

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Family Size and Marital Age

by

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Abstract

A cross sectional study about the relationships between family size and marital age and the impact of education, occupation and family planning programme was conducted in the region of South Tapanuli North Sumatera. The study was performed on 246 married couples by simple random sampling of households in the villages Pakantaa, Tamiang, Muarasoro and Sumuran, during the period of September 25 up to October 3, 1982.

The earliest age of marriage for women was 14 years, and the latest 20 years. Most of the women (68%) married at 16-20 years. The main education of responders were primary school (67%). The occupational status was mostly (90%) farmer. The mean family size under 20 years old was 6.3 and over 20 years, 5.3.

Fertility rate under 20 years was still high. Family Planning was not yet widely accepted in this area.

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Introduction

The practice of early marriage remains widespread. Adolescent fertility responsible for growing proportion of births to women under 20 deserves tacit attention due to its adverse health, demographic and social consequences (Sudiyanto, 1979). The experience of the medical profession over the last fifty years indicates that not only is the number of children that leads to unfavourable health consequences, but also the interval between pregnancies and the mother's age at pregnancy.

Most people, including politicians and religious authorities, now agree that responsible people should, and generally do, avoid having more children than can properly be looked after (William and Jelliffe, 1978).

Material and Methods

This study had been performed in the villages Pekantan, Tamiang, Muarasoro and Sumuran in the region of South Tapanuli, North Sumatera, during the period of

Results

We found 1468 children in these four villages; 61.79% of the families had 6 or more children. See table 1.

TABLE 1 : *Family Size*

Number of children	Total	%
No child	2	0.81
One	9	3.66
Two	18	7.32
Three	21	8.54
Four	19	7.72
Five	25	10.16
Six or more	152	61.79

China Birth Planning, suggested the slogan of "Later, Longer and Fewer". China leaders asked all citizens to delay marriage, space the births of their children three or more years apart, and limit their families to two or three children. In 1979, the Indonesia population was 138.000.000 which is now 147.000.000. The population growth rate is 1.9% and mean family size 4.9.

The purpose of this study is to find out the relationships between family size and marital age and the impact of education, occupation and family planning programme in South Tapanuli, North Sumatera, Indonesia.

September 25, up to October 3, 1982. We distributed questionnaires to 246 married couples by simple random sampling.

We found that the earliest age for marriage was 14 years for women while the latest 30 years. Most women (68%) were married between the ages of 16-20 years and men were mostly married between 21-25 years. See Table 2.

TABLE 2 : *Marital age*

Marital Age		Female	%	Male	%
Under 15 years		33	13.87	—	0
16 — 20 years		162	68.07	64	18.70
21 — 25 years		40	16.80	95	42.60
26 — 30 years		3	1.26	54	24.22
over 31 years		—		10	4.48
Total		238		223	

There were 195 mothers who married at the age below 20 years, with total number of children 1237. Mothers married at the age of more than 20 years were 43 with total number of children 231. The average family

size of those who married at the age of below 20 years was 6.3 and those above 20 years 5.3. The education of most of the couples was mostly primary school, namely 67% for female and 72% for male. See Table 3.

TABLE 3 : *Educational status*

Education	Female	%	Male	%
Illiterate	57	23.65	30	12.5
Primary school	163	67	172	72
Intermediate school	15	6.22	26	10.83
High school	5	2.07	10	4.15
University/Academy	1	0.42	2	0.83

Most of the families in this study (90%) were living as farmers. See Table 4.

Families participating in family planning were still few namely 9.07%. See Table 5.

TABLE 4 : *Occupational status*

Occupational	Female	Male
Unemployed	8	5
Farmer	216	208
Government official	7	10
Others	8	16
Total	239	239

TABLE 5 : *Family Planning*

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IUD	5
Condom	3
Total	26

Discussion

The national census in 1979 showed that the mean family size in Indonesia was 4.9. In this study we found that 61.79% of the families in the four villages had six or more children.

Zakaria Siregar (1978) in his study on family planning among freshmen at the University of North Sumatera, Medan, Indonesia, found that the majority of the students wanted to have 3-4 children and planned to get married at the age of 25-29 years. The average family size for women married at the age of below 20 years was 6.3 and for those above 20 years 5.3. The International Fertility Survey in 1976 found that the average number of children was 4.4 for mothers marrying at the age

of 13 and 2.0 for those marrying at the age of 25. In these four villages 68% of the women married below the age of 20 years. See table 2. In India, 56.3% women married at the age of 15-19 years and in Senegal 50% of women were married at the age of 15.6 years (Sudiyanto, 1979). At the age of 15-19 years almost 40% of African girls are married, 30% in Asia, 15% in America, 14% in Oceania, 9% in Soviet Union and 7% in Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Concerning Indonesia, no data of girls marrying at the ages of 15-19 years are available (Sudiyanto, 1979).

In table 6 we can see the changes in laws regulating minimum age of marriage since 1970.

TABLE 6 : *Changes in Laws Regulating Minimum age of marriage-since 1970*

Country	Previous law		Latest law		Year of latest Reform
	Women	Man	Women	Man	
Australia	16	21	19	19	1973
Columbia	18	21	18	18	1974
C u b a	—	—	16	18	1975
FR Germany	16	21	18	18	1974
France	15	18	18	18	1974
India	15	18	18	21	1976
Indonesia	15	18	16	19	1974
I r a n	15	18	18	20	1974
Ireland	12	14	16	16	1974
Iraly	14	16	18	18	1975
Malaysia	—	—	18	18	1975
N e p a l	14	16	16	18	1975
Tanzania	—	—	15	18	1971

Rebecca Cook. World health, August - September 1976.

The delay of marriage from 16 to 20 or 21 can decrease child birth by 25 - 30 %. In table 7 we see the average age marriage in Java, Indonesia.

TABLE 7 : *Average Maritelage in Java*

Year 1980	Average age at first marriage	
	City	Village
West - Java	16.7	15.64
Mid - Java	17.91	16.65
East - Java	17.27	16.45

Most of the women (67%) and men (72%) had primary education while illiteracy was still 23.65% among women and 12.5% among men (See table 3). World Fertility Survey in Senegal in 1978 found that only 15% of the population over 15 years were illiterate.

People in these villages were living as farmers (Table 4). This is not surprising because Indonesia is still an agricultural land. Table 5 shows that family planning was not widely accepted yet in these villages. Only few (9.02%) were following the program, though the government is doing much to persuade the people.

Summary

The average family size was still large and the majority women married at a younger age.

Most of the people had primary education and were living as farmers. Family planning was not yet widely accepted.

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