EARLY MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL-REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG MADURESE WOMEN: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AN INDONESIAN COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This research is an ethnographic study regarding the ethnic group practice of early marriage in one sub-village in East Java province, Indonesia. The ethnic group, Madurese, is one among two community groups that persist in conducting the practice. Law enforcement and health programs have been designed to overcome it. Yet, they resulted in the invisible practice of early marriage within the community.

Experience of the daily life, while conducting the research, led to a deeper understanding of the complexity of early marriage among Madurese. The researcher spent time doing field work in the community; the research was able to portray cases in early marriage. Taking three cases from different generations, the research explored women’s experience regarding their decision in getting married at a young age: under 16 years old. Their experiences in life present a picture of their life from their own lens: how they thought about themselves, their marriage story, and sexual-reproductive life experiences.

Retrieving and blending women and community voices, we can see the prevalent trend in early marriage is constructed by the complexity of the cultural web of the Madurese. The prevailing practice is also constrained by their preference of preserving their way of living. The study also shows how the local government failed to recognize the complexity of the community in Kebun Cengkeh so that it is hard to stimulate change related to early marriage.

KEY WORDS: EARLY MARRIAGE / ETHNOGRAPHY / MADURESE / SEXUAL-REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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