

Religious and Social Conceptions of Divorce: A Case Study of Cibogo Community in Cirebon

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INFORMASI ARTIKEL

Keywords:

Divorce; Gender; Marriage; Sociology; Family;

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is seen as a social institution that legally binds two individuals, while divorce marks the legal and social end of that relationship. The complexity of marriage involves cultural, religious, and social factors, and family issues often lead to divorce. The aim of this study is to identify the causes and impacts of divorce. Using a case study approach and qualitative research methods, the study employs conflict theory as its theoretical framework. Conflict theory emphasizes how social, economic, and political factors influence marital dynamics, ultimately contributing to the likelihood of divorce. Marital conflicts can arise from an unequal division of household labor, differences in opinion, or infidelity, often triggered by emotional tension or unmet needs. External factors, such as financial difficulties, unemployment, or cultural differences, can further strain the relationship. Divorce is often seen as a response to perceived injustice within the marriage. If one partner feels exploited or if there is an imbalance of power, divorce may become a means of seeking justice. Conflict theory provides insights into how these social, economic, and political factors shape marital relationships, helping individuals understand the underlying causes of marital conflicts and the potential for divorce.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a formal commitment made by a man and a woman to establish a relationship that is recognized legally, religiously, and socially (Adam, 2020). In Indonesia, marriage is governed by the Indonesian Law No. 16 of 2019, which amends Law No. 1 of 1974. According to this law, the minimum legal age for marriage is 19 years for both men and women, and a marriage is deemed valid when conducted in accordance with both state and religious regulations. The primary purpose of marriage is to attain happiness and harmony, while also preventing divorce.

However, in certain situations, divorce becomes an unavoidable outcome. In Cirebon City, there were 824 divorce cases out of 2,046 marriages in 2023 (Badan

Pusat Statistik, 2024). This indicates that approximately 40% of marriages end in divorce. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, including domestic violence, interference from parents, and the husband's failure to fulfill his responsibilities (F. Auliani, 2023). Moreover, differences in religious affiliations can also result in marital conflicts that ultimately lead to divorce (Elfaruq, 2023). Given these reasons, divorce is often perceived as the most viable solution when marital problems become insurmountable (Fauzi, 2021).

Divorce, however, can have significant negative consequences for individuals, children, and families (Krisnawati et al., 2024; Suratno & Budiyo, 2022). Additionally, divorce is frequently viewed as a social stigma, especially for women. In traditional societies, women who divorce are often seen as failures in their roles as homemakers, while men's divorces tend to be more socially accepted (Nurlian et al., 2019). nevertheless, over time, societal perceptions have shifted, and the stigma surrounding divorce, especially for women has gradually diminished, as more rational and pragmatic reasons for divorce, particularly from the women's perspective, are recognized (Hartawati et al., 2022).

The phenomenon of divorce in Cirebon City is particularly evident in various areas, including Kampung Cibogo, Kelurahan Argasunya, Kecamatan Harjamukti. Kampung Cibogo, situated on the outskirts of Cirebon City, is inhabited by a community that still strongly adheres to traditional customs, norms, culture, and religion. According to (Alfianto, 2020), divorce is considered one of the negative consequences of early marriage in Argasunya, Cirebon.

The existing research highlights the importance of a deeper understanding of the meaning, causes, and effects of divorce. Such knowledge is not only critical for individuals who experience divorce but also for society as a whole. The social environment plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of marital relationships and can serve as a decisive factor in major life decisions, such as divorce. Therefore, this study aims to further explore the significance of divorce as understood by the people of Kampung Cibogo, alongside the underlying causes and the social, psychological, and familial impacts faced by those who experience divorce within this community.

This research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the divorce phenomenon, particularly within the context of Kampung Cibogo, and to provide insights that will enhance the social and cultural understanding of divorce in Indonesia. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to offer valuable contributions to policy discussions related to marriage, divorce, and family dynamics in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology with a case study approach. The researcher conducted a case study by directly immersing themselves in the research location, namely Kampung Cibogo, Argasunya Village, Cirebon City. The data for this study was obtained from two primary sources: primary data and secondary data. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, non-participatory direct observation, and documentation. Secondary data, on the other hand, was obtained through the documentation of quantitative data that could not be directly measured, such as divorce statistics.

Interviews were conducted with informants selected using the snowball sampling method, beginning with the head of the neighborhood (Ibu RT) of Kampung Cibogo. From there, the researcher expanded the sample to include three individuals who had experienced divorce and one individual currently undergoing divorce proceedings. The interviews were conducted in-depth to explore the informants' experiences related to marriage and divorce. These interviews were conducted simultaneously with observation and documentation, where interviews were recorded using audio recordings. During the observation, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the social and cultural context of Kampung Cibogo.

The data collected from this research was subsequently processed and analyzed using Dahrendorf's Conflict Theory. This theory was employed to understand the dynamics of marriage that experience conflict, leading to divorce. Additionally, this theory was used to analyze the forms of tension and the social impacts of conflict within the community (Dahrendorf, 1959).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Cibogo Village

Kampung Cibogo is located in Argasunya Village, Harjamukti District, Cirebon City. The community of Kampung Cibogo is known for its strong adherence to traditional values, social norms, and religious teachings. These values serve as the foundation for social interactions and decision-making in everyday life.

The majority of the population in Kampung Cibogo works as traders, farmers, and casual laborers. These professions are more easily aligned with the skills and capital available to the community. The diversity of these occupations reflects an economic pattern that is heavily dependent on the informal sector. The education level in Kampung Cibogo is generally limited to junior high school (SMP) and senior high school (SMA). This relatively low level of education significantly influences the

mindset and socio-economic development of the community, including attitudes toward marriage.

According to information provided by an informant (Ibu RT), the tradition of marriage in Kampung Cibogo in the past often involved early marriages, with many children being married at the age of 14. This practice was influenced by religious interpretations that allowed children to marry once they reached adulthood or puberty. In addition, some residents still adhere to the principle of arranged marriages, where partners are selected from among family members or close relatives who are well-known. Although there is a considerable age gap between the partners, arranged marriages are considered normal as they are believed to strengthen family bonds. This practice reflects the strong influence of patriarchal culture and long-standing traditions within the community (Dewi et al., 2023).

The Meaning of Divorce in the Community of Kampung Cibogo

Divorce is a phenomenon that carries various meanings for the individuals who experience it, particularly within the socio-cultural context of specific communities. The meaning of divorce can be understood from both a historical perspective and the personal emotions individuals have regarding divorce itself. The breadth of understanding surrounding divorce significantly influences the decisions made and the reactions toward the occurrence of divorce. Today, divorce is often seen as a solution to various problems within the household. In some cases, the problems lead married couples to feel pressured and ultimately give up on maintaining their marriage.

1. Divorce as a Solution to Problems

In marital life, interactions between spouses do not always go smoothly. Misunderstandings, differences of opinion, or conflicting interests often lead to arguments. Some of these arguments may even escalate into acts of violence, both physical and mental. As a result, divorce is often seen as the last resort after various efforts to resolve marital issues have failed. It is suggested that divorce occurs when there is an inability to manage prolonged conflicts and discomfort within the relationship (White & Rogers, 2004).

As expressed by Ibu W: "*Sebenarnya perceraian bisa dihindarkan, tetapi kalau tidak bisa atasi, jalan terbaiknya yaitu bercerai* (Actually, divorce could have been avoided, but if it can't be handled, the best way is to divorce)". The decision to divorce is made when the couple feels there is no other way to resolve the existing issues and believes that divorce is the best solution.

2. Changing Roles of Family Members

Divorce also brings significant changes to the roles of family members. When divorce occurs, individuals who previously held specific roles within the family,

such as husband or wife, will experience a shift in status to that of a widow or widower. This leads to the cessation of domestic responsibilities, including the rights and duties toward the former spouse. According to Ibu W: "*Cerai tuh saya sekaligus jadi peran ayah untuk memenuhi nafkah anak saya* (Divorce means I also take on the father's role to provide for my child's needs)". This change illustrates that, despite the divorce, individuals still have to shoulder the roles previously undertaken by their spouse, such as raising and providing for the children.

This role change is in line with the theory proposed by (Cline & Westman, 1971), which suggests that changes in family structure due to divorce force individuals to adapt to new, more complex roles. Divorced individuals must strive to meet the family's needs, even without a spouse, which leads to the learning of new roles that require greater independence.

3. Divorce as a Cause of Additional Problems

For some individuals, divorce is not just the result of marital issues but also adds to the complexity of other problems. Divorce can worsen the psychological condition of the individuals involved, especially if the marital issues have been ongoing and unresolved for an extended period. Additionally, divorce can lead to increased social and emotional problems, particularly for the children involved. Divorce can exacerbate children's psychological conditions, making it difficult for them to adapt to the changes within the family, as well as increasing the risk of emotional and social issues in the future (Amato, 2000).

As expressed by Ibu N: "*Sebuah perceraian menurut saya dianggap jelek dan saya berkeinginan tentang menikah itu akur sampai tua nanti, suami saya sikap kasar salah satu jadi permasalahan cerai* (I think divorce is a bad thing, and I had hoped for a harmonious marriage until old age. But my husband's abusive behavior became one of the reasons for the divorce)". This case shows that, while divorce is viewed as a solution, the consequences often lead to outcomes that are not necessarily better.

4. Divorce as a Violation of the Marital Promise

In many cultures, including that of Kampung Cibogo, divorce is often seen as a failure in maintaining marital harmony, which was originally built upon vows made in the presence of God. Religious teachings encourage couples to live in harmony and resolve marital problems in a proper manner. However, in some cases, divorce is viewed as a violation of this sacred promise. As expressed by Ibu S:

"Setelah saya mengajak bercerai, kemudian suami pun berusaha untuk memperbaiki perilakunya dan mengajak istri untuk rujuk lagi, karena suami berpikir bagaimana nasib anaknya kelak jika tidak memiliki seorang ayah. Anaknya baru berumur 4 bulan. Selain itu, keluarga suami juga turut

mendukung agar mereka tidak bercerai dan memperbaiki kesalahan yang sebelumnya (After I proposed divorce, my husband tried to improve his behavior and asked me to reconcile because he was concerned about what would happen to our child without a father. Our child is only 4 months old. Furthermore, my husband's family also supported us to reconcile and correct past mistakes)".

This illustrates that divorce is not only seen from a social perspective but also from a religious viewpoint, which emphasizes the importance of preserving the marriage. Religious views on divorce often serve as a significant consideration in the decision to divorce. As explained by Fahmi (2015), in many religious teachings, divorce is considered a last resort after all efforts to maintain marital harmony have failed. Therefore, in communities with strong religious values, divorce is viewed not only as a personal issue but also as a violation of moral and religious principles.

Causes of Divorce in Cibogo Village

Divorce in Kampung Cibogo is influenced by various factors that are social, emotional, economic, and behavioral in nature. These factors play a significant role in eroding marital harmony and influencing the decision to divorce. Some of the key factors contributing to divorce in this community include verbal and physical abuse, economic-financial problems, bad habits such as gambling, and infidelity.

1. Verbal and Physical Abuse

Verbal and physical abuse are among the primary factors leading to divorce. Verbal abuse refers to actions that insult, belittle, or hurt a partner's feelings through harsh words and disrespectful expressions. Physical abuse, on the other hand, involves aggressive acts that harm the partner's body. Both forms of abuse can trigger feelings of humiliation, disappointment, and emotional pain, ultimately leading to discomfort within the marriage.

As expressed by Ibu N:

"Suami saya suka mengancam akan membunuh jika saya tidak mencari uang. Saat ada masalah dengan istri saya yang baru atau masalah luar, suami saya selalu melibatkan saya dan anak-anaknya, sampai mereka trauma dengan ayahnya yang selalu mengancam dengan membawa senjata tajam di depan anak-anak (My husband often threatened to kill me if I did not earn money. When there were problems with his new wife or external issues, he always involved me and the children, to the point where they became traumatized by his threats, and he even brandished a sharp weapon in front of the kids)".

Such violence leads to the decision of divorce as a protective measure for both the individual and the children from potential further physical and emotional harm.

2. Economic-Financial Issues

Economic issues are a significant contributing factor to divorce, particularly when one partner fails to fulfill their financial responsibilities within the family (Burstein, 2007). In Kampung Cibogo, there have been cases where husbands neglected to provide for their wives and children for extended periods, resulting in instability within the family unit. Unstable family finances can lead to tensions between partners and ignite conflicts that may culminate in divorce.

As stated by Ibu S: "*Saya cerai salah satunya karena faktor ekonomi. Suami saya tidak menafkahi saya selama empat bulan, dan tidak bertanggung jawab. Ia menghilang begitu saja* (I divorced partly because of financial issues. My husband did not support me for four months and was irresponsible. He just disappeared without any explanation)". This economic downturn hinders the fulfillment of basic family needs, such as food, education, and healthcare, which ultimately causes dissatisfaction in the relationship and triggers the decision to divorce..

3. Bad Habits, Such as Gambling

Bad habits, such as gambling, are also significant factors contributing to divorce within Kampung Cibogo. Gambling, as an activity involving the betting of money in hopes of gaining luck, often neglects the needs of the family. When a husband spends his earnings on gambling, disregarding the household's needs, it leads to dissatisfaction and disappointment in the wife and children. In many cases, divorce is considered a solution to protect the family's well-being (Dowling et al., 2016).

Ibu W explained: "*Kalau pulang suka malam, terus pernah ketahuan main judi* (He often comes home late, and once he was caught gambling)". The husband's neglect of financial responsibilities for gambling causes tension in the household, potentially leading to divorce.

4. Infidelity

Infidelity refers to actions outside of marriage where one partner engages with someone other than their lawful spouse. Infidelity is often considered a major breach of trust within a marital relationship and is a leading cause of divorce. In some cases, even after infidelity is discovered, the involved partners may try to repair their relationship. However, in many cases, infidelity is seen as an unforgivable breach, ultimately leading to divorce.

As shared by Ibu N: "*Kalau pulang sering malam, terus pernah kepergok selingkuh, terus suami saya tetap mengelak membela diri* (He often came home late, and once he was caught cheating, but my husband continued to deny it and made excuses)". Infidelity destroys trust between partners and often leads to the decision of divorce.

Forms of Divorce Conflict in Cibogo: A Conflict Theory Perspective

Conflicts that occur within families are often complex and deeply embedded in the relationships between family members. In the community of Kampung Cibogo, the family, as the smallest unit of society, plays a critical role in shaping individual identities and providing emotional and psychological foundations for its members.

Conflicts within divorce often reflect long-standing tensions between spouses. Differences in values, unmet expectations, or unresolved communication issues can gradually build emotional pressure between the partners. In some cases, financial problems, infidelity, and violence may exacerbate existing conflicts. While families can play a role as mediators or supporters during the divorce process in Kampung Cibogo, they may also become an additional source of conflict if not handled wisely. Therefore, a deep understanding of the family unit and how conflicts affect relationships within the family is crucial for comprehending the complexities of divorce.

It is undeniable that a family, like any other social structure, exists in a state of equilibrium, but it must sometimes undergo internal upheavals. Conflict theory emerged in part as a response to structural functionalism and was shaped by various critiques. The key proponent of conflict theory, Ralph Dahrendorf (Nendissa, 2022), asserted that conflicts leading to social change are marked by continuous struggles between the different elements of society.

Conflict is an inherent and essential aspect of society, and it cannot be fully understood by only focusing on stability and order. He argued that while stability exists, it is the conflicts between groups and individuals that drive change and development. Dahrendorf's theory highlights the idea that society is rarely in a state of complete harmony, and conflicts over power, resources, or values are constant and unavoidable.

In the context of divorce, these conflicts can manifest in various ways. The tension between partners, often driven by deep-seated disagreements, is a reflection of broader social dynamics, such as power imbalances or societal expectations of marriage. Dahrendorf's theory suggests that the family, as an institution, is not exempt from these dynamics and that marital conflicts often mirror larger societal struggles.

Thus, Dahrendorf's conflict theory provides a lens through which we can examine divorce in Kampung Cibogo. It allows us to understand that the breakdown of a marriage is not merely the result of individual disputes but is also shaped by larger social structures and conflicts that affect the couple's ability to resolve their issues.

CONCLUSION

Divorce is a decision often made due to the lack of alignment and shared goals within a marriage. In Kampung Cibogo, divorce is driven by several factors, such as verbal abuse, economic issues, bad behaviors like gambling and excessive drug use, and infidelity. This phenomenon reflects long-standing tensions in the relationship between husband and wife, which ultimately leads to divorce as a perceived necessary solution. This aligns with findings in the literature, which indicate that divorce often results from emotional and social tensions caused by communication issues, economic inequality, and breaches of trust in marriage (White & Rogers, 2004; Amato, 2000).

In Kampung Cibogo, divorce not only disrupts the relationship between spouses but also impacts children and the family's social status. Families that fail to establish a stable household often face social stigma, affecting their reputation in the community. This is consistent with theoretical views on how divorce can disrupt social structures and alter power dynamics within the family. This study also underscores the importance of good communication, financial responsibility, and fidelity in marriage to prevent divorce and mitigate its negative consequences.

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