



## Emotional maturity and marital readiness among marriage dispensation applicants

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### Abstract

Child marriage is a marriage that occurs when one or both parties are under 19 years old, which requires marriage dispensation from a Religion Court judge. One of the problems faced by prospective brides is low marriage readiness. Marriage is important to prepare so that household life can run harmoniously. One of the important factors in marital readiness is emotional maturity. Emotional maturity plays an important role in marriage readiness for brides-to-be. This study examines the correlation between emotional maturity and readiness to marry in children applying for marriage dispensation. This study uses a correlational quantitative method. The sampling technique used quota sampling with predetermined criteria, namely the child applicant for marriage dispensation at the Malang Regency Religious Court, obtained 107 respondents. The instruments used in this study were the marital readiness and emotional maturity scales. The data analysis used was Pearson's product-moment correlation with a value of  $r = 0.455$  and  $p < .001$ . This study's results indicate a significant and positive relationship between emotional maturity and readiness to marry in children applying for marriage dispensation.

**Keywords:** *child marriage; emotional maturity; marital readiness*

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## **Introduction**

Ideally, individuals start marriage life in their 20s. However, in some cases, some people decide to marry under 19 years old. The existence of this phenomenon has become a concern for the public and the government because they are too young to get married. UNICEF noted that Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest rate of child marriage in the world with nearly 1.5 million cases at the end of 2022. It makes Indonesia the country ranked 8th in the world and 2nd in ASEAN for child marriage cases.

The regulation regarding the minimum age limit for a person to get married has been written in UU No. 16 Tahun 2019, which is 19 years old for men and women. Prospective brides or grooms who are less than 19 years old must apply for a marriage dispensation at the Religious Court in order to obtain a marriage license in accordance with government regulations regarding the minimum age limit for marriage. The area with the highest rate of child marriage in East Java was in Malang Regency. Based on data from the Malang Regency Religious Court in 2022, there were 1,434 cases of marriage dispensation applications with 386 never attended formal education, 288 elementary school graduates, 476 junior high school graduates, and 105 high school graduates.

Anwar & Rahmah (2017) stated that there are physical and psychological impacts that will be experienced by individuals who engage in child marriage. Some of the physical impacts that a person will experience when pregnant at a young age are prone to miscarriage, premature birth (premature babies), low birth weight, congenital defects, viral infections, anemia during pregnancy, and death. Meanwhile, the psychological impact experienced is in the form of stress due to the pressure of a new role that will result in her married life.

Holman & Li (1997) defined marital readiness as one's ability carry out their new duties as a married couple and is considered an important aspect in the process of developing relationships. Olson et al. (2011) explained that marriage readiness will help couples to be able to identify their strengths and also take their time to improve aspects that are considered lacking so that their married life will continue to grow. Therefore, someone who has the intention to get married needs readiness. One of them is the level of mature emotions so as not to make the wrong decisions and respond to problems well. Blood (1969) stated that marital readiness is divided into two types: personal and situational. Personal readiness includes emotional maturity, social, age, and new role. Meanwhile, situational readiness includes economics and time. Moreover Salsabila (2019) stated that emotional maturity plays an important role in an individual's marital readiness. An emotionally mature person is considered ready to prepare for marriage because he can think more carefully in making decisions (Salsabila, 2019).

Emotional maturity is described as a condition when a person can express and control their emotions well. Katkovsky & Gorlow (1976) defined emotional maturity as a process in which the personality continuously strives to achieve healthy emotions and is physically and interpersonal. According to Santrock (2012) emotional maturity is described as the ability of individuals to manage and regulate their emotions more adaptively and will continue to develop over time. Couples who have good emotional maturity can help with household life. This happens because they can handle conflicts and differences that arise in domestic life (Iqbal, 2019).

Davita (2021) found a significant correlation between emotional maturity and readiness to marry in early adulthood. If a person has high emotional maturity, then his readiness to get married will be high as well. Fitriyani (2021), in her research, found a positive and significant correspondence between emotional maturity and marriage preparation. Both studies showed a good correlation between a person's emotional maturity and their level of preparation for marriage in early adult subjects. In addition, Al'azm & Fitniwilis (2023) in their research also showed a positive correlation between emotional maturity and readiness to get married in early adult subjects at Risma Hayatul Ilmi Depok.

Based on the previous explanation, this research objective examined the correlation between emotional maturity and marital readiness among marriage dispensation applicants. We

hypothesized a correlation between emotional maturity and marital readiness among marriage dispensation applicants.

## **Method**

The research method in this study was a quantitative correlational design. The study population was all marriage dispensation applicants at Malang Regency Religious Court. We applied quota sampling with all respondents 107 applicants (92 girls, 15 boys) from 19 September until 11 October 2023. We categorized subjects into two age groups, namely early adolescents with ages 12 – 14 years as many as 3 subjects, and middle adolescents with ages of 15 – 18 years as many as 104 subjects.

### **Instrument**

The marital readiness scale was adapted by Wulandari (2020) based on marital readiness aspects from Holman & Larson (1994) and Olson & Olson (1997) that have been summarized by Wiryasti (2004). There were 36 items on the marital readiness scale with 17 favorable items and 19 unfavorable items with a validity range 0.325 – 0.687 and reliability of 0.838. The measure of marriage readiness uses 4 answer options, namely Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The emotional maturity scale was developed by aspects from Katkovsky & Gorlow (1976) and adapted by Haq (2017). It consists 26 items (11 favorable items and 15 unfavorable items). The validity range 0.352 - 0.668 and the reliability coefficient was 0.898. The measure of emotional maturity uses 4 answer options, namely Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

### **Procedure**

There are four stages in this study. (1) We conducted observations and literature studies on the problems that prospective brides tend to experience in the Counseling Room of the Malang Regency Religious Court. (2) We determined the research variables and subjects to be studied, namely emotional maturity and marital readiness among marriage dispensation applicants. (3) We collected data by providing the emotional maturity scale and the marital readiness scale based on predetermined criteria. Before giving and filling out the questionnaire, the researcher gave informed consent to each respondent's guardian to give consent to participate in this study. The scale were given directly to the child of the marriage dispensation applicant by filling out a questionnaire before the premarital counseling session.

### **Analysis**

We applied Pearson's Product Moment correlation analysis using JASP to examine the correlation hypothesis between emotional maturity and marital readiness.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

Table 1. Level of Respondent's Emotional Maturity and Marital Readiness

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Readiness	High	53	49.5%
	Medium	53	49.5%
	Low	1	1%
Emotional Maturity	High	16	15%
	Medium	77	72%
	Low	14	13%

Table 2. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

		Pearson's r	p
Emotional Maturity	- Marital Readiness	0.455	< .001

The result indicated a significant correlation between emotional maturity and marital readiness. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between emotional maturity and readiness to get married. A person with high emotional maturity will also have high marital readiness. On the other hand, a person with low emotional maturity will also have low marital readiness.

### Discussion

This study examined the correlation between emotional maturity and readiness to marry among marriage dispensation applicants. The research findings support the hypothesis that there is a relationship between emotional maturity and marital readiness. When a person has high emotional maturity, then he also has a high readiness to get married and vice versa. This indicated that the two variables are interrelated.

In this study, the children who applied for marriage dispensation were dominated by girls. The respondents were 92 girls (96%) meanwhile there were only 15 boys (14%). As gender proportion presented, girls are more likely to marry at a very young age than boys. Based on research conducted by UNICEF (2020) in 2018 showed that girls involved in child marriage as many as 1,220,090. Meanwhile, SUSENAS (National Socio-Economic Household Survey) reported that 0.56% of Indonesian female citizens got married before 19 years old. The existence of negative views or stigmas in Indonesia, especially in rural areas, makes girls in vulnerable subjects experience child marriage. It is stated in the research conducted by Oktaviani et al. (2018) that girls who are 15-17 years old but remain unmarried are considered family shame. The girls are motivated to achieve higher education despite the financial constraints.

The respondent's emotional maturity was dominated by 77 people in the medium category. A total of 14 people are in the low category. Meanwhile, in the high category, there were 16 people. This shows that children who apply for marriage dispensation are not fully emotionally mature yet. As data is compared by gender, men tend to have more stable emotions compared to women. This result is in line with research conducted by Tiwari & Ojha (2014) on 50 male respondents and 50 female respondents with an age range of 15-19 years which concluded that girls have less stable emotions compared to boys.

Emotionally mature means an individual has the ability to understand and manage his emotions, communicate effectively, and handle any conflicts in a marital relationship. Moreover, if someone has a good level of emotional maturity, he can perform a good quality of communication with his spouse, including financial issues (Endeh et al., 2023). Financial planning and management should be well prepared, one of the ways to manage it is to have good communication with spouse on how to share the financial responsibilities to prevent marital conflict caused by economic distress (Conger et al., 2010). Emotionally mature couples will have abilities to have proper family planning, prepare for the presence of children between them, and communicate with each other to share their new responsibilities as parents (Thahura, 2020).

Individuals can be perceived as emotionally mature therefore they are ready to marry when they are able to regulate their emotions and think (Lybertha & Desiningrum, 2016). Moreover, individuals that are emotionally mature tend to manage their emotions well, therefore they may find solutions for domestic problems wisely and effectively. Those who are emotionally mature will understand the feelings felt by their partner, be able to accept the differences that occur between them and understand the obligations to married life that include responsibilities as a married couple and commit to building a harmonious life (Iqbal, 2019).

When we analyze marital readiness, as many as 1 person is in the low category, as many as 53 people are in the medium category, and the high category as many as 53 people. This indicates that the study participants were not fully prepared for marriage. Teenagers who choose to get married early experience maturity earlier compared to teenagers in general. Adolescent girls who mature earlier tend to have problems such as demanding independence earlier from their parents and having an older friendship environment, physically they also tend to trigger responses from the opposite sex that lead them to romantic relationships, such as dating and early sexual experiences (Souza, 2022).

Karunia & Wahyuningsih (2018) stated that one's emotional maturity has an important role in his marital readiness. Putri & Taufik (2017) shared their study that divorce among young couples as a consequence of their failure to handle marital conflict due to their emotional instability. Individuals with high levels of emotional maturity tend to have more ability to handle difficulties during marriage life, adapt to the environment, and minimize the presence of spousal conflict (Rosalina & Ekasari, 2015). According to Salsabila (2019), among ethnic Arab individuals with an age range of 18 to 25 years, there is a positive correlation between emotional maturity and readiness to marry. This is in line with our research that there is a significant and positive relationship between emotional maturity and readiness to get married.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the study results among 107 respondents, it can be inferred that there is a positive and significant correlation between emotional maturity and marital readiness among children as marriage dispensation applicants. If emotional maturity is high, marital readiness is also high, and vice versa.

## **Suggestion**

This study implies that it is expected to be one of the references for the development of psychology specifically in the fields of clinical psychology, development psychology, family psychology, and gender issues that focus on girls as vulnerable subjects to experience child marriage. The premarital counseling process especially for children who apply for marriage dispensation should be focused on reevaluating their decision to marry and considering other aspects such as psychological readiness, physical, financial, and role as spouse. The governments

should be able to create cross-sectoral collaboration programs to prevent and overcome child marriage issues.

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