



The Perception of Parents on Early Marriage Cases in Lapandewa Kaindea Village

Salmawati^{1*}, Hastuti², Wa Nurfida³

^{1,2,3} Jurusan Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Politik, Universitas Muhammadiyah Butoon

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*Correspondence: Salmawati

Email: salmawatiw81@gmail.com

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to understand how parents perceive early marriage cases in Lapandewa Kaindea Village and to determine the impact of these perceptions. The study uses social action theory and employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive qualitative data analysis approach, collecting data through observation and interviews. The informants consist of four people: parents whose children married at an early age, parents whose children did not marry at an early age, and a religious figure. The results show the perceptions of parents whose children did not marry early, the perceptions of parents about the causes of early marriage, and the perceptions of the religious figure. The factors contributing to early marriage in Lapandewa Kaindea Village include pregnancy outside of marriage, education, economic conditions, and communication factors. The impact of parents' perceptions on early marriage cases.

Keywords: Parental Perception, Early Marriage, Impact of Early Marriage, Role of Family Members

Introduction

Due to the increasing population growth each year, Indonesia faces many social issues. These problems are reflected in the work of the government and its human resources. Early marriage is one of many societal issues. Early marriage remains a problem in many countries around the world, and our laws regarding early marriage, for instance, are insufficient (Zulfa, 2024). This is due to various internal and external factors that contribute to the high rate of early marriages in Indonesia (Rumekti, 2016). Early marriage is a social problem that is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia. This occurrence often happens in isolated cases, particularly among teenagers, and most of the victims are girls. Early marriage predominantly has negative impacts on households, including the breakdown of families, malnutrition in children, divorce, violence against women, and many more (Murti & Heryanto, 2020).

According to (Limbong & Deliviana, 2020) one of the causes of early marriage is engaging in premarital sex, which results in unwanted pregnancies. Another factor contributing to early marriage is overly liberal relationships or inappropriate social interactions (Al Akash, 2021). Due to increasing instances of free association and pornography, teenagers might lack the ability to think about other aspects that could build

their character. (Saputri, 2020) states that a healthy marriage meets the age criteria for couples intending to marry, which is between 20 and 35 years old. This age range is important for women's reproductive health, as the female reproductive organs become more biologically mature for the reproductive process, and women at this age have sufficient mental maturity.

Women who wish to marry should be at least twenty years old, as this age makes them psychologically more stable, which impacts the quality of their marriage. Since most women under the age of twenty prioritize recreation and education, they are often unprepared to face these issues. According to (Saputri, 2020) this aligns with the recommendations of the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), which suggests that the ideal age for women to marry is 21 years and the minimum age for men is 25 years. At this age, men have strong psychological and physical conditions that can help family life by providing psychological, emotional, financial, and social protection (Nasution & Partini, 2019).

Early marriage is no longer a new issue, with various arguments both for and against it within society (Sudarsih & Ningsih, 2018). Early marriage is considered by some as one of the best solutions to avoid illegal acts such as premarital pregnancy or adultery due to deception (Nurfirdayanti et al., 2021). We often face various marriage-related issues that require development (Damayanti & Mardiyanti, 2020). Therefore, marriage not only requires material readiness but also spiritual readiness. Early marriage is increasingly common among teenagers today, aged between 15 and 19 years (Sari et al., 2018). Teenagers have high sexual desires due to their increasingly permissive and almost unrestricted environment. As we know, teenagers are a segment of society that is still emotionally unstable and in physical growth, so they may need help. It is important for parents to develop a communication model with clear rules for children under 18 to control teenage behavior (Sholahuddin, 2022).

This should be balanced with the awareness of the younger generation regarding pre-reproductive health issues. The results of a demographic survey on adolescent reproductive health in South Buton in 2016 showed relatively low awareness that reproductive health education could influence teenagers' attitudes towards premarital sex. The primary reason for most early marriages is unwanted sexual relations leading to premarital pregnancies, which result in families deciding to marry off their children quickly to cover up the shame, even though they are still underage. This early marriage phenomenon often occurs among teenagers in junior high school (SMP) or high school (SMA), especially in Lapandewa Kaindea Village. This is supported by marriage data showing that in 2018, around two teenage couples from junior high school got married, and from 2020-2022, there were four teenage couples who married early despite just entering high school. This phenomenon has increased from 2018 to 2022, with about six underage couples getting married in Lapandewa, Lapandewa District, South Buton Regency.

The main impact leading to early marriage is their lack of understanding of the importance of education for their future (Kohno, 2020). This results in teenage free association, leading to premarital sex, as well as a lack of interaction with parents, such as

insufficient attention from parents due to work or farming, lack of religious and cultural education from an early age, and insufficient parental supervision in limiting their children's social environment. Observing the minimal role of parents who have not been able to emotionally approach their children and have no particular interest in controlling their children's behavior regarding the phenomena occurring in Lapandewa Kaindea Village is evident from their efforts. The researcher believes that an in-depth analysis is necessary to explain how parents perceive early marriage cases in Lapandewa Kaindea Village.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research using a descriptive qualitative data analysis approach. The target informants of the research include parents whose children married at an early age, two parents whose children did not marry at an early age, and a religious figure. These informants serve as sources of data and information for the study conducted in Lapandewa Kaindea Village, Lapandewa District, South Buton Regency, from December 2023 to April 2024. The research aims together primary data through observation, documentation, and direct interviews with relevant parties, as well as secondary data from literature studies, journals, articles, and previous theses.

The researcher employed several data collection methods, including observation to monitor environments where early marriage frequently occurs, and interviews to collect data directly from informants according to interview guidelines, with findings noted and recorded. The data analysis process involves data reduction to obtain a clearer picture by summarizing and selecting important information, data presentation in the form of brief descriptions, graphs, and category relationships to facilitate understanding and planning subsequent steps, and concluding based on the results collected through observation and interviews.

Result and Discussion

Parental Perception on Early Marriage Cases in Lapandewa Kaindea Village

The perception of parents regarding early marriage in Lapandewa Kaindea Village indicates that marrying at a young age is considered to bring about many problems. Parents believe that the highly unstable and uncontrollable emotions of teenagers, as well as their selfish and childish nature, make them incapable of forming a harmonious family. For instance, Ibu Wa Tania (40), in an interview, stated that she strongly disagrees with early marriage. According to her, building a household at a young age is not easy because, aside from considering love, young couples must also think about future economic issues, especially if they are still in school. She emphasized the importance of education for her children and preferred them to focus on school rather than dating. Therefore, parents in the village tend to prioritize education and economic readiness before considering marriage for their children.

The perception of parents in Lapandewa Kaindea Village regarding early marriage varies. For example, Ibu Wa Hadi (42) stated that as long as the prospective husband has a job and comes from a good family, and behaves maturely, marrying at a young age is not a

problem even if the bride is only 18 years old. For her, if the couple likes each other, she would give her blessing, pray for the best for her child, and provide advice on managing a household. On the other hand, various factors cause early marriage in the village. One of them is pregnancy outside of marriage, where parents feel the need to marry off their child to avoid embarrassment, even if the child is still in school. The busy schedules of parents, most of whom are farmers, limit communication with their children, making it difficult to monitor their education and social interactions. Additionally, poor economic conditions drive parents to marry off their daughters in hopes of reducing the family's financial burden. Informants such as Ibu Wa Se'u (45) shared that she was deeply shocked when she learned her child was pregnant outside of marriage and had to marry off her underage child and discontinue her education. She emphasized the importance of parents continuing to monitor their children's social interactions and building good communication despite being busy with work.

From the perspective of religious leaders, as conveyed by the village Imam, Islam does not set a minimum age for marriage as long as the couple is capable of taking responsibility (Zulaiha, 2021). However, in Lapandewa Kaindea Village, early marriage often occurs due to pregnancy outside of marriage, where parents feel the need to marry off their child to maintain the family's reputation, even if they are still in school. This shows that early marriage is more driven by social and economic emergencies rather than emotional and financial readiness.

The Impact of Parental Perception on Early Marriage Cases

Early marriage brings various impacts on the household life of young couples. This study discusses the effects of parental perception on early marriage cases, focusing on health, economic, and communication aspects.

Impact of Pregnancy Out of Wedlock

According to interview results, early marriage has detrimental effects on the health of both the mother and the baby. Young mothers are prone to health problems such as bleeding, miscarriage, pregnancy complications, and difficult labor due to immature reproductive organs. Babies born to young mothers are at risk of premature birth, low birth weight, congenital defects, and even death. Ibu Wa Se'u (45) stated that 17 years old is not mature enough for marriage because they are still in school. She believes that marriage is not just about material wealth but also readiness in various aspects of life. Meanwhile, Ibu Wa Tania noted that many husbands migrate for work, leaving pregnant wives without adequate attention during their pregnancy.

Economic Impact

Interview results indicate that early marriage does not improve the family's economic condition. Many young couples still live with their parents because they do not have stable jobs and sufficient income. Ibu Wa Se'u highlighted that her child's economic situation did not improve after early marriage and still depended on the parents. She believes that

marrying at a more mature age with stable employment can reduce economic problems. On the contrary, Ibu Wa Hadi noted cases where parents chose a good prospective husband with a stable job, improving the family's economic condition despite the young age of the daughter. Ibu Wa Tania added that most families who marry at an early age do not experience economic improvement compared to those who marry at a more mature age.

Communication Impact

In a household, communication is key to resolving issues between husband and wife. Ibu Wa Se'u noted that young couples often experience conflicts due to poor communication and lack of maturity. Conversely, Ibu Wa Hadi observed that although her neighbors married at a young age, they had good communication because they were accustomed to responsibility from their parents, thus avoiding conflicts. Ibu Wa Tania added that in the village, the majority of the population are farmers and migrants. Husbands who migrate often cause gossip in the community, leading to conflicts due to a lack of trust and communication between couples.

Max Weber's Social Action Theory serves as the primary foundation for this research. Weber argues that individuals are the main actors responsible for social actions within society (Webber & Page, 2022). According to Weber, social action is behavior that holds meaning for the individual and is directed towards others, or actions that are considered meaningful by the individual and aimed at others (Tajalla et al., 2022). This theory attempts to understand the concept of action by elucidating the reasons behind these actions, emphasizing the dynamics, creativity, and voluntary aspects of individual actions (Weber, 1991). The focus of this theory is to comprehend the general environment rather than specific individuals, and to understand social behavior through causal explanations. This method requires empathy, the ability to understand others' thought processes. In the context of early marriage in Desa Lapandewa Kaindea, parental perception plays a crucial role. The immaturity of children physically, mentally, and biologically is a key factor in parental decision-making. Early marriage cases often occur due to out-of-wedlock pregnancies, lack of education, economic issues, and poor communication. Parental perceptions in this regard are varied, with past experiences serving as lessons for the future, especially for their children.

Traditional action refers to routine actions that have become habitual, passed down from previous generations (Gerth & Mills, 2014). An example of this is the belief that marriage is the proper solution to address out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Affective action is driven by feelings or emotions such as anger, fear, or joy. For instance, a child who gets angry because they were not given money by their parents exhibits affective action. Instrumental action is taken with a specific goal in mind and is based on rational considerations. An example of this is the decision to marry after discovering a pregnancy to maintain the family's reputation. Meanwhile, value-rational action is performed consciously based on religious, legal, or other values. An example of this is practicing religious duties as an obligation, carried out with full awareness and conviction in the values held.

Weber posits that these types of actions usually represent a combination of various factors and are dependent on rational considerations aimed at specific goals (Weber, 1947). In the case of early marriage in Desa Lapandewa Kaindea, such actions are often driven by the desire to preserve family honor and avoid social stigma. Parental views in Desa Lapandewa Kaindea regarding early marriage vary. For example, Ibu Wa Hadi, Ibu Wa Tania, and Ibu Wa Se'u agree with early marriage if an out-of-wedlock pregnancy occurs, seeing it as a solution to preserve family honor. Religious figures in the village also believe that early marriage is acceptable as long as both parties can take responsibility.

Among the four categories of social action proposed by Weber, instrumental action and value-rational action are more relevant in this research (Albrow, 1990). Some parental views fall under traditional and affective actions, but this study focuses more on instrumental and value-rational actions. The community of Desa Lapandewa Kaindea views early marriage as a "shortcut" to address out-of-wedlock pregnancies and maintain family honor. Overall, Weber's theory underscores the importance of rationality in dealing with social phenomena, rather than merely relying on habits or emotions. This research highlights the community's more rational perspective in making decisions about early marriage, although traditional and emotional factors still play a role. Parental views indicate that the decision to marry early is often based on rational considerations, such as economic readiness and responsibility.

Conclusion

According to the perception of parents regarding early marriage in Desa Lapandewa Kaindea, the majority of parents disagree with early marriage as it is deemed difficult to form a harmonious household at a young age. They emphasize the importance of their children's education and consider future economic issues. However, some parents are pleased to see their children mature and ready to build a household, even if they are still teenagers.

This research is based on Max Weber's Social Action Theory, which posits that actions that hold meaning for an individual and are directed towards others are considered social actions. Individuals play a primary role in the occurrence of social actions within society, taking into account dynamics, creativity, and voluntarism. In the context of early marriage in Desa Lapandewa Kaindea, parents have various perceptions influenced by factors such as education, economy, and communication related to their children's decisions.

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