

Divorce Pattern Shift in Indonesia *The Social Media Impact*

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Abstract: Social media offer so many advantages to interact and to communicate while making access to information even easier. The issues of gender equality and women's empowerment are the content that may has an impact the trend of divorce. About 70% of total divorce rate in Indonesia puts women as the divorce's initiator. As a patriarchal country, women initiate to divorce is an interesting phenomenon in Indonesia. This research is purposed to explain the relationship between social media usage and the impact on divorce pattern shifts in Indonesia. The data were collected by online interview to 16 divorced women within the last 5 years from Madiun, Magetan, and Ponorogo. The data include women's talk of divorce in social media and their view of divorce and widowhood, divorce cases that strengthen their motivation, and other factors that can cause their decision. The study found that: (1) Social media encourage women's valiancy to argue and to express their feelings, (2) Divorce cases exposed in social media strengthens the motivation for divorce, (3) Divorce and widowhood are no longer a taboo, and (4) Women's economic independence and online infidelity become another factor that can initiate divorce.

1 INTRODUCTION

The high rate of divorce in Indonesia cannot be separated from the influence of the information and communication expansion and technology development, especially within the computer-mediated communication. The latter applies to almost every sectors of human life and has caused the change within human communication pattern.

The terminations of marriage law in Indonesia are regulated by the Constitution No. 1/1974 (38) and President's Instruction No. 1/1991 concerning the Compilation of Islamic Law (113). The law mentioned that marriage may be terminated due to death, divorce (*talak* when a divorce is initiated by men or *cerai gugat* when a divorce is initiated by women), and court decision. Based on the data, most reasons that caused divorce in Indonesia are disharmony, the lack of responsibility, economic problems, and infidelity. More studies conducted about the matter also indicated that the influence of globalization and industrialization are playing a part in the increasing numbers of the divorce rate.

1.1 Social media and gender equality issues

Social media has a direct impact on cultural factors such as lifestyles, attitudes, languages, aspirations, and user's behaviour. As it became an integral part of our daily life, people around the world often use social media for communicating with others, sharing photos or videos, and for entertainment purpose. Social media can enhance mutual ownership and positive attitudes among its users, encourage creativity, easily accessed, and fulfil the needs of people to build relationships with another (Carter, 2012; Hanna et.al, 2011; DiMauro & Zawel, 2012). Social media contents such as texts, photo, or videos shared by individuals and organizations have the power to build up high spirits or motivations and bring substantial yet unintentional influences (Berthon et.al, 2012; Berger & Milkman, 2012; Di Mauro & Zawel, 2012).

In many countries, ideological and cultural changes due to the modernization and economic development are generally regarded as the cause of the increasing marital disruption. The stability of the

family becomes disrupted by the need to meet personal fulfilment. The impact of industrialization on marital life that plagued the Western countries also occurred in the East, such as in Indonesia and Taiwan (Guest, 1992; Jones, 1994, 1997; Thornton & Lin, 1994 in Heaton 2001). The increasing of gender equality awareness brought by new media has also resulted in the cultural change within the society. Although their histories and levels of economic development are different, each of these countries has the same experience of economic development and equally exposed by gender equality issues culturally.

Divorce rate in Indonesia has increased since 2001 and significantly in 2007. The increasing number seems to be inseparable from the effect of globalization that brings gender equality issues and the inclusion of new cultures. Industrialization, women's economic independence, and the use of new media that leads to easier access to information, building a network of friends and communities, as well as sharing information, are believed to encourage the increase of divorce.

1.2 Social media and women's view on divorce and widowhood

Ulfa (2011) has found that there is a relationship between gender awareness with the high divorce rates in Ponorogo. The information exposure from various sources increases the judgment of women's empowerment so that they refuses all kinds of injustice in marriage and encourages them to get a divorce. Economic independence factor is also present, but not as the biggest determining factor in the decision-making process. From the results of this study, it can be seen that the existence of ideological and cultural changes by the expansion of information and communication technology had an impact on the increasing divorce rate.

In her studies, Nurhasanah (2014) has found that the increasing divorce rate in Padang was due to the changes in women's view of divorce. Something that was originally considered taboo and embarrassing in Rumah Minang, with the traditional philosophy of *basandi syarak, syarak bassandi kitabullah* was already regarded as a natural thing. The changes in social construction became one of the reasons that can change the women's view of divorce. From this research, we know that there is a connection between the transformation of women's ideology or culture with the divorce rate. The ideological and cultural change is most likely as the impacts of communications technology development that leads

to easily accessed information and the inclusion of new cultural values.

1.3 The shift of divorce pattern

Indonesia is a country that embraces the patriarchal culture. The increasing number of *cerai gugat* (a divorce asked by women) is an interesting phenomenon that contradicts the country's culture. The patriarchal culture took women's position in the subordination of men as the decision makers in the family are usually the husband. The increase of *cerai gugat* can be expressed as a form of resistance towards the patriarchal culture as it shows the shifting divorce pattern.

Women's rights awareness, gender equality, mainstream gender relations, and women's economic independence have encouraged Indonesian women to make fundamental decisions regarding their marital status. Several studies have shown that divorce and widowhood were neither considered a taboo nor a humiliating status for women. The change within the divorce view and being a single woman had impacted the divorce pattern. It has shifted from *cerai talak* (a divorce initiated by men) to *cerai gugat* (a divorce initiated by women).

Table 1: Cerai Talak and Cerai Gugat Ratio in Indonesia in 2011-2015 (Indonesian Statistic Bureau, 2016).

Year	Cerai Talak	%	Cerai Gugat	%	Total
2011	85.779	30.99	191.013	69.01	276.792
2012	91.800	30.15	212.595	69.84	304.395
2013	111.456	44.51	250.360	69.19	361.816
2014	113.850	29.78	268.381	70.21	382.231
2015	97.749	28.13	249.679	71.86	347.428

2 METHODS

We conducted *ex-post facto* research from 16 divorced women according to the court decision of the Religious Court (Pengadilan Agama) in Madiun, Ponorogo, and Magetan, East Java. The information collected by the researchers include the events or behaviour that occurred before and during the event of divorce.

The participants are social media users (such as Facebook) and the data collection was conducted by online interview towards single women who have filed for divorce within the last 5 years. The question that we asked the participants include the use of

social media related to women's talk of divorce, their view of divorce and widowhood, their experience of being a single woman, the information about divorce or divorce cases that strengthen their motivation, and other factors that might cause them to initiate divorce.

This study is also looking forward to other factors that we suggest can affect the decision-making such as economic independence and online infidelity.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study will be divided into 5 main parts which are social media usage, view of divorce and widowhood, divorce cases that enhance the motivation to initiate divorce, the view of divorce and single women status, and other factors that influence the divorce.

3.1 Description of participants and the use of social media

We conducted online interviews with 16 single women who are social media users, with the age range between 20-35 years old, and have a divorce status that varies from 5 months up to 4 years. These participants included teachers, public servants, private employees, merchants/online seller, and stay-at-home mom. They have access to conventional media (such as radio, television, and newspaper), online media, and social media with the access duration varies between 3 to 5 hours per day.

The study shows that teachers and public servant participants have more access to conventional media, especially television and newspapers with the duration between 3-5 hours a day and little access to online media as they only use social media less than 3 hours a day. Participants working as private employees have more access to online media and are using to social media between 3-5 hours a day, using conventional media television less than 3 hours a day, and rarely read newspapers. Merchants/online sellers and stay-at-home mom have more access to social media with the duration above 5 hours a day, but little time to access online media and television.

3.2 The talk of divorce and widowhood

During the period that leads to divorce, participants mostly talked about their marital conflict with their spouse. They expressed their consciousness about their marital life and the hope for a better life as a

single woman after the divorce in social media. Their stances on social media tend to support divorce and regard the widow's status as usual.

Almost all participants have been exposed to gender equality issues and believed that men and women should be equal. They also believe in the ability to survive as a single woman, especially participants who are economically independent. They also claimed to be very confident in life even without a husband. The conversation about divorce and widowhood being uploaded on social media gets responses from another single woman or whom still in marital conflict. Although all participants agree to avoid the event of divorce, there were many answers that neither support nor reject the divorce.

The disclosure and supportive responses in social media help the participants to see that divorce and widowhood is no longer a taboo and an embarrassment. It is in contrast with Indonesian's view that often considers a divorce as a women's failure in fostering family livelihood. From this findings, we could see the shifting view regarding divorce and widowhood by women.

3.3 Other divorce case that influence decision-making process

Most reasons that can cause divorce in Indonesia are disharmony, lack of responsibility, economic problems, and infidelity. Many studies about divorce indicate that the influence of globalization and industrialization can also increase the divorce rate.

According to the participants, online conversations in social media with topics of divorce and widowhood become one of the considerations in their decision to file for divorce. Participants are mostly informed about the experiences, opinions, or the views of others about divorce and widowhood based on the comments on their status or through an involvement during discussions. The factors had enhanced their confidence to make a fundamental decision in their marital life.

While actively engaging in social media and finding the others who are experiencing the same problem, the participants grow more confident to decide or to initiate for divorce. Some participants found close friends and established more intensive personal communication that helped them through the divorce process. The exposure of divorce cases in the mass media that show women's success to survive as a single parent, living a normal life as a single woman, are being other factors that reinforce the decision to initiate for divorce.

3.4 Other actors that influences the divorce

Economic independence is another important factor in influencing women to initiate for divorce. In a patriarchal culture, the husband is the main income seeker, but with the process of globalization and industrialization, women's opportunity to enter the workforce and being economically independent has become greater. This became one of the factors that encourage women's confidence to initiate for divorce. Economic independence has been a major factor that can cause divorce, in this study, however, the participants said it was not the main factor.

Another factor that encourages women to file for divorce is infidelity, whether committed by the husband or wife. In the global era, social media has offered opportunities for building relationships with others, including personal relationships that lead to disloyalty. There are two kinds of infidelity, (1) an affair committed by a husband that causes jealousy, continuous fighting, that leads to divorce, (2) an affair committed by the participants as an escape from a domestic conflict, which strengthens the decision to divorce. In this study, only a small percentage of participants made infidelity through social media as a reason for initiating the divorce. The main reason being disharmony and no responsibility from their husband.

4 CONCLUSION

One of the factors that may cause a shifting on the divorce pattern in Indonesia is the use of social media. The information from social media has enhanced the participants' confidence to file for divorce. Their psychological capability has improved through the relationship they build with friends who have the same experience in divorce. Another factor that contributes to their confidence is the support of the family and the confidence build between single or divorced women online.

Information accessed by the participants from various media on the topic of divorce has created the notion that divorce is no longer a taboo or an embarrassment. When they found domestic marital conflict, the women are no longer afraid or worried to initiate for divorce. Through the study, it was found that social media plays a major role in the shift of divorce pattern in Indonesia from *cerai talak* (divorce initiated by the husband) to *cerai gugat* (divorce initiated by the wife).

Through this study, we can found that: (1) social media encourages women's valiancy to express feelings, (2) the exposure of divorce cases in social media strengthens the motivation for divorce, (3) divorce and widowhood are no longer taboo and humiliating, and (4) women's economic independence and online infidelity became other factors that encourage the decision to initiate women file for divorce (*cerai gugat*). Although social media has a major impact to the of divorce pattern shift in Indonesia, the main reason to divorce is disharmony in marriage.

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