

## The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Early Marriage Couples in Forming a Happy and Prosperous Family in Medan Belawan District

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### ABSTRACT

Interpersonal communication has a significant impact on the high rate of marriage among teenagers. This research aims to see the role of interpersonal communication in early marriage in forming a happy and prosperous family in Medan Belawan Village. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, collecting data through interviews, observations, and documents. The results showed that early marriages tend to be based on people with middle to lower economic conditions; interpersonal communication is essential in forming a happy and prosperous family. Effective communication between husband and wife is the primary key to understanding the needs, expectations, and values that underlie family relationships, especially in early marriage relationships.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Communication events have the potential to occur in various places at various times and involve individuals from various backgrounds. However, this paper focuses on interpersonal communication processes, both in formal and non-formal organizational contexts. Interpersonal communication refers to exchanging messages and information between at least two individuals. This type of communication consists of two main aspects: (1) intrapersonal and (2) interpersonal communication. In addition to being practical, interpersonal communication is also a process of exchanging information, which is considered very important and a basic need for every individual, both within the scope of formal and non-formal organizations (Harapan & Ahmad, 2019). The level of intensity of interpersonal communication among adolescents has a significant impact on the increase in early marriage. This raises questions about the process and manner of interpersonal interactions that require further study.

Early marriage should be minimized or even avoided altogether. From a sociological, psychological, and biological point of view, early marriage as a whole has the potential to have negative impacts on the lives of adolescents and, in many cases, can lead to high divorce rates in society. The rate of early marriage in Indonesia remains relatively high (Kumparan.com, 2022). Based on a report from UNICEF, by the end of 2022, Indonesia will be ranked eighth in the world and second in ASEAN in terms of early marriage, with nearly 1.5 million cases out of a total of nearly 1.8 million marriages, indicating a high prevalence of early marriage.

Interpersonal communication significantly impacts the high marriage rate among adolescents (Indanah et al., 2020). This is undoubtedly influenced by two aspects of the cause: internal and external factors. Internal factors that contribute to early marriage include the level of education, knowledge, personal motivation, sexual experience, and pregnancy before marriage, which is often known as "MBA" (married by Accident). On the other hand, external factors that influence early marriage involve the role of parents, religious aspects, economic conditions, cultural factors and traditions, and the impact of mass media.

It is important to note that marriage at a young age also has the potential for significant psychological complications (Syalis & Nurwati, 2020a). Research evidence supports this claim, showing that marriage and pregnancy at an early age can result in unavoidable long-term social impacts. Mothers who experience early pregnancy may face prolonged trauma and feel a crisis of confidence. In addition, psychologically, these children are not yet prepared for the roles of wife, sexual partner, or mother. Therefore, it is clear that early marriage hurts their psychological well-being and personality development (Sekarayu & Nurwati, 2021).

Couples who marry at a young age generally cannot yet deal with the demands of work that require physical skills, generate sufficient income to support the family, and fulfill daily needs. Then, early marriage couples will also re-create a space of financial incompetence, ultimately re-create economic badness due to a lack of financial readiness (Khaerani, 2019). In addition, they are often not morally prepared to take on the responsibilities of marriage. This condition often results in mental instability, as they still have limited emotional maturity (Utami, 2016). Marriage at a young age, when viewed from a demographic perspective, is often associated with high fertility rates, which in turn does not always support the development of community welfare. Young marriages are often considered vulnerable and unstable, with low levels of independence, and contribute to high divorce rates.

Early marriage tends to be more common among people with lower economic levels. Although sometimes seen as a solution, early marriage can raise several other issues. Issues related to early marriage include an increased risk of sexual diseases, a higher risk of sexual violence, an increased risk of pregnancy, psychological problems that may arise, and lower social and economic levels. Early marriage is an agreement that binds both parties to legalize marriage according to religious, legal, and social norms (Adam, 2019). Early marriage is widespread in various parts of the world, especially in developing countries. There are various backgrounds and reasons for early marriage. For example, early marriage is still common in some rural areas in Indonesia. This is due to the local culture that emphasizes that a woman's primary role is homemaker, so further education is not considered necessary. Marriage is considered a better way to start offspring.

The government has also shown concern about the issue of early marriage. The Medan City Government illustrates that early marriage in Medan potentially negatively impacts future generations. For example, when the Medan Branch of the Indonesian Medical Association (IDI) visited that the Mayor, Mr. Bobby Nasution, welcomed, it discussed the need for increased socialization on sex education in the context of marriage, especially about the reproductive health of children who marry at an early age, especially those in Medan Belawan Sub-district. The rampant cases of early marriage in Medan Belawan Sub-district indicate this. This situation is related to the community's lack of knowledge about the risks that may arise from early marriage. In addition, the Medan City Religious Affairs Office (KUA) also plays a vital role in efforts to reduce early marriage (Portal.pemkomedan.go.id, 2022).

The situation regarding adolescents in Belawan is very complex. Cases involving children in Belawan have become a common problem known to the community, especially in Belawan Regions I and II. Children are not only

dropping out of school but are also involved in early marriage, pre-marital sex, pre-marital pregnancy, and, most seriously, child prostitution. Many of these problems originate from school dropout situations. Informants interviewed in this study revealed that most children who drop out of school are also involved in early marriage and pre-marital sex. The dropout rate of children is a problem that has a significant impact. This situation has the potential to create deviant behavior in children, such as engaging in prostitution, drug abuse, free sexual behavior, and early marriage. Belawan may only be known as an area with cases of violence and social conflict, but little is known about the roots of the problem and the steps that the community can take to protect the young generation there.

Analyzing the purpose of parenting patterns applied by parents to children and examining family backgrounds are essential in understanding the relationship between cases of domestic violence, child sexual abuse, and early divorce with the role of parents, especially in terms of parenting patterns. Unfortunately, Belawan Village, located in a coastal area near Belawan Harbor, has a high population density, and people often underestimate the problems (BPS, 2022). Many school dropouts turn to work in nightlife establishments such as karaoke bars and discotheques. While working in these places, they often experience pressure to 'serve' male customers who visit prostitution areas and nightlife spots around Belawan, including karaoke bars and discotheques (Muda et al., 2023). So, based on the existing phenomena, this research seeks to see the communication-related impacts of early marriage couples in Medan Belawan, focusing on the role of interpersonal communication in early marriage couples in forming a happy and prosperous family.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Interpersonal communication in the accommodation process (Solihat et al., 2014) is an interactive relationship between an individual and another individual in which message symbols, especially language symbols, are effectively used. The use of verbal language symbols, especially those that are oral in reality, is often accompanied by sign language, especially gestures or body language, such as smiles, laughter, and shaking or nodding the head. Communication between individuals is generally considered more personal (private) and occurs face-to-face. Some interpersonal communication does have a purpose; for example, if someone comes to ask for advice or opinions from others. In interpersonal communication, accommodation and adaptation are essential functions that build personal closeness.

Self-discourse can be understood as disclosing information about oneself to others (West & Turner, 2008). According to West and Turner, self-disclosure can impact personal closeness between individuals. In this theory, the absolute

requirement is the deliberate openness of one individual to open information about themselves (private) to others. In this study, self-disclosure theory serves as a tool to analyze the communication of early marriage couples, the nature of openness, and the resulting tendencies.

To maintain harmony in life together, especially in marriage, good communication and maturity in thinking are needed. With effective communication and maturity in thinking, couples can find solutions to any problems. Domestic harmony highly depends on good communication patterns between husband and wife (Najoan, 2015).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a type of qualitative research. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative research explores and understands meaning in several individuals or groups of people who come from social problems. Overall, the qualitative approach does not prioritize rhetorical aspects. This study used a participant observation method, in which the researcher directly observed intensive interactions and acted as an independent observer. This research involves collecting data related to early marriage in the Medan Belawan Sub-district area. Data analysis techniques were used by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The phenomenon of early marriage in Medan Belawan Sub-district is based on the lack of attention and prevention from the families of early marriage couples. Most of the community has tolerated early marriage as a natural and frequent occurrence. Government officials who have the authority have carried out prevention efforts, which in this case is the KUA. The government realizes that the biggest challenge in dealing with the problem of early marriage is the local habit of conducting early marriages as a method of solving problems. The problem of early marriage in the Medan Belawan Subdistrict is undoubtedly motivated by the practice of marriage that does not involve the government; in other words, it only involves the couple's family and is not officially recorded. This impacts the difficulties for the KUA of Medan Belawan Subdistrict in obtaining and handling cases of early marriage in the local area.

The problem of rampant early marriage in Medan Belawan occurs due to a need for family awareness in supervising teenage children. In addition, similar circumstances result in a need for more public awareness in reporting early marriages due to several personal interests. Even so, efforts made by the KUA are actively socializing the adverse effects of early marriage for the community in several specific events. Then, regarding the distribution of early marriage practices in the Medan Belawan Sub-district, the distribution is

relative. There is a tendency for an increase in early marriage to occur in areas that have a relatively high population density, such as Belawan Bahagia Village and Belawan II Village.

If viewed through a legal perspective, marriage at an early age, both the parents of the male party and the female party of the prospective husband and wife are still under the age that must obtain permission from the parents as in Article 6 paragraph (2), (3), (4) and (5) and Article 7 paragraph (1) and (2) of Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. This marriage must obtain permission from the court, and if each partner has yet to reach age 21, they must obtain parental permission. In addition, most early marriage couples in Medan Belawan come from the lower middle class. Economic and emotional circumstances significantly affect the lives of couples or families, not to mention the communication problem in the marriage relationship, which has its challenges.

#### *Role of Interpersonal Communication in Early Marriage Couples*

The form of interpersonal communication in early marriage couples is the main objective of this discussion. In this study, the focus of the discussion is on life in early marriage couples. Based on the data the researchers managed to get, three early marriage couples will be discussed, namely the families of Mrs. Dede and her Husband, Mrs. Bunga Dahlia and her Husband, and Mrs. Santi and her Husband. Each of the three couples is an early marriage couple spread across three different areas: Belawan I, Belawan II, and Belawan Bahari Villages.

Mrs. Dede Hutasuhut and her husband are one of the early marriage couples in Belawan, an urban village. According to her statement during the interview, they married at a relatively young age, around 16-17 years old. The family has a lower-middle-class background and was married ten years ago. The family lives in a reasonably high-density neighborhood and is classified as a coastal area where most residents have professions as traders or fishermen. They got married mainly because they were compatible and wanted to live together.

Meanwhile, their families have no problem with it. The social environment in the area where Ms. Dede lives tends to consider early marriage to be commonplace and not a problem. This is also supported by family factors that give freedom to the child to choose his or her life path.

Education plays an important role and considerably influences the formation of a better order for the future. The level of education provides an opportunity for the community to create a better generation. This will also affect the insights and interactions in the marriage relationship that will help in everyday life. Mrs. Dede also confirmed this situation, explaining that the lack

of interest in schooling is most likely motivated by family factors, where most parents need children to help with homework and daily chores.

According to Mrs. Dede's husband, the main challenge is the early days of marriage. Household problems are usually oriented toward relationship patterns that undergo a process of adjustment. Sometimes, some things that were not a problem for him before marriage become problematic after marriage. There is an accommodative process in a couple of Mrs. Dede and Husband. The accommodative process is in the early phase of marriage. This initial phase also determines how the marriage relationship will run. Interpersonal relationships in marriage partners undergo a process and will be accommodated by each other. This can then form an attitude of mutual understanding after experiencing the process of adjusting to each other. According to Mrs. Dede, in the early days of marriage, the main challenge was openness to each other. Individualized habits often become the background of problems in the household. However, as the age of marriage increases, understanding each other makes them open to each other to solve problems.

This couple lives in the Belawan II urban village area. Based on the interviews, this couple belongs to a lower-middle-class family. This couple has been married for approximately sixteen years and has one child. The main reason for the marriage of Mrs. Bunga and her husband is due to economic background. According to Mrs. Bunga's statement, the family felt greatly helped to meet their daily needs after marriage. The husband's main job was as a fish trader who often sold his merchandise to Medan City. The husband's educational background of Mrs. Bunga, did not graduate from elementary school. In addition, economic and educational backgrounds considerably influence the lives of early marriage couples.

Regarding the social environment, education in the Belawan II area is primarily dominated by people with professions such as fishermen and traders. The difficult economic situation will impact teenage children's lives in the Belawan II Kelurahan area. In addition to the lack of interest in education, access to schools still needs to be improved, such as at the junior and senior high school levels. This situation can certainly affect the pattern of education received by each generation in the Belawan II area. This is also motivated by the fact that the lives of the people in Belawan I are still far from enough, many of which become difficulties, including finding work.

In interpersonal communication, this family has many obstacles, especially if there are problems involving emotional conditions. This process is also part of the adaptation in the early phase of marriage. Both recognize that conditions after marriage become very different from before marriage regarding communication. The main obstacle in couples between Bunga and

Husband is related to problem-solving, especially in the early period of marriage. The main impact they feel is the change in communication patterns and the adaptation process. The adaptation process arises because of the need to understand each other. This is what makes them able to adjust until they are finally able to communicate optimally. With a minimal economic and educational background, for them, marriage is a solution to solve problems, especially in economic matters. By getting married, they will be able to help each other.

The family of Mrs. Santi and her husband is one of the early marriage couples living in the Medan Belawan II area. This couple is classified as a lower-middle-class family. Every day, Mrs. Santi's husband's main job is a fisherman. Unlike the two previous early marriage couples, based on an interview conducted on July 30 with Mrs. Santi, parental encouragement was the main factor in their marriage. This is an effort to boost the family economy. Mrs. Santi decided to get married so she could help the family. Based on this, the main factor in early marriage is economic conditions. Poor economic conditions can increase the potential for early marriage among adolescents in Medan Belawan.

Early marriage in the couple Mrs. Santi and Husband is driven by the desire to improve a better standard of living. Communication barriers also occurred in the early phases of marriage, but the adaptation process went with openness until finally accommodating each other. This family also interprets happiness as something to strive for and be grateful for. The demands as one part of helping parents became Santi's morale to ease the burden on the family and help his younger siblings.

Based on the results of this study, researchers found that early marriage can be categorized into two sides, namely divided into early marriage couples who experience problems in marriage and early marriage couples who do not experience problems. In the first finding, early marriage couples tend to see marriage relationships with high adaptation patterns; their mutual openness to each other supports this. Whereas in the second early marriage couple, couples who experience communication problems tend to be closed so that the level of domestic violence is relatively high.

In forming a happy and prosperous family, interpersonal communication is essential for couples in early marriage. Effective communication contributes to constructive problem-solving, which is essential for building solid relationships. According to research results, early-marriage couples with good interpersonal communication tend to have higher levels of marital satisfaction. Family communication patterns, including frequent communication about activities, thoughts, and feelings, are crucial in building strong family bonds. A positive family climate and effective parenting during

childhood have been shown to influence later romantic relationships. Therefore, early-married couples must develop good communication skills and maintain a positive family climate to create a prosperous family.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, interpersonal communication is essential in forming a happy and prosperous family in early marriage couples in Medan Belawan Village, Medan Belawan District. Effective communication between husband and wife is critical to understanding the needs, expectations, and values underlying their family relationship. On the other hand, the level of happiness and well-being in the family can be increased through efforts to improve the quality of interpersonal communication. The discovery of communication patterns that support positive relationships can serve as a foundation for developing programs or interventions to increase the sustainability and meaningfulness of marital relationships in young couples.

## FURTHER STUDY

Suggestions for further research on the role of effective communication in conflict management and improvement of family well-being in early married couples in the medan belawan area. Understanding of communication in early married couples: determinants of successful communication to form a happy family.

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