



The impact of *merarik* kode' on women's educational Trajectories in Central Lombok

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes marriage practices within the merarik culture (merarik kode') among Sasak women in Pejanggik Village, Central Lombok, using the Harvard Gender Analysis Framework and Walby's theory of patriarchy. The study focuses on understanding how early marriage within this cultural tradition influences women's educational experiences and gender relations in everyday life. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with purposive sampling to select participants who had experienced marriage through the merarik tradition. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving Sasak women who married at a young age as well as local stakeholders. The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that women who experience merarik kode' often live within unequal gender relations in which domestic responsibilities are assigned to them despite participation in income-generating activities. Their autonomy and access to resources are restricted, as many decisions require approval from their husbands. In addition, early marriage significantly affects women's educational trajectories. Many women are forced to drop out of formal schooling, face difficulties in continuing equivalency education, and experience limited access to information and knowledge development. These limitations also influence their capacity in parenting and child education. This study highlights that early marriage within the

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merarik cultural context contributes to educational inequality and limits women's opportunities for empowerment and social mobility. Therefore, culturally sensitive educational programs and community-based interventions are needed to increase awareness of women's education and reduce early marriage practices.

Keywords: Gender; Early Marriage; Women; Education.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis praktik pernikahan dalam budaya merarik (merarik kode') pada perempuan Sasak di Desa Pejanggih dengan menggunakan Harvard Gender Analysis Framework dan teori patriarki Sylvia Walby. Penelitian ini berfokus pada pemahaman bagaimana pernikahan dini dalam tradisi budaya tersebut memengaruhi pengalaman pendidikan perempuan dan relasi gender dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan purposive sampling untuk memilih partisipan yang mengalami pernikahan melalui tradisi merarik. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan perempuan Sasak yang menikah pada usia muda serta para pemangku kepentingan lokal. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Matthew B. Miles dan A. Michael Huberman yang meliputi pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan yang mengalami merarik kode' sering hidup dalam relasi gender yang tidak setara, di mana tanggung jawab domestik tetap dibebankan kepada mereka meskipun turut berpartisipasi dalam aktivitas ekonomi keluarga. Otonomi dan akses terhadap sumber daya juga terbatas karena banyak keputusan memerlukan persetujuan suami. Selain itu, pernikahan dini berdampak signifikan terhadap perjalanan pendidikan perempuan. Banyak perempuan terpaksa putus sekolah, mengalami kesulitan melanjutkan pendidikan kesetaraan, serta memiliki keterbatasan akses terhadap informasi dan pengembangan pengetahuan. Keterbatasan tersebut juga memengaruhi kapasitas mereka dalam pengasuhan dan pendidikan anak. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pernikahan dini dalam konteks budaya merarik berkontribusi pada ketimpangan pendidikan dan membatasi peluang perempuan untuk pemberdayaan serta mobilitas sosial. Oleh karena itu, program pendidikan yang sensitif budaya dan intervensi berbasis masyarakat diperlukan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran tentang pentingnya pendidikan perempuan dan mengurangi praktik pernikahan dini.

Kata Kunci: Gender; Pernikahan Dini; Perempuan; Pendidikan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in the preservation of local culture is important, because women can also contribute to the common good so that there is no gender inequality in the culture itself. Especially if it is associated with the *merarik* culture which is still preserved by the Sasak Tribe and has raised criticism from various circles so that many theories are used to examine gender injustice in the *merarik* culture.

In Fitrianita et.al. (2018), *merarik* was originally a term used by the Sasak Tribe to bring away girls with the aim of being married (marriage by elopement). However, in its development *merarik* experienced an expansion of meaning and was used to mention a series of marriages in the Sasak Tribe as a whole (Fitrianita et al., 2018). The community perspective that considers *merarik* process easy provides a gap for men and women to practice *merarik*. Especially for teenagers who already have a special relationship with the opposite sex (dating). Many things are behind the occurrence of *merarik*, one of which is the promiscuity between Sasak men and women which has worried the parents. Then *merarik* becomes an alibi to cover the family's disgrace, thus increasing the number of early marriages, especially in the Sasak environment, and the Central Lombok region in general.

Whereas marriage should be used as an important process in people's lives aimed at continuing offspring carried out based on customs in the form of culture and customs. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian state, marriage procedures are unique to each region. In customary law, marriage is a bond between a man and a woman that aims to form a household that is carried out religiously and customarily by involving the families of both parties (Aniq. 2011). But on the other hand, marriage has a negative impact on social life, such as marriage at a young age which has an impact on social values. Young marriage or more commonly referred to as early marriage is one of the national issues that must receive special attention both in terms of prevention and prohibition. Not without reason, early marriage has a significant negative impact on physiological/biological development, and psychological and economic well-being of families which affects the quality of life of Indonesian society in general in various aspects.

The data shows that young women marry at the age of 15-19 with a percentage of 11.7%. Based on the available data, there are more than 22,000 girls aged 10-14 years, equivalent to 0.2% of young women who have married underage. 50% of young women in Indonesia are married under the age of 19 (Sutari Andini, 2021). Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number.16 of 2019 concerning Marriage explains that the legal age for marriage is 19 years (State Sheet of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). The data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2019 on the number of women married before the age of 18 put West Nusa Tenggara Province, which is the research location, in the 6th highest rank in Indonesia, namely 16.1% (Supriani et al., 2021).

During the Covid-19 period, around 500 children in the West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) region had married. The data was obtained from the delivery of the Daily Executive Head of the NTB Provincial Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning (Wartawan BBC News Indonesia, 2022). Among the reasons for receiving dispensations are elopement marriage (*merarik*) and the low education of underage marriage partners. A total of 297 dispensation cases were approved and the rest were rejected, the main reason being that the couple was under 16 years of age. The West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government in 2015 issued a circular letter as a form of effort to limit the minimum age for women in marriage to 21 years old and 23 years old for men, but in fact the circular letter was not heeded because it saw the reality of the community who had practiced early marriage (Mispandi, 2021).

Furthermore, the research on *merarik* have long attracted scholarly attention because this tradition is deeply embedded in their everyday life. First, research conducted by Titi Fitrianita et al. in 2018 focused on Nyurlembang women in the *Merarik* tradition. The findings

indicate that patriarchal culture has brought about cultural changes that have strengthened men's positions in *merarik*. This study examines the patriarchal nature of *merarik* culture in which women face a psychological dilemma (Fitrianita, et.al., 2018). Though this research mentioned about patriarchal culture in *merarik*, it did not discuss further on the women's educational trajectories.

Second, the results of a study conducted by Andini (2024) showed that most underage couples in Central Lombok Regency lack the physical, mental, educational, and economic readiness to start a family, including having children. This lack of preparedness impacts parenting practices, resulting in inappropriate parenting styles that meet the child's needs. This parenting style impacts children's values and ethics due to limited knowledge of personality traits such as speech, manners, and other behaviors (Andini, 2021). This previous research contradicts prevailing religious and cultural values and norms among the Muslim family while current study focusses on the gender relation of *merarik* doers.

Third, research conducted by Siti Nurul Khaerani showed in the form of low economic factors that make practitioners of early marriages finally marry. Limited school fees are the background for dropping out of school. The hope is that after marriage, the economy that was initially lacking is expected to improve by marrying early, in other words, hoping the economy would change for the better. In addition to economic factors, there are social or environmental factors and educational factors. The impact of carrying out early marriage is a high dropout rate, to poverty (Khaerani, 2019). In this research, the economic impact of early marriage carried out from the practice of *merarik* in Lombok. Meanwhile, our research sought more to the extent of gender relation.

Efendi and Wahyuningsih (2024) examined gender injustice in early marriage and found that women often experience marginalization, subordination, stereotype reinforcement, domestic violence, and double burdens after marriage. The study revealed that patriarchal values strongly influence women's roles by limiting their access to education, economic participation, and decision-making within the family. Although the research provides important insights into gender inequality in early marriage, it does not specifically address how local cultural practices shape these inequalities in particular communities. In the context of the Sasak tradition, early marriage through *merarik kode* may reproduce similar forms of gender injustice because the practice is closely related to cultural norms, family expectations, and patriarchal social structures.

Handayani, Widodo, and Maulia (2022) investigated vulnerable areas of violence against women and children using a mixed-method sequential exploratory design in Semarang. The study identified several major factors contributing to violence, including poverty, incomplete family structures, limited educational access, patrilineal culture, and early marriage. The findings showed that early marriage was one of the important indicators associated with women's vulnerability because it often intersects with traditional gender roles, weak decision-making power, and unequal family relations. The study also revealed that patriarchal cultural values continue to shape women's social positions and increase their exposure to domestic vulnerability.

Previous studies have generally discussed early marriage from the perspective of gender injustice and patriarchy; however, limited attention has been given to how *Merarik Kode* as a specific cultural practice influences women's educational experiences and everyday gender

relations in Sasak society. Furthermore, few studies have analysed this issue using the Harvard Gender Analysis Framework to examine access, control, division of labor, and decision-making within early marriage. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring early marriage in *merarik Kode'* through both gender analysis and patriarchy perspectives.

Marriage in the *merarik* culture carried out by underage teenagers is still considered ineffective, literally they do not understand real marriage, even though it is done consensually. This would have an impact on life after marriage. The biggest impact would be felt by women. With this research, it is hoped that it can describe how the phenomenon of early marriage in *merarik* culture is seen from the perspective of gender analysis and the impact caused by this phenomenon. The conceptual framework in this study emphasizes more on how the impact of education for women dropping out of school on the Sasak *merarik* culture which results in early marriage in the community. The concept of education in this study also emphasizes education as a source of knowledge for women as *merarik* actors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender analysis is used as the main approach in this study because it is an important framework for identifying gender issues, particularly differences in roles, access, and social relations between women and men. In this context, it is relevant to examine the *merarik* tradition among the Sasak community, especially in Pejanggik Village, where the practice often leads to early marriage among girls with low educational backgrounds. This condition continues to produce gender inequality, particularly because many girls leave school after marriage, limiting their opportunities to gain knowledge about communication, child care, reproductive health, and social roles, while also reinforcing their subordinate position in family and society.

To examine this inequality more systematically, the study applies the Harvard Gender Analysis Framework, which focuses on three main components: activities, access and control, and influencing factors. This framework is considered appropriate because it helps explain how women's activities within the *merarik* tradition are often controlled by men, while access to decision-making remains limited. As a result, women participate in cultural life but have little power to influence customary rules or broader social development. In principle, women should be actively involved not only in physical development but also in cultural transformation, including participation in shaping customary regulations and decisions that affect their lives (March & Muhopadhyay, 2005).

This framework is combined with Sylvia Walby's patriarchy theory, which explains that social relations between men and women are hierarchical, with men holding dominant authority in both public and private spheres (Walby, 1990). In the *merarik* tradition, the process often involves taking a girl away without prior parental consent, after which family and community leaders usually encourage marriage even when the girl is underage. Although Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019 sets the minimum marriage age at 19 for both men and women, cultural practices still sustain early marriage. This situation strengthens women's dependence, increases the risk of domestic violence, and preserves patriarchal values that continue to place women in a disadvantaged position within Sasak society.

Merarik Kode' further has various negative impacts on the lives of women. Getting married at an immature age can complicate their lives because there are various things that must be sacrificed, such as the opportunity to get an education. According to Dewey, education is an

intellectual and emotional effort to form fundamental human skills (Habibi & W, 2025). Ki Hajar Dewantara defines education as something that is needed by children to grow intellectual, emotional and character abilities (Lukmana, 2024). Abdullah further explains that education is a way developed by society to achieve the highest level of progress so that new generations can lead to progress by using certain steps (Abdullah, 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that education as a process of forming skills in order to create independence through the development of cognitive, affective and social potential that can help children as a new generation become adult humans to achieve progress in society. Thus, education plays an important role in improving the standard of living of the community.

3. METHOD

This type of research is descriptive qualitative which seeks to describe factually about early marriage in the Sasak *merarik* culture and the educational impact felt by these women in Pejanggik Village, Central Lombok Regency (Silmi, 2017). Field research that describes in detail is considered the most suitable research method used in this study because researchers saw the condition of Sasak women as a whole in relation to early marriage in the region and their education. Due to its qualitative nature, this research prioritizes combined data obtained from field research and described in various forms such as words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and discourse (Laila & Vera, 2024).

The population in this study are the practitioners of *merarik* culture who come from the Sasak Tribe who live in Pejanggik Village, Praya District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province (NTB). Only samples with certain considerations can be a source of data, known as purposive sampling technique. In this research, there are several considerations made to select the sample including; their direct involvement with this culture, their understanding of this culture, and the availability of time they have. In addition, due to the use of gender analysis in this research, only women who are directly involved in the *merarik* culture was sampled. In addition, because this research also focused on education, there are additional criteria, namely women who have dropped out of school. Three women who have been married for 0 to 5 years and three women who have been married for more than five years due to the *merarik* culture until they drop out of school was sample in this study. The total of samples in this study consists of six women who dropped out of school due to the *merarik* culture. Furthermore, stakeholders such as traditional leaders, village heads, religious leaders and social activists in the area would also be involved in this research. To analyse the data in this study, the Miles and Huberman data analysis technique was used, namely by collecting data, reducing data, presenting data and verifying data (Sugiyono, 2015).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings: Impact of Merarik Kode' on Women's Educational Trajectories in Central Lombok

Merarik culture that has been rooted for hundreds of years for the Sasak Tribe in Pejanggik Village, Praya District, Central Lombok Regency is certainly an ancestral heritage that should be preserved. The Sasak people also strongly adhere to this culture. *Merarik* or carrying away women who want to be married (marriage by elopement) is a tradition that must be carried out by men to show their masculinity. While for women this culture provides respect

for them. For women's families, being married by *merarik* is much more honorable than being proposed to. According to them, if a woman is proposed to, it is like selling a child, which is the same as selling a chicken. If not married off, the women are considered dead because they have become a disgrace to the family (Hudalinnas, 2012).

The indiscriminate application of *Merarik* culture and the absence of age benchmarks for the practitioners make this culture very vulnerable to abuse. One of the abuses is to perform *merarik kode'*. *Merarik kode'* refers to a marriage performed by an underage couple (early marriage). For the Sasak people, if the woman has menstruated and the man has reached puberty then *merarik* can be done. This is based on Islamic law where the entire community is Muslim. Although this is contrary to state law where according to Marriage Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage which states that women must be at least 19 years old and men must be at least 19 years old if they want to get married (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, 2019).

The existence of *merarik kode'* in the Sasak Tribe has various impacts on women's education. Based on the results of interviews and observations, it is known that there are at least 4 (four) impacts felt by women who experience *merarik kode'* on their education such as dropping out of school, not being able to continue equivalency education, not being able to increase knowledge, and minimal knowledge to educate children (*parenting*).

4.1.1. Women dropping out of school

When it is known by the school that the women have committed *merarik*, the women's parents would be called to be questioned about the truth. This information is usually learned by the school from the woman's close friends or by village officials. Not only are the women's parents called but also the men are called to the school. Then the school would sanction the male party in the form of a fine of around Rp 1,000,000 or 250 kilograms of grain. In addition, advice and warnings have often been given by the school through teachers in class about the impact of *merarik kode'* (Abdurrahman, 2023). This fine must be paid by the male party to the school and the warnings delivered by the teachers at school are efforts to prevent *merarik kode'*.

The efforts that have been made still do not seem to be able to eliminate the number of '*merarik kode'*' in Pejanggik Village. *Merarik kode'* still occurs so that women have to leave school. All women who experienced *merarik* while still at school could no longer continue their formal education. This is because the school was forced to expel them from school (Abdurrahman, 2023). Even if the school does not expel the women, there is a feeling of shame and fear of being made fun of that they have been *merarik* (Asia, 2023). It can be concluded that whether expelled by the school or not they would not want to return to school if they have committed *merarik*.

Of the 6 (six) informants interviewed, most of them did *merarik kode'* when they were still at the Junior High School (SMP) level. Ani and Vita did *merarik* when they were in grade 2 while Asia, Tina and Era did it when they were in grade 3. There was also one who did *merarik kode'* at the senior high school level when she was in grade 2, namely Ain. As a consequence of the *merarik*, of course they can no longer attend school because they have been expelled by the school. They were forced to drop out of school at a very young age ranging from 13 to 17 years. In fact, the government has launched a 9-year compulsory education for

basic education (elementary and junior high school levels) and an additional 3 years for further education (high school level) to become a 12-year compulsory education (Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 47 of 2008 concerning Compulsory Education, 2008).

Compulsory education for 12 years aims to ensure equitable distribution of opportunities for formal education so that Indonesian children can obtain a minimum education to develop their potential and independence. To support this government regulation on compulsory education, the West Nusa Tenggara government has waived tuition fees at all levels of education, from elementary to high school (Nusilah, 2023). Although they go to school without paying tuition fees, there is still money to be spent on fees or buying school equipment, so they choose to get married to ease the burden on their families, especially their grandmothers, so that someone can pay for their lives (Ain, 2023); (Tina, Sasak Woman *Ular Naga* Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Ita, 2023). Having divorced parents makes them have to live with their grandmother who has almost no income. In other words, the divorce of their parents and their economic condition made these women decide to do *merarik kode'*.

All the women who did *merarik kode'* had the same regret because they had to drop out of school. There was a sense of regret because they saw that their other friends could finish school and get good jobs so that they could live more properly. Apart from regretting that they could no longer continue their formal education, they also hoped that no more women would experience the same thing as them. They hope that all women would not experience *merarik kode'* and have a life like theirs where they have to quit school and only become housewives. They also hope that their children would be able to go to high school or university so that they do not have the same fate as their mothers. They believe that women also have the right to get the highest education in order to have broad knowledge and an established job such as becoming an employee (Ain, Sasak Woman Pejanggik Village, 2023) ; (Asia, Sasak Tribe Woman Gaong Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Ita, Sasak Woman of Gaong Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023) ; (Tina, Sasak Woman of *Ular Naga* Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023) ; (Era, Sasak Woman of Gaong Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Ani, Sasak Woman of Nyampe Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023). The regret accompanied by the hope that there would be no more women who commit *merarik kode'* indicates that they feel a loss from their actions.

With the cessation of the formal education of these women, their opportunity to develop their intellectual, emotional and independence potential in the school environment is also stopped, although the opportunity to develop themselves still exists when they are in the community. However, this development process would be more directed and guaranteed if it is done through formal education because the curriculum applied would help them explore the various potentials they have. Furthermore, by completing their formal education they would have a diploma that can be used to get a decent job so that they can become independent people.

4.1.2. Difficulties in Continuing Equivalency Education

Equivalency education is a government effort to ensure that all people from various levels can get an education (Fitrianti, 2012). As a non-formal education, equivalency education is intended for anyone who wants to continue their formal education which is stopped at various levels of education such as Package A equivalent to SD / MI, Package B equivalent to SMP / MTs and Package C equivalent to SMA/MA (Widodo et al., n.d.). Based on the results of

interviews with informants, it is known that of the 6 (six) women who experienced *merarik kode'*, only 1 (one), namely Era, had the opportunity to continue her education to equivalency education, more precisely by taking Paket B or the equivalent of junior high school. The economy is quite good because the husband works as a driver who also takes Paket C at the same time as the informant and the encouragement of the husband's family (Era's brother-in-law) made her able to complete Paket B in 2021. Era also plans to continue her education to Paket C when registration opens. Era joined the package school in order to have a diploma and be able to get a better job (Era, 2023). This indicates that there is already a desire to have a higher education even through non-formal channels, which shows that slowly the people of Pejanggik Village have understood the importance of having a higher education in order to have a better life.

While the other 5 (five) women did not have the opportunity to continue to equivalency education. Economic problems, not getting permission from their husbands and the difficulty of leaving their children were the reasons why the other women did not continue with equivalency education. Although they could not continue with equivalency education at that time, these women expressed their willingness to continue their education as expressed below:

"I would like to continue my education if I have money." (Ain, 2023)

"I am willing to continue my education if there is help from the government." (Ani, 2023)

"I also want to have a diploma but I am ashamed to ask for money from my papuk (grandmother)." (Ita, 2023)

Although most wanted to continue their education, there were also those who did not want to as expressed as follows:

"I do not want to continue my education even though there is government assistance" (Asia, 2023)

"I don't want to go back to school because I have children" (Tina, Source of Research, pejanggik, 2023)

Based on the informants' statements above, it is known that as housewives, the informants admitted that they could not have their own income so they were very dependent on their husbands regarding finances. Their husbands' jobs, which can only fulfil their daily needs and some have even divorced like Ani, make their financial condition quite difficult. The amount of money that must be paid if they want to attend equivalency education makes it impossible for them to continue with equivalency education. Although they have the desire to continue with equivalency education, these women do not have enough money so they cannot continue their education. This is the main reason why they cannot continue with equivalency education. However, if there is financial assistance from the government they are willing to continue with equivalency education. They realize that with education they can get a decent job.

However, there are women who still do not want to continue their education. They argued that no one could look after their children while they were in equivalency education. Asia, who is pregnant and would soon have a child, and Tina, who feels that there is no one to look after her child, claim that they no longer need to continue their education. They hope that their children would be the ones to get higher education. Thus, it can be seen that these women are not fully aware of the importance of education.

4.1.3. *Restricted Access to Information, Unable to Improve Knowledge*

After marriage, the women who experienced *merarik kode'* did not have adequate access to information because they did not have personal *cellphones*. Of the 6 (six) informants, only 2 (two) people have a personal cellphone, namely Tina and Ain, and even then it is more often used by their children to watch *Youtube* (Tina, Sasak Woman Dusun Ular Naga Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Ain, Sasak Woman Pejanggik Village, 2023). The rest Asia, Ita, Era and Ani only have 1 (one) *cellphone* that is used together. All of their social media accounts are only used together and it is the husband who is more often carrying the *cellphone* because of work (Ani, Sasak Woman Nyampe Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Asia, Sasak Tribal Woman Gaong Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Era, Sasak Woman Gaong Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Ita, Sasak Woman Gaong Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023). With only 1 *cellphone*, which is more often brought by their husbands, their access to information through *cybermedia* is very limited. They hardly know what is happening out there. All they know is what they know from television. However, there is also Asia who does not have a television in her house.

Furthermore, the husband's family thinks that *cellphones* only contain temptations that can make the woman ungrateful for her current situation (Asia, Sasak Tribe Women in Gaong Hamlet, Pejanggik Village, 2023). So they are not allowed to have personal *cellphones*. The fear of bad actions stemming from *cellphones* makes these women not have adequate access to information. Because access to information via *mobile phones* is limited, the women here get information only through television channels. Getting information by watching news on television is the only way for them to get information.

Based on the above conditions where women only have *cellphones* that are shared with their husbands, social media accounts that are also only one and the time of use is very limited, namely only when the husband is at home and they rarely watch news broadcasts on television, this is the reason for the lack of information they can receive, making it difficult for them to increase their knowledge. In addition, the negative stigma from the family about *cellphones* adds to the isolation of the information conditions of women who do *merarik kode'*. This condition makes it difficult for these women to develop their intellectual abilities so that educational goals cannot be achieved.

4.1.4. *Inadequate Knowledge to Care for and Educate Children*

Of the 6 informants, 2 (two) do not have children, namely Era and Ani, 1 (one) of them is pregnant, namely Asia, 2 (two) have toddlers and 1 (one) has a toddler. From this, it can be concluded that more than half of the *merarik kode'* women already have children of various ages. However, none of them are in school yet. The children therefore spend time with their mothers at home.

Mothers who do not have access to information via the internet and can only watch television broadcasts as mentioned in point three above are a strong reason for their lack of ability to care for and educate children. Limited information and knowledge makes it difficult for women to take care of their children at home. They hardly know how to take good care of their children. Luckily, there are posyandu cadres who play a very active role in educating these women on how to care for infants to toddlers. Diligent posyandu cadres visit women who are pregnant and have infants or toddlers one by one to remind them to check their pregnancies and immunize their children. As a result, all informants who are pregnant or have children routinely bring their children to the nearest posyandu (Asia, Sasak Tribe Women in Gaong Hamlet, Pejanggik Village, 2023).

Although these women already have knowledge about how to care for babies and children through posyandu cadres, knowledge related to how to educate children is still inadequate. Women with toddlers have a tendency to scold and hit their children if they make mistakes. They sometimes yell at their children to discipline them (Ain, Sasak Woman Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Tina, Sasak Woman Ular Naga Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023); (Ita, Sasak Woman Gaong Hamlet Pejanggik Village, 2023). This is certainly not in accordance with a good way of educating children (*parenting*). In *parenting* yelling can make children feel inferior and worthless. Furthermore, scolding children by giving prohibitions and threats can make children fearful and by giving punishment in the form of beatings would certainly have a harmful impact on the child's psychology.

The lack of knowledge about good *parenting* makes these women feel overwhelmed in dealing with their children's behaviour. Because their children are accustomed to receiving physical contact, verbalization becomes a difficult thing for children to accept. This would have a negative effect on the child's psychology. Because actually with the dropout of the mothers, the poor economy and limited access to information can make the emotional condition of the mothers become less good. Mothers would be more easily provoked by their emotions due to the lack of education they receive.

As times change and people become more aware of the importance of education, changes have also begun to occur in the Pejanggik village community. There are already people who do the proposal procession when they want to get married. This has begun to be done by those who have higher education such as S1 or those who have permanent jobs such as civil servants, doctors and so on (Ijazi, 2023); (Hery, 2023). Sarmiono, as one of the Pejanggik villagers who made a proposal when he got married, thinks that by making a proposal, parental consent can be obtained properly. In addition, discussions about how much hantaran money the male party can afford to give can also be carried out if a proposal procession is used. This can minimize conflict when the wedding takes place. In other words, those who have a good education realize that marrying a woman with the consent of her family would be better and can avoid conflict.

4.2. Discussion: Impact of Merarik Kode' on Women's Educational Trajectories in Central Lombok

The findings show that *merarik kode'* contributes to the reproduction of gender inequality by interrupting women's educational trajectories at an early age. Within the Harvard Gender Analysis Framework (March & Muhihopadhyay, 2005), women who experience early

marriage are required to shift from student roles into domestic responsibilities as wives and mothers, limiting their participation in formal education. Although *merarik* is culturally understood as a respected marriage tradition, in practice it places young women in unequal social positions because education is often sacrificed after marriage.

The study also reveals that women's access to educational opportunities remains limited after marriage, including difficulty continuing equivalency education due to financial dependence, childcare responsibilities, and the need for husbands' approval. This reflects patriarchal relations as explained by Sylvia Walby (1990), where men exercise greater control over household decisions and women's mobility. Similar to previous studies, early marriage in this context strengthens women's dependence and reduces their autonomy in making decisions related to their future.

The study also reveals that women's access to educational opportunities remains limited after marriage, including difficulties in continuing equivalency education due to financial dependence, childcare responsibilities, and the need for husbands' approval. This finding supports Khaerani (2019), who identified economic hardship as an important factor behind school dropout and early marriage. Similarly, parental divorce and low family income in this study encourage girls to choose marriage rather than continue school.

In addition, restricted access to information after marriage further limits women's knowledge development and parenting capacity. Limited ownership of mobile phones and dependence on husbands for communication reduce women's access to educational information. This finding is in line with Andini (2021), who found that underage marriage often results in inadequate readiness for parenting. Similar to the findings of Handayani (2022), early marriage in *merarik kode* intersects with patriarchal family structures and limited educational access, increasing women's vulnerability in daily life. Overall, early marriage within this cultural context reproduces long-term educational inequality and limits women's opportunities for empowerment and social mobility.

In addition, restricted access to information after marriage further limits women's knowledge development and parenting capacity. Limited ownership of mobile phones and dependence on husbands for communication reduce access to educational information, while inadequate educational experience affects parenting practices. These findings indicate that early marriage within *merarik kode* not only causes school dropout but also reproduces long-term educational inequality, limiting women's opportunities for empowerment and social mobility.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that early marriage within the *merarik* cultural practice of the Sasak tribe in Pejangik Village, Praya District, Central Lombok Regency has a substantial and adverse impact on women's educational trajectories. The findings demonstrate that early marriage frequently leads to women dropping out of formal schooling, thereby disrupting their educational continuity at a critical stage of personal and intellectual development. Once married, women often face increased domestic responsibilities and social expectations that limit their ability to remain engaged in formal education. Furthermore, the research reveals that women who have experienced early marriage encounter significant difficulties in accessing and completing equivalency education programs as alternative pathways to continue learning. Structural barriers, limited institutional support, and competing familial obligations reduce the

feasibility of these programs, resulting in prolonged educational discontinuity. As a consequence, women's access to information becomes increasingly restricted, which in turn constrains opportunities for expanding knowledge, skills, and critical awareness. Overall, early marriage in the context of *merarik* culture not only interrupts formal education but also narrows women's long-term access to educational resources and knowledge development. These conditions contribute to the reproduction of educational inequality and limit women's capacity for social mobility and empowerment. Therefore, addressing early marriage requires culturally sensitive educational policies and community-based interventions that prioritize women's right to education while engaging constructively with local cultural values.

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