

FACTORS ENCOURAGING EARLY MARRIAGE AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN EAST JAVA OF INDONESIA

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A B S T R A C T

Early marriages occur in Indonesia and this still contributes to maternal and child mortality. Therefore, research is needed to find out the reasons why the incidence of early marriage can occur. This research was conducted in four sub-districts in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, by taking respondents based on the technique of snowball sampling. After the interview, several factors had apparently contributed to this early marriage, among others, culture, economic level, level of education, and level of knowledge on marriage. This of course requires a program to increase the age of first marriage by a woman called maturing marriage age. It is hoped that the contributing factors to early marriage will not be repeated in the future when the perpetrators of the early marriage are given an explanation of the importance of delaying the age of marriage to adulthood.

INTRODUCTION

At least a third of women aged 20-24 in more than 40 countries in developing countries have got married before their eighteenth birthday and about 12% of them are married before the age of 15 (UNFPA, 2012). This means that an early marriage can be defined as either when a woman is less than 18 years old at the time of the marriage, or when a man is less than 22 years old (Jaber, et.al., 2005). In fact, early marriages affect adolescent psychology, health, and reproduction leading to lost opportunities for education in terms of dropout, vulnerable to violence and neglect, and many more (Delprato, et.al., 2015; Prakash, 2017). In addition, it can also result in a less quality generation. It is risky because there is insufficient preparedness from several aspects such as health, mental, emotional, educational, socio-economic, and reproduction (Delprato, & Akyeampong, 2017). Pregnancy at a young age has several risks including premature birth, low birth weight, hemorrhage and many others that can increase maternal and infant mortality rates. Studies have shown that labor in mothers under the age of 20 has a

high contribution in neonatal, infant, and under-five mortality rates (Paul, & Chouhan, 2019; Nasrullah, Zakar, Zakar & Krämer, 2014).

Children's right to health and well-being is one of the things that is deprived when children are confronted with early marriage. In developing countries, excess morbidity and mortality of children remains rooted in social determinants (Goldhagen, & Lansdown, 2017); therefore, the problem of early marriage must be resolved to completion. Actually, early marriage can be related to the contribution of gender and values. Adolescent marriages among young men are rarely found, but early marriage rates among adolescent girls are still quite common. In fact, early marriage for women leads to early labor, which carries an increased risk of death in pregnancy or childbirth, premature birth, complications during labor such as obstructed labor, low birth weight, and a higher likelihood that the newborn will not survive (Roudi-Fahimi, 2006; Kulczycki, 2017).

Based on these things, this study will determine several reasons why early marriage can occur. By interviewing respondents from

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those who are going to get married at a young age, the important things that are the reasons why they choose to have an early marriage will be analyzed. Actually, the marriage age maturity program is the right act that provides understanding and awareness to adolescents so that in planning a family various aspects related to family life, physical, mental and socio-economic readiness can be considered and the number and distance/interval of births can be determined. Therefore, this information can be very important to them as their age is not mature enough.

METHOD

a. Respondent

This qualitative study used a snowball sampling (Stivala, 2016) to find out the reasons why early marriage might happen. The respondents as prospective brides registered to get married in the Religious Affairs Office of four sub-districts in Surabaya City while meeting the inclusion criteria, i.e, the first marriage, age ranging from 14 to 18 years old, and willing to be the respondent.

b. Procedure

The procedure of collecting the data was:

1. Asking several questions regarding the reason why the marriage could take place, and
2. Categorizing the respondents' answers to make the discussion be in line with the topic questioned.

The answers of the interview were presented in words and the discussion was narratively described to give clearer understanding for the readers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After the process of categorization based on the respondents' answers, the reasons underlying the incidence of early marriage in the study site were as follows:

1. Culture

Based on the finding, the parents in the three study sites adhered to the culture that parents forced their children to get married more quickly after graduating from school with a marriage age ≤ 20 years. The parents seemed to have an obligation to marry off their daughter after they were known to initiate menstruation.

Respondent 1.

My parent told me that I have to get married in the young age because there is a saying circling in my community that we are afraid to be called perawan tua (old virgin because of being unmarried in a very mature age). My parents will be ashamed of me not getting a husband soon.

Respondent 2.

Yes, I am also afraid to be called perawan tua. Therefore, when my parent told me that the culture in my society is to get married as soon as possible, I just follow. I cannot think any further except saying yes to what my parents want.

Respondent 3.

This is what I have to do to obey what my parents say. This is what commonly happens in my community.

Based on the results of research on cultural factors, culture is a complex whole, which contains knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and other abilities, as well as habits that humans obtain as members of society

(Ranjarbar, 2006). The norms of these cultural elements are very inherent in society related to marriage. Culture is closely related to norms and values in a particular society or community. Both of these have a strong influence in shaping gender roles and responsibilities, which in turn can also contribute to early marriage and early childbirth (Cottingham, 2017). Of course, lack of knowledge about one's body, shame about discussing contraception with a partner, and silencing sexual and reproductive health problems and conditions can occur in early marriage.

According to Goldhagen & Lansdown (2017), early marriage forced to young girls has become a cultural traditions that have long impacted on child's attitudes and behaviors. Such a culture is certainly very detrimental to adolescents, especially girls who are conned more vulnerable than adolescent boys. The practice of early marriage that should not be happening again at this time must be abolished by giving understanding to the community, especially the village community, by slowly changing the culture, in terms of changes in behavior in the practice of early marriage.

2. Economy

The second reason to be listed in this study is the economic factor. This is based on the fact that to support the family economy, parents prefer to immediately marry off their children to meet material, spiritual and harmonious relationships within the family.

Respondent 4.

My family income is not good. My parents, especially my mother, told me when I get married, the burden of my family can be reduced. It can be said that I have to sacrifice for my family and it is all because of the economy.

Respondent 5.

It is impossible for my family to support me to continue my school with the fact that we do not have enough money even for daily needs. Therefore, after I graduate, it is my duty to alleviate the burden of my family. Of course, I don't want it actually, but what I can do for this.

Respondent 6.

I got married in my early years because my family cannot support my life any longer, particularly my school. This is why to get rid of one of the problems in my family is by me being married this early. I know it is so sad.

Marrying off a child at an early age is actually triggered by many economic factors; therefore, this factor has also become the main contributing factor to early marriage (Brännström, Vinnerljung, & Hjern, 2015). The low income of family has encouraged them to marry their daughters off to reduce the burden of the family. These economic factors seem to only turn a blind eye to problems that arise at the time and do not look forward to problems that may arise in the future. With the increasing economic level of society, the problem of early marriage may not occur again because the focus of the life of the community will shift towards increasing self-capacity rather than having early marriage.

3. Low level of education

Education had become the main reason why early marriage occurred. With no support of good economic level, a low level of education or they just finished the basic years of education without having a chance to continue to the middle level would certainly take place.

Respondent 7.

I only reached my elementary school. No, I did not continue to middle school. Ys of

course it was related to the economic factor. My parents had no money to send me to the middle school so that I am here now waiting for my marriage life.

Respondent 8.

I really wanted to continue my study until university. However, my parents could not support me. Yes, I only graduated from elementary school. I could not even continue to middle school. Actually, I can work but still I cannot go to school. My parents gave me this alternative that I had to get married soon.

Respondent 9.

Maybe this is because I don't have a high level of education that made me have to get married in my early years. If I could continue my study higher, I didn't have to get married now.

Having not enough income is also closely related to low level of education. Consequently, low education levels in turn will likely to increase the appeal of early marriage. Based on the results of research, most parents were insufficient to meet the economic needs of the family or they faced the economic difficulties. Therefore, they had to drop out of the school, resulting in them having a low level of education. Early marriage reduces attainment of other outcomes such as education (Keister, & Fulton, 2015).

The age of first marriage, especially for women, illustrates the socio-economic changes that occur in society. This shift does not only affect the potential for birth but is also related to the role in the development of education (Gözüyilmaz, & Baran, 2010). Early marriage means difficult to finish or complete schooling, making career development more challenging (Keister, 2005). Actually, employment status in a community can indicate the economic situation of the community. The ease of gaining employment

opportunities or the opening of many jobs is an economic indicator of an area or a country. Job ownership by a woman can bring a decision to delay the age of marriage.

4. Low level of knowledge about marriage

Economy factor and education might lead to the reason number three, that is, the low level of knowledge about the age to marriage. The access to the government's policy or law on marriage did not touch them directly and this was why early marriage could happen.

Respondent 10.

You told me about the marriage age according to the government but to tell you the truth I didn't know it. Honestly, anything about marriage life is just a little I know.

Respondent 11.

I just graduated from elementary school and those kinds of information you gave me was none of my reach. I cannot cancel my marriage because my parents have already set it fixedly.

Respondent 12.

In my school, that is, elementary school, I was never given such information about marriage. Maybe, with this age, I am considered not ready by the government. However, my parents had arranged everything.

Early marriage will indeed raise future problems that young women who marry at a very young age are not well informed about marriage (Warria, 2017). This is very dangerous actually because women who have to take care of a family and perhaps with children will be confused to determine the right steps at a very young age. Based on the results of research on educational factors, most women had a low level of education. A low level of education or not going to school again for a woman can encourage to get married

quickly. Problems that occur because they do not know the ins and outs of marriage so that they tend to quickly get married and give birth to children. The role of parents in the continuation of early marriage is basically inseparable from the level of parental knowledge that is also connected with the level of parental education. The higher level of education provides insight and knowledge to choose to continue education and look for a better life so it will therefore be able to delay the decision to get married early.

CONCLUSION

Cultural factors along with economic factors have contributed in early marriage in community in Indonesia. Low family income and education may become the effect of those two aforementioned factors to augment in the incidences of early marriage.

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