

Social Impacts of Child Marriage in Grobogan Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia

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Abstract

Background: The prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia has more than doubled in the last three decades but is still one of the highest in the East Asia and Pacific region. In the Grobogan District in 2016 an increase in the number of marriages at an early age in women was 36.5 percent. This study is a qualitative-naturalistic study. The main data source of this study is the results of Focus Group Discussions, interviews and observations and also supported by secondary data in the form of previous research results. The reason for early marriage is mostly due to the incidence of pregnancy outside marriage in adolescents. It is suspected that there is a relationship between early marriage, low level of education and poverty. Religious education, morals and strict control from parents, schools and communities must be done with a variety of strategies, because most of the reasons for early marriage are getting pregnant first.

Keywords: *Child marriage, education, poverty, multi-strategies.*

Introduction

The prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia has declined for more than twofold in the last decade but is still of one of the highest rates in East Asia and Pacific. The National Social and Economic Survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2012 shows that 25 percent of 20-24 years old married women marry when they are under 18 years old⁽¹⁾.

Based on the IDHS in 2012, 17% of 20-24 years old married women marry when they are under 18 years old⁽²⁾. Indonesia is one example of global progress towards removal of child marriage practice with five percent of prevalence decline between IDHS issued in 2007 and 2012.

Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS)-UNICEF's report shows that the prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia is not only still high (with more than one-third girls marry before they get to adult or about 340,000 girls annually) but the prevalence has increased instead⁽³⁾.

Furthermore, although girl under 15 years old marriage has declined, but the prevalence of 16 and 17 years old girl marriage increases continuously, showing that girls protection decline when they are 16 years old. It is important to note that child under 15 years old marriage may not reflect the actual prevalence since many of these marriages are disguised as above 16 years old or unregistered girl marriage⁽³⁾.

There is a complex relationship between child marriage and education in Indonesia. Girls who marry before 18 years old have lower education level than unmarried girls, particularly after Elementary School. Besides, younger married children have lower education level than older married children. Girls tend not to continue their education after their marriage⁽³⁾.

The percentage of 20-24 years old girl marriage gets lower in line with increasing education level. The percentage of Elementary School girl marriage (40.5

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percent) is significantly different from they who continue their education to high school (5.0 percent). These numbers show that investment in secondary school for girls, especially high school, is one of the best ways to ensure that girls get to adulthood before marriage⁽³⁾.

At regional level, in the 2013-2018 Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of Central Java Province, the achieved target rate of marital age under 20 years old in 2016 is 1.19%. The rate of marital age under 20 years old in 2015 is 2.42%; while the rate of marital age under 20 years old in 2016 is 1.05%, which means that the decline is significant of 1.37%. The rate of marital age under 20 years old in 2016, in comparison with the target, has achieved the target defined in 2013-2018 RPJMD. In 2016, the highest rate of Marital Age Women or WUS under 20 years old is that in Batang Regency of 2.25%, while the lowest rate of WUS under 20 years old is that in Magelang City of 0.30%. In Grobogan Regency, the rate of marital age under 20 years old in 2015 is 4.71% and declines to 1.93% in 2016.

According to the data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Grobogan Regency, there are 21 men and 27 women who marry when they are under 16 years old in 2014. This number keeps increasing, consecutively to 21 men and 93 women in 2015, to 26 men and 127 women in 2016 and there are 19 men and 17 women only in January 2017. The main reasons of these early age marriages are: unwed pregnancy of 927 people and in avoidance of adultery of 1,169 people.

From such initial data, it is clearly important to conduct a research of early age marriage for material to design policies or programs to reduce early age marriage rate and prevent any of its consequences.

Method

This research's main source of data is numbers generated from Surveys conducted by BPS and relevant institutions, results of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and, if possible, interview and observation results, supported with secondary data in the form of previous researches' results. The secondary data are obtained from the results of surveys conducted by Central Bureau of Statistics and other institutions. These data and information are understood naturally without manipulation and arrangement using experiment or test. In other words, this research tends to be qualitative⁽⁴⁾.

The research location is all administrative area of Grobogan Regency, which is determined based on the fact that this Regency has a relatively complex early age marriage phenomenon. The poverty rate of this Regency is relatively high with its rural culture.

Results

Grobogan Regency has child marriage problem. According to the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics, the percentage of 17-18 years old girl marriage in Grobogan Regency in 2013 is relatively high of 28.55%, but from the perspective of First Marriage Age <17 years old, Grobogan Regency is in the first order of Child Marriage rate with a percentage of 34.95%. Meanwhile, according to the data of Family Planning Office of Grobogan Regency, there are 3,142 cases of child marriage in Grobogan in 2012, which increases to 4,072 cases in 2014.

In 2015, there are 110 cases of women and children abuse, 3,225 cases of divorce and 5 cases of law enforcement from investigation to court order for women and children abuse. There are 25 cases of child dealing with the law with Restorative Justice Approach settlement, 55 cases of woman and children abuse under health care of trained health workers in Community Health Center and 11 cases of woman and children abuse with legal assistance service. Meanwhile, the percentage of active institutions is up to 50% with coverage of 123 gender based violence service institutions.

There are three subdistricts in Grobogan Regency of which early age marriage rate is very high, namely Ngarangan Subdistrict, Pulokulon Subdistrict and Gabus Subdistrict. These three subdistricts are expected to poor area. Central Bureau of Statistics's data show that the three subdistricts have no fertile land with irrigation⁽⁷⁾. Gabus Subdistrict's 3,901ha farm is rain-fed rice field, Pulokulon Subdistrict's 5,665 ha farm is rain-fed rice field and only 10 ha is covered by irrigation and in Ngarangan Subdistrict, more than 3,000 ha farm is rain-fed rice field.

According to BPS data, 65.14 percent of Pulokulon Subdistrict people and 73.53 percent of Gabus Subdistrict people are classified into poor family. In Ngarangan Subdistrict 86.76 percent of people are classified into non-prosperous family⁽⁷⁾. This fact confirms the presumption that it is possible that poor families have their daughters married when they are young as an effort to release some of its economic burdens.

Table 1. Under 20 Years Old Married Population in Grobogan Regency in 2015

Subdistrict	Sex		Population
	Men	Women	
Kedungjati	30	299	329
Karangrayung	73	770	840
Penawangan	39	456	495
Toroh	62	762	824
Geyer	40	545	585
Pulokulon	63	1.086	1.149
Kradenan	61	853	914
Gabus	46	822	868
Ngaringan	63	1.095	1.158
Wirosari	66	933	999
Tawangharjo	29	531	560
Grobogan	41	673	714
Purwodadi	47	624	671
Brati	28	418	446
Klambu	17	270	287
Godong	39	342	381
Gubug	41	403	444
Tegowanu	37	337	374
Tanggungharjo	21	118	209
Total	840	11.407	12.247

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs of Grobogan Regency (2017)

Table 2. Data of Under 16 Years Old Marriage in Grobogan Regency in 2014-2017

2014		2015		2016		2017	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
21	77	21	93	26	127	19	17

Prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia is not only still high (with more than one sixth girls marry before they reach adulthood or about 340,000 girls annually), but the prevalence has also re-increased. Moreover, although under 15 years old girl marriage has declined, but the prevalence of 16-17 years old girl marriage continuously increases, showing that girl protection decreases when they are 16 years old⁽³⁾.

Table 3 shows that educational factor is likely to influence early age marriage or divorce. From the table,

it is clear that they who are divorced/married mostly have Junior High School or lower education. The low education level causes unemployment and poverty. Having children married is one way to release parents' responsibility or is caused by girl's premarital pregnancy. From Table 3, it is clear that low education factor is expectedly the cause of high rate of divorce for young (under 20 years old) couples in Grobogan Regency. This assumption is confirmed in Table 3, that they who are married/divorced are mostly homemakers.

Table 3. Under 20 Years Old Married/Divorced Population by characteristics in Grobogan Regency in 2015

Characteristics	Sex		Population
	Men	Women	
Education			
No/Pre-Elementary School	7	61	68
Not Graduated from Elementary School	12	203	215
Elementary School	82	2,792	2,874
Junior High School	80	2,317	2,397
Senior High School	23	309	332
Diploma I/II	0	0	0
Diploma III	0	0	0
Diploma IV/Bachelor	0	0	0
Master	0	0	0
Doctor	0	0	0
Employment			
Unemployed	7	130	137
Homemaker	0	3,386	3,386
Student	11	84	95
Farmer/Planter	13	184	197
Private Employee	76	840	916
Casual Employee	4	4	8
Merchant	0	2	2
Entrepreneur	93	1,052	1,145
Total	204	5,682	5,886

Source: Ministry of Religious Affairs of Grobogan Regency (2017)

Discussion

The poor will utilize any existing economic sources in case of change to economic condition, one effort of which is to use family's manpower, including children. Based on the phenomena, it is clear that education is the key to hold down the early age marriage rate⁽⁸⁾. If the reason they stop their education is the fee, Government's role should be improved in providing education facilities.

It is expected that the occurrence of early age marriage in Grobogan is at least influenced by three factors, namely: women's averagely low education, poverty and moral issue (premarital pregnancy). Cultural factor is not yet found. Woman who marry young tend to be less educated, raise children too early and not have decision-making power in household. In other words, adolescent

marriage is unfavorable since they are basically in their adolescence that, according to psychological study, is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾. With adolescent's transitional characteristics, they are supposed to be unstable, while marriage practically demands one's high responsibility. Responsibility gets higher and heavier with Unintended Pregnancy. The expected impact to arise is conflicts which may impair child's growth and development and continuity of family⁽³⁾.

Early age marriage is also expectedly caused by poverty. The poverty rate in Grobogan Regency in 2015 is 13.68%, relatively higher than the national average (11.13%) and that of Central Java Province (13.27%).

It is also important to note that under 15 years old

child marriage may not reflect the actual prevalence since many of these marriages are disguised as above 16 years old or unregistered girl marriage.

That there are many cases of early age marriage because of premarital pregnancy shows that social norms have declined in the society in line with globalization and information advancement. It is assumed that besides Grobogan Regency, many cases of student's premarital pregnancy occur in various regions. The cause is expectedly the advancement of information technology, in which porn websites are easily accessed⁽⁹⁾. Consequently, many students follow promiscuous lifestyle, that they have premarital sexual intercourse. Girls with premarital pregnancy certainly need psychological accompaniment so that their mental remains stable, particularly when facing their family's or society's anger⁽¹⁰⁾. In rural environment, there should be real measure in monitoring, for example, city park should not be left dark, internet center should have no partition and students should always be controlled when they skip school⁽¹⁰⁾.

Girl's marriage in too young age causes early pregnancy and delivery, which are correlated with mother's high death rate and abnormal condition since girl's body is not mature yet to give birth⁽¹¹⁾. This fact also conforms to what is stated in the 2011-2016 Regional Medium-Term Development Plan of Grobogan Regency. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in Grobogan Regency increases from 8.78 per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 17.44 per 1,000 live births in 2015.

Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in Grobogan Regency is relatively high of 149.92 per 100,000 live births in 2015. This number increases from the 2011 actual MMR of 114.03 per 100,000 live births. The 2015 actual MMR in Grobogan Regency exceeds 2015 MDGs target of 102 per 100,000 live births. The common causes of maternal mortality are: severe eclampsia and hemorrhage⁽¹²⁾.

Conclusion

Based on the study, the following conclusions are made:

- The high rate of early age marriage in Grobogan Regency is contributed to by moral issue;
- There is expectedly correlation between early age marriage and low education level in Grobogan Regency;

- Phenomenon of low education level and poverty is like an endless circle. Girls' low education level is obstructed by poverty and it is poverty that leads to girls' and their family's low education level;
- Poverty expectedly causes parents' financial problem, which drives them to have their daughters married, whether consciously or not, as a means to "release their responsibility" as parents;
- Early age marriage expectedly causes high maternal mortality ratio and under-five mortality rate and divorce rate at young age.

Suggestions:

- Religious and moral teaching and strict control of parents, school and society should be performed with various strategies, since the main cause of early age marriage is premarital pregnancy.
- To make incessant campaign of how dangerous early age marriage is by involving all parties: government, society figure, religious figure, village officials, school, religious study group, etc;
- To establish psychological consultation institution for adolescents in relationship, adolescents with premarital pregnancy, married adolescents and female adolescents with domestic violence. The government of Grobogan Regency may cooperate with NGO, higher education institution, hospital, etc. In this institution, parents are to be involved for familiar dialog with children so that they will not have unhealthy relationship;
- To enhance school's participation to be the main priority. School should also provide special counseling service considering that moral crisis is at emergency level. Curriculum of danger of early age marriage, reproduction health and danger of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, etc. should be the main concern.
- To provide sufficient fund to increase the poor's "purchasing power" in education, besides relieving Educational Management Contribution, also scholarship program, additional food support, transportation support, or to change study method and hours so that poor children may still help their parents to work, while they can still go to school in the afternoon, etc.;
- Opportunity of allocated economic empowerment, particularly for girls, is very important to eliminate

child marriage, in the framework of protection to promote their education, skills and financial control.

- Access to economic services, financial institution, microeconomic development training, etc. should be prioritized. Various financial lending should be facilitated for girls who discontinue their education so that they will develop their skills and economy;

Ethical Clearance: Nill. This research was conducted without treating informants.

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