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## **Impact of Child Marriage in Terms of Household Harmony: Study in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency**

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*Received: 07-12-2024*

*Reviewed: 21-12-2024*

*Accepted: 09-01-2025*

### **Abstract**

Child marriage is a phenomenon that affects the quality of household life, especially among young people who are still studying. Psychological immaturity is often the leading cause of conflict and disharmony in the household. This study aims to identify household harmony in child marriage in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency. This study uses a descriptive design with a survey approach. The population consists of 27 families who had child marriages in 2022, with a sampling technique using saturated sampling. Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed through editing, coding, scoring, and tabulation processes to determine the percentage. The results showed that more than half of the respondents (51.9%) had a level of household harmony classified as disharmonious. The main factors contributing to this disharmony are a lack of communication, unmanaged conflicts, and a lack of joint planning between couples. The conclusion of this study is that child marriage tends to result in household disharmony. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve communication between couples, healthy conflict management, and discussions to plan common goals both in the short and long term. These results are expected to be evaluation materials for the government and society to prevent child marriage through more effective education and regulation.

**Keywords:** Child Marriage, Household Harmony, Couple Conflict, Dander District, Premarital education

### **Introduction**

Child marriage remains a critical issue in Indonesia despite legal reforms aimed at addressing it. According to Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, the minimum legal age for marriage is 19 years for both men and women. This regulation emphasizes the importance of physical and emotional maturity to achieve a harmonious marital relationship and prevent early divorce. However, societal,

cultural, and economic factors often lead to exceptions, resulting in a persistent prevalence of child marriage in various regions, including Bojonegoro Regency (Mulyani et al., 2022).

Marriage at a young age poses significant challenges. Psychologically, adolescents are often unprepared to fulfill marital responsibilities, manage conflicts effectively, or communicate openly with their partners. Emotional immaturity and unstable psychological states commonly observed in young individuals can lead to frequent disputes and even divorce (Cahyono, 2018). This disharmony not only affects the couple but also impacts children born into these marriages, potentially leading to adverse sociological and psychological outcomes, such as aggressive behavior or mental health disorders (Awaru, 2021).

Globally, child marriage remains a widespread issue. According to UNICEF (2021), countries like Niger, Chad, and Mali report alarmingly high rates of child marriage, with more than half of women in these regions marrying before the age of 18. In Indonesia, the prevalence of child marriage stood at 9.23% in 2021, with East Java reporting one of the highest rates, recording 17,585 applications for child marriage dispensation in 2021 alone (Central Statistics Agency, 2021). This trend highlights the urgent need for interventions to curb the practice and mitigate its impacts.

In Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency, the prevalence of child marriage remains concerning. Secondary data from the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) reveals a steady increase in cases, with 26 child marriages recorded in 2021 and 28 in 2022. Disharmony is a common issue among these households, often stemming from a lack of communication, emotional instability, and an inadequate understanding of marital roles and responsibilities (Secondary Data from KUA Dander District, 2022).

Given the persistent prevalence of child marriage and its adverse effects on family harmony, this study aims to examine the level of household harmony among families formed through child marriages in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of strategies and policies aimed at preventing child marriage and improving the quality of life for families already affected by this practice.

## **Literature Review**

This research focuses on the concept of child marriage and its implications for household harmony, emphasizing the psychological, emotional, and sociological factors that influence marital stability in young couples. Child marriage is a formal or informal union where one or both parties are under 19, as defined by Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage in Indonesia. The law aims to protect adolescents from the physical, emotional, and economic risks associated with early marriage. However, cultural and socio-economic pressures often lead to exceptions through marriage dispensations (Mulyani et al., 2022). Found that child marriage is prevalent in developing countries, with the highest rates in Niger (76%) and significant rates in Indonesia (9.23%). Early marriage is often driven by poverty, lack of education, and cultural norms, which perpetuate gender inequality (UNICEF, 2021). Discussed the trend of child marriage among Indonesian youth, highlighting the role of peer influence and

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parental pressure in motivating early unions (Susatya, 2016). Investigated the legal and social implications of child marriage in East Java, revealing that dispensation requests remain high despite regulatory efforts to minimize the practice (Mulyani et al., 2022)

Household harmony is defined as the ability of a married couple to maintain a stable and supportive relationship characterized by effective communication, mutual understanding, and conflict resolution. Disharmony often results from emotional immaturity, lack of readiness for marital roles, and inadequate support systems, particularly in marriages formed at a young age (Awaru, 2021) and explored the impact of family disharmony on children's psychological and social development, finding that unresolved marital conflicts often lead to aggressive behavior and mental health issues in children (Awaru, 2021). Highlighted the challenges young couples face in managing household conflicts, emphasizing the role of emotional instability and lack of communication skills in triggering disputes and divorce (Cahyono, 2018). The primary causes of disharmony in young marriages were financial strain, lack of spousal understanding, and insufficient emotional maturity (Mulyani et al., 2022).

Some aspects of harmony in the household, including (Firdausirrochim N, 2018):

1. Religious life in the family. The atmosphere of religious life in the family dramatically affects happiness. Many problems will arise if marriage is carried out without paying attention to this. Religion shapes a person's perspective, and couples with the same religion still have different perspectives, even though most of their views are the same (Firdausirrochim N, 2018).
2. Spending time with family members. No matter how busy fathers and mothers are, they should be able to take time to get together, especially with their sons and daughters. This togetherness is essential for maintaining the bonds of friendship between family members. Observers say that the most valuable legacy parents can give their children is a few minutes each day (Firdausirrochim N, 2018).
3. Communicate well with family members. Communication between family members is essential to eliminate misunderstandings and quickly resolve various problems. In a conducive atmosphere, two-way communication between husband and wife and between parents and children will make psychological bonds closer. If there is a problem, it can be resolved amicably, so there is no need to complain (confide) to others (Firdausirrochim N, 2018).
4. Respect each other among family members. Appreciation or appreciation has a significant meaning. Respect between husband, wife, and children towards parents and the authority of parents can be upheld by showing appreciation for children's achievements (Firdausirrochim N, 2018).
5. Family is a group bond. Each family member feels bound in the family as this group bond is strong and not loose (sense of belonging). This attachment is significant so that each family member does not walk alone, for example, when the father, the mother, and the child are busy (Firdausirrochim N, 2018).
6. Ability to solve problems. If the family has a problem, they can solve it positively and constructively. This certainly depends on the personality factors of both parents; parents

must be role models for their children. If it cannot be resolved, do not hesitate to consult an expert (professional) (Firdausirrochim N, 2018).

Based on the discussion the author describes above, all couples must understand the substance of communication and family harmony in implementing communication strategies to maintain household harmony. In essence, all couples must have dreams of success in their marriage; this hope is formed if a household runs happily and harmoniously. In achieving harmony, strong cooperation and commitment are needed between couples. This can be done by maintaining and improving communication and mutual understanding, respecting each other by giving praise or other means, making the best of time with family, and paying attention to small things to create harmony (Sutanto H, 2022: 37).

Effective communication is a cornerstone of marital stability, enabling couples to resolve conflicts, share responsibilities, and build mutual trust. In child marriages, poor communication often exacerbates existing challenges, leading to increased instances of disharmony and divorce (Auliya, 2019). The use of group counseling to improve communication skills among young couples was examined, and it was concluded that targeted interventions could significantly enhance marital stability (Auliya, 2019). Identified communication gaps are a leading cause of disputes in young marriages, emphasizing the need for premarital education and counseling (Cahyono, 2018).

Child marriage has far-reaching consequences for the psychological well-being of the couple and their children. Young couples often lack the emotional and financial readiness needed to navigate marital challenges, leading to higher rates of disharmony and divorce (Cahyono, 2018; Awaru, 2021) and highlighting the psychological burden on young brides, including anxiety, depression, and a sense of isolation, particularly in cultures where child marriage is normalized (UNICEF, 2021) and discussed the sociological impacts of disharmony, including its effect on children's academic performance and social behavior (Awaru, 2021). They reported a correlation between early marriage and high divorce rates in Indonesia, attributing this trend to unresolved disputes and a lack of readiness among young couples (Central Statistics Agency, 2021).

## **Research Method**

This study employs a descriptive design with a survey approach to explore household harmony among young couples who experienced child marriage in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency. This design is suitable for capturing a detailed understanding of the characteristics and dynamics of harmony within households formed through early marriage.

This study's population consisted of 27 families in the Dander District who engaged in child marriage in 2022. Since the population size was relatively small, the study utilized a saturated sampling technique, involving all 27 individuals as participants. This ensured comprehensive data collection from all cases relevant to the study.

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The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, which included sections on demographic information and household harmony indicators. Before being distributed to participants, the instrument underwent a pilot test to ensure clarity and validity.

Data collection followed these steps: Ethical Approval: Approval was obtained from relevant authorities, ensuring participant confidentiality and informed consent. Participant Recruitment: Participants were approached through local religious affairs offices (KUA) in the Dander District with the help of community leaders. Questionnaire Distribution: The questionnaire was distributed to participants in person, assisting those requiring clarification or literacy support. Data Cleaning: Collected questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and accuracy before analysis.

The data collected through questionnaires were processed through the following steps: Editing, Coding, Scoring, and Tabulating. Responses were carefully reviewed, assigned codes based on predefined categories, scored for harmony indicators, and tabulated for analysis. Descriptive Statistics: Percentage distributions were calculated to summarize the prevalence of household harmony and disharmony among participants. Interpretation: The results were interpreted to identify patterns and trends in household harmony, focusing on factors contributing to harmony or discord. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of household harmony in young couples, enabling the study to address its research objectives effectively.

### **Result**

The study involved 27 participants, who were young couples engaged in child marriage in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Variable	Frequency (n=27)	Prosentase
Age (year)		
16 – 17	8	29.6
18	19	70.4
Gender		
Male	12	44.4
Female	15	55.6
Educational Background		
Junior High School	11	40.7
Senior High School	16	59.3

Based on the demographic characteristics in Table 1, the results of the study reviewed from the age of marriage show that the majority (70.4%) of teenagers who have child marriages marry at the age of 18, while some (29.6%) marry under the age of 18. Based on gender, more than half (55.6%) are female and some (44.4%) are male. More than half of teenagers who have

child marriages (59.3%) have a high school education background, while some (40.7%) have a junior high school education background.

### **Household Harmony Status**

The findings revealed the levels of household harmony among participants. The data are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Household Harmony Among Participants**

Variable	Frequency (n=27)	Prosentase
Household Harmony		
Harmonious	13	48.1
Not Harmonious	14	51.9

Based on the household harmony in Table 2, the study's results showed that more than half of the households (51.9%) were categorized as not harmonious, indicating significant challenges in maintaining household stability among young couples. Communication issues and conflict management were reported as the primary contributors to disharmony, as identified in the structured questionnaires. 48.1% of households classified as harmonious reported better communication and support between spouses.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that household harmony among young couples who experienced child marriage in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency, is significantly challenged, with 51.9% of respondents reporting disharmonious households. This result aligns with existing literature highlighting the vulnerabilities associated with early marriage, particularly in emotional, psychological, and social dimensions (Cahyono, 2018).

The disharmony observed in over half of the participants' households is likely linked to the immaturity of young couples, as they are not yet fully prepared to navigate the complexities of marriage. According to Susatya (2016), child marriage often results in unpreparedness in managing roles and responsibilities as spouses and parents, contributing to frequent conflicts. Furthermore, the findings affirm the assertion by Awaru (2021) that a lack of communication and conflict resolution skills is a significant factor in family instability. The higher prevalence of disharmony could also stem from the psychological immaturity of the participants. As noted by Cahyono (2018), younger individuals are more prone to emotional instability, which can exacerbate conflicts and impede effective communication in marital relationships. This is consistent with the study's findings that communication breakdowns and unresolved conflicts were common among disharmonious households.

The results of the study in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency, are by the theory above that household disharmony in child marriage is possible because most respondents and their partners never participate in religious activities together; this illustrates the lack of commitment and effort in building a spiritual dimension that can strengthen relationships in

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the household. It was also obtained from the questionnaire answers that respondents and their partners rarely took the time to talk and discuss family problems. Lack of effective communication can lead to misunderstanding, increase the risk of conflict, and hinder the ability of couples to overcome issues that arise. This study also found a lack of joint activities between respondents and their partners. Activities such as gathering, exercising, or going on vacation together were rarely done by most households involved in this study. These activities are essential in strengthening emotional bonds and building stronger relationships between couples. In addition, respondents and their partners also took less time to discuss and plan the family's future together. This reflects the lack of clarity of goals and shared visions in the household, resulting in uncertainty and a lack of togetherness in facing challenges.

Furthermore, this study found that respondents often felt they did not have enough time to be with their partners. The imbalance between personal and family life can disrupt the quality of relationships and reduce the time spent together. The questionnaire results also showed a lack of appreciation and attention between partners. Respondents felt less appreciated and sometimes did not feel accepted in their partner's family. This can lead to feelings of neglect and conflict in the household. In addition, this study also found a lack of understanding between family members. Respondents felt that each family member did not understand each other. This lack of knowledge can worsen communication and widen the gap in the relationship. In terms of solving problems, respondents also said that their partners could not listen and understand their opinions. The inability to listen to each other and work together to solve problems can hinder resolving conflicts in the household. In addition, respondents also felt that their partners were unable to resolve disputes in a good way. Lack of skills in managing conflict can worsen the situation and damage harmony in the household; from all respondents in the child marriages studied, one couple had divorced their partner.

The respondents' education can cause household disharmony in child marriages in this study; more than half of the respondents' education level was only junior high school (elementary level), and this low education can contribute to disharmony in child marriages. Respondents with low levels of education have limitations in understanding the complexities of interpersonal relationships, healthy communication patterns, and problem-solving strategies. This causes difficulties in interacting with partners and overcoming challenges that arise in marriage. In addition, low income also contributes to disharmony in child marriages. Most respondents in this study had an income of less than IDR 2,279,568 per month. The economic pressure caused by low income can affect the stability and harmony of a couple's relationship. This financial instability causes stress, anxiety, and tension in the household, especially in meeting basic needs such as food, shelter, education, and health care. When couples face financial difficulties, they cannot live the lifestyle they want, plan, or meet daily needs. The inability to achieve economic goals can trigger conflict and dissatisfaction in relationships. In addition, low income also affects access to resources and opportunities that can improve the quality of family life. Couples with limited incomes have difficulty accessing the education, health, or social services needed to improve their living conditions. Income inequality also creates an imbalance of power and roles in the household, which can disrupt harmonious relationships. Therefore, it is essential for couples experiencing child marriage to improve their

level of education and seek opportunities to increase their income so that they can build a better life for themselves.

The findings in Dander District reflect broader trends in Indonesia and globally regarding the consequences of child marriage. Data from UNICEF (2021) indicate that child marriages, particularly in regions with high prevalence, often result in increased risks of divorce, domestic violence, and emotional stress. Similarly, statistics from the Central Statistics Agency (2021) report a strong correlation between early marriage and higher divorce rates in Indonesia. While this study focused on household harmony, the broader implications of child marriage cannot be ignored. The inability to manage conflict and maintain communication impacts the couple and their children, as suggested by Awaru (2021). Children in disharmonious households are more likely to experience psychological distress, social isolation, and reduced well-being, creating a cycle of familial instability.

The findings of this study support the Family Systems Theory, which emphasizes that family dynamics, such as communication and conflict resolution, play a critical role in maintaining household harmony. According to this theory, when one subsystem (e.g., the marital relationship) is dysfunctional, it affects the overall family system, leading to adverse outcomes for all members (Minuchin, 1974). Furthermore, the study's results align with the Social Exchange Theory, which posits that relationships are sustained when the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. In the case of child marriages, the emotional and psychological costs of unprepared marriages may overshadow potential benefits, resulting in disharmony and dissatisfaction in the relationship.

The findings underscore the urgent need for preventive measures and interventions to address the challenges of child marriage. Schools and health institutions play a critical role in equipping young people with life skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, which can improve marital harmony (Auliya, 2019). In addition, community leaders and parents must actively advocate for delaying marriage until individuals are psychologically, emotionally, and socially mature, as emphasized by Mulyani et al. (2022). This study highlights the significant challenges to household harmony faced by young couples in child marriages, reaffirming the critical need for policies and interventions that prevent child marriage and provide support to young couples. Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of child marriage on family stability and examine the effectiveness of targeted interventions to improve outcomes for young families.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined young couples' household harmony in Dander District, Bojonegoro Regency child marriages. The findings reveal that more than half (51.9%) of the respondents experience disharmony in their marriages, primarily due to emotional immaturity, insufficient communication, and a lack of conflict resolution skills. These results emphasize the detrimental impacts of child marriage on the stability of family life, confirming previous research that associates early marriage with higher risks of domestic conflict, emotional stress, and divorce. The analysis underscores the importance of psychological, emotional, and social



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readiness in ensuring harmonious family relationships. Theoretical frameworks, such as Family Systems Theory and Social Exchange Theory, provide a valuable lens to understand the dynamics of young couples navigating early marriage challenges. Moreover, the study reinforces the need for preventive measures, including educational programs, reproductive health counseling, and community awareness campaigns, to delay marriage until individuals reach sufficient maturity. Respondents must prioritize good communication with their partners to maintain harmony in young marriages. Talk openly and honestly about each other's hopes, needs, and feelings. Listen attentively and respect their partner's opinions and feelings. Listen attentively to their partner and avoid personal attacks. Find a standard solution that meets both needs. Managing conflict healthily and constructively will strengthen relationships and create better understanding. Discuss and plan short-term and long-term goals with their partner, including financial, career, and family plans.

The family or parents should provide wise advice and guidance, like parents with valuable life experience. Share knowledge and insights with the young couple, but still give them the freedom to make their own decisions. Do not impose opinions or control every aspect of their lives. Encourage open communication between young couples and parents. Be a good listener and be ready to hear their complaints. Provide emotional support and suggest solutions that can help overcome problems that arise in their household. Health workers, they can involve parents, uncles, and other family members in counseling activities. For example, counseling can be done directly at the village hall or when families accompany their children or families who are still teenagers when getting immunizations for prospective brides and grooms at health facilities. On these occasions, it is essential to emphasize that maintaining harmony in the household is very important. By providing the correct information and focusing on the importance of harmony in the household, health workers can help young couples understand the consequences of teenage pregnancy.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited by its small sample size (27 participants), which may not fully represent the broader population of child marriages in Indonesia or similar contexts. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias. The cross-sectional design also limits the ability to observe changes in household harmony over time.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future studies should adopt longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impacts of child marriage on family harmony and well-being. Expanding the sample size and including diverse socio-cultural contexts could enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, exploring the perspectives of children from these households could provide a more holistic understanding of the consequences of disharmony on family members. Finally, assessing the effectiveness of intervention programs, such as communication and conflict resolution training, could inform policies and practices aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of child marriage.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence highlighting the challenges of child marriage. It underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to promote family harmony and protect the well-being of young couples and their families.

### **Declaration of conflicting interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest in experimentation and results from this research.

### **Funding acknowledgment**

STIKes Rajekwesi Bojonegoro supported this research. The authors would like to express their gratitude for the financial support and resources provided, which were essential for the completion of this study.

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