

Marital Conflict, Javanese Women Coping Strategy Aside From Legal Approach In Divorce Decision Making

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Abstract:

Divorce in Javanese people is a humiliating event, considered as a disgrace not only for the divorcee but also for their extended family. That kind of shame caused decision making process for Javanese women become difficult, although they might have marital violence but not too many of them reported it legally. This research aimed to understand marital conflict and coping strategy in divorce decision making among Javanese women. Research method used here is phenomenologist qualitative on eight women that filed their divorce for at least six months before interview conducted, were employed, and had children. Data collected with semi-structured interview, analysed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This research found that: marital conflict and coping strategy for Javanese women participants filed divorce influenced by Javanese ethics. Javanese ethics also caused these Javanese women participants had a confusing divorce situation because norms that they believe in its community was forcing them to stay in that marriage, though it might be full of violence, without making any legal action. These Javanese women participants had courage to take divorce decision when coping strategies, they had done were no longer enough to handle the stress caused by marital conflict.

Keywords: Marital Conflict; Coping Strategy; Javanese Women; Divorce Decision Making

1. Introduction

Marriage is a physical and soul bond unification based on love between man and women as husband and wife, with purpose to build happy family. Someone can be happy through marriage (Bailey & Fernando). According to Souls by & Bennet (2015), married person has higher psychological well-being than those unmarried because they get deeper social support from their spouse. Marriage in Javanese society is part of life essence, which means that God has given his “wisdom words” for man to

reproduce. Marriage is a sacred event and it has aspect of new form (child). Marriage can last if spouse share love in friendship, decisions, goals, and togetherness to care for feeling of closeness. In reality, many marriages did not happen as expected. The emergence of problems in marriage can trigger conflict which is a common event in every dyadic relationship because of differences in individual values based on cultural background and experience. Such conflicts can cause estrangement in spousal relationships and have a negative impact on marriages.

Conflict is a term used to define disagreement, incompatibility, fighting, arguing, competing, fighting, clashing and war (Wani, 2011). Marital conflict happened between husband and wife due to sexual disagreements, differences in parenting style, emotions, religion and even differences in interests and values (Igbo, Awopetu & Ekoja, 2015). If spouse was always faced with marital conflict and was unable to work together as a team, they will have difficulty in overcoming more complex marital problems. The worst situation in marriage is when a husband and wife are not capable to handle conflict from time to time, then it can lead to divorce (Markman, 2010; Sadarjoen, 2005).

Dissolution of marriage can be caused by death or divorce and on a court decision (Law No.1 of 1974 regarding Marriage). In Indonesia, based on data quoted by www.detik.com from the Supreme Court's (Mahkamah Agung - MA) website in 2021, divorce case from 2018 to 2020 shows an increase. In 2018 there were 444,358 divorce cases and in 2019 it increased to 480,618. The data shows that the number of divorce cases filed by women is higher every year than divorces filed by men. In 2019, the number of divorce cases file by women was 355,842, while divorce cases filed by men were 124,776 cases. The High Religious Court (Pengadilan Tinggi Agama - PTA) recorded that the divorce rate in East Java throughout 2020 reached around 18,034 cases. East Java is one of the provinces with the highest divorce rate in Indonesia. In Surabaya, divorce cases from January to November 2021 reached 5,198 cases consisting of 4,020 divorced cases filed by women while 1,667 divorced cases filed by men (www.jpnn.com).

Society in giving their judgement to a person cannot be separated from cultural and religion aspects. Culture becomes a moral

standard, which means if someone does something that violates the provisions of religion or local culture, it is often called immoral. Divorce in Javanese society considered as inappropriate behavior and violates morals because based on religion it is prohibited, while from a cultural point of view it is considered negative. Patriarchy in Javanese culture also causes the widows label to be considered low. In every divorce, women are blamed, considered to be unable to maintain the marriage, which cause their moral burdens are heavier than men (Sakina & Siti, 2013). The patriarchal practice that is still quite strong in Javanese society causes that filing for divorce for most women is a very difficult decision because they are often blamed and "judged" for not being able to maintain a marriage (Muhayani, 2012).

Javanese women in making the decision to divorce will likely experience emotional challenges because of the burden of their role in the family and also the norm that considers widows as a disgrace. Javanese women experience confusion, worry and doubt that will affect their lives. This situation is just like stated in the initial interview (not from the research participant):

“what would people think of me if I were a widow, I am a doctor, meet a lot of people...I will be ashamed if there is anyone know while actually I cannot stand the marriage anymore, having a husband but just like I don't have one, got beaten too”

-Dian, 44 years old, mother of 2 son-

Domestic violence according to Law No. 23 of 2004 regarding the Elimination of Domestic Violence is any act against a person, especially a woman, that results in physical, sexual, psychological misery or suffering, and/or neglect of their household,

including threats to commit acts, coercion, or deprivation of liberty against the law in the domestic sphere. In fact, Javanese women who experience domestic violence (psychological, physical, sexual, neglected in their household) choose not to report to the authorities because they are ashamed to spread disgrace in their family. The divorce decision making for Javanese women puts them in situation where they need to choose; being stigmatized as a widow or staying in a marriage that is full of violence.

Research on divorce decision making among women in Indonesia, especially in Java, is still limited. Javanese women in making divorce decisions are influenced by individual value factors related to culture and wisdom in considering children and families (Rizki, Yuliardi & Andayani, 2011). Javanese women in making the decision to divorce have considerations of children, social status, family, threats, and anxiety on living alone (Puspitasari, Pudjibudojo & Hartanti, 2021). The decision to divorce is not a decision caused by one event but the accumulation of conflicts that happen, which make Javanese women need time to firmly file for divorce from 1 month – 2 years (Puspitasari, Pudjibudojo & Hartanti, 2021).

Based on descriptions above, making a decision to divorce for Javanese women is not an easy thing because of the stigma of divorce itself and widowhood in society, but the phenomenon is that the divorce lawsuit rate is getting higher. Therefore, the researcher wants to understand the conflict and coping strategies of Javanese women in making divorce decisions.

2. Method

The method used in this research is phenomenological qualitative with an interpretive paradigm. Researcher chose the

interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach because it was considered capable of interpreting how each participant gave meaning to their experiences (Kahija, 2017; Langdridge, 2007; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The main focus of IPA is to report on participants' meaning of their unique experiences. The participants in this study were eight Javanese women who had been divorced maximum of six months before the interview, were employed and had children. Criteria for Javanese women are 1) the original Javanese descent or born from the previous generation; 2) use Javanese language from generation to generation with various dialects in their daily life; 3) residing in East Java and Central Java; 4) still doing and practicing their Javanese tradition. Data collection technique used interviews and observations conducted in several cities in the province of East Java, which are Sidoarjo, Kediri, Blitar and Madiun.

3. Analysis and Result

The analysis technique used in this research is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), through six stages, which are 1) interpretation of the transcript; 2) initial recording; 3) formulation of emergent themes; 4) formulation of superordinate themes; 5) patterns between cases/between experiences of participants and; 6) arrangement of the entire superordinate theme.

3.1. Marital Conflict

Marital conflicts that occur in participants are all forms of domestic violence (psychological, physical, sexual, and economic neglect), conflicts with in-laws' families and role conflicts. The following is an overview of participant's conflicts in this study:

Table 1. Participant's Conflict in Research

Initial	Age	Latest Education	Occupation	Number of Children	Duration of Divorce	Conflict Experienced
Ani	39	Bachelor	Self-Employed	2	6 months	Husband's affair
Betty	32	Master	Psychologist	1	6 months	Economic dishonesty
Cinta	36	Bachelor	Police Officer	3	3 months	Husband's affair
Dini	37	High School	Factory Worker	1	2 weeks	Husband's affair
Eny	26	Bachelor	Early Year Teacher	1	4 months	Marriage abandonment
Fifi	28	Bachelor	High School Teacher	1	1 month	Physical domestic violence
Gita	28	High School	Housemaid	1	3 months	Husband's affair
Hani	35	High School	Waitress	2	2 weeks	Husband was a drug addict

Participant's psychological forms of domestic violence including husband's infidelity, insults, physical insults, and threats. Physical domestic violence by husbands are beating, kicking, and strangulation. Sexual domestic violence in the form of a husband's request to have anal sex and forced to do something that causes discomfort during sexual intercourse. Forms of domestic abandonment are limited income, leaving the family for several months without material support, and also neglect. Role conflict occurred because participants work full time outside the house and their husbands still demanded that they finish their household chores. Participants experienced a double burden by acting as

employee outside the house, the backbone of the family, wife, and also as a mother, while the husband did not help at all.

3.2. Coping Strategy

Marital conflict creates negative experiences that affect participant's cognitive, psychological, physical, social and economic aspects. They tried to overcome their marital conflict by doing coping strategies. Coping strategy are ways to manage external and or internal demands that burden one's ability. The following is a summary of the impact and coping strategies carried out by the participants:

Table 2. Conflict Impacts and Participant's Coping Strategies

Initial	Conflict	Impact (cognitive, psychological, physical, social and economical)	Coping Strategy (problem focused)	Coping Strategy (emotion focused)
Ani	Husband's affair	Low self-concept, labelling, helplessness	Put on appealing appearance to satisfied husband's sexual needs	Did nothing, Accepted all of husband's treatments, self injury
Betty	Economic dishonesty	Low self-concept, labelling	Gave ultimatum to husband to be honest	Did nothing, Ignorance
Cinta	Husband's affair, Physical domestic violence	Low self-concept, labelling, helplessness	Put on sexy appearance, reported to husband's superior	Covered her bruises and pretending to be happy, did nothing
Dini	Husband's affair	Cognitive distortion	Focus on working, still served the husband	Did nothing, Ignorance
Eny	Marriage abandonment	Low self-concept, labelling, helplessness	Confrontation, asked husband to do the domestic chores	Did nothing, Accepted all of husband's treatments
Fifi	Physical domestic violence	-	Confrontation	Did nothing, Ignorance, Sleep
Gita	Husband's affair, Physical domestic violence	Low self-concept, labelling	Resisted by self-defence, still obeyed husband	Accepted, did nothing
Hani	Husband was a drug addict, Husband's affair	Low self-concept, labelling	Put make up on, family's backbone	Did nothing, Accepted all of husband's treatments

Coping strategies carried out by participants included problem focused and emotion focused. Problem focused coping is overcoming the impact of conflict directly on the problem, which by directly confronting the husband, applying make-up and looking attractive so that the husband

does not cheat, and working double-duty because she is the backbone of the family. Emotion focused is overcoming the impact of conflict that only involves emotions, which by accepting all treatments from their husband, avoiding conflict, running away

from physical domestic violence, and hurting themselves.

4. Discussion

4.1. Javanese Ethics

Participants ever since their childhood through adulthood were raised with Javanese ethics, which is Javanese cultural values that govern the overall norms and judgments used by Javanese people to find out how human should live their lives (Magnis-Suseno, 1985). Javanese ethics direct human to the path of safety and peace of mind that in every situation human should be patient so as not to cause conflict and show respect for others according to their degree and position (El-Jaquene, 2019). Javanese ethics are internalized in participant's lives that human must avoid conflict and the "requirement" of women to be gentle, uphold family values, manage emotions, endure suffering and be loyal (Handayani, 2008).

Participants who experienced domestic violence (psychological, physical, sexual, abandonment) rarely reported it to the authorities. Participants felt ashamed and worried that they would be considered spreading disgrace to their husbands because in Javanese ethics there is this term "mikul dhuwur mendem jero" (bear highly hoard deeply), which means that the wife must protect her husband's good reputation and cover up his disgrace. Javanese women are also worried about being gossiped about and being blamed for not being able to serve their husbands, therefore even though they are subjected to violence such as being beaten, kicked, strangled, abandoned, they usually keep silent and better to avoid conflict so as not to be subject of violent.

Javanese ethics influence participants in carrying out coping strategies for their marital conflict. Participants were very careful to avoid verbal conflicts with their husbands. They considered speaking loudly and rudely to maintain an argument as inappropriate because it would lead to greater conflict and disharmony (Sulastri, 2019). When participants feel that the problem focused coping strategy is not working, they carry out an emotion focused coping strategy with patience, acceptance (nrimo), compliance (rilo) and surrender (sumarah) (Sulastri, 2019). Patience is also followed with belief that the husband will change and good fate will come. Nrimo (acceptance) is acceptance, responds to all problems appropriately even though one is full of disappointment. Attitude of Rilo (compliance) is a willingness to let go of one's belonging if it is not their destiny (Magnis-Suseno, 1983). The ability to be patient, nrimo and rilo does not mean passive, but rational, keep trying and submit oneself to God which is called sumarah (Sulastri, 2019).

After all forms of coping strategies are carried out and the husband's behavior does not show any change for the better, the desire for divorce appears. Participants who have a desire to divorce do not immediately file it seriously because the emotion focused coping strategy continues to be carried out by hoping that the husband will return and change his behavior for the better. Over time there is no change and the husband is getting wilder, then the participants who already feel tired of dealing with conflict and implementing coping strategies, file for divorce.

4.2. Javanese Ethics and Domestic Violence

Javanese women who experienced domestic violence (psychological, physical, sexual, abandonment) can make a legal report through the authorities to get protection. In fact, Javanese women harbored and kept their husband's behavior aside because they felt ashamed of the disgrace, they also did not want the conflict to get bigger. Javanese's patriarchy and ethics influence Javanese women in responding to the domestic violence they have experienced. Participants feel ashamed, worried, and anxious if they dare to report domestic violence, they will also be blamed and considered incapable of being a wife who have to serves their husband, incompetent so that they deserve that violence. Patriarchy legitimizes violence against women, and what is more interesting is that they who actually "willing" to experience violence are not women who are "weak" economically. Working women, who are economically empowered, do not necessarily have the courage to fight or report, because of the community's "judgement" regarding the disgrace they have experienced is more frightening than the violence itself

5. Conclusion

Javanese women experienced negative impacts due to the marital conflicts that they have faced. These negative impacts include cognitive, psychological, physical, social and economic aspects. Coping strategies in dealing with participant's conflict are problem focused and emotion focused. Participants carried out problem focused and emotion focused coping strategies simultaneously or alternately. The changes in coping strategies are done solely just to survive the conflicts that they constantly experience in their marriage. Problem focused and emotion focused coping

strategies influence each other all the time, could facilitate and hinder each other. Tired of facing conflict without any changes in husband's behavior caused the participants to finally dare filed a divorce. Legal reports that should be a means of protection were not carried out, because they are considered to be a personal disgrace and for their family based on Javanese ethics

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