

# Child Marriage Influences Reproductive Health

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Child marriage is still a serious global problem. The UNICEF in 2010 stated that 60% of girls in the world get married under the age of 18 years old. Meanwhile, a percentage of 34.5% of girls in Indonesia get married under the age of 19. In addition, the imbalance among regulations, Children Protection Act, Marriage Act, Convention of Children Rights and Anti-Discrimination Convention against Women which have been ratified by Government of Indonesia, economic factor, the interpretation of religious teachings and the strong patriarchal culture have caused the high occurrence of child marriage practices. In addition to the breakup of access to education, child marriage also impacts on psychological, economic and reproductive health aspects.

According to researcher of UGM Center for Population and Policy Studies, Basilica Dyah Putranti, the phenomenon of child marriage in Indonesia is inseparable from the tradition of marriage rooted in the local community. In this case, although there have been many changes in society values, the family still has a big role in decision making process.

She said that one cause of child marriage is poverty, because girls are considered as economic burden to the family. Therefore, the purpose of marriage is to ease the economic burden of the family. Thereby, it is not surprising that parents would marry off their daughter shortly after she has her first menstruation. By encouraging children to get married, girls actually come into a new circle of poverty, because they remain economically dependent on husband and parents. "Especially, after their child is born, the economic burden of the family increases," she said at the Auditorium of the Center on Wednesday (7/12).

In view of Dyah Putranti, content and implementation of laws related to marriage also encourage child marriage. There are two laws that lead girls to marriage situation, namely Marriage Act No.1 of 1974 concerning the minimum age of marriage of 16 years for girls, and the Compilation of Islamic Law concerning child marriage dispensation under 16 years old. Moreover, many cases of power abuse by unscrupulous government officials also tolerate the practice of child marriage.

Speaking at a discussion entitled *Child Marriage in Indonesia* held by the UGM Center together with SCN CREST, LSPPA, LKIS Women and PLIP Mitra Wacana, Dyah pointed out the practice of child marriage impacts on boys and girls. One of significant effects of child marriage is reproductive health. Almost in all areas of research that she had conducted, girls who marry at children age have potential of high risk pregnancies. Various cases of pregnancy complications are quite high, especially in areas of East and West Nusa Tenggara. "Meanwhile, the low pregnancy complication

cases in Java and Bali is mainly due to the availability of facilities and health personnel which are relatively better," she added.

The result of research in Java, NTB and NTT shows that girls who get married at young age are vulnerable to domestic violence. Cases are mostly found in girls in Sikka, Lembata, Dompu, Indramayu and Rembang. The occurrence of domestic violence is often triggered by traditional pressure that puts girls in a vulnerable position. "Dealing with the *belis* tradition in Sikka, for example, the husband feels he had bought his wife by giving *belis*, so he feels justified in committing violence against his wife," Dyah Putranti added.

Drs. H. Faturrohman Ghozalie, LC, MH from Religious Court of Gunung Kidul Regency reveals an increase in the number of child marriages from year to year. The Gunungkidul Religious Court noted in 2009 there were 24 cases of men under 19 years old getting married, in 2010 there were 62 cases and in the year 2011 there were 82 cases. Meanwhile, for women under 16 years old who are married, in the year 2009 there were 22 cases, 58 cases in 2010 and 57 cases in 2011. "It is impossible if we refuse to marry them, because those who came were already pregnant. All that we do is for the sake of the baby, especially" he said.

Low level of education, Faturrohman said, makes them unaware of various negative effects of child marriage. Therefore, they get married without having enough knowledge. "About the impact on reproductive health, they certainly do not know about it. Therefore, these negative impacts need to be socialized, because on average these girls have only finished elementary school," he explained.

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