SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MARRIAGE ON ADULT SINGLE WOMEN

Agnes Rumondang Marpaung[1]*, **Eko Hartanto[2]**

[1,2]Department of Communication, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Universitas Gunadarma, Jalan Margonda Raya, Depok 16424, Indonesia.

[1] agnesrumondang@student.gunadarma.ac.id, [2]eko_hartanto@staff.gunadarma.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to find out the social construction of marriage is formed in Indonesian society and the perspective of single adult women on the social construction of marriage. This study uses a qualitative method by doing interviews with single adult women who do self-actualization and get the question "when will you get married?" repeatedly, which is a manifestation of the social construction of marriage, as well as the collection of data through online observation. The results revealed that the social construction of marriage that formed in Indonesia is when someone is mature enough as in age and career, then the next life goal would be marriage. This construction arises because of the communal nature of Indonesians who feel like they have to take care of other people whose life choices are not the same as the tenet they profess. Researchers understand the interviewees based on their identity as a single woman who has more negative connotation compared to married women, as well as their choice to pursue a career is worried because of the perceived superiority of men, and also the connection with the growth of their character and the social life that influences them.

Keywords: Construction; Marriage; Woman; Single.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui konstruksi sosial mengenai perkawinan yang terbentuk dalam masyarakat Indonesia dan perspektif perempuan lajang usia dewasa mengenai konstruksi sosial tentang perkawinan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan melakukan wawancara pada perempuan lajang usia dewasa yang melakukan aktualisasi diri dan mendapatkan pertanyaan "kapan nikah?" berulang kali, yang merupakan manifestasi dari konstruksi sosial perkawinan, serta pengumpulan data lewat observasi dalam jaringan. Hasil penelitian menunjukan bahwa konstruksi sosial mengenai perkawinan yang terbentuk di Indonesia adalah ketika seseorang sudah matang secara karier dan berusia dewasa, maka tujuan hidup selanjutnya adalah menikah. Konstruksi ini timbul karena sifat komunal masyarakat Indonesia yang merasa harus mengurusi orang lain yang pilihan hidupnya tidak sesuai dengan paham yang mereka anut. Peneliti memahami narasumber berdasarkan identitas mereka sebagai perempuan lajang yang dinilai negatif dibandingkan dengan perempuan-perempuan yang sudah menikah dan pilihan mereka untuk meniti karier dikhawatirkan karena adanya anggapan keunggulanlaki-laki, serta hubungannya dengan pertumbuhan karakternya serta kehidupan sosial yang memengaruhinya.

Kata kunci: Konstruksi; Perkawinan; Perempuan; Lajang.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesians are known as people who love to communicate. Most foreign tourists express the impression that Indonesia is a friendly country, proving Indonesia ranks 8th out of a total of 64 countries in the list of subcategories of the friendliest countries according to the Expat Insider 2019 survey. However, not everyone could communicate and create a warm situation. Oftentimes, when starting a conversation or having a chit chat, there is someone who does not consider the various backgrounds of the interlocutors, so the interlocutors feel uncomfortable.

For instance, a typical Indonesian chit chat that is often encountered during family events is the question "When are you getting married?" aimed at young people who are already working and in their 20s and 30s. This question becomes a habit because there is a stigma in society, that if you are already earning and are getting old, then getting married is the next goal of life. Not everyone thinks that getting married is an ideal or a target shortly. Some want to actualize themselves such as work, doing social activities, and others.

The case can be said as a phenomenon of social construction. Berger and Luckmann (in Manuaba 2008:221) state "the world of daily life presents itself as a reality interpreted by man. So what man thinks is found in the world of daily life is a reality as it is experienced.". Based on this background, researchers aim to reveal the social construction of marriage formed in Indonesian society and the perspective of adult single women on the social construction of marriage.

In this study, the subjects included 6 adult single women (over 19 years old) who performed self-actualization. The selection of women's subjects is based on research from CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Working Group, Estu Fanani, which states that currently discriminatory actions against women are still common. According to her, the practice of discrimination occurs a lot in the fields of politics, economy, social, culture, and civil. The forms also vary, including physical and psychic violence, negative stigma, domestication, and marginalization. This reflects that most Indonesians adhere to a patriarchal culture. Researchers chose a female subject who

performed self-actualization because according to the hierarchical concept of the needs of Abraham Maslow, the highest needs of individuals are self-actualization. When it reaches the last stage of the hierarchy of needs, then one already feels enough with the needs of the previous stage such as physiological (clothing, food, shelter), the need for security, social needs, and the need for appreciation. Therefore, researchers chose subjects with these criteria because participants had reached the process of self-maturity. The object of his research is the social construction of marriage.

RESEARCH METHOD

Researchers used qualitative methods by collecting data through in-depth interviews, information from books, and observations on the internet, then testing with triangulation. Researchers use critical paradigms to reveal and analyze social realities by questioning the inequality of existing social relationships (Halik, 2018:167). Researchers used critical study strategies, to explore, predictions of social phenomena (Kerlinger, 1986:9).

This research exists as a manifestation of the social construction of marriage, that is the phenomenon of the question "When are you getting married?" which becomes a matter of conversation, and is intended in single women of adulthood, and focuses more on the assumptions formed regarding marriage in Indonesia and how adult single women deal with it, especially in terms of communication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social Construction of Marriage

The construction of marriage in Indonesia generates the phenomenon of the question " When are you getting married?" which is often a mainstay of the topic when meeting relatives or families who are not married when already working and become an adult. This construction arises because of the family culture or communal nature of Indonesian society that feels the need to remind or take care of unmarried people at an age that is suitable for marriage. This question is also often used as small talk material. It is common for this question to be followed by a

comparative sentence, such as "the A is married, the B already has children. Come on, don't waste your time."

This phenomenon is growing along with the strong nature of Indonesian society of patriarchy, women are more harmed by the burden of the question "when are you getting married?" since their 20s, ahead of men who would normally be asked this question in their 30s because it is reasonable to want a career and achieve its goals first. The social construction of marriage that was thrown to adult single women caused a variety of stigma in women, was considered too independent, and the fear of people around her that no man would want to be with independent women. Other than that, they are referred to as virgins who are too picky in finding a life partner. This inequality or gender discrimination is also due to the tradition that has long been founded in society that men who make a living, women who take care of the household. Whereas there are also women who want to work, continue their education to a master's degree or doctorate, etc. Also, women have to work harder than men to get the same recognition, as it is often underestimated in performance issues.

Adult Single Women's Perspective

The speakers stated that the social construction they saw about marriage with different meanings, for example, Ade and Ovi agreed that marriage was considered an achievement in Indonesia as if there were no other goals that could be achieved by women of their age. Desriana added that for generations of her parents, getting married is an obligation. When her parents saw her unmarried daughter at the age of 28, her parents felt a crisis. It is not uncommon for interviewees to feel matched by those around them.

According to Naomy, the marriage cannot be decided in a hurry, it must be carefully and without compulsion. Moreover, the 20s are productive times to pursue a career. Furthermore, they also know the experience of their married friends, that having time for themselves will be less, and they are not ready to lose the freedom they have when unmarried. They want to do a lot of things when they graduate from college and haven't felt like they've done enough until now because there's still a lot of self-abilities that can be improved. Marisa and Ovi stated that marriage has long

been used as a race. They are considered too picky, whereas, in their opinion, it is perfectly reasonable for them to set certain criteria because it is for the father of their children to be. They see that what is the point of them having difficulty developing themselves by going to a master's degree, join students exchange, working, but getting married just because of the demands of society. Then if they choose wrongly, the impact will be felt by themselves. Other than that, marriage and family is not a small cost. Not to mention when holding a wedding based on prestige.

Interviewees often get "when are you getting married?" questions from families who only occasionally meet during holiday gatherings, friends who don't know each other or meet at reunions only, and neighbors or their parents' friends who often ask through their parents. The question resulted in a variety of responses, some of them took it as jokes, such as saying "just pray for me" or "bring the man, introduce them to me". Some answered the question with a brief discussion about gender equality, to open the minds of those who ask what men doing in their 20s also the same as women to achieve. There are also responses by stating her achievements even though she is not married, for example as she has already gone to several countries.

Some speakers also sometimes feel insecure, wonder themselves if there is anything wrong with her, what makes her less fortunate, is she that bad, what if there are no men who want to be with her, and so on. This affects their psychics, making them compare themselves to others and become less confident. That question impacts their mood, so they lack the spirit of undergoing activities.

The burden of that question turned out to be not only received by them but also by her family especially the parents. Therefore, the parents of several interviewees being asked repeatedly a similar question, until Desriana, avoiding to talk with her parents because the conversation will always lead to the topic of marriage. They end up avoiding events that provoke "when are you getting married?" questions such as school reunions, family gatherings, and especially weddings. They will sort out which events they prioritize to come which are usually their closest friends or relatives who never ask the question. It is the people who

talk about many topics such as asking "how are you?", "what's up?", hobbies, daily activities, etc. Interviewees feel very appreciated because they ask questions that show an interest in talking, not just filling in the blanks to the people who they rarely meet. The interviewees are aware that most people that being annoying are people who don't know them.

The Reality of Marriage

In fact, at this time society has a variety of opinions on marriage due to changes in values. In a traditional gender perspective, people have a great desire to get married. Hurlock (in Maqhfirah, 2018:110) says the age of thirty is called critical age for unmarried women. As Campbell stated (in Maqhfirah, 2018:110) "for women, the age of thirty is an option that has a crossroads". However, when viewed from the modern gender side, women tend to focus on career or work. This was also triggered by the growing understanding of feminism among the city's women, who mentioned that women should not rely on men. According to Eriany (in Nursalam, 2015:68), marriage is no longer considered a suitable lifestyle for everyone, often postponed, the more couples live together without a legal marriage and the more women work and have children working and making a living.

Review through Social Identity Theory

According to Feldman (2009), some people want to continue to enjoy the freedom to take risks, experiment, travel the world, pursue a career, continue their education, or do creative work. Hurlock (1980) explains that during her twenties, the goal of most unmarried women was marriage. If a woman is not married by the age of 30, they tend to change their purpose and value of life to work-oriented, career, and personal pleasure. This turned out the social categorization of single women closely related to specific characteristics that seemed negative or unusual, as they tended to be compared to the married which is considered more normal. This comparison results a distinctive identity or stigma in single women. This is justified by the confessions of Ade, Desriana, Marisa, Naomy, Ovi, and Rizqa. They explain that they are often compared to friends that already getting married as if they had made a mistake, and being exemplified with something good that they

have to emulate. For example, Ade has been compared to her parents' friends with the sentence "you are at this age and why are you not going to marry? my son already married and I'm at the same age as you when I'm married, also already have my first child". Marisa, meanwhile, experienced the comparison precisely when her intern friend asked if there was a job vacancy in her workplace, and saying "our friend already married, I already have children. When is your turn?' The sentence seems to be a template and forms a pattern of the marital status questions.

They realize that this stigma discourages those who are single women through their stories, such as Desriana, "when I'm going somewhere, I will always being reminded to find a soul mate and get married quickly" or her families who are 40 years and older are up to the level of cornering in the family gathering "oh my God, why are you still unmarried?". The questions that are asked from her environment evoke an emotional sense that they understand their identity as part of a group of single women. This sentimental feeling is sometimes ignited when the question "when are you getting married?" is uttered repeatedly, for example, Rizqa once said "when are you getting married... When did you die?" because she was annoyed, especially when she asked by friends who are not close to her. Their answers are contained by the threat of identity, when they think positively about the principle of marriage that they adhere but opposed by the negative thoughts of many people, then they will build sentences of self-defense.

Therefore, they showed self-actualization by career to maintain a positive social identity. They show that their purpose in life is not just to get married, but to be settled in financial. However, they often experience gender discrimination that the group of men who are allowed to pursue a postgraduate degree or pursue a career first. Naomy said, "the men are rarely asked... Maybe when they are on their 30s. Indonesians still think that women can't be anything if men are above everything compared to women", that forces them to join social groups where they feel more comfortable, for example, Ovi says, "I was annoyed to attend any wedding event or celebration. I make sure to come to a close one because my close friends never mention the issue of getting married". But because the stigma about single women is already ingrained in Indonesia, they realized that their group's

social status is lower than married women. So, they finally often respond by surrender, for example, Desriana said, "when asked when to marry I must just answer just pray for me".

Review through Theory of Liberal Feminism

The framework of liberal feminism is fighting for social issues that focused on "equal opportunity and equal rights" for every individual, including women's opportunity and rights (Mansour, 2004:82). However, all interviewees agree that there is an inequality between women and men if they are still single or unmarried in adulthood. Men are encouraged to pursue a career and pursue higher education first, but if women at the same age decide on similar choices, there is a judgment from the society that encourages them to get married immediately, because if they want to pursue their career and education first, then no men will be with them because the assumption is men more superior than women, then women should not be more dominant than men on the financial, career.

Review through Psychosocial Development Theory

According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, a human will experience development throughout his life faced with several stages that each have prominent values that form whether it is a positive or negative character, consisting of hope, will, initiative or feelings of guilt, competence, identity or blurring of roles, love (intimacy or alienation), caring or stagnation, and ego integrity or despair. Each character formed from these stages will affect the future self. For example, when in the second stage, ages 2-3, 'will' is something that must be trained, so that the child learns to develop self-reliance. If the environment is restrictive, then the child will be filled with doubt if he wants to try something when he grows up. This will have an impact on the next stage, for example, to the third stage, ages 3-6 years, the child becomes less initiative because when doing exploration and being different from the environment, he will feel guilty. In this case, Ovi said "does she that bad, not that lucky", feels misstep when she's not married yet. As for Ade, instead, finds herself very independent through her words "I have a strong plan for my life. I want to go to school again. I can do this, and it doesn't bother anyone."

Ade feels that she has a clear plan for her life and can enjoy things although she is not married. Based on these two contrasting answers, there are different backgrounds or environments, affecting the formation of their attitudes and characters. Ade grew up in a family environment that supported her decision to be highly educated and focused on a career first, while Ovi grew up in an environment that pushed her to marry in the early 20s, including her parents. So, while Ovi so doubtful and blame herself, Ade stands out in autonomous characters because it is trained from the age of 2 years.

All stages of life will affect each other, for example when the previous stages of the environment do not play a good role, then when it comes to the sixth stage which is 20-40 years old, those who are asked "when are you getting married?" will feel alienated, they feel that no one is trying to establish intimacy with them because the topic of discussion always leads to the question of marriage. As Desriana said, "it made me insecure, so sad, feel not worth it, and think that I'm wrong. So as much as possible I avoid talking for a long time with parents because it led me to that marriage things, again and again". Whereas if a person is helped by the intimate role of her family, who always puts love and respects the choices of her family members, then someday they do not experience stagnation or inhibition of development because the question "when are you getting married?" is only considered as a small talk or a chit chat that has no impact on their mental health. Ade said, "luckily my parents and my sister felt that I could always make decisions and plans. So they believe in the target that I want to achieve."

CONCLUSION

Marriage, which is an official bond between one person and another, is a sinister scourge for some, particularly in women who have two burdens at once, which are patriarchal culture in Indonesia as well as negative stigma about single status in adulthood that has passed the minimum age of marriage. Career-oriented and educated women are considered unnecessary so they are more susceptible to marriage stigma rather than men.

The stigma that formed results a social construction of marriage, which is when people already working and mature enough, then the next purpose of life is to marry. This construction arises because of the communal nature of Indonesian society that feels the need to take care of unmarried people at an age that they think is suitable for marriage. This is evidenced by the phenomenon of the question "when are you getting married?" which often appears at family events and reunions. Meanwhile, single women consider marriage to be a crucial choice, so they form certain criteria. After all, it is quicker and easier to get information about other people's experiences of marriage, divorce, family violence, as well as their relationship experiences, or the formation of their character as they grow up based on family environments and friendships that make them think that marriage is sacred and for a lifetime, they don't want to regret later because they chose the wrong partner. Marriage seems to be a required achievement that must be hastened for most Indonesians. The 20s are productive times to pursue a career and self-development.

As women who have an identity of single, they experience the threat of identity of comparisons between them and married women and also stigmatized when it comes to career and higher education because it should not be higher than men who are considered more superior. This threat of identity affects their psychological condition because as they grow at a certain age, the characters that should be positively formed are less supported by the family environment or society. So when they are often getting a question "when are you getting married?" repeatedly, there is a feeling of distress and become unconfident. Until they avoid large-scale social gatherings that aren't too close to them or if they have to attend events like family gatherings, reunions, and weddings, they simply reply to the question "when are you getting married?" with a joke.

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