

# Final Year Students's Perspectives on Getting Married Young

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**Abstract.** this study aims at elucidating the youth perspective on marriage and marriage at young age. This research is a qualitative research, which involved final year university students as the respondents. Hall's Reception Theory is used to analyze the youth perspective on marriage and getting married young. The study explored the dominant ideologies, i.e. (1) the dominant-hegemonic position; and (2) the oppositional position shown when the youth (as audience) decode/ read texts about married young. Shared cultural knowledge work as the framework in the interpretation process trigger different perspectives of the audience. While the text with #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran has religious teaching as the ground to their movement, the result of the research showed that religion is not the main working ideologies affect the text reading but other cultural aspects (economy and education).

**Keywords:** youth, perspective, married young, interpretation, Hall's reception theory

## 1 Introduction

In the discussion of society through times, many issues revolve around marriage. How marriage relates to as the basic part of society, the identity, and the culture, makes marriage an essential issue in the course of history. There hardly is exact definition of an ideal marriage or an ideal time to start marriage. Each field; legal, psychological, physical, sociological or cultural area, has its own definition, with a relatively more fluid one for the cultural. Culture, as it comprises the majority aspects in the society, ranges from the reflective to representative show myriad symbols defining the sole term marriage itself. According to the Oxford languages dictionary, marriage means "the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions specifically a union between a man and a woman)" (Oxford on google.com). This definition is broader than the definition of marriage in Indonesia. According to Indonesian Dictionary (*KBBI*), marriage (*pernikahan*) means a union of marriage performed to complies legal and religious requisites (*ikatan (akad) or perkawinan yang dilakukan sesuai dengan ketentuan hukum dan ajaran agama*). The latter definition of marriage has a more rigid understanding, that requires law and religion liminary conditions. In Indonesia, the basic legal and religious requisite age to hold a marriage is when a man is 19 years old and a woman is 16 years old minimum.

In the implementation, not all men and women are married above the liminary age of 19 and 16. Thousands of marriages have been held in Indonesia from 2009-2020. Up to 2018, 1 of

9 female youth or 1,2 million are married under 18 years old with 61,3 thousand are married under 15 years old. In this pandemic times, there are more early marriage happens. In 2019 only, there are 23,7 thousand cases of early marriage; whilst in January to June 2020, there are 32.980 number of cases [1]. The cases of early marriage in Indonesia are still influenced by several aspects, such as poverty, education, ethnic, and religion; resulting in the change of the quality of education, welfare, social condition, health and employment of the early marriage couples.

There has been researches studied the factors of early marriage, but rarely discuss the spread of information, and how the structure of the information penetrates to the youth in contemporary Indonesia. the issue of early marriage cannot be separated from the definition of marriage in Indonesia, and also the definition of men and women understood by the youth. In prior research, the study of how the representation of Instagram posts with the #NikahMuda and #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran elaborates main ideas namely (1) man has the dominant position than the woman, (2) religion (Islam) as the decision maker of married at young age, (3) being married at young age becomes the symbol to acknowledge someone's piety [7]. The research recommends that there should be a further study to elaborate how the youth perceive marriage and early marriage. Therefore, this study aims at elucidating the youth perspective on marriage and marriage at young age.

### ***Research Problems***

Based on the background, the problem of this study is to analyze youth's perspective on marriage and marriage at young age.

### ***Objective and Significance of The Study***

In relation with the previous research problems, the study is aimed to find out youth's perspective on marriage and getting married at young age. In this case, the purpose of this study is to give a contribution to the society of how the message about marriage and early marriage circulates in recent times.

## **2 Review of Related Literature**

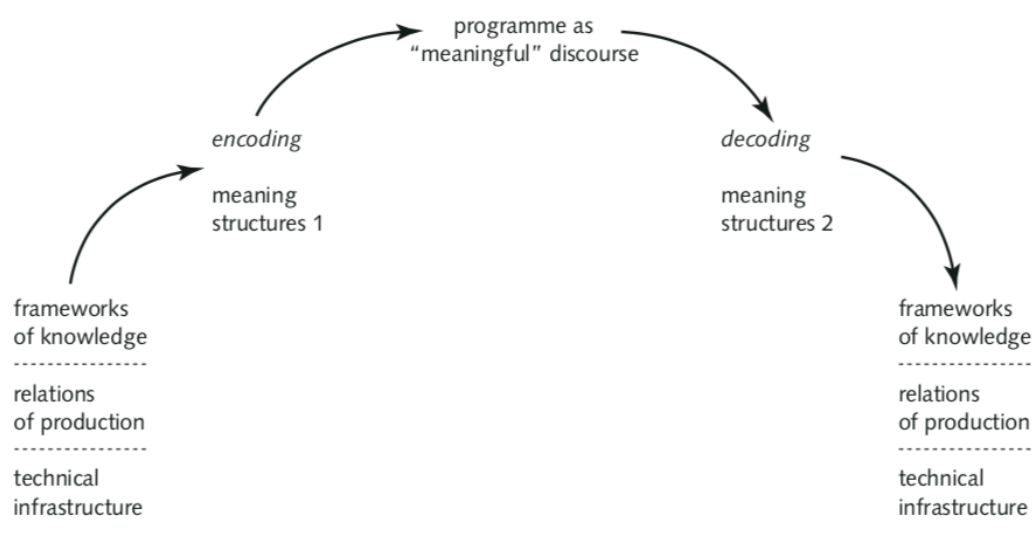
### **2.1 Reception Theory**

The reception theory is used as tool to analyze the problem of this study, to explain the readings of the posts of *Nikah muda* (in the instagram) and how *Nikah muda* in Indonesia is discussed in BBC news by some activists who concern on feminism. This theory is expected to be able to elaborate the complex structure in dominance initiating the polysemic reading of the message of *nikah muda*.

The reception theory argues that the communication process is not a linear one-way process from the sender, through the message, and to the receiver. In this model, the sender fixes the meaning of the message to the receiver. Whereas on the other hand, the receiver does not only have one single meaning as fixated by the sender. Thus, Stuart Hall argues that in the practice of communication is systematically distorted. The meaning or the reading of the

message is actively generated by the receiver, and the meaning reading (making) is polysemic; it is read in various ways [3]. At this point, reception of the message or the code is an active practice, that later Hall called as practice of meaning making.

By referring to [4] & [3] summarized that: (i) meaning is not simply fixed or determined by the sender; (ii) the message is never transparent; and (iii) the audience is not a passive recipient of meaning. Even though there are facts delivered through the text, the facts should be transferred through a sign system, that creates biases: distort the intentions of the producers and provoke different feelings to the consumers. Borrowing Marxist terms, [3] (designed a model of “encoding/decoding”, and proposing articulated model of communication.



**Figure 1.** Encoding and decoding of broadcast structures

The model of communication as illustrated in Figure 1 elaborates the ideologies behind the readings of message more comprehensively because it shows how the message create polysemic meanings. This polysemic meanings disclose “a dominant cultural order” or Hall termed as “preferred meanings”. This preferred meaning, indicates that the reading/ meanings is dominant, influencing how all events or the codes will be signified. This mechanism enforces dominant ideology revolving in the society, showing how the regulating common sense is actually not neutral. However, as [4] continues, the culture and the practices or readings/ the practices of culture are constant sites of struggle and there are always negotiations process representing the ideology circulates within the society. The negotiations display different positions in the society which are classified into:

- (1) the dominant-hegemonic position;
- (2) the negotiated position;

(3) the oppositional position.

Those positions can be evaluated by analyzing the biases in the action of decoding/ reading the message. The biases, which are influenced by education, job position, social class and economic aspect, exhibit each ideological position in a particular group of society.

## **2.2 Previous Studies**

In her research entitled *How They See It: Young Women's Views on Early Marriage in A Post-Conflict Setting*, [6] explored the views and experiences of early marriage among married and engaged adolescent girls living in the Nahr el Bared Palestinian refugee camp in North Lebanon. Of the 22 adolescent girls interviewed, none felt they were forced into their engagements or marriages. Rather, they took this decision in consultation with their families, reflecting their understanding of their situation in a particularly difficult post-conflict setting. Respondents in this study reported being overwhelmed by the hardships of their existence, by endemic poverty made worse by the conflict, and the oppression of their post-conflict existence, but not by their marriages or engagements. Respondents did not think they had sacrificed their futures by their early marriages, but rather that they had started their futures a bit early. Thus, it can be concluded that the decision to enter an early marriage, neither unilateral nor imposed, was instead described as an assessment of numerous factors, including economic hardships, insecurity and loneliness, many arising as a result of the conflicts.

The findings of the study challenge common understandings of early marriage. It is common approach in the media and development reports to present married adolescent girls as victims. However, Knox's study has shown that victimization is not necessarily an accurate representation of how girls in early marriages understand their experiences. Early marriage viewed in its broader social and cultural context and do not necessarily consider it a violation of human personal rights.

## **3 Research Method**

### ***3.1 Data and Data Source***

This research is a qualitative research which applies Hall's Reception Theory in the analysis. This theory puts the emphasis on the audience reception in the process of decoding message. In order to know how the text is perceived and what the perspectives the audience toward the text, audience is referred as the subject of this study. There are 10 respondents participate in the research. Half of these number are female and the rest are male. In this case, the researcher selected purposive samples which are believed to be sufficient to provide relevant information and understanding of what is studied [8]. Therefore, typical case sampling as one of variations of purposive sampling was used. All of them are university students who are currently studying at their final year. The reason of taking this group as the respondent is related to whom the text should be intended to. The texts which promote marriage at the young age, especially under #nikahmuda, are addressed to the audience who are young, male and female, and single. University students studying at the final year dominate this group.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

In order to know audience reception and their perspective toward marriage and getting married at the young age, there are at least two steps taken in collecting the data. In order to gain the data, some sample of posters promoting getting married at young age posted through Instagram under #MenikahMuda are distributed to the respondents. At this step, respondents are also requested to watch a video produced by BBC discussing the same issue. This video is chosen as a supporting text to be read because this video represents different assessments toward the menikahmuda movement. Having been exposed to these texts, the respondents fill in the questionnaire to give their response and explain their interpretation of the message. The results of the survey in form of qualitative data are central in the exploration of the reception. The sample of the questionnaire used to collect the data is attached.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

[3] suggested that different audience members might decode the message not in the way the producer originally intended. Thus, results in audience perceive different meanings. Accordingly, the data are analyzed to understand on which position the audience adopt their positions when they decode the text (dominant, oppositional reading, and negotiated reading). After the data has been classified into the three categories respectively, the cultural backgrounds influence the audience's dominant ideology is investigated.

### **3.4 Drawing conclusion**

Drawing the conclusion based on the data analysis and interpretation is the last step taken in this study.

## **4 Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Intended Meaning of #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran text**

In 2019, there were massive posts using #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran which led to the popularity of one community, Gerakan Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran, an organization initiated by La Ode Munafar bringing the idea to prevent dating in Indonesia. Having the basic reason of initiation to advocate victims of negative effects of dating and to stop the negative influence of dating, this organization set focus that in 2024 there will be 18.250 people joining the line.

Most of the contents with the hashtags #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran are ones with preaches, Qur'an verses, and images of Islam. There are thousands of posts using the hashtags with a thousand/ hundreds of likes on the top Instagram feeder. In the last study, the most liked posts were chosen in terms of relevance to be analyzed in order to elaborate the messages behind those images. To uncover meanings from the images, the data were classified into three categories: (1) men (2) women and (3) marriage and piety.

In the first classification, the posts imply how men and women should behave and to be chosen as spouse or future spouse. The images delivered the idea of personal space; specifically talking about interpersonal relation between lovers (in Islamic perspective), about family (who should be regarded in the discourse of a family) and about being pious (as

Moslems). Most the discussions are using images of men and women in Islamic views, they are wearing peci and gamis, in frame together with women wearing hijab and long dresses. There are also images which put the image of men with kids, and almost none has the image of men in social situation with many friends. The images shown in the posts are to represent the idea of a personal space. A space where this idea of men is put together with the idea of family as a personal space. Even though this is a public post, but the images are mostly personal, to deliver the message towards personal space.

The texts itself convey messages about the definition of men, norms of how men should behave, the roles and the position of men are discussed using one common ground idea: islam. Men are defined as the head of the family, who also has responsibility as the first man of the family: to perform the public affairs, to work outside, provide the financial needs, and to be responsible to not having many friends, so they will have more time with the family. A dream man was pictured as a man who is pious, can recite Qur'an and memorize the last juz' of Qur'an, humorous and romantic, soft and caring to the wife and child, good at cooking, loyal and responsible, and not a smoker. The criteria mostly on how a good man is perceived by Islam, and not on how a good criteria of a good modern man, in a more global context such as educated, financially sufficient, or having a good nurturing environment.

More about the role of men as pictured in the posts, were that when a man decides to ask a woman to marry, he has the full decision for it. He had not need to ask the woman about the marriage, he only needed to ask the father of the woman, and he was able to take the woman to KUA to make the legalization of the marriage. There were posts depicting this image when a man was grabbing a woman to take her to KUA, although the woman wanted to finish the study first, instead of to be married.



## Figure 2.

[source:<https://magdalene.co/story/auto-bahagia-ala-kampanye-nikah-muda-dan-bagaimana-melawannya>]

The image of this post was a comic characters, drawn in an adorable way, but the message is pretty strong. Moreover, this post gained 7.749 likes, quite many number for a post with very simple text and caption, the action drawn was quite clear for the readers. The image in figure xx shown that the men and woman are moslem, and the man had the full right of the woman, even though the woman was not yet his wife. Not only strengthening the idea of male dominance and the restriction to woman/s freedom in Islamic view, this image also forces the idea that education was not a priority in life decision, of it is compared to marriage.

The second data classification encircle the definition of women in regards to role, function, model figure in a family, and things a woman should deserve from the moments before the marriage. There were posts showing images of women, alone and waiting, with texts conveyed messages that women should wait, because the efforts of finding is the role of men. In that sense, women were put in the more passive state. Despite there were texts stating that the result would worth the wait, women is still in the subordinate position, because the circle in mostly on the idea of waiting, without able to active in a public domain such as education or work force.

The other posts were exemplifying that when a woman received a marriage proposal from a man who is still insufficient financially, she was told not to reject the proposal, because if the man was a sufficient man financially, he would not make the proposal for the woman. This depicted a lower position of a woman in terms of decision; she did not have any ability to say no, nor to express her thoughts. Accompanied with a caption saying that piety is the most important aspect of a man and woman, not the financial aspect, the posts had once again underlined Islam as the common ground.

In this modern era, where most of our life and lifestyle circle around public space, where the line of public space and personal space has blurred, work and financial aspect cannot become most important part of life. Many commitment and family problem has arisen from this financial aspect, because it is the underlying layer of lifestyle and life itself in the more contemporary era.

The posts had shown that the criteria of good women are the women who were able to wait, and put herself in subordinate position, in domestic space. Women were defined by her quality of piety, her ability to perform passive role in family and life, as prescribed by the teachings of Islam.

In Indonesia, religion has become the basic life aspect, even tradition and legal system relatively usual to be compared to religion teachings and the practices. As the development of the modern life in this contemporary era, global culture has merged into local culture where traditional norms and religious norms take place. Western culture which has become the global culture has adapted by many of Indonesian youth, so as dating and the closer romantic

relationship between man and woman, which might lead to free sex and other negative actions such as abusive actions.

The initiator has shown that many problems arisen from global culture deserve a proper treatment that is ‘a cut off’ from the youth themselves. The posts dedicated as the campaign of this activism of Indonesia tanpa pacaran, have shown that there were negative and acute effects of dating and the needed to be cut off. On the other side, the posts have campaigned that Islam is the answer for the negative effects of global culture.

The data analyzed had showed that (1) men were in the more dominant position than women- and women were rather to put themselves as the more subordinate position than men, (2) religion were used as a form of legitimation in choosing the spouse and the future spouse criteria, religion also became the basic reason why someone decided to make family regardless other (a more contemporary socio-aspect such as: education, economy, traditional values or lifestyles; (3) being single and not dating had become a way to separate between devout and undevout person. On the other layer, the images from Instagram post with #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran showed that Islam as the common ground, were perceived as a relatively conservative or “fundamental”, not in the sense of radical Islam, but how the images rejected the more contemporary aspect of socio-politics of life, have led the apprehension to a more conservative one.

## **4.2 Perspective on Getting Married Young**

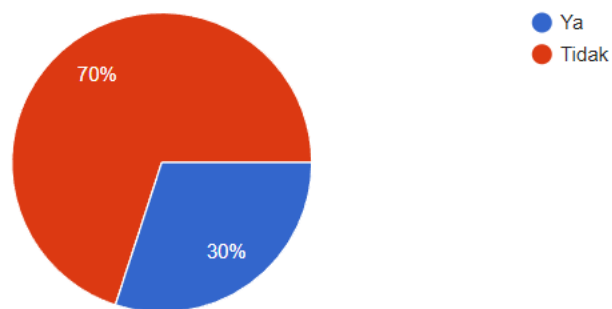
### **4.2.1 Dominant Reading**

There are some positions that audience take when they are perceiving the meaning of cultural text. [3] in discussing the decoding process explain that in perceiving the message, audiences may agree with the message as what is intended by the producer; some audience may perceive the meaning differently; some other may approve the message conveyed to them, but to some extent they show some disagreement to some of the delivered idea. Hall further argued that not only the audience perceive different meaning, but the difference in perceiving the message of a text may happen among the audience themselves, polysemy. The different interpretation happens because in reading the text, an agent has a presupposition resulted from shared cultural knowledge which acts in a framework that influence the reading [10].



How agent's cultural knowledge influences the meaning making/ interpretation of the cultural text is the main concern of this study.

The information gathered by questionnaire tells that the respondents have already been familiar with the issue of married at young age. There are various sources where they learn this trend. Even though social media is the main sources of the information about this issue, close friends and family are other party from whom they learn the topic of married at the young age.



**Figure 3.1** perspective on getting married at young age  
30% of respondents agree with married young  
70% of the respondent disagree with married young

Preferred reading is the audience's perception which similar to the meaning intended by the producer of a text. The result of survey in this study of final student's perception on getting married young show that approving the preferred meaning is the position taken by 30 % audience taking part in this study. In fact, the background of this group of respondents show several interesting information, related to their preferences. Living in an environment where majority of the member get married at the young age can be their situational context which condition them to think that what is expected by the society is to get married at the young age. Having this idea as a common sense trigger themselves to approve the idea married at the young age as the right thing to do.

By taking Islamic teaching as the point of view, this group of respondents explain that it is advisable for any Muslim who are eligible to get married. However, intention is mentioned to be the basis of their decision to get married. A respondent stated that married even at young age is good in case this decision is intended for Allah's blessing. They believe that marriage will only bring more positive things as it Sunnah. One of the example is to open a door for prosperity. The similar view on the importance of good intention in marriage is also reported in "Dive Into The Concept Of Love And Marriage In Ta'aruf" [8] in which one of the interviewee stated that when someone does it because of a sincerely intention, God's blessing is granted.

The respondents who accept the idea of married at young age argue that marriage means more time to spend with their partner. Furthermore, marriage will prevent people from

committing adultery, which is a great sin in Islam. Marriage is also valued as a commitment that their partner would be faithfully love and care for him/her unconditionally. For this reason, some people find security from marriage.

These aforementioned factors, i.e the marital age, the expectation of the people in inner the circle, religious teaching and practices, and the need of secure/ stable relationship are parts of cultural knowledge which becomes audience's framework in scrutinizing the intended meaning carried in the text.

However, gender of the respondent is not determining factor in this preference. When discussing which party should take initiative to make an approach to a potential partner, the respondents are splits. In their opinion, either man or woman may take preliminary steps in building acquaintanceship. This reading is different with the message advocated in #nikahmuda and #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran, in which it is always the male which have the right to approach the potential partner, but not the other way around.

The respondents, however, do not mention about ways of courtship in Islam. The preliminary step of dating is known as Ta'aruf. In ta'aruf, a man/ a woman interaction is mediated by a third party. The objective of ta'aruf is to know each other better [9]. The respondent, in fact, speak from the framework of cultural knowledge they seen to be practiced by people around them. Thus, what they find in the society set preposition for interpretation of the married at young age as a text.

In the case of marriage at young age, the respondents who are in their final year of their studies in university, assume that when a man is taking initiative in the courtship, the motive is related to biological need (sex), economics, religious fanatic, matchmaking. The first motive is related to the intention to marry. As a way to avoid fitnah or premarital sex which often happens in dating, people may decide to get married. Marriage at the young age is also associated with religious (Islam) fanatic. Economics motive means that if someone is capable of fulfilling daily needs, he is eligible to marry a decent woman. Matchmaking is another reasons of getting married young mentioned by the respondent. The matchmaking can be facilitated by the parents of the two parties (the man and the woman) who already known each other. Marriage is decided to strengthen the acquaintanceship.

#### **4.2.2 Oppositional Reading**

Oppositional Reading indicate that readers have different view of the message conveyed in the text. The result of the survey shows that most of the respondents (70%) disagree with the idea of married at young age. Literacy, mission of the individual, economical factor, physical and psychological state are the main aspects contribute as the framework of their interpretation.

Emotional Maturity is the most principal among the other aspects mentioned by the respondents. By the emotional maturity they mean the mature and stable emotional state.

They aware that in a man and woman romantic relationship, there will be conflict. The conflict come from many issues, extended from the internal to external factors. Different characters will deal with the same problem differently. This depends on their personality, way of thinking, idealism, knowledge, and other affecting factors. However, it is their stable emotional state, and communication skills which will help them to deal with the conflict wisely. The respondent also knowledgeable that in Indonesian society, marriage does not simply mean that a woman marries to a man. They realize that the engagement after the marriage will also involve the interaction with the member of the extended family, which sometimes stressful when someone cannot go along in their new family. They also mentioned that there is a possible problem comes from economic conditions, but this is more manageable and less worrying than their struggle to fit in the problem arise from communication.

Independence in the economic domain is noted to be the next condition before moving forward to marriage. The expectation to have a happy marriage with their partner is one of the reasons for getting married. The respondents openly mention that this requirement (independence in economic domain) is a must for a man. The male and female respondents took part in the focus group discussion confirmed that they agree with this idea. The male respondents believe that men are responsible to at least provide primary needs for their family. The female respondent admits that a man with good job and good salary is more desirable to marry. They stated that her family will also approve the marriage more willingly if the potential husband is well-off. Because it can guarantee that their daughter will not suffer hardship, especially which related to the fulfilment of the primary needs.

This is related to the ideology of the society (patriarchal). In this type of society, they will allow woman to work but they still have to play their basic role as a wife. Two main role of wife as referred by the respondents are to support husband and to manage the household. In the family business, there are Duty and right to be fulfilled. To be a leader and breadwinner are the responsibility for husband. Although in the present time, a wife often involved in the family matter discussion, they may only give their opinions. It is the Husband who has the right to make the decision. Husband always has the responsibility to give their opinion and the privilege to make decision.

What information exposed to them much or less influence their inclination / perspective of married at the young age. One of the respondent who disagrees with the trend, stated that his close friend is the one from whom he heard about married at the young age disagree with the idea of married young. Another respondent who also disapprove the idea of married at the young age, learn the idea from her mom's experience on getting married at the young age. From this result, we learn that people might not read many reference in order to give their stand toward marriage. Their circle and what they see in the circle, instead, influence their view toward marriage at the young age. Even though, this inclination seems biased, because they also realize that there are many factors influence the success in marriage, especially those who get married at the young age, this result shows an interesting finding. This suggests

that in the view of the respondents, marriage life is practical instead of theoretical. That's why they believe on what people in their circle has lived in than believing in the promise of ideal marriage that any books argue.

## **5 Conclusion**

How marriage relates to as the basic part of society, the identity, and the culture, makes marriage an essential issue in the course of history. The analysis of the data discusses the intended meaning of #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran texts. The texts itself present messages about the definition of men, norms of how men should behave, the roles and the position of men, the definition of women in regards to role, function, model figure in a family, and things a woman should deserve from the moments before the marriage. The message found in #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran texts indicates the ideology of patriarchy, which put men to be in the more dominant position while female as the more subordinate position than men. The images from Instagram post with #nikahmuda and #indonesiatanpapacaran showed that Islam as the common ground, were perceived as a relatively conservative.

There are two perspectives in the reading of final year students's perspectives on getting married young. The first is dominant reading, in which the readers of the text read and accept the ideas conveyed in the text. The second is Oppositional Reading, which indicate that that readers have different view on the message conveyed in the text. Based on the study, 70% of the respondents disagree with the idea of married at the young age, and only 30% of the respondent agrees with the intended meaning. There are reasons of their disagreement, mainly emotional maturity, finance, and life circle. The analysis also finds the practices of patriarchal value. Even though respondent who are young adult can accommodate the equality between men and women, the attribute of men as dominating is still seen.

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