded as awareness collectively. In religious, values the socialized through recitations, wedding sermons, and religious rituals. By politics, views This strengthened through related state policies with family and marriage (Widjaja, 2023).

In context wedding early, powerful knowledge about Marry as a form of worship big. Difference fundamental between readiness of adults and children often neglected. As a result, theology become dominant in justify practice wedding early, while perspective health reproduction, psychology, education, and economics not enough get attention in form policy and view public.

2. *Antithesis Sex Freedom from Immorality in Early Marriage*

The phenomenon of early marriage is based on norms constructed in a binary opposition between religious norms that permit early marriage and those that prohibit promiscuous sexual behavior and sexual relations outside of marriage. Field research found that most informants subjectively stated that early marriage, according to Islam, is even better. Religious figures, in this case, are one of the agents perpetuating the discourse and practice of early marriage (Worku, 2024).

The phenomenon of early marriage is fundamentally anchored in a framework of binary oppositions, where religious norms permitting early unions are positioned against strict prohibitions on promiscuous behavior and extramarital sexual relations (McLean & Dixon, 2025). This binary creates a social landscape where early marriage is not merely an option but is framed as a moral necessity to prevent perceived sin. Field research indicates that many individuals subjectively view early marriage through a positive Islamic lens, often considering it a superior or "safer" spiritual path compared to the risks of modern dating. In this context, religious figures act as powerful agents of discourse, frequently perpetuating and legitimizing the practice by framing it as a religious safeguard. By prioritizing the prevention of "zina" (illicit sex) over the physical and psychological readiness of the youth, these influential figures help solidify early marriage as a culturally and religiously sanctioned solution to the anxieties of the modern age.

Knowledge based on the religious understanding of religious figures, such as ustadz/ustadzah, is standardized into norms that then regulate societal actions. The knowledge that *"early marriage is better than casual sex"* becomes a norm that within the power system systematically reinforces the practice of early marriage, so that early marriage is viewed as a religious norm. The knowledge that *"marrying young is better because it reduces sin"* also becomes a theological and cultural norm that drives society's subjective interpretation of the practice. Discourse choice extreme between perform worship or to sin to become system knowledge that is confirmed by religious authorities and institutionalized in form of norm or rules (Abdullah et al., 2026). This is furthermore confirm practice wedding early as a valuable norm reward so that must perpetuated.

3. *Early Marriage as a Priority Men over Women*

Discourse and practice wedding early strengthen because existence hegemony knowledge about masculinity in marriage. Men positioned as seeker living main, leader family, and parties who have authority moretall in house stairs. This view reinforced by religious interpretations that place man as guarantor answer economy and protection women, while Woman considered depend on men as well as only as seeker living addition (Khawar, 2024).

The discourse and practice of early marriage are further entrenched by a pervasive hegemony of knowledge regarding traditional masculinity within the marital institution. Under this framework,

men are socially and structurally positioned as the primary breadwinners, the undisputed leaders of the family unit, and the figures who wield ultimate authority within the domestic sphere. This hierarchical view is frequently reinforced by specific religious interpretations that cast the husband as the sole guarantor of economic stability and the physical protector of his household (Refat, 2024). Conversely, women are marginalized within this narrative, often viewed as inherently dependent on their male counterparts and relegated to the role of secondary contributors whose economic endeavors are seen as mere supplements to the husband's primary income (Abubakari, 2024). This rigid gender construction not only validates early marriage as a means of establishing male dominance early on but also strips young women of their financial independence and decision-making power from the very start of their adult lives.

Construction the give birth to unequal relations, where women and children viewed must submit to power men. In system patriarchal, marriage early considered as good choice, is n't it? only for prevent behavior that is considered deviate, but also for move not quite enough answer guard Woman from father to husband. This view often delivered in the wedding sermon or advice social in society. Marriage early become lasting because strong belief about superiority men and assumptions that woman weak as well as need protection. Patriarchal interpretation of religion Then standardized become a social norm that legitimizes practice as a result, society look at wedding early as something that is natural, normal, and even religious, even though in reality strengthen gender inequality and limit right woman for develop (Aminah & Sugitanata, 2022).

4. *Early Marriage as a Commodity of Economic Power*

Condition low economy make perpetrator wedding early decide for married. There is no cost school become reason they for separated school. Even though they actually also want to still school but condition the parents' economy is very worrying, they no capable for send to school their children. So that parents more like if they go work some migrated out of town, working in Jakarta, Bali, and Yogyakarta. Considering that working outside the city is more promising and can yield substantial profits, and the results are quite fantastic, they generally work outside the city by opening grocery stores, from working as grocery store clerks or opening their own grocery stores as their own businesses.

The decision to enter into an early marriage is often driven by severe economic hardship, which forces families to prioritize immediate survival over long-term development. A lack of financial resources for education frequently compels students to drop out, as parents find themselves unable to cover the rising costs of schooling (Assefa et al., 2023). While many of these young individuals harbor a desire to continue their education, their families' dire financial conditions make school seem like an unattainable luxury. Consequently, parents often encourage their children to enter the workforce, with many migrating to major cities such as Jakarta, Bali, or Yogyakarta.

In these urban centers, the prospect of working in the retail sector—specifically in grocery stores—is viewed as a highly promising path to prosperity. Whether starting as shop clerks or eventually opening their own independent businesses, many find this sector to be remarkably profitable (Tiensuu et al., 2026). The resulting financial success is often transformative, allowing families to significantly improve their quality of life, upgrade their housing, and acquire luxury vehicles. In this context, the immediate and "fantastic" returns of labor are seen as far more valuable than the delayed benefits of a high school or university degree. Ultimately, early marriage is embraced not just as a result of dropping out, but as a strategic hope for economic mobility; it is perceived as a gateway to a more stable and prosperous life, where the union is expected to consolidate resources and provide a better future than the one offered by an inaccessible education system.

Recently, grocery stores have been quite profitable, allowing them to improve their quality of life, from building magnificent homes to luxury vehicles. They prefer dropping out of school rather than attending school, ultimately deciding to marry. Besides the lack of school fees, the hope of better economic change through marriage is a reason for early marriage. With marry condition life expected become the more Good (Fauzan & Nufus, 2024). In order to relieve burden on parents, children his daughter married with men who are considered able. Parents consider If child his girl someone proposed and invited married, at least he will independent and not again depends to parents.

5. *Early Marriage as a Mechanism of Religious Power Distribution Need Sexual*

Wedding viewed as norms and mechanisms theological for distribute desire sexual in accordance religious teachings. Although seldom revealed in a way open, partially public believe that married, especially marry early, aiming avoid sin as well as prevent connection extramarital sex (Olamijuwon & Odimegwu, 2022). Views This strengthened by belief that sex free and pregnancy outside marriage is a sin, whereas marriage is legal way religiously for fulfil need sexual and obtaining descendants.

Marriage is frequently perceived as both a social norm and a theological mechanism designed to channel sexual desires in strict accordance with religious teachings (Dudziak et al., 2025). Although seldom discussed openly, a significant portion of the public believes that marriage—particularly when entered into at an early age—serves as a vital spiritual safeguard to avoid sin and prevent the perceived moral decay of extramarital relations.

This perspective is reinforced by the deeply held conviction that premarital sex and unintended pregnancies represent profound spiritual transgressions, whereas marriage is viewed as the only religiously sanctioned pathway for fulfilling sexual needs and ensuring the legitimate continuation of the family lineage (Bernard & Miller, 2025). Consequently, early marriage is often framed as a proactive solution to preserve individual and communal morality in a world seen as increasingly permissive.

Through this process, marriage early perceived as moral and social solutions. Practice This often placed opposite with dating is considered violates religious norms. Therefore, marriage young assessed more good compared to dating, especially for guard honor family and avoid pregnancy outside of marriage. Construction This show How power knowledge Work through norms, rules, and religious teachings that are socialized by religious figures such as kyai, nyai, ustadz, and ustadzah (Titi Sartini, 2025). As a result, increasingly fast child Woman married often considered the more good because viewed guard virginity and price himself.

The Power of Knowledge About Sexuality Female Body

1. *Women As Source Temptation Full of Risks*

In perspective theory sexuality, body Woman in a patriarchal culture often viewed as center sexuality that alone (Rodríguez-García-de-Cortázar et al., 2025). Women in construction dominant knowledge viewed and placed as object in construction reality, including object sexuality. Body Woman viewed as source temptation for men, sources of slander, and even source problem social in society. Knowledge about body Woman standardized in various forms of norms and ethics, including mandatory norms guard body Woman from various risk (Jan et al., 2025).

From the perspective of sexuality theory, the female body in a patriarchal culture is often reduced to a mere locus of sexuality. Within the framework of dominant social knowledge, women are frequently objectified and situated as passive subjects in the construction of reality, particularly as objects of sexual desire. Their bodies are paradoxically viewed as a source of temptation for men, a root of social fitna (strife), and even the primary cause of various social problems within the community (Sahar, 2022). This perception leads to a standardization of the female body through rigid norms and ethical codes, which dictate that women bear the sole burden of "guarding" their bodies. Consequently, these mandatory norms are imposed not to empower women, but to mitigate perceived social risks, further entrenching the idea that a woman's physical presence must be strictly controlled and regulated to maintain communal order.

In system power knowledge, discourse wedding early associated with discourse body women and norms about guard Woman from all conflicting risks with the norm. Women are married at the age of young as step anticipatory to pregnancy outside of marriage, because Woman considered more dangerous and risky compared to men. The discourse on the construction of women, with their bodies as a source of temptation and therefore more dangerous than men, dominates societal knowledge (Bordo, 2020). Another equally powerful discourse is the emergence of the subjectivity that if a man and a woman have a relationship (dating), they will have intercourse like husband and wife and result in pregnancy.

Within the framework of the power-knowledge system, the discourse surrounding early marriage is inextricably linked to the regulation of the female body and the enforcement of protective norms designed to mitigate perceived social risks (Kerr, 2021). Young women are often pressured into early unions as a pre-emptive measure against out-of-wedlock pregnancy, reflecting a deep-

seated societal bias that views the female presence as inherently more "dangerous" or "risky" than that of their male counterparts.

This dominant construction of reality positions the female body as a primary source of temptation, necessitating strict external control to maintain communal order (Meyers, 2014). This narrative is further bolstered by a pervasive subjective belief that any romantic relationship or "dating" between a man and a woman will inevitably lead to sexual intercourse and subsequent pregnancy. Consequently, these intertwined discourses dominate the collective consciousness, framing early marriage not as a choice, but as a necessary disciplinary mechanism to govern sexuality and safeguard traditional norms.

The discourse of sexual constructions about the female body as a source of temptation and disaster, on the one hand, and the stereotype of women as weak, emotional, and in need of male protection, on the other, has perpetuated the tradition of early marriage in various regions of Indonesia. The discourse of the stereotype of women as shy creatures has also given rise to the construction that modern women no longer have the same sense of shame as women in the past (Pokharel, 2026).

The tradition of early marriage in Indonesia is deeply sustained by a dualistic and contradictory discourse regarding the female body and character. On one hand, women are hyper-sexualized in the social consciousness as a primary source of temptation and potential "moral disaster," necessitating strict control through marriage to prevent social upheaval (Gustavsson et al., 2022). On the other hand, this is coupled with a persistent stereotype of women as inherently weak, overly emotional, and perpetually in need of male protection and guidance. This construction is further complicated by the idealized image of the "traditionally shy" woman; by framing modesty as a lost virtue of the past, contemporary women are often scrutinized and judged for lacking the same "sense of shame" attributed to previous generations. Together, these gendered stereotypes and moral anxieties create a powerful social justification for early marriage, positioning it as a necessary tool to manage female sexuality and restore a perceived traditional order (Mensah, 2023).

Field research reveals a pervasive and troubling subjective view that positions young girls as inherently in need of constant protection due to the perceived "danger" of their own bodies. This sentiment is often captured by local adages suggesting it is easier to guard a herd of livestock than a single young woman, illustrating the intense social anxiety surrounding female sexuality. In this cultural framework, a woman's physical form is viewed as a natural catalyst for male sexual arousal, shifting the burden of morality entirely onto the female body (Gruenbaum et al., 2023). Consequently, early marriage is utilized as a strategic mechanism to secure and maintain a girl's "purity," a responsibility that extends beyond the individual to the honor of the family and the wider community.

Within this power-knowledge system, the perceived danger of the female body is standardized through strict social norms and disciplinary controls (Crawford, 2022). These measures are enacted to prevent any actions that might violate communal ethics—often categorized broadly as "social problems." The resulting implication is a social logic where the earlier a girl is married, the better; in this view, rapid marriage is seen as the most effective way to safeguard her virginity and "price," ensuring that her self-worth and her family's reputation remain untarnished by the risks of the modern world.

Field research has found a subjective view that girls should be protected because their bodies are very dangerous, even leading to the belief that it is easier to protect 10 goats than one girl. A woman's body shape and curves are seen as arousing sexual desire in men. Therefore, marriage is a key factor. early become mechanism for secure and maintain child Woman especially on the body will not only be on women, but also on their families and communities. power knowledge like this, knowledge about danger body Woman standardized in the norms that are strict control knowledge that (Norris et al., 2022). That thing done so as not to bulk actions that violate norms, or called social problems. As the implication is that the more fast child Woman married, thing That viewed the more good, because virginity and price are increasingly maintained himself.

2. Discourse Limitations The "Sale" Age of Women

Other knowledge that is not lost important in give contribution perpetuation wedding early is knowledge that age Woman limited and can become source problem social (Pourtaheri et al., 2024). In hegemony knowledge like this, if man postpone wedding viewed reasonable, whereas Woman

viewed as virgin old and “*not behavior*”. This Of course A stereotypes that are not fair. In connection This is often found hegemony discourse that body and age Woman viewed have limitations in a way sexual and have risk high. In fact, women with education tall viewed own more risks and limitations, because viewed the more prone to become virgin old and “*not in demand*”.

Another critical factor contributing to the perpetuation of early marriage is the social construction of a “biological expiration date” for women, which frames their aging as an inevitable source of social stigma. Under this hegemonic knowledge system, men are granted the social latitude to postpone marriage indefinitely, a choice viewed as reasonable and pragmatic (Berkovitz, 2024). In stark contrast, women who do not marry young are often labeled with derogatory stereotypes such as “old virgins” or “unmarketable,” creating an unfair and gendered pressure to wed.

This discourse is further strengthened by the belief that a woman’s body and reproductive age are strictly limited, carrying high social and sexual risks if those limits are exceeded. Paradoxically, this systemic bias even extends to women who pursue higher education; they are often viewed as being at greater risk of social “obsolescence.” In this distorted view, a woman’s academic and professional achievements are seen not as assets, but as liabilities that make her “less in demand” in the marriage market. Ultimately, these stereotypes function as a disciplinary mechanism, coercing young women into early marriages to avoid the social marginalization that comes with being perceived as having “outlived” their societal value (Sharper et al., 2025).

Discourse This related close with construction discourse superiority men, that man more rational, more clever, and powerful. In hegemony discourse superiority men and inferiority women, men who have education more low from Woman it is said “*ashamed*” and “*inferior*”, because contradictory with power discourse mentioned. Limitations age women also often associated with construction discourse sexuality about sacredness virginity in one sides and relationships identified dating with connection sexual on the other hand (Kamal, 2024).

3. *Norm of Sacredness Female Sexuality in Wedding*

Besides construction body Woman as source temptation, there is discourse dominant that connects in a relationship between men and women with connection risky sexual behavior cause pregnancy no desired. As a result, women often positioned as a victim of relation said. Dating viewed as form desacralization of sexuality norms and identical with sex conflicting freedom with religious values, namely connection legitimate sexual only in wedding (Nikmatullah, 2023). Beyond the construction of the female body as a source of temptation, there exists a dominant discourse that views any romantic relationship between men and women as an inherently risky precursor to illicit sexual behavior and unintended pregnancy. Within this social framework, women are consistently positioned as the inevitable victims of such interactions, bearing the brunt of the resulting social stigma and physical consequences. The concept of “dating” is frequently viewed through a lens of moral panic, seen as a form of “desacralization” of traditional sexual norms and synonymous with a dangerous level of sexual freedom that directly conflicts with religious values. These values strictly dictate that legitimate sexual expression is exclusively reserved for the sanctified institution of marriage. Consequently, this perception serves as a powerful catalyst for early marriage, as families and communities rush to formalize relationships in order to prevent the perceived moral and social collapse associated with premarital intimacy (Makuvaza, 2025).

In framework this, marriage early considered more good because legalize connection sexual and caring sacredness sexuality in institutions marriage. Concerns to premarital pregnancy is common become parents ' reasons marry child they are at the age young. Discourse virginity and risk body Woman the more strengthen view this. Hegemony knowledge the strengthened by religious figures, customs, and institutionalized religious and cultural norms in society (Jafari, 2022). Even in a number of case, child young use discourse This for push wedding early as solution on relation dating is considered problematic.

4. *Virginity As a Norm of Female Piety*

In the context of Indonesian society, the discourse of virginity in women and virginity in men has become a hegemonic discourse in society with discourse virginity, urgency virginity in a way systemic even conditioned and controlled through institutionalized rules, so that appear practice test

virginity in some institutions, such as test virginity for woman candidate soldiers and candidates wife member Indonesian national army (Ni'mah & Sakti Ritonga, 2023).

In the context of Indonesian society, the discourse surrounding virginity has evolved into a hegemonic force that disproportionately targets and regulates the female body. This obsession with virginity is not merely a social preference but a systemic urgency, meticulously conditioned and controlled through various institutionalized rules and regulations. This societal preoccupation is starkly evidenced by the historical and controversial practice of virginity testing within state institutions, such as the requirements once imposed on female military candidates and the prospective wives of Indonesian National Armed Forces members (Whittington & Hancock, 2024).

By formalizing these tests, the state and its institutions have effectively transformed a private, moral concept into a public, bureaucratic mandate, further entrenching the idea that a woman's worth and integrity are tied strictly to her anatomical status. This systemic control serves as a powerful disciplinary mechanism, reinforcing patriarchal standards and legitimizing the surveillance of women's sexuality under the guise of maintaining institutional morality and "purity." Consequently, these practices validate a broader social narrative where women are subjected to invasive scrutiny and judgment, perpetuating gender inequality and restricting their agency over their own bodies (Han, 2025).

Women in hegemony discourse virginity is at in cornered, discriminated against, and losing positions power individual. Many problems arise related discourse virginity, including the definition of virgin alone. Virgin in hegemony discourse often interpreted not yet once relate sex and membranes virgin or hymen is not yet torn apart (Christianson & Eriksson, 2025). However thus, in knowledge medical membrane elastic virgin can just no torn apart, even though Already repeatedly having sex sex. On the other hand, the membrane virgin can torn apart without relate sex caused by because another cause. In the hegemonic discourse of virginity, the norm established that a good woman is a virgin, and this virginity will determine whether someone finds a good partner or not. Therefore, the discourse of virginity is closely linked to male acceptance and sexual satisfaction with women. In fact, virginity in this discourse becomes a measure of a woman's piety. Virginity viewed become mark most important and decisive price self a women in society and especially in front of men (Ardener, 2020). Women who do not can guard her virginity viewed lost his dignity and honor.

5. *Norms of Sexual Services and Servitude as The Nature of Women*

In knowledge dominant society, women often constructed as waiter sexual husband. View This get legitimacy from text religion, fiqh books, classical interpretations, and hadiths misogynists who place Woman as object as well as party subordinate. As a result, obedience wife and obligations serve need sexual husband viewed as a religious norm. In the dominant societal consciousness, women are frequently constructed as sexual servants to their husbands, a role that finds deep-seated legitimacy through a specific reading of religious texts (Zakarriya, 2024). This perspective is often reinforced by classical fiqh literature, traditional interpretations, and the selective use of hadiths that place women in a subordinate position, effectively reducing them to sexual objects within the marital framework (Akhtar, 2026).

As a result of this structural inequality, a wife's total obedience and her perceived obligation to fulfill her husband's sexual desires are elevated to the status of a mandatory religious norm. This construction leaves little room for female agency or the concept of sexual consent within marriage, as the relationship is framed through a lens of service and entitlement rather than mutual partnership (Srivastava & Dhal, 2025). By institutionalizing these views through religious and social discourse, the hierarchy of the domestic sphere is maintained, further entrenching the marginalized status of women as parties whose primary value is defined by their utility to their male counterparts.

Construction the strengthened through various book religious popular which confirms that Woman pious is obedient and devoted woman to husband. With thus, the relationship husband and wife built in framework hierarchical, where the husband become center authority and women placed as servant. Power of knowledge patriarchal this institutionalized through rule social, ethics family, religious rituals, recitation, social stigma, as well labeling negative to women who are considered no comply (Shah & Lashari, 2023). In fact, some of these norms get support in state regulations, such as the Marriage Law. Overall mechanism this show how knowledge patriarchal keep going reproduced and perpetuated position subordinate Woman in family and public.

Conclusion

Wedding early Still survive in society Because constructed, legitimized, and controlled through power patriarchal religious knowledge as well as discriminatory culture. This power work through standardization of norms, rules and ethics which then implanted in life social so that considered as something natural. As a result, marriage early understood as normal practice and even solution social. Discourse this built through various understanding patriarchal to religious texts reinforced by religious figures, institutions religion and traditions culture. One of the its shape is construction body Woman as source temptation, so that Woman positioned as the party that must controlled. Knowledge theological and cultural each other support in form view.

Various prohibitions, obligations, stigmas, and stereotypes become mechanism important for maintain practice wedding early. For example, sex free considered a sin, women must guard purity, family must guard honor and marriage viewed as worship. In context this, marriage early promoted as means distribution desire legitimate sexual and prevention pregnancy outside of marriage.

Series knowledge the keep going reproduced through activity religion and practice culture. Therefore, it is necessary discourse critical for dismantle relation patriarchal and discriminatory power, because system knowledge the contribute big in perpetuate practice wedding early in society. The continuous reproduction of these knowledge systems through religious activities and cultural practices creates a self-sustaining cycle that normalizes inequality. Because these systemic beliefs contribute so significantly to the perpetuation of early marriage, there is an urgent need for a critical discourse aimed at dismantling patriarchal power structures and discriminatory relations. Challenging these narratives requires a conscious deconstruction of how "truth" is manufactured by those in power to control the female body and limit women's agency. By exposing the mechanical links between traditional gender stereotypes, economic pressures, and institutionalized surveillance, society can begin to shift toward a more equitable framework—one that prioritizes education, bodily autonomy, and the genuine well-being of young people over the rigid enforcement of restrictive social norms.

With thus, in order to be able to realize what is called Foucault as "*the rupture from the past*", is necessary construction non-knowledge patriarchal and non-patriarchal discriminatory. The way is with involving agents and institutions that are considered authoritative and legitimate, as well as standardization of egalitarian norms and ethics as tool control to knowledge said. With standardization of norms, rules and ethics, subjectivity and practice society will also can changed become egalitarian and non-galitarian discriminatory.

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