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CHALLENGES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

BY NUR HASYA ROZAIDI, IZZATUL SYAFIQAH ABDULL HALIM, NUR HUSNA
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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the ways to complete a part of one's faith (*deen*) by fulfilling the commandments of Allah SWT through the practice of the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad SAW. In fact, marriage opens wider opportunities for people to perform good deeds and worship Allah SWT through the fulfilment of the rights and responsibilities of both husband and wife in married life. However, entering married life without good preparation may cause the relationship to become a source of Allah's displeasure when the rights and responsibilities within the household are not properly fulfilled. Therefore, young people who wish to marry should prepare themselves in various aspects, both physically and mentally, so that they can be mature and remain patient in overcoming the trials of married life together with their spouse.

CAUSES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

Early marriage has become a trend among young people nowadays. This practice occurs in many societies due to various interconnected factors. One of the main causes is family pressure. In some families, parents encourage their children to marry at a young age because they wish to become grandparents early and strengthen the relationship between the married couple. This pressure often influences teenagers to accept marriage before they are emotionally and mentally prepared for such responsibilities.

Another important factor is financial insecurity. Some parents who struggle economically believe that marrying off their children can provide them with a better and more stable life. In certain situations, families may also view marriage as a source of financial benefit through the bride price or dowry received from the groom's family. As a result, early marriage becomes a practical solution to reduce the family's financial burden.

In addition, personal desires also contribute to early marriage. Many young people are influenced by friends or other couples who marry at a young age. They believe that marriage is the best way to build a *halal* relationship and avoid involvement in immoral or sexual activities before marriage. Their emotions and desire for companionship may lead them to make decisions without fully considering the long-term consequences.

Furthermore, early marriage is sometimes seen as a way to protect women from out-of-wedlock pregnancies. It is regarded as a way to preserve a woman's dignity and protect the family's reputation. In certain cultures, pregnancy outside marriage is considered shameful and damaging to the family's reputation. Therefore, families may encourage marriage at an early age as a preventive measure to maintain honour and social acceptance within the community while protecting the woman's dignity.

Lastly, a lack of education is another significant cause of early marriage. Some teenagers are not motivated to continue their studies or pursue higher education. Traditional beliefs in certain communities also influence the perception that women only need to become housewives rather than pursue academic or career success. Limited awareness of the importance of education for future opportunities often leads young people to prioritise marriage over personal development.

In conclusion, early marriage occurs due to a combination of social, economic, cultural, and personal factors. Therefore, society, parents, and educational institutions should work together to provide proper education, guidance, and support for teenagers so that they can make wise decisions for their future.

CHALLENGES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

1 Emotional stress and pressure

Couples who marry at a young age tend to face higher levels of emotional stress and pressure. This is because they have to carry many new responsibilities after getting married. For example, the husband needs to work hard to earn money to provide *nafaqah* for his wife, while the wife carries the responsibility of managing the household, and both of them have to deal with each other's emotional changes peacefully. If they are blessed with children in an early marriage, they both have to be physically and mentally prepared, as pregnancy brings many changes to the wife's emotional well-being and physical health. At the same time, the husband must be ready to provide emotional support to his wife and work harder to ensure sufficient financial support for the growing family. In addition, some young couples may not yet have achieved full emotional maturity and an understanding of the meaning of marital responsibilities. Therefore, this situation can also lead to difficulties in managing emotions and resolving conflicts in a harmonious way. As a result, arguments may occur and may even lead to domestic violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse within the marriage.

2 Financial instability

Financial issues are among the most critical challenges commonly faced by couples who marry at a young age. This happens because young couples typically only have experience managing less crucial financial matters during their unmarried life, but these responsibilities become more significant after they enter married life. After marriage, financial responsibilities become greater as family expenses involve the needs of both the husband and wife. Furthermore, if the couple is blessed with children at a young age, their financial commitments will continue to increase alongside the growing daily needs of the family. Hence, if they do not manage their financial commitments wisely, this may further lead to emotional pressure and arguments. In addition, young married couples are often influenced by the lifestyle displayed on social media, which encourages them to compare their lives with others. This condition may create a strong desire in them to follow trends without considering their actual financial capabilities, and they may not be able to differentiate between needs and wants. For instance, they may prioritize luxury by purchasing the latest gadgets, following fashion trends, and decorating their homes according to trendy styles simply because they do not want to feel left behind or be looked down upon by those around them.

3 Restrictions on education and career opportunities

In general, early marriage can reduce an individual's chance to pursue education, as it may limit their opportunities to further their studies at a higher level due to family commitments. Individuals who marry at a young age are usually those who have already started working to support their families financially, but they may face difficulties in securing high-paying jobs. Although they may already be working and earning an income, their low level of educational qualification becomes a major barrier to obtaining better employment opportunities with higher salaries. On the other hand, if young couples continue their studies, their focus is often affected as they have to manage multiple roles and responsibilities at the same time. As an illustration, young couples must concentrate on their academic work while also fulfilling their responsibilities as husbands or wives. This circumstance may prevent them from giving full commitment to their studies, and in the worst case, if this pressure continues, it may lead some to discontinue their studies.

4 Parenting difficulties at a young age

Parenting is the main responsibility of both husband and wife in the family because it is the first guidance in a child's life, which forms the basis for the development of the child's behaviour, morals, and personality. Parenting is defined as the efforts made by parents in providing care, nurturing, protection, education, and much more to their children. However, young couples usually tend to have less parenting knowledge. Young couples should demonstrate good moral values to their children because these values will have a positive influence on the children's personalities. Conversely, providing inappropriate moral values can also lead to inappropriate personalities, such as the emergence of bad habits in daily life, arguing, saying harmful things, and other negative behaviours. As a result, children who receive improper parenting may experience difficulties in their development.

Not only that, young couples may experience difficulties in the parenting process as their age and experience are still limited, which may affect their emotional stability when handling their children. Young couples need to seek guidance from their parents or married couples who have expertise in parenting knowledge so that they can learn to become good parents and prevent their children from negative influences.

WAYS TO BUILD A HEALTHY YOUNG MARRIAGE

1 Improve communication skill

Good communication is one of the most important foundations of a young marriage. Couples need to express their feelings, thoughts, and expectations honestly and respectfully. Open communication helps prevent misunderstandings and strengthens the emotional connection between husband and wife. Listening carefully and discussing problems calmly can also improve trust and cooperation in the relationship. In addition, healthy communication allows couples to solve conflicts in a mature and peaceful manner instead of avoiding issues or reacting emotionally. Based on the study, effective communication that takes place in a marriage influences the direction of the couple's marriage and can prevent divorce.

Moreover, there are studies that highlight some key elements of effective communication in marriage. These include expressing love verbally and non-verbally, sharing positive and constructive opinions, managing conflict through restructuring and active listening techniques, developing effective communication skills, and maintaining positive communication behaviours. There are also researchers who examine communication patterns based on gender. The ways of communication and interaction between men and women are literally different. Although they are different, the positive effects of communication are the same for both genders.

2 Financial instability

Financial planning is essential for young couples because financial problems are among the common causes of marital stress. Couples should learn to manage their income wisely by preparing a budget, controlling unnecessary spending, and saving for future needs such as housing, children, and emergencies. Discussing financial goals together can help both partners feel responsible and secure in the marriage. Proper financial management also encourages discipline, reduces conflict, and creates stability within the family.

Based on a study that was conducted, it was found that a quality marriage depends on tolerance and wise financial management. Tolerance in managing household finances is very important between husband and wife because financial factors are also among the causes associated with conflicts in marriage.

3 Mutual respect and understanding

Respect and understanding are necessary to maintain harmony in marriage. Each partner should appreciate the other's opinions, responsibilities, and personal differences. Understanding each other's strengths and weaknesses can help couples build tolerance and cooperation. Mutual respect also means treating one another kindly, avoiding hurtful words or actions, and supporting each other emotionally and mentally. When couples feel valued and understood, their relationship becomes stronger and more stable.

This is consistent with a study that examined the opinions of married individuals. Some respondents stated that the quality of their marriages improved when spouses understood and accepted each other's strengths and weaknesses. This is very important in marriage because it can help prevent misunderstandings regarding each partner's roles and responsibilities.

4 Emotional and Psychological support from family

Family support plays an important role in helping young couples adapt to married life. Emotional support, such as advice, encouragement, and understanding from parents or family members, can reduce stress and strengthen the couple's emotional well-being. Psychological support also helps young spouses manage conflicts, responsibilities, and emotional challenges more positively. When families provide guidance without excessive interference, young couples are more likely to feel secure, confident, and emotionally stable in their marriage.

Family members can offer both emotional and practical support during difficult times. For instance, they can encourage open dialogue, helping loved ones articulate their thoughts and feelings regarding mental health or treatment options. By creating an environment that fosters understanding and connection, families can alleviate stress and promote healing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, marriage requires commitment, responsibility, patience, and mutual understanding to build a peaceful and stable family life. Every couple may face different challenges, but with good communication, emotional maturity, and proper preparation, these challenges can be managed wisely. Allah says in Surah Rum verse 21:

وَمِنْ ءَايَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.”

Therefore, couples should strive to support and respect one another in order to achieve a harmonious and blessed marriage.

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CHALLENGES OF EARLY MARRIAGE



Marriage should be a way to complete a part of one's faith (deen) and a form of worship to Allah. However, it also can be a source of Allah's displeasure when the rights in the household are not properly fulfilled. Therefore, young couples need to support each other in overcoming the trials of married life and maintain a harmonious environment in the house.

Causes



1) Family pressure

- the parent's desire to become grandparents and to strengthen ties between the marrying family

2) Financial problems

- the intention to improve the economic status of the families facing financial insecurity

3) Personal desires

- being influenced by other couples who marry early, and to avoid engaging in sexual activities.

4) Protection from out-of-wedlock pregnancies

- to preserve women's purity and protect family's reputation

5) Lack of education –

- not motivated to pursue higher education and believe that women should only become housewives



Challenges



1) Emotional stress and pressure

- Carry many new responsibilities.

2) Financial instability

- Financial commitments become bigger.

3) Restrictions on education and career opportunities

- Cannot commit due to the multiple positions and responsibilities
- Low qualification leads to difficulties in securing high-pay job.

4) Parenting difficulties at a young age

- Immature age and less knowledge about parenting.



Solutions

Improve communication skills

- Open communication helps prevent misunderstandings
- Listening carefully and discussing problems calmly

Financial Planning

- learn to manage their income wisely by preparing a budget, controlling unnecessary spending, and saving for future needs



Mutual respect and understanding

- should appreciate the other's opinions, responsibilities, and personal differences.

Emotional and Psychological support from family

- Emotional support can reduce stress and strengthen the couple's emotional wellbeing.

