

The Implementation of the Population - Aware School Program at Kemala Bhayangkari Elementary School in Reducing the Phenomenon of Early Marriage

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage and teenage pregnancies under the age of 20 remain a significant issue in Balikpapan, especially due to their adverse effects on adolescents' reproductive health and future well-being. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Population-Aware School Program (Sekolah Siaga Kependudukan/SSK) at Kemala Bhayangkari Elementary School as a strategy for preventing early marriage through reproductive health education. The study employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation conducted from April to June 2026 involving the principal, the SSK coordinator, and lower- and upper-grade teachers as research participants. Data were analyzed using the Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) management framework and Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the implementation of the SSK Program is effective through four key managerial actions: leading, communicating, motivating, and coordinating. These strategies demonstrate that early reproductive health education, implemented through structured school programs, enhances students' awareness and serves as a protective factor against early marriage. This study provides empirical evidence that school-based reproductive health education can contribute to preventing early marriage and offers practical insights for strengthening population education programs in Indonesian elementary schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as marriage couple, built upon mental, physical, and economic readiness. Ideally, the age for marriage, according to health experts, is 20 to 25 for women and 25 to 30 for men. While Indonesian Law No. 16 of 2019 establishes 19 as the minimum legal age for both sexes (Undang-undang Republik Indonesia No 16 Tahun 2019 Tentang Perubahan Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 Tentang Perkawinan, 2019), the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) sets the ideal age for marriage at 21 for women and 25 for men (Vanessa, 2022). In reality, the data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2025 has indicated that the proportion of women giving birth under the age of 20 in Balikpapan was 0.137 or 13.7%. Early marriage has become a serious concern in the city, which recorded 52 marriage dispensation cases in 2025, making it one of the highest contributors to child marriage nationally (Susena & Statistik, 2025). Broadly speaking, studies show that 15-20% of Indonesian school-age adolescents have engaged in premarital sexual relations (Nadya et al., 2026). Similarly, many early marriage cases in Balikpapan are linked to premarital pregnancies stemming from unprotected sexual encounters (Audina et al., 2021). Research points to two main factors driving this behavior among teenagers, such as, lack of proper reproductive health knowledge and the impact of technology, which gives them unregulated access to sexually explicit content, including pornography (Pidah et al., 2021). The damage caused by early marriage mostly affects reproductive health. Young brides face a much greater risk of dangerous pregnancies, and many teenagers who are not ready for motherhood choose abortion, a decision that puts both their own lives and their babies at risk (Fachria & Nunung, 2020; Sekarayu & Nurwati, 2021). Babies born to teenage mothers are also more likely to arrive

prematurely or suffer from malnutrition, and some do not survive. This happens because these young mothers are still growing; their bodies must divide nutrients between their own development and their baby's (Fadilah, 2021; Duana et al., 2022). The emotional distress is equally damaging, since it takes hold of anxiety, stress becomes overwhelming, they feel cut off from their support networks, mental health deteriorates, the weight of responsibility becomes crushing, and the marriage mostly does not last long (Purwaningtyas et al., 2022). Early marriage can be defined as a marriage entered into by an individual before reaching the age considered to be an adult according to law, biological development, or psychological maturity (Lestari et al., 2025; Tampubolon, 2021).

The factors that push young people into early marriage are varied. There are many reasons why this is happening: poor education, limited knowledge of reproductive health, premarital pregnancy, parental influence, religious beliefs, financial struggles, cultural tradition, and media exposure. Studies consistently show that young people with better reproductive health knowledge are less inclined toward premarital sexual behavior, whereas those with limited understanding are more likely to engage in such behavior (Hatta & Dewi, 2022). Given the urgency of reproductive health knowledge for adolescents, this research was conducted as an effort to prevent early marriage through the Population-Aware School (SSK) program in elementary schools. Using a case study approach, this research focuses on Kemala Bhayangkari Elementary School in Balikpapan City, selected for its integrated, sustainable, and participatory SSK implementation. While numerous studies have examined early marriage prevention, this research takes a different approach by focusing on prevention efforts that begin early through the Population-Aware School Program at the elementary school level. This program integrates population, family, planning, and population control materials into the school curriculum (Indonesia, 2020). Based on the explanation above, the purpose of this study is to examine efforts to prevent early marriage by improving reproductive health education through the SSK program. Therefore, the current research is expected to serve not only as an academic reference but also to address a growing problem in society. Increasing knowledge about reproductive health will help shape the character of adolescents who care about their future, while also educating them about the dangers of early marriage.

2. METHODS

This study aims to explore the essence of the implementation of the Population-Aware School Program at Kemala Bhayangkari Elementary School in Balikpapan City as an effort to improve reproductive health education. The method used in this study is qualitative. Creswell argues that qualitative research in educational settings relies on the informants' opinions and involves the researcher asking open-ended, in-depth questions. (Creswell et al., 2004) The type of research used is a case study research type with empirical inquiry in the form of an investigation conducted to examine real-life phenomena (Hasan & Jailani, 2023). This research was conducted at Kemala Bhayangkari Elementary School in Balikpapan City, a Population-Aware School with integrated, sustainable, and participatory implementation. This school was purposively selected because it has received official recognition as a Paripurna (Exemplary) Population-Aware School model from the DP3AKB and BKKBN in Balikpapan, and has been implementing the SSK program since 2021, providing rich data for examining program sustainability. The research was conducted from April 2026 to June 2026, with a three-month period during which the researchers collected data, analyzed it, and compiled a research report. The primary data sources were the principal, one representative from the curriculum team, the head of the Population-Aware School Program coordinator, one teacher in charge of lower grades, and one teacher in charge of upper grades. Secondary data were obtained from observations and existing documentation. In data collection techniques, researchers obtained data through interviews, observation, and field documentation. This study tested the validity of the data obtained by researchers using source triangulation and technical triangulation techniques.

In source triangulation, researchers gathered information about the same object from several different sources. Meanwhile, in technical triangulation, researchers not only relied on interview data but also strengthened it with observational data and key documentation of the activities. This study used interactive data analysis techniques with stages of data reduction, data presentation, and decision-making (Miles et al., 2013).

Table 1. Research Informants

Informant Code	Position	Main Duties in the SSK Program
N1	School Principal	Person in Charge & Policy Maker
N2	SSK Coordinator	Executive Chairperson & Program Driver
N3	Lower Grade Teacher	Implementer and driver of the SSK program
N4	Upper Grade Teacher	Implementer and driver of the SSK program

This study used the POAC management framework, which is a management framework containing stages of planning activities (Principle of Planning), organizing (Principle of Organization), movement (Principle of Direction), and control (Principle of Control) to achieve organizational goals (Terry & Rue, 2019). This research flow focuses on the directing stage (Principle of Direction), with a scope that includes providing direction (Leading), conveying information (Communicating), providing encouragement (Motivating), and aligning various activities (Coordinating). Therefore, this research was conducted to answer several questions in accordance with the stages of directing (Principle of Direction), namely: (1) How does the principal guide teachers toward a shared understanding and reduce the stigma surrounding reproductive health topics? (2) How effective is the school's communication in accommodating students' sensitive questions about reproductive health? (3) How does the Population Corner facility capture student interest and encourage independent awareness to study reproductive health issues? And (4) What form of coordination is built between the school and external partners in organizing clinical reproductive health education programs?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores how the Population-Aware School Program is implemented to increase reproductive health knowledge as a mitigation measure for early marriage. The results indicate that Directing stage of the POAC framework successfully integrates reproductive health into the curriculum, establishes communication channel that support knowledge acquisition, optimizes the Population Corner as motivational resource, and synchronizes activities with collaborative partnership.

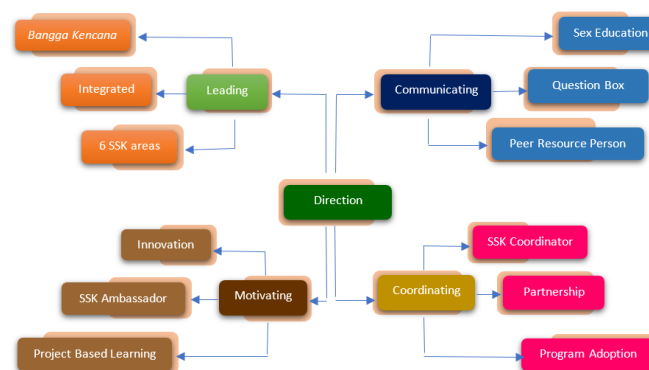


Figure 1. Concept Map of SSK Implementation

Table 1. Stages of Implementation of the SSK Program for Reproductive Health Material.

Principle of Direction	Findings	Form of Activity
Leading	- Curriculum Integration - Government Program Integration - Coordinator Establishment	Vision, mission, goals, and learning. "Bangga Kencana." 6 areas involving teachers, parents, and students.
Communicating	- Sex Education - Question Box	Inviting expert speakers, educational video content, and literacy resources Separate learning processes for boys and girls. One of the services available at the population corner to answer students' sensitive questions about reproductive health. SSK Ambassador.
Motivating	- Peer Resource Person - Innovation - SSK Ambassador - Project-Based Learning	"Pojok Kependudukan" (Population Corner). Peer Resource Persons. Articles, educational materials in the form of videos, QR codes, posters, and books. SSK Coordination Team Training for teachers, students, and parents
Coordinating	- With parents and committee - Partnering - Adoption Program	Preparation for building a future family planning program.

Leading is a step taken by the principal to provide direction for integrating the SSK program into the curriculum. The integration of SSK is also outlined in the curriculum's vision, mission, and objectives, which serve as the guiding principle for the school's movement. As explained by Speakers 1 and 2.*embedded into the curriculum, it starts with the regulations themselves. First, we make sure all the rules related to the Population-Aware School Program are properly in place. Then we move on to weaving the program into the curriculum itself. So, extracurricular, co-curricular, and intracurricular activities are integrated...* [N1]*one of our vision and missions integrated with the SSK is to realize a Population-Aware School. This includes increasing faith and piety, improving student achievement, increasing community participation, improving teachers' skills, improving facilities, and enhancing partnerships, all of which ultimately lead to the realization of a Population-Aware School...* [N2].*in addition, there is also a long-term goal, integrated with the Population-Aware School for the next four years, namely collaboration between schools and their fostered schools regarding the Adiwiyata program, healthy schools, child-friendly schools, and population aware schools...* [N2]. Informants 1 and 4 also emphasized that the integration of population science material is applied in learning and through habituation to build student character. *In the Physical Education (PJOK) material, 5th and 6th grade even discuss reproductive health. There is also a PJOK lesson on reproductive health. Science lessons discuss puberty, and all of these topics are integrated with reproductive health. Thus, it is not taboo discussion to explain it to elementary school children today. In religious lessons on Thaharah, we already discuss the ruling on obligatory bathing...* [N1] *in line with the school's vision and mission, the school can establish and build a population-oriented school. Of course, as teachers, we are also asked to integrate learning activities with population issues. This could be through character-building for students, teaching them how to manage and sort waste, maintain good health, and perhaps consume nutritious food. Essentially, this is through character building for students...* [N4]. According to informants 1 and 3, the principal's guidance also relates to integrating the government program "Bangga Kencana," which prepares families for a better future. This requires developing teacher competency through community learning activities so students can understand the "Bangga Kencana" program. *so there are indeed several institutions that help make this program a success, because in this program we talk a lot*

about “Bangga Kencana.” The “Bangga Kencana” program, which is a program from DP3AKB, is a program previously well-known as the Family Planning program with the slogan “Two Children is Enough.” Now today, the “Bangga Kencana” program is more about how to create a quality family and how families can plan for their future.... [N1].... how can our children integrate one of the government's “Bangga Kencana” programs, namely preparing for a healthy family, no more than two children, and creating a happier family... [N3]

Informant 1 emphasized that in its implementation, the principal took the lead by establishing a program coordinator consisting of six areas involving all supporting aspects: teachers, parents, and students. ... we formed a team and issued a decree regarding the Population-Aware School Program . In that decree, we involved three components: teachers, parents, and students. Students were also involved in the decree because they were students who also benefited from and were involved in this program... [N1]. Steps to integrate the program into the curriculum, including integration into government programs and the formation of coordinators, show that leadership is a form of direction carried out by the principal in implementing the SSK program, especially for the purpose of mitigating early marriage.

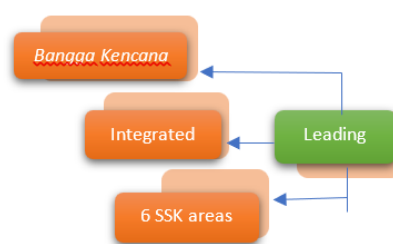


Figure 2. Leading Concept Map

Communicating is an effective step in increasing reproductive health knowledge as a mitigation measure for early marriage. Students tend to consider reproductive health topics taboo, so many questions end up being asked on their own online without guidance. Therefore, schools facilitate students' curiosity about reproductive health through preventative education using several tools, including inviting expert speakers, providing educational video content, and literacy resources in population corners. This was explained by Informants 1, 2, and 3: we collaborate with external parties, such as community health centers (Puskesmas), to provide and build understanding of the impacts of early marriage... [N1] the availability of books and advice is important, because children also need literacy knowledge, especially population books on marriage... [N2] hence, the content is animated, like this family here; there is a young married couple who had children and stopped using family planning, so they have more than two children, let's say they have six children. So, what happened here? It seems there is content there, ma'am. You can watch it on Instagram later. The content shows several children in that family having to fight with each other to take a bath, resulting them being late for school and they even fighting over the food. So, we can see the comparison between a family with only two children and one with more than two. This is happening because the parents are not mentally ready and married too early.... [N3]. The 2nd resource person (2nd informants) explained that efforts to increase student knowledge also include sex education activities, which are implemented separately for boys and girls. This allows students more freedom to ask questions and explore reproductive health and how to prepare themselves for the future. ...in 6th or 5th grade, they are already taught about fertilization and reproduction. So, the girls are taught by Ms. Eva and the boys by Mr. Eko, so they are separated. This means that it leads to early marriage and provides understanding to children... [N2]. In addition to a separate guidance center to maintain student privacy, Resource Person 2 explained that the school also provides an effective communication platform for students who wish to ask questions about reproductive health, using a suggestion and question box located in the population corner. These questions are then discussed with the SSK ambassador team and disseminated to their peers. ...so when they came there, there's a suggestion and question box in the corner, which can be a discussion forum. "Come on, what are your suggestions, input, or problems?" The SSK ambassadors open their discussions with their teams

and disseminate the information to their peers. [N2] Sex education activities, the question box, and utilizing SSK ambassadors as peer resource persons are a series of platforms within the communication stage, aimed at providing effective communication to increase understanding of reproductive health as a mitigation measure for early marriage.

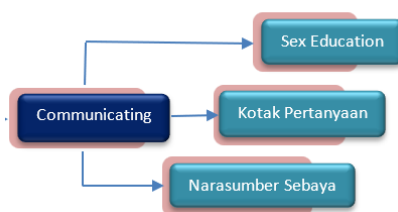


Figure 3. Communicating Concept Map

Motivating is the process of providing encouragement, inspiration, and strength that can ignite students' interest in learning about reproductive health. This motivation is built through innovation, the formation of SSK Ambassador, and Project-Based Learning. Informant 1 explained that the innovation in the SSK program is in the form of a population corner. Informant 4 added that within this population corner, the SSK Ambassador play a significant role, routinely providing a series of innovations that serve as sources of population knowledge. *So, the population corner is an idea from the innovation department, intended to provide information related to population issues...* [N1] *The content of the population corner is usually because we happen to have SSK Ambassador at our school, so the children and their team usually create posters and bulletins related to population issues, which also attracts the children's attention. The children can also make good use of their time in the population corner because it contains a lot of information related to reproductive health, growth, and balanced nutrition. So, the children are usually interested in visiting the corner...* [N4]. According to informants 1 and 3, one of the school's motivations for students is the selection of SSK Ambassador, who have the important role of serving as peer resource persons. This motivates students, as they can provide counseling to their peers. *Yes, the Ambassador's job is to educate their classmates and provide them with an understanding of the Population-Aware Program...* [N1] *We usually hold the activities on Fridays because Fridays at Kemala Bhayangkari Elementary School are co-curricular, so there are no other classes. So this allows the children to participate in the learning process, making it mixed session, ma'am. It is not only the first grade alone, but the younger students may join the older students. They exchange ideas, discuss, and the older students provide counseling there...* [N3]. Another interesting thing, according to informants 1 and 4, is that the results of the project-based learning, integrated with population material, in the form of posters, bulletins, and educational content, will be displayed in the population corner and even used as learning resources for other students. This is a source of pride for the students who created the project. *There are books, articles, and videos with barcodes that can be scanned, educational videos related to population issues...* [N1] *Usually, the kids make posters, bulletins, and educational content about population issues. Yesterday, someone uploaded a TikTok video about stunting prevention and 7 steps to prevent it. So, thank God, the kids got into groups to discuss and then create the project, whether it's content or posters. We gave them creative freedom there...* [N4]. A series of activities to create innovative programs, in the form of SSK Ambassador, as well as project-based learning outcomes with population integration, are steps taken by the school to motivate and ignite students' interest in continuing to expand their knowledge related to population.

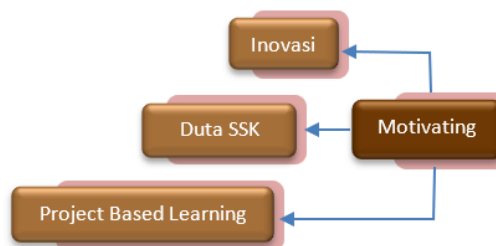


Figure 4. Motivating Concept Map

Coordination is the school's process of aligning and integrating activities in the implementation of the SSK program with relevant parties. Parents and committee members are included in the SSK coordination team, whose duties and functions are outlined in the Principal's Decree. Activities with parents to improve understanding of child development and how to provide reproductive health education to children through parenting were explained by informants 1 and 3. ... So, we have six indicators, yes, six areas, that involving teachers, parents, and students For example, we have our innovation sectors, which we involve teachers, parents, and students. So, from there, we gather input, what ideas do parents have? What innovations can teachers contribute? And what do the children themselves come up with? This is how we work collaboratively... [N1] We also frequently hold parenting seminars at the school, where a child psychologist can serve as the resource person to educate parents how to teach their children at home. Children also spend a lot of time at home, so it's important to maintain a balance between home and school... [N3]. According to informants 1, 2, and 4, the success of this program is also due to the supports of partners, including the DP3AKB, Community Health Centres, the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), and partner schools The availability of books and advice is important, because children also need literacy knowledge, especially population books on marriage... [N2] collaborating with SMA Negeri 2 and SMP KPS as partner schools... [N2] Our school collaborates with DP3AKB, BKKBN, and community health centers to support children's health.... [N4] in this program, we talk a lot about "Bangga Kencana," which is a program from the DP3AKB (Education and Child Protection Agency), a program we know as family planning, which aims to create quality families and plan for the future... [N1]. Collaborating with parents and partnering with other parties is a step in the school's coordination process to align program implementation and integrate population-based government programs into the SSK.

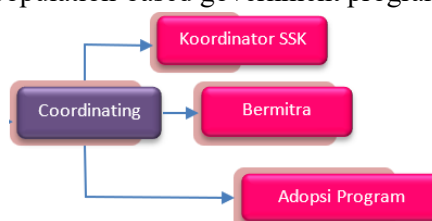


Figure 5. Coordinating Concept Map

DISCUSSION

Leading

Direction or leadership is closely related to a manager's ability to direct and motivate each member to achieve targets (Eka, 2025). The principal directed that the school curriculum be integrated with the SSK program. This aligns with the explanations of informants 2 and 4, who stated that the SSK program is clearly reflected in the school's vision, mission, objectives, and everyday learning practices. According to informant 1, the initial step in integrating the SSK into the curriculum is to refer to regulations as documented, namely the Decree of the Minister of Population and Family Development/Head of the National Population and Family Planning Agency No. 41/KEP/D3/2025. Beyond regulatory compliance, the school also integrates the government's

“Bangga Kencana” program from the DP3AKB, with the aim of preparing families for a quality future. Speaker 1 emphasized that in implementing SSK, the principal has divided the program into six areas: (1) policy, (2) intracurricular activities, (3) extracurricular activities, (4) innovation and creativity, (5) monitoring and evaluation, (6) achievements and awards. These data are documented in the Principal's Decree.

Communicating

According to Triwardhani et al., (2020), effective communication plays an essential role in connecting the various elements of education, fostering a sense of shared purpose and enabling better outcomes for everyone involve. Acknowledging that critical importance of effective communication in both reproductive health education and early marriage prevention, the school has put several preventive strategies in place. According to informants 1, 2, and 3, these include expert speakers, crating educational content, and offering reading materials on early marriage. According to informant 2, sex education lessons are designed separately for male and female students. To maintain the privacy of students who wish to inquire further about reproductive health, a question box is provided in the population corner. The questions are discussed by Population Ambassador, accompanied by a supervising teacher, and then disseminated to their peers.

Motivating

Providing consistent motivation can increase student productivity, achievement, and interest. According to informant 1, ways to build student interest in learning reproductive health are through innovation, the selection of SSK Ambassadors, and Project-Based Learning. Informants 1, 3, and 4 explained that one of the innovations in the SSK program is the population corner. The selection of Ambassadors also serves as a motivation in itself, as students will be assigned as peer resource persons who provide counseling to their friends. Each learning session also creates enthusiasm for students by producing projects in the form of books, bulletins, posters, and educational content.

Coordinating

The coordinating function ensures that each sector and relevant parties within the SSK program can work together harmoniously, effectively, and efficiently to achieve the target of improving students' knowledge of reproductive health as a mitigation measure against early marriage. The SSK program consists of six sectors, and informant 1 explained that each sector consists of teachers, students, and parents as activity coordinators. For example, in the innovation sector, ideas can be generated from teachers, parents, and students. Program alignment also encompasses equal guidance provided by the school and parents at home. Informant 3 revealed that the school frequently holds parenting seminars for parents, inviting expert speakers. Informants 1, 2, and 4 also added that the program's successful implementation is based on collaboration with other parties, such as the DP3AKB (Regional Child Protection Agency), Community Health Centers (Puskesmas), BKKBN (National Population and Family Planning Board), and partner schools.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on observations in this study, it can be concluded that the SSK program can improve students' reproductive health education as an effort to mitigate early marriage, a phenomenon in society. The implementation phase (Principle of Direction), which is part of the POAC management phase, can serve as guidance for schools in implementing the SSK program. The Principle of Direction is divided into the steps of Leading, Communicating, Motivating, and Coordinating. Each step has a purpose: (1) Leading significantly assists the principal in directing the integration of SSK into the school curriculum; (2) Communicating serves as an effective means of communication for students in an effort to increase their knowledge of reproductive health, which is often considered taboo; (3) Motivating provides a forum for students to receive encouragement to spark their interest

in implementing the SSK program; and (4) Coordinating serves as an effort to align government programs with schools, align the roles of schools and parents, and align programs with relevant parties.

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