

Effect of Early Marriage on Reproductive and Sexual Health

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Abstract

Early marriage, defined as formal or informal marriage before the age of 18, occurs widely throughout the world. Early marriage has a direct impact on girls' education, sexual and reproductive health, and psychological well-being. In this regard, the current review is conducted to examine the sexual and reproductive health consequences of child marriage. This research uses library research methods or literature research. Literature research is a systematic activity that involves various stages of collecting, processing, and summarizing data using certain methods to find solutions to problems. Early marriage as a result of poverty has many adverse consequences on girls' sexual and reproductive health including death in childbirth, physical and sexual violence, isolation, depression, cervical cancer and risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Teenage pregnant women have a higher risk of premature birth and more neonatal death than other women. Marriage of girls at an early age can increase the risk of sexual and reproductive complications. Therefore, training programs should be implemented to raise awareness of the community, parents, and religious leaders, to empower girls in this regard.

Keywords

Sexual and reproductive health; early marriage; risk of sexual complication



I. Introduction

Early marriage has been associated with a range of health, economic and social impacts. Early marriages are more likely to experience unwanted pregnancies and high fertility, are less likely to have used a contraceptive method, and have reduced access to general health services and in particular maternal health care.

According to the Indonesian Women's Coalition (2019), Girls Not Brides survey data found that one in eight young Indonesian women married before the age of 18. This finding is supported by data from the 2017 BPS Demographic and Health Survey (IDHS). In this survey, 25.71% of women aged 20 to 24 were married under the age of 18. Marriage contracts from the dimensions of sacredness are special contracts compared to other contracts such as buying and selling, pawning and others. In addition to the marriage contract, it can be done several times without limits, while the marriage contract is only limited to four times, because most men are only permitted by four wives. Because in the concept of shariah a man is only able to take maximum responsibility for four wives.⁴ Marriage contract in Islam is considered as a matter that must be handled with care, because it will have legal implications for various other things caused by marriage, such as nafaqah, inheritance and also the sustainability of happy households. One of the most important elements of the marriage contract is only a parental guardian (nasab). Only a prospective bride has the right to marry a woman in her guardianship. This is only given by Islam to guardians, because women cannot marry themselves. If a woman marries herself, then her marriage is not legal. But in reality, the marriage guardian who has the right to marry sometimes loses his guardianship due to certain matters, which requires his

guardianship to move to another guardian of marriage in the hierarchy that is in the ring further than that. (Imran, et al. 2019)

More based on Law Number 16 of 2019, Marriage is only permitted if a man and a woman have reached the age of 18 years. However, the current legal system is not sufficient to criminalize marriage offenders and as a result, girls continue to marry under the age of 18 through customary or religious marriages that are not registered in the state. In line with the opinion of Basilica Dyah Putranti, researcher at the UGM Center for Population Policy Research, the phenomenon of early marriage in Indonesia cannot be separated from the tradition of community-based marriage. In this case, the family still plays an important role is very important in the decision-making process, even though there are many changes in values in society. The lack of education level makes them unaware of the negative impact of child marriage. So they got married without full preparation. "As for the effect on reproductive health, they certainly don't know. For this reason, there is a need for socialization regarding this matter.

Marriage is a sacred relationship between a man and a woman with the aim of forming a family and prospering offspring. 8Premarital pregnancy if married early is not only because of the desire of both parties, but also many other motivating factors, such as low education, economic needs, culture of young marriage, comfortable marriage, and free sex in adolescents. Educational factors that tend to be low and family economic income cause children to drop out of school and do not continue to the next level of education. It can be concluded that early marriage is due to cultural factors that have been passed down from generation to generation.

The education factor will greatly influence the economic factor. Poverty is one of the most influential factors in encouraging early marriage, because in some areas in Indonesia, women are often seen as an economic burden on the family. Therefore, getting married at a young age is considered the fastest way for the family to reduce the economic burden. Other factors that influence early marriage are also closely related to the culture of child marriage. In remote and remote areas, there are still many theories that women only take care of housework, so people in remote areas believe that women should get married when they have passed puberty.

Early marriages are vulnerable to domestic violence and are less likely to participate in family decision-making because of their immaturity and lower socioeconomic status. 10 One of the main problems of early marriage is the pressure to raise children when they are children and have limited knowledge about sexual life and reproduction. Research evidence shows that child marriage is associated with many adverse reproductive outcomes such as stillbirth, miscarriage, stunting, underweight, unwanted pregnancy, and abortion. Childbirth places both mother and baby at high risk of adverse reproductive outcomes.

Moreover, complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a major determinant of morbidity (obstetric fistula, HIV/AIDS) and death among young women in low- and middle-income countries.

In addition, early marriage exposes girls' development to serious threats by depriving them of education and employment.

With this background, this study was conducted to examine the reproductive health consequences of early marriage. As for how to overcome problems related to early marriage, it requires the right solution. The results of this study were designed as basic research to help the government break the chain of social problems caused by child marriage. This study can help us learn more about early marriage in terms of reproductive health.

II. Review of Literature

Based on the opinions reviewed, reproductive health related to early marriage can be categorized as follows:

2.1 Vulnerability to Sexually Transmitted Infections/HIV

Marriage at a young age increases the likelihood of STDs, particularly HIV and the human papilloma virus (HPV). Women are 2-3 times more likely to become infected with HIV from just one session of unprotected sex, compared to men.

In addition, the highest prevalence rate of HIV infection was observed in women in the 15-24 year age range, whereas the peak of this risk for men occurred 5-10 years later.

This finding can be confirmed by the fact that women may be more physically susceptible to HIV infection at a younger age because the vaginal lining is not covered with protective cells and their cervix is easily damaged.

The increased rate of HIV transmission may also be due to cervical or vaginal tearing through sexual intercourse with men, who's HIV has been confirmed. Thus, young women are susceptible to HIV due to the presence of STDs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, and herpes simplex type II.

2.2 Cervical cancer

One of the main causes of cervical cancer is early marriage. HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection (16-18). Indonesia has a very high prevalence of cervical cancer although most women in this region cannot receive effective screening for HPV or cervical cancer. Husbands with many previous sexual partners, early marriage, low socioeconomic status, and poor access to health care services are some of the common causes of cervical cancer. According to the literature, cervical cancer is the most common type of cancer among women in Indonesia. In addition, this type of cancer has an age-adjusted incidence rate of 24.4 per 100,000 individuals and is recognized as the second leading cause of cancer death.

2.3 Unwanted Pregnancy

The studies reviewed showed an association between unwanted pregnancy and early marriage. In a study conducted on women aged 20-24, married at a young age in India, women who married early were 1.7 times more likely to have an unwanted pregnancy, compared to their late married counterparts. These findings were obtained regardless of screening for confounding factors, including education level, household economic status, residence, and religion. In addition, these women are at a higher risk of having an unintended multiple pregnancy.

In a study conducted in Bangladesh, South Asia, girls who married under the age of 18 had more unwanted pregnancies than their late married counterparts.¹⁴ Similarly in another study conducted on pregnant women who married in Nepal, South Asia, approximately half (46%) of subjects who were married at the age of <16 years experienced an unwanted pregnancy, compared with those (36%) who were married. at the age of 16 years.

2.4 Physical and Sexual Violence

Girls who engage in early marriage are at high risk of sexual and physical violence, which can result in a number of adverse sexual and reproductive outcomes.¹⁵ In this

regard, in one study, women who married at a young age reported 1.8 and 1.5 times more likely to experience physical or sexual violence and have an increased risk of violence compared to those who married at an older age.

In general, there is a very unequal power dynamic between men and women mainly because of their age difference. Women who lack decision-making abilities face constant harassment by their husbands and in-laws, and are socially isolated. According to the National Family Health Survey, married women have very low decision-making abilities as only 52.5% of their opinions are considered in household decisions. In addition, marriage at a young age causes failure to understand oneself due to lack of progress in personal and social skills. Therefore, these women will become very dependent on their husbands and become unable to withstand violence from their partners.

2.5 Risks during Pregnancy

Complications, such as preeclampsia, sepsis, and bleeding, put young women (under 15 years of age) at a five times greater risk of death than those who married in their twenties (In addition, in one study, young mothers reported 2-5 times higher risk of death). more at risk of maternal death, compared to adult mothers. Likewise, in another study, mothers aged 15-19 years were shown to be three times more likely to experience maternal death.

Based on the evidence, for every case of death during childbirth, another 30 mothers experience disability, infection, and injury that is largely untreated. The high mortality rate is in addition to eclampsia, postpartum haemorrhage, prolonged labor, HIV infection, malaria, and sepsis. Due to women's divorce in Yemen, the legal age for marriage has increased from 15 to 18 in the country, leading to the filing of divorce by some young married women.

2.6 Risks during Labor

In early marriage, there may be too many deliveries, either too soon or too late.

According to evidence, 42% and 45% of girls and 25% of girls aged 10-15 years have a small pelvis and are not ready to give birth. In addition, 88% of women are at risk of obstetric fistula.

2.7 Neonatal Risk

According to research, women under the age of 18 have a 35-55% higher risk of giving birth to a low birth weight or premature baby, compared to those over the age of 19. In addition, they had a higher neonatal mortality rate (60%).

In addition, young mothers have inadequate decision-making and parenting skills and give birth to underweight or premature babies

In one study, health problems were reported as the most significant factor for seeking care in young mothers. Young women cannot decide about their health care issues because their spouses and in-laws interfere with their decisions in this matter. In other words, this woman lacks the ability to make decisions.

2.8 Isolation and Depression

After marriage, women move to their partner's house both in rural and urban areas and play a role as a wife, housemaid, and finally a mother. Given the high dowry payments, there is a large age difference between men and their wives (thus having little in common), and men expect their partners to be fertile. Residents of some areas even accepted polygamy, which led to the exclusion, rejection, and depression of women. Some

women have accepted that bearing children and adapting to new environments are important factors for their survival. In addition, these individuals are deprived of opportunities to enjoy childhood, receive education, and make friends.

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 Research Data Analysis

As the results of the studies reviewed show, women's sexual and reproductive health is impaired by early marriage in a number of ways. Moreover, it is reported that not only mothers, but also their babies are adversely affected by early marriage. These outcomes included delivery of low birth weight neonates, fetal death, pregnancy-related complications, physical and sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancies, and preterm delivery. However, conflicting results were obtained regarding several other outcomes, including early childhood and neonatal mortality, and risk of HIV infection. Therefore, further evaluation is needed to assess the health outcomes of early marriage.

Early marriage is associated with far-reaching social, political, economic and health implications for women and their communities. In addition, this type of marriage leads to shorter childhoods in women, who are unable to recognize their human rights. Moreover, early marriage increases the risk of psychological and physical problems

Early termination of marriage requires approval from relevant parties (eg father, community, tribal and religious leaders). In addition, education programs must be designed to increase women's ability to break the chain of poverty.

The Millennium Development Goals describe a vision in 2000 that obliges community members to eliminate life-threatening hunger and poverty, provide basic education to children, strengthen women's empowerment, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, tackle malaria and HIV/AIDS, ensure environmental feasibility, and building international partnerships.

Early marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and sexual activity can be delayed with education. The number of early marriages may be directly or indirectly reduced by some programs designed to focus on the condition of women. Educational and economic opportunities have been provided to individual women and their families by effective program implementation. The program is aimed at delaying marriage, providing financial motivation to families so that their daughters can continue their education, and providing food for children at school to reduce family household expenses.

Continuing education and attendance at vocational training courses protects women from early pregnancy, illness, HIV infection, and death. In addition, they can have a promoted socioeconomic status by earning a better salary. Educated women are more likely to be able to choose a life partner and have acceptable levels of well-being and health. In this regard, in a randomized controlled trial, Beattie reported that continued education for women increased their age at first relationship and marriage and reduced their risk of HIV infection.

In addition, school retention and STI and HIV rates can be increased and decreased with conditional and unconditional cash transfers, respectively. Education can not only delay marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth, but also school-based education about sexual relations can positively change women's attitudes and awareness about controlling high-risk sexual behavior in marriage.

This review study summarizes the available documentation on the sexual and reproductive health consequences of early marriage as a common practice worldwide. However, the lack of access to all related articles is one of the limitations of this study.

IV. Conclusion

In connection with the rise of early marriage in Indonesia, a multi-stakeholder policy is needed to stop early marriage with a focus on women, their families, as well as society and the government. In this regard, culture-based programs can provide reproductive health education and services for families and communities, thereby contributing to the termination of early marriage, early pregnancy, and associated maternal and infant morbidity and mortality.

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