

## Sasak Traditional Marriage System in Avoiding Conflict and Preventing Disharmony Between Families in the Modern Era

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**Abstract.** Family encouragement and custom often force someone to get married even though the person is not fully ready, often creating conflict within the family. This research reveals that the Sasak traditional marriage system on Lombok Island legalizes kidnapping marriages so that the potential for conflict is increasingly wide open. This study aims to examine and analyze the role of the Sasak marriage customary system in an effort to reduce the potential for conflict due to merarik kodek which can result in disharmony between the couple's families. This research uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach carried out through observation and in-depth interviews conducted with 19 informants. The results show that conflicts that can occur due to child marriage can be mitigated by the merarik customary system, even though the custom itself triggers potential conflicts that can result in disharmony between the couple's families. The first three processes of merarik, namely maling, besejati and selabar, will create the potential for conflict, and the next three processes, ngawinan, nyongkolan and bales lampak nae, will reduce the potential for conflict. So, it is concluded that the Sasak marriage system can reduce conflict due to the tradition of merarik kodek.

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**Keywords:** Merarik kodek; Sasak; Marriage Custom; Conflict Potential; Disharmon

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### INTRODUCTION

Ancestral traditions have become an inherent part of every ethnic group (Syafriзал et al., 2022; Amal et al., 2019). The people of Lombok are known for their tradition of kidnapping marriage, or in Sasak language terms; it is called merarik, which is a way of marrying a woman by kidnapping her and taking her to a place without her parents knowing (Satria & Mahadika, 2021; Suyono, 2018). Culik marriage is a practice that is controversial and contested in society in general, but not for the people of Lombok. Kidnapping, aka merari, marriage for the Sasak tribe in Lombok is commonplace

(Hamsun & Aminullah, 2019; Purba et al., 2018) and has even become part of the traditional traditions inherited from their ancestors, which have been carried out from generation to generation (Fahrurrozi & Mispandi, 2021; Aziz, 2017; Habibi & Kusdarini, 2020). In another social perspective, this merarik tradition encourages early marriage (merarik kodek). This is proven by data released by BPS in the proportion of women married or living together before 18 in the 20-24 year age range in 2020, showing that West Nusa Tenggara Province ranks in the top 4 after Kep Province. Bangka Belitung, West

Sulawesi and West Kalimantan with a percentage of 16.61% (BPS, 2020).

In practice in the field, child marriage or taking codecs is one of the factors that triggers a conflict between the two sides of the family because they marry when they are still school age (Muhsinin, et al., 2022; Purba, 2023), so the family does not accept it. Will annul the marriage and take the child home because it concerns the family's dignity (Subayil, 2018). Apart from the contradictions that have the potential to trigger conflict and disharmony between couples' families due to forced marriages, some parents choose to let their children marry in order to cover up the disgrace that has already spread in society (Fatah & Kasim, 2019; Suraida et al., 2019). The practice of pulling codecs is prone to giving rise to the potential for conflict, leading to disharmony in the relationship between the two families, especially in the pesuke procession, where the woman's family sets a high ransom with the aim of maintaining the family's honor and self-esteem (Mansyur, 2021; Fitri & Purba, 2023).

For instance, several beneficial customs are found in the knowledge of the Sasak tribe, which is centered on the island of Lombok. One such custom is begibung, which is the gathering and sharing of food as an attempt to reconcile dispute. For instance, several of the Sasak tribe's sesenggak, or wise sayings, were discovered in another context and can be used to manage conflict (Zuhdi, 2018; Asyari,

2022). The Sasak tribal community certainly has various traditions considered necessary to develop, including the Merarik tradition, which has a pro and contract to preserve it. This tradition of early marriage often creates new conflicts within the family. This is based on the child's unpreparedness for marriage. However, this tradition is also considered a strategy to reduce conflict.

Research developed by Fitriani Rahayu (2019) entitled Harmony and Modality in the Merariq Marriage Practices of the Sasak Tribe of Lombok focuses on maintaining harmony between the two sides of the family amidst the subordinate position of women. Also, it examines the harmony that occurs in the family behind the conflict. Interesting tradition (Neonub & Habsari, 2018; Supriyati et al., 2017). Harmony occurs because of marital commitment and the spiritual well-being of family members, but in reality, on the ground, harmony does not occur. This is certainly different from the research that has been carried out. The research focused on examining how all stages of the Sasak marriage customary system were able to reduce conflict and prevent disharmony between the couple's families as a result of problems caused by the phenomenon of pulling codecs. This research aims to determine the role of the Sasak tribe's traditional marriage system in reducing conflict due to the traditions implemented.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach. Just like qualitative research, it requires a process of observation, interviews, and documentation (Creswell et al., 2007). This research uses a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted in Menceh Village, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. The research subjects consisted of 10 informants from Merariq codec perpetrators, 3 informants from parents or families of Merariq codec perpetrators, 5 informants from regional heads, and 1 informant from traditional figures. The research data was collected using primary data through observation and in-depth interviews with informants. Data collection is also strengthened by secondary data collected through literature studies, books, scientific journals, and other supporting sources. Data analysis techniques in this research use data presentation, reduction, and verification/conclusion. The validity of the data in this research was carried out by retesting the field regarding the problem topic and adjusting it to literature related to the research topic.

## DISCUSSION

Referring to valid data, in the last five years, early Marriage in Indonesia was most widespread during the Covid-19 era, to be precise in 2020, with details of 3.22% of women getting married at 15. There were

0.34% of men married at the same age, while 27.35% of women married in the 16-18 year age range, while 6.40% of men married in the same age category (Jayani, 2021; Wanti et al., 2023 ). Although a global-scale campaign to end early Marriage in order to achieve gender equality and women's welfare has continued to be echoed in the last decade (Schaffnit et al., 2019; Wahidah et al., 2021), the facts show that in 2021 to 2022, early Marriage in Indonesia is still at the ultra level, where there are 65 thousand applications for marriage dispensation in 2021 and 55 thousand applications in 2022 (Ministry of PPPA, 2023) as intended in Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage which confirms that the minimum age for Marriage for men is 19 years and women 16 years (Susilo et al., 2021) which was later updated through the issuance of Law Number 16 2019. Article 7, paragraph (1) states that Marriage is only permitted for men and women who have reached the age of 19 years.

Pulling codecs is a social phenomenon familiar in Indonesia both in urban areas and remote areas of the island (Jayadi et al., 2021), where there is a lack of education and socialization regarding the urgency of higher education and postponing age marriage. Early, so that this phenomenon never reaches an endpoint (Dewi et al., 2023; Natsir et al., 2021). The rise of early marriages also occurs in Menceh Village, East Sakra District, East Lombok Regency. The phenomenon of early

marriage, or in the Sasak language, it is called *merarik kodek*, can cause conflict between the couple's families because the nature of marriage tends to be coercive. In the view of feminist theory, early marriage using the mercenary system, aka a man kidnapping the woman who will become his partner, is an act of violence against women and children, but society considers this to be normal, so this phenomenon continues to be perpetuated (Palulungan et al., 2020; Napitu et al., 2020; Dewantara et al., 2022).

Research conducted in Menceh Village, East Sakra District, East Lombok Regency shows potential for conflict, which could result in less harmonious relations between the couple's families. An informant, the perpetrator of the *codek* extraction, named Marcus Anderson (man, married at 18), stated that he kidnapped the woman when she was ready to be kidnapped. However, there was no notification to the woman's family. Four days later, the truth was revealed, namely confirmation to the woman's family by the male hamlet head to the woman's hamlet head (Jumarim, 2022; Abshor, 2019). The following process carried out by the first informant's family was *selabar/nyelabar*, namely the process of haggling over the price of the dowry (*pisuke*) to the family of his future wife. He said, "Initially, the negotiation process was quite tough, so an agreement on the dowry price was reached in quite a long time, around three weeks. During the *pisuke* handover, my

family met with my wife's family, but we were uninvolved."

Similar statements were also made regarding the dynamics that occurred in the process of stealing to a misdemeanor by the second informant (male, married at the age of 17 years), the third informant (female, married at the age of 16 years), and the fourth informant (male, married at the age of 17 years), the fifth informant (male, married at the age of 18 years), the seventh informant (female, married at the age of 16 years), the eighth informant and the ninth informant (female, married at the age of 17 years). The data provided by eight informants provides one conclusion that they were abducted or were abducted while conscious and willing. Of course, it is very clear that in the Sasak tradition, conflict also has values that are considered positive for indigenous peoples (Asyari, 2022). However, all the female informants were initially shocked and confused because it has become a tradition that is no longer an extended societal taboo. The background is like it or not, so whether they want it or not, whether they are ready or not, they will follow all the processes carefully, which are the responsibility of the family and the man (Syahrul, 2017). The sixth informant provided different information from the other informants. The sixth informant (male, married at 18) stated: "There was no tension whatsoever, after I kidnapped my wife, the process only took three days, and after two

days, we had the wedding ceremony. Maybe it is because I still have a family relationship with my wife, so our parents immediately agreed, and both accepted it."

After the selabar/nyelabar procession is complete and an agreement has been reached for the dowry money, the following process is the wedding/bekawin or marriage ceremony process, namely the core procession, which is the legal recognition that the bride and groom are legally husband and wife based on religious law, customary law, and law. The state is often also called a marriage contract (Maknun, 2013; Sugitanata et al., 2023; Machmud et al., 2020; Pane, 2020); however, as explained by regional heads in several hamlets, both partners were not given a marriage book as an administrative sanction for marrying at the same age and not permitted by law. After the wedding ceremony, a day or a week later, the bride and groom will carry out *nyongkolan*, which is the tradition of a bridal procession by the family and friends of the bride and groom to the bride's house (Jamaludin & Sugitanata, 2020; Muzadi & Solikhudin, 2022; Haq, 2017). Usually, halfway through the journey, the convoy departing from the groom's house will be greeted on the way by a convoy of the bride's family and colleagues departing from the bride's house.

Next, *bales lampak nae* becomes the closing procession of a series of *merarik* customs carried out by the Sasak tribe in

Lombok. *Bales lampak nae* is visiting the groom's family at the bride's house, bringing various types of food. *Bales lampak nae* is more exclusive than *nyongkolan*, because it is carried out like a family gathering in general and only includes the groom's nuclear family (Rejeki & Hermawati, 2020).

In Menceh Village, as explained by Mr. Kasim, who is a traditional figure in the village, for every bride and groom who get married, at least six traditional processions become an unwritten demand that must be carried out, whether it is marrying at a mature age or marrying at the age of a child. So, they do not carry out a series of traditional processions. In that case, the family is indirectly considered to be disrespecting and not preserving the customs that are the identity of the people in Menceh Village.

The next category of informants that the researchers met and interviewed were the parents or families of the three perpetrators who pulled the codec. The first informant is the uncle of the first informant who pulled the codec, the second is the mother of the seventh informant, and the third is the grandmother of the fifth informant. The three informants from the category of families involved in child marriages told different narratives. Two of them felt that their families objected and were not willing to marry at the age when their children should be focused on going to school. As explained by the grandmother of the wife of the fifth informant who committed early



marriage: "All parents want to see their children go to high school so they can be successful in the future. At first, I was shocked and did not agree when I received the news that my grandson, who was only in the second year of high school, had been kidnapped by his girlfriend, hidden somewhere. "If I could bring my grandson home, I might have done it, but that has become his choice too; I am afraid he will do something strange."

Meanwhile, the uncle of the third informant involved in child marriage said: "Yes, who would not be surprised that he was still at that age and still at school when suddenly he called and said he had run away with someone else's child? Moreover, the parents are angry; we are confused about how to act. The problem is that we also do not know where he hides someone else's child. "After family deliberation, we have no choice but to grant his wish to marry, rather than the bad things he is determined to do, so we inevitably have to agree and accept the woman."

One informant did not express any objection and accepted his son's decision to marry very young because he was married at 14; even his siblings married underage. "It is okay; that is his choice. "I was even married when I was 14; I have changed husbands several times; until now, I am only 34 years old and have 10 children." Early marriage is not a problem for the Sasak people because early marriage always prioritizes the needs of the child and the permission of the child who

wants to get married (Hamidiyanti et al., 2018).

Next, the researcher asked the three informants about the dynamics during the labor process. The first informant stated that there was an initial request from his family to the man's family, who was unable to fulfill the amount, which he did not want to mention, so they had to go through three meetings within one month until there was an agreement between both parties concerned or a dowry would be paid by the family. Men to women's families. Meanwhile, the second and third informants stated that it took three weeks with two sittings together to reach an agreement. The second informant said: "Actually, if the labor process or pisuke discussion is going on, it is just a little tension, and differences of opinion are normal, as long as it does not lead to fist fights."

The next category of informants that researchers met and interviewed were regional heads (kawil) in five hamlets with the highest rates of child marriage from year to year compared to other hamlets, namely Batu Lawang Hamlet, North Batu Lawang, Selayar Hamlet, Bagek Prie Hamlet, and Repok Bunut Hamlet. The five regional heads confirmed that child marriages in their hamlets are widespread, but cases continue to decline yearly. The most contrasting decline in child marriage cases began to occur since the publication of Law (UU) Number 16 of 2019 concerning amendments to Law Number 1 of

1974 concerning Marriage, which became a reference for regional heads to issue Regional Regulations (Perda) or Regulations. Governor (Pergub), Regent Regulations (Perbup), and even Village Regulations (Perdes).

As stated in East Lombok Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2020 concerning the Prevention of Child Marriage, Article 11 paragraph (2) reads, "The Village Government is responsible for (a) Developing a policy for preventing child marriage; (b) facilitating empowerment activities in the context of preventing child marriage; (c) coordinating with related parties in efforts to prevent child marriage." Departing from the legal basis of the East Lombok Regency Regulation Number 41 of 2020, this became the basis for the issuance of the Menceh Village Regulation concerning the Prevention of Child Marriage Article 5 paragraph (1), which reads, "The conditions for marriage as referred to in article 4 letter b for the age provisions for marriage are if the man and woman have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years," and paragraph (2) which reads, "Marriage may only be permitted for prospective brides and grooms who have reached the age limit as stipulated in the provisions of paragraph (1)".

The existence of a legal umbrella in the form of a village regulation is a prohibition for the regional heads in each hamlet not to intervene and assist in the marriage process for couples under the age of children, both according to custom and state administration,

because if the relevant parties from the district find out about this based on reports from the village, the regional head who is proven to have participated in or arranged a child's marriage is threatened with imprisonment. The enactment of this regulation is, of course, because many considerations have been made; this is because early marriage will have an impact on various negative aspects for children (Fadilah, 2021). For this reason, the five regional heads in the five hamlets that we met simultaneously stated that they were looking for safety and not to be involved in wedding processions by minors, even though they received ridicule from the community and were considered not working fully for the community. They will only help in the genuine process but want to avoid being involved in the informal process.

Apart from the written law, several regional heads, such as the Head of Dusun Montong Bunut, Kawil Dusun Selayar, and Kawil Dusun Batulawang Utara, explained that there were genuine efforts by the East Lombok Regency PPA (Women and Child Protection) service in several cases of child marriage which directly involved separating the two prospective couples who have pulled together before carrying out the marriage contract. However, these efforts still failed even though they returned to their respective homes successfully. However, after two weeks or a maximum of one month later, the two teenagers met again and ran away, leaving the

family and local community with no other choice. Apart from getting the two of them married, some things could embarrass society, especially the family.

Child marriage with any motive should not happen, be it cultural or religious motives, as happened in Kaduna state, Nigeria (Amzat, 2020; Susantin & Rijal, 2020), because it will still destroy the child's future development. Talents possessed can also have fatal consequences for the mother's health physically and psychologically (Sekarayu & Nurwati, 2021) and the child's growth and development to the point of experiencing stunting or malnutrition due to the mother's immature physical condition and not being ready to give birth (Saipudin et al., 2023).

Apart from hurting the health conditions of the families of child marriage perpetrators, conflicts that result in disharmony between the couple's families have the potential to occur, especially if the marriage is carried out using fascinating traditions, as was done by several informants of child marriage perpetrators in Menceh Village, East Sakra District, East Lombok. Apart from being caused by objections from parents, especially women, whose children marry at school age, so they have to drop out of school (Fitrianita et al., 2018), the factor of elopement without any notification can also be a trigger for conflict which leads to disharmony between family, due to forced marriages (Fatah & Kasim, 2019).

The tradition or culture of the Merarik customary system has two dimensions namely the first dimension lies in the three initial processions (kidnapping/running away the woman, besejati, and Calabar/nyelabar) which can trigger the emergence of conflict between the couple's families, The second dimension lies in the three final processions (nuptials/marriage contracts, nyongkolan, and bales lamp nae) which act as a damper or prevent conflict between the couple's families. Traditions in these three dimensions are considered to resolve conflicts about early marriage in the Sasak traditional community (Erwinsya et al., 2020).

The theory of realistic and non-realistic conflict initiated by Lewis A. Coser has strong relevance to the phenomenon of child marriage, which can potentially trigger conflict between the families of couples/potential couples that occurs in Menceh Village. In Coser's view, realistic conflict is defined as conflict that occurs due to the failure to fulfill a set of demands requested by another group or individual who generally has considerable power in one social sphere. Meanwhile, non-realistic conflict is a conflict that brings together two camps that have no social or emotional attachment, and in general, the implementation of the conflict is carried out indirectly (Tualeka, 2017).

During the implementation of the merarik tradition in Menceh Village, data from several informants showed that the potential



for realistic and non-realistic conflict occurred in the processes of kidnapping/hiding women, *besejati* (telling the family), and *selabar* (haggling over the dowry price). The potential for non-realistic conflict has automatically been patterned because the two camps previously had no relationship or business with each other. However, because part of their family has been kidnapped or taken by someone else, an emotional relationship with each other has begun. Formed. There is a realistic conflict that has the potential to occur in the *selabar* procession because there, the woman's family becomes the claimant for the woman's family. If their demands are not met with the price offered, the woman's family could radically take the prospective bride back from the man. *Selabar* has two motives: 1) a high dowry price is set solely so that the man cannot fulfill these demands so that the man will cancel the marriage; 2) a high dowry price is set as compensation or ransom from the man to the woman's parents for taking the trouble to care for their child. However, the male family is still in their wits; they will bargain and negotiate the dowry price set by the female family until an agreement is reached. The more challenging the negotiation process, the greater the potential for conflict. Because basically negotiations that are not by the mutual agreement will create prolonged conflict; therefore it is necessary for parties to give in or lower their egos in carrying out the agreement (Anas et al., 2019).

Realistic conflicts that can potentially occur in the practice of child marriage using the *Merarik* customary system in *Menceh Village* can be reduced and prevented by the customary system itself, namely in the second three stages. After haggling over the dowry price, aka *pisuke*, through the *selabar* procession, the next stage will continue with the marriage contract ceremony. The marriage contract is the first step to reducing natural conflict that could occur due to the practice of the three previous customary systems. At the time of the marriage ceremony, the father or guardian of the bride will perform the marriage vows with the groom as a sign that he has let go of responsibility for his child and transferred that responsibility, both physically and mentally, to the groom. This is an initial sign that there is no longer any tension between the couple's families, as happened in the three initial processes that have been completed. All processes certainly have stages that are considered to reduce conflict in child marriages; this process is considered to be a solution to overcoming disharmony in early childhood marriages (Yulianti, 2010).

In the next stage, *nyongkolan* and *bales lampak nae* become symbols of welcome and welcome by the women to the men because they have legally become part of the family. Thus, when *bales lampak nae* brings together two nuclear families in the woman's family home in a warm family atmosphere, it is a sign that potential conflicts that arise during the

three initial processes of Sasak wedding customs have been successfully suppressed and prevented by the final three processes of Sasak wedding customs so that disharmony between the couple's families does not occur. Traditions can go hand in hand with the needs of society if they pay attention to the positive value aspects of the tradition it self (Rizaldi & Qodariyah, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The Sasak traditional marriage system, known as merarik, has triggered potential conflict between the couple's families. This Sasak wedding tradition causes the potential for realistic and non-realistic conflict because it occurs at school age and is forced. However, on the other hand, the Merarik customary system also reduces and prevents conflicts that can result in family disharmony. This research found that the Sasak traditional marriage system could be one solution to overcoming the problem of disharmony in the marriage system. The problem in the research is that even though the world has entered the modern era, indigenous peoples still preserve the practice of child marriage using the merarik system, which has become a culture or tradition passed down from generation to generation on the island of Lombok. Indigenous peoples cannot stop this tradition. However, traditional families can pay attention to their children's readiness before carrying out

the traditional Sasak tradition of getting married.

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