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The Meaning of Fear of Adultery in Marriage Dispensation Applications at The Sidoarjo Religious Court

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the meaning of the concept of "fear of adultery" in the application for marriage dispensation at the Sidoarjo Religious Court. The focus of the study is directed at how prospective brides and grooms and related parties interpret "fear of adultery" as a moral, religious, and social basis, as well as the influence of family pressure, societal norms, and the dynamics of the couple's relationship in forming this meaning. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 informants, consisting of 8 prospective brides and grooms and 2 employees of the Sidoarjo Religious Court. Data analysis uses Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism theory to understand the process of meaning formation through symbols, language, and social actions. The research results show that the reason for "fear of adultery" does not have a single meaning, but rather is a social construct formed through interactions between the applicant, family, and social environment. This meaning is generally formed by parents as the authority within the family and is used as a moral and religious symbol to legitimize early marriage and maintain family honor. For the Religious Court, "fear of adultery" is understood as a common administrative narrative in the marriage dispensation process. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, early marriage is understood as a social act legitimized through the symbolic meaning of "fear of adultery" that is constructed and accepted collectively.

Keyword: *Moral Basis, Social Reality, Social Action*

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Introduction

From a sociological perspective, marriage is defined as a social institution that plays a crucial role in establishing peace, regulating relationships between individuals, and protecting and maintaining prevailing cultural values and norms (Ida et al., 2024). Marriage is not only understood as a personal bond between two loving individuals, but also as a social contract recognized, legitimized, and supported by broader social structures, including the family, society, and the state. Marriage serves as a means to regulate and control behavior to conform to social and religious norms, to divide rights and obligations fairly between husband and wife, and to regulate social roles within the family, such as parenthood or spouse. Through the institution of marriage, society ensures the continuation of offspring, the preservation of cultural values, and the creation of long-term social stability (Abdawiyah et al., 2023). Furthermore, marriage also plays an important role in the process of socializing life values, serving as a means of social control over individual behavior, and providing a legitimate and socially recognized platform for the channeling of human biological, emotional, and psychological needs (Marwiyah et al., 2023).

Early marriage, which refers to marriages performed before the age of 18, has become a worrying social phenomenon in the modern era, especially in developing countries like Indonesia (Bawono et al., 2022). This practice not only reflects structural issues such as poverty, low education, and rigid social norms, but also poses widespread problems for the future of children, especially girls. According to a recent report from UNICEF, Indonesia ranks 8th in the world and 2nd in the ASEAN region in the number of child marriage cases, with an estimated 1.5 million cases (Rizkianti & Puspita Sari, 2025). These figures indicate that the practice of early marriage remains deeply entrenched, despite various policies aimed at addressing it.

The impact of early marriage is very diverse and serious and can be felt by both the bride and groom, but various studies show that it is women who suffer the most losses, because when a woman marries at a very young age, after marriage she will immediately be faced with the demands of a domestic role as a wife and mother, which socially and culturally is often positioned as the main obligation that must be prioritized, so that the opportunity to return to school or develop one's potential becomes very small, even almost closed, and this condition ultimately strengthens gender inequality and narrows women's access to a more independent and empowered life in the future. From a sociological perspective, children or adolescents who marry at an immature age tend to be psychologically unprepared to face the emotional pressures of marriage, financially insecure enough to meet household needs, and socially immature enough to form equal and healthy relationships with their partners. This can lead to unequal power relations within the family, reinforce economic dependence on the partner or extended family, and limit access to education and opportunities for broader social mobility later in life (Maulana et al., 2026).

The phenomenon of early marriage in Indonesia demonstrates a shift in distribution patterns and public perception (Rifki Aditya, Julia Ivanna, 2023). Previously, early marriage was primarily influenced by family, traditional, or economic factors. However, in the current era, social media, such as TikTok, has become a platform that not only facilitates entertainment and lifestyle trends but also contributes to shaping opinions and normalizing early marriage (Purwaningtyas et al., 2022). Much content on TikTok features young married couples openly sharing their married lives, depicting romance and happiness. This has influenced some teenagers, who begin to idealize marriage at a young age without understanding the responsibilities and risks involved (Wulandari et al., 2025).

Beyond the influence of social media, the high rate of early marriage is also inseparable from the strong traditional cultural values that define the institution of marriage (Suhaeny, 2020). In Indonesian society, particularly in rural areas, customary norms and traditions are still strongly held, including views on the ideal age for marriage and the division of gender roles within the household (Hasyim et al., 2025). Girls are often deemed "fit" for marriage upon reaching a certain age, and parents feel more at ease if their daughters marry, as they are perceived as capable of meeting social demands and maintaining the family's reputation. In societies with strong cultural systems, early marriage serves as a means of social control over adolescent behavior, especially girls, to maintain family and community honor (Ahmadi, 2008).

Young or older couples often seek legal loopholes to continue their marriages even though the prospective bride and groom have not yet reached the legal age limit (Citraningsih & Noviandari, 2022). One common approach in this situation is to apply for a marriage dispensation with a religious or district court. A marriage dispensation is a court-issued permit granted to prospective brides and grooms who have not reached the minimum age stipulated in law, thus maintaining their marriage legally (Asharo, 2025). The practice of applying for a marriage dispensation is frequently cited, with reasons often related to premarital pregnancy or concerns about the possibility of adultery if the marriage is not consummated immediately. This is generally influenced by parental pressure, social pressure, or perceived urgency, often leading to concerns about potential dishonor or stigmatization in society if the marriage is not consummated immediately (Fatah, 2026).

The reasons behind these requests are all narratively constructed to create a sense of urgency (Greace Br Sembiring et al., 2025). In fact, in many cases, these narratives are deliberately constructed and enriched by incorporating religious values and social norms as a form of moral justification, attempting to demonstrate that marriage dispensation is not only legally valid but also ethically and religiously sound (Ilham Hibbaturrahman et al., 2026). The reasons put forward in marriage dispensation requests are generally not a pure reflection of the objective circumstances faced by the prospective bride and groom, but are strategically arranged in a poignant and urgent narrative, designed to evoke empathy and increase the likelihood of the request being granted,

without deeply considering the long-term impact of early marriage on the social, psychological, and mental well-being of the prospective bride and groom (Zumaro, 2021).

One example of an incident observed by researchers occurred at the Sidoarjo Regency Religious Court, where the practice of underage marriage is still common, evidenced by a series of marriage dispensation requests filed with the court each year by local residents (Auli & 'Assa'ad, 2021). Based on data from the Sidoarjo Religious Court's annual report, the number of marriage dispensation requests showed a downward trend from 2023 to November 2025 (Maesaroh & Realita, 2026). In 2023, 320 cases were recorded, with 96 applicants citing "fear of adultery" as the primary reason. In 2024, the number of cases decreased to 291 cases, with 87 still citing the same reason. As of November 2025, 286 marriage dispensation requests were recorded, with 80 of these filed citing "fear of adultery." This data indicates that despite the decline in the number of marriage dispensation requests, fear of adultery remains the dominant and most common reason cited by applicants.

Based on the analysis of various reasons submitted, the most frequently used factor as the main basis for applying for marriage dispensation is the fear of adultery, which shows that moral aspects and religious values are still the dominant factors influencing the decisions of parents or guardians in submitting applications for marriage dispensation for their children who are still under the age stipulated by law (Sidoarjo Religious Court, 2023-2025). The researcher intends to examine in depth how the meaning of the concept of "fear of adultery" namely the fear of the possibility of adultery before marriage is understood and interpreted by applicants for marriage dispensation, which in many cases does not only come from the prospective bride and groom themselves, but is more dominantly voiced by parents or guardians who represent their children who are not old enough to marry.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, aiming to in-depth describe the social reality as experienced and interpreted by the research subjects. This descriptive approach is realized through the researcher's efforts to describe in detail the background, perspectives, and social interaction patterns of the applicants, their families, and related actors within the family, community, and religious legal institutions. This research focuses on how the subjects interpret and use social and religious symbols, and how these meanings are formed through ongoing social interaction processes. Within this research framework, symbolic interactionism theory is used as an analytical lens to understand how symbols, language, and social actions are used by individuals and families of marriage dispensation applicants when they explain their reason for "fear of adultery." This theory helps researchers see how these meanings are interpreted, formed, and used in everyday interactions, both within the family and in the broader social

environment.

This entire research was conducted at the Sidoarjo Religious Court starting August 1, 2024, and continuing until June 2025 to refine the data through interviews and searching for sources. The research subjects consisted of 1. Prospective brides and grooms, namely individuals who apply for marriage dispensation and use the narrative of "fear of adultery" as the main reason in their application for early marriage. Prospective brides and grooms were chosen as research subjects because they are the parties who directly experience and are involved in the process of applying for marriage dispensation. and 2. Prospective brides and grooms, namely individuals who apply for marriage dispensation and use the narrative of "fear of adultery" as the main reason in their application for early marriage. Prospective brides and grooms were chosen as research subjects because they are the parties who directly experience and are involved in the process of applying for marriage dispensation.

Result and Discussion

Symbolic Meaning of "Fear of Adultery" in Marriage Dispensation Applications

Based on the results of research and observations conducted at the Sidoarjo Religious Court, it was found that the reason "fear of adultery" is one of the main reasons for applying for marriage dispensation. The term "fear of adultery" has various meanings but has the same core, namely as a form of moral and religious awareness to avoid actions that are considered sinful in the view of religion and social norms (Hasibuan & Pisra, 2024). However, in reality, the reason "fear of adultery" is sometimes also used as a narrative to cover up the condition of a previous pregnancy, with the aim of maintaining the family's good name and preventing the exposure of shame in the public space. Based on the results of interviews with four couples who applied for marriage dispensation consisting of eight informants, various understandings were obtained regarding the meaning of "fear of adultery", although they have the same core meaning. Most applicants interpret fear of adultery as an effort to avoid actions that are prohibited by religion and considered a major sin (Munawaroh, 2024).

The brides' responses indicate that "fear of zina" is interpreted as a moral and religious symbol used to evaluate their own behavior, and as a justification for their decision to marry at an early age. For them, this term reflects a desire to avoid sin and pursue a relationship that is considered religiously valid. Meanwhile, Religious Court officials interpret "fear of zina" as a symbol that has become a common understanding in marriage dispensation applications. This reason often reflects social concerns, pressure from family, and in some cases, is used to conceal an existing pregnancy. In line with Herbert Blumer's view, the meaning of "fear of zina" is not singular or fixed, but rather changes and depends on the experiences and social interactions of each

individual.

1. Dominant Decision-Making in Marriage Dispensation Applications

Overall, the interview results indicate that the decision to marry young is a joint decision involving the prospective bride and groom and parents of both parties. However, parental dominance appears to be stronger, especially when the child is still young, not yet independent, or is pregnant before marriage (Sujana, 2023). This suggests that family factors play a significant role in determining the direction of early marriage decisions. Considerations such as maintaining the family's reputation, avoiding social stigma, and restoring family honor are the primary factors driving parents to quickly decide to marry off their children (Nurjannah et al., 2025).

These parental actions are the result of a symbolic interpretation of the concepts of "adultery" and "honor" within the framework of Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism theory. It is clear that the decision to marry young is interpreted differently by each actor involved. For parents, early marriage, especially in the context of premarital pregnancy, is interpreted as a moral and social solution to maintain family honor and avoid societal stigma. The meanings of "shame," "disgrace," and "parental responsibility" become powerful social symbols and encourage parents to take a dominant role in marriage decisions (Sen et al., 2025).

2. Family Institutional in Decision Making

The family institution plays a crucial role in the socialization of religious values, social norms, and cultural norms prevalent in society. Through daily interactions within the family, children learn to understand the concepts of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, and values such as responsibility, obedience, and family honor (Vijayagopal et al., 2024). These values then influence how individuals interpret important life events, including decisions related to marriage. Parents occupy a crucial and strategic position within the family institution. Parents are seen as the primary decision-makers in various family matters, especially those concerning their children's future. This authority arises because parents are considered to have the experience, maturity, and moral responsibility to make the best choices for their children.

The excuse of "fear of adultery" can be understood as a way for families, particularly parents, to guide and control their children's behavior to ensure it aligns with the values they deem correct (Ashari, 2024). Through this rationale, parents strive to ensure that their children's actions do not deviate from religious teachings and prevailing norms. Furthermore, the use of the excuse of "fear of adultery" also reflects the family's attempt to conform to societal values. The decision to marry young is then seen not only as a solution to the child's personal problems but also as a social step to maintain family norms, honor, and acceptance within the surrounding community.

From a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, the family institution can be understood as the primary space where social meanings are formed that form the basis for individual actions. The meaning of "fear of adultery" does not emerge naturally or directly, but rather is formed through a continuous process of interaction between children, parents, and the family environment. Through these interactions, children learn to understand how behavior is judged, accepted, or considered deviant (Julimas & Efendi, 2025). The family is the first place for children to learn and understand religious values, the concepts of sin, shame, and responsibility. Through advice, reprimands, direction, and examples of parental behavior, children gradually develop an understanding of what is considered right and wrong. This process shapes how children interpret relationships with the opposite sex and the moral and social consequences of their behavior (Alfarizi & Marpaung, 2025).

3. The formation of The Menaing of "Fear of Adultery" Throught Personal Beliefs, Religious Teachings, and Social Pressure

Based on interviews with eight informants, it was found that the meaning of "fear of adultery" was not shared by all informants. Each informant constructed their own understanding based on their life experiences, family background, and the social environment they encountered. Taken together, these three factors explain that the meaning of "fear of adultery" is formed through interrelated processes (Kisworo, 2020). This meaning does not exist in isolation but is constructed from individual experiences, internalized religious values, and social interactions with family and the surrounding environment. Personal beliefs provide an internal basis for individuals to interpret fear of adultery as a moral awareness and self-responsibility (Fatmawati et al., 2025). Religious teachings reinforce these beliefs by providing a framework of values and norms that regulate behavioral boundaries. Meanwhile, social pressure acts as an external factor that accelerates and strengthens decision-making, especially when individuals and families face societal judgment, stigma, and expectations.

4. The Role of Religious Court Officials in the Initial Process of Marriage Dispensation Applications

Based on interviews and observations conducted with two employees at the Sidoarjo Religious Court, it was discovered that Religious Court employees play a crucial role in the initial stages of the marriage dispensation application process, particularly in providing administrative guidance, moral guidance, and legal understanding to applicants. In the initial stages, employees serve to direct and facilitate the administrative process, such as explaining the required documents, application procedures, and the court procedures that the applicant and guardian will

undergo. In addition to providing administrative explanations, employees also play a role in

providing social and moral education to applicants. They share their views on the risks that may arise from early marriage, such as psychological unpreparedness, potential economic problems, and the possibility of future marital conflict.

Employees strive to instill awareness that marriage dispensations are not justifications for underage marriage, but rather legal exceptions that should be applied for with careful consideration. Employees also consistently recommend postponing marriage if the prospective bride and groom are deemed emotionally or financially unprepared. This recommendation is intended to give the prospective bride and groom time to better prepare for married life. However, interviews revealed that applicants do not always follow this advice or guidance. Most applicants continue with their marriage dispensation applications for moral and religious reasons, primarily due to concerns about falling into adultery.

5. Dynamics and Negotiation of the Meaning of "Fear of Adultery"

This meaning always depends on how individuals and groups interpret the surrounding social situation. "Fear of adultery" does not have the same meaning for everyone, but rather is understood differently according to the role, experience, and social position of each party involved in the marriage dispensation application process.

- For Marriage Dispensation Applicants, The meaning of "fear of adultery" is understood in various ways and is not a single one. Findings indicate that this reason is the primary basis for applying for marriage dispensation, but the underlying meaning is influenced by personal experiences, family relationships, and social pressures. First, for some applicants, "fear of adultery" is interpreted as a religious fear of sin and violating religious teachings. Adultery is understood as a prohibited act with moral and spiritual consequences. In this view, marriage is considered the only legitimate and religiously justified way to avoid prohibited acts. This interpretation is reflected in applicants' statements that marriage is a way to protect themselves, calm their hearts, and properly practice religious teachings. Second, interview findings indicate that the meaning of "fear of adultery" does not always arise from the applicant's personal awareness. In some cases, this meaning is shaped and directed by parents, the authority figures within the family.
- For families, The reason for "fear of adultery" is not only understood as a fear of violating religious teachings, but also as a symbol of responsibility, protection, and an effort to maintain the family's honor in the eyes of society. First, for families, "fear of adultery" is interpreted as a form of moral and religious responsibility of parents towards their children. Parents feel obliged to guide and control their children's behavior to prevent them from engaging in acts deemed to violate religious norms. Marriage is seen as a legitimate

and moral solution to ensure children are in a relationship that is religiously and socially recognized. This meaning arises from parents' belief that failure to prevent adultery also means failure in fulfilling their role as responsible parents. Second, "fear of adultery" for family functions as an effort to maintain the family's honor and reputation. Interviews indicate that parents strongly consider the views of society, neighbors, and extended family. Premarital pregnancy, the child's closeness to their partner, and the intensity of interactions known to the surrounding community are perceived as threats to the family's image.

- For the Religious Courts, the excuse of "fear of adultery" is interpreted as a moral and religious narrative frequently cited in marriage dispensation applications. Interviews with Religious Court staff revealed that this reason reflects the family's concern about potential violations of religious norms due to their child's social interactions, which are deemed uncontrollable. In practice, the Religious Courts view "fear of adultery" as an indication of moral and social pressure experienced by the applicant and their family. This reason often reflects concerns about sin, dishonor, and negative judgment from society if the marriage is not consummated immediately. Therefore, "fear of adultery" is a reason deemed relevant to prevailing religious values. The Religious Courts also recognize that the meaning of "fear of adultery" does not always reflect the actual facts. Court staff revealed that in some cases, this excuse is used as a formal narrative to conceal premarital pregnancies.

Linked to Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism perspective, these moral and religious symbols acquire their meaning through social interaction. Individuals do not act solely based on objective religious rules or social norms, but rather on the meanings they assign to these symbols. The meaning of "fear of adultery" is formed and reinforced through family interactions, parental advice, religious sermons, neighborhood conversations, and everyday social experiences. In these interactions, parents play the primary role of interpreting moral and religious symbols and then transmitting them to their children. Parents are positioned as symbols of authority and guardians of values, so their interpretations of "fear of adultery" and early marriage tend to be accepted by children as truths that must be followed. Children then act in accordance with these formed meanings, although in some cases, doubts or emotional distress remain.

Thus, within Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism framework, the role of moral and religious symbols in justifying early marriage can be explained through three main processes:

1. Meaning: Symbols such as "adultery" and "sin" are interpreted as moral threats to be avoided;
2. Interaction: Moral and religious symbols do not emerge individually, but are formed

and reinforced through social interaction. The meaning of "fear of adultery" is constructed through relationships between children, parents, extended family, and the social environment.

3. Interpretation: Each individual interprets and adapts this meaning to their personal experiences and social circumstances

After conducting research for approximately 10 months, the researcher found a number of important findings based on the informants' answers to the research questions. The questions asked to the prospective bride and groom included: (1) why the decision to marry at a young age was considered appropriate? (2) who played the biggest role in the decision? (3) what is meant by "fear of adultery" according to the informants? (4) whether the narrative of "fear of adultery" comes from personal beliefs, religious teachings, or certain social pressures? (5) whether the prospective bride and groom have ever received advice from court officials to postpone the wedding and how did they respond? and (6) how the prospective bride and groom felt when the request for dispensation was submitted, whether they felt confident, pressured, or doubtful?

In addition, researchers asked the administrative staff of the Sidoarjo Religious Court questions related to: (1) their role in the initial process of applying for marriage dispensation? (2) the frequency of applications for marriage dispensation with the reason of "fear of adultery"? (3) the provision of advice or alternatives before the applicant is directed to the next process; (4) the main source of the emergence of the reason "fear of adultery", whether it comes from religious understanding, family pressure, or other factors? and (5) how the process of social interaction influences the way the applicant and his family interpret the reason "fear of adultery" in applying for marriage dispensation?

Responses from Marriage Dispensation Applicants

Fear of adultery is understood as an attempt to avoid religious prohibitions, but in marriage dispensation requests, this narrative is often constructed by parents as a social strategy. Pregnancy before marriage is a primary factor driving dispensation requests, accompanied by shame and concerns about exposing family disgrace. Therefore, fear of adultery is used as an excuse to ensure the court's approval of the request without revealing the true circumstances. Although some suggested postponing the marriage, this was rejected due to the perceived urgency of the situation. The decision to marry is undertaken with faith and acceptance of the consequences, including social and educational impacts such as school interruption, so that fear of adultery serves not only as a religious belief but also as a moral legitimacy within the legal sphere.

Fear of adultery is interpreted as a fear of sin, especially due to the pregnancy that occurred before marriage, which is considered to increase sin if not married immediately. The primary decision-making role is played by the woman, her parents, and the parents of the couple, given that

the couple is still a student and tends to follow family decisions. Marriage is seen as the right step without delay, as the situation is deemed urgent. Personal beliefs and religious teachings are the primary basis for this decision, coupled with a sense of responsibility because the woman is already working and feels capable of supporting the family. Although there was some suggestion to postpone the marriage, this suggestion was rejected because the circumstances were deemed impossible. The decision to marry is undertaken with full faith as a form of moral and religious responsibility for the situation that has occurred.

On the other hand, Anisa (16) revealed that:

“The decision to pursue a relationship without a legal bond is driven by the fear of falling into sin if it continues without a legal bond, especially since both parties feel they are ready to commit to a serious relationship. The decision-making process involves the individual, their partner, and their parents through joint discussions. Prolonged courtship is considered to be ineffective, so marriage is seen as the more appropriate option. However, this decision is not solely based on personal conviction, but is also influenced by social pressure from a religious environment and frequent meetings, which can lead to feelings of pressure from surrounding gossip. Although the court offered advice early in the marriage dispensation application process, this advice was simply respected without being followed. Furthermore, doubts arose about the appropriateness of the decision, although marriage was ultimately pursued as the most feasible path under the circumstances.”

Adultery is understood as a major sin that must be avoided, so marriage is seen as a way to protect oneself and avoid negative societal judgment. The decision to marry is not made by one party, but rather the result of a mutual agreement between the individual, their partner, and their parents. The primary motivation stems from personal conviction and religious teachings, but social pressure also plays a role, particularly due to the intensity of the gatherings that spark conversations in the surrounding community. Although there were suggestions to postpone the marriage, these were ignored. The decision to marry was undertaken with steadfastness, based on the perceived mental and financial readiness.

Fear of adultery is understood as a fear of violating religious prohibitions and incurring sin. The decision to marry stems from personal and partner stability, which is then discussed with parents until a mutual agreement is reached. Marriage is seen as the right choice, both due to religious convictions and practical considerations such as having a financial provider. A background of religious education from childhood, including experiences studying at Islamic boarding schools, fostered an understanding that religious teachings are the primary foundation for life decisions. Furthermore, the family's view that marriage at a young age is normal also strengthened this decision. Although there were suggestions or input from others, these were simply listened to without influencing the final decision. The decision to marry was undertaken with complete

steadfastness and confidence.

Habib (30) also magnified his experience as follows:

“Fear of adultery is interpreted as an effort to avoid undesirable and prohibited acts according to religious teachings, based on existing religious understanding. The decision to marry is made because adultery is viewed as a major sin, while the age is considered appropriate and mature for marriage. The primary motivation stems from religious teachings and personal beliefs, reinforced through active involvement in religious studies and lectures that frequently discuss the prohibition of adultery. Although there was some advice or input from others, this was not a major issue because the individual in question felt mature and capable of making their own decisions. The decision to marry was ultimately carried out with full confidence as a form of consistency with their religious values.”

Anindita (14) expresses her opinion in this way:

“Fear of adultery is understood as the fear of falling into a major sin. In the marriage decision-making process, the parents of both parties play a dominant role because they provide the most guidance. The decision to marry is considered appropriate given that the pregnancy occurred before the marriage, triggering parental anger and disappointment, as well as demands that the couple take responsibility. This situation is exacerbated by social pressure, particularly parental shame toward those around them who perceive the family as incapable of caring for the child. Despite input throughout the process, all responses are delivered by parents who firmly reject the advice, while the individual remains submissive. On the other hand, doubts persist due to their student status and perceived unpreparedness. Therefore, the decision to marry reflects more on the dominance of family authority and social pressure than on full personal readiness.”

In the meantime, Dimas (23) shares his opinion in this way:

“Fear of adultery is understood as an inner attitude based on faith and trust in God, thus encouraging individuals to avoid adultery. In the decision-making process for marriage, the parents of both parties play a dominant role, although the process still involves discussion with the couple. The decision to marry was driven by the pregnancy, which triggered parental anger and became the primary reason for the proposed marriage. This situation was reinforced by social pressure from the extended family and the surrounding environment, which often expressed negative judgments. Despite some input on other considerations, parents on both sides rejected the proposal with conviction. On the other hand, the individuals concerned felt doubtful when the proposal was submitted, as marriage was perceived as an attempt to cover up family shame, leading to feelings of pressure due to the various demands that must be met.”

Responses from Sidoarjo Religious Court Employees

In the practice of handling marriage dispensation applications, fear of adultery is a frequently cited narrative. Generally, this reason is interpreted as a concern that a child or partner is unable to maintain social boundaries, thus risking extramarital relations. The role of court officials is limited to administrative assistance until the trial preparation stage, while the decision to accept or reject the application rests entirely with the panel of judges. During this process, advice to postpone the marriage is almost always provided with a detailed explanation, but in many cases, the applicant ignores it. Religiously, fear of adultery is understood as the fear of committing a grave sin. However, based on field experience, this interpretation is not only formed by individual awareness but is also influenced by family interactions with the social environment, which continually emphasizes issues of sin, slander, and the risks of social interaction. Therefore, the narrative of fear of adultery becomes a joint construction of religious values and environmental pressures.

Mrs. Ndasah (28) gives her opinion in this way:

“Fear of adultery is one of the most frequently cited narratives in marriage dispensation requests, generally used to expedite the marriage process and avoid violations of moral and religious norms. However, in practice, this reason often also serves to conceal an existing pregnancy, driven by shame and concern about public perception. In the case handling process, officials act as both administrative agents and educators, providing guidance and direction to postpone early marriage if financial or psychological unpreparedness is detected. However, such postponements are often rejected, even met with emotional rejection framed in religious arguments. Based on the experience of handling cases intensively, the meaning of fear of adultery is strongly formed through social interactions involving parental advice, conversations with neighbors, religious sermons, and everyday conversations in the surrounding environment, so that these reasons are considered reasonable and legitimate for marrying children within the context of a marriage dispensation.”

Conclusion

This study concludes that the reason for "fear of adultery" in marriage dispensation applications does not have a single meaning, but rather is the result of a social process formed through interactions between the applicant, family, social environment, and the Religious Court. This meaning does not always arise from the applicant's personal beliefs, but is often shaped and directed by parents as the authority within the family. For the family, "fear of adultery" is interpreted as a moral and religious symbol used to justify the decision to marry young, maintain family honor, and manage social stigma, particularly in cases of premarital pregnancy. Meanwhile, for the Religious Court, this reason is understood as a formal narrative that is common and administratively acceptable in the process of examining marriage dispensation applications. From the perspective of Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism, the decision to marry young is not solely influenced by factors such as age, economic conditions, or emergency conditions, but by the symbolic meaning of "fear of adultery" constructed through social interaction and shared interpretation. Thus, early marriage is a social act legitimized by moral and religious symbols that are interpreted and accepted collectively in community life.

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Declaration of Generative AI: I have stated before that this article was written independently without the use of generic artificial intelligence technology. The process of writing, drafting, and developing of text content is all done independently. Every idea, analysis, argument, and formulation of sentences comes from the writer's own thinking and effort. All reference points are clearly provided according to current scientific writing standards. With this statement, I take full responsibility for the truth and integrity of the work made.

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Conflicts of Interest: The study is done independently without any peer pressure, intervention, or interest connected with the subject discussed. The writer also notes that no conflict of financial or non-financial interests can affect objectivity, integrity, or research. The study is done in accordance with current research ethics and academic honesty during the process of data collection, analysis, and writing. Cooperation with certain institutions or parties does not affect the interpretation or conclusions that result from the study.

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