

VIEWS ON EARLY MARRIAGE AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IMPACTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON PARENTS OF COUPLES IN BARRU DISTRICT

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Abstract

Parents have a role to play in determining whether adolescents enter into marriage or delay marriage at a young age. This study aims to explore the views of parents of couples towards early marriage. The research design used phenomenology which is part of qualitative research, involving 10 informants consisting of parents of young women who married off their children, young women who married early and midwives. Selection of informants using purposive sampling and triangulation. Data collection was done through interviews (in depth interviews) and observation. Data analysis techniques in qualitative research are based on data reduction, data display and conclusions and verification. The results of the study revealed several views that caused parents to marry off their children, namely 'difficult economy', 'lack of education level of parents and children', and 'family social status'. Parents are one of the factors driving early marriage and the various health impacts that can be experienced by adolescents who marry early.

Keywords: Early Marriage, Couple's Parents, Reproductive Health.

INTRODUCTION

Early marriage is especially common among girls in low-income countries, who become wives and mothers before they reach physical and mental maturity [1]. Child marriage is often the result of entrenched gender inequality. Child marriage leaves girls disproportionately affected by the practice [2].

In Indonesia, the prevalence of early marriage is among the top 10 highest in the world. Based on data from the National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS), in 2019, 36.22% of Indonesian women under the age of 19 were married, in 2020 it was 34.34% and in 2021 it was 34.54%. Based on the distribution data, the incidence of early marriage is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas [3].

Child marriage rates vary across Indonesia with an average of 8% in Sumatra to 16% in Kalimantan in 2018. The graph below shows the distribution of child marriage under the age of 18 across Indonesia [4]. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of South Sulawesi province on the proportion of the incidence of marriage of girls before the age of 18 in 2022 shows a proportion of 9.33%, this has increased where in 2021 it was only 9.25% [5].

Determining the age limit for marriage is very important. This is so that the resulting marriage can create a prosperous, happy, healthy and lasting family. Basically, a person's mental and physical maturity is important when entering the gates of a

household [6]. A girl is said to be physically ready for marriage when her body has finished developing, which is around the age of 20. Therefore, the age of 20 can be used as a guideline for a woman's physical readiness [7].

Penelitian terkait penerimaan batasan usia pernikahan dalam hukum perkawinan di Indonesia menunjukkan dimana UU perkawinan yang beberapa kali diuji di Mahkamah Konstitusi ternyata tidak mampu mengakomodir aspirasi seluruh lapisan masyarakat. Kontroversi diterimanya aturan baru mengenai batasan usia menikah menjadi bukti sosial bahwa batasan usia menikah belum diterima secara masif di masyarakat, sehingga berdampak pada tingginya angka pernikahan usia dini [8].

The impact of early marriage can be seen from various aspects such as health, social and psychological. Low awareness of health knowledge, growth and physical development means that women who become pregnant at an early age are at greater risk of maternal health problems, disability and death [9]. Some of the risks that threaten women's reproductive health when they decide to marry at an immature age include abortion, anaemia, intrauterine fetal death, premature birth, sexual violence, uterine atony and cervical cancer [10].

Research conducted by Eros Rosmiati revealed that early marriage has many adverse effects on the sexual and reproductive health of girls including death during childbirth, physical and sexual violence, cervical cancer, depression and the risk of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). In addition, teenage pregnant women have a higher risk of premature birth and neonatal death [11].

Girls who marry at an early age, most of them take on the roles and responsibilities of wives and mothers without adequate support, resources or abilities. Girls also have the obligation to be able to adapt to their partner's family and face social pressure from their environment. In addition, couples who marry too young do not fully understand their rights and obligations in the family because they are not physically and mentally mature [5]. Girls who marry at an early age are often denied human rights, not allowed to continue their education, and become victims of sexual and domestic violence. This also has implications for the overall development and well-being of the community as a whole [12].

Child marriage is a complex issue. Triggering factors include poverty, geography, lack of access to education, gender inequalities [13]. Social conflicts and disasters, lack of access to comprehensive reproductive health services and information, social norms that reinforce certain gender stereotypes (e.g. women should marry young), and culture (religious interpretations and local traditions). In addition, arranged marriages and community acceptance of child marriage are often considered as one of the drivers of child marriage [14]. Previous research shows that the lack of communication between parents and children, especially adolescents who need more attention to the development of their sexuality, will lead to more free sexual behaviour, which can lead to early marriage [15].

Parents have a role in determining whether adolescents will enter into marriage or delay marriage at a young age [15]. Socio-culturally, parents have different views on early marriage. Most of them, especially in rural areas, consider this tradition to be good and only a few think otherwise [16].

Barru sub-district has the highest number of early marriage cases in Barru district. There were 21 (26.9%) cases of early marriage in Barru Subdistrict in 2022 and 31

(42.4%) in 2023. Based on the previous description, this study aims to determine parents' perceptions of early marriage and the reproductive health of children who marry at an early age.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method in this study is a qualitative method, which is research used to investigate, find, describe and explain the quality or speciality of social influence. This research design using phenomenology is one type of qualitative research method that explores and reveals the shared meaning of concepts and phenomena that represent the lived experiences of a group of individuals. In qualitative research using participants as a source of information sources of information about what is known. The participants in the study were key participants (parents of adolescent girls who married early), expert participants (midwives in charge of the research area) and additional participants (adolescent girls who married early). Selection of participants using purposive sampling and using triangulation. Furthermore, data collection techniques were carried out by in-depth interviews and observation. Data analysis techniques in qualitative research are based on data reduction, data display and conclusions and verification [17].

RESULT

Table 1: Participant Characteristics Data

| No. | Participant | Age (Years) | Education | Jobs | Marriage Age |
|-----|-------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1 | P1 | 45 Years | Not in School | Housewife | 15 Years |
| 2 | P2 | 36 Years | Primary School | Housewife | 16 Years |
| 3 | P3 | 38 Years | Primary School | Housewife | 15 Years |
| 4 | P4 | 42 Years | Secondary School | Housewife | - |
| 5 | P5 | 47 Years | Diploma | Midwifery | - |
| 6 | P6 | 40 Years | Diploma | Midwifery | - |
| 7 | P7 | 47 Years | Diploma | Midwifery | - |
| 8 | P8 | 17 Years | Primary School | Housewife | 13 Years |
| 9 | P9 | 19 Years | Secondary School | Housewife | 15 Years |
| 10 | P10 | 19 Years | Secondary School | Housewife | 18 Years |

Based on the data on the characteristics of participants in table 1, seen from the characteristics of age, 17 years old as many as 1 participant, 19 years old consisted of 2 participants, aged 35-40 years, namely 3 participants, aged > 40 years as many as 4 participants. In the education characteristics, the most dominant number is mothers who do not go to school as many as 1 participant and elementary education consists of 3 participants while those with junior high school education are 2 participants, from the employment characteristics of key participants and additional participants working as housewives and 4 participants as midwives, even the average age of marriage of key and additional participants is under the age of 19 years.

Perceptions of parents marrying off their children early

Young marriages are often viewed negatively by the community, but there are still people who think that young marriage is not a problem but a common thing that happens in the community. Like the young marriages that occur in Barru District, Barru Regency, where the driving factor in young marriages is the child's own parents. Based on research conducted by researchers, there are various statements obtained from participants regarding the factors that cause parents to allow children to marry young.

As conveyed by the key participant as a parent who has married off his daughter at a young age:

P1: *“.....Saya kan dulu itu tidak mau kasih cepat menikah anakku karena dibawah umur i nanti pi umur 19 tahun tapi itu laki-laki mau sekali baru neneknya juga bilang sapa tau tidak panjang umur, tidak kulihat mi juga cucuku jadi terpaksa mi kasih jadi.” Jadi q tanya mi baik-baik kalau betul-betulki mau saya kasih jadi.....”*

The same thing was also conveyed by other key participants as parents who have married off some of their children at a young age:

P2 : *“.....Karena ada mi kasian yang suka i toh karena orang tua kasian takut juga kalau sapa tau mau i keluar na baku suka i anak-anak toh jadi itu mi ku kasih menikah saja.....”*

P3 : *“.....di kasih tau ji menikah saja mumpung ada yang suka itu ji ku tanya.....”*

According to the statements of the two parents above, it can be concluded that there are still some perceptions of parents who consider young marriage to be a positive thing to do.

Marriage is done so that it is no longer a burden on both parents, guarantees a better life and besides that, parents also play a role in determining these choices. Because of this, young marriages that occur in Barru Village, Barru Regency, some are encouraged by their own parents.

As conveyed by additional participants as perpetrators of young marriages in Barru District, Barru Regency:

P8: *“.....Menikah ka atas kemauan orang tuaku. Pernah datang kenalan yang mau melamar tapi sempat ka tidak mau dan menolak sekali, menangis sama bapak, tapi karena ada sepupu dan keluarga palece (bujuk) baru lama-lama mau meka dan mengikut ka apa yang mau sama orang tua. Usiaku waktu menikah dulu 13 tahun.....”*

The same thing was also conveyed by an additional participant who was also a perpetrator of young marriage in Barru District, Barru Regency:

P9: *“.....Waktu itu tidak pernah ka berencana untuk segera untuk menikah, karena pada saat itu saya masih sekolah SMP. Tapi orang tuaku na minta ka untuk segera menikah karena orang tuaku tidak bisa mi na lanjutkan sekolah itupun na bilang sekolah tidak ada gunanya, karena tidak mampu ki.....”*

The same thing was also conveyed by an additional participant as a perpetrator of young marriage in Barru District, Barru Regency:

P10: *“.....Tidak ada ji alasan tertentu bagi saya untuk memutuskan melakukan pernikahan, saya hanya menuruti apa kata orang tua saja dan sudah ka juga tamat SM, tidak ada juga niat untuk melanjutkan sekolah. Waktu itu umur saya 15 tahun saya diminta ketemu sama pilihannya mama ku untuk kenalan secara langsung. Mungkin orang tua meminta saya untuk menikah dengannya karena keluarga ji juga sepupu dua kali dan orang tua laki-laki juga mau. Jadi ku setuju mi apa yang diminta sama orang tuaku.....”*

In accordance with the statements of additional participants as perpetrators of young marriages above, it can be concluded that the drivers of young marriages are their

own parents. Parental involvement and perspective in determining the choice to marry young is still very influential for a child. The reasons for parents to marry off their children at a young age are the economy which is so difficult, lack of understanding of the importance of education and also being influenced by what and who the person is proposing to their child.

A Reproductive Health Perspective on Early Marriage

Based on the research that has been conducted by researchers on the impact of reproductive health that occurs from young marriages in Barru District, Barru Regency, researchers conducted interviews with key participants and expert participants that researchers obtained the impact of marriage at a young age for a child who has married. We often see that couples who marry at a young age usually have a limited level of understanding.

As conveyed by key participants as parents in Barru Sub-district, Barru Regency regarding reproductive health:

P4: *"...iye, beresiko. Biasanya itu dilarang dulu hamil, disuruh ki dulu KB karena biasa terpengaruh sama kandungan sama pikiran, berpengaruh sama fisik..."*

P3: *"...iye, karena tipis kandungan, lebih cepat lahir bayi belum bulannya..."*

The same thing was also expressed by key participants who rarely heard of reproductive health problems that occur in children who have early marriages:

P1: *".....pernah ka dengar, yang tidak boleh hamil anak-anak....."*

P2: *".....tidak pernah ka dengar bu....."*

From the responses of the key participants above, it can be concluded that parents' lack of understanding of the reproductive health impacts of early marriages by adolescents.

Based on the results of interviews conducted with expert participants regarding what obstacles are obtained at health facilities regarding pregnancies experienced by children who have married underage, most of those who come are already pregnant, have low HB and are very risky so they are referred. The statements of expert participants are as follows:

P5: *".....Rata-rata yang dibawah umur datang ke puskesmas itu sudah dalam keadaan hamil, kebanyakan begitu yang didapatkan kasusnya disini....."*

P6: *".....Ada memang yang malah sudah besar mi umur kehamilannya, dan semua di sesuaikan dengan lab karena itukan diminta juga oleh pengadilan toh untuk bisa mempercepat proses pernikahannya karena biasa dipertimbangkan kalau dia nda hamil ji tapi kalau sudah hamilkan sudah harus dan mau tidak mau dipercepat....."*

P7: *".....ada, kayak kemarin itu 17 tahun rendah Hbnya dibawah 10 sudah 2x pemeriksaan toh malah kemarin malah turun jadi dirujuk mi....."*

P6: *".....ada juga yang itu hari dirujuk karena serotinus. Yang paling banyak itu HB sama KEK....."*

The same thing was also expressed by other expert participants that not all pregnant women who come to health facilities have complications and excessive complaints during the examination. The following is a statement from an expert participant:

P7 : *“.....ada, selama hamil itu anak-anak biasa-biasa ji nda sampai hiperemesis berlebih.....”*.

P5 : *“..... tidak banyak tapi ada beberapa. Biasa kalau datang periksa kesini untuk pemeriksaan saja.....”*.

P5 : *“.....Selama ini tidak ada ji sampai komplikasi paling itu ji sama keluhannya yang muntah-muntah saja.....”*

Based on the results of interviews conducted with participants, it is known that the participants' lack of understanding of the Child Marriage Law and the ideal age to marry.

DISCUSSION

Young marriage can also be found in Barru District, Barru Regency, where there are still some parents who marry off their children at a young age without considering the age of the child because it is all done due to the parents' limited knowledge of the meaning of marriage itself.

Parents as participants in this study have children who marry around 18-19 years of age and this age is referred to by the government as an early age because the government rules for women in terms of marriage are 20 years old The above statement is supported by regulations from the government as follows UNICEF [18], that early marriage is a marriage that is carried out under the age of 20 years, where adolescent girls do not have mature readiness both physically and psychologically.

In line with research stating that although the age limit for marriage has been determined, in reality there are still parents who marry off their children at a young age. With the break from school for children who no longer continue their education at a higher level, children will feel bored and lonely because of the change in environment they live in [19].

Families that have a weak or low economic level will result in a very long dilemma, in the family, problems will definitely enter their lives and will also affect their family life. With a poor economic level, it is possible that an unwanted marriage will occur [20].

The people of Kecamatan Barru are mostly poor families. In terms of livelihoods, most people are farmers with irregular incomes, which are not enough to fulfil their daily needs. By marrying off the child, the family's burden will be reduced because with the marriage taking place, the one who will bear the needs of the child becomes the responsibility of the husband. With the hope that after their children are married, their children will help ease the burden on their parents [21].

Families who have a low economic level will marry off their children even though they are still not old enough to get married. Parents marry off their daughters because of economic factors. By marrying off their children at a young age, they will be released from their responsibility to finance or fulfil their life needs. The occurrence of young marriage is not only due to economic factors, but also because the level of knowledge of parents and children is still so minimal due to low levels of education. Therefore, environmental factors are also one of the factors driving parents to marry off their children at a young age, because they generalise life based on what is considered normal in community life [22].

Based on the results of interviews that have been conducted in Barru Sub-district, Barru Regency, it shows that participants' lack of understanding about reproductive health towards early marriage. This is due to the ignorance of the community in the socialisation activities of related health workers. So that the information received by participants about reproductive health is still lacking, and participants more often get information from the words of people and neighbours.

The high incidence of early marriage in Barru Regency is due to the lack of knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the community about the impact of reproductive health on early marriage, the existence of age restriction laws for marriage, and the ideal age for marriage. So it is not a problem if parents marry off their children at any age. Early marriages that occur are driven by matchmaking factors from parents and families, their own will (mutual consent), and also married by accident (pregnant outside of marriage). In line with the results of the research conducted, it shows that the factors that influence early marriage are arranged marriage, social support, and lack of knowledge [23].

Researchers found facts in the field that there was one / the main participant who during pregnancy experienced pregnancy hypertension, then the child was born prematurely and low birth weight (BBLR). This incident is at risk of stunting in children. Stunting is one of the government's priority programmes, as the elimination of all forms of malnutrition is included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target of 2030. One of the causes of stunting is poverty due to the economic inability to fulfil nutritious food needs for the family. Stunting is not only caused by poverty, but stunting will also cause poverty. When stunting cannot be prevented and continues to increase, it will have an impact on human resource potential, which has an important effect on the country's economy [24].

Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out, it is found that the categories of maternal health and infant health are categories that are influential as a result of the pregnancy of mothers who marry early. Physical factors in the form of immature reproductive organs cause women who marry young to not be able to withstand the burden of pregnancy or pelvic parts that are not developed enough so that they can make the fetus abnormal and its growth and development which leads to miscarriage Hutabalian, 2019 During pregnancy, pregnant women should conduct pregnancy checks at least 4x visits with the aim of detecting complications that can threaten the life of the mother and baby [25].

The results of this study are supported by Samsi, 2020, that the health of mothers during pregnancy in early marriage shows that the frequency of ANC (Antenatal Care) during pregnancy averages 8 times, all of which are carried out at health workers (midwives and doctors) and complaints during pregnancy are mostly lack of blood (anaemia), dizziness and swelling in late pregnancy / old pregnancy [26]. According to Nugroho 2018, the results of the study stated that babies with LBW (Low Birth Weight), anaemia, miscarriage, bleeding, often occur in mothers with a very young age. Similar to previous research according to Thato, et al 2020, teenage pregnant women also have premature birth rates and give birth to babies with low birth weight.

The results of research with the impact of pregnancy obtained from two categories, namely maternal health and infant health, in the category of maternal health in this study found the impact of anaemia on mothers. This category is supported by the theory according to Kuntoro 2021, that anaemia during pregnancy is caused by lack

of knowledge of the importance of nutrition during pregnancy at a young age, because during pregnancy the majority of mothers experience anaemia, additional iron in the body functions to increase the number of red blood cells, form fetal red blood cells and placenta over time a person who loses red blood cells will become anaemic [27].

In line with Masia's research 2020 nutritional anaemia is more common in pregnancy because during this period there is an increase in the need for food substances to support physiological changes during pregnancy. The cause of anaemia during pregnancy at a young age is due to lack of knowledge of the importance of nutrition during pregnancy at a young age, because during pregnancy the majority of mothers experience anaemia. So it can be concluded that the nutritional needs of pregnant women must be met very well because it guarantees the health of the mother and fetus. The second category of the physical health impact theme is infant health. In this category, the impact of low birth weight babies is found. This category is supported by the theory described by Hartono 2018, that low birth weight (LBW) is also a congenital abnormality, prematurity occurs because of the easy age of the mother and the lack of maturity of the reproductive organs, especially the uterus, which is not ready for a pregnancy process, low birth weight (LBW) is also influenced by poor nutrition during pregnancy, and also the age of the mother who has not yet turned 20 years old. According to Cater and Coleman 2022, low birth weight and complications during pregnancy and childbirth can occur due to inadequate nutrition, because nutritional needs are still needed for the physical growth of adolescents so that there is competition with the needs of the fetus. So it can be concluded that low birth weight babies (LBW) are strongly influenced by the good and bad nutritional status of the mother [28].

In this study, the impact of reproductive health is closely related to the theory of Johnson's behavioural system model where Johnson's behavioural system theory explains the process of changing health conditions influenced by external pressures and role changes that affect behaviour and have an impact on healthy or sick pressure for individuals. In this study, mothers who married early experienced pain pressure, namely experiencing changes in health status. Mothers who have not matured their reproductive organs can experience anaemia during pregnancy and have an impact on the health of babies who experience low birth weight (LBW). Anaemia is an impact on the health of mothers who marry young because mothers who marry and give birth at a young age do not have knowledge about good nutrition for pregnancy so that due to the lack of nutrition of the mother, it affects the growth and development of the baby so that the baby is born with low weight. From the impacts that occur, mothers are encouraged to take action to balance their health status by visiting health services to meet the needs of the mother and foetus [29].

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of existing research, parents are the driving factor for early marriage and the various impacts experienced by mothers who marry early in Barru District, Barru Regency. The various pressures experienced encourage the mother to marry and when they enter into this young marriage relationship, the mother who is required to take on a new role in her family must face various impacts in terms of health and psychology. Even the health impacts experienced by the mother pose a great risk to the health of the mother and her baby. Therefore, the biological, psychological and social maturity of a woman in early marriage is necessary.

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