

Impact of Geographic Conditions on *Sirri* Marriage Phenomenon in Situbondo District

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the impact of the geographical conditions of an area on the phenomenon of sirri marriage through a qualitative study. Data analysis was carried out inductively from the results of observations, in-depth interviews and FGDs. The results of the study indicate that the phenomenon of unregistered marriage occurs in Sumber Malang, Situbondo, East Java as a result of the geographical conditions of the area. The topographical conditions of the area in the form of mountainous areas with an altitude of 500-1,250 meters above sea level, very steep with a slope of 45%, rocky and dry soils make the Sumber Malang area difficult to develop economically. This is because agricultural cultivation is difficult to develop. Furthermore, the accessibility of areas that are difficult to reach because they are far inland, narrow roads, no public transportation, far from the center of economic activity have caused people in this area to choose to stay in their environment. Topography and regional accessibility have an impact on adolescent marriage behavior in the Sumber Malang community. Adolescents and parents view unregistered marriage as something that is done to avoid sin, the certainty of a relationship, economic motives (because the cost of marriage is considered expensive by the community) and as a result of the remote location of the area; because the teenager only has a circle of friends in Sumbermalang. There are two patterns of sirri marriage that occur, namely teenagers will marry sirri and live together and teenagers will marry sirri then stay with their parents and still continue their education. The implication of this research is to provide an illustration that geographical space can affect the pattern of marriage that occurs in society. Based on this, the relevant government can provide adequate access to education at the research sites.

Keywords : Sirri marriage; geographical condition; topography; accessibility

1. Introduction

The human-earth relationship (Sun et al., 2016) is a natural relationship that has existed since humans were born and reproduced, because human survival, reproduction, development cannot be separated from the geographical environment. Soil is the land that gave birth to humans. Especially in rural communities, humans have a strong dependence on land. With the continuous development of science and technology, humans have a greater ability to change nature and are less dependent on the geographical environment. However, it cannot be denied that the geographical environment has

always been the material basis for production and people's lives. Except for physical activity, geographical environment, climatic conditions, political conditions, economic conditions, and cultural conditions in an area have a great influence on people's lives, one of which is marriage (Leke et al., 1993).

Marriage is an important episode in life. This marks the transition to parenthood with child-bearing potential and one of the most important determinants of fertility (Dimastiwi, 2021). However, the phenomenon of unregistered marriage before a woman reaches a sufficient age to marry still persists among women. Sirri marriage is the norm in some traditional societies which have strong intergenerational ties with an agricultural economic base (Ardila, 2014; Faiz, 2013; Muhajarah, 2015). In Indonesia, especially in the horseshoe area, namely Situbondo Regency, sirri marriages are still common (Tamam, 2010).

The pattern of adolescent marriage that occurs in the study area is more in unregistered marriages or unregistered marriages. The phenomenon of sirri marriage is very common among teenagers in Madura society. As is the case in Situbondo Regency, the majority of teenagers get married before they are 20 years old. Sirri marriages are very difficult to trace because of their unregistered status, but many are carried out in the community (Tahir et al., 2019). Sirri marriages in Madurese youth begin with self-introductions by teenage girls and boys and introductions by parents. Furthermore, when they feel like each other or match, the couple will perform a sirri marriage. There are teenagers who are married in a sirri manner, some continue to study and some stop going to school and choose to become housewives.

According to the belief of some people, the implementation of marriage should be widely announced to the public. It aims so that the public can know the union between two different human beings, and know about the changes in the status of the two. Marriage must also be legalized by state law and also religious law in order to create peace between the two parties. However, on the other hand, in the Madurese community there are couples who choose to marry according to religious law by carrying out unregistered marriages and not registering their marriages under state law (Leahy & O'Sullivan, 2019).

The word sirri means secretly or not published with a wedding ceremony (Maloko, 2015). Sirri marriages are carried out according to Islamic law, however are not registered according to state law and are not announced to the surrounding community (Irfan, 2011). The implementation of sirri marriages has also been recorded in several countries such as England, the Netherlands, Malaysia, the Philippines, Tunisia and Russia and also occurs in Indonesia. In the UK in 2016 at least from 287 marriage records there were 27% of marriages that were not registered in state law because their citizens performed unregistered marriages (Suleiman, 2015). In 2017 in a survey conducted by True Vision Aire and Channel 4 of 903 Muslim women in the UK who were respondents, 60% of them married only based on religious law or unregistered marriage (Adillah, 2011; Cranmer, 2019).

There are several reasons for sirri marriages in England. First, a man and a woman perform an unregistered marriage due to avoid adultery (Suleiman, 2015). Second, couples who want to live together, but are not ready to legally marry. Third, couples who have previously married religiously with the intention of registering their marriage but do not have the free time to register their marriage according to state law (Fairbarin, 2020; Leahy & O'Sullivan, 2019). Fourth, sirri marriages are also carried out to fulfill sexual desires in a way that is allowed by religious law, namely marriage, especially for people who are far apart from their official partners (Nisa, 2018). For Islamic countries such as Tunisia, it is very difficult to prevent sirri marriages, because Islamically such marriages are permissible (Mustasaari & Al-Sharmani, 2018; Voorhoeve, 2018).

Besides England and Tunisia, unregistered marriages also occur in Malaysia and mostly occur among foreign workers (Leng et al., 2012; Nisa, 2018). Workers from abroad, including from Indonesia, generally have binding contracts with their place of work, most of which do not allow them

to get married first. For this reason, they choose to carry out a sirri marriage so that the parties where they work are not known (Nisa, 2018). Another reason for foreign workers such as from Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, India, Vietnam and Nepal in Malaysia who carry out sirri marriages with native Malaysian educators with the aim that foreign workers have convenience if they will become local residents in the future because they have married local residents with how to legally legalize their marriage (Leng et al., 2012).

In Indonesia itself, sirri marriages are also rife in several areas. Marriage in Indonesia is said to be a sirri marriage if it is not performed in front of KUA officers for Muslim citizens and the Civil Registry Office for non-Muslim citizens (Saleng et al., 2017). In 2012, the number of known sirri marriages was around 25% of the total number of marriages in Indonesia (Nisa, 2018). Although it is religiously legal, legally sirri marriage is not recognized in Indonesia (Razak et al., 2019). The practice of unregistered marriage for the Madurese in Sumber Malang is a common practice. Instead for residents in this area, sirri marriages seem to have become a culture so that carrying out unregistered marriages is no longer a taboo subject and considers that sirri marriages (unregistered or underhanded marriages) are the same as officially registered marriages. The government through the KUA in Situbondo Regency has actually made efforts to overcome this problem, but has not given maximum results. Therefore, this is a common problem and should be a priority to find a solution immediately.

Sumbermalang District is one of the sub-districts located in Situbondo Regency. Most of this sub-district is located at the foot of the mountains, namely Mount Argopuro with an altitude of 1,200 meters above sea level. Most, ie 65% of the population in this sub-district work as farmers and farm laborers. The community of farmers and farm laborers also have a low educational background, as many as 76.3% of the population only finished elementary school. Based on data obtained in the field, the number of sirri marriages in Sumbermalang District is the highest in Situbondo Regency. This data has only been successfully collected and clearly known through information from local residents and there are still some that have not been and/or are unknown or only vaguely known by the residents. That is, the number of perpetrators of unregistered marriages in Situbondo District, could be more than the data. Previous research conducted in 2015 also showed data for as many as 200 people, only in one District of Sumbermalang (Nur et al., 2020). However, in 2020, the number of perpetrators in the region has not decreased and has actually increased to 210 people who are involved in unregistered marriages.

As we know, that the geographical conditions of an area can have an influence on human social life. This also applies in the Sumbermalang District, where the location of the area is at the foot of the mountain, the road conditions are not good (partly asphalt and part onderlah), agricultural land that is less developed causes the economic condition of the people here to be at the lower middle level. In addition to having an effect on economic conditions, the geographical location of this sub-district also has an influence on the pattern of teenage marriage. Based on this, researchers are very interested in knowing more about how the geographical conditions of the Sumbermalang District area can affect the social life of the community, especially the pattern of teenage marriage. Geographical conditions of the area to be analyzed include; topography, accessibility, and community behavior as a result of the geographical conditions of the area.

This research needs to be done to find out more about the role of geographical conditions in people's social life, especially in the pattern of teenage marriage. By knowing this, young women who undergo sirri marriages will gradually be free from marriage patterns that are not in accordance with statutory regulations. In addition, by knowing the root cause of the relationship between geographical conditions and adolescent marriage patterns, the relevant government can provide solutions to reduce the number of unregistered marriages that occur in Sumbermalang District. Thus, the education level of young women will be better along with reducing the number of sirri marriages. This will also have

an impact on various dimensions, such as adolescent reproductive health, maternal and child mortality and adolescent household life.

2. Methods

The location of this research is Sumbermalang District, Situbondo, East Java. This district is located at coordinates 7,849133° South Latitude and 113.704650° East Longitude. The northern sub-districts are Jatibanteng, Besuki and Suboh sub-districts, in the east and south by Bondowoso Regency and in the west by Probolinggo Regency. The area of Sumbermalang District is 129.47 km² which is divided into 9 villages, namely Alastengah, Baderan, Kalirejo, Plalangan, Sumberargo, Taman, Tamansari, Taman Kursi and Tlogosari (Sumbermalang in Figures. 2020). The research location in detail can be seen in Figure 1.

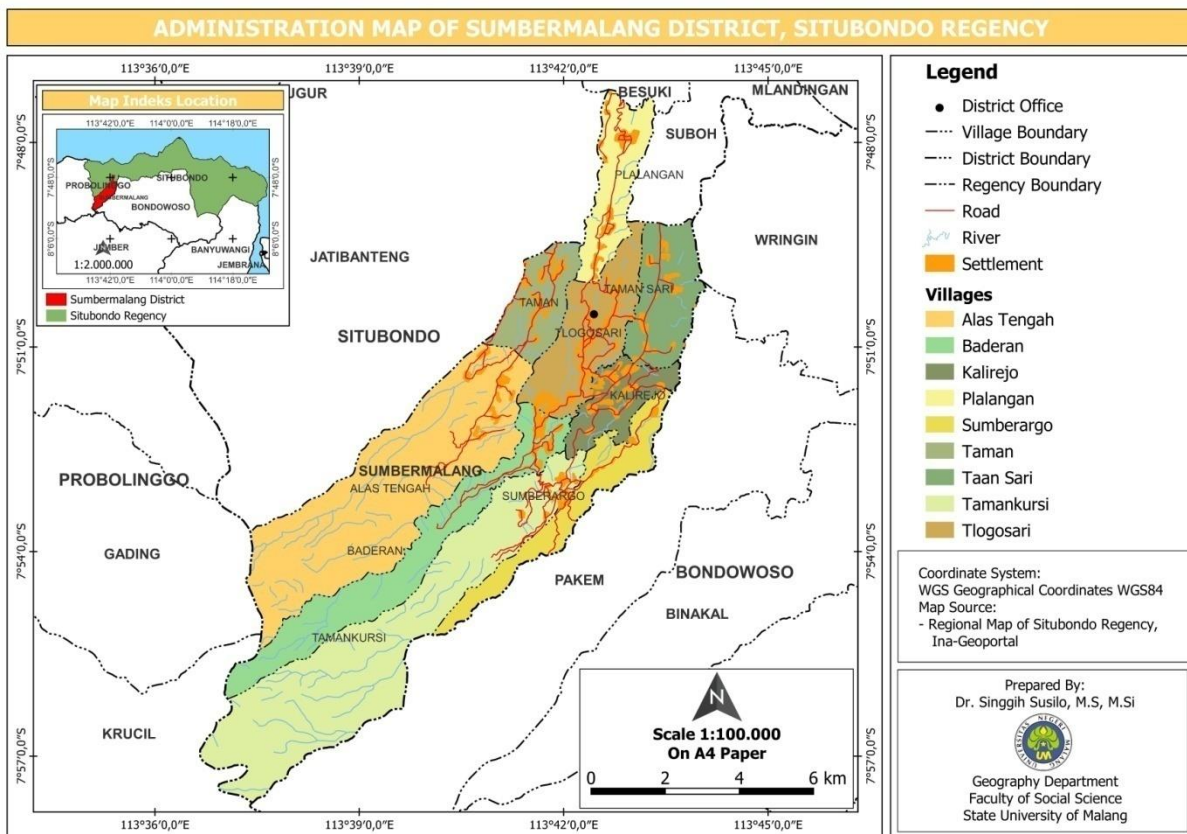


Figure 1. Administration map of Sumbermalang District, Situbondo

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative data were obtained from one sub-district, namely Sumber Malang, Situbondo, East Java. There were 247 sirri marriages in 2019-2020 in Sumber Malang District. This study was conducted in this sub-district because it has a high incidence of sirri early marriage in Situbondo, East Java.

All research participants for the qualitative method were selected purposively with a snowball technique that included various groups. The question guide aims to obtain information on topographic conditions, accessibility and community behavior as a result of the geographical conditions of the area. The guidelines also include questions to understand the context that influences young men to marry early and what role they play in these situations that lead to their marriage, in the decision-making process.

The interview informants consisted of young women aged 15-24 years who had early marriages in a sirri manner as many as 16 young women and 16 young men. Interviews were also conducted with parents of perpetrators of early marriage in a sirri manner, community leaders, teachers, KUA (official marriage agency) officers and village or sub-district officials.

Fieldwork was carried out between June and September 2021. In addition to in-depth interviews with 32 youth aged 15-24, who married before the age of 18, eight focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted. Each FGD session was mixed gender and consisted of three women and three men. Informants were initially briefed on the scope and objectives of the study and their consent was received for audio recording and visual image-taking during the interviews. In-depth interviews mainly focused on the impact of geographical conditions on the cultural behavior of early marriage in a sirri manner.

3. Results and Discussion

Three themes were identified from in-depth interviews and data analysis: (1) geographical conditions of the region, (2) regional accessibility, and (3) community behavior as a result of regional geographical conditions.

3.1 Geographical conditions of the region

Sumbermalang District is part of Situbondo Regency which can be said to be a remote sub-district because it is far from Situbondo Regency, which is as far as 55 km. Sumbermalang District is located in the western part of Situbondo Regency, which has a northern border with Besuki District, in the east with Suboh District and Bondowoso District, in the south with Bondowoso District and Probolinggo District and the western boundary is Jatibanteng District.

The area of Sumbermalang District is 42.44 km² which does not include state forest and most of the area is mountainous, dry, rocky, steep land with an average height of between 500-1,250 meters above sea level. But there are also rice fields which are located on the edge of rivers, valleys and steep. The District of Sumbermalang consists of 9 villages and is divided into 32 hamlets, 55 RW and 161 RT. The villages are Alastengah, Baderan, Taman Kursi, Sumberargo, Kalirejo, Tamansari, Tlogosari, Taman, and Plalangan.

Tlogosari Village, which is part of the Sumbermalang District, is the capital of the sub-district, which is 52 km to Situbondo Regency. Meanwhile, the village with the farthest distance from the sub-district capital is Alastengah Village (20 km). So with the long distance it can be said that Sumbermalang District is a very remote area.

The topographical conditions of the Sumbermalang District have an impact on agricultural activities in this area (Mubarak et al., 2017). The steep mountainous terrain, dry soil, and rocky soil make several types of agricultural commodity crops undeveloped in this area. Some of the agricultural crops that are cultivated by the community on a small scale are tobacco and corn. These two types of plants are widely planted, but have not been able to become the main community that can generate income for the community as the main source of income.

The main income of the people in this sub-district comes from working as laborers and farmers. The heads of families work as laborers for laying hens/broilers, foragers for grass for cattle, loggers for bamboo trees as raw material for plaiting, construction workers. The women and housewives work as woven bamboo makers, measuring pxl 20cmx10cm and sold to the market at a price of Rp. 1,500.00 per ten plaits. This activity is very commonly carried out by family heads and women in this sub-district. Therefore, economic activity in this sub-district has not varied. This is also due to the level of education of the community, most of which have finished elementary school. Thus, society has not been able to innovate in economic activities (Ekamper et al., 2011)

Residents in the sub-district work as laborers and farmers. The education level of the population in Sumber Malang District is seen from the number of students, including: the number of elementary school students as many as 5,156, the number of junior high school students as many as 1,050 and high school equivalents as many as 829 (BPS, 2020). When compared to the population of Situbondo Regency of 685,967 people, the ratio of the population who are still in school at the twelve-year basic education level reaches 3.72% of the total population of Situbondo Regency (BPS, 2020).

The community in Sumber Malang District is known as a *santri* community with various religious cultures that surround it. The religious culture that has been built over the years by these northern coastal communities is evident in various patterns of community life. Islam is the dominant religion and colors the people of Sumber Malang District. This is reinforced by data that of the total population of 35,967 people, 34,628 are Muslims or (96.2%) and 1,342 non-Muslims or (3.7%) (BPS, 2020).

The culture of the *santri* that has been constructed into the realm of people's thinking eventually fosters local religious values. The local religious values of the Sumbermalang District community which were constructed by the local culture of the coastal community who incidentally were *santri* for many years, were transferred from generation to generation and greatly influenced the behavior and life of the community. The Muslim community of Sumbermalang District has a tendency to strongly believe in the figure of the *kiai*. Anything that is said by a *kiai* or religious figure in the form of "wrong or right", "according to or not in accordance" with the current conditions is a fatwa and belief that is difficult to change. This condition simultaneously produces and produces a patriarchal culture that has become a 'spirit' in various aspects of community life at large and has an effect on family institutions, the community environment, educational institutions, and individuals as members of the community of Sumber Malang District.

3.2 Regional accessibility

The determination of accessibility is determined, among others, based on factors of distance/area location, road network, and the existence of transportation facilities. In addition, it also includes topographical conditions or the height of the area as a factor that hinders accessibility. Based on the distance/regional location factor, the value of accessibility is closely related to the location of an area from other areas, especially from the center of community activities which are usually related to the presence of a market (Irwan et al., 2018). In Sumbermalang District, there is one market location which is the center of community activity. The center of activity on the first level is the Market in Tlogosari Village.

When viewed from the road network, the road network in Sumbermalang District is divided into 3 classes, namely collector roads, local roads that connect between villages/kelurahan, and environmental roads within the village. There is only one collector road in Sumber Malang District, namely the road that connects Sumbermalang District with Situbondo District. Its function is not as the main route between districts but only as an alternative route. The width of this collector road ranges from 5 - 6 meters with an asphalt road. There are several local roads in Sumbermalang District that connect one village/kelurahan with other villages/kelurahan. The width of the main road in Sumbermalang District is 4 m. Meanwhile, environmental roads are roads within the village that connect between hamlets in the village. Environmental roads in the village are mostly still rocks and gravel with the width of the main road in the village mostly between 2 - 3 meters. Even in some sections, footpaths are still found which only have a width of less than 2 meters and are still in the form of dirt. This makes it difficult for vehicles to access the area, especially to the remote hamlets in these villages.

The topography of most areas in Sumbermalang District has a very steep topography. When viewed from the percentage of the slope of the land, 30.65% of the Sumbermalang sub-district has a

slope of more than 40% or very steep, while for areas with flat topography with a slope of 0 - 8% it is only about 8.91%. This steep topography has made access to some villages even more difficult. This is because in addition to the road conditions that have suffered a lot of damage, the steep topography makes it difficult for vehicles to pass through the road

3.3 Community behavior as impact of regional geographical conditions

Community behavior is formed not only from the interaction between fellow humans but also related to physical strength. Pinto (2015) suggests that the main factor in the process of behavior occurring is interaction while other factors such as climate, geographical location and conditions, politics and economy are modifying factors. So in this case environmental characteristics are one of the factors that greatly influence the formation of community behavior. The behavior of the community will also have its own uniqueness that is formed due to the peculiarities of the community's culture, different climatic conditions, topographic characteristics, the influence of the spiritual values adopted, and the political or security conditions of an area. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with the subject, the theoretical interpretation of the findings is as follows:

a. Sirri's marriage as an effort to avoid sin

Teenage girls in Sumbermalang sub-district decided to have an unregistered marriage for fear of sin, too long "runtang runtung" or courtship. The motivation for carrying out a sirri marriage is to legalize the relationship between a man and a woman so as to avoid committing sins. This mindset of fear of sin is the reason for the perpetrators of sirri marriages. This is a positive implication of understanding Islamic religious doctrines about sin-reward, heaven-hell, haram-halal, legal-illegitimate and so on. However, this was later applied partially without paying attention to the principles of other Islamic teachings. Another reason is to avoid adultery. This reason is almost the same as the fear of sin. Whereas the real concept of marriage does not only stop at the issue of avoiding adultery, but there are other things that are also very important, namely that the marriage bond is a very strong bond and family life as much as possible gives birth to sakinah or tranquility for all its members. The motivation of teenage girls who decide to marry in a sirri way is because they are afraid of being abandoned or by their boyfriends. So to make sure that the boy who is the girlfriend of a teenage girl will not leave her is to ask her to marry in a sirri way.

b. Sirri marriage as an economic motive

The motivation of teenage girls to decide to marry sirri is because of the poor condition of their parents. Parents will immediately marry off their daughters even though they are still minors if the child already has a boyfriend or match her if the child does not have a boyfriend. This motive is carried out so that the daughter's family can reduce the burden of dependents, because a married daughter will be dependent on her husband.

c. Sirri marriage as a result of the remote location of the region

Teenage girls and boys who do unregistered marriages here because they are left behind in access to information and technology. They are deep inland and in remote and mountainous areas. Due to their reluctance to leave their neighborhood, after finishing school they chose to marry and most of them in a sirri way. The reality in the field shows that there is a cultural logic that is the basis for why unregistered marriages occur. That this reality does not grow from an empty space that only exists instantaneously, but that it exists and is present from a logic that is constructed through the logic of the physical, cultural and religious environment. Sirri marriages find their logic of legitimacy in the construction of culture, environment and religious understanding.

Sirri marriages occur because of poverty motives. Many Madurese in Sumbermalang sub-district live in lower-middle economic conditions, especially rural communities. Poor in this case has two meanings. First, the community cannot afford to pay for administration at KUA (Religious Affairs Office). This inability gets worse when village-level brokers exist. They would send people to take care of various administrations because he had to pay twice as much as usual. Second, they married sirri because of the inability of the economy to finance their lives. In public affairs, especially in their work, they still depend a lot on men. In this context, sirri marriages seem to be legal to do in Situbondo.

The geographical location of Sumbermalang District provides its own challenges for its residents. The phenomenon of sirri marriage which has become entrenched for teenagers in this area is also greatly influenced by geography, steep nature and remote location which is certainly one of the obstacles in people's creativity. Dry soil conditions and the difficulty of developing agricultural activities make the people here poor. The location of the sub-district which is far from the center of community activities makes the youth not have friendly relations with teenagers from other areas. The circle of friends of teenagers in this sub-district is only limited to teenagers who are in the same area. Most teenagers in Sumbermalang Sub-district prefer to live permanently in Sumbermalang Sub-district rather than having to look for work outside the area. Teenagers choose to stay in their hometowns because they feel reluctant to be away from their families. This reluctance is because, if they work in the morning, in the afternoon they want to return to their home and meet their families. The distance from their residence to various community/economic activity centers is very far, so they have to live in a rented house/boarding house at the work location.

Based on this description, geographical conditions in the Sumbermalang sub-district have a very serious impact on the behavior of its people (Ansell et al., 2017; Elbaar et al., 2019; Boyce et al., 2019; Niamba, 2020). People, especially teenagers, do not have access to adequate education in the vicinity of their homes. This is because the distance of a public or private secondary school from the sub-district is 34 km. Furthermore, both teenage girls and boys only go to school up to the level of junior high school education and even only elementary school. This causes a lot of teenagers who when they finish school, prefer to marry sirri with their male friends.

Sirri marriages in Sumbermalang District are divided into two patterns. The first pattern, teenage girls and boys marry in a sirri and then live in a household like a marriage officially registered at the KUA. The second pattern, adolescent girls and boys marry in a sirri and continue their education at the high school level and even college. In this second pattern, most of the youth do not live in the same house. They still live with their parents. After completing their education, they will only live and settle in one of the parents of a girl or a boy.

4. Conclusion

In general, the geographical conditions of the area tend to influence people's behavior. The steep topography, dry and rocky soil make the community's economic and agricultural activities not varied or difficult to develop. The accessibility of remote areas, located in the mountains with an average altitude of 500-1,250 meters above sea level makes Sumbermalang District difficult to access by outsiders and at the same time causes the community to have little contact with outsiders. These two geographical conditions lead to the unique behavior of the people. One of them is the existence of sirri marriages among teenage girls and boys. Teenagers who are reluctant to leave their neighborhood due to limited access and unable to get a suitable job make them decide to marry in a sirri way. The pattern of unregistered marriage that occurs, firstly, teenagers marry sirri and settle in one house, second, teenagers marry sirri and continue their education by living in the residence of their respective parents. After completing their education, they will live together.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, other people or organizations related to the material in this article.

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