

# *Underage Marriage: Celebrity Ustadz and Islam Hegemonic Value*

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**Abstract**— Religion and science are two discourses that compete and negotiate in the history of the debates of sexuality and gender, including the determination of the criteria whether a person can engage in sexual activity and marriage or not. The scientific discourse gives guidelines regarding the minimum age that determines the readiness of the person to marry, judging from the person's maturity, both psychically and mentally. Meanwhile, the religion discourse in Indonesia, with Muslims as the majority, has agreed that someone who has reached "Akil Baligh" is considered ready to marry. Using Norman Fairclough discourse analysis as the method, this paper examines three layers of discourse: text, discursive practices, and socio-cultural conditions on the representation of Muhammad Alvin Faiz 's marriage (17 years), son of Arifin Ilham (Ustadz and celebrity) in the online news and discussions on Merdeka.com. Islamic values in socio-cultural conditions are not negotiated with the scientific discourse. Result shows that there are hegemonic values that make the discursive practices of the conversation about underage marriage tend to ignore the minimum age criteria of marriage for men as contained in the Marriage Act 1974.

**Keywords**—underage marriage; hegemony; critical discourse analysis; online media

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that ranked seventh on highest number of child marriage in the world. Council on Foreign Relations noted around 458.000 children got married in Indonesia. This number placed Indonesia on top of other countries such as Congo, Mexico and Nigeria. There are two universal factors that caused high numbers of child marriage; economy and cultural norm in certain region. World Bank data which gathered based on demographic data and health survey shows that girls who come from wealthy family are more likely not to get married at an early age. This data affirms the hypothesis that poverty and economy establishment rate influence child marriage. Meanwhile, belief and religion are cultural norm backgrounds which made child marriage often recommended. Indonesia, as a country with highest Muslim population, has some challenges regarding that cultural norm background. Some Muslims, who follow conservative Islam syariah about child marriage agreed that Al Qur'an specifically mention that a person can get married as soon as they become mature. However, this maturity definition can be so elastic. A conservative Islam scholar for instance equalizes

maturity with puberty, the "Akil Baligh" moment which marked by wet dream for boys and menstruation for girls.

In some cases, in Indonesia, marriage is identical with an act to avoid adultery (zina), thing that made underage marriage considered as religious act. One of the news regarding child marriage that has become trending topic on the internet is the marriage of Muhammad Alvin Faiz and Larissa Chow. Muhammad Alvin Faiz is son of Arifin Ilham (Ustadz and celebrity), when they got married, Alvin Faiz was still 17 years old, two years below the mature age that stipulated in Law Number 1 of Year 1974 on Marriage. News and discussion about Alvin Faiz's marriage was on top of google trends.

Religion background and Muhammad Alvin Faiz family made his underage marriage news existed in religiosity discourse. We may see the representation in various media, as how Merdeka.com shows: Muhammad Alvin Faiz's marriage, son of Arifin Ilham (Ustadz or celebrity) whose age is still 17 years old as an act to avoid adultery, this was represented in the news' entitle, "Got Married at Young Age to Avoid Adultery." On its news, merdeka.com also quoted Arifin Ilham's statement "Abi won't let small fire, even as small as matches fire, touch your body, Son, let alone hell's fire. That is why Abi blesses your marriage, because I want Alvin, Abi and all of us to be save. I don't want your heart, thought, eyes and ears make an immoral act."

Merdeka.com promised that there will be a balance discussion from several aspects regarding early marriage, as mentioned on the article closing sentence, "Merdeka.com, today will discuss about plus and minus of early marriage from health, psychologist, and people who married at early age perspective. Happy reading." There are five articles that syndicated by Merdeka.com and specifically talk about early marriage.

Those five articles will become the object of this research; *Early Marriage to Avoid Adultery, Saving Sin due to Postponing Marriage, Religious Court's Permit to Get Married at Early Age, Young Couple have to Prepare Their Physical and Mental Condition before Having a Child, Couple's Strategy for Long Lasting Marriage in Early Marriage*. This research will use critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough as the method which will dissect discourse into three layers: text, discourse practice and socio-cultural

**II. LITERATURE STUDY**

*A. Early Marriage Polemic in Indonesia*

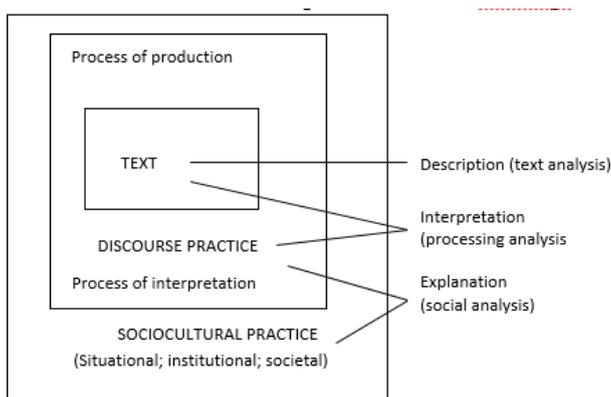
Indonesian society considered marriage as a very important thing in human life cycle. Thus, people who already grown up or mature, usually “forced” by the society to get married as soon as possible. Marriage is not only something that can be happen to grown up people but also child or teenager. This phenomenon well known as early marriage. According to Margaret E. Greene (2014), early marriage or child marriage can be defined as a marriage that is carried out before the age of 18 years, according to the definition stated in the Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC).

Until now there are still many debates and controversies around early marriage topic, especially due to the risks that it may cause. From gender perspective, it is potential to become a form of exploitation on women or children. Early marriage can be harmful to the girl. The National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan) in their report noted some negative impacts of early marriage; disconnection of social relation with peers, poverty, losing opportunity in education, domestic violence, limitation on access or moving space, losing right on dowry, and the damage of reproduction organ.

Despite of the negative impacts that has been studied and socialized by the experts, in some area in Indonesia, early marriage is still considered as a common practice. There are some popular cases that highlighted by the media in context of early marriage. One of them is Syekh Puji’s case several years ago. He is a business man and Muslim preacher who get married to a child. As quoted from TheJakartaPost.com, “Pujiono Cahyo Widiyanto, aka Syekh Puji, married a 12-year-old girl in a religious ceremony as his second wife in Bedono village, Semarang regency, Central Java. In 2010, he stood trial for violating the Child Protection Law but the Ungaran District Court found him innocent. On Nov. 24, 2010, the Central Java High Court sentenced him to four years’ imprisonment and fined him Rp 60 million.”

**III. METHODOLOGY**

Fairclough divided discourse analysis into three dimensions: text (how text is represented and is carrying certain ideology), discourse practice (dimension that including the process of text production and consumption), and sociocultural practice (dimension that related to the context outside text dimension).



**Figure 1. Fairclough’s Three Dimensional Model**  
(Source: Fairclough, 1995: 98)

Here are the components of Fairclough’s analytical model:

*Text.* Fairclough stresses that text is not only to show how an object pictured, but also the relation between the defined objects. Analysis will be conducted in how linguistic parts such as relation between the speakers, including question of who starts the conversation agenda (Fairclough, 1992: 152ff.); ethos, how identity is built through language and aspects of the text (1992: 166ff); metaphors (1992: 194ff); wording (1992: 190) and grammar (1992: 158ff., 169ff.)

*Discourse Practice* stresses in production and consumption text. There are two focuses from discourse practice: intertextuality dimension and interdiscursivity of text. A text will always involve production process with a complicated and complex discourse practice.

*Sociocultural Practice* is based on argument that social and culture context and other discourses in certain time and space has become the base on how the discourse works. Sociocultural practice might not be directly involving in text production, but it will be the outermost dimension which deciding on how text can be produced and understood in society’s knowledge system.

**IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

*A. Textual Analysis*

- *Getting Married at Early Age to Avoid Adultery (Menikah Muda untuk Menghindari Zina)*

The first text that presented by Merdeka.com is narrated on the subject of marriage, early marriage and brief descriptive regarding Muhammad Alvin Vaiz and Larissa Chou’s marriage. There is an incoherent relation between paragraphs 3 and 4 when it says that "The government itself sets the age limit for marriage for men at age 19 and women at age 16. The limitation of marriage is regulated in Law Number 1 Year 1974 Article 6." with "But, the restriction of marriage age was considered to be detrimental to women. One of them is the health risks of marriage at a young age." The logic construction by the sentence’s problematic, because what is problematic is not "limitation", but underage marriage.

The main identity constructed by the text is in the figure of Muhammad Alvin Faiz. Muhammad Alvin Faiz as a young groom (paragraph 5) - Muhammad Alvin Faiz can marry a beautiful woman who is a Chinese descendant and a convert (paragraph 6) - This identity appears explicitly in the sentence. Alvin Faiz is a law-abiding person (paragraph 7) - Legal obedience is represented from merdeka.com’s choice to quote Instagram Alvin Faiz’s account calling that his marriage must go through state permit because his age is still under applicable regulations. Alvin is a person who obeys parents (paragraph 8) - Parents’ obedience represents how

Alvin got permission from Arifin Ilham, his parent. Alvin is married early because he wanted to avoid adultery (paragraph 9) - merdeka.com quotes Arifin Ilham's remarks as to why the permit was granted. Alvin is adult (paragraph 10) - This claim is problematic, since Merdeka.com earlier quoted Alvin Faiz's parents statement that he was "mature" and at the end of the paper merdeka.com uses the narrative analogy of Prophet Muhammad SAW as the juxtaposition of Alvin's position, namely "Then married Siti Aisyah who was only a teenager. While marrying Siti Aisyah, Muhammad SAW, the prophet, was often tested for his maturity because he was required to guide his young wife." There is no claim of maturity based on psychology or physiology (health) discourse on the text.

- *Saving Sins Due to Postponing Marriage (Menabung Dosa karena Menunda Nikah)*

The second text presented by merdeka.com is spoken by the narrator by partially quoting directly or paraphrasing one main source used, name Wijayanto, Ustadz also a lecturer at the University of Gajah Mada. There is no official information, what major or subject he lectured, and in which faculty he teaches. The main identity constructed by this text is "young marriage." The whole paragraph is focus in the circle of religious discourse, with the main premise, the young marriage according to the Islamic Shari'a and can avoid sin. Merdeka.com quotes Wijayanto who cites the Quran as an authoritative text to show that Islam does not limit the age of marriage, and says that delaying marriage can lead to immoral acts (paragraph 4).

At the end, Merdeka.com quotes Wijayanto which obscure about the age limitation marriage. He stated that the rules to limit the age of marriage must consider the benefit for all people. But according to him (Wijayanto), every case of young marriage is not used as a basis to limit people in binding a kinship. "In general, it is necessary to limit the age of marriage, but not every case of young marriage can be generalized, it doesn't have to be the standard to limit people in marriage."

- *The Religious Court Permit to Early Marriage (Izin Pengadilan Agama supaya Bisa Nikah Muda)*

The third text presented by merdeka.com is spoken by the narrator, and in the center uses the utterance of a "penghulu" (Muslim wedding officiant) from Religious Affairs Office in Central Jakarta, named Dendi Rosiadi. The identity constructed by this text is the first two, the figure of Alvin, and back as in the first text and in the second, merdeka.com feels the need to provide a

repetition of the reason for Alvin Faiz to get married at young age, that is, "Alvin himself has his own reason for marrying Larissa Chou who is three years older than him. One of them is to avoid adultery."

Dendi Rosiadi statement that quoted by Merdeka.com is about how the steps of licensing marriage under the age set by the Act. The Office of Religious Affairs cannot marry the bride at an early age for no apparent reason. There is no exposure to the psychological and physiological aspects which later became the background of exposure related to the terms of early marriage.

- *Young Couples Must be Physically and Mentally Prepared before Having Children (Pasangan Muda Harus Siapkan Fisik dan Mental Sebelum Punya Anak)*

The fourth text presented by merdeka.com is spoken by the narrator, with the aim of mental and physical preparation to face an early marriage. merdeka.com quoted Psychologist Kasandra Putranto to explain the psychological aspects of a young marriage. The identity constructed in this text is the young marriage and the physical and mental factors that must be prepared beforehand. Determination is problematic, because from the beginning merdeka.com has established that early marriage is an inviolable thing, and other things are the risks that must be faced. That physiological risks (paragraph 3-4-5) and psychological risks (paragraphs 6-7) are things to be deal with and overcome, and not delaying the marriage itself. One problematic aspect of this article is Merdeka.com uses psychologist speech to explain the physiological aspects that the physiologist or doctor should explain.

- *Couple's Strategy to A Long-lasting Early Marriage (Ini Strategi Pasangan Biar Awet Meski Menikah Muda)*

The last post featured in a series discussing an early marriage by merdeka.com is narrated by a narrator, using a narrative from the Liga Guntara, someone who has experience in early marriage. This text, once again emphasizes that the marriage restriction rules contained in Law No. 1/1974 of article 6 are often disregarded because of the motivation to avoid sex before marriage. The term "zina" (adultery), which often appears in all four of the previous writings, does not appear in this paper, but changed into "free sex." This can be seen in the second paragraph, "However, today the provision is often disregarded, due to the number of pre-marital pregnancies as a result of free sex culture in some young people."

The identity built in this text is the marriage at an early age from A to Z, the motivations, problems and strategies that can be done to deal

with the problem. Liga's motive when deciding to get married at the age of 19 is the compatibility and declaration, paraphrased by merdeka.com. "Liga says that he and his future wife are already feel comfortable with each other, plus the blessings of both their parents." (Paragraph 9). Early marriage has two major problems, there are financial (paragraph 11-14) and maturity (paragraph 15-17). The strategy proposed by merdeka.com by borrowing the Liga's narrative is, how to control the ego and emotions and understand the couple's character (18-19).

However, this post is different from the previous four posts, there is a warning that early marriage risks something that requires readiness. "Simply put, think again if you want to get married at young age." Which quoted from Liga's statement.

### B. Discourse Practice Analyzes

The news series presented by merdeka.com on August 14, 2017, is part of a continuation of a review of Muhammad Alvin Faiz's previous marriage which began on August 8, 2017, to coincide with his marriage day. Merdeka.com promises to review various aspects, sociological and psychological in this news series. As it appears at the end of the article "Merdeka.com, today discussed the plus or minus the young marriage in terms of health, psychologists, to people who run an early marriage. Please read. "But far away from the fire, as described in the previous section Merdeka.com uses only one main source, to discuss the psychological aspect, which is then forced to explain the health aspects.

The Islamic discourse between the existing texts is very strong, considering the repeated argument behind the argument worthy of early marriage, which is approaching adultery. All writings are standing on the same shoulder in the aspect of motivation to encourage marriage to take place. The informant, Wijayanto with Ustadz title and Dendi Rosiadi as *penghulu* from Religious Affairs Office (KUA), was used to assert the authority of the Islamic discourse in its text representation. Some texts that explicitly quote Quranic verses, as in the second, where merdeka.com cites Wijayanto which sounds Sura An-Nuur verse 32 is a concrete form of it. Merdeka.com is the agency of Islamic hegemony in early marriage discourse. Meanwhile, health, psychology, and sociology discourse are not represented in text. The informants, especially psychologists only appear as ornaments to envelop Islamic discourses that encourage early marriage practices.

### C. Sociocultural Analysis

The submission of medical and psychological discourse in the presence of religious discourse at the level of media text representation shows that there is a problematic in the literacy aspect of our knowledge. Religion become the main reason and seems to ignore medical and psychological discourse which rely on scientific based and rationality.

The rise of religious fundamentalism is one thing that makes medical and psychological discourse marginalized in early marriage discussions. Avoiding adultery is a major factor

which then makes medical and psychological aspects out of the question. The rise of religious fundamentalism also makes sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education become taboo, so that the rationality of society about the importance of health and dangerous risk of disease or reproductive disorder due to early marriage is lost in public discourse (Candraningrum, Dhewy, Pratiwi: 2009) .

The increase of religious fundamentalism is recorded in the study of Pew Research Center (PRC) from 2011-2012 with a sample of 2000 people. The research shows that in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia 77% of the population support the enforcement of Islamic Sharia law. This enforcement of Shari'ah certainly has a logical consequence on Islamic hegemony, belief in Islamic doctrines as a whole.

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper shows how Merdeka.com displays the text that represent the works of Islamic hegemony in sociocultural. Early marriage, is the main method to avoid adultery and is the way advocated by Islam. Muhammad Alvin Faiz, who is a son of Ustadz, dragged his message to the extreme point of the religious discourse. In the practice layer of discourse, it can be seen how the discourse of health, psychology and sociology are not represented in the text. The informants, especially psychologists appear only as an ornament to conceal the discourse that encourages early marriage practices. It is basically caused by religious fundamentalism.

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