

Living Lab Approach to Supporting the Achievement of SDGs 8: Economic Empowerment Efforts to Reduce Early Marriage

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage remains a significant social issue affecting human resource quality, community welfare, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Village Living Lab approach in supporting the achievement of SDG 8 through economic empowerment as a strategy to reduce early marriage in Montong Tangi Village. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving village government officials, the Family Assistance Team (Tim Pendamping Keluarga), community and religious leaders, adolescents, and local entrepreneurs selected using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings reveal that the Village Living Lab approach strengthens collaboration among local government, communities, and stakeholders in implementing youth education, literacy improvement, skills development, and local-based economic empowerment programs. This approach enhances adolescents' awareness of the negative impacts of early marriage, encourages educational attainment and economic independence, and increases community participation in preventing early marriage. The study concludes that the Village Living Lab approach contributes to strengthening human capital development and supports the achievement of SDG 8 by improving the economic capacity of rural communities.

INTRODUCTION

Early marriage is defined as a marriage contract between individuals under the age of 19, as regulated in Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. Globally, UNICEF views this practice as a violation of children's rights due to its significant impact on hindered access to education, reproductive health risks, and vulnerability to domestic violence. According to the National Population and Family

Planning Board (BKKBN), the ideal age for marriage is 21 for women and 25 for men. Globally, this phenomenon is seen as a serious obstacle to human resource development because it cuts off access to education and increases reproductive health risks. Data from *UNICEF (2023)* states that child marriage is a form of human rights violation that perpetuates the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Early marriage remains a social phenomenon frequently found in rural areas. Early marriage is generally defined as marriage between individuals who have not reached the ideal biological, psychological, and social age, as stipulated in laws and regulations. Marriage can be understood as a form of life cooperation between men and women built on shared goals, values, and understanding as a means of actualizing piety. This bond is not only formal, but also reflects social and cultural relationships recognized by religious, legal, and societal norms. Marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife, carried out based on applicable religious, legal, and social norms, with the aim of forming a legitimate, happy, and sustainable family (Hamrun (2024).

Psychosocially, the mental unpreparedness of young couples to navigate the ark of marriage often leads to disharmony that has long-term consequences for the quality of life of future generations. This condition is clearly reflected in Montong Tangi Village, where the problem of early marriage remains a crucial issue requiring serious attention. Based on TPK data from five hamlets, 18 cases of early marriage were recorded, reinforced by 2023 data regarding 23 cases of teenage births. This high rate is triggered by multidimensional factors, ranging from low levels of formal education, family economic pressures, to the strong influence of local culture that views marriage as an instant way out of financial burdens (Ema, 2025). Consequently, various derivative problems have emerged in Montong Tangi Village, such as an increase in the number of teenage school dropouts and the emergence of new families trapped in a cycle of poverty due to a lack of economic preparedness. This is in line with conditions exacerbated by various complex factors, ranging from low levels of education, minimal understanding of the community's laws, to the economic burden on families that makes parents tend to allow their children to marry early.

This situation not only impacts the individuals who marry but also has broader social and economic repercussions. National data shows that child marriage contributes significantly to school dropout rates each year, with the majority unable to complete the 12-year compulsory education (Khairunnisa, 2021). This phenomenon creates a skills gap, leaving them with low bargaining power in the labor market. According to economic studies, individuals who marry underage risk losing up to 10% of their potential earnings throughout their productive lives due to being trapped in the low-wage informal sector.

In the long term, early marriage reinforces the intergenerational poverty trap at the village level. Families formed without financial preparedness tend to have limited access to health and nutrition, which risks increasing the prevalence of *stunting* in their children by up to 30% compared to mature families. At a macro level, this accumulation of household

economic failures hinders the achievement of SDG 8, as the burden of dependency in villages increases while economic productivity slows due to low human capital quality. Thus, early marriage is not merely a domestic issue, but a structural barrier that prevents villages from achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

In addition, early marriage also impacts health aspects, especially for women. Reproductive health risks, high rates of economic dependency, and limited roles in household decision-making are issues that often accompany early marriage. This condition further weakens women's position in the village economic structure and hinders their productive contribution to local development (Masrurroh, *et al*, (2025). Therefore, early marriage cannot be viewed as merely an individual problem, but rather as a development issue that requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach.

Early marriage is closely linked to low labor productivity and limited job opportunities in rural areas. When individuals marry at an immature or young age, they tend to enter the workforce without adequate education and skills. Consequently, work productivity is low and opportunities for decent employment are increasingly limited. This condition is directly proportional to the low quality of human resources, which ultimately hinders local economic growth (Pratama *et al.*, 2025).

Low labor productivity due to early marriage also impacts the village economic structure. Villages struggle to develop because the majority of the workforce is in the informal sector with low added value. A lack of innovation, entrepreneurial skills, and access to decent employment make villages dependent on traditional sectors that fail to significantly improve welfare. In this context, early marriage contributes to rural economic stagnation and widens the gap between rural and urban areas (Yoshida *et al* ., 2022).

In the search for sustainable solutions, the Living Lab concept is relevant. The Living Lab is an open research ecosystem that prioritizes active community participation in creating innovations in real-world environments, which aligns closely with *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) point 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth. SDG 8 emphasizes the importance of creating productive jobs and providing access to quality education and training for young people to break the cycle of systemic poverty that often leads to early marriage (Ponto, 2023).

The Living Lab approach is crucial in efforts to reduce early marriage because it directly addresses the root of the problem. Through a participatory process, village communities can identify factors driving early marriage and design solutions tailored to the local context. Economic empowerment within the Living Lab framework can open up employment and business opportunities for adolescents, providing them with more constructive alternatives to early marriage (Pascalina, 2022).

The contribution of SDGs 8 to early marriage prevention efforts lies in its ability to shift adolescents' orientation from the goal of instant marriage to economic self-empowerment. This effort was actually carried out through socialization in 2024 to raise awareness about the

impact of early marriage. By encouraging independence and productivity, SDGs 8 acts as a preventive instrument capable of changing the mindset of rural communities, from the assumption that marriage is an economic solution to an understanding that financial readiness and job skills are the main prerequisites before starting a household (Sutrisno, 2023). This is crucial to ensure that every individual has an equal opportunity to develop professionally before taking on domestic responsibilities.

One concrete step needed is to offer a solution through an integrated youth education concept for the community in Montong Tangi Village. This educational program not only focuses on understanding reproductive organs but also provides financial literacy and practical skills training tailored to local potential (Masruroh, *et al.*, 2025). This is expected to become a comprehensive youth education platform. Where youth in Montong Tangi Village have a clearer and more measurable vision of the future, so they are consciously able to delay marriage in order to achieve a more prosperous quality of life and economic independence. Through the youth activity center (Creative Hub/Youth Center), it is hoped that agents of change will emerge from among the youth themselves who can shift cultural stigmas and create a more productive and future-oriented village ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHODS

Study This use approach qualitative with type study descriptive For understand in a way deep implementation approach *Living Lab* Village in support achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 through empowerment economy as effort pressing wedding early in Montong Tangi Village. Approach This chosen Because capable describe phenomenon social in a way comprehensive based on condition real in the field as well as give understanding about interaction inter-factors, empowerment processes, and dynamics growing social in public.

Subject Study

Subject study determined use technique *purposive sampling*, namely choose informants who are considered own knowledge, experience, and involvement direct to problems being researched. Informants consists of on Village Head, apparatus village, Support Team Family (TPK), figures community, religious leaders, teenagers, parents, and perpetrator activity empowerment economy. Election informant the aim get diverse information so that capable describe implementation approach *Living Lab* in effort pressing wedding early in a way comprehensive.

Instrument Study

Instrument main in study This is researchers itself (*human instrument*) which plays a role in collect, analyze, and interpret data. To support the process used guidelines interview, sheet observation, and documentation as instrument supporters. Use a number of instrument the allows researchers obtain comprehensive data about condition social society,

implementation education teenagers, as well as forms empowerment economic activities carried out in Montong Tangi Village.

Procedure Study

Study implemented through a number of stages that include preparation, data collection, data analysis, and compilation report. At this stage preparation done identification problem, compilation instruments, as well as determination informant research. Next, data is collected through observation, interview in depth, and documentation. Data obtained Then analyzed in a way systematic until produce findings further research arranged in form report scientific in accordance objective study.

Indicator Success

Success study measured based on achievement implementation education teenager through approach *Living Lab*, increasing participation public in activity empowerment economy, as well as formation understanding about connection between independence economy and efforts prevention wedding early. In addition, the study also assessed to what extent the approach the capable support achievement of SDGs 8 through improvement capacity source Power human, productivity economy community, and strengthening collaboration between stakeholders interests at the level village.

Data analysis

Data analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña which includes data condensation, data presentation, and withdrawal and verification conclusion. Analysis done in a way sustainable since the data collection process took place so that every information obtained can verified through technique triangulation sources and triangulation method. Approach the used For ensure credibility findings study at a time produce interpretation that describes connection between approach *Living Lab*, empowerment economy, and efforts pressing wedding early in Montong Tangi Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educating Youth Through the Village *Living Lab* Approach to Reduce Early Marriage

Wedding early Still be one of problem social influences quality source Power humans and development villages, including Montong Tangi Village. Research results show that practice wedding early in the village This No fully influenced by factors economy as Lots found in study previously. Based on findings field, the more causes dominant precisely related with aspect emotional teenagers, influence environment social, as well as Not yet optimally education about planning life and readiness family. Although Montong Tangi Village has sufficient social capital good, like existence institution education, activities religious, and the development of MSMEs, various potential the Not yet integrated in something capable system support prevention wedding early in a way sustainable. Condition

This reinforced by the findings that from ten wedding the last thing that happened in the village of which , four of them done at the age of school.

Findings the reinforced by perception respondents who indicated that education viewed as step strategic in prevent wedding early. Respondent have an opinion that improvement understanding about health reproduction , its importance education, as well as future planning can form awareness teenager in take decision in a way more mature . In addition, respondents evaluate that education will more effective if held in a way participatory with involving government village , institution education, religious figures , figures society, family and youth as perpetrator main. Perception This show that public No Again look at education limited to delivery information , but rather as a process of empowerment that builds capacity teenager For planning for the future in a way more responsible answer.

Interview results with perpetrator wedding early show that decision married at the age of school more Lots influenced by impulse emotional compared to consideration rational about education , readiness psychological, as well as condition economy after married. Impact from decision the new felt when partner enter life House stairs , such as emergence conflict family , difficulties fulfil need economy , as well as Still dependent on parents. Findings This show existence gap between perception teenager before Marry with reality life after married to Thus , the problem main No solely decision married at the age of young , but low readiness teenager in operate role as couples and parents.

Findings study This show that approach prevention wedding early need directed at strengthening capacity teenager through comprehensive education, no only focus on aspects economics . Research results Pontoh, *et al* (2025) also explained that level education own more influence strong to decision Marry compared to condition economy only , while Warda and Romli (2025) show that marriage at an early age child increase risk low welfare family Because vulnerability economy , triggering instability psychological , hindering education and influencing quality parenting child so that need to dip intervention integrated through education , empowerment economy as well as strengthening mark culture. Findings the strengthen results study This that education need directed at the formation of ability think critical, taking decisions , and future orientation teenager.

Based on overall findings said , can understood that education teenager is foundation main in prevention wedding early in Montong Tangi Village. However, the effectiveness education No only determined by the material provided, but also by the method implementation. Education that involves public in a way active will more capable build awareness collective compared to a holistic approach informative solely . This is in line with findings Meliala and Meliala (2026) which shows that education based participation public produce change more behavior sustainable compared to counseling conventional. With Thus, the results study This indicates that strengthening education through participatory approach become prerequisite important before develop more collaboration wide through approach Village *Living Lab*.

The implementation of the Living Lab approach in Montong Tangi Village demonstrates that participatory principles have begun to be applied through an economic empowerment program managed by a Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes), specifically in the egg-laying chicken farming business. The program engages the community in productive economic activities to increase income and strengthen village economic independence. However, this implementation has not been specifically directed at supporting youth education or preventing early marriage, so the link between the economic empowerment program and efforts to reduce early marriage has not been systematically established.

These findings indicate that adolescents in Montong Tangi Village have not been fully positioned as subjects of development. In fact, one of the characteristics main *Living Lab* is involvement user *involvement* in all over stages innovation, starting from identification problem until program evaluation. From the perspective researchers, involvement active teenager No only increase effectiveness education, but also build a sense of belonging on the program being run. Findings This in line with Lorenz's research (2023) shows that that approach *peer education* more effective in increase knowledge and awareness teenager about danger wedding early.

The existence of the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) egg-laying chicken program demonstrates that the Living Lab approach has already begun to develop in Montong Tangi Village. The program involves the village government, BUMDes managers, and the community in developing economic ventures based on local potential. This collaboration reflects one of the key characteristics of Living Lab: the involvement of various stakeholders in generating innovations oriented towards solving community problems. However, this collaboration still focuses on village economic development and has not yet involved educational institutions, youth groups, or youth organizations as key actors in preventing early marriage.

The results of this study show that the main challenge lies not in a lack of resources, but rather in the suboptimal coordination mechanisms between actors. the in line with draft *Living Lab* proposed by Leminen and Schuurman (2021), which emphasizes that success innovation social depends on collaboration sustainable inter-stakeholder interests. Research by Schuurman and Leminen (2022) also confirms that network collaborative become factor important in produce adaptive solutions to need society. In Indonesian context, research Noviani, *et al* (2023) showed that integration government village, institution education and society capable increase effectiveness of empowerment programs based community. Therefore that, approach *Living Lab* in Montong Tangi Village requires strengthening governance collaborative so that various potential that has been owned village can integrated become a prevention strategy wedding earlier effective and sustainable.

Research result show that approach *Living Lab* in Montong Tangi Village has great potential For developed as an educational model teenager in pressing wedding early, especially Because approach This capable integrate characteristics social, cultural, and

potential local village to in the learning process. The existence of institution education, religious figures, government village, organization youth, as well as MSME actors are social capital that can optimized For build ecosystem more education participatory and sustainable . In perspective researchers, efforts prevention wedding early No Enough done through socialization of a nature incidental, but need room collaboration that makes it possible teenager involved in a way active in the process of learning , discussing , and develop relevant skills with need From the Living Lab perspective, the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) egg-laying chicken program can be viewed as an *early stage implementation because it fulfills contextual elements by utilizing local village potential as a basis for economic empowerment*. However, this approach still requires strengthening aspects of youth participation, cross-sector integration, and joint evaluation mechanisms to be able to develop into a Village Living Lab model that supports the achievement of SDGs 8 while contributing to reducing the number of early marriages.

Based on overall results research, can understood that education teenager through approach *Living Lab* No only improvement - oriented knowledge about danger wedding early, but also build awareness, capacity, and responsibility answer teenager in planning for the future . Integration between education, participation community and collaboration inter-stakeholder interest become foundation important in create supportive environment grow flower teenager optimally. With Thus, the approach *Living Lab* No only functioning as method education, but also as a model of empowerment society that encourages birth solution based need local.

The Relationship Between Economic Empowerment and Efforts to Suppress Early Marriage

Economic empowerment is a development strategy that is not only oriented towards improving community welfare but also plays a role in shaping individuals' capacity to make more rational decisions. context of Montong Tangi Village, results study show that connection between empowerment economy and efforts pressing wedding early No nature directly, but rather through improvement quality source Power human development skills, as well as formation future orientation in adolescents.

Perception respondents also showed that empowerment economy viewed as capable means push teenager For more prepare education, work, and independence before enter life family. Respondents evaluate that programs like training entrepreneurship, strengthening business productive and *creative hub* No only give benefit economy, but also build trust self, expanding experience, as well as create room learn more productive for teenagers. Findings the show that empowerment economy understood as investment social contributors to development man at a time support achievement of SDGs 8 through improvement productivity and opportunities more work inclusive.

Although Thus, the results interview with perpetrator wedding early show that factor economy No is reason the main driving force they married at the age of school. The decision

more influenced by desire personal, encouragement emotional, as well as low readiness in planning for the future. Problems economy precisely appear after enter life House stairs , when partner face difficulty fulfil need family , not yet own work still, and still depends to parents . Findings This give different perspectives from assumption general that poverty is reason main wedding early . In context of Montong Tangi Village, economy more appropriate understood as consequences that arise consequence low readiness teenager enter life family than as factor reason main occurrence wedding early.

Kabeer's (2021) research confirms that economic empowerment is not only measured by increased income, but also by increasing an individual's ability to make life choices (*agency*), develop self-capacity, and build independence in decision-making. These findings are reinforced by research by Hasanah *et al.* (2025), which shows that community-based economic empowerment programs can improve adolescents' future orientation by strengthening their skills and life skills. Similarly, Azizeh's (2025) research concludes that adolescent involvement in literacy and entrepreneurship mentoring programs is effective in preventing early marriage. The results of this study reinforce these findings, stating that economic empowerment in Montong Tangi Village is more accurately understood as a preventive strategy that builds adolescents' life readiness through the development of skills, experience, and future orientation, so that the decision to marry can be more carefully considered.

The research results show that Montong Tangi Village actually has quite a lot of economic potential, as indicated by the increasing activity of MSMEs and the community's economic turnover. However, this development the Not yet followed with increasing involvement teenager as perpetrator economy productive . Based on results interview with MSME actors, some of them big business Still managed by a group age adults, whereas teenager only once in a while help business family without get training and mentoring entrepreneurship in a way sustainable. Condition This show that potential economy village Not yet utilized as a medium for learning and empowerment for generation young, so that opportunity For build capacity teenager through activity economy Still not optimal.

Research (2022) explains that involvement generation young in activity economy productive contribute to improvement skills, confidence self, and readiness entering the world of work. Findings Genadi, *et al.* (2025) also stated the same thing that the entrepreneurship program through training base entrepreneurship with develop village youth capacity Kopang based on potential local increase motivation teenager For develop potential himself. In line with study said, the results study This show that potential the economy in Montong Tangi Village is not yet fully directed as instrument development source Power human. In perspective researchers, conditions This is *missed opportunity*, because activity growing economy should can become room Study for teenager For get experience, develop skills, as well as build future orientation before enter life have a family.

Research findings show that the Living Lab approach to economic empowerment has begun to be implemented through the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) egg-laying chicken program as a form of productive economic development based on local potential. The program demonstrates the application of Living Lab principles, particularly in the collaboration between village governments, BUMDes managers, and the community. However, this implementation is still oriented toward improving the general economic well-being of the community and has not been specifically designed as a youth empowerment strategy or an instrument for preventing early marriage.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the Village Living Lab approach has *strong* potential to support the achievement of SDG 8 through economic empowerment focused on youth capacity development. study indicates that potential the economy of Montong Tangi Village is not yet fully utilized as room capable learning form skills , independence , and future orientation generation young. Therefore that, empowerment economy need developed through a collaborative model that involves government village, BUMDes, institution education , MSME actors, organizations youth, as well as public in One ecosystem innovation based *Living Lab*. Approach the No only push creation chance work and improvement productivity as SDGs 8 goal , but also strengthens readiness teenager For enter life mature in a way more independent so that can minimize trend occurrence wedding early . Findings This in harmony with study Istiqomah, *et al* (2024) which confirms that empowerment economy based collaboration capable increase participation public in development village , as well as supported by research by Schuurman and Leminen (2022) which shows that success *Living Lab* depends on synergy inter-stakeholder interest in produce contextual and sustainable solutions. With Thus, research This confirm that empowerment economy through approach *Living Lab* No only contribute to growth economy village , but also become a development strategy supportive human prevention wedding early in a way sustainable.

The existence of the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) producing laying hens indicates that the foundation for the Living Lab in Montong Tangi Village is already in place. The next challenge is not building the program from scratch, but rather integrating this productive economic activity with youth education programs, family capacity building, and collaboration between the village government, schools, Islamic schools, community leaders, and youth groups. This integration is expected to produce social innovations that not only improve the community's economic well-being but also contribute to a sustainable reduction in the practice of early marriage.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the research results regarding the Village Living Lab Approach in Supporting the Achievement of SDGs 8: Economic Empowerment Efforts to Suppress Early Marriage in Montong Tangi Village, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. Youth education through the village Living Lab approach to suppress early marriage shows that Montong Tangi Village has not yet implemented *the Living Lab approach* in its efforts to prevent early marriage. The education provided is still partial, through the Youth Integrated Health Post (Posyandu Remaja), outreach activities, and guidance within the madrasah environment. The main factors driving early marriage are more influenced by psychological unpreparedness, the influence of the social environment, social media, and culture, rather than economic factors. Nevertheless, the village has institutional and social potential that can be developed through the *Living Lab approach*, which prioritizes participatory, collaborative, and contextual principles.
2. The link between economic empowerment and efforts to reduce early marriage indicates that economic empowerment is not directly linked to the decline in early marriage, but rather serves as a preventative strategy in building adolescent readiness for the future. Village economic potential through MSMEs and Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) has not been optimally utilized to empower adolescents due to the lack of integrated programs. Therefore, the *Living Lab approach* is a relevant model for connecting village governments, educational institutions, MSMEs, and the community in building an economic empowerment ecosystem that supports the achievement of SDGs 8 while contributing to efforts to reduce early marriage.

Suggestion

Study This Still limited to studies implementation approach *Living Lab* in context empowerment the community in Montong Tangi Village. Therefore that, research furthermore recommended For develop implementation models based *action research* or study experimental testing effectiveness of the LENTERA Program on improvement capacity teenagers, strengthening participation society, as well as decline practice wedding early. Research continuation can also be develop innovation empowerment economy based potential local, entrepreneurship teenagers, as well as village digital transformation so that produced an adaptive and adaptable *Living Lab* model replicated in other villages with characteristics similar social.

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