

# Intergenerational Patterns of Early Marriage and Childbearing in Rural Central Java, Indonesia

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## Abstract

*This study aims to explore women's views and experiences of inter-generational early childbearing, and observe the mechanism of inherited early motherhood in Indonesia. Six informants of in-depth interview were women who gave birth before the age of 18 and have a mother or daughter who was also a teenage mother. As women have been through different events in their life trajectories, the feeling and experience of being a teenage mother were expressed differently by the three different generations. Grandmothers expressed their regret for missing their chance to continue their studies when their parents forced them to marry young. Their disappointment with the current economic status and their past sorrow had placed early childbearing as a remorseful event. While the mothers' generation expressed less guilt, daughters showed no regret for their decision to become teenage mothers. Regarding the mechanism by which early childbearing is repeated across generations, social theory seems to be the most convincing approach to explain how the younger generation followed their parents in starting their childbearing early. It appears that, although the younger generation has their own values in making fertility decisions, their attitudes and practices are shaped from their observation towards their parents' fertility behavior.*

## Keywords

*Early childbearing; early marriage; teenage motherhood; intergenerational pattern; fertility decisions*

## Introduction

Teenage marriage as a prelude to early childbearing is common in Indonesia. As marriage in traditional Indonesia was a familial rather than individual concern, parents took the initiative regarding their daughter's marital plans, and marriage often occurred at a very young age (Hugo, Hull, Hull & Jones, 1986; Malhotra, 1991). Socio-cultural and religious construction of Muslims also has made early marriage acceptable for most Indonesians, as the desire for marriage is following the *Sunnah* - which refers to acts that are optional, but meritorious if performed - to prevent 'zina' (unlawful sexual acts) between unmarried males and females. Following the Muslim teaching, teenage marriage is believed as a preservation of a girl's 'value' and protection of her innocence, since virginity at first marriage is regarded as a woman's worth (Martin-Anatias, 2018; Sarwono, 2017). In addition, Muslims believe the timing of marriage, childbearing and the number of children are God-given, and therefore, these events should not be prevented (Guest, 1992; Jones, 2001; Widyastari & Isarabhakdi, 2016).

Although Indonesia's fertility rate has fallen significantly from 5.6 children per woman in 1970s to 4.1 in 1980, 2.6 in 2010, and 2.4 in 2017, it cannot be denied that early motherhood

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remains. During the past decade, the Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey (IDHS) recorded between 7 to 10% of Indonesians started their childbearing before the age of 18 (National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), Statistics Indonesia (BPS), Ministry of Health (Kemenkes) & ICF, 2018; Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik – BPS), National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), Kementerian Kesehatan (Kemenkes – MOH) & ICF International, 2013; Statistics Indonesia (BPS) & Macro International (ORC), 2004; 2007). The proportion of Indonesian women who married before 15 has also declined, from 30% in 1970 to 11% in 1995 (Jones, 2001) while the median age at first marriage has increased from 19 in 1970 to 20.8 in 2017 (National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) et al., 2018; Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik – BPS) et al., 2013; Statistics Indonesia (BPS) & Macro International (ORC), 2004; 2007). Although the prevalence of teenage marriage and early motherhood may seem relatively low, this phenomenon is likely to continue for decades (Jones, 2017) given the practice is inherited from generation to generation.

Studies have documented that inter-generational early childbearing is more prevalent among women with a family history. Children of teenage mothers have a higher likelihood of being teenage mothers themselves (Barber, 2000; Hardy, Astone, Brooks-Gunn, Shapiro & Miller, 1998; Kahn & Anderson, 1992; Murphy & Knudsen, 2002; Steenhof & Liefbroer, 2008) whilst those whose sister was a teenage mother are 4.8 times more likely to have a similar experience (East, Reyes & Horn, 2007).

Scholars argue that teenage births are repeated across generations because of mothers' strong influence on their daughters, especially regarding the appropriate time to start a family (Edwards, 1992). Daughters of teenage mothers have a higher probability of becoming teenage mothers themselves (Anderton, Tsuya, Bean & Mineau, 1987; Campa & Eckenrode, 2006; Hardy et al., 1998; Horwitz, Klerman, Kuo & Jekel, 1991; Kahn & Anderson, 1992; Murphy & Knudsen, 2002; Steenhof & Liefbroer, 2008), partially due to genetically-driven earlier timing of menarche, which is correlated with age at first intercourse and first birth (Lehti et al., 2012; Manlove, 1997; Udry & Billy, 1987).

Although maternal factor is a consistent proxy for inter-generational early childbearing, the life-course experiences of daughters is strongly associated with their family environment where they are brought up, socio-cultural context, and preferences on the timing of family formation (Chen & Landau, 2015; Nettle & Cockerill, 2010). The life-course approach argues that familial experience of poverty, poor parenting, low levels of economic development and lack of educational attainment have put young women at a higher risk of early motherhood (Bennett, 2014). Daughters of teen mothers are more likely to grow up in disadvantaged families with lower economic status and fewer resources available to support their education (Chen & Landau, 2015; Manlove, 1997; Rowlingson & McKay, 2005).

A socio-cultural model of teen motherhood explains the intergenerational relationship between parents and teenagers through socialization and social control. Young women who have a close relationship with their parents are more likely to inherit their values and behave according to their expectation, simply because they share similar social norms (Barber, 2000; Bengtson, 1975; Perrier, 2013). Although teenagers may acquire their own values, their behavior is usually the product of the imparted norms that are assimilated and observed (Barber, 2000; Chen & Landau, 2015).

While most studies related to early motherhood are considered dated, the theoretical framework of adolescent motherhood remains applicable to the current demographic situation of Indonesia (Bennett, 2014; Jones, 2001; 2017). Research on intergenerational early childbearing in Indonesia is also scarce as it requires fertility data from at least two different

generations. Upon its availability, the existing data are mostly published in the local language and involving only one generation (Sardi, 2016; Ubaedilla, 2019). The cause and mechanisms of how teenage motherhood is repeated across generations also remain unclear.

This study was aimed at exploring women's views and experience of intergenerational early marriage and childbearing. It also observed the possible pathways of inherited early motherhood among three generations of teenage mothers in rural Central Java, Indonesia. Considering the strong cultural values held by the Indonesian Muslims especially in rural Central Java, early marriage and childbearing is presumably driven by sociocultural and religious elements, rather than economic forces. The sociocultural framework is therefore, expected to provide the best explanation on the pathways of inherited early marriage and childbearing in rural Central Java, Indonesia.

## Methods

The present analysis was a multiple qualitative case study of women from two families in rural Central Java who have intergenerational experience of early marriage and childbearing. Women who gave birth to their first child before the age of 18, and who had a mother or daughter who was also a teenage mother were eligible for the study.

This study was a presentation of selected cases from a larger qualitative phenomenology study on early marriage and childbearing in rural Central Java which involved 15 women who gave birth to their first child before the age of 18. Initially, inherited pattern was found in one (*asongan*)<sup>i</sup> family of three generations. The sample was then extended until another set of family with three generation of early motherhood was found. The intergenerational patterns were confirmed after interviewing six women from two families (farmer and *asongan*) who gave birth before the age of 18.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of qualitative sample

Initial	Current Age	Generation	Family	Occupation	Age at 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage
Tr	54	Grandmother	Farmer	Farmer	17
Kt	32	Mother	Farmer	Farmer	14
Ah	18	Daughter	Farmer	Unemployed	17
Ym	61	Grandmother	Asongan	Asongan	16
Em	43	Mother	Asongan	Asongan	17
Ty	25	Daughter	Asongan	Unemployed	17

The study focused on early marriage and childbearing as a specific event where the reasons and decision-making process were investigated thoroughly. The women's feeling and experiences of being a mother at a young age were also explored, and their socioeconomic later life was observed to justify the long-term consequences of early motherhood. All in-depth interviews took place at the informants' house between December 2016 and May 2017. To build a rapport and facilitate smooth interviews, family planning field officers or PLKB

<sup>i</sup> *Asongan* refers to a type of merchant who has no store, typically selling food and drinks by carrying around their goods, and offering the bus passengers before departing.

(*Petugas Lapangan Keluarga Berencana*) and village health volunteers introduced the researchers to the informants. Interviews were audio-taped after obtaining the informants' consent.

## Results

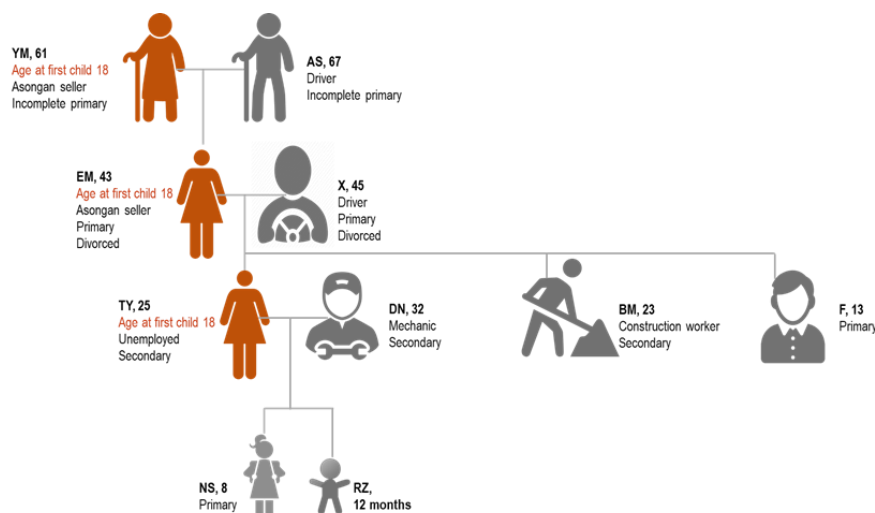
### Study setting

Wonosobo district lies approximately 120 kilometers from Semarang, the capital of Central Java Province. It covers a mountainous area with an altitude ranging from 275 to 2,250 meters above sea level (Semarang Bureau of Statistic, 2017; Wonosobo Bureau of Statistics, 2016). With a total population about 780,000 in 2015, the population density between sub-districts are quite varied ranging from 410 people/km<sup>2</sup> in the remote area to 2,694 people/km<sup>2</sup> in the city center. Agriculture remains the main source of living for its inhabitants, although there is an increasing number of people employed in the government or private sector, primarily in the hotels or restaurants (Wonosobo Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Although Islamic teachings and values govern the norms of behavior, there is an openness to a modern development as evidenced by the acceptance of family planning since the 1980s with the support of religious leaders (Niehof & Lubis, 2003). Therefore, it is not surprising if the average family size of the women in Wonosobo remains small even though the proportion of women who married early was quite high (Wonosobo Bureau of Statistics, 2015; 2016).

### Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of early child bearers

Six informants of the in-depth interviews were daughters, mothers, and grandmothers of farmer and *asongan* families who gave birth before the age of 18. Eighteen years of age was defined as the cut-off point of teenage motherhood considering the completion of secondary school education in Indonesia. The youngest informant was an 18-year-old mother of a 2-month old infant whereas the oldest was a 61-year-old grandmother whose daughter and granddaughter also experienced early motherhood.

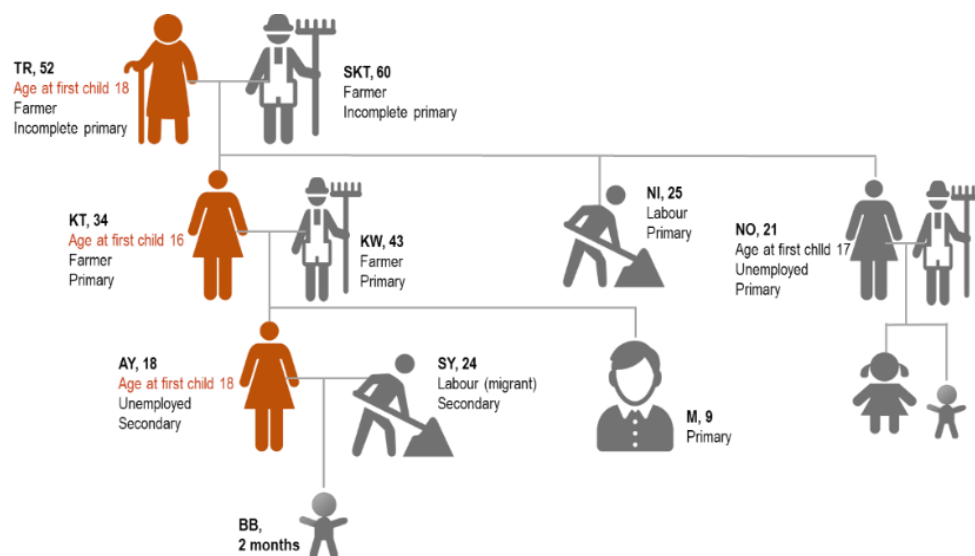
**Figure 1:** Three-generation early childbearing in *asongan* family



Although most women in the study generally married young, the family size was relatively small. The grandmother (first generation) of the *asongan* family only had one daughter (Figure 1), whereas the grandmother of the farmer family had two children (Figure 2). The second generation (mother) of the *asongan* family had three children, and the farmer family had two. Although they have not completed their reproductive age, the daughters (third generation) of teen mothers have positive attitudes toward smaller family size.

Educational attainment across the three generations in both families was relatively similar, whereby, the younger generation had a higher level of education. As the daughters had completed junior secondary school, their mothers only attained primary level, and the grandmothers never completed primary school.

**Figure 2:** Three-generation early childbearing in the farmer family



The socio-economic status of early child bearers in three generations was also relatively poor. The daughters were temporarily unemployed for childrearing whereas their mothers inheriting the occupation of their predecessor (grandmothers) as farmers and *asongan* seller. The farmer family appeared to have a higher socio-economic status compared to their *asongan* counterpart as they have additional incomes from selling cattle and timber in between harvesting season. The husband of the farmer family (KW) also had an additional advantage of being a local leader who was eligible to receive revenue from the land leased to him by the village.

### Early childbearing decision-making: socioeconomic forces, religious belief or culturally driven?

Our exploration towards reproductive behavior of women in rural Java revealed that early childbearing rooted from early marriage practices that was inherited from generations. Early marriage for Javanese Muslim was mostly imposed as the most effective measure against 'zina' (premarital sexual act) and the partial fulfilment of one's 'dien' (religion), particularly because marriage is believed as a half of faith beside the fear of *Allah* (God). Additionally, early marriage is seen as a way to relieve the disadvantaged families of its financial difficulties and economic burden.

**Table 2:** Themes emerged from in-depths interviews

No	Major categories	Sub-themes within category
1	<i>Reasons for early marriage</i>	
	Early marriage as a Muslim teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> to prevent 'zina' <input type="checkbox"/> to fulfill the 'dien' (religion) <input type="checkbox"/> women's domestic role
	Early marriage as economic relief	<input type="checkbox"/> financially restricted <input type="checkbox"/> no (entirely) free education <input type="checkbox"/> parents' obligation ends by marrying off their daughter
	Early marriage as social force	<input type="checkbox"/> parents' shame of having unsaleable maidens <input type="checkbox"/> parents' fears of their daughter becoming a spinster
2	<i>Early marriage decision making</i>	
	Forced by parents	<input type="checkbox"/> not knowing the future husband <input type="checkbox"/> <i>manut</i> (comply with the order without questioning)
	Arranged by parents	<input type="checkbox"/> obligation from daughter to parents <input type="checkbox"/> parents from both families agree <input type="checkbox"/> marriage takes place after certain period of courtship <input type="checkbox"/> parents choose the best candidate
	Self-choice	<input type="checkbox"/> couple meet at school or workplace <input type="checkbox"/> parent's approval <input type="checkbox"/> couple's readiness
3	<i>Childrearing as the major challenge</i>	
	Working mothers	<input type="checkbox"/> bring the children to work <input type="checkbox"/> division of labor between husband and wife <input type="checkbox"/> shorter working duration <input type="checkbox"/> shift work
	Postnuptial residence	<input type="checkbox"/> extended family nearby <input type="checkbox"/> neighbor's helps
4	<i>Consequences of early childbearing</i>	
	Low education	<input type="checkbox"/> regretting early marriage <input type="checkbox"/> financial difficulties as a result of low education
	Lower socioeconomic status	<input type="checkbox"/> higher education equals better occupation <input type="checkbox"/> higher education means better socioeconomic status
	Education for their successors	<input type="checkbox"/> daughters are married off after they complete their secondary education <input type="checkbox"/> sons are married off after they complete their higher education

This study also discovered that early motherhood decision-making varied by generations. The grandmothers experienced a forced marriage, where their parents discussed the marriage arrangements without their consent. As Javanese women in the past were taught to practice *manut* - an expression of obedience whereby the daughters abide by their parents' wishes without question -, objection toward the marriage proposal was never an option.

*"Well, I was afraid of my parents, that's all. Especially my father. He forced me to marry him (husband), and because I was so afraid of him, I did not say anything. I just followed his order. I understand my father forced me to marry that man because he was afraid I would become a spinster."*

(YM, 61, grandmother, asongan)

Early marriage among the mothers' generation was also likely to be driven by social forces. Sending their teenage daughter off for marriage was a source of pride for parents because it was a sign that their daughter is 'laku' (i.e. in demand); while an adult unmarried daughter

was viewed as unqualified wife-to-be. Parents were still the main decision makers on when and to whom a woman should marry, but they would inquire whether the daughter was willing to accept the marriage proposal. Although this appeared to make the arrangement voluntary, the social norms of the Javanese gave women limited options, except to accept the parents' wish.

*"It was an arranged marriage. From parents to parents. His family came to propose me, and I know him because we are neighbors. I just finished my primary school and [had] nothing to do at home except helping my mom babysit my younger brother when she goes to the rice field. My parents accepted him because he [husband] came from a good family and he was already settled financially as he had a farm of his own. We married a couple of months after the proposal."*

(KT, 32, mother, farmer)

By the time of the daughters' generation, marriage was more an individual choice. However, a different type of 'forced' marriage was observed since the daughter of the farmer family was married due to her premarital pregnancy. It was true that she voluntarily married the father of her child. She also perhaps voluntarily quit schooling because she thought becoming a full-time mother was a better choice than continuing school and aborting her pregnancy. However, since conceiving a baby out of wedlock and abortion were considered as unforgiven sins, therefore, 'forced' marriage in the youngest cohort of the farmer family appeared as a societal and religious driven rather than parental force.

## **Rural women's views and experiences on early childbearing**

The women interviewed in this study gave birth to their first child when they were between 17 and 18 years old. As teenage mothers, the grandmothers recalled their experience as fearful, partly because of their lack of knowledge in raising a child. The family environment where the grandmothers were brought up also played a significant role in the early motherhood preparedness. The grandmother of the *asongan* family was raised in a conservative family where the relationship between parents and children was formally regulated. The grandmother's fear, therefore, originated from the lack of information given by parents regarding marriage and motherhood. The grandmother of the farmer family, on the other hand, was brought up in a large family where she could observe the experience of her elder sisters. Although parent-child communication was also lacking, observation and experiences of the older siblings may have helped the grandmother of the farmer family to adjust with motherhood at an early age.

Financial issues also differed the childrearing experiences between mothers of the *asongan* and farmer family. After delivery, the mother of the farmer family stayed at home to take care of her children while the grandmother worked in the field. The in-laws also helped in childcare whenever it was necessary. The mother of *asongan* family, unfortunately, had to work immediately after giving birth.

*"The financial deficiency was the hardest... because umm... my husband did not earn money. Sometimes he did not bring any money for more than three months. You know... I was the one who is practically heading the household. We fought a lot. He spent his time outside the home but earned nothing... I had to carry the kids with me to the bus station."*

(EM, mother, 43, *asongan*)

While the mother's generation was more prepared for childrearing with the assistance of grandmothers, the daughters reported a better delivery experience. Although fear was also present, their faith in God helped them to manage their apprehension. Modern health practitioners were also available to assist them since the pregnancy throughout the delivery. With better antenatal care (ANC) practices and the assistance of family and village health volunteers, the daughters were more prepared for their first childbirth.

Daughters were also more empowered and confident in raising their children despite being young. Accompanied by a strong faith, the daughters believed they would be good parents because they were mature and received psychological support from their family.

*"Yakin (I have faith). I am convinced by seeing my mother and my grandmother who started early (marriage and childbearing), and they are doing fine... Maturity has nothing to do with age. Mature means the person has strong intention to build a family and plans for the future."*

(TY, daughter, 25, unemployed)

As the youngest among three generation of teenage mothers, the daughters used 'yakin' as the reason for their decision to start childbearing early. The terms 'yakin' refers to *faith or belief in God* and leaving everything in His hands. It also signifies a submission from human being to their God (Allah in Muslim teaching). The daughters' tone when they uttered 'yakin' was full of confidence which implies a perceive strength as they obtained support from their family and also blessings from God by avoiding *zina*. Their attitude towards early childbearing could be driven by social expectation toward newlywed couples to reproduce soon, as there is a belief that a woman's identity is completed when she becomes a mother. However, their faith can also be interpreted as a display of ignorance, lack of knowledge or understanding of future family issues.

Childrearing was not a major issue for the unemployed or self-employed women, but it posed a big challenge for those who were employed, especially when it was followed by subsequent births. In the rural Javanese context, childrearing is a joint responsibility with the extended family who usually lives in the same compound or at least close to each other. These rural Javanese women, therefore, experienced less difficulties in childrearing because their grandmothers or mothers extended their help as they lived nearby. The youngest generation received the most advantage of having the support from the adult females in the family in caring for their babies.

### **Rural women's views on educational attainment and their current socioeconomic status as consequence of early marriage and childbearing**

The women's views on early childbearing and educational attainment were closely related to their life experience. They admitted their decision to marry their spouse and to be a teenage mother as a way out of social pressure or economic difficulties. When they were asked '*would you change your mind if you are given a choice of rearing a child or attending school*', all the informants demonstrated a positive change by choosing the latter one as they acknowledged that a higher level of education would guarantee a better opportunity to generate higher incomes.

*"It is unfortunate that my granddaughter [her granddaughter - daughter generation in this study] also did not complete her secondary school. It's hard you*



*know, in this time... if you do not attain at least secondary education, you won't be employed and have good income. If only she had completed her secondary level education, she could be a shopkeeper, instead of a domestic worker. But she married her boyfriend whom she had dated for years. Now, she just stays at home taking care of her baby, and sometimes working part time at a laundry shop near our home."*

(YM, 61, grandmother, asongan)

The mothers also felt their current socioeconomic status would be better if they had completed a higher level of education and postponed their marriage. However, for the mother of the asongan family, school was unaffordable and working was the only option.

*"Actually, I did not want to marry early. I wanted to work and earn money to support myself and help my mother. But my husband proposed and our parents agreed. Finally, I ended up ngasong [working as asongan seller] like my mother because I couldn't get a better occupation."*

(EM, 43, mother, asongan)

The daughter of the *asongan* family showed a positive attitude by prohibiting her daughter from marrying a man of her choice before completing high school. She also would stop her son from marrying before completing his tertiary education because she believed that education widen the opportunities for a better occupation. The daughter of the farmer family, on the other hand, showed a moderate and inconsistent attitude toward early marriage and childbearing, seen from her indecisive response on a hypothetical question whether she as a parent would allow her daughter to marry a man when she turned 15.

It is true the long-term effect of early childbearing cannot be fully comprehended because there are many life events occurred in women's life trajectories. However, the current socioeconomic status of the women can be considered as a relatively unchanged variable and it is seen as the consequences of early childbearing. When the grandmother and mother of *asongan* family remained as *asongan* sellers, the daughter decided to stay home to take care of her children. The grandmother continued to work in her elderly life in the absence of financial support from her husband. Likewise, the mother of the *asongan* family remained '*ngasong*' (working as an *asongan* seller) because of insufficient support from her husband since they were married until finally divorced. The daughter of the *asongan* family was somewhat fortunate enough to obtain full financial support from her husband and additional support from her mother and grandmother.

The farmer family appeared to have a better socioeconomic status than the *asongan* family. The grandmother and grandfather inherited three pieces of lands from their parents and earned revenue from selling the crops. The mother in the farmer family also received a piece of land from her parents when she married and combined her assets to her husband. The revenue from the land were more than enough to cover their daily expenses as they grew *salak* (snake fruit), chili, corn, cassava, bean and rice throughout the year.

## Discussion

It cannot be denied that socioeconomic reforms under the Suharto regime which included compulsory education and family planning program had empowered young people to take their initiative to find their own life partners and delay their age of marriage (Hugo et al.,

1986). Industrialization and Westernization also had an impact on Indonesian families by allowing couples to take responsibility for their own economic-related decisions (Alison & Nobles, 2009). However, it is worth noting that although socioeconomic development has brought a new way of life for many Indonesians, a considerable portion of Indonesian women were left with little choice except to marry at their teens, and start childbearing early.

This study has shown that socioeconomic development of Indonesia has shifted the decision makers and the nature of early marriages; from forced marriages decided by parents of the grandmothers' generation to arranged ones with a period of courtship in the mothers' generation, and finally to self-choice marriages in the daughters' generation. The underlying reason for early marriages and childbearing also changed from social pressure to one determined by economics, where parents in the grandmothers' era considered early marriage as the fulfilment of their pride, whereas parents in the daughters' era perceived early marriage as an economic relief.

The socioeconomic development of Indonesia unfortunately, are not equally distributed to all Indonesians (Akita & Miyata, 2018; Gatto, Wollni, Asnawi & Qaim, 2017). Rural peasant families in Central Java are experiencing economic depression due to a shift from agriculture to industrial living where the younger generation are no longer willing to work in the rice fields. As a result, many peasant families have sold their land and shared its proceeds among their children. At the same time, although the government of Indonesia has implemented compulsory education since 1990s, education is not entirely free (Rosser & Sulistiyanto, 2013). Unaffordability of parents in paying the transportation cost, books, uniform and other educational-related cost have left early marriages as the best and viable option for girls from disadvantaged rural families.

The findings of the current study suggested that early childbearing is repeated across generations and inherited through several mechanisms: family environment as a life course approach, socio-cultural, and biological pathways. The family environment model holds that daughters of teen mothers are more likely to grow up in a disadvantaged family environment with lower economic status and fewer resources available to support their education (Chen & Landau, 2015). The finding is consistent with this theory, as the younger generation of women inherited early childbearing from their mothers and grandmothers, and lived in low socioeconomic status that could not afford education.

Social theory suggests that parents stimulate their children's behavior through socialization and social control, where they imbue norms, values, and preferences to their daughters in order to share similar values and attitudes regarding early childbearing (Barber, 2000; Perrier, 2013; Van Bavel & Kok, 2009). It is true that daughters interviewed in the present study have their own preferences, but their decision was constructed from the values that were rooted from their childhood. Children learn from their parents' direct teaching and observation that they actively sought or passively accepted, and finally express similar attitudes throughout their lifespan.

Matrilocal post-nuptial residence of rural Javanese also made the socialization effect stronger since women across the three generations lived nearby. The second generation of women (mothers) observed their predecessors' (grandmothers) way of living, inherited their values and norms and eventually transformed them into practice. The younger generation's observation of their elders also increased their self-efficacy of becoming teenage mothers, shown by the confidence of the daughters (third generation) in making their own reproductive decisions.

Previous studies showed parental influence (the intensity of parent-child contact) diminishes when the children enter adulthood (Glass, Bengtson & Dunham, 1986; Van Bavel & Kok,

2009). However, in the grandmothers' and mothers' generation, the socio-cultural construction of the Muslim majority has placed parents as figures of reverence. They decide to whom their children marry and whether they should quit secular school. The traditional view of Indonesian Muslims also legitimates parents' rights to marry their teenage daughters off, especially when formal schooling is not regarded as a viable option for girls. Since the social control of parents in the daughters' generation seemed to be weaker in this study, it was not surprising that the daughters cited economic reasons as the underlying cause to quit schooling, and their strong faith in their parenting capability as the reason of early motherhood decision.

A new form of forced marriage was observed in the youngest generation where the daughter of the farmer family married after discovering she was pregnant. The daughter may not see it as a forced-marriage however, considering the religious dogma and sociocultural value held by her family and the surrounding community. Understanding the consequences of the premarital pregnancy and to avoid further social sanction to the family, the couple voluntarily entered a marital union regardless their age.

Although it's not obvious, biological pathways of intergenerational early childbearing can be seen from the early onset of sexual intercourse that the women shared across the generations (Campa & Eckenrode, 2006; Kahn & Anderson, 1992). The daughters of teen mothers in the present study may be biologically predisposed to early childbearing partially due to genetically-driven early menarche, which is correlated with age at first intercourse and first birth.

Although the present study has been able to explore the early marriage decision making process and its possible pathways of inherited early motherhood, there were limitations that should be acknowledged. The current framework that displayed the intergenerational patterns inherited through socialization, environment (life course approach) and biological pathways is mostly focused on individual and family level, and lack of macro level determinants. While this study found the premarital pregnancy experienced by the youngest generation was perhaps caused by insufficient reproductive health knowledge, the framework failed to capture the role of government and policy makers in defining fertility behavior. Yet, in the absence of adequate reproductive health information provided by school and convenient discussion with parents, adolescents in Indonesia are lacking reliable references to understand their sexuality (Widyastari, Isarabhakdi & Shaluhiyah, 2015).

It is true the Indonesian government has proclaimed education as the right of every citizen, as stated in its 1945 constitution. It also cannot be denied that the Government of Indonesia also had introduced compulsory education since the previous decades (Widyastari & Isarabhakdi, 2016) with the Suharto's Presidential Instruction (Inpres) Block Grant (Kristiansen, 2006; Statistik - BPS), 2017). Under the government of President Joko Widodo, 12 years of compulsory education was mandated with the implementation of Smart Indonesia Program (*Program Indonesia Pintar*) (Minister of Education, 2016). It should be noted however, that although compulsory education has guaranteed the free education for all Indonesians, it is not entirely cost-free. In most cases, pupils and their parents have to pay for books, teaching materials and transportation (Rosser & Joshi, 2013; Rosser & Sulistiyanto, 2013; Zuilkowski, Samanhudi & Indriana, 2019). The implementation of the new program was also challenged by the district's ability in financing education, although the central government also have their responsibility in distributing the General Allocation Fund (*DAU/Dana Alokasi Umum*), which was designed to equalize the fiscal capacity among districts (Kristiansen, 2006). Hence, providing equal access to schooling has been regarded as the most effective measure in preventing teenage marriages.

Given its sensitivity, the current framework did not focus on the marital status when the first childbearing occurred, or whether the early marriage and childbearing was preceded by premarital pregnancy. Previous studies found that early childbearing due to premarital pregnancy was common in Indonesia and brought negative consequences to the mothers' later life (Widyastari, Isarabhakdi, Vapattanawong & Völker, 2019). Therefore, in addition to reproductive health knowledge, continuous health education focusing on the adverse health outcomes of early motherhood and how its affect their socioeconomic later life should be a good starting point. As reforming the sociocultural and religious practices toward early marriage and childbearing will not be easy, however, using a sociocultural approach to target the youngest reproductive cohort will be beneficial to change their perspective towards teenage motherhood. Involving religious leaders in communicating the health messages would also be effective in preventing early marriages and childbearing among the future generation.

The sample size is another limitation of the study. Future research should expand the number of families and sought an alternative framework to observe teenage pregnancy from wider perspective and adopting a different level of analysis (i.e. individual, family, community and macro-level). Future research could also compare the pattern of early childbearing among two and three generation families.

## Conclusion

As women have been through different events in their life trajectories, the feeling and experience of being a teenage mother were expressed differently by the three generations. The grandmothers expressed their regrets for missing their chances to continue their studies when their parents forced them to marry. Their disappointment to their current economic status and their past sorrow has placed early childbearing as remorseful event. The mothers' generation had less guilt whereas their daughters showed no compunction for their decision in becoming teenage mothers. Regarding the mechanism by which early childbearing was repeated across generation, social theory seems to provide the most convincing explanation how this phenomenon was perpetuated. Although the new generation had their own values in making fertility decisions, their attitudes and practices were born from their observation of their parents' fertility behavior.

Inherited early marriage and childbearing in rural Central Java should be addressed appropriately considering its short and long-term effects to women's life and their family. The present study has shown, rural Central Javanese women have not been able to improve their socioeconomic status, partly because they attained lower level of education, and early childbearing restricted them from securing a better job.

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