

Preliminary Study of Hope in Adolescents Who Experience Unwanted Pregnancies

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Abstract

In Indonesian unwanted pregnancies in adolescents has been a popular phenomenon and it happens mostly because of premarital sexual problem. Premarital sexual adolescents among Indonesian communities are unacceptable acts both according to social norm and Indonesian culture. Mostly in Indonesian community usually reacted to both those who do premarital sexual behavior and unwanted pregnancies with social consequences such as being expelled from school and exiled from the community even more to those who experience unwanted pregnancies. Negative social stigma related to unwanted premarital pregnancy worsens the psychological experience of the subject. Young women and teenage-girls who experience unwanted pregnancy often experience depression, hopelessness, helplessness, and suicidal thought. This paper is a small part of a thesis that investigate lived experiences of women who have gone through social and psychological difficulties due to teenage unwanted pregnancy. The thesis investigates how the women strive for hope and move on with their lives. As part of the literature review of the thesis, this article unpacks what have known about psychological effects of teenage unwanted pregnancy and what the literature says about the dynamic of hope.

Keywords: hope, unwanted pregnancy, adolescents, losing hope

1. INTRODUCTION

Unwanted pregnancy is one of difficult problem faced by adolescent all over the world including Indonesia. Indonesian Association of Planned Parenthood (*Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia/PKBI*) shows that in 2016, 22 percent of 37.000 respondents (girls and women) have experienced unwanted pregnancy (*Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia, 2016*). *Yayasan Rumah Tumbuh Harapan* (*Yayasan RUTH, 2014*) reports that 70 percent of 53 out-of-wedlock pregnancy cases they have handled were cases of women under 21 years old and the youngest was 12 years old (*Yayasan RUTH, 2014*). Some of the causes of unwanted pregnancy in adolescents are rape and incorrect information about reproductive and sexual health such as myth about pregnancy will not happen if the intercourse was only done once (*Amalia & Azinar, 2017*).

Despite ritualized pre-marital sexual behavior in many Indonesian indigenous tribes, contemporary Indonesian society stigmatizes pre-marital sexual behaviors. Thus, pre-marital pregnancy is culturally unacceptable and shameful. Girls suffer the most from the stigma. There are many instances where pregnant teenage girls were expelled from school as the school principal perceived her as a moral hazard to other students (*Suryoputro, Ford & Shaluhiyah 2007; Sarwono, 2007*). Social stigma around premarital sexuality in Indonesia has put the already disadvantaged teenage girls in a

more risky position, as it is likely that they receive lack of social support during the hardship.

2. UNDERSTANDING UNWANTED PREGNANCY IN INDONESIA

Unwanted pregnancy is defined as unintended pregnancy, which could happen to both married and unmarried couple. In married women, unwanted pregnancy could happen when the couple is not ready for having a child due to various reasons. In unmarried adolescents unwanted pregnancy could happen due to unsafe sexual behavior, promiscuity, and also as a result of rape (*Sarwono, 2007*).

Social taboo about sexuality prevents adolescents from getting sufficient constructive knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. Sexual education receives strong resistances from Asian's culture that rooted deep in Indonesian culture also. Mostly Asian people and also Indonesia people argue that sexual education is something to private to be share, will shame when try to talk about it and feel that this issue must be share after adolescents has mature enough which it will be late at that time (*Wong, 2018*). From *Yayasan Ruth's* experience that mostly adolescents even some adult didn't have sexual knowledge enough so they easily fooled by some man to do premarital sexual.

Resistance to sexual education led to lack of knowledge about reproductive health among adolescents (*Amalia & Azinar, 2017*). As a result, adolescents are at risk of unsafe

sexual behavior that could lead to unwanted pregnancy and Sexual Transmitted Diseases.

Adolescents with unwanted pregnancy face social sanctions such as exclude from society and expelled from their school/ usually school at Indonesia have an argue that unwanted pregnant adolescents bring down the school or campus reputation. In many countries, safe abortion is an option that the teenagers could choose as a solution to their pregnancy. In Indonesia, women, let alone unmarried women, have lack of access to safe abortion since abortion is considered a great sin. The law in Indonesia that made by Health Minister only allows pregnancy termination in specific circumstances, such as rape case or medic issue.

Adolescents with unwanted pregnancy in Indonesia are more fragile to experience depression situation that cause by fear to social sanctions. The stigma that those adolescents receive suppress their mentally make them even worst circumstances such as losing their hope. That's why some adolescents with unwanted pregnancy may choose to committed suicide or unsafe abortion just to cover their shame.

Lack of access to safe abortion put adolescents in greater risks of physical and psychological harms. Self-initiated abortions through traditional methods and traditional medicine have become a solution most teenagers chose in this situation. It is difficult to get exact statistical data about unsafe abortion as it is usually hidden due to the social stigma around it.

Adolescent woman who experience UP needs a supportive environment to rebuild her hope. Rebuilding hope and self-regulation can help adolescent woman to enhance her quality of life for making a better future (Herth, 2000; Lopez, 2009). Hope is defined as positive mental attitude to understand the meaning of life in achieving life goals (Lopez, 2009). Every individual has a need of hope to achieve the life goals and the concept of hope becomes an important component in the cycle of life process. Hope can give strength, optimism, positive effect to an individual achieving life goals in the future (Nierop-van Baalen, Gryndonck, Van Hecke & Verhaeghe, 2016; Snyder et al., 2000; Merolla, 2014; Benzein, Norberg & Saveman, 2001).

In general adolescents who experience UP feel the loss of hope for their future and this feeling causes them to think a shortcut such as abortion and attempted suicide. Being excluded from community because of having the unwanted pregnancy leads the adolescent woman to repetitive failure which will initiate her to the loss of hope or hopeless (Hellman, Worley, Munoz & Hellman, 2014). Process of the loss of hope is divided into three phases: phase of rage, phase of despair, and phase of apathy.

Phase of rage or intensely feeling angry focuses on negative thoughts or emotions (Hellman, Worley, Munoz & Hellman, 2014). The adolescent woman who experiences UP will undergo phase of rage or anger towards herself and towards the man whom caused her to have the unwanted pregnancy. The second phase is phase of despair or desperation, which occurs because the individual cannot adjust to overcome the barriers (Snyder, 2002). This phase occurs when partner cannot take his responsibility or when parents become upset with her unwanted pregnancy. The last phase is phase of apathy or impassivity where individual does

not have any motivation and interest to reach the life goal (Van Reekum, Stuss & Ostander, 2005). This phase happens when the adolescent woman who experiences UP does not get any support from anyone in her community such as being excluded from the family or being left by the partner. The adolescent woman who experiences UP and comes to this phase will initiate negative thoughts like taking abortion or attempting suicide.

The adolescent women who are hopeless need support and encouragement to rebuild and find their hope again. The process of finding hope on adolescents who experience UP is a mutual cycle on the interplay between goal, pathway thinking, agency, barriers and emotions, and stressor. Emotions in the process of gaining hope can be positive when an individual has a perception of achieving goal successfully and vice versa with negative emotion. The way the adolescent woman who experience UP response with her emotion and the way her family response with their emotion will affect this adolescent woman to find hope in achieving her future life goal.

Furthermore in the process of finding hope there is a barrier that can be a challenge to the adolescent woman whether it helps her discovering hope or it makes her losing her hope again. High hope individuals will view stressor as challenges to build the motivation and help her finding another alternative pathway to achieve their goals. Based on the theory of hope, life goal can be obtained when an individual has motivation or in terms of the theory of hope called agency (willpower) and the way called the pathway (way power) (Snyder, 2000). The components between willpower and way power are interplay, complementary, and positively correlated.

The measurement of hope will influence the development of life in an individual, low hope makes an individual not developed well because the individual do not have motivation to reach the goal (Snyder, 1994). According to Weil (2000), hope can be formed and developed inside an individual in order to obtain changes. Positive changes will take the individual to obtain better goals. Every individual has an ability to develop hope by using the cognitive ability to create various kinds of thoughts to obtain goals. According to Snyder (2002), high hope individuals will have an extra ability when they face difficult times.

Hope emerges in adolescents who experience Ups should be developed continually so that the adolescents can achieve the life goals. Nurturing hope is started by describing the specific goals, which the individuals aim to achieve (Hellman, Worley, Munoz & Hellman, 2014). Nurturing hope is divided into three phases: Goal classification phase, viable pathways phase, and creating future memories phase.

Goal classification phase or clarifying goals will increase the agency components of hope so that the individuals can focus on developing pathway to achieve goals (Snyder, 2002). Adolescents with Ups have buried their life goals so that they need to be helped to explore their goals again. When adolescents experience Ups and were forced to drop outs of school, they have thought that their futures have been ruined so that they need encouragement to classify their life goals again.

Viable pathways phase is a phase to identify the details of goals, to detect every potential barriers happened in the

future, and to regulate self by developing positive behavior and attitude in order to achieve goals (Hellman, Worley, Munoz & Hellman, 2014; Snyder, 2002). Adolescents with UPs will face more responsibilities such as continuing their studies, taking responsibility in raising their child, regaining trust from their parents and positive response from community. In this phase adolescents need help to classify the details of goal that need to be achieved. The last phase is creating future memories phase where the individuals are challenged to dream about their future. In this phase, the individuals have to describe the potential success and achievements that they want to happen in their lives (Hellman, Worley, Munoz & Hellman, 2014; Snyder, 2002).

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL IMPACT OF UNWANTED PREGNANCY

Adolescents whom experience the unwanted pregnancy do not only face the social effect but also facing physical and psychological effects. The physical effects that can be seen are changes in the form of their bodies caused by their pregnancies; risks of getting sexual transmitted infections; and chances of aborting the babies. Some of the clients at Yayasan RUTH have tried to do abortion and some have infected with sexual transmitted infections like gonorrhoea. They committed abortion because they were ashamed of their pregnancies and also they felt afraid to face the consequences of getting out-of-wedlock pregnancy (Sarwono, 2007). Abortions have been known of causing high-level risks to both health and safety of the adolescents whom committed of doing it (Edmunson, 2009).

Meanwhile the psychological effects that happen to adolescents who experiencing the unwanted pregnancy are such as the unstable emotional disorders like feeling guilty, feeling down, sadness, crying, and anxiety (Sarwono, 2007). Feeling guilty can cause despair and hopelessness, which will trigger the suicidal impulses (Nirwana, 2011). Some researches in Indonesia related to the unwanted pregnancy in adolescents focus on the factors that cause the unwanted pregnancy happened like the research done by Amalia & Azinar (2017) and Ismarwati & Utami (2017).

Adolescents who experience UPs need supports to raise up and having hope again for their future. The dynamics of hope that occurs on adolescents who experience UPs started by losing hope, going into the process of finding hope, and getting into the process of nurturing hope. Research on building hope for adolescents who experience UPs is one of an important thing to take in order to help them and give them insight of taking the right response so adolescents who experience UPs can rebuild their purpose of life again.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The effects that occur on adolescents who experience the unwanted pregnancies (UPs) such as physical, social, and psychological effects have caused adolescents losing their

hopes (loss of hope). The adolescents with unwanted pregnancies need the dynamic of hope so that they can recover and rise up again from losing hope and find ways to develop their hopes in order to achieve their life goals.

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