

Socio-Cultural Perspectives of Early Marriage between Teenagers and Parents in Rural Communities

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Abstract: Early marriage (under 19 years) has a very serious impact on both the mother and the child born. Grobogan Regency is an area in Central Java province, most of which is rural. The prevalence of women marrying and getting pregnant at an early age in this area is very high, reaching 59.88% in 2018, 51.24% in 2019 and 52.81% in 2020. This figure is much higher than the figure for Central Java province, which is 37.67%. Teenagers are the main actors in early marriage, especially in rural communities.. This type of research is survey research with a cross-sectional design. The population is junior high school students aged 13-16 years in Grobogan sub-district as an area with the highest incidence of teenage marriage in Grobogan Regency, Central Java. The minimum sample size is calculated according to the Slovin formula with a 95% confidence level, obtaining a total of 185 students and their parents. Data were collected using a questionnaire. Univariate and bivariate analysis using the test Mann Whitney. The results of the study stated that the perceptions of teenagers and their parents were also not much different. Significant differences were only related to the perception of matchmaking by parents as the cause of teenage marriage and the perception of the lack of reproductive health information and the impact of early marriage can encourage early marriage.

Keywords: early marriage; teenagers; parents

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently in the top 10 countries with the highest prevalence of early marriage in the world. The National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS) stated that in 2019, women in Indonesia who married at the age of less than 19 years were 36.22%, in 2020 it was 34.34%, and in 2021 it was 34.54%. Based on its distribution, early marriage occurs more in rural areas than in urban areas.

Central Java is a province with the highest prevalence of early marriage of girls in Indonesia. Grobogan Regency is an area in Central Java province, most of which is rural. The prevalence of women who marry and become pregnant at an early age in this area is very high, reaching 59.88% in 2018, 51.24% in 2019 and 52.81% in 2020. This figure is much higher than the figure for Central Java province, which is 37.67%. The prevalence of early pregnancy in women in Grobogan Regency is also very high, namely 60.97% in 2019 and 60.86% in 2020, always much higher than Central Java, which is 45.20%.

Several studies have stated that women who marry at the age of 10-19 years face a risk of death during pregnancy and childbirth that is almost 5 times greater than those who marry at the age of 20-24 years. Mothers aged 15-19 years are also at greater risk of experiencing complications during pregnancy and childbirth than mothers aged 20-24 years. Early marriage can cause various adverse health impacts such as miscarriage, stillbirth, high fertility, and maternal morbidity.

Early marriage also has an impact on the children born. Mothers who marry at an early age have a 1.55 times greater risk of infant mortality compared to adult mothers. Children born to women who marry at a young age are also at greater risk of stunting, thinness and underweight. Babies with low birth weight (LBW) are also more likely to be born to mothers aged 16-19 years (17.80%), compared to mothers aged 20-30 years (12.33%). Analysis of birth data from the Population and Civil Registration Service of Grobogan Regency, a total of 3,400 babies born to women aged under 30 years during 2020-2021, found that women who were married and pregnant at the age of less than 20 years had a 1.728 times greater risk of giving birth to LBW babies compared to women who were married and pregnant at the age of over 20 years.

Early marriage has a very serious impact. Factors that influence early marriage must be intervened. Teenagers and parents are the main actors. Early marriage in the perspective of socio-cultural and health among adolescents and parents must be studied because it will affect the occurrence of early marriage. The perceptions and beliefs of adolescents and their parents greatly determine decisions and predictions early marriage especially in rural areas.

METHOD

This type of research is analytical survey research with a cross-sectional design with the aim of analyzing the perceptions of adolescents and parents towards early marriage in rural communities from a social and health perspective at a certain time simultaneously.

The population of this study was junior high school students aged 13-16 years in Grobogan sub-district and their parents as an area with the highest incidence of teenage marriage in Grobogan Regency, Central Java. The minimum sample size was calculated according to the Slovin formula with a 95% confidence level, obtaining 185 students and their parents. The sample selection technique was purposive with the following considerations: 1) teenagers living with their parents, 2) able to read and write, and 3) willing to be respondents.

Data collection uses an instrument in the form of a questionnaire that has met the requirements of validity and reliability. This questionnaire was developed based on references from several standard questionnaires with modified questions to focus more on early marriage from a social

and health perspective among adolescents. Data collection was conducted by trained researchers and enumerators. Before filling out the questionnaire, researchers and enumerators provided explanations and informed consent to respondents. Bivariate data analysis used the t-test. Mann Whitney to analyze the differences in perception between male and female adolescents, as well as the differences in perception between adolescents and their parents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that in general there was no significant difference between the perception of early marriage in adolescents and their parents. Based on the results of the study, there were several different perceptions between adolescents and their parents, including that adolescents were more likely to agree (43.2%) that Matchmaking by parents is the cause of teenage marriage. While only 31.5% of parents agree with the statement.

Table 1. Socio-cultural perceptions related to early marriage among teenagers and their parents

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Don't agree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Teenage girls who have started menstruating means they are ready to get married.										
Teenager	42	22.7	84	45.4	50	27.0	7	3.8	2	1.1
Parent	52	28.1	88	47.6	26	14.1	15	8.1	4	2.2
2. Girls marry at a young age to maintain the honor of their parents and family.										
Teenager	41	22.2	74	40.0	50	27.0	19	10.3	1	0.5
Parent	42	22.7	80	43.2	30	16.2	31	16.8	2	1.1
3. It is taboo for a girl to delay marriage										
Teenager	31	16.8	58	31.4	81	43.8	11	5.9	4	2.2
Parent	28	15.1	68	36.8	51	27.6	32	17.3	6	3.2
4. Marrying off daughters at a young age can help solve economic problems in the family.										
Teenager	49	26.5	83	44.9	34	18.4	17	9.2	2	1.1
Parent	57	30.8	89	48.1	23	12.4	10	5.4	6	3.2
5. Unmarried girls over 18 years old are a burden on the family										
Teenager	43	23.2	76	41.1	37	20.0	23	12.4	6	3.2
Parent	53	28.6	81	43.8	28	15.1	19	10.3	4	2.2
6. Unmarried girls over 18 years old will bring shame to their parents and family.										
Teenager	47	25.4	92	49.7	29	15.7	12	6.5	5	2.7
Parent	60	32.4	83	44.9	27	14.6	12	6.5	3	1.6
7. Parents really expect their daughters to marry before the age of 18.										
Teenager	63	34.1	88	47.6	22	11.9	8	4.3	4	2.2
Parent	63	34.1	73	39.5	32	17.3	14	7.6	3	1.6
8. Teenage girls feel ashamed if they marry before the age of 18										
Teenager	38	20.5	51	27.6	33	17.8	40	21.6	23	12.4
Parent	43	23.4	65	35.3	27	14.7	35	19.0	14	7.6

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Don't agree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
9. Parents will look down on pregnant teenage girls										
Teenager	29	15.7	39	21.1	51	27.6	46	24.9	20	10.8
Parent	29	15.7	48	25.9	49	26.5	38	20.5	21	11.4
10. Teenage girls must obey their parents if they ask them to get married even though they are still in school.										
Teenager	70	37.8	68	36.8	28	15.1	14	7.6	5	2.7
Parent	88	47.6	60	32.4	25	13.5	7	3.8	5	2.7
11. Early marriage is one way to improve the economy of poor familiescapable										
Teenager	50	27.0	74	40.9	45	24.3	13	7.0	3	1.6
Parent	57	31.0	85	46.2	26	14.1	14	7.6	2	1.1
12. Early marriage is an effort to prevent excessive teenage dating behavior.										
Teenager	19	10.3	60	32.4	64	34.6	34	18.4	8	4.3
Parent	28	15.1	65	35.1	46	24.9	41	22.2	5	2.7
13. Early marriage can occur if there is a feeling of mutual love or fear of losing a partner.										
Teenager	25	13.5	50	27.0	66	35.7	34	18.4	10	5.4
Parent	26	14.1	65	35.1	57	30.8	33	17.8	4	2.2
14. Arranged marriages by parents are the cause of teenage marriages										
Teenager	15	8.1	43	23.2	47	25.4	64	34.6	16	8.6
Parent	28	15.2	43	23.4	55	29.9	54	29.3	4	2.2
15. Lack of reproductive health information and the impact of early marriage can encourage early marriage.										
Teenager	19	10.3	63	34.1	42	22.7	46	24.9	15	8.1
Parent	23	12.4	33	17.8	37	20.0	77	41.6	15	8.1
16. Wanting to quickly add new family members is a driving force behind early marriages										
Teenager	32	17.3	70	37.8	44	23.8	30	16.2	9	4.9
Parent	30	16.2	85	45.9	39	21.1	24	13.0	7	3.8
17. Dating is often the cause of early marriage										
Teenager	17	9.2	42	22.7	36	19.5	66	35.7	24	13.0
Parent	18	9.8	39	21.2	45	24.5	68	37.0	14	7.6
18. The low level of education and knowledge of parents is a tendency for their children to marry off at an early age.										
Teenager	19	10.3	45	24.3	49	26.5	49	26.5	23	12.4
Parent	22	11.9	36	19.5	37	20.0	70	37.8	20	10.8
19. The increasing influence of mass media and social media can attract the attention of teenagers to choose to marry at a young age.										
Teenager	22	11.9	46	24.9	53	28.6	46	24.9	18	9.7
Parent	21	11.4	54	29.2	48	25.9	49	26.5	13	7.0
20. Traditions and customs that exist in society to this day encourage teenagers to marry at an early age.										
Teenager	28	15.1	64	34.9	49	26.5	34	18.4	10	5.4
Parent	22	12.0	57	31.0	45	24.5	49	26.6	11	6.1

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Don't agree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
21. Having peers who marry at a young age is a motivation to also marry at an early age.										
Teenager	41	22.2	63	34.1	54	29.2	17	9.2	10	5.4
Parent	28	15.1	72	38.9	43	23.2	38	20.5	4	2.2

Another different thing is the perception of the lack of reproductive health information and the impact of early marriage can encourage early marriage. Parents agree more with this (49.7%) compared to teenagers who only 33.0%.

Table 2. Analysis of Differences in Socio-Cultural Perceptions between Adolescents and Their Parents

Statement		Respondent Type (Mean Rank)		U value	p-value
		Teenager	Parent		
1. Teenage girls who have started menstruating means they are ready to get married.		192.39	178.61	15838.500	0.185
2. Girls marry at a young age to maintain the honor of their parents and family.		185.68	185.32	17079.000	0.973
3. It is taboo for a girl to delay marriage		181.61	189.39	16392.500	0.463
4. Marrying off daughters at a young age can help solve economic problems in the family.		192.99	178.01	15727.000	0.149
5. Unmarried girls over 18 years old are a burden on the family		194.43	176.57	15461.000	0.090
6. Unmarried girls over 18 years old will bring shame to their parents and family.		192.01	178.99	15909.000	0.209
7. Parents really expect their daughters to marry before the age of 18.		180.67	190.33	16218.500	0.353
8. Teenage girls feel ashamed if they marry before the age of 18		194.88	175.07	15192.000	0.066
9. Parents will look down on pregnant teenage girls		189.35	181.65	16401.000	0.478
10. Teenage girls must obey their parents if they ask them to get married even though they are still in school.		195.60	175.40	15243.500	0.052
11. Early marriage is one way to improve the economy of a family that is lackingcapable		193.47	176.48	15453.000	0.105
12. Early marriage is an effort to prevent excessive teenage dating behavior.		191.39	179.61	16022.000	0.270
13. Early marriage can occur if there is a feeling of mutual love or fear of losing a partner.		193.32	177.68	15665.000	0.143
14. Arranged marriages by parents are the cause of teenage marriages		199.34	170.59	14368.000	0.007
15. Lack of reproductive health information and the impact of early marriage can encourage early marriage.		171.64	199.36	14547.000	0.010
16. Wanting to quickly add new family members is a driving force behind early marriages		190.76	180.24	16138.000	0.320
17. Dating is often the cause of early marriage		189.29	180.68	16226.000	0.421
18. The low level of education and knowledge of parents is a tendency for their children to marry off at an early age.		180.31	190.69	16152.000	0.336
19. The increasing influence of mass media and social media can attract the attention of teenagers to choose to marry at a young age.		188.59	182.41	16541.000	0.567
20. Traditions and customs that exist in society to this day encourage teenagers to marry at an early age.		175.96	194.09	15347.000	0.091
21. Having peers who marry at a young age is a motivation to also marry at an early age.		178.14	192.86	15751.000	0.168

Statistically, based on the results of the Mann Whitney test (table 2), it shows that there is a significant difference in the perception of "arranged marriage by parents is the cause of teenage marriage" between teenagers and their parents ($p = 0.007$), with an average assessment of 199.34 for teenagers and 170.59 for parents. Teenagers mostly agree that teenage marriage often occurs or is caused by arranged marriages carried out by their parents. This means that arranged marriages can be the most common cause found in society for early marriage or child marriage.

Significant differences were also seen in the perception of "lack of reproductive health information and the impact of early marriage can encourage early marriage" between adolescents and their parents ($p = 0.010$), with an average assessment of 171.64 for adolescents and 199.36 for their parents. This means that more parents agree that the lack of reproductive health information and the impact of early marriage can encourage early marriage. If parents often communicate or provide information related to reproductive health, including the impacts of adolescent dating behavior, then it is likely that children will have the responsibility to be able to plan their lives better and be able to make efforts to mature at the age of marriage.

Patriarchal culture is still strong in many families, where parents, especially fathers, are considered to have superior power and have full authority to make decisions, including regarding marriage decisions for their children. On the contrary, children are always in an inferior position who must obey the decisions made by their parents, especially their fathers. These decisions often do not consider the opinions, views, and rights of children to determine their future. The practice of early marriage often occurs due to coercion, including through matchmaking carried out by both families since their children were still very young.

In addition to their own decisions, the practice of child marriage in Grobogan also often occurs because of parental decisions and sometimes even because of forced matchmaking from parents. In addition, it is taboo for women who often reject the proposal of the man. The stigma in society if you are picky about potential partners, later no one will dare to propose and eventually become an old maid. If a girl does not go to school or is not a santri or does not work, it is better to marry her so that she does not become an old maid or "perawan kasep".

In general, early marriage is caused by individual factors such as promiscuous sexual behavior, family factors such as economic needs and arranged marriages, and environmental factors such as the existence of a culture or tradition of early marriage. Knowledge, attitudes and self-efficacy become individual factors are very important in determining whether a teenager will make the decision to marry at an early age among teenagers.

Many teenagers have the mindset that marriage will protect the honor of the family as the successor to the future. So, marriage must still be carried out to maintain the honor of the family because it has been planned, even though the age is still young or has not met the requirements for marriage as stipulated by law. In some areas in Indonesia, the practice of child marriage has social and cultural support. People often believe that if women marry late or remain single, it is said that their prosperity and luck are 'closed and late' which means it can bring shame to the honor of the family. Often society blames women and has a negative perception of those who are not married. The majority of Indonesian people are Muslim. In their beliefs, religion does not limit the age requirement for marriage, but for them women and men are allowed to marry if they have reached puberty.

The phenomenon of early marriage that often occurs in society is not only the individual will of teenagers, but also because of the decision of parents, and has even become a tradition. Parents marry off their daughters at a young age, due to: 1) shame due to their daughter's pregnancy, 2) concerns about their daughter's dating behavior, 3) obedience to parents, 4) economic factors, 5) educational factors, 6) the role of the media, 7) limited knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The perceptions of teenagers and their parents are also not much different. Significant differences are only related to the perception of matchmaking by parents as the cause of teenage marriage and the perception of the lack of reproductive health information and the impact of early marriage can encourage early marriage. Early marriage can be prevented by self-efficacy strong, high family income, strong family support, and access to positive information. Social norms also influence the delay in marriage age. Comprehensive interventions must still be carried out to promote the benefits of maturing marriage age based on the cultural context of the community.

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