THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE RATES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage remains a common phenomenon in various regions, including Kelurahan Lipu, Baubau City. This practice is often influenced by cultural norms, social pressure, and limited understanding of Islamic values regarding marriage. In fact, marriage is a sacred bond that requires psychological, spiritual, and social readiness. This study aims to examine the relationship between early marriage and divorce rates from the perspective of Islamic education. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation using a saturated sampling technique involving young married couples, religious leaders, and community figures. The findings reveal a strong correlation between early marriage and the high rate of divorce. Contributing factors include the dominance of social norms, a lack of understanding of Islamic marital principles, and the absence of premarital guidance rooted in religious teachings. These results underscore the importance of comprehensive premarital education and the active role of religious institutions in preparing young couples to build a harmonious family life based on Islamic values.

Keywords: Early Marriage; Divorce; Islamic Education.

1. Introduction

Marriage is a physical and emotional bond between a man and a woman, who often come from different backgrounds, particularly in terms of family upbringing and environment. When they come together with the shared goal of building a lasting and happy family, marriage becomes more than just a union it becomes a commitment to achieving harmony and well-being. In Islam, the purpose of marriage is not only to ensure the continuation of progeny but also to establish a harmonious, prosperous, and joyful household (Bullah, 2022). Harmony refers to the balanced fulfillment of rights and responsibilities among family members. Prosperity implies the attainment of physical and spiritual tranquility, which in turn fosters happiness through mutual love and affection within the family (Stiles & Yakin, 2022a). In relation to underage marriage, Islam does not explicitly prohibit such practice. This is exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who married Aisha at the age of six but did not live with her until she reached the age of nine. Islam permits and encourages marriage without arbitrary limitations on time or place, as long as the conditions are met (Pradikta et al., 2023). As recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari, the Prophet said: *"O young people, whoever among you is able to marry, should marry, for it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty; and whoever is not able, should fast, for it will be a shield for him."* (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

Based on the hadith, there is no fixed age limit for marriage, whether for young men or women. However, if a teenager is not yet physically, mentally, or financially capable, fasting is advised to help control one's desires. Early-age marriage can have significant consequences on the couple's life. Emotional immaturity and a lack of

life experience are common among those who marry too young (Muslim et al., 2022). Several contributing factors, such as peer influence, environmental conditions, and economic hardship, often lead to early marriages. Furthermore, low levels of education significantly affect an individual's perception and understanding of the essence and purpose of marriage (SCHULZ & DIALLO, 2022). As a result, this can disrupt household harmony and ultimately lead to divorce.

The gap between the Islamic teachings on marriage and the actual practices in the community of Kelurahan Lipu remains evident. In Islamic guidance, marriage is recommended when individuals have reached maturity in terms of physical, psychological, and spiritual readiness. However, in social reality, early marriages still occur among those who are not yet mentally prepared or sufficiently responsible (Shúilleabháin, 2019). This indicates a misalignment between the values of Islamic education, which emphasize preparedness and the benefit of the union, and cultural practices or social pressures that encourage youth to marry before they are truly ready (Essop, 2022). The main problem that arises from early marriage is the increasing rate of divorce among young couples. A lack of understanding regarding rights and obligations within the household, limited conflict-resolution skills, and unstable financial conditions are the primary triggers for marital breakdown (Uddin, 2020). Ideally, Islamic education should serve as the foundation for nurturing a sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah-based family. Unfortunately, in many cases, religious education is not a primary consideration prior to marriage, resulting in the underutilization of Islam's educational function in guiding marital decisions.

The key challenge lies in how to effectively internalize Islamic educational values among the younger generation and parents within the community of Kelurahan Lipu. Limited access to comprehensive religious education and the weak role of religious institutions in providing counseling and guidance present significant obstacles. The impact of this issue extends beyond the individuals who experience divorce; it also affects the children involved and, more broadly, the quality of social life within the community. If left unaddressed, this phenomenon has the potential to create a recurring social cycle, particularly in the absence of systematic and sustainable interventions rooted in Islamic principles.

Previous studies have shown that early marriage is significantly correlated with increased divorce rates, particularly in communities with low levels of education. (McNelis & Segrin, 2019) revealed that couples who marry under the age of 20 tend to have lower marital resilience due to emotional and economic unpreparedness. Similarly, (Stiles & Yakin, 2022b) found that early marriage is often influenced by cultural factors and social pressure rather than personal readiness, which ultimately leads to household disharmony. In the context of Islamic education, a study by (Hoy, 2019) emphasized that Islam does not prohibit marriage at a young age, but requires physical and emotional maturity conditions that are often unmet in current early marriage practices. Furthermore, research by (Majdzadeh & Zeinalzadeh, 2019) stated that a lack of understanding of the Islamic concept of a sakinah (tranquil) family is a major cause of divorce among young couples. (Baydar, 2023) also found that adolescents who do not receive adequate

religious education from an early age are more likely to experience marital failure. This is supported by (Reiko, 2021), who stressed the importance of educational and religious counseling institutions in equipping young couples with knowledge about Islamic marriage principles. Based on these findings, it is evident that Islamic education holds great potential to prevent divorce resulting from early marriage, though its implementation in society remains suboptimal.

When a married couple no longer lives together due to various reasons, this situation is referred to as divorce. Such separation can have significant effects on both the couple and their children, impacting their social, psychological, and economic well-being. In light of this context, the researcher is interested in exploring the relationship between early marriage and divorce rates from the perspective of Islamic education in the community of Kelurahan Lipu, Baubau City.

2. Methods

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore in depth the social phenomena occurring within the community, particularly regarding the practice of early marriage and its impact on divorce rates (Hosseini, 2021). Qualitative research also enables the researcher to capture the meanings and understandings from the participants' perspectives concerning Islamic educational values that play a role in shaping a harmonious family. The research design employed is a case study. This study focuses on a specific location, namely the community in Kelurahan Lipu, Baubau City, to gain contextual and comprehensive insights into the relationship between early marriage, divorce, and the application of Islamic educational values. Through this design, the researcher is able to explore the background, motivations, and perceptions of individuals and groups involved in cases of early marriage and divorce.

The data collection techniques in this study were conducted through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. Interviews were carried out with individuals who married at an early age, divorced couples, and religious leaders who understand Islamic educational teachings related to marriage (Wulandari & Septian, 2020). Observations were conducted to directly observe the social conditions of the community, while documentation was used to collect secondary data such as marriage and divorce records from local government institutions. The primary instrument in this research was the researcher themselves, supported by interview guides and observation notes. Data validity was ensured through triangulation techniques, which involved comparing and cross-checking information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. This approach enabled the researcher to ensure that the information collected was accurate and consistent in reflecting the social reality of the studied community.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman. The stages of analysis included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Collected data were reduced to focus on relevant information aligned with the research objectives, then presented in narrative form or in tables as needed. Subsequently, the researcher interpreted the findings to draw conclusions about the relationship between early marriage and divorce rates, as

well as its relevance to the Islamic educational values embraced by the local community.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The Dominance of Social and Cultural Factors in Early Marriage Decisions

The research findings indicate that social and cultural factors play a highly dominant role in encouraging early marriages in Kelurahan Lipu. The majority of respondents admitted that the decision to marry at a young age did not entirely stem from personal will, but rather from social pressure, local cultural norms, and the desire to uphold family image and honor. In many cases, young girls were encouraged to marry as soon as they had a partner, even without considering their mental, emotional, or financial readiness.

The community in Kelurahan Lipu tends to hold a traditional view that marrying young is normal and even ideal. There is strong social anxiety about adolescents maintaining relationships for too long without the bond of marriage, prompting parents to "secure" their children through marriage. This practice has become entrenched as a form of social control and protection of customary norms, even though in practice it often overlooks the individual's mental, emotional, and financial readiness. This finding is supported by interviews. RN, a 17-year-old female who married at her parents' request, stated: "At that time I did not want to marry because I was still in school, but my parents said it was better to get me married since I often went out with him. They said people would talk, so I just went along." Similarly, AH, a long-time community leader in Kelurahan Lipu, explained: "Here it is common for girls to marry young. If a serious man comes to propose, parents usually agree right away. If it is delayed, it can become gossip or a bad rumor."

These statements illustrate that the decision to enter into early marriage is more normative and socially influenced rather than based on personal readiness. This indicates that external factors, particularly cultural norms and environmental pressure, play a major role in determining early marriage practices, which often result in a lack of preparedness for the realities of married life.

The practice of early marriage in Kelurahan Lipu shows that the decision to marry at a young age is not entirely based on individual awareness, but is strongly shaped by deeply rooted social and cultural expectations. The local community commonly perceives marriage as a means of protecting family honor, especially for young women. There is widespread concern over the negative stigma that may arise when adolescents are involved in relationships without formal commitment, leading to intense pressure to marry quickly. This situation reflects the concept of social control theory, which explains that cultural norms and community expectations influence individual behavior to remain within what is socially accepted. From the perspective of Islamic education, early marriage without sufficient mental, spiritual, and financial readiness stands in contrast to the core principles of marriage in Islam. Islamic teachings emphasize the necessity of physical and emotional maturity, the ability to carry out responsibilities, and a clear

understanding of the rights and obligations of both husband and wife. When these elements are lacking, the marriage becomes highly vulnerable to conflict and separation. Therefore, even though early marriage is not explicitly prohibited in Islam, its implementation should be guided by Islamic principles that ensure the long-term stability and harmony of the family.

Limited Understanding of the Concept of Marriage in Islam

This study found that the majority of couples who married at a young age in Kelurahan Lipu lacked an adequate understanding of the concept and principles of marriage according to Islamic teachings. Marriage, which should be established on the foundations of responsibility, cooperation, and spiritual commitment, is often perceived only as a legal union between a man and a woman. Important values such as the responsibilities of husband and wife, communication based on Islamic ethics, equality of rights and obligations, and the essential purpose of marriage, which is to build a family characterized by tranquility, affection, and compassion, have not been used as the primary foundation in managing family life.

This lack of understanding has led many young couples to be unprepared for the dynamics of married life. When faced with challenges such as differences in opinion, financial pressure, and emotional conflict, they lack a sufficient religious foundation to resolve these issues wisely. As a result, household conflicts occur easily and often lead to divorce. This indicates that disharmony in the household is not only caused by age or economic factors but also by the lack of Islamic values instilled in the couple prior to marriage.

This finding is supported by an interview with MD, an 18-year-old male who married young and is now divorced. He shared, "At the time, all I knew was that marriage is valid if there is a guardian and witnesses. But after getting married, I was confused about how to lead a household. I never learned about responsibility or how to handle problems in an Islamic way." Similarly, Ustaz FK, a local religious leader, expressed his concern regarding the situation: "Many teenagers come to the religious office only to request a marriage certificate, but they never attend religious classes or premarital counseling. They do not yet understand that marriage is a great act of worship that carries significant responsibilities. In the end, when their household becomes unstable, they do not know how to respond."

These findings lead to the conclusion that a limited understanding of the concept of marriage in Islam is a crucial factor contributing to the high divorce rate among young couples. Therefore, intervention is needed in the form of premarital education based on Islamic values, which must not be limited to formalities but should also be substantive and contextual. The lack of understanding among young couples regarding Islamic marital principles is one of the main causes of disharmony in the household. In the Islamic perspective, marriage is not merely a formal contract but a sacred bond that must be grounded in moral, spiritual, and social responsibility. When couples do not understand the roles and responsibilities of husband and wife, the importance of Islamic communication, and the values of mutual care and affection, conflicts that arise in the marriage become difficult to resolve wisely. This condition is frequently observed among young couples in Kelurahan Lipu who enter marriage without sufficient religious preparation.

Substantive premarital education has not yet become an integral part of the community's religious and social structure. As a result, many couples marry without a fundamental understanding of how to build a family based on tranquility, love, and compassion, as taught in Islam. When conflicts arise, they lack normative references or conflict-resolution strategies grounded in religious guidance. Consequently, many young couples resort to divorce, believing they lack the ability to maintain a healthy and harmonious marriage.

Lack of Religious-Based Premarital Counseling and Guidance

The research findings reveal that most couples who married at a young age in Kelurahan Lipu did not receive any form of premarital counseling or guidance, either from religious institutions such as the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) or from local religious leaders. Premarital guidance, which should serve as an educational platform for prospective spouses to understand their responsibilities, rights and obligations, as well as Islamic values in building a family, has not been implemented systematically. The absence of such educational programs has resulted in many young couples entering marriage without sufficient spiritual and psychological preparation.

Limited access to premarital counseling has led couples to learn about married life in an instant and informal manner. Some of them have never received any guidance or advice from religious figures and only completed the marriage process through administrative procedures. In the Islamic perspective, however, marriage is not merely a social contract but also an act of worship that requires readiness and knowledge. Without proper guidance, couples are vulnerable to misunderstandings in fulfilling their respective roles and often struggle to resolve household conflicts in an Islamic manner. This is supported by a statement from SR, a woman who married at the age of sixteen and divorced after two years of marriage. She explained, "When my husband and I got married, we only dealt with paperwork at the sub-district office and the KUA. There was no counseling, no religious study. After marriage, we realized there were so many things we did not know. We argued frequently, and eventually separated." Likewise, BA, the parent of a young married couple, expressed regret over the lack of premarital preparation: "If there had been counseling or religious programs for prospective brides and grooms, maybe my child would have been better prepared. But so far, there have never been such activities from the mosque or the KUA. So they ended up figuring things out on their own after marriage."

Field data suggest that the weakness of the premarital counseling system is one of the contributing factors to couples' lack of preparedness in navigating married life. There is a need for active involvement from religious institutions, community leaders, and educational bodies to provide structured and relevant premarital programs, especially for adolescents and prospective young couples.

The lack of premarital guidance for young couples reflects a weak religious education system that should serve as the primary foundation for building a household. In Islamic teachings, marriage is not merely a formal contract but also a form of worship that requires both physical and emotional readiness. The absence of premarital guidance causes many couples to lack a spiritual understanding of the

true meaning of marriage, leading them to make emotional decisions without fully considering long-term responsibilities and values. This condition creates a significant gap that often results in conflict and divorce, particularly among those who marry at an early age. The failure of religious institutions and local government to provide adequate premarital preparation is a deeply rooted issue. Although the administrative procedures for marriage are generally fulfilled, the actual delivery of Islamic values is not implemented seriously. Many couples complete the marriage process at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) without being offered substantial educational opportunities, such as premarital classes or spiritual counseling. In reality, religious institutions have a vital role in delivering comprehensive understanding about the rights and responsibilities of spouses, conflict management, and the values of sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah within marriage.

Strong Correlation Between Early Marriage and High Divorce Rates

This study indicates a strong correlation between the practice of early marriage and the high rate of divorce in the community of Kelurahan Lipu. Couples who marry at a young age generally lack emotional maturity, financial stability, and adequate communication skills. These factors directly contribute to the emergence of conflict, disharmony, and incompatibility in married life. Most young couples are not yet prepared to face the complex responsibilities of marriage, and as a result, when problems arise, they are more likely to make the quick decision to separate.

Early marriage that is not accompanied by religious guidance and psychological readiness results in couples lacking both a spiritual foundation and effective conflict-resolution strategies. Minor disagreements that could otherwise be resolved through mutual discussion often escalate into major problems that lead to divorce. In addition, financial pressure such as the absence of a stable income or continued dependence on parents further worsens the condition of young households. This highlights that youth is not merely a matter of age, but also reflects the multidimensional readiness required to build a stable family.

This explanation is supported by an interview with YM, a 20-year-old male who married at the age of 18 and divorced two years later. He stated, "When I got married, I was still working irregular jobs. My wife also was not used to managing the household. We often argued about small things. Eventually, we got tired and decided to separate." Similarly, a local government official from Kelurahan Lipu, who asked not to be named, shared the following observation: "Based on the data we have, most divorce cases here involve couples who married before the age of 20. They were not ready, either economically or emotionally. Many of them do not even know how to resolve household conflicts in a mature way."

Based on this empirical data, it can be concluded that early marriage contributes significantly to the high rate of divorce. Therefore, efforts to prevent early marriage must become a primary concern. This includes the provision of religious education, premarital counseling, and raising public awareness about the importance of readiness before establishing a household.

The correlation between early marriage and divorce suggests that youth is not merely a matter of biological age, but also reflects psychological, emotional, and social readiness for married life. Couples who marry at a young age generally lack the maturity to manage conflict, are not yet financially stable, and often respond impulsively to problems. When differences or pressures arise within the marriage, young couples frequently fail to find mature and rational solutions, which leads to escalating tension and ultimately divorce. This lack of preparedness in early marriage is closely tied to the absence of premarital education, limited life experience, and weak religious understanding. Without proper grounding in Islamic values concerning the responsibilities of spouses, the importance of mutual consultation, and the principles of sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah, young couples often treat marriage as a mere social formality. This makes the household vulnerable, especially in times of economic crisis or internal conflict. Field findings show that couples who marry early experience a higher rate of divorce compared to those who marry at a more mature age and undergo adequate preparation.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study further emphasize the importance of educational interventions from religious institutions, educational bodies, and local governments in educating the public about healthy and responsible marriage. Without proper education and guidance, early marriage will continue as a cultural tradition, despite its negative impact on family life. Premarital counseling, youth education based on Islamic values, and the involvement of community leaders in transforming social paradigms are strategic steps that can be taken to reduce the practice of early marriage and improve the quality of family life in the future.

These findings indicate the urgent need to strengthen religious education programs, particularly those related to family and marriage, at the community level. Religious institutions such as mosques and Offices of Religious Affairs (KUA) must play a more active role in providing premarital guidance that is not only formal but also practical and contextual. By offering a comprehensive understanding of the rights and responsibilities within marriage based on Islamic teachings, communities can be better prepared to enter into and sustain married life. This effort is expected to help reduce divorce rates and foster stronger families, both spiritually and socially.

Furthermore, the findings suggest the need for reformulating policies and community-based premarital guidance programs that are preventive and educational in nature. The active involvement of religious leaders, mosques, and Islamic educational institutions is essential in building a sustainable system of guidance. Premarital education should not be treated as a mere administrative requirement, but rather as essential spiritual and social preparation for prospective spouses. In this way, marriage can become a strong and harmonious institution capable of reducing divorce among young couples.

Preventive measures against early marriage must be carried out holistically through collaboration between religious institutions, educational organizations, and government agencies. Interventions such as premarital education, reinforcement of religious understanding, and the development of life skills should

be introduced as early as adolescence. This will help young people understand that marriage is not merely about love, but also about long-term responsibility. Such a strategy aims not only to reduce early marriage and divorce rates but also to prepare a generation that is better equipped to build strong, harmonious families grounded in Islamic values.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that early marriage in Kelurahan Lipu is still largely influenced by strong social and cultural norms, which encourage young couples to marry without considering their mental, emotional, and financial readiness. Environmental pressure and the desire to preserve family honor have led to early marriage being viewed as a solution, rather than a commitment that requires adequate preparation. Unfortunately, most couples who marry early lack a deep understanding of the concept of marriage in Islam. Essential values such as mutual responsibility between spouses, Islamic communication, and the goal of establishing a sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah-based family have not yet served as the foundation for managing household life. The lack of premarital education and counseling from both religious institutions and government agencies has further worsened the situation. Young couples generally do not receive sufficient guidance before marriage and thus enter into married life without the necessary preparation to face its challenges. As a result, many early marriages end in divorce due to an inability to resolve conflicts and cope with life pressures. Therefore, there is a strong correlation between early marriage and the high divorce rate in the Kelurahan Lipu community. In response to this issue, a collaborative effort involving religious leaders, educational institutions, and government bodies is needed to provide premarital education grounded in Islamic values in order to build stronger and more harmonious families.

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