



Early Marriage Construction and Perpetuity Factors In Discourse of Power and Religion

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Abstract

This article aims to describe and analyze the related construction of early marriages and the perpetuity factors in discourse of power and religion. Early marriage is one of the unhealthy phenomena and even causes high divorce, maternal mortality, and domestic violence rates. It becomes a warning from health experts. However, the lack of knowledge and the strong stream of normalization make early marriage one of the things recommended in a small number of regions, including Reban. In addition, this tradition is supported by an understanding of religion that contributes indirectly into paradigm through the paradigm. This research is a field research with a descriptive-analysis approach and Michel Foucault's power of knowledge. The data sources of this research were obtained from interviews and observations as primary sources, as well as books, journals, articles, and supporting data as secondary sources. The results of this research indicate that the construction of early marriages and perpetuity factors are mere normalization. There are a number of things that make this problem is normalized including theological-normative contributions which are indirectly understood socially as well as the construction of power and knowledge about early marriage and its effects for people who experience it.

Keywords: early marriage construction; perpetuation; power and knowledge; theological-normative

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Introduction

People in Batang region have many traditions perpetuated until right now, especially in the border area of Batang and Banjarnegara, Mojotengah village. That village is still tightly stuck with ancestral traditions which are still perpetuated by the people. One of the traditions that has become the customary law of that area is early marriage. This marriage is considered as a normal and valid thing, therefore this tradition is still being conducted as a form of the customary law heritage of village communities until now.

In a society with strong traditions and principles of harmony, marriage construction is described as a tradition having the values of life as a means for obtaining descendants, perpetuating traditions and genealogies, and changing position in social sphere. Therefore, it will be able to protect tradition heritage as a riches of village communities. In indigenous communities, a marriage is regarded as a means to conciliate two families with tenuous relationship. A marriage is not a relationship between husband and wife only, but also a relationship between their parents and big families to create an eternal and happy family.

Marriage is one of the sacred things between men and women (Abud, 1987, p. 99; Suma, 2005, p. 43). This is inseparable from the theological-normative contribution that is inherent in people's understanding, so that people understand that every human being is created by God by having spouse, it means that every creature is created by God in pairs (Wasman & Nuroniyah, 2012, p. 29). In addition, this understanding also explains that religion encourages people to love their spouses with the aim of creating harmonized family space (Hafidh, M. A., & Asrori, 2009, p. 88). In realizing the ideal marriage goals; *sakinah*, *mawadah*, and *warahmah* (Mardani, 2011, p. 7; Muchtar, 1974, p. 20).

Dealing with that things, marriage is closely related to religion contribution in social construction. Thus, it constructs society paradigm to realize perpetuation in family life. It is conducted to create a family space that corresponds to the ideality in social construction which is in line with aspects of religion and power relations. That thing is very important for men or women to prepare anything carefully, both physically and mentally, and also economic condition. To prepare all of them, it is necessary to relate the understanding of marriage and its polemics, meaning that a man and a woman should understand anything dealing with activities after getting married which are closely related to economic, mentally and physically aspects (Andrian, 2018).

However, marriage has different social constructions in some regions in Indonesia, it means that not all societies consider a marriage in detail with various preparations. Even,

some of them ignore it since it is complicated. It is caused by the values constructed by traditions. Therefore, it is necessary to answer this problem with new paradigm applied in early marriage. In this case, early marriage is considered as a good thing for both men and women without considering prior preparations.

Based on some data, early marriage will cause some problems, especially for men and women who will get married. Some social problems will arise due to early marriage rates; increasing divorce and domestic violence rates, and even increasing maternal mortality rate (Abdi, 2019). In this case, early marriages give impacts on physical, intellectual, and emotional conditions, especially for the women. It causes women to lose opportunities of continuing their study into higher education levels and also to lose opportunities of creating experiences during their youth, it gives impacts to individuals who depend on economic and social aspects of the family (Rohmaniyah, 2017, p. 36).

Early marriage is closely related to the role of the family, it means that the family plays a role in achieving society development that humanizes humans (having culture) and try to free people from all kinds of discrimination and violence (Lips, 1993, p. 4; Marzuki, 2007). Family is an asset in constructing the understanding through education-knowledge by considering that most of children's activities should be conducted in the family environment (under family supervision). In this case, the family is an initial environment in the process of internalization so it has constructed an understanding dealing with the values and ways of life (Rohmaniyah, 2017, p. 34). Therefore, family environment has a big contribution toward a good society construction that corresponds to social construction in an area.

Phenomenon of early marriage happens in Batang regency, Reban region, Mojotengah village. Early marriage is considered as a good thing, so that it becomes a measure for the good and the bad of individuals in society as well as a tradition. Early marriage is constructed as a normal thing, even it is also regarded as a good thing, based on the arguments or ways of life regarding the old age of men and women in the future which is closely related to people's vulnerable conditions and the time when their children have grown up (based on an interview with a perpetrator of early marriage (Eka, a fictitious name, 2020). Thus, children are able to care their parents when their conditions have been old and vulnerable (Julitia, 2019).

Not only that, there is a uniqueness in the marriages occurring in Reban region, most of the women who want to get married get *khitbah* when they still study at school, both junior and senior high school. Meanwhile, the men who do *khitbah* (marriage proposal) have

worked with the average of education levels up to junior and senior high school. Although, it cannot be denied that there are some teenagers who still study in college or have graduated from it (based on a field observation in Reban on April 2018 showing that some girls have been proposed at the second grade of junior high school). It indicates that society regards an education as useless thing, because inevitably people have to work in developing their village by farming and improving the quality of their harvest. In this case, a certificate of education is not really needed to have.

Social conditions as mentioned above are closely related to early marriage and the contribution of religion in constructing a paradigm as described above, therefore it is closely related to social theory. There is an interesting topic in the social review, it relates to power and religion, especially in the relation of knowledge and power as a study researched by Michel Foucault (Bertens, 2001, p. 297). This theory was later developed by modern sociologists and turned into discourse analysis in social theory. Knowledge in social reality or its practice is often used as a means to perpetuate power, it means that power is associated with institutions that dominate with other relations such as family, society which is related to the state of conditioning and being conditioned (Foucault, 2002, p. 175).

According to the problems above, this article aims to explore the problem of early marriage and its perpetuation occurring in Reban region, Mojotengah village, by using the view of power relation and its knowledge (Riadi, 2019). Moreover, it will also explore the religion contributions, especially theological-normative contributions in society's understanding until it constructs social construction as described above, the object of this research is also closely related to gender and sex theories, named equilibrium theory and structuralist-functionalist theory (Megawangi, 1999, p. 56). Thus, in approaching it, the researcher applies these two theories.

This research is a field research. It is a research conducted in the field with appearing symptoms (Hadi, 1975, p. 42). Field research is conducted in a real life settings, therefore it results a well-organized and complete image of the social units (Azwar, 1998, p. 5). This research was conducted in Mojotengah village, Reban region, with a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a research used to examine the conditions of natural objects where the researcher as the key instrument (Trianto, 2010, p. 179).

In this case, the researcher collects the data and information through books, articles, documentations, and other library materials in order to analyze or examine the content with the assumptions required in the contained discussion (Surahmat, 1998, p. 13). The approach

of this research is conducted by collecting data of early marriage and its perpetuity factors. In addition, the researcher also applies Foucault's theory named the genealogy of power. This theory is applied to see how the construction of knowledge and power works in early marriage and its perpetuity factors (Foucault, 2012, p. 428).

There are two data sources of this research; primary and secondary data sources (Arikunto, 1998, p. 114). The primary data sources are the data as main references (Umar, 2000, p. 42). The primary data sources of this research are persons experiencing early marriage. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources are the data supporting primary data sources (Kartono, 1983, p. 27). The secondary data sources of this research are books or documents supporting this research. The methods used in this research are observation and interview. Observation method is a method that requires researchers to go into the field to observe the things relating to the certain spaces, places, activities, objects, time and circumstances (Ghony, D. & Al-Mansur, 2012, p. 165). Meanwhile, interview method is a dialogue conducted by the interviewer to obtain some information from the interviewees. This interview is used as a technique of data collecting that is principally as an attempt to find a deeper information of a study from relevant sources (Arikunto, 1991, p. 155; Satori, D. & Komariah, 2010, p. 129).

The data analysis used in this research is the Miles and Huberman model, as quoted by Sugiyono in his book entitled *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R & D*, where the data collected is then recorded as the data records that will be deeply analyzed based on the statements obtained from the interviews in a research (Sugiyono, 2008, p. 337).

This research is a qualitative research, it starts from the field of research, from empirical facts. The research is conducted in the field to learn, analyze, interpret, and conclude the phenomena occurring in the field. The process of data analysis is conducted simultaneously with the process of data collecting by these following stages:

- a. Data reduction, the selection process, focusing on simplification, abstracting and transforming rough data that arise from written records in the field and it is continuously conducted, especially the data relating to construction of early marriages and its perpetuation.
- b. Data presentation, a set of information arranged to provide the possibility of concluding and doing actions.
- c. Conclusion (verification), final results concluded during the research. It is based on an analysis as a review of field notes (Sugiyono, 2008, p. 345). The data which are systematically

presented will make it easier to find the answers of problem formulation about early marriage and its perpetuation.

Theological-Normative Contribution; Early Marriage and Perpetuity Factors

In Islam, polemics related to marriage are divided into three parts; marriage as a human nature, marriage as a social benefit, and marriage based on choices. First, marriage as a human nature, Islam forbids its adherents to take the ascetic path by not marrying or living alone to worship only and *taqarrub* to Allah. Marriage is a human nature in order to be strong and balanced in life. It is stated on Qur'an, Ar-Rum: 30.

Second, marriage as a social benefit, meaning that with marriage people can protect each other in life, protect the lineage, protect society from moral decay, protect society from sexual diseases, create mental and spiritual peace, grow husband and wife's cooperation, and create the instincts of father and mother. Third, marriage based on choices, meaning that Islam recommends several options. The options offered by Islam to its adherents; based on equality in belief, descent and honor, and virgin status (Ulwan, 2012, pp. 3-14). Regarding to those things, early marriage is closely related to theological-normative contributions (Rohmaniyah, 2019, p. 124).

The theological-normative contributions also participate in supporting the tradition of early marriage that still occurs in Reban region. Therefore, it becomes a cultural heritage or a common thing in that region. The role of religion has a great influence toward the ways of life in Reban region. It can be seen from the very strong diversity in society. Moreover, there is also a boarding school creating *hafidz* and *hafidzoh* in Mojotengah village. Both young and old people have a good relationship by trusting each other. The majority of people in Mojotengah village are Muslim, even most of them are activists of an Islamic organization (based on an observation in Mojotengah village on February 23, 2020). It is expressed as follows:

“Ten mriki niku wargane kentel agama, dadose nggeh rukun, adem, tentrem. Nggeh nek wonten acara niku, warga mriki semangat, khususipun sing kaitane karo agama. Nggeh sami kalean nikah. Nikah iku nek mpun siap nggeh langsung mawon, nopo maleh nggeh katahe warga mriki mpun mboten sekolah duwur-duwur. Ngoten niku nggeh mergo, pandangan wargane daripada mangke malah tumindak e lek. Dadose ten mriki niku nggeh mayoritas warganipun nikah di bawah umur 20, khususipun nggeh tiang putri.” (An interview with a perpetrator of early marriage (Dian, a fictitious name, 2020).

[“People here live with strong religion, so that people can live in harmony and peace. If there are social events, people are excited, especially for events dealing with religion such as marriage. If people have been ready to get married, they should do it as soon as possible. Moreover, most of people here do not continue their study to higher education levels. They do early marriage to prevent the bad things happen. Therefore, most of people here get married before 20 years old, especially for the girls.”]

“nikah nom iku neng kene dianjurke, soale wedine ngko ndak maksiat. Makane mayoritas warga ning kene nikah nom, ora lanang ora wadok. Nek lanang rata-rata nikah umur 20 menduwur. Nek wadok, kebanyakan dibawah umur 20. Soale, masyarakat kene iku nek wes umur 17 bingung arep opo, khusus wedok. Opo maneh ng agomo diajarke sing ojo ditunda-tunda iku nikah makane iku dadi dalile.” (An interview with a perpetrator of early marriage (Winto, a fictitious name, 2020).

[“Early marriage is recommended here to prevent the bad things. Therefore, most people here experience early marriage, both men and women. Generally, the men get married after 20 years old. It is different from the women because most of them get married before 20 years old. It happens because people are confused what to do if they have been 17 years old, especially for the women. Moreover, Islam teaches people not to postpone a marriage and it is the religion proposition.”]

Thus, the contribution of religion is really involved in normalizing early marriage and its perpetuation. It occurs because people consider religion as something special and important among others just like education and job. So that, early marriage becomes an implementation of theological-normative construction which is implemented by Reban people.

In addition, according to the theological-normative contributions produced by people, it also gives impact to perpetuity factors on husband-wife’s relationships in early marriages. A marriage is regarded as something sacred and identical with divinity, meaning that it must be protected by a full awareness as a servant of God. In addition, it is also based on the harmonious relationship between the two parties of the marriage that considers it as a complement of religion, so it needs to be properly protected. It is expressed as follows:

“pernikahan iku sakral, mas. Sing nyekseni Pengeran (Allah) dan Rosul. Dadi kudu bener-bener dijogo. Nopomaleh sampe ceri, tukaran niku nggih saene dihindari. Kulo kolean garwone kulo niki nggeh ngoten, mayoritas warga mriki nggeh sami mas. Dadose nggih roto-roto kabeh wargan nggeh harmonis, nggeh nek wonten masalah mboten ageng. Ngoten.”(An interview with a

perpetrator of early marriage (Rya, a fictitious name 2020). Rya is also an *ustaz*.

[“Marriage is a sacred thing. It is witnessed by Allah and His Messenger. So that a marriage should be properly protected. Divorce and quarrels should be avoided in marriage life. My wife and I avoid it too, most people here do the same thing. That makes most people here live in harmony, so sometimes they only find some trivial problems.”]

Local people really consider a marriage as a sacred thing. They regard marriage as a form of tradition that includes Allah and His Messenger as its witnesses. Therefore, most of marriages in that village is longevity, especially early marriages. In addition, diversity is very strong and various traditions are still running well (based on an observation in Mojotengah village on February 23, 2020).

Power and Knowledge; Early Marriage dan Perpetuity Factors

There is a relation of power and knowledge in early marriage, it becomes one of the things that cannot be avoided indirectly, especially in early marriage and various problems in it. Power and knowledge are the products of Michel Foucault’s thought. According to Foucault, power should be processed with various relations, so that various constructions can be found to streng then it (Foucault, 1997, p. 113). It is described by this following expression;

“nikah nom iku ning kene wes umum mas, soale pendidikan ora patio dinemenemenke, ujung-ujunge yo bali ng ndesone. Nek nikahe nom, mbesok gedene iku kan anak biso ngrawat wong tuone. Makane ning kene mayoritas lulusan smp. Sing wadok iku yo umume nikahe umur dibawah 20 tahun, jelase roto-roto nggih 17-18 tahun. Mergo kokui, makane tekan saiki yo seh jalan, malah didemeni.” (An interview with a perpetrator of early marriage Eki, 2020)

[“Here, early marriage is a common thing because education is not regarded as something important as people will come back to their village at the end. If people do early marriage, the children are able to care their parents in the future. Most of people here graduated from junior high school. Generally, the women get married under 20 years old, most of them are 17-18 years old. Therefore, early marriage still occurs, even it is liked by many people.”]

The knowledge construction which is developed is about the future. So that early marriage is still conducted until now. Generally, the men are older than the women. They

have age difference about 2-5 years. It is based on the data coming from the closest junior high school showing that few female students of third grade have been proposed (an observation at Mojotengah Junior High School, Reban). The data correspond to this following expression;

“ten mriki iku nggih mas, kelas 2 SMP kadang nggih mpun dilamar. Ning, sebagian kecil saja. Umumnya nggih di kelas 3 dipinangnya.”(An interview with the chief of Mojotengah village (Danto, a fictitious name, 2020).

[“Here, sometimes the girls from second grade have been proposed. But, it is only a few. Generally, they are proposed at the third grade of junior high school.”]

The brides are proposed when they have graduated from junior high school, although some of them are proposed when they are still in junior high school. It happens because the implementation of knowledge construction. If women get married above 20 years old, it will be regarded as unusual thing. As we know, generally the women with the age of 20-25 years old already have 1-3 children. Thus, it restricts the spaces for women, moreover in education field.

There are several constructions constructed by the local people toward early marriage and the lack of higher education, the education costs are getting more expensive, the distance between the village and high school needs more than an hour to spend, the economic situation is weak, the fields are not cultivated, and the age is enough forgetting married. This construction is constructed by the parents of brides and bridegrooms. Thus, generally, the marriage uses parents' money. However, some of them use their own money because sometimes the bridegrooms have worked for about 10 years and save the money.

Family plays an important role in early marriage as explained above. However, sometimes the brides and bridegrooms have known and loved each other since they were in junior high school or even elementary school. Therefore, their families decide to marry them, although their economic condition is not really good/ sufficient.

Early marriage is one of the factors causing high maternal mortality rates, high rates of divorce and domestic violence. In addition, early marriage also does not provide power space for the brides and bridegrooms to continue their study to higher education levels, to work or to have good career, and to prepare for the mental condition (physically and spiritually). It happens because every individual has the right of power over himself without being influenced by others, including his parents.

However, in the case of early marriages found in Reban, power spaces of the brides and the bridegrooms to construct knowledge through education in preparing families with more stable economic and mentally conditions to avoid unwanted things (such as domestic violences and divorces) do not really occur, it means that there is a coercion from other parties. In this case is, the family of bride and bridegroom and the local community. Therefore, the knowledge dealing with the risks of early marriage that relate tosexuality and various sexual diseases can not be well understood.

In Reban, especially Mojotengah village, the maternal mortality rate is even very low, the divorce and domestic violence rates are also low, even themortality rate due to diseases is low too. It occurs because of the normalization conducted by persons experiencing early marriage

In reproduction matter, related problems that should be experienced at least once, even very little, unlike the data from WHO. Although the knowledge relates to reproduction health is still low and the knowledge relates to mind health is also low, the maternal mortality and domestic violence rates are also very low, even they are sustainable on average. This happens because most of the members of the community normalize the things to happen, including a rule mentioning that women as wives must obey the men. This normalization has occured until now.

The health condition of Reban people, especially Mojotengah, is very good. Most of people there work as farmers. They are used to working after praying *subuh*, when the sun has not risen yet. Walking on the mountainous area is a common activity for them. The men and women do the same things, especially those who are married or ready to get married. Therefore, they have a good health.

Conclusion

Early marriages occur in Reban, especially in Mojotengah, are a form of normalization only. The problems are constructed as normal and not exaggerated things. Thus, the divorce and domestic violence rates become low. In addition, the power spaces of persons experiencing early marriage are completely invisible, it means that early marriages occur because of the encouragement of third parties; parents or family.

Some of the reasons causing the perpetuation of early marriages in Mojotengah can be concluded as follows:

- a. The theological-normative construction understood by the society gives an influence to people's ways of life, it implies on worship in youth (getting married) and a view of future when people are getting old. In this case, children become one of family supporters as they are able to work and earn money.
- b. The construction of power and knowledge understood by the society is that early marriage as a good thing. Thus, it still occurs until now. The construction of knowledge that is used as a principle is the lack of domestic violence and divorce. In the sexual realm, the maternal mortality and divorce rates are low too. Therefore, it can be clearly seen that the power and knowledge in the phenomenon of early marriage are less realized, except because of the normalization.

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