

SUHARTO'S POPULATION POLICY IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA: FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM, MARRIAGE ACT OR COMPULSORY EDUCATION HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT TO FERTILITY DECLINE?

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ABSTRACT

Fertility in Indonesia has been falling significantly, from an average total fertility rate of 5.6 children per women in 1970s to 4.1 in 1980, and 2.6 in 2010. This paper attempts to explore which and how Suharto's population policies have played role in Indonesia's fertility decline. Whilst the adoption of modern contraceptive was perceived as the major determinant of fertility decline in Indonesia, changes in Indonesia's political order and socio-economic development also contribute a considerable effect to Indonesians' familial norms. The implementation of 9-year compulsory education had placed a strong foundation for the future Indonesian human capital and enabled women to obtain higher opportunities for schooling. Beside facilitates the diffusion of ideas among young people and opened up their perspective toward reproductive rights and self actualization, education also increases women's opportunities to participate in laborforce. With the increasing roles outside the domestic sector, delaying age of marriage and limiting family size becomes a choice for women in contemporary Indonesia. The marriage act, however, was perceived as an accelerator rather than a predictor in increasing age of first marriage. Regardless the existence of the Marriage Law 1974, age of first marriage is likely to increase with increasing of education, although maybe in a slower rate.

Key Words : population policy, contemporary Indonesia, Suharto

INTRODUCTION

Fertility in Indonesia has been falling significantly, from an average total fertility rate of more than 5.6 in children per women in 1970s to 4.1 in 1980, 3.2 in 1985 and 2.6 children in 2010.¹⁻⁷

Although it is difficult to determine the levels and trends of fertility in Indonesia due to unavailability of reliable data prior to 1970, nevertheless, scanty evidence based on socio-economic condition of the time indicates that fertility has probably

risen and reach peak in 1950s and started to decline in 1960s.⁸

The adoption of modern contraceptive was perceived as the major determinant of fertility decline in Indonesia.⁹ The successful of family planning program has been well known as the leading factor in fertility transition in Indonesia since it was established in early 1970s. On the other hand, changes in Indonesia's political order was also mentioned in several paperworks⁷⁻⁹ and also showed that fertility decline in Indonesia might be a result of combined socio-economic development of the families and institutional changes such as increasing age of marriage and women's schooling.⁷⁻¹²

The turning point of Indonesia's fertility transition was marked during Suharto's era in 1967. Suharto's population policies in birth control, marriage law and compulsory education had forced the past Indonesian families to change. This paper attempts to explore which and how's Suharto population policies played role in Indonesia's fertility decline.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORM AND FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

Socio-economic changes of Indonesia has been embeded in the history since pre-independence, over more than 300 years of being colonialized. Under the Dutch colony, premodern Indonesian were mostly relied on agricultural sector as the main feature of living. Dutch built up plantations and developed export industry such as sugar, coffee and indigo which required a substantial amount of labor.^{7,9,12} During the transition period from colonialism to independence in 1945-1950s, there was a considerable change in economic structure. When Dutch expelled from Indonesia, business and plantation were closed. Agriculture was in decline, and family

welfare generally at the lowest. Increasing desire to prevent births was diminished by unaccessibility of contraceptive technology, thus resulting in a total fertility rate of 5.5 per woman and family size remain unchanged until 1970s.⁸ Improvement in economic condition in 5-10 year post- independence led mortality started to decline and childbearing underwent a period of recovery. Export revenues had returned and led the grow of large investment in infrastructure. Green revolution also brought to increased employment, increased access to land and public services. Economic improvement in this era was likely to support higher fertility and large family size.^{8,12}

A decisive turning point in Indonesia's history occured in 1966-67 with the transfer of power from President Sukarno to President Suharto by a soft military coup. Suharto used the Sukarno's pluralist ideology Nationalist Religious and Communists and forced him to resign as President after an incident of what-so-called G30S/PKI (September 30th movement by communist party) where some military generals were kidnapped and murdered by the communist. Suharto, who was a commander of special force then took over the country's leadership and dismissed Communist Party that was believed closely related to Sukarno. Suharto then established of what immediately became known as the New Order government.

Transition from pro-natalist Sukarno to anti-natalist Suharto marked the Indonesia's fertility decline. As of Indonesian population growth showed a rapid increase; from 97 million in 1961 to 120 million in 1970, national family planning program was then established in early 1970s. The program was started in Java and Bali in the early 1970s, expanded to the other developed provinces in the mid-1970s, and encompassed all of the

remaining provinces by 1980. The Suharto government provided an equivalent of US\$ 1.3 million as counter budget to US\$ 3 millions from donors to NFPCB in 1970 to show its commitment to control fertility and continue to increase up to US\$ 65 million as a share to US\$ 25 million from donors in 1985.⁸

Suharto also successfully mobilized people by changing the social institution. The Suharto regime has actively promoted Pancasila (five pillars) values and removed political party activities from the villages, and replaces it with organizations that support the government. Sometimes, military bureaucracy were also involved into the program as Suharto command military to serve the nation in two functions, defense and social mobilization. As a result, Indonesian peasants families have historically followed the advice of their village leaders and conformed to village practices with a minimum of questioning and a high degree of compliance.

There is no doubt that the success of family planning program in Indonesia was due to Suharto's policy. In his era, a massive and comprehensive family planning program was campaigned through multiple channels, such as mass media and health personels. Suharto also approaching community and religious leaders in order to obtain their supports in family planning. Thus, people were well informed and society gradually accepted the program as a new norm. The cost of fertility regulation therefore was very low because information and means were widely provided by the government at a very low cost or even free¹². The massive campaign of family planning program in the past also brought a message that population policy has not only aimed to reduce the fertility rate, but is also promoted to improve family welfare. By having smaller size, families are expected to be able to

optimizing their incomes for a better living standard. As a result, during the past 30 years under the New Order regime, Indonesia has made substantial progress, particularly in stabilizing political and economic conditions. Income per capita increased sharply from about US \$50 in 1968 to US \$385 in 1986 and US \$1,124 in 1996, thus more families are enjoying a better quality of life in the recent times with smaller size of household members.^{13,14}

With the changing social organization and economic development, the national family planning program has been successfully mobilizing people to comply with birth control,⁷ even in a country with Muslim as majority. Prior 1970s, premodern Indonesian families were generally relied on natural fertility to regulate their family size. With the success of family planning program, modern contraceptive means were accessible and widely available. Contraceptive prevalence rate among Indonesian women increased sharply from 3 percent in 1970 to 13, 29 and 51 in 1975, 1980 and 1985 respectively. As a result, family size in Indonesian has been halved from 5.6 prior 1970s to 2.8 in 1997.^{1-3,15}

YOUNG WOMEN EDUCATION AND NATIONAL MARRIAGE ACT 1974 IN INCREASING AGE OF MARRIAGE

Increasing age of marriage is one of the determinant of fertility decline. When a woman entering marriage union at early age, she will have longer reproductive period and may has higher fertility compared to her counterparts who married later. As reproductive capability of women decreased by age, delayed marriage also associated with lower fecundity and shorter reproductive period.^{16,17}

Traditionally, Indonesians married young, and marriage usually took place by parents' initiative.^{8,18,19} Indonesian Fertility

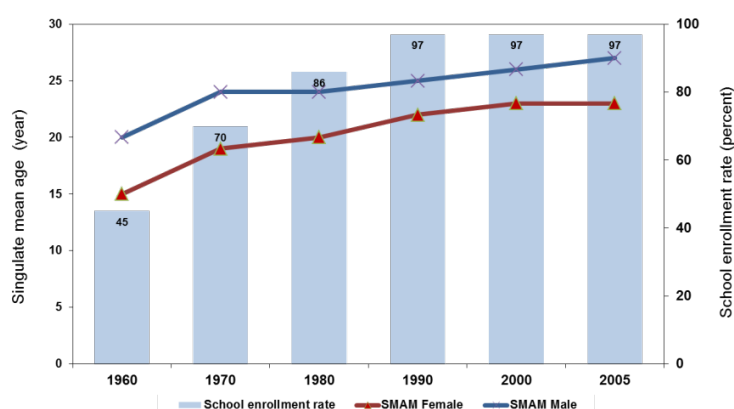
Survey in early 1970s reported forty percent of women age 30 in 1976 were married at the age of 15.^{9,20,21} As a country with Muslim as majority, Indonesian families in the past tend to marry their children close to puberty in order to avoid being committed in sins. Marriage in traditional Indonesia was also a familial rather than individual concern.¹⁹ In the absence of schooling and employment for women, low or middle class parents sent their daughter marry-out as an economic relieve for their families.^{18,22,23}

Socio-economic differentiation of fertility among Indonesian are very distictive. The highest fertility is commonly found among low to middle social strata, which education was commonly used as a proxy. Again, the role of Suharto is remarkable during his legacy leading Indonesia for more than 30 years. Despite his controversial case prior his fall in 1997, he brought a lot of socio-economic development throughout Indonesia. The implementation of 9-year compulsory education had placed a strong foundation for the future Indonesian human capital and enabled women to enjoy higher opportunities for schooling. With

the increase of schooling, Indonesian couples then tend to marry later and have more lasting unions. Age at first marriage also increases with level of education. Women aged 25-49 who completed secondary school married at 22.9 years in average, whilst women who have no education married earlier at 17.2 years old.^{14,17,24} Figure 1 shows that school enrollment rate rapidly increased from below 50 percent prior 1970s to 70 percent after 1970s and gradually increased until 97 percent in 1990s and 2000s, following the increased age of marriage.¹⁻⁴

The role of education in delaying age of marriage is very obvious. First, it simply because school attendance, especially in elementary level, is not allowing students to marry. Secondly, schooling facilitates the diffusion of ideas among young people and opened young people's perspective of their rights and self actualization. Thirdly, education increases women's opportunities to participate in laborforce. When women participation in laborforce is higher, the likelihood to delay marriage is higher because women may want to enjoy earning more incomes.²⁵⁻²⁷

Figure.1 Singulate Mean Age at Marriage and School Enrollment Rate Indonesia, 1960s-2005



Apart from compulsory education and succesful family planning program in Suharto era, Marriage Act 1974 may also

contributed to fertility decline in contemporary Indonesia. The act regulated minimum age of marriage 19 years old for

boys and 16 years old for girls. Suharto's government often claimed its successful program in increasing age of marriage after the implementation of Marriage Law, shown by the changing patterns of child marriage after 1974,^{8,12,28,29} declining in divorce and polygamy and also increasing number of registered marriage.³⁰ However, the above argument is not completely clean from debates. Resistances toward marriage act among conservative Muslims were often reported.^{21,31} The three main articles of the marriage law—increasing age of marriage, regulating divorce and polygamy—are definitely contrary to Muslim teachings. Muslim believes that early marriage will prevent the youngsters from committed to sins. Divorce in Muslim Law also used to be very simple. Once the husband said “I divorce you”, they are no longer husband and wife. The act also restricted a man from taking a second wife without judicial review and first wife's permission. In terms of registering a marriage; prior to 1974, marriage in Muslim was not necessarily to be registered. By syariah law, a man and a woman will be automatically become husband and wife once they stated the *‘ijab-qabul’* (marriage contract). However, to calming the conservative Muslim, Suharto government employed a compromised strategy by stating that there is nothing in Islamic law will be changed. Conservative Muslim then considered this as a win-win solution especially when the government promising an increasing power and stature of Islamic court in regulating marriage, divorce and polygamy by increasing the national budget for the court. The law also gained a strong support from local organization such as women organization, because of its aims in increasing women's status.³⁰

The marriage act was rather an accelerator than a predictor of increasing age of first marriage.³⁰ It's mean, with or

without the implementation of Marriage Law, age of first marriage will increase eventually with increasing of education, although maybe in a slower rate. The effect of Marriage Law in increasing age of marriage is also likely to be weaker among society with strong Muslim beliefs and low education such as Priangan ethnic group in West Java and Maduranese ethnic group in East Java.²¹

It should be noted however, early marriage remains prevalence in some ethnic groups in Indonesia, but not in general. Socio-economic reform resulted from education policy by Suharto has empowered young people to take their own initiative to find their own mates. The age of marriage increased because the youngsters may need a certain period of time to find eligible partner.⁸ Industrialization and Westernization was also believed to affect Indonesian families by allowing couples to take responsibilities of their own economic-related decisions.³² Marriage then are no longer arranged by parents with socio-economical reasons but because of love and self-fulfilment.¹⁸ Nevertheless, self-choice marriage is not completely young people's autonomy. Parental approval remains important in self-choice marriage, both for men and women.³³

CONCLUSION

Undoubtely, Suharto has an important role in Indonesian family changes. His population policy was not only covered birth control to promote smaller family size, but also accompanied by marriage law and compulsory education. Under his leadership, family planning program of Indonesia has known as one of the success story. A massive comprehensive family planning program combined with social development (education) and law enforcement resulted in a joint effect in changing people idea of family size, thus

declining fertility from 5.6 in children per women in 1970s to 4.1 in 1980, 3.2 in 1985 and 2.8 in 1990. Beside changes in its size, family change in Indonesia is also marked by the changing of familial patterns in terms of marriage. With the influence of education policy, younger generation after 1970s married later than the previous times, and by their own choice, no longer under parents' arrangements.

Despite his authoritarian style, Suharto brought a lot of socio-economic development throughout Indonesia. The implementation of 9-year compulsory education had placed a strong foundation for the future Indonesian human capital and enabled women to obtain higher opportunities for schooling. Beside facilitates the diffusion of ideas among young people and opened up their perspective toward reproductive rights and self actualization, education also increases women's opportunities to participate in laborforce. With the increasing roles outside the domestic sector, delaying age of marriage and limiting family size becomes a choice for women in contemporary Indonesia. The marriage act, however, was perceived as an accelerator rather than a predictor in increasing age of first marriage. Regardless the existence of the Marriage Law 1974, age of first marriage is likely to increase with increasing of education, although maybe in a slower rate.

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