

## PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY OF *MERARIK* TRADITION (ELOPEMENT) AND ITS PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT ON FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN EAST LOMBOK REGENCY, WEST NUSA Tenggara

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**Abstract** - The tradition of *merarik* is the term of marriage commonly used by the Lombok Sasak people. This tradition is commonly known as elopement which is a tradition passed down from Sasak society. This *merarik* tradition is one of the legal contributors to the early marriage of teenagers. That is because most of the perpetrators of *merarik* tradition are children who are still of school age and most are aged 15-16 years <sup>[1]</sup>. Teens who get married early both by way of *merarik* tradition actually are not fully ready to go through household life because the immature level of physical, emotional, sexual and psychosocial development. This study aims to explore the phenomenon of *merarik* tradition on the psychosocial impact of perpetrators of *merarik* culture in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. This study uses a descriptive phenomenological approach involving 10 informants who were married at school age. Data is collected by conducting in-depth interviews for 30 to 60 minutes. The results of data analysis found 4 themes, namely the emotional response of the family and community after *merarik*, received bad treatment from her husband (domestic violence), complex emotional conditions after marriage, and divorce.

**Keywords** - *Merarik tradition, early marriage, psychosocial impact, social impact*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the customs which are the beliefs of the people in certain areas increase the incidence of marriage at a young age, such as beliefs about being unethical if they do not accept a man's proposal to his daughter even though his daughter is still under 18 years old, being insulted, underestimated also becomes cause parents agree to marriage. For some families, decision-making related to marriage is influenced by adherence to religious beliefs held, for example in Islamic religion marriage is the sunnah of the apostles that must be done and can protect us from sin <sup>[2]</sup>. The tradition of *merarik* one of the types of traditions or cultures that exist in Indonesia, precisely in West Nusa Tenggara Province.

The Merarik or elopement tradition is the most common tradition and is often practiced by the Sasak tribe in Lombok and is usually done by teenagers. Merarik is a tradition in which men carry away teenage girls from their homes without the knowledge of their parents, and are carried out at night <sup>[3]</sup>. Sasak society considers that the tradition of *merarik* is a tradition that shows the toughness and virility of a man so that it is considered as a way to maintain self-esteem as a man because he has been able to take a woman who became his idol of the heart without the knowledge of her parents. Merarik is a method used by the

people of the island of Lombok (Sasak tribe) to continue the relationship to the level of marriage by both teenagers who are dating<sup>[4]</sup>.

This *merarik* tradition is one of the causes of early marriage because most of those who carry out this tradition are school-aged children and the average age is less than 16 years or more<sup>[1]</sup>. Early marriage which is influenced by tradition is a form of threat in achieving the goals of international development efforts to combat cases of poverty<sup>[5]</sup>. Some of the reasons that underlie child marriage supported by parents are low economic status so marrying children at an early age can help reduce the burden on families financially related, avoid adultery, the will of the child itself which is difficult for parents to refuse, the education of children and parents who low, environment and customs who believe that if a child has been proposed, it should not be refused<sup>[6]</sup>. Early marriage has many negative effects, one of which is a bad impact on their social life. Viewed from the social side, early marriage affects the romance of their household. Their emotions are still like puberty where there is no stability, immature way of thinking affects them in communicating and making decisions in married life. Psychologically they will feel the level of depression that interferes with their lives such as withdrawing from the social environment and low confidence in dealing with peers. This is increasingly supported by their low education that is more vulnerable to problems in living the household life with their partners. This level of depression is higher for those who get married early than those who are not married yet<sup>[7]</sup>.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of the *merarik* tradition of the psychosocial impact of the perpetrators of *merarik* culture in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. This research was conducted in the East Lombok Regency of West Nusa Tenggara in December 2019 until January 2020. The informants in this study were women who had carried out the tradition of *merarik* at the age of under 19 years, totaling 10 people. The sampling technique is done by purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria: women who are married under the age of 19 years, willing to participate in this study, can speak Indonesian properly and correctly, married more than 1 year. The main instrument in this study is the researchers themselves and the process of collecting data is by conducting in-depth interviews with informants. Data analysis conducted with the thematic analysis method consisted of several steps including: 1) The results of the interview were made in the form of verbatim transcripts; 2) Reread the interview results; 3) Give a sign by coloring the points that have important meaning, 4) Grouping important points to be made into categories and sub themes, 5) Arranging themes. This data analysis stage is carried out manually because this research explores experiences that contain informant expressions<sup>[8]</sup>.

## III. RESULTS

The informants who participated in this study at the time of the interview were aged between 16 and 31 years and they were married at the age of 13 to 18 years. Three informants did not finish elementary school, 4 school informants reached elementary school level, 1 informant had school up to junior high school level and 2 others reached high school level. Ten informants work as housewives, occasionally helping their husbands work in the fields (farmers). Five themes were identified according to the informant's statement : The results of the analysis resulted in 4 themes, namely the emotional response of the family and community after *merarik*, experiencing Domestic Violence, complex emotional conditions, and divorce. The following is the description of the 4 themes:

### **Theme 1. Diverse emotional responses from the family and surrounding community after doing the merarik**

This theme provides an overview of the reactions of parents/family of the informants as well as the various surrounding communities upon knowing that the informant is carrying out the tradition of *merarik*.

#### ***Parents/family approve marriage***

This sub-theme shows a variety of reactions from informants' parents or families. These reactions are categorized into two, namely positive and negative reactions. Positive reaction is as follows:

*... yes immediately agreed. They usually just agree right away (Inf. 1)*

*Nothing. They usually just agree right away. they just want me to get married (Inf. 3)*

*At first I wanted to be proposed but my grandfather did not want because he couldn't bear to say that if I was proposed, that's why I was taken away. The response is good, mother ... it's better if she sees me married than... You know my condition, I want to continue ... continue education, I can't.*

*Instead of staying at home, I'd get married and fear there are gossip (slander), it's not good for girls. (Inf. 4)*

*....Said (parents) if you two want it, then go on. (Inf. 5)*

*With husband's first parents agree (first husband)*

*Yes, the parents immediately agreed because he asked for permission right (the fourth husband) (Inf. 6)*

*Yes they immediately agreed, yes advised so that I can be a good wife, that's the point. Hehehe (Inf. 7)*

*No more worry, yeah agree. (Inf. 8)*

*there isn't any, they're just happy I get married. (Inf. 9)*

#### ***Parents feel sorry***

A statement that shows a negative reaction from parents / family when they find out the informant is doing the *merarik*:

*I married I was still young, my parents are crying because I am the only child. They both cried, surprised. Hmm... I never got permission for marriage (tradition of merarik), so just get married (go to the first husband's house) She just cried while hugging me because I was still a child and then she (mother) feels sorry for me. [\*Her eyes filled with tears when she said] Because she thought I couldn't cook even though I could. (Inf. 2)*

*At that time, we were riding a motorcycle, Mom and Grandma, just see us leaving. They cried I was taken by my husband. I also cry not be able to leave them. Up here (my husband's house) just broke down my tears, can't bear to leave my grandmother and mother. (Inf. 5)*

### ***Parents angry when they find out I do merarik***

Then at that time my mother was also angry there (at her house), they immediately quarreled. I was told by a friend, a friend who was there calling. Eee, your father and your mother are angry, she said. Father and mother didn't know then. Eee, when he found out, he was angry until you wanted to burn my shirt. Father are angry because husband invited me in elopement that tim, didn't ask for permission. Yes, father does not agree to elope. (Second Husband) If this one, not, too angry they (very angry). (Third husband) (Inf. 6)

They are angry .. then cry but eee...what can be done .. hehehe(Inf. 10)

### ***Merarik/young marriage is common***

This sub-theme shows a variety of reactions from the surrounding community. This sub-theme reaction is also categorized into two, namely positive and negative reactions to the tradition of *merarik* or marrying young. Positive reaction is as follows:

Nothing, it's normal at first.. (Inf. 1)

Just ordinary, no one talks about anything ... it's normal for people to get married there (Inf. 2)

Ndek wah biasa markode (nothing, it's normal)(Inf. 3)

Oooh.. Never, maybe because it's used to, so common(Inf. 8)

Nothing ... Just ordinary, yeah because it's normal, miss. The little ones who get married here miss.If you are 15, 16 years old you are married(Inf. 9)

A statement that shows a negative reaction from the surrounding community when they find out the informant did the *merarik*:

### ***Become the talk of community***

Yes usual .. New bride must be diligent, clean the house but I never because I often sleep. Hehehe yes it often be said like that (Inf. 4)

Some people say that "still little but married", "already have children even though she is still small", etc.. If I hear it's hot on my ears, it hurts me. I told him (husband)(Inf. 5)

A lot of ... yes being ridiculed by people, talked about. They just arbitrarily talk about us. Because I got a divorced marriage. Hum .. divorced marriage a few times, a lot of money they said so, like people selling children they said.(Inf. 6)

yaaa there are many, because I just graduated from school. My husband has also been married, so a lot of people talk, it's not good to hear that(Inf. 7)

There is .. talking about it because I was still little but married. Yes, I'm sad to hear that..(Inf. 10)

## **Theme 2. Low economic conditions after marriage affect the emotional state of informants (complex feelings)**

This theme illustrates the low economic condition after marriage influences the informant's emotional state.

### ***Low financial capability makes feeling uncomfortable***

This sub-theme shows complex informants' feelings because their daily needs tend to be lacking.

Yes, I have, like financial problems ... sometimes daily needs aren't enough. Yes, also assisted by mother, hehehe If we are lacking. Hehehe for example there is no rice we still asks parents. The husband is just a casual workernormal lah. Heheh(Inf. 1)

Just happy, hehehe.... Yes, I'm tired because I work.. Working there, in what it's called .. Yeah, eee in the fields. If already married yes mostly tired. Working in the hot rice fields, taking care of husband too. Hehehe(Inf. 3)

At first it was exciting .. But for a long time now quite dizzy. Hehehe. Dizzy..Yaaa because the husband has nothing to do right, Yesterday worked but the contract ran out. Now unemployed (husband). So finances are always lacking(Inf. 4)

Quite happy, don't have any obstacles. Love must be sincere. Yes, we are happy though despite the shortcomings (economic needs), my husband works selling cilok around until late afternoon ... feel sorry(Inf. 5)

### ***Trying to meet their own food needs***

... When we don't have anything to eat and have a lot of needs at home, I go looking instead of him (husband) who goes looking. Hum ... I'm tired of thinking, if there isn't any rice, I'll go find it(Inf. 6)

### ***Husband angry because of financial difficulties***

Like to get angry (husband) .. Yes angry because many things..Angry because there is no money for example..Often, he gets angry(Inf. 7)

Yes usual .. difficulties in money. Hehehe.. If we don't have money, it will be difficult, we fight ... Yes, Thank God, I'm happy(Inf. 8)

Because sometimes don't have enough money, normal household life. Heheh (sad reason)(Inf. 10)

## **Theme3. Receive ill treatment from husband (domestic violence)**

This theme illustrates the unpleasant treatment of the husband experienced by the informant such as Domestic Violence (physical, sex and feelings) so that it disturbs the condition of the informant's feelings after marriage

### ***Experiencing Domestic Violence***

This sub-theme shows three categories, namely physical, sexual and psychological violence.

The following statement relates to physical violence :

Have (experienced physical violence), been beaten frequently, after that I immediately hated him. He used to hit me because I was angry at him who likes to go home at night, often going to play until 11 o'clock. That's why I'm divorced (first husband).(Inf. 2)

When fighting again often beaten(Third husband) I have...was slapped when he was angry (Fourth husband). (Inf. 6)

Yes often .. use hands (hit), I was silent already, then cry only(Inf. 7)

if there is something wrong sometimes was hit. Hehehe yeah for example not obedient to him .. But once in a while ... No (resistance) just cry. Household life, yes just usual.. (Inf. 8)

The following statements are related to sexual violence:

Ee.. If I don't want to, forced (intercourse), that's what makes the heart hurt. Sad [\* teary eyes].(Inf. 6)

The following statement is related to psychological violence (feelings):

Yes often scolded for late cooking because I sometimes forget because of watching TV anyway. Hehehe, yes sometimes cry when already scolded(Inf. 1)

Hm.. My husband is loud. Just often yelled at [\*Eyes filled with tears] yes, a little fault and getting yelled at, shouted at. Eeee kan usually we want as a wife if there is need to talk, that's what I want, but he can't... so sometimes just cry(Inf. 4)

Like to be angry .. Yes angry because a lot of things.. , Usually because there is no money(Inf. 7)

### **Feelings after marriage**

This sub-theme illustrates the feelings of informants after marriage.

Yes ashamed [\*teary eyes] but if you get better with your husband, you will be fine again(Inf. 4)

Always ashamed, hehehe. See successful friends, we (I) don't but what can we do now, it is fate . Only I myself who did not succeed, my friends, many, (successful) who became midwives, work , so ..what is it right...(Inf. 8)

Hehehe yes .. often come feeling like that .. yes...because my husband is like that so often there are feelings of regret. I often cry "why I match with people like this", I said so. I divorced twice already with my husband but reconcile again(Inf. 9)

yeah sad .. Ashamed but I still live mbak.. Hehehe(Inf. 6)

Yes initially happy but after a long time the nature changed, ... Yes very disappointed especially when hit, directly hate him(Inf. 2)

*Happier back then.. Hehehe if already married more hurt [\*look at the husband sitting in front of the house]. Yes regret, tired too. There are thoughts about getting divorced too(Inf. 7)*

**Theme 4. Divorce**

***Choose to end the household (divorced)***

This sub-theme illustrates the reasons informants decide to separate from their husbands, namely because they always fight (domestic violence), feel unhappy, the husband is not responsible and does not love her husband.

A statement that shows always fighting:

*Often fight ... (reasons for divorce)very disappointed. Especially when hit. Just sad (first husband)(Inf. 1)*

*Always fightingand then maybe he also feels uncomfortable, yes so split up(Inf. 8)*

*Yes often fights (reasons for divorce), Eeee... if there's a problem with my husband, always interfere (in-laws). He obeys his mother..... (Inf. 6)*

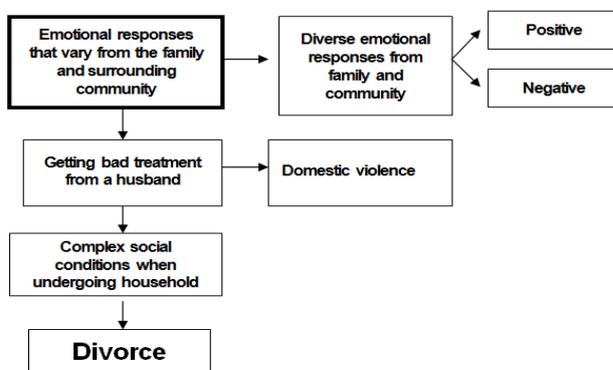
Statements that indicate the husband is not responsible:

*Own child is not given anything. Only her grandparents funded at childbirth, what time, everything. If the father is not responsible for his child, until now he has never looked for his child.*  
 (Inf. 6)

A statement that shows they no longer love their husbands:

*ooh.. Because I have no love, ... Yes, there is no love, then.. Can't be comfortable our household is a mess, always fighting like that so maybe he also feels uncomfortable right, yeahso split up(Inf. 8)*

The four themes are arranged in the form of an interaction chart between themes, as follows:



After carrying out the tradition of *merarik* at a very young age, informants found a variety of responses from the family and also the surrounding community, some gave positive responses and some gave negative responses. After getting married and living a household life with a husband, the informant often gets bad treatment from the husband, namely experiencing domestic violence. After

marriage, informants also experience complex emotional conditions such as sadness, disappointment, regret and a small portion only that feels happy. Feelings and treatment received from the husband made the informants decide to separate from the husband (divorced).

#### IV. DISCUSSION

##### **Diverse emotional responses from the family and surrounding community after doing the *merarik***

This first theme provides an overview of how parents/family and the surrounding community react after knowing the informant is doing *merarik*(eloping). Response is interpreted as a person's reaction to something through attitudes, behavior/actions and thoughts. The results of this study for this theme indicate that parents/family and the surrounding community gave mixed reactions or emotional responses. The diverse responses include happiness or mediocrity, anger, sadness to intimidation. In general, most parents who marry their children at school or early age say that they do so because they have to. Parents approve the marriage of their children because they feel it is a responsibility that must be carried out to cover up the shame in the family. Although there are a small number of parents who are willing to get their children married at an early age due to various factors<sup>[9]</sup>. In rural communities, early marriage is a natural thing and becomes a tradition that is not easy to be eliminated in an area. According to people in rural areas if a daughter is not married or not immediately married then they are said to be unsold or will become old maid. Parents also think that young married girls are good. This means that by marrying their daughter quickly or at a very easy age it can help the family economy so that the burden and responsibilities of the family are reduced. Parents also think that if their daughter does not get married soon it will have an impact on their psychological condition, especially in their social life<sup>[10]</sup>.

##### **Low economic conditions after *merarik* affect the emotional state of informants (complex feelings)**

Many women decide to get married at an early age as a form of means to meet their needs for freedom, their desire to experience love in a culturally respectable life, and to escape poverty and from difficult family conditions. But the results of this research in Israel show the opposite of their expectations, namely getting married early has limited benefits, especially psychosocial problems of women. After entering the phase of marriage, they will create intense new problems instead of finding solutions to problems before marriage. Women who were previously married at an early age show feelings of regret, especially regret not being able to learn as before marriage, always feeling lonely, feeling unhappy, always lacking in financial matters and not confident<sup>[11]</sup>. Women who drop out of school and choose to marry early have 31 percentage points more likely to live in poverty compared to women who marry at their proper or ideal age. Similarly, women who drop out of school are 11 percent more likely to be in families below the poverty line. The decision to marry early has long-term consequences<sup>[32]</sup>. After marriage, those who are involved in early marriage are more vulnerable to experiencing low economic problems in their household life. Such as lack of money to buy daily basic needs, lack of work (unemployment), dependency if often assisted by the families of both partners, difficult livelihoods, low income, and increased cost of living that is difficult to overcome<sup>[12]</sup>.

##### **Got bad treatment from her husband (domestic violence) so decided to get a divorce**

The third theme illustrates how the impact of early marriage experienced by informants after becoming a housewife psychologically.

Female couples suffer more than men in married life due to poor social relations, cessation of education, poor physical and psychological conditions due to pregnancy and forced marital relations. Women who are widowed will be discriminated against<sup>[13]</sup>. The results of Kidman Rachel's study (2017) comparing child marriage related to domestic violence in 34 countries in South Asia said that women who marry between the ages of 15 and 17 years are at high risk of experiencing sexual violence with their husband (29%). This is caused by a lack of intimacy before marriage that triggers conflict in the household and risks increasing further violence<sup>[14]</sup>. Another reason why child brides are more at risk of experiencing domestic violence is because they are socially vulnerable such as uneducated, poor and too young. Families with poverty see marriages as a path to greater economic security for their daughters, especially when education is not affordable<sup>[14]</sup>.

Another negative impact of early marriage is divorce at an early age. Many things cause divorce decisions in marriage and one of them because of economic factors. To start life with a new status as a widow at an early age is not an easy matter for women who marry early but it is one of the consequences that must be accepted and lived.

Women who are married in their teens experience the negative effects of early marriage, namely divorce<sup>[15]</sup>. Early marriage will affect social life, one of which is affecting the harmony of both partners' households. Puberty emotions that are still unstable, their way of thinking which is mostly immature will affect communication and decision making in married life<sup>[6]</sup>. According to women who get married early, divorce is the best decision after several times rejected by her husband and did not get her rights as a wife during marriage. The negative impact experienced by women who get married early is the occurrence of divorce caused by physical violence that is often done by the husband of the subject. That is because there is no readiness both mentally and physically in living a married life for both partners<sup>[16]</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

The results of this study resulted in 4 themes, namely the emotional response of the family and community after *merarik*, received bad treatment from her husband (domestic violence), complex emotional conditions after marriage, and divorce. After carrying out the tradition of *merarik* at a very young age, informants found a variety of responses from the family and also the surrounding community, some gave positive responses and some gave negative responses. After getting married and living a household life with a husband, the informant often gets bad treatment from the husband, namely experiencing domestic violence. After marriage, informants also experience complex emotional conditions such as sadness, disappointment, regret and a small portion only that feels happy. Feelings and treatment received from the husband made the informants decide to separate from the husband (divorced).

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