

Article

Sociocultural Construction and the Persistence of Child Marriage in Semarang, Indonesia

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Abstract: Early marriage is a persistent problem that persists in various regions, such as Semarang, with a high number of cases. This article aims to examine the social construction of early marriage in Muslim community and its sociocultural impact. This research combines quantitative and qualitative methods. A total of 75 participants from the Muslim community and 32 child marriage participants were surveyed and interviewed. Interviews were used to describe the statistical data. The data were analyzed using an interactive model. The research findings indicate that the social construct of early marriage in Muslim society, based on the belief that it is done to avoid sin and for religious reasons, has been proven unfounded. There has been a shift in perceptions where child marriage is increasingly seen as a personal family matter rather than a religious obligation. Participants often cited psychological factors, such as a desire to marry early, or premarital pregnancies, as the main motivations behind their decisions. The social impact of early marriage is that perpetrators of early marriage feel inferior when participating in social activities in their village. During routine meetings, perpetrators of early marriage tend to be quiet and never provide input or "contribute to discussions" at village activities. The implications of this study relate to the need for targeted interventions that not only address the individual motivations for child marriage but also the broader community perspectives that permit its persistence. Tackling both aspects can lead to more effective strategies in reducing child marriages.

Keywords: Marriage; child marriage; anthropology; Muslim community; religion

Introduction

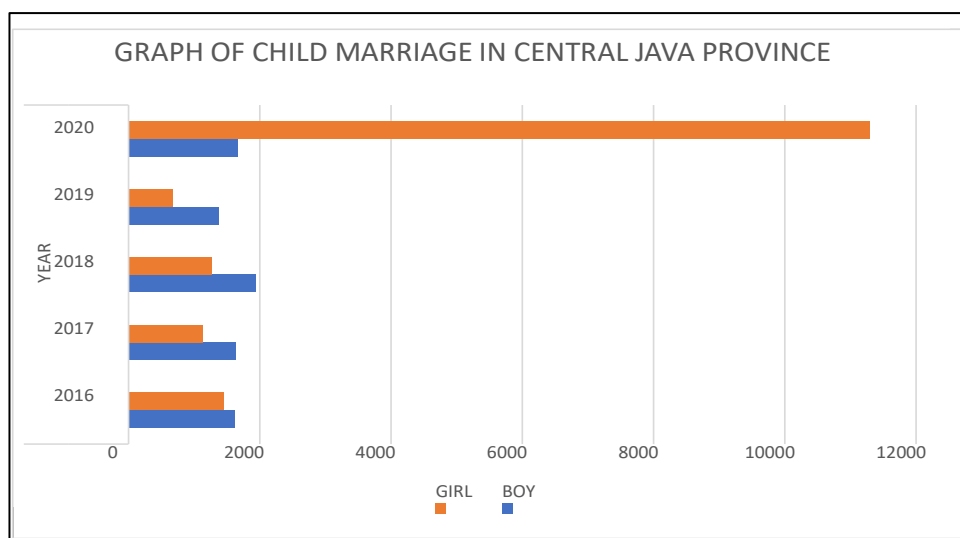
Child marriage remains a serious global issue, affecting regions from Africa to Asia, the Middle East to Latin America, and even parts of Europe and North America. Early marriage is most common in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, with significant declines in some countries and stagnation or even increases in others (Plesons, et al. 2021). This complex problem, if left unaddressed, could result in 1.2 billion women being married before adulthood by 2050 (UNICEF, 2016). The lack of attention to child marriage previously hindered progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly Goal 6, between 2000 and 2015.

As part of this commitment, the issue of child marriage has been explicitly included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. Target 5.3 aims to eliminate all harmful practices, including child, early, and forced marriage, as well as female genital mutilation (Fajar, 2018). Eliminating child marriage is not only crucial to achieving SDG 5.3 but is also

essential for advancing multiple other SDG goals. Failure to address this issue will continue to hinder broader development objectives, reinforcing cycles of poverty, gender inequality, and limited educational opportunities.

Child marriage remains a significant challenge globally, with many marriages not complying with legal and religious regulations. In Indonesia, the Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 initially set the legal marriage age at 16 for women and 19 for men, but this was amended by Law No. 16 of 2019, raising the minimum age for women to 19 years to promote gender equality and reduce child marriage. Despite this legal reform, child marriage persists due to cultural traditions, economic pressures, and social norms. While increasing the minimum marriage age was expected to curb child marriage, the reality has shown otherwise. Public awareness and outreach efforts regarding these legal changes are essential to ensuring compliance and protecting children's rights (Wicaksono, 2015). However, inconsistencies within marriage laws remain a challenge. Article 6(2) of the 1974 law states that individuals under 21 years require parental consent, while Article 7(1) permits marriage at 19 years, leading to legal ambiguities. Furthermore, Article 7(2) allows for judicial dispensation, enabling exceptions to the minimum age, which continues to sustain child marriage practices.

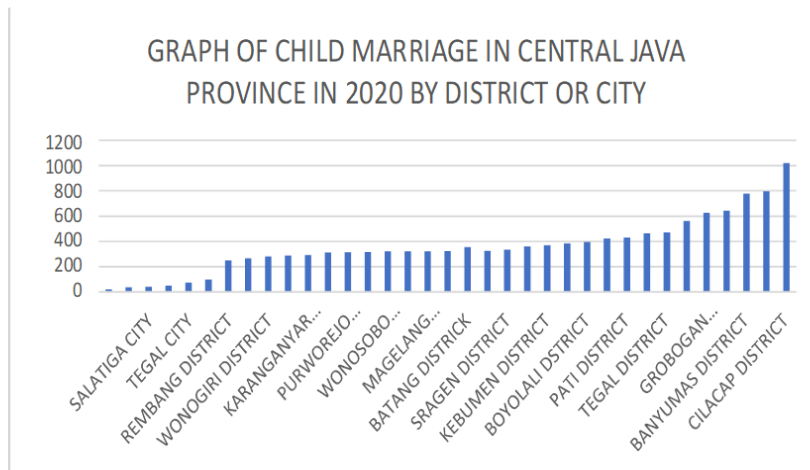
Globally, child marriage is widely condemned under international human rights conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and CEDAW. In fact, data from Save the Children's Global Girlhood Report 2020 states that at least 12 million girls are married each year worldwide, and an additional 1.8 million to 2.5 million girls will be at risk of early marriage in the next five years, mainly due to the economic impact of the 2020 pandemic (Agustina, 2021). Despite the framework has been established, Indonesia remains ranked 8th in the world and 2nd in Southeast Asia in terms of the percentage of marriages where one of the partners is under the age of 18 (Ratnaningsih, et al., 2022). Although the 2015 National Survey (Susenas, 2015) showed a gradual decline, this practice is still widespread, especially in Central Java, as shown in Figure 1 (Septianti, et al., 2017). Even in 2017, 30,000 marriage dispensation requests were submitted in Indonesia, with 18,000 approvals, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of marriage dispensation requests in Indonesia continued to increase, even becoming a global phenomenon (Saputra, 2018; Liem, et al., 2023; Alqahtani & Alqahtani, 2022; Arshad, 2020; Bachtiar et al., 2021; Julianto et al., 2022; Subchi et al., 2021).



Graph 1. Child Marriage in Central Java Province

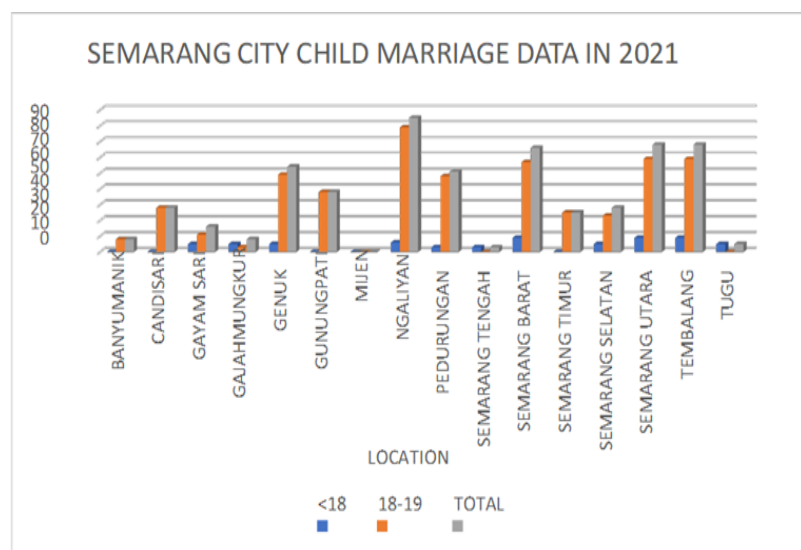
Judging from the graph, child marriage occurs more frequently among women, especially from 2019 to 2020, which has increased quite significantly. This is influenced by various factors, both social, cultural and economic. The strongest factor is the economic factor. In fact, according to the Ministry of Women's and Children's Empowerment, child marriages have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic (Rahiem, 2021).

Children are those under 18 years of age and are generally students. However, findings from the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas reveal that there are around 400-500 girls aged 10-17 years at risk of child marriage due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Kompas.com 2021). Meanwhile, in 2022, there were 172 cases of marriage dispensations in Semarang City (Religious Court, 2024). Overall, the phenomenon of child marriage in Central Java per City Regency can be seen in the following figure:



Graph 2. Child Marriage in Central Java per Regency City

The latest data obtained from DP3AKB Semarang City regarding cases of child marriage that occurred in children under 18 years old were 59 cases. For ages 18 – 19 years there were 474 cases. The total number of registered child marriages that occurred in the city of Semarang was 556 cases. This case is spread across all sub-districts in the city of Semarang. Can be seen in the following graph:



Graph 3. Semarang City child marriage data (2021)

This condition indicates that there are serious efforts to deal with the phenomenon of child marriage. This is because child marriage can cause latent problems. Based on this, researchers are interested in conducting research related to the social construction of early marriage in Muslim communities and its socio-economic impacts, as well as prevention models in Semarang City and Regency. The novelty of this research is that apart from examining the phenomenon of child marriage and its socio-economic impact, this research

will also develop a model for preventing child marriage in the form of a socialization model, which can be in the form of posters, maps, flip sheets that are easy to use and accessed by the community and policy makers.

Literature Review

In Islam, marriage is viewed as the Prophet Muhammad's sunnah aimed at forming a harmonious family (sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah) (Susilo et al., 2021; Fadhil & Abdurrahman, 2023; Rohman, 2016). Although the Qur'an and hadith do not specify a minimum marriage age, maqasid syariah emphasizes considering physical, psychological, and social maturity, alongside insights from modern sciences (Rohman, 2016). In Indonesia, Law No. 16 of 2019 sets the minimum marriage age at 19 for both genders (Jamal & Ikhwan, 2021).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, early marriage rates declined as more youths delayed marriage (Herwati et al., 2025), but increased again during the pandemic across countries such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Kenya (Afrin & Zainuddin, 2021; Hossain et al., 2021; Paul & Mondal, 2020; Rahiem, 2021; Esho, 2022). In Indonesia, this led to a rise in underage marriage dispensations granted by courts (Lathifah et al., 2022; Supriyadi & Suriyati, 2022; Jamal & Ikhwan, 2021).

Research identifies education, economy, culture, beliefs, media, gender inequality, pregnancy outside marriage, and parental influence as key causes of early marriage (Arimurti & Nurmala, 2017; Schaffnit et al., 2021; Karim & Cipto, 2017). Low education remains the dominant factor (Djamilah & Kartikawati, 2014). Cultural practices like child "elopement" and weak community control sustain the issue (Hanapi & Yuhermansyah, 2020; Agustina, 2022), while premarital pregnancies often lead to early marriage to preserve family honor (Wantu et al., 2021). Similar trends are observed among low-income, less-educated families in India (Paul, 2020; Roy & Chouhan, 2021).

Early marriage generally results in educational disruption, economic vulnerability, and gender-based inequality (Bengesai, 2021; Ramli et al., 2025; Zakaria, 2024; Gunawan & Bahri, 2023). Financial and emotional instability often trigger domestic conflict, violence, and divorce, affecting the broader social structure (Budiana, 2024; Ramli & Awang, 2025; Yusof & Nen, 2023). Thus, early marriage is not merely an outcome of economic or educational limitations but reflects deeper social and cultural constructs. This study explores these sociocultural dimensions to provide a broader understanding of early marriage among Muslims.

Methodology

This research approach uses a mixed method. A qualitative approach is used to analyze the socio-cultural constructs related to early marriage, while a quantitative approach is used to identify the profiles and perceptions of respondents. This study is a descriptive study that uses a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of child marriage and its socio-cultural impact in Central Java. (Creswell 2012).

This research used participants from child marriage couples and the muslim community in Semarang City. The focus of research examining society's perceptions of child marriage and the impact on the social and cultural life of child marriage. The data in this study were collected using questionnaires administered to 75 community respondents (Muslims), 32 early marriage participants (16 couples), and 8 KUA officers (supporting informants). These questionnaires were open-ended. Interviews were also used to explore in-depth information from 8 KUA officials, 10 members of the general public, and 10 early marriage participants. Data validity was ensured through data source triangulation and method triangulation. The collected data was then processed for textual and contextual analysis using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saladana (2014), which involves data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

The Findings and Discussion

1. Social Construction of Muslim Society Towards Child Marriage

Social construction is a general agreement from society that is considered correct and should be so, even though this assumption is not necessarily correct. Social construction usually includes perceptions, assumptions, presumptions, and even stereotypes. The social construction of society sometimes becomes a value that is believed and even becomes an ideology. Berger and Luckmann (2012) state that humans exist in objective and subjective realities, where in objective reality humans are structurally influenced by their living environment, therefore human development is socially determined. In this research, social construction in the form of people's perceptions of child marriage is the main focus and is important to know.

The perceptions or views of the Muslim community in the city of Semarang regarding child marriage are of course very diverse. There are those who agree, of course there are those who disagree. In this research, we took 75 members of the general public (Muslims), then we gave them a closed questionnaire about the perception of child marriage, which has been used as a reason for religious reasons, meaning that child marriage is done for the reason "to avoid sin". This closed questionnaire provides a choice of two answers, namely "yes or no". The optional questions in the questionnaire consisted of the following questions: "Do you agree that the reason for child marriage is for religious reasons or to avoid sin?" The community's answers from 75 participants were as follows:

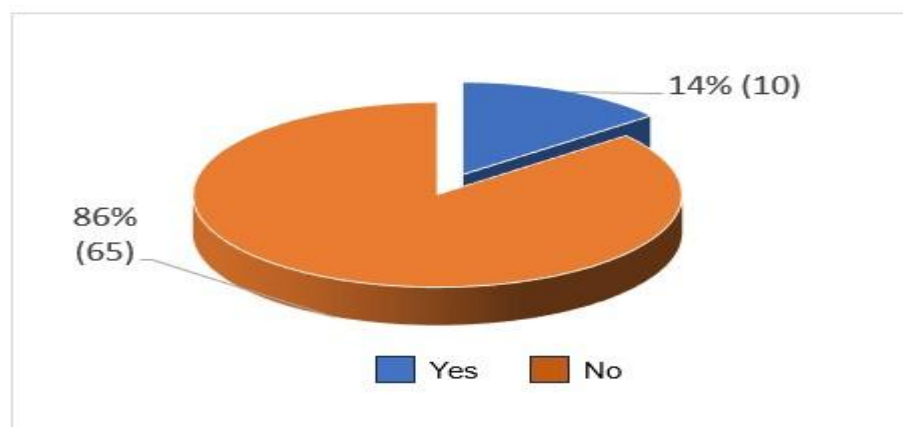


Diagram 1. Participant's Answers about the reasons for Child marriage

In the Pie Diagram above, the answers of participants who said they "disagree" if child marriage is carried out for religious reasons or to avoid sin were 86% or 65 participants. Meanwhile, the answer that stated "agree" if the reason for child marriage was for religious reasons or to avoid sin was 14% or 10 participants. This answer is very interesting because in the construction of Muslim society so far, the blue-print is that if children are already dating, they will be married immediately to prevent sin and for religious reasons. The reality of research data shows that the Muslim community's assumption that child marriage is carried out for reasons of avoiding sin or for reasons of fulfilling religious law, is actually not the case. In fact, the majority of people's perceptions as participants for this research, all of whom are Muslims, say that child marriages are carried out for other reasons, not because they want to avoid sin or because of religious teachings.

The results of the analysis also reveal that the driving factors of religion and knowledge do not have a significant influence in determining a person's decision to have a child marriage. This shows that society assumes that the knowledge and understanding of the participant's religion do not contribute to encouraging the desire to marry early. As the opinion of a child marriage

"I wonder, mam, I feel awry, as a daughter I feel like I'm a burden on my parents. Even though my parents are poor... I also help out every day to work at odd jobs to earn a living, but my parents are just farm laborers with an uncertain income... it's also difficult for me. Sometimes I also receive my neighbor's laundry so I can continue

going to school. But as time went on our family's needs became more severe. I have 3 younger siblings...well this is increasingly becoming a burden on my mind too. So, when someone asked me to get married, I just wanted it so that my parents' burden would be reduced a little" (Participant D (20 years)

The perception of the Muslim community who answered child marriage was for other reasons, not because of avoiding sin, as much as 86% stated that the most reason for child marriage was because they were already pregnant first, the next answer was that the reason for getting married was because the parents' desire was while the parents were still intact, still strong economically, so that they can still marry off their children on a large scale.

Society's perception of child marriage varies, although there are those who reject it, society tends to be permissive. This means that when child marriage is forced, society will also accept it and consider it a personal matter for each individual and will not affect the lives of society in general. In fact, when cases of child marriage are forced to be carried out due to promiscuity, society also tends to be permissive and accepting. As stated by one of the participants interviewed:

"well...it is how it is, mam, everything is already done. Usually that's an arena for promiscuity, and the parents don't pay attention...so you'll end up getting pregnant first because of that promiscuity. But for society in general, if something like that happens, the important thing is that someone is responsible and willing to marry, then it's over. We don't want to meddle because it has been resolved with marriage as solution. Whether they have a job or not is none of our business because usually their parents support their lives. So, in general, child marriage does not interfere with people's lives... it's a personal matter..." (Participant E (21 years)

The public's perception that they tend to accept child marriage is also influenced by the factor that society knows and believes that if a couple is forced to enter into an child marriage if they are not yet working, their survival will certainly be borne by their respective parents. Both together and individually. It seems that the perception of society that agrees is that child marriage is an individual matter and does not disturb the general public, therefore it is understandable if society is permissive.

These differences in perception indicate the existence of individual subjectivity in understanding the reality of early marriage. Through continuous actions and interactions, individuals form a shared reality that is socially objective but still subjectively meaningful (Berger & Luckmann, 2012 in Johnson, 1981). The findings regarding society's permissive attitude towards early marriage—as long as it does not cause disruption and is based more on pragmatic rather than dogmatic reasons—reflect the basic view of Berger and Luckmann's theory of social reality construction, that social reality is actually formed through social processes (Poloma, 2010).

2. Public Perception of Child Marriage for Economic Reasons

Society's perception of child marriages carried out for economic reasons is expressed in the following question indicators; (a) Child marriage is good if it improves the income and economic livelihood of the participant; (b) society can accept child marriages that occur between rich people with high incomes compared to marriages between less well-off people; (c) Child marriage can prevent participants from income uncertainty. The public's response to statements supporting child marriage for economic reasons can be seen in the following diagram:

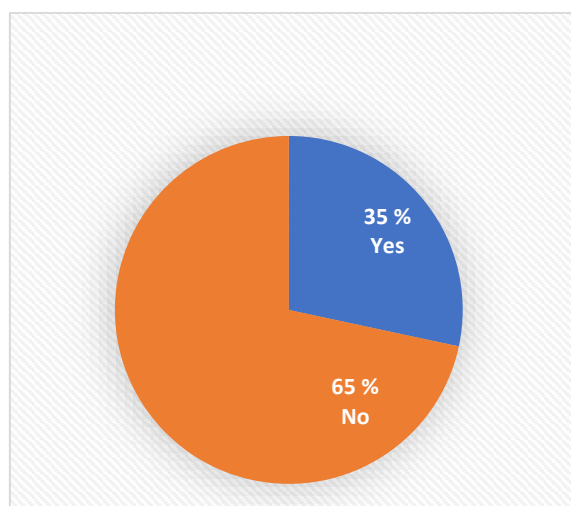


Diagram 2. People's answers about the reasons for child marriage are for economic reasons

The pie diagram above clearly shows that even though society accepts child marriage or is permissive, it turns out that society does not agree if there is an opinion that child marriage can be a way out of economic problems. This is proven by 65% of people who answered "no" meaning they disagreed. Even though this group is a group of people who support child marriage, they clearly say that child marriage is not a way to improve economic status. Meanwhile, only 35% support that child marriage can be a way out of economic problems. The costs of child marriage are generally borne by parents because usually those involved in child marriage are not yet working. As stated by one of the KUA officers interviewed by researchers, said:

"Usually those who marry early have a lower economic condition. In fact, the costs are usually borne by the participant's parents because the husband does not yet have a job" (Participant F (20 years)

Based on economic factors, the general public believes that child marriage may be caused by family economics, work and the desire to obtain a better life. Usually, the encouragement of child marriage is more due to the family's financial conditions, where the family's economic function is intended to fulfill and regulate the economy of family members, especially work and income. The level of a person's income will affect a person's way of life. A person's weak or poor economic condition will lead to a child marriage. Parents will immediately marry their children, with the reason that after marriage it will be easier for parents to support their family. Here children have a very big role, where married children will be able to help their parents with their burdens.

However, the assumption that economic factors are the driving force for child marriage is not proven. Although it cannot be denied that participants of child marriage come from underprivileged backgrounds or families. However, the main reason for child marriage is the occurrence of pregnancy outside of marriage. In this case, the findings of this study differ from those of Paul (2020), and Roy and Chouhan (2021), in India, where economic factors are significantly correlated with the decision to marry early.

Meanwhile, in terms of education, most participants of child marriage are at the high school education level. In general, participants of child marriage cannot complete their education properly. This can be understood because the participants are trapped in promiscuity which is the biggest factor driving child marriage. The factor of getting pregnant first is also a driving factor for child marriage. Therefore, participants of child marriage cannot complete their education properly. This is in line with what was stated by the KUA officer interviewed by the researcher as follows:

"On average, it's because of the wrong company and their parents are just indifferent. Finally, it became pregnancy out of wedlock....and they were forced to get married. Well...that's it" (Participant F (19 years)

The following diagram can show clearer results regarding the educational background of child marriage.

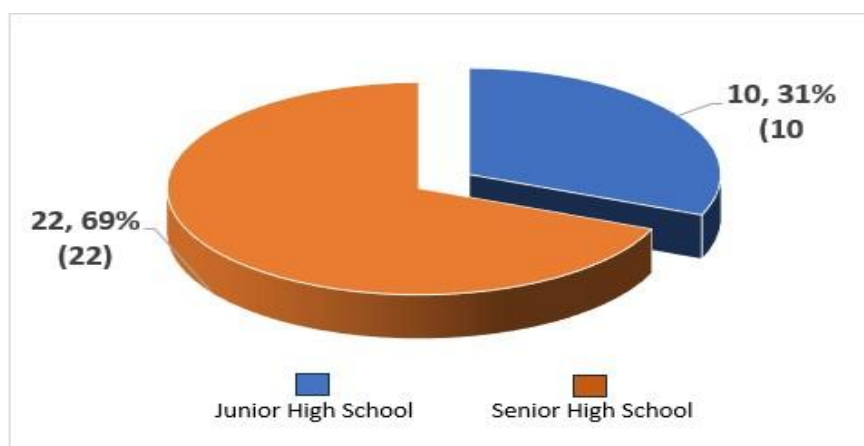


Diagram 3. Educational Background when entering into Child marriage

The highest number of participants of child marriage were at the high school level of education at 22.69% and at the junior high school level at 10.13%. This is in accordance with what one KUA officer said and is also in line with data taken from 32 participants who participated in child marriages in the city of Semarang.

3. Social Impact and Cultural Impact of Child Marriage

To discuss the impact, we must first know the factors that encourage child marriage. According to the community, the factors proposed in this research are related to the occurrence of child marriage, except for religious factors. The driving factor structure model is indeed suitable to be used as an indicator of the drivers of child marriage. However, according to analysis of research results in calculations, religious factors do not have a causal relationship with child marriage. In other words, religion is not used as a reason for child marriage. The results of the analysis of the general public's responses also show that the biggest driving factor for child marriage is the participant's psychological factors.

The psychological factor of the participant plays a very big role or is the main determinant that causes child marriage. This is proven by the results of research on 32 people who were involved in child marriage. The answer obtained was 98.52% or 31 people answered "yes". When asked about several indicators of psychological encouragement for child marriage. Only 1 person or 1.48% answered "no". The next driving factor that plays a major role in the occurrence of child marriage is economic and employment factors, but these are still classified as moderate. The results of research on marriage participants show that they choose to marry early because their parents are economically burdened because they have to bear the life of the child marriage participant, so they choose to marry so that their parents do not have to bear their life any longer. The research results showed that as many as 72.50% (23 people) chose to marry early rather than burden their parents. Meanwhile, 27.50% (9 people) chose not to marry early and tried to find work to ease the economic burden on their parents.

Apart from that, the psychological condition of the participant is also considered to have contributed to the incidence of child marriage. Psychology is closely related to the participant's environment, where social interactions may also shape the participant's personality to engage in free sex and the desire to marry early. This is in line with the social factor value which is also high. In general, the public's view regarding participants of child marriage because of extramarital relationships is that the participant's behavior is out of control as a manifestation of social conditions in society.

The motivating factor for families is usually because parents want their children to have children soon. Parents who have daughters will always be anxious considering that their children have grown up and are considered ready for marriage even though they are still underage, and they have not been proposed to. So the

encouragement from parents and/or family will be even greater. This also has an impact on the child's psychological and personal condition, which then raises the fear of becoming an old maid. However, the value of family factors is only 1%, indicating that religion is not a factor in someone deciding to marry early. A very low value was also shown for the religion factor, namely 4%. This may be related to the mindset that marrying young is synonymous with marrying out of wedlock, so that people assume that the participant is violating religious rules.

Based on the analysis results, it also shows that wealth and level of welfare only contribute 4% to child marriage. In other words, child marriage in Semarang City is not due to economic problems and increasing welfare. However, economic problems arise after child marriage. Graduates who are not yet competent to work and whose skills are low still depend on their parents' income, resulting in difficulties in increasing their income.

The incidence of child marriage in the city of Semarang is clearly more caused by problems of knowledge and social relationships in society. In terms of knowledge, participants of child marriage do not know what the impact of child marriage is, apart from that, knowledge regarding the law that regulates the age of marriage is also still very low. The majority of child marriage participants in Semarang City are junior high school and high school/vocational school graduates, and elementary school graduates have also been found, which could be a cause for concern regarding psychological maturity.

Child marriage is also often considered a shame because it occurs as a result of promiscuity. Although findings in the field also show this. It is possible that this is due to the lack of supervision from the family and community in preventing promiscuity. Several conditions found in the participant's environment show that society has accepted the occurrence of child marriage. This results in the absence of social sanctions that can have a deterrent effect.

Parental education level, trauma and heredity also play a role in the incidence of child marriage. Information obtained from participants when asked about the reasons for child marriage shows that the parents' past also plays a role. Some participants thought that getting pregnant out of wedlock was an acceptable thing because their parents also had the same history, so child marriages could not be avoided. Family trauma also plays a role in supporting child marriage, although it is not often found. Participants of child marriage usually look for an outlet by dating too much.

Thus, based on the factors driving early marriage above, field data can be used to present the impacts of each factor. First, the economic impact, although considered a minor driving factor, still has a significant impact. In fact, the biggest economic impact is after child marriage. Almost all those involved in child marriage do not have permanent jobs, this also has an impact on their family's economy. They also try to do odd jobs to support their household life. There are also those who are born by their families or provided assistance by each side of the family. This was stated by one of the informants,

"What else, mam, since they've already been married off by their parents, the important thing is not to suffer any disgrace. Their parents are also aware that if they don't have jobs, their respective parents will help them with their lives" (Participant F (48 years))

The responses that emerged showed that the majority of child marriages were caused by the participant's knowledge and social factors, while the lowest driving factor was religion. However, more than 90% of participants of child marriage are sexually promiscuous and married because they were pregnant out of wedlock.

Second, the social impact relates to education. Those who marry early tend to be unable to continue their education to a higher level, this finding is in line with Bengesai's (2021). In fact, most participants in early marriage only have a junior high school education rather than a high school education. Thus, in social interactions they also feel inferior, especially since most child marriages are caused by pregnancy out of wedlock due to promiscuity. In the end, the perpetrator, who bore the burden of shame, decided to drop out of school, while the others applied for a marriage dispensation. This is as expressed by the participant below:

“dropouts cannot achieve their dreams in education. Having to stay at home, because I dropped out of school, and having to complete my work as a wife at home” (Participant G (22 years))

The relatively low level of education of participants of child marriage certainly also has an impact on their children's parenting patterns. They will feel self-reflective that they married young and are fine, can live, and have children. It is possible that tomorrow he will also give his blessing to his child to marry at an early age, because he will set an example when he was previously married. As expressed by a young father who married early at the age of 20:

“the important thing is to be able to eat, work and live, mam, in fact I also married young, and I am fine, I can also support my family even though I'm barely. So, if someday my child gets married young, I will allow it, because the fact is that I was fine doing so” (Participant H (20 years))

The most felt and most severe social impact is the cause of child marriage due to promiscuity and pregnancy outside of marriage. This is what one KUA officer said:

“On average, the causes of child marriage in the city of Semarang are more due to promiscuity, excesses, pregnancy out of wedlock. If this is the case, the shortcut taken by each parent is to immediately marry them off. Even though in terms of age, they don't meet the requirements. But what else can we do, sometimes we are also confused but many people use dispensation letters to get married” (Participant I (50 years))

A further social impact is the existence of *Mysogynistic* views, namely negative views or views of hatred towards participants of child marriages caused by being pregnant first. This societal view will become a burden for participants of child marriage. Even though the data shows that people feel they have no right to interfere in each family's affairs, there are still people who are apathetic, dismissive and look down on people who marry early because they are pregnant first. As said by a community leader,

“It's like this, mam...even though we are aware that it is our own business, as community leaders we are also worried because it sets a bad example for other young generations. And it turns out that there are also people who ostracize or look down on perpetrators of child marriage because they got pregnant first. Well....if this happens and drags on, it will give rise to seeds of dislike or hostility. As a public figure, I am worried about this condition. We want the community to be harmonious and united without any doubt or suspicion. If I also see perpetrators of child marriage, when they attend RT meetings, they are also aloof, sitting in a corner as if they don't feel confident, mam. And as if they can't join in the conversation of other gentlemen. Well...if this degrading view continues for a long time, it will certainly have a bad impact on the descendants of the perpetrators of child marriage or their children. Because their children will also feel the impact of being shunned and excluded because of their parents' actions. If this happens, it's a pity for the child because the child doesn't know anything but has to bear the social sins of his parents” (Participant J (60 years))

It turns out that the further social impacts are becoming worrying for some people or community leaders. The social impact that the descendants of child marriages must bear because they are pregnant first is what is troubling the community, because the children who are born do not know anything, the children born are pure, but in this situation the children have to bear the social sins of their parents. This psychological impact must be a concern, lest it set a bad precedent, that the descendants of self-married people tend to be introverts because they are not accepted in their environment, a further impact could be that they also engage in promiscuity because they are looking for an escape. A further impact could be that tomorrow when he grows up, he will also have a child marriage.

Child marriage also has a social impact because there are role models from friends or other teenagers who have already had child marriages. In this research, it was also revealed that because they saw that their peers were married and even had children, this also encouraged them to want to get married early. As expressed by one of the participants of child marriage:

"I'm a woman, mam... I'm afraid of becoming an old maid, especially since I'm not beautiful. My friends are married, and they are fine. So, I also got married because I was afraid that I would become an old maid."
(Participant K (20 years))

Further social impact, children will lose their role models from their parents. This means that because his parents do not happen to have good jobs and do not have a high level of education, their economic life is also mediocre. Children will see this as a role model that is not that good. So, children may not have the work ethic or enthusiasm to achieve higher education. Indeed, it can also encourage the children of children of child marriages to be better than their parents, but in the city of Semarang this does not happen, especially since most child marriage participants can only stay married for between 4 and 8 years.

Another social impact is the impact that comes from the community around the house of the participant of the child marriage. Social factors arise from the pressure of neighbors near the informants' houses, who mostly live in the village, to avoid slander and bad prejudice against teenagers who have been dating for a long time and often bring their lover's home. Society's opinion that children who do not marry soon will become spinsters and old virgins is also a significant factor, so that many parents are forced to marry off their children just to avoid "what people say".

Third, cultural factors. Apart from social factors that influence the occurrence of child marriage, there are also cultural factors. Cultural factors occur usually because of traditions in an area. Traditions passed down from generation to generation in a society also have an influence in the case of marriage. Based on the results of interviews conducted, there were two participants who had reasons for child marriage because of cultural factors originating from local regional traditions. The following interview results were obtained:

"Yes mam. In the past, when people from villages were still small, they could earn money. So, they ready to get married....." (Participant L (18 years))

The results of the interviews with the two participants showed that they married early because of a tradition passed down from generation to generation in their family. There are traditions or habits that have been passed down from generation to generation in the family, where if teenagers are able to earn a living, it is appropriate for them to get married, which is not taboo in society. The existence of cultural factors behind teenage marriage in this case is in line with the results of research conducted (Bawono et al. 2022). In one region, the community considers early marriage to be a tradition that must be maintained and preserved because it has been passed down from generation to generation.

Marriage is a cultural pattern that is the result of a tapestry of meanings that form a network with all its strengths and weaknesses. Borrowing Geertz's concept of the model for, marriage is a cultural value, which is seen in a collection of meanings that individuals then interpret their experiences and regulate their behavior, so that with these values, actors can define the world and the guidelines they will use in the world. Meanwhile, in the model of the individual, it shows how people perform their roles in accordance with what they do in their daily lives, following the culture that has been formed (Rorah and Loho, 2024). So, the meaning that has become attached to marriage to the point of becoming a culture is then believed to be a reference for people's behavior.

Conclusion

The social construction of the Muslim community regarding child marriage, which has long been a blueprint, namely that child marriage is carried out for religious reasons, to avoid sin, has apparently not been proven in research in the city of Semarang. There are many factors involved in child marriage, especially because it is a result of promiscuity, which causes pregnancy so that the child is immediately married off. The Muslim community in the city of Semarang tends to be permissive in accepting incidents of child marriage, because they consider it a personal matter. The biggest driving factor for child marriage is psychological reasons and the participant's desire not to burden their parents economically. The economic impact will be felt after marriage, while the social impact will continue as long as misogynistic views persist.

The findings of the social construction of early marriage above have the potential to become an objective reality which, if not deconstructed, will become an internalized habit that is accepted as an objective reality and will have an impact on the cultural form of society regarding marriage. In line with Geertz's concepts of "model for" and "model of," the construction of early marriage will likely produce new meanings that are both accepted and passed on. Therefore, related social institutions that have the opportunity to reduce the problem of promiscuity also need to be activated and synergized in their roles

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