

Widower's age and number of children affect parenting style and remarriage decision

Frisilia Octaviana Yolanda¹, Hermanto Tri Joewono², Dwi Aprilawati³*

¹Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia.

²Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga; Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia.

³Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia.

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ABSTRACT

Background: The high maternal mortality ratio automatically represents the highest number of widowers in Indonesia. The change of status from a husband to a widower does not rule out the possibility of being able to change his role and function in the family. **Objective:** To describe that the widower's age and the number of children have an impact on the parenting style and the desire to remarry. **Materials and Methods:** This study was an observational study with a cross-sectional design. Husbands who had been left by their wives for two years or more owing to maternal death and had one or more children before the wife's maternal death were the subjects of this study. Widower's age, as well as kid's parenting patterns before the death of the mother were recorded. This study was likewise subjected to an ethics review and relied on informed consent. **Results:** Widowers who had one child before their wife's death and decided to remarry accounted for 7 subjects (87.5%), while those who did not remarry accounted for 5 (31.3%). On the association between a widower's age and child-rearing practices, there were two respondents (40%) who chose to entrust their children's care to someone else or not to be cared by themselves. **Conclusion:** There was a significant relationship between widower's age and the number of children and the parenting style and remarriage decision. Single parents who decided to remarry were single parents at a relatively younger age.



Corresponding Author:

Dwi Aprilawati

Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga

Jl. Mayjen. Prof. Moestopo no. 47, Surabaya 60131, East Java, Indonesia

Dwi-a@fk.unair.ac.id.

Hermanto Tri Joewono

Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital

Jl. Mayjen. Prof. Moestopo no. 6-8, Surabaya 60286, East Java, Indonesia

hermanto.tri@fk.unair.ac.id

BACKGROUND

The high maternal mortality ratio automatically represents the highest number of widowers in Indonesia. The change of status from a husband to a widower does not rule out the possibility of



being able to change his role and function in the family. A lot of matters affect the change of role in the family. One of them is separation. The separation of one family unit in which the social role structure was broken or finished may happen if one or several family members fail to fulfil their respective obligations (Xerxa, et al., 2020). This includes maternal death.

To overcome the situation or state of being separated like this, single parents, especially husbands, sometimes make the decision to remarry (Anita & Khairulyadi., 2018). Several things determining the desire to remarry are the fulfillment of economic needs, child care assistance, fulfillment of social needs and fulfillment of the need for intimacy and affection (Santrock, 2006), whereas factors related to the intention to remarry are influenced by personal resources and family factors (Peng, 2016). One of the factors that initiated remarriage was children. In a study conducted by Koo and Parker, showed that having children often limits the possibility of remarriage in men. Men who do not have children or have one child were more interested in remarriage than men who have two children or more (Naf'ah, 2014).

Age factors also influenced widowers' desire to remarry. The research conducted by Parker et al., single parents who decided to remarry were single parents at a relatively younger age than those who decided to survive with their loneliness (Parker, 1999). Widowers realize that their age is no longer young and tend to think not to remarry. By considering their age, widowers were wiser to realize, understand, and accept themselves becoming older, especially when considering that they have been blessed with children and established economic life (Triyani, 2013). Aside from affecting the desire to remarry, the age of widowers was also influenced the parenting of their children (Peng, 2016). Because maternal death forces widowers and children to adapt to their new life without a wife or mother. The adaptation problem related to parenting often experienced by husbands was disobedience of the children to the rules of the household and their lack of responsibilities (Melinda, 2012). This sometimes triggers widowers to entrust their childcare to other people, such as the widower's mother, mother-in-law, and aunt or other relatives who they consider to understand more about parenting after the death of their wives.

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this study was to describe the widower's age and the number of children that have an impact on the child's parenting style and remarriage decision.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was a cross-sectional study with a descriptive and observational analytic method. This study was conducted from February to October 2018. The respondents in this study were widowers due to maternal death in Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia in 2015. Inclusion criteria for this study were respondents who had a history of losing their spouses by maternal death two years or more, Javanese ethnic, a minimum of high school graduates, non-government employees and had a child before maternal death. The total number of respondents who met the inclusion criteria for this study was 24 respondents. Secondary data in this study were obtained from the medical record and IT data of Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia regarding maternal deaths in 2015. Javanese ethnicity was chosen because this study was conducted in Surabaya, where the majority of the population was Javanese ethnicity. This was a questionnaire-based study, hence it was necessary for respondents who had a good level of education (at least high school). People who work as civil servants have a good level of education and economy, while those who often get problems due to maternal deaths were those who have poor education and economy. This research also discussed parenting patterns, thus having children before maternal death was included. Data collection was done using interview techniques in each respondent's house with the help of questionnaires.

RESULTS

Data on maternal deaths at Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia were as many as 53 cases in 2015. From 53 cases of maternal deaths, we obtained 24 samples that met the

inclusion criteria. From 53 samples, 29 samples did not meet the inclusion criteria as 6 samples did not have children after maternal death, 9 samples were not Javanese in ethnic, 3 samples could not be contacted further, 3 samples died, 7 samples refused to become respondents because they did not want to bring up the grief of maternal death, 1 sample did not qualify because he was not a husband at the time of maternal death, 1 sample did not meet the inclusion criteria as he already had a child from a previous marriage.

In this study, based on Table 1, the age of the respondents was divided into >30 years old and <30 years old. From the results of the study, it was found that widowers of <30 years of age were 2 subjects (8.3%) while those with >30 years of age were 22 subjects (91.7%).

Table 1. Distribution of widower's age 2 years or more after their wife's death in Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Age	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
<30 years old	2	8.3
>30 years old	22	91.7
Total	24	100

Based on Table 2, out of 24 respondents, husbands who got remarried were 8 subjects (33.3%) while those who did not remarry were 16 subjects (66.7%). Subjects who did not remarry were dominated by widowers aged >30 years.

Table 2. Distribution of husband's remarriage decision 2 years or more after their wife's death in Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Current status	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Remarried	8	33.3
Not remarried	16	66.7
Total	24	100.0

The distribution of the number of children before the maternal death of the wife in Table 3 showed that subjects with one child were 12 subjects and those who had children >1 were also 12 subjects.

Table 3. Distribution of the number of children before maternal death in Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Number of children	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
1 child	12	50.0
2 children	9	37.5
3 children	3	12.5
Total	24	100.0

The parenting style shown in Table 4 found that the husbands taking care of their children were as many as 19 subjects (79.2%), and those who let their child be cared for by others were 5 subjects (20.8%).

Table 4. Distribution of child parenting after maternal death in Dr. Soetomo General Academic Hospital, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Child parenting	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Taken care by oneself	19	79.2
Taken care by other people	5	20.8
Total	24	100.0

From the statistical calculation data with the chi-square method in Table 5, it was found that out of the 2 subjects who were <30 years of age, no subjects took care of their own children, whereas 2 subjects (40.0%) left the parenting to other people. Meanwhile, for widowers with age >30 years, as many as 19 subjects (100%) chose to take care or do their own children's parenting, and 3 subjects (60%) left the parenting to other people. The p-Value obtained was 0.036, meaning that there was a

significant relationship between the age of the husband and parenting after maternal death.

Table 5. Chi-square statistical analysis of the relationship between widower's age and child parenting.

Age	Taken care by oneself		Taken care by other people		Total		P-value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<30 years old	0	0.0%	2	40.0%	2	8.3%	0.036
>30 years old	19	100%	3	60.00%	22	91.7%	
Total	19	100%	5	100%	24	100%	

As for the results of the relationship between the number of children and remarriage decisions according to [Table 5](#), it was found that there was a significant relationship between the number of children with remarriage decisions which were statistically calculated using chi-square method. The result was that subjects with one child who remarried were as many as 7 subjects (87.5%) and those who did not remarry were 5 subjects (31.3%). While subjects with >1 child who remarried were only 1 subject (12.5%) and those who did not remarry were as many as 11 subjects (68.8%). A p-value of 0.027 was obtained.

Table 6. Chi-square statistical analysis of the relationship between the number of children and remarriage decisions

Number of children	Remarried		Not remarried		Total		p- value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1 child	7	87.5	5	31.3%	12	50%	0.027
>1 child	1	12.5	11	68.8%	12	50%	
Total	8	100.0%	16	100.0%	24	100.0%	

From the data, it can be concluded that the number of children influences the remarriage decision and the widower's age also affects parenting.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the number of children and the husband's decision to remarry resulted in 12 husbands with one child which were divided into 7 samples who chose to remarry and the other 5 samples who chose not to remarry after 2 years of their wives' maternal death. Widowers who had more than 1 child who decided to remarry were as many as 1 sample, while those who chose not to remarry were as many as 11 samples. It could be concluded that the number of children with the decision to remarry had a significant relationship. From the result of interviews and questionnaire data processing, most of the husbands chose not to remarry because they wanted to focus on taking care of their children, and maintaining their children's feelings, especially husbands who already had more than 1 child. In addition, the husbands also explained their fear that if they were to remarry, their children might not get sincere affection as given by their biological mother or biological family. This opinion was in line to the research conducted by [Ganong, et al., \(1984\)](#) which said that second marriages or remarriage of parents have a detrimental effect on children. This was driven by the assumption that stepfamily was a depiction of evil and rude, thus giving impact on the children themselves on their mental, emotional, and other interpersonal problems. The above statement was also supported by research from the American Academy of Pediatrics which mentioned the impact of family structures on children's health and well-being, showing that children who live with their biological parents have good physical, emotional, and well-being ([American Academy of Pediatrics, 2017](#)).

Some husbands also still felt loss and remembered their wives, thus deciding not to remarry. The statement was supported by the research conducted by [Stahl \(2004\)](#) who said that divorce would give a sense of sadness when remembering togetherness in the good times of the past. Various feelings experienced after separation include fear, concern for children, sadness, loneliness, anger, and jealousy.

Research conducted by [Rizki, et al., \(2013\)](#) also said that since the absence of a wife figure in the

family, husbands tend to focus more on giving their attention to children. In the absence of a mother figure in the family, children will indirectly tell and complain to their father. As a single parent, the father must always make time for his child because the formation of the first socialization function was within the family environment. However, still a father cannot fully carry out the role as the substitute of a mother. In a study conducted by Grant (2017), it was said that the personality and traits of mothers have a significant impact on the mental health of their children. Also, in a study conducted by (Pearson, et al., 2018), it was found that fathers did not have a significant impact on the mental health of children at 18 years of age. From the research we can conclude the importance of a mother in child development whose role cannot be replaced by a father.

In addition to the number of children, the age of the husband also influences child parenting which was done by mother and father. Due to maternal death, the father was forced to take over the role of a mother for his child. Being a single parent is not easy. Many adaptation problems came from both father and child. The study conducted by Agustina (2017) supports the above statement that adaptations are necessary especially from a father who will guide and educate his child. However, the parenting of a child is also influenced by the age of the husband. The older the widower's ages, the more he will understand the parenting of a child, thus it is not too difficult to adjust the parenting style after maternal death. Therefore, in this study most of the husbands with more than 30 years of age chose to take care of their children instead of entrusting them to others. However, no husbands less than 30 years old took care of their children on their own, meaning that all of the children were fostered by someone else. The results of this study were also in line to the research conducted by Agoes (2003) that individuals feel concerned in facing various possible difficult problems including raising and educating children. To reduce the worries of young-aged husbands, they will usually entrust their children to others who more capable in terms of educating and raising their children.

CONCLUSION

Widower's age and the number of children have a significant relationship with the parenting style and remarriage decision.

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