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LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage:

Current Situation in Indonesia

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Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage is a common public health problem worldwide. It is one of the key issues concerning reproductive health of women not only in developing countries but also in developed countries, including Indonesia. The international community is also aware that the problem of Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage is a very serious problem. The general implication is that women and children will be at risk in various aspects, related to unwanted marriages, forced sexual intercourse, pregnancy at a very young age, as well as an increased risk of transmission of HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and cervical cancer. The purpose of the article is to review current situation and issues on adolescent pregnancy and child marriage in Indonesia.

Keywords:



INTRODUCTION

Sexual activity among adolescents has increased in recent decades. This is associated with the age of starting puberty which is earlier than before, lack of supervision of cultural and religious values, a younger age for first sexual intercourse, thus causing an increase in pre-marital sexual intercourse.¹ There are about 2% of female adolescents aged 15-24 years old and 8% of male adolescents in the same age claimed to have had sexual intercourse before marriage, and 11% of them experienced an unwanted pregnancy. Among women and men who have had premarital sexual intercourse, 59% of women and 74% of men reported that they started having sex for the first time at the age of 15-19 years old.² In addition the increased in adolescent sexual intercourse causes child marriage and Adolescent pregnancy.³

Adolescents are citizen in the age range of 10-19 years old⁴, the Ministry of Health provides a limit for adolescents is in age 10-18 years old⁵ and child is someone who is below 18 years old, including children who are still in the uterine.⁶ Adolescent pregnancy is a pregnancy that occurs between the ages of 10-19 years old and child marriage is a marriage that occurs at the age of the child (below 18 years old).

Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage have decreased in many countries in the last ten years, but in fact they are still occurring, especially in developing countries and remote areas of the country. Every year there are about 21 million girls who become pregnant between the ages of 15-19 years old, and about 12 million give birth. Adolescent fertility rates decreased from 56 deliveries in 2000 to 45 deliveries in 2015 and 44 deliveries in 2019.⁴ Likewise, child marriage occurs in both rural and urban areas and covers various economic strata and various social backgrounds. Globally, one in six women Adolescent between the ages of 15-19 years old are married, even as many as 700 million women marry as child brides.⁷

In Indonesia, Adolescent pregnancy shows a decreasing rate in the last 5 years. In the SDKI 2012, the Adolescent pregnancy rate was 48 births per 1000 female births and decreased to 36 births per 1000 women in the SDKI 2017, while the 2019 target was 38 births per 1000 women, and still dominated by rural youth (1,97% compared to urban areas).⁸ Likewise, child marriage has decreased, however, this decline has not achieved the expected results and is relatively slow. For example, the prevalence rate of child marriage had increased in 2016 by 11,1% to 11,2% in 2018. Meanwhile, for the age of marriage below 15 years old, there was a decrease of 1,04% from 2008 to 2018. However, based on the trend of the last three years there was an increase from 0,54% in 2016 to 0,56% in 2018.¹⁰

The international community is also aware that the problem of Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage is a very serious problem. The general implication is that women and children will be at risk in various aspects, related to unwanted marriages, forced sexual intercourse, pregnancy at a very young age, as well as an increased risk of transmission of HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and cervical cancer.¹⁰

Women who marry at a young age are often associated with an increased risk of dropping out of school, social isolation, poverty, high fertility and poor mental health.



Meanwhile, Adolescent pregnancy is often associated with increased maternal and infant mortality due to complications of pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium. Adolescent pregnancy is a major health problem in almost many countries, especially in developing countries, including Indonesia. How is the situation in Indonesia?

Definition of Children and Adolescent

Adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. The period of adolescent development is marked by physical, social, and psychological maturity which is marked by efforts to find identity.⁹ Age has been used to distinguish groups of adolescents according to their physical growth, such as early adolescence (11-13 years old), middle adolescence (14-18 years old)) and late adolescence (19-24 years old). WHO defines Adolescent to include all people aged 10-19 years old (WHO, 1989). The Indonesian Ministry of Health is redefining this group as people aged only 10-19 years old and not married. Meanwhile, according to the BKKBN, the age group for adolescents is 10-24 years old and not married.¹⁰

The definition of the child's age in the Election Law No. 10 of 2008 (article 19, paragraph 1) is up to 17 years old. Meanwhile, the Marriage Law No.1 of 1974 explains the minimum age limit for marriage for women is 16 years old and men are 19 years old. The definition of a child based on Law no. 23 of 2002, is someone who is below 18 years old, including a child who is still in the uterine. Child marriage is defined as a marriage that occurs before the child reaches the age of 18 years, before the child is physically, physiologically and psychologically mature to be responsible for the marriage and the children resulting from that marriage.^{10,11}

The number of adolescents (aged 10-19 years old) in Indonesia in 2021 is 44,5 million people or about 16,5% of Indonesia's population of 270,2 million. Meanwhile, adolescents aged 15-19 years old are 22,3 million people or about 8,3% of the total population of Indonesia. Meanwhile, the number of children (age <18 years old) in Indonesia is 88,7 million people or about 32,8% of the total population of Indonesia.¹²

Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy

Child marriage is one of the problems in Indonesia. This is due to the recent trend of child marriage that has hit Indonesian Adolescent and is already at an alarming level. The issue of early marriage will have a negative impact in the future if it is related to the population and the quality of human resources in the future.

Child marriage age is a concern for policy makers and planning for healthy, strong and prosperous family development programs for three reasons. First, it is considered a high risk of marital failure. Pregnancy at a young age is at risk because of mental unpreparedness to build a marriage and this results in marriage failure. Second, pregnancy at a young age is at risk of becoming an irresponsible parent. Third, early marriage to a certain degree statistically contributes to the increase in fertility rates because marriage at a young age means that these young couples have a long period of reproductive life.¹³



A UNICEF literacy study found that the interaction of various factors puts children at risk for early marriage. It is widely known that child marriage is tied to tradition and culture, so it is difficult to change. Economic reasons, the hope of achieving social and financial security after marriage causes many parents to encourage their children to marry at a young age.¹⁴

Child marriage is a form of violation of children's rights to grow and develop. Several studies related to the impact of child marriage also show a correlation between maternal and infant health, and maternal mortality with the phenomenon of child marriage. In general, the practice of child marriage in Indonesia has decreased in the last 10 years by 3,5%. This decline has not achieved the expected results and is relatively slow. In fact, the prevalence rate of child marriage had increased in 2016 by 11,1% to 11,2% in 2018. The fluctuating rate of increase every year shows that systematic and integrated efforts are needed to achieve a decrease in the number of child marriages.⁹

Child marriage in Indonesia is closely related to the dualism of the applicable regulations, namely Law no. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, Law no. 35 of 2014 concerning Amendments, and Law no. 23 of 2003 concerning Child Protection. Advocacy for a revision of the marriage age based on the Constitutional Court's decision in December 2018 related to the discrepancy between the Marriage Law and the Child Protection Law. On September 16, 2019, the Indonesian House of Representatives agreed to approve the revision of Article 7a of the Marriage Law, which stipulates the minimum age for women and men to marry is 19 years old.⁹

Child marriage is closely related to Adolescent pregnancy. Adolescent pregnancy is sometimes referred to as the adolescent fertility rate, which is the number of women aged 15-19 years old giving birth per 1000 women in that age group.^{14,15} In other words, the measure relates to the proportion of adolescent fertility measured as a percentage of total fertility contributed by women aged 15-19 years old. This is known as the Age Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR).¹⁵ However, WHO still defines adolescent pregnancy as pregnancy in a woman aged 10-19 years old. Some authors also distinguish it from pregnancy in young adolescents (younger adolescent pregnancy) which is pregnant at the age of 10-14 years old and adolescent pregnancy (Adolescent pregnancy) which is 15-19 years old.^{15,16}

Adolescent pregnancy is still an important health issue in many countries, both in developing and developed countries. There are two very strong factors influencing this development. First, changes in the age of menarche where the average age of menarche is lower. In developed countries the median age of menarche is 12,5 years old, while in poor developing countries the age of menarche is 15 years old and the average decline has been 2-3 months per decade since the 19th century. Second, schools where this increase in education will lead to adolescent less dependent on parents and loose parental supervision. These two factors cause a lot of premarital sexual intercourse and will certainly increase Adolescent pregnancy.^{1,16}

Global Epidemiology Overview

Every year it is estimated that 21 million adolescent women aged 15-19 years old are pregnant and about 12 million of these give birth, and at least 777.000 adolescent women



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below 15 years old give birth in developing countries.^{16,17} Worldwide, 11% of all deliveries occur during adolescence, including 16 million female adolescents aged 15-19 years old and 2 million female adolescents below 15 years old, most of which (95%) occur in low-and middle-income countries and 1 in 100 adolescents die each year associated with pregnancy and childbirth.^{17,18}

It is estimated that worldwide ASFR has decreased by 11,6% in the last 2 decades. But very big differences occur in various regions . In East Asia 7,1 while in Central Africa it is 129,5. In south-east Asia the fertility rate is 33 with variances in Bangladesh 83 and North Korea 0,3. Although ASFR has decreased, the absolute number of deliveries to children and adolescents has not decreased. This is due to the increasing population growth of the adolescent group at the age of 15-19 years old. The highest number of deliveries occurred in East Asia (95.153) and West Africa (70.423).¹⁷

Child marriage is a violation of human rights. Even though it is against the law, the practice of child marriage is still taking place in various parts of the world. Globally, it is estimated that 1 in every 5 children are married formally or informally before they reach the age of 18 years old. The amount is approximately 36% below 18 years old and 10% below 15 years old. Child marriage threatens the lives and health of girls and limits their future lives. If they are pregnant even though they are still teenagers, it will increase the risk of pregnancy and childbirth, and can even cause death.²⁰

The proportion of young women in the world who marry as children has decreased in the last decade where it has decreased by 15% from 1 in 4 to 1 in 5. This means that in the last 10 years child marriage could be avoided as many as 25 million children. It is estimated that there are 650 million girls and women who married before the age of 18 years and the highest occurred in the South Asian region around 47% and the lowest in the Middle East and North Africa 4%. India is the country with the most child marriages, 35% and the lowest is the Congo, Turkey Tanzania. Meanwhile, Indonesia, together with Bangladesh and Nigeria, accounted for 14%.²¹

Impact of teenage pregnancy

Abortion

Abortion can occur spontaneously or by induction. Increased sexual behavior can lead to unwanted pregnancies. Attempts to perform unsafe and illegal abortions can lead to serious maternal complications such as septic abortion and even maternal death. In the long term it causes pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

Prematurity

The risk of preterm labor in Adolescent pregnancies is higher than that in older adults. This is caused by late antenatal care, social rejection, physical abuse, smoking and other abuses.

Hypertension in pregnancy

In India the incidence of eclampsia is 10%. The incidence of preeclampsia has doubled in adolescents pregnancy compared to women aged 30-34 years old.



Sexually transmitted disease

1 in 4 sexually active adolescent girls has an STD, such as chlamydia or human papillomavirus (HPV). Sexually active adolescents are at higher risk of contracting STDs for a combination of behavioral, biological, and cultural reasons. For some STDs, such as chlamydia, adolescent women may have an increased susceptibility to cervical infection because these cells are more susceptible to infection. The higher prevalence of STDs among adolescents may also reflect barriers to accessing the quality STD prevention and management services.

Long labor

The incidence of prolonged labor is 4% in women aged 12-16 years old compared to women aged 20-29 years old ranging from 0,3%. This may be due to fetopelvic disproportion.

Birth injury

Because of the small capacity of the genital organs and the increase in operative delivery, lacerations of the genital tract causing bleeding are more common in adolescent mothers.

Psychological problems

Adolescent mothers experienced significantly higher rates of depression, both before and after delivery, than adult mothers and their non-pregnant counterparts. Researchers found that girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years old had twice the rate of postpartum depression as women above 25 years old. Among adolescent mothers, rates of depression are estimated to be between 16% and 44%. In contrast, the prevalence of major depression in non-pregnant adolescent and adult women is between 5% and 20%. About 19% of 15 to 19 year olds reported having suicidal thoughts, and 9% had attempted suicide. Adolescent mothers are also at risk of experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, mainly because of their high risk of exposure to community and interpersonal violence including physical assault by a partner, neglect and abuse by parents. Adolescent mothers are faced with a variety of psychological problems that range from low self-esteem to major depression.

This is due to poverty, domestic violence, dysfunctional family relationships, underlying psychiatric disorders. Pregnant teens are more likely to smoke and use alcohol than older women in developed countries, which can cause many problems for the child and after birth.

Adolescent mothers often do not continue their education and are trapped in the poverty syndrome. Adolescent marriages break up faster than other marriages and have the highest divorce rate of all.

A survey conducted in Japan showed that women who had their first baby before age 18 years old were 1/3 less likely to develop breast cancer than women who had their first baby after age 35 years old. If all births to women below 18 years old were eliminated, the population would be 5% smaller in 50 years than if this rate remained constant. If all juvenile



births were eliminated, the reproduction rate would decrease from 1,16 to more than the stationary value of 1,00

Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage: the current situation in Indonesia

According to the SDKI 2017, the Adolescent pregnancy rate (ASFR) in Indonesia is 36 births per 1000 women. Seen a decrease in the number of Adolescent pregnancies/births (15-19 years old) from year to year. In the SDKI 1991, the Adolescent pregnancy rate was 67 births per 1000 women, decreased by 51 births per 1000 women in 2002, decreased again by 48 births per 1000 women in 2012 and 2017 to 36 births per 1000 women, already exceeding the target set by the government in 2019 namely 38 births per 1000 women.

In general, the practice of child marriage in Indonesia has decreased in the last 10 years by 3,5%. This decline was faster in rural areas than in urban areas. However, this decline has not achieved the goal results and is relatively slow. For example, the prevalence rate of child marriage had increased in 2016 by 11,1% to 11,2% in 2018. Meanwhile, for the age of marriage below 15 years old, there was a decrease of 1,04% from 2008 to 2018. However, based on the trend of the last three years there was an increase from 0,54% in 2016 to 0,56% in 2018.^{9,22}

According to the Susenas 2018, it is estimated that 1 in 9 women aged 20-24 years old married before the age of 18 years old, while 1 in 100 men aged 20-24 years old married under the age of 18.²² Prevalence of women aged 20-24 years old who married for the first time under the age of 18 years is still dominated by rural residents compared to urban residents. The percentage for rural areas is 16,87% and for urban areas is 7,15%. Meanwhile, the prevalence of men aged 20-24 years old who married for the first time under the age of 18 years on average was 1,06% where in the village population it was 1,44% and the urban population was 0,77%.²²

The prevalence of child marriage in each province varies greatly from year to year. The 2015-2018 period shows a similar trend to the national figure, which is increasing and decreasing which indicates variations in the regional and provincial contexts. Based on the results of the SUSENAS 2018, the highest prevalence of child marriage is West Sulawesi Province (19,4%) and Central Kalimantan Province (19,1%), while the lowest are DKI Jakarta (4,1%) and Riau Islands (4,7%). If viewed based on absolute numbers, the highest child marriage is found on the island of Java. The absolute number is closely related to the total population, so the three provinces with the highest numbers are West Java, East Java, and Central Java. These three provinces contribute 55% of the total child marriage in Indonesia.²³

Determinants of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage in Indonesia

1. Socio-cultural norms of religion

Indonesia has thousands of islands with multiverse cultures, norms and social systems. Some have a matrilineal social system such as in West Sumatra where the

woman will choose the man in the marriage system. Most Indonesians use a patrilineal social system where women are treated unequally to men and made to live by rules made by men.

The patrilineal social system in most of Indonesia creates a bad paradigm for women. For example, in many areas, it is socially unwise and somewhat unacceptable for a woman to leave her home after dark, while a man is allowed to pass anytime. With regards to marriage, a woman can be labeled as "too old" if they are single for too long while a man need not worry about such labels. This paradigm burdens Indonesian girls to rush into marriage.²⁷

In South Kalimantan, people tend to think that girls should be married before the age of 20 years old. Religion also plays an important role in supporting child marriage in Indonesia. As citizens of one of the largest Muslim countries in the world, the majority of people in Indonesia are fairly conservative. Religious beliefs have generally been used as a justification for child marriage. Marriage is seen as a tool to prevent promiscuity, which is forbidden by the dominant religion. Many traditional families in Indonesia still rely on marriage in this way. Once again, girls are victims of violent social prejudice, rushing into marriage without their consent.²⁷

2. Education

Education is a very important factor in the occurrence of Adolescent pregnancy. Childbirth rates in adolescents with low education are higher than those in higher education. Women aged 20-24 years old who married under the age of 18 years old were four times more likely to not complete their education than those aged above 18 years.^{23,24,25,26,28,29}

3. Income

Women from low-income families are three times more likely to have child marriage than women from middle-and high-income families.²³ Meanwhile, poor women will have twice the risk of having Adolescent pregnancy compared to rich women.^{23,24,28,29}

4. Rural

Women who come from rural areas are twice as likely to have child marriages than women who live in cities.^{23,28,29}

5. Information media

Women who have and get good information media tend to get married earlier than women who do not have good information media.²⁸

6. Reproductive Health Education and Reproductive Health Services

Women who received education related to contraception were more likely to be able to control births using contraception compared to women who received less education about contraception. In Indonesia, contraception is only promoted to married couples. This policy is actually to avoid the interpretation that the government has legalized premarital sex. As a result, adolescents' access to contraception will be reduced, especially for unmarried adolescents. One of the efforts that can be done is to conduct education related to reproductive health in schools and also with parents



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regarding sexual topics which will increase the possibility of Adolescent to avoid unhealthy sexual behavior.^{26,28}

Prevention of Child marriage and Adolescent pregnancy³⁰.

1. Strengthening the laws and policies that protect girls from child marriage
 - *Implementation Act No 12 of 2022 about Act of Crime sexual violence*
 - *Pushing for the Implementation of Amendment of Law Number 1 of 1974*
 - *Developing a Community-based Child Protection Mechanism (CBCPM)*
2. Ensuring the availability of quality education and health to prevent and respond to child marriage for all children
 - *Strengthening the Minimum 12-Year Compulsory Education for Girls*
 - *Provision of Early Education and Services on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights*
 - *Quality and Inclusive Health and Education Services*
3. Alleviating poverty.
4. Change of mindset on the protection of child's access to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), gender equality, and youth participation.
 - *Promotion on Gender Equality*
 - *Promotion to Change Mindset on SRHR*
 - *Encouraging youth participation in preventing and responding to child marriage*
 - *Protection of child's access to SRHR, gender equality, and youth participation*

The role of Obstetricians and Gyneacologist

Regarding Adolescent pregnancy and child marriage, Obstetricians and Gyneacologist can play a role in providing counseling to adolescents and parents about the importance of preventing child marriage and helping parents to provide reproductive health education to children according to their age stages. Obstetricians and Gyneacologist also play a role in helping adolescents to obtain information and Sexual and reproduction health right services as well as contraceptives, assessing the ability of adolescent parents to raise children to prevent neglect or abuse of children, and participate in society to prevent early marriage.

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