

How's Parenting Stress can Decrease Marital Satisfaction? Study on Teen Mom

Fira Ayu Yustia*, Ahmad Munjirin, Fasha Nabila Azhari Nurdin, Ni'matuzahroh, Diah Karmiyati

Master of Psychology, University of Muhammadiyah Malang

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ABSTRACT

The challenges of the transition from childhood to adolescence raise various upheavals within the individual. Especially for teenagers who married young and pregnant. Having kids when individuals are teenagers can trigger stress due to parenting, especially for girls who become mothers for the first time, parenting stress felt by teen moms can decrease marital satisfaction, because there is a incompatibility between expectations of marriage with the existing reality. This study was conducted to investigate the effect of parenting stress on marital satisfaction. This study design for quantitative approach. A total of 90 teen mom were enrolled in this study. They were asked to finish several questionnaires, including the Parental Stress Scale and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale. The obtained data were analysed using simple regression test, to determine whether or not influence of parenting stress (PS) on marital satisfaction (MS). Results revealed that parenting stress influence negative effect on marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the high parenting stress felt by teen moms after the presence of children cause lower marital satisfaction.

Keywords: marital satisfaction, parenting stress, teen mom, children

INTRODUCTION

Early marriages tend to reap polemics, because most teenagers who decide to marry early have very low physical, material and mental readiness (Pamungkas & Kinanthi, 2022). The lack of preparation for adolescents in facing life after marriage can lead to marriage dissatisfaction (Muhid et al., 2019). This is proven by Oktaviana dan Piraini (2023) in their research which shows that teenagers who marry early feel dissatisfaction in marriage life.

Dissatisfaction in marriage can cause conflicts such as disputes and differences of opinion, as well as psychological pressures such as anxiety, stress and even depression (Dwima, 2019). The worst impact of dissatisfaction in marriage can cause marriage failure which end in divorce (Dwima, 2019; Ghaibi et al., 2022). Couples with low levels of marital satisfaction will experience physical and psychological discomfort (Cohen et al., 2009) and loss of stability in their marriage (Bui et al., 1996). It can happen because people who are dissatisfied with their marriage will have a bad lifestyle, experience stress easily, reduce work performance so that financial management becomes a mess (Renshaw et al., 2010).

Dissatisfaction in marriage that is not immediately resolved will lead to unhappiness, low life satisfaction and low self-esteem (Hawkins & Booth, 2005) for husband or wife or even both. In the long term, this condition can lead to poor mental health, triggering anxiety and even depression (Omani-Samani et al., 2018). A dysfunctional marital relationship can also have a negative effect on the children in the family

(Renshaw et al., 2010; Røsand et al., 2014). Anderson (2014) reports that children with dysfunctional families tend to have low attachment to their parents, have a tendency to experience psychological and behavioral problems, have low academic performance and interpersonal skills, have problems building romantic relationships, cause problems health such as heart disease, stress and increased cortisol hormone, and feel emotional turmoil that is uncertain (Kouros et al., 2008), even depression (Du et al., 2022). Reviewing the many negative impacts caused by marital dissatisfaction, it is important to study scientifically and in deep regarding satisfaction in marital relations.

Satisfaction is defined as a response in the form of positive feelings towards experience, while marital satisfaction is referred to as a form of evaluation of the extent to which individual needs, hopes and desires are fulfilled (Caruana et al., 2000). Another opinion refers to marital satisfaction as a subjective evaluation of husband and wife regarding the genuine feelings of pleasure, satisfaction, and joy that they feel as a whole in the marital relationship (Taghani et al., 2019). Criteria of couples who have high marital satisfaction include having a personality that can be adapted to a partner (Skolnick, 2002). Other indicators of marital satisfaction are shown in the form of loving personal relationships between partners, being together, being able to show good parental roles, being able to accept and manage conflict (Skolnick, 2002). Referring to Taghani et al (2019), marital satisfaction is one of healthy element in the family. Marital satisfaction does not depend on the length of marriage (Oprisan & Cristea, 2012), but this is influenced by various factors including gender (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2014), age (Buunk & Van Yperen, 1991), religiosity (Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006), economic status (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009), education (Cobb & Sullivan, 2015), adaptability, conflict resolution strategies, and the presence of children (Iqbal, 2020).

Previous studies have shown that there is a slight difference in the level of marital satisfaction between husbands and wives, where wives have slightly lower satisfaction than husbands (Jackson et al., 2014). Other findings also show similar results, where marital satisfaction is significantly higher for husbands than wives, followed by a negative correlation between age and marital satisfaction for wives (Rostami et al., 2014). Wives report high levels of marital satisfaction at the beginning of marriage, but this satisfaction decreases after the presence of children and increases again after children growth to be independent (Duvall in Iqbal, 2020). Bee and Mitchell (in Iqbal, 2020) argue that the presence of children greatly influences the decrease in the level of marital satisfaction, especially for women (wives). Increasing the number of children can increase stress on couples and reduce quality time between husband and wives so that gives impact on low level of marital satisfaction (Hendrick, 1981).

Some of the problems couples face after having children include parenting problems (McGrath et al., 2010), fatigue and lack of sleep (Giallo et al., 2011), intimacy problems and difficulty spending time alone with a partner (Woolhouse et al., 2012), financial challenges, lack of support, no time for oneself (Kowal et al., 2021) and stress caused by efforts to educate children, work, relationships with partners and other obligations (Lorenz et al., 2020). These problems are increasingly felt by mothers, because mothers have greater parenting responsibilities than fathers (Leslie et al., 1991; Prasetyo et al., 2015; Theule et al., 2010). These parenting responsibilities can cause stress on the mother (Qian et al., 2021). Especially for mothers who are teenagers, they are likely to experience high levels of stress and depression because they tend to have social and economic burdens compared to adult mothers (Goodman & Brand, 2009; Spencer et al., 2002). In fact, an average of about 30% of mothers report clinically high levels of caregiving stress at some point during a two-year period (Larson, 2004). Spencer et al (2002) found that teenage mother continued to experience increased levels of parenting stress two years after their child's birth. Teen mom is found to spend most of their young adulthood raising their own children with poverty (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008), teen mom often lacks resources and social support that can reduce stress related to childcare. In addition, the rate of depression in teen mom is higher than that of adult mothers (Barnet, 1996; Lanzi et al., 2009; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009; Wilhelm, 2006).

Mothers who experience parenting stress tend to low levels of marital satisfaction (Rostami et al., 2014). Parenting stress is a condition where parents face a reality that is not in accordance with expectations in the parenting process, where a series of behaviors, communication, care, parenting, care and interaction between parents and children causes tension and anxiety in parents (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010). The majority of research explains that mothers experience more parenting stress (Neece et al., 2012). Mothers tend to experience parenting stress if they fail to adapt to their duties as mothers, this condition can trigger mothers to become irritable and commit violence against children (Lestari, 2018), mothers with high parenting stress tend to accept children less, pay less attention when listening to children, as well as giving less affection (Anthony et al., 2005; Putnick et al., 2008) so that it has an impact on children, where children will experience behavior problems, personality disorders, welfare disorders and adjustment problems (Berry & Jones, 1995). The study of Dong et al (2022) identified a serious impact of parenting pressure on women's marital satisfaction (Dong et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a significance effect of parenting stress on marital satisfaction in teen mom. Hypothesis on this research is there is an effect of parenting stress on marital satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses quantitative research that is based on the relationship between variables and is associated with existing theories (Sugiyono, 2010). This study was conducted to determine the effect of parenting stress on marital satisfaction. Participant in this study were 90 teen mom which selected by purposive sampling technique, which is used according to the required sample requirements.

Marital satisfaction is measured based on ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale develop by Fowers dan Olson (1993), available on Indonesian version on Fadilah (2017) with Cronbach's alpha 0.874. Parenting stress is measured using Parental Stress Scale (PSS) on Indonesian version develop by Kumalasari et al (2022) with Cronbach's alpha 0.828.

Data collection uses a questionnaire, which is a way of collecting data by giving a list of question or statement to be answered by respondents (Sugiyono, 2015). In this study, the measurement scale of research variables uses a Likert scale type and carried out at the same time to compare differences in results between research subjects or individuals. Data analysis by simple linear regression test using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25 version.

Table I. Result of Regression Analysis

| Interfaith Influence Variable | β | Sig |
|---|---------|-------|
| Parenting Stress – Marital Satisfaction | -0.348 | 0.007 |

The analysis of the hypothesis shows that parenting stress significantly influence marital satisfaction ($\beta = -0.348$). Hypothesis on this research is accepted, which mean that the parenting stress can be an intermediate variable on the influence of marital satisfaction. The negative symbol indicates that parenting stress influence negative impact on marital satisfaction. While a higher parenting stress impact on lower marital satisfaction.

The findings in this study are in line with the results of previous research conducted by Dong et al (2022) that parenting stress can reduce marital satisfaction. Stressful parenting conditions refer to stress caused by parents in the process of raising their children, including negative emotional experiences and states such as anxiety, fear, loss of self, and exhaustion (Tachibana et al., 2012). Parenting stress is significantly related to

individual mental health and happiness in life (Extremera et al., 2009; Skok et al., 2006). There is clear evidence that high parental stress can impair personal well-being and the quality of intimate relationships (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997; Coyne & Downey, 1991; Karney & Bradbury, 1997). During child-rearing, mothers usually experience higher levels of stress (Cousino & Hazen, 2013; Raikes & Thompson, 2005), and family relationships are affected by such an environment, which will lead to a sharp decline in marital satisfaction (Beach et al., 1998; Dong et al., 2022). In addition, previous studies have shown that the stress of parenting indirectly affects women's marital satisfaction during parenting (Dong et al., 2022).

Supported by the results of the descriptive tests that have been carried out in this study, it shows that teen mom tends to experience high levels of parenting stress. The high level of parenting stress has an impact on the low satisfaction with marriage felt by mothers (Dong et al., 2022). Low marital satisfaction in this study is illustrated by the results of the descriptive test. For mothers, parenting stress not only damages the mother's mental health, but also affects the quality of marriage between partners. Women bear the stress of parenting which is usually accompanied by lower marital satisfaction (Dong et al., 2022).

Especially for mothers who are teenagers, the incompatibility between expectations of marriage and the reality they face causes a decrease in satisfaction with marriage (Rannu, 2020). The low marital satisfaction is directly proportional to the age of the individual. Individuals who marry at a young age are prone to conflict which causes low marital satisfaction and even leads to separation (Mokoginta, 2019). Low marital satisfaction in teen mom is triggered by emotional tension that occurs in the early years of marriage (Hurlock, 2002). Marital satisfaction in this study is in the low category, this is relevant because all the samples in this study are women who have become mothers. Women tend to feel lower marital satisfaction than men, after the presence of children (Iqbal, 2020). Low marital satisfaction can reduce psychological health and increase psychological stress (Fernandes-Pires et al., 2023), and correlates with increased depression in mothers (Yang et al., 2023). It was also found that the effect of marital satisfaction on health differed between husbands and wives. As revealed in a study conducted by Scott et al (2010) that men who have become husbands appear healthier than single men whether they are in a happy marriage or not. But this does not apply to women. Women who have become wives are seen to have higher psychological health than unmarried women "only" if their marriage is happy.

There are several main factors that are considered important by women in increasing marital satisfaction, including communication between partners, double income, understanding, relationship with in-laws, and compromise (Ayub & Iqbal, 2012). Other factors that can affect the high and low levels of marital satisfaction are partner personality, level of mutual understanding, intellectual maturity, sufficient mental balance, economic factors, computability, sexual satisfaction, love, passion (Zaheri et al., 2016) and conflict resolution strategies (Strong & Cohen, 2016; Zaheri et al., 2016), and the presence of children (Iqbal, 2020).

In line, the low marital satisfaction of teen mom in this study was caused by high parenting stress. Adolescence which is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood is characterized by physical, physiological, psychosocial and behavioural changes. Adolescents who have become mothers must explore themselves to go through the transition from childhood to parents (mothers) and find appropriate strategies for coping with stress due to pregnancy, becoming mothers and becoming parents (Kaye, 2008). (Flaherty & Sadler, 2022) stated that teen moms are particularly vulnerable to parenting stress due to conflicting demands of parenting and development, bearing in mind that adolescents who are caring for children for the first time may experience additional stress and negative emotions associated with parenting (Hans & Thullen, 2009). The causes of high parenting stress in teen mom can come from mother's attributes such as mother's self-efficacy, child characteristics such as child's temperament, and contextual influences such as perceived social support (Flaherty & Sadler, 2022).

The impact of parenting stress can cause mothers to experience mental health problems such as depression (Barnet et al., 1996). Not only that, other negative impacts are also felt by children. Children of teen mom

who experience parenting stress are at high risk of experiencing developmental problems (Huang et al., 2014), health problems, developmental delays and socio-emotional problems (Lanzi et al., 2009; Smith-Hefner, 2005), because parents with high parenting stress were found to have more negative parenting styles (Deater-Deckard et al., 1994). This parenting style is associated with poor behavioural, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes in children, and can negatively affect competence and coping abilities in children whose parents have high levels of parenting stress (Cappa et al., 2011).

Approximately 30% of teen moms report clinically high levels of stress at some point during a two-year period (Larson, 2004). Spencer et al (2002) found that teen mom continued to experience increased levels of parenting stress two years after their child's birth. Teen moms were found to spend most of their young adulthood raising children alone and in poverty (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008), indicating that many teen moms lack the resources and social support that can reduce the stress associated with raising young children. In addition, rates of depression in teen moms are higher than rates found in adult mothers with young children and adolescents who are not caring for children (Barnet, 1996; Lanzi et al., 2009; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009).

Overall, teen mom reported more anxiety, loss of self-esteem (during pregnancy), difficulty accessing financial, moral and material support from parents or partners and stigmatization by health workers when conducting obstetric examinations. Three strategies that teen moms can use to cope with the stress of parenting and pregnancy are described as taking advantage of opportunities (thriving), accommodating challenges (bargaining and surviving), or failure (desperation), and varying in the extent to which they allow adolescents to cope. stress (Kaye, 2008). Various things experienced by teen mom resulted in low marital satisfaction.

By all the results that have been obtained, this research is limited to discussions that are still not explicitly in-depth, limited number of subject and the variables revealed are only parenting stress and marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, this phenomenon in teen mom is still very broad and interesting to reveal, so the researchers suggest for future researchers to reveal the phenomenon more broadly and implicitly, explore issues regarding parenting stress and marital satisfaction in teen moms by combining social support or depression as mediator variables. The researcher also suggests that future studies take a larger number of subjects with a wider research location so that the results of the study can be generalized.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of the study, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect between parenting stress on marital satisfaction on teen mom. This research findings highlight that teen mom goes through a difficult transition period between development and new roles as parents, so they are prone to stress higher parenting. Higher parenting stress that happened to them effect on lower marital satisfaction. It's also because they found incompatibility between expectations of marriage and the reality that occurs.

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