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## Marriage satisfaction on young women with premarital pregnancy

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**Abstract.** Marriage due to premarital pregnancy become increasingly more common in Indonesia, although the behavior is still deemed as inappropriate by the society and tends to be negatively stigmatized. This might affect the marriage satisfaction which could harm the overall quality of the marriage. The purpose of this study was to determine marital satisfaction on youth with premarital pregnancy. Participants in this study were nine young women who were married due to premarital pregnancy and residing in Kupang City. Data was collected using interviews and analyzed with thematic analysis approach that revealed three main themes. The results showed that marital satisfaction varied in participants, in which six participants were more satisfied and enjoyed their current married life, while the other three participants were not satisfied due to dissatisfaction with aspects of equality of roles in household, parenting and sexual life. Implications from this results were discussed further in the article.

**Keywords:** *Marriage satisfaction, premarital pregnancy, young women*

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### Introduction

Adolescence period is a period with rapid developmental changes in physical, cognitive, emotional and psychosocial aspects, which could cause several issues in life (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2014). Physical and emotional developmental are closely related with sexual issues, as young females who were poorly educated with sexual and marital knowledge become vulnerable with premarital pregnancy. Premarital pregnancy on young women is considered as an inappropriate behaviour in Indonesia society, therefore these girls are highly stigmatized by community members (Ali, 2006). Aside of poor sexual knowledge, premarital pregnancy is also influenced by peer norms, relationship status, poor self-esteem and poor interpersonal skills particularly on assertive skill (Ardianti, Fakhrurrozi & Marissa, 2016).

Recent report from Badan Pusat Statistik and UNICEF (2016) mentioned that prevalence of early marriage is around 17%, having decreased when compared to

previous decades, due to increased access of education for girls. The survey also discovered several reasons behind premarital intercourse, 16,2% stated that they agreed to have sex when promised to be married, 12,3% mentioned love as their reason, and 12% said that they were being forced by their couple. Proportionally most youths who experienced early pregnancy were in higher education (82,5%), 16,8% were in high school and only 1,42% were in junior high school. Even though the prevalence has been decreasing, the number is still considered high, and more importantly, the risks threatening teenagers and youth people on early or young marriage is harmful and can also impact the surrounding people around the person, including their couple and child. Young people who married due to premarital pregnancy are exposed to poor maternal and child health, school dropout, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, depression and poor marriage satisfaction (Ardianti, Fakhurrozi & Marissa, 2016).

Marriage satisfaction is vital in every marriage, as it is stand as one of the most important aspirations of a married individual (Soraiya et al., 2016). Marriage satisfaction also served as an important positive influencer of happiness, high marriage satisfaction often resulted in increased happiness, while poor marriage satisfaction often ended up in marriage failure or divorce (Novianty & Goei, 2013).

Previous study in Indonesia (Mardiyan & Kustanti, 2016) highlighted the importance of children in marriage satisfaction and commitment. However, there is a lack of evidence on how marriage satisfaction is perceived by young women who are married due to premarital pregnancy. This study aims to explore the perception of marriage satisfaction on married young women who had premarital pregnancy. The result of this study might inform stakeholders on the dynamics of young marriage and help develop better intervention and prevention programs.

### **Methods**

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling approach using following inclusion criterias: young women (aged 18 – 24 years old), married due to premarital pregnancy, have child(ren), and have marriage age of three years old or below. All participants filled informed consent and this study also has been approved by research ethics committee from Public Health Faculty on Universitas Nusa Cendana. All nine participants resided in Kupang City, capital of East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Interview sessions were done from 2 March 2020 to 11 April 2020. Interview duration ranged from 20 to 26 minutes, with an average of

23 minutes. Follow up interview were done with four participants by phone due to COVID-19 lockdown situation.

Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study, and an interview guide was developed and used throughout the interviews. The guide was continuously reflected upon every interview session and revised accordingly in order to improve the quality of interview. Interviews were recorded with voice recorder and transcribed by the first author. Gathered data were analysed with thematic analysis, even though the authors used both inductive and deductive approach in analysing the data, the authors decided to only report the inductive analysis in order to make the report more concise. The first author coded the first three set of verbatims, which then checked by the other two authors. All remaining verbatims were then coded accordingly. Themes were formulated from the data which were discussed by all three authors.

Peer debriefing, audit trail, member checks, and triangulation were done in this study to improve the quality of the data and analysis. Investigator triangulations were done by all three authors. Data and results were discussed with peers in order to gain feedback. Audit trail was kept and can be obtained by contacting the first author. Member checks were done by confirming the results of the study with participants to ensure that the results truly reflect participants' perception.

## Results

Almost all participants (eight out of nine) have bachelor degree. Four participants were 22 years old and the other five were 23 years old. The rest of the demographic data is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1

### *Participants' demographic data*

Pseudoname	Age	Education	Ethnicity	Marriage age	Husband's occupation
Ivon	22 years old	Bachelor	Rote	3 years	Unemployed
Olga	22 years old	Bachelor	Kefa	2 years	Unemployed
Cici	22 years old	Bachelor	Rote	2 years	Entrepreneur
Vani	22 years old	High school	Sabu	3 years	Entrepreneur
Yuyu	23 years old	Bachelor	Sabu	2 years	Entrepreneur
Iba	23 years old	Bachelor	Semau	2 years	Entrepreneur

Jelly	23 years old	Bachelor	Rote	1 years	Entrepreneur
Meme	23 years old	Bachelor	Timor	2 years	Civil service employee
Nani	23 years old	Bachelor	Rote	1 years	Entrepreneur

Thematic analysis resulted in three themes, the first theme, post marriage activities consisted of six sub themes, conflict triggers has three sub themes and positive deeds consisted of five sub themes. More details available in figure 1.

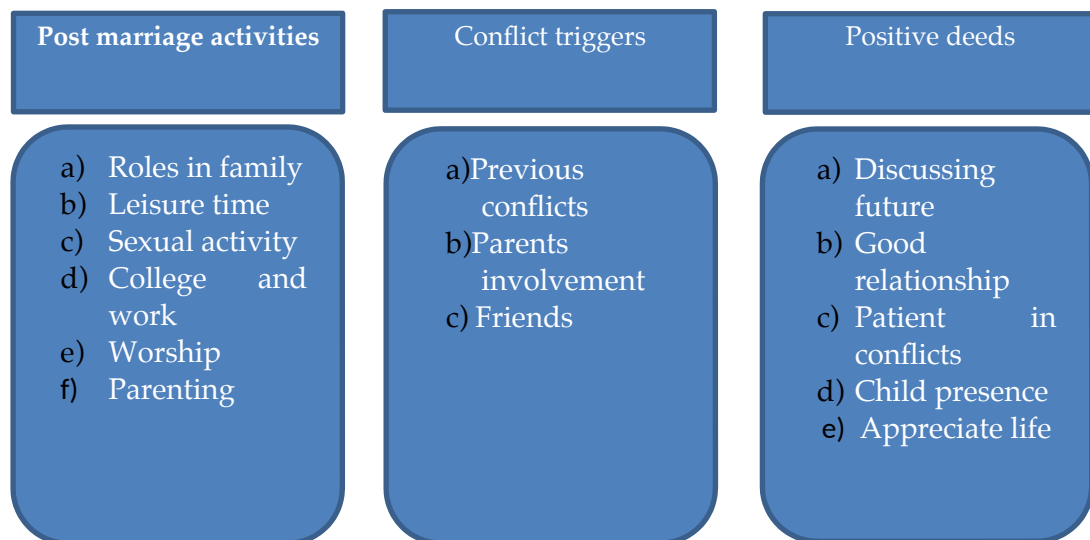


Figure 1. Themes and sub themes

Generally, six participants stated that they were satisfied and enjoyed their current married life, meanwhile three participants were not satisfied with their married life. Further details on each themes will be discussed.

### Post marriage activities

Marriage due to premarital pregnancy changed participant's life and its activities. They have to consider themselves, their husbands and children in their life and many routines have changed as its consequences. One of the most significant changes was the new roles they have in their own family. Five participants admitted that they struggle to adjust with their new roles as mother and wife due to their husband's passive role in household chores and parenting.

*"It is my role in family as mother and also as wife, to serve my husband and children. To take care of my child. Doing chores. My husband, he only thinks about providing for us." (Cici)*

Five participants stated that they rarely have leisure time with their family due to fatigue from work burden, and they almost never spend their time for outdoor leisure and mostly only stayed in home at their spare time. Next, five participants said that they no longer satisfied with their sexual life because of fatigue they had due to household chores, parenting and also college lectures, as represented in a quote below.

*“At first it (intercourse) still felt good especially when we are still in relationship, but after marriage and having my child, I don’t enjoy it anymore. I am not sure, maybe we are just tired, me and my husband.”*  
(Olga)

Eight participants still continue their higher education after marriage, only Vani chose to dropped out from college due to her pregnancy. Jely started to work as honorary teacher after marriage, while two other participants started small businesses to help provide for the family. Two of the participants’ husband were still unemployed just like them and they are still financially helped by their parents. Five participants admitted that they and their husband were rarely attending worship together as opposed as when they were still not married, mentioning reasons of work, laziness, and living separated.

*“Well personally I still pray regularly now, but we rarely goes to church now, back when we are still in relationship we often attended worship but now not anymore. Maybe in one year, only a couple times that we went to church”* (Yuyu)

All nine participants longed for better future for their children therefore they seriously learned and practice good parenting for their children, even though some participants were not helped by their husband in parenting.

### **Conflict triggers**

Young marriage tended to have many conflict triggers and it is also the case with participants in this study. Previous conflicts that is feel unfinished by one or both member of the couple often become triggers for another conflict. Issues that mentioned by most of the participants were about their household’s poor finance as reflected in a quote below.

*“An issue that is often occurred multiple times in my family is that we rarely have enough money to fulfill our daily needs. I think my husband is unable to manage our money and always wasting them, that’s why we fight all the time. Sometimes my husband also spend money with his friends, I told him that money from our parents is for our family, not for them (husband’s friends). Moreover, my husband rarely helped me in taking care of our child, when our child want to eat, take a bath, or defecate, always me. That also made us fight a lot”* (Olga)

As also reflected in quote above, putting friends above family also trigger conflicts in marriage. This was stated by four participants, particularly highlighting how their husband often spend more time with their friends than family. Next, Ivon and Jely said that they always involve their parents in every fight they had with their husband, and they think it is negatively affected their relationship with their husband.

### **Positive deeds**

Participants felt that one of the most important things in deciding their satisfaction is positive deeds that happened in their marriage. Planning and discussing for future were felt by participants as empowering and motivating them to positively look for better days in the future.

*“Well we often talk about our life and our future, most importantly we have to have our own house so that we are not burdening parents by staying at their house. We also often talked about our financial, income and outcome, also about our child’s activities and development too, and also about our health” (Iba)*

Maintaining good relationship with parents and friends especially important for six participants, it helped them to create supporting environment for their family. Being patient and relenting to their partner also helped all participants in facing conflicts and issues in their family. Child’s presence also considered vital in creating positive vibes in the relationship as they are considered as source of strength and happiness by their mothers. Further, feeling of gratitude and appreciation of life helped participants to overcome many adversities that they felt in their marriage life, however three participants mentioned that they regretted their current life and could not enjoyed their marriage because of imbalance of roles in family, parenting and poor sexual life.

*“It is not easy (this life), I felt like I have done a lot of wrong things in my life, and this life is one of the negative consequences that I receive. I felt that maybe if I did not have this pregnancy, maybe I will not have to spend most of my time fighting and working for this family. I felt like I’m the only one who are struggling to maintain this family, taking care of our child.” (Jely)*

### **Discussion**

Young marriages due to premarital pregnancy have caused a lot of changes in the life of young women. Many new roles these young couples have since married demand them to adapt with their new roles. Distribution of roles accordingly is required to maintain functions in family and to achieve family objectives. In Indonesia however, roles are still unequally distributed in gender perspective as

mothers are still heavily expected to take care of household chores and parenting (Puspitawati, 2010). This fact is also reflected in this study where young mothers were burdened with responsibilities like cleaning houses and also taking care of children with minimum involvement from their husbands.

Leisure time spent together with family members was proved to help to improve marriage satisfaction in previous study (DeGenova & Rice, 2009) and this is also strengthened by findings of this study. Married young women in Kupang however rarely have the time and energy to spend quality leisure time with family and this negatively affected their marriage as also portrayed by their poor sexual life. In other study, mothers too have spent more time with their children and that absorbed time spent with husbands, thus limiting emotional relationship building between the couples (Mardiyan & Kustanti, 2016). Sexual activities is important to a good marriage satisfaction, and this study found that it is difficult to achieve by young women who were married due to premarital pregnancy due to various adversities such as work burden and marital conflicts.

Even though religious life deemed important for couples particularly for their spiritual life therefore affecting satisfaction in marriage (Lestari, 2012), this study found that young women struggles to maintain their religious activities because of exhaustion by taking care of the family. As reflected by the findings, it is found that young women who were married due to premarital pregnancy experience many difficulties in adjusting with many activities in their post marital life and this has affected marriage satisfaction in overall.

Managing conflicts is not easy for young couples, moreover for those who had premarital pregnancy. Plenty of conflict triggers existed that affected marriage satisfaction just like this study has found. Previous conflicts become triggers for most conflicts experienced by married young women. Poor financial capability, limited time spent with family, and poor relationship were amongst the most recurring conflicts found by this study. The inability to settle unfinished conflicts and grudges resulted in this circle of conflicts (Dewi & Basti, 2008). Involvement of friends and also parents in this young family has proven to become source of conflicts. Another study has predicted this (Saputra, Hartati & Aviani. 2014), as relationship with parents and friends could be harmful it is not maintained in balance with family relationship and responsibilities.

Marriage satisfaction can be maintained with various positive deeds as found by this study. Planning for future were found to be empowering by the married young women in Kupang. Discussing positive hopes and goals in

relationship and their children's future helped to create positive atmosphere which is important for marriage satisfaction. Good relationship is also influential to satisfy young women as discussed before.

Abilities in resolving conflicts is as important as ever to married couples just life found in this study. Previous study particularly highlighted that it is important for young couples to learn the ability of founding the core of the conflicts and discussing the solution to the conflicts (Wismanto, 2012). These abilities however are not easy to learn, and stakeholders related to young family welfare needed to address this in their programs.

Further, presence of children and being grateful to life also helped young women to find satisfaction with their marriage life. This confirmed past study findings (Wismanto, 2012; Bastaman, 2007) even though it also contrasted other study that found children might be the source of issues for young couples' marriage satisfaction (John & Belsky, 2008). Future study might look further into this matter to provide more facts and settle the dispute.

Even though the majority of participants in this study said that their marriage life is satisfying, some reasons of dissatisfaction in these young women should be noted and addressed carefully. Poor roles distribution, poor parenting and also poor sexual life were considered as important factors in poor marriage satisfaction and this stressed needs for support for these young families.

This study is not without limitations. Participants came from pretty similar background which might limited variation of responses acquired. Another limitation is that the potential of bias that the first author has in this study. The first author has similar experience with the participants which might clouded judgement and analysis in research process. Aside of that, this study still provide considerable amount of information that is needed to better understand dynamics of marriage satisfaction in married young women who had premarital pregnancy.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that marriage satisfaction is perceived to be highly affected by various post marriage activities, conflict triggers and also positive deeds. Young families who have child struggles to meet financial needs, which affected their parenting abilities and also their sexual life. It is important to maintain positive environment in order to be satisfied with the marriage.

### *Suggestion*



Based on the findings, it is suggested to young women who are married due to premarital pregnancy to seek help particularly in regards of developing abilities to manage conflicts and create supportive and positive environments and behaviours. Concerning stakeholders such as community and religious leaders are needed to address stigma addressed to these families and also help in providing professional help for them.

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