

The Construction of Traumatic Marriage Reality in Early Adults in Medan City Post-Parental Divorce in the Context of Interpersonal Communication

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Abstract

This study analyzes the construction of traumatic marriage reality in early adulthood in Medan City following parental divorce, focusing on intrapersonal communication. The research also explores the forms of traumatic marriage experiences in this context. The study employs the theories of reality construction, family communication, intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, reasoned action, social judgment, trauma, marriage, divorce, and early adulthood. Using a constructivist paradigm and qualitative descriptive method, the study involved five informants: two aged 24, two aged 25, and one aged 19. The results reveal that four informants construct marriage as complex, burdensome, and not a life goal, while one informant shifted from subjective to objective reality, viewing marriage as a source of happiness and a life goal. Three informants experienced complex marriage trauma, while two experienced simple trauma. Interestingly, not all informants with negative marriage constructions experienced complex trauma. Specifically, informants NA, AAP, and AN had negative constructions with complex trauma; informant VWY had negative constructions with simple trauma; and informant HS had a positive construction with simple trauma. This study highlights the diverse ways early adults in Medan City construct and experience the reality of marriage after parental divorce.

Keywords

Reality Construction, Traumatic Marriage, Early Adulthood Interpersonal Communication

INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest unit of social order, led by the head of the family and typically composed of a husband, wife, and possibly children. It forms the foundation of social relationships, with members often depending on each other. The family unit originates from marriage, a union between a man and a woman, typically seen as a key to happiness. Humans naturally seek companionship and aim to build a harmonious household that provides comfort, affection, and inner peace.

For many, marriage is an essential life goal and is viewed as the starting point of human civilization. In Indonesia, marriage is highly valued, with the Central Statistics Agency reporting in 2021 that married individuals have the highest happiness index at 71.58%. Marriage is not only a personal aspiration but also a societal expectation, reinforced by religion and state laws, particularly in Islam, where marriage is considered sacred.

However, not everyone constructs marriage as a pathway to happiness. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann suggest that each individual has a unique understanding of reality and knowledge. For those who have experienced parental divorce, the reality of marriage can be daunting and traumatic. Divorce often impacts children psychologically, leading to long-term emotional issues that shape their views on marriage. Research indicates that children of divorced parents may have less confidence in intimate relationships and a heightened fear of marriage.



Trauma from parental divorce often surfaces in intrapersonal communication, where individuals internally reflect on their fears and concerns. This internal dialogue can lead to doubts about marriage, particularly among early adults who are at a stage where societal expectations emphasize finding a life partner and starting a family. This study examines how early adults in Medan City, whose parents have divorced, construct the reality of marriage in the context of intrapersonal communication.

Initial observations were conducted on three young adults in Medan City with divorced parents. The first informant, NA, a 24-year-old woman, views marriage with fear due to her parents' divorce when she was 11. NA struggles with trust issues and fears becoming a single parent, which has made her uninterested in marriage.

The second informant, FS, a 24-year-old man, experienced his parents' divorce at age 7. FS associates marriage with complexity and trauma, fearing that his marriage might fail like his parents'. He is deeply uncomfortable discussing marriage.

The third informant, AAP, a 25-year-old man, was abandoned by both parents at age 4 and raised in a boarding school. AAP views marriage as challenging and is hesitant to marry due to his parents' divorce. Despite being open to relationships, AAP fears his partner's family might not accept him due to his family background.

This study highlights the diverse ways early adults with divorced parents construct the reality of marriage, often viewing it with fear and skepticism. These findings contribute to understanding the impact of parental divorce on children's perceptions of marriage and provide valuable insights for further research and societal awareness.

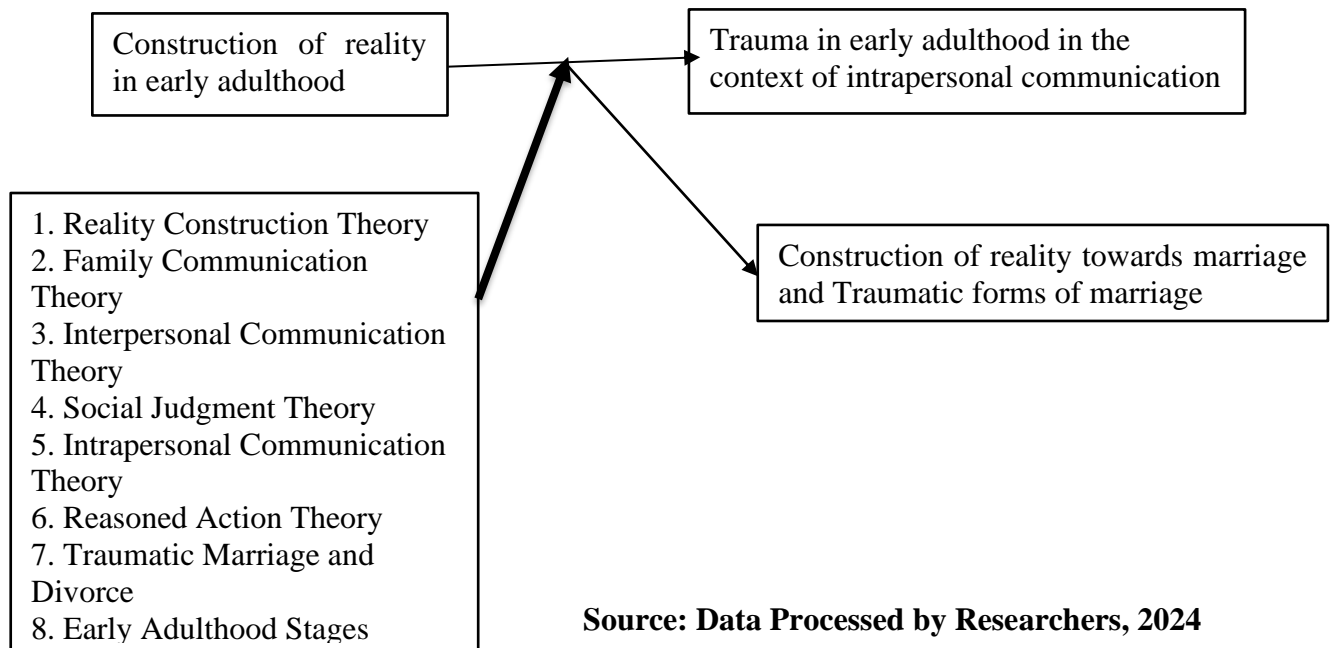
METHOD

Research Paradigm

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach. The constructivist model posits that reality is a product of human construction, making it essential for exploring complex, subjective experiences such as the construction of reality and traumatic marriage. The constructivist paradigm contrasts with approaches that emphasize observation and objectivity in understanding reality or science (Siregar, 2021: 8).

In examining how early adults construct the reality of marriage after experiencing parental divorce, a deeper exploration is necessary, as these realities are shaped by individual perceptions and experiences. The constructivist paradigm is well-suited to qualitative research, which is descriptive, analytical, comparative, and meaning-oriented. Data in this approach can be gathered through methods such as observation and document analysis, aligning with the constructivist belief that reality is formed through human interpretation and interaction.

Framework



Research Methods

Qualitative research allows researchers to identify issues from the researcher's perspective, and understand the meaning and interpretation of behavior, events or objects (In Haryono, 2020: 36). This study examines the construction of reality and traumatic marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce, which means that it will be seen how the construction of marriage with Peter L. Berger's theory goes through three stages, namely, externalization, objectivation and internalization. In addition, it also looks at how early adult families communicate with their parents, to analyze the relationship and communication between the informant and his mother and father. Will this communication also later become a factor that strengthens the formation of the construction of the reality of marriage and traumatic marriage in early adulthood. Therefore, qualitative research is considered to meet the needs of research where the data obtained is obtained directly from interviews and dialogue with informants so that the data is more accurate and original (Siregar, 2021: 48).

Study Aspects

This study examines the construction of reality and traumatic marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce in Medan City. The study aspects used as references in this study are as follows:

1. Aspects of the study on how the construction of the reality of marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce in Medan City is seen based on the breadth and depth of information on the meaning of marriage for informants, which is seen through externalization, objectification and internalization.
2. Aspects of the study on the form of traumatic marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce in Medan City, which is also seen based on simple trauma and complex trauma,



which is also followed by seeing how divorce ultimately creates trauma in marriage, trauma interferes with daily activities, trauma makes you not want to get married.

Subjects and Objects of Research

The subjects in this study were viewed based on the individual's ability to be interviewed and asked to provide information and facts about the object being studied. Moleong (2017:132). The informants in this study were early adults whose parents were divorced, with the following criteria:

1. Early adults in Medan City aged 18-40 years
2. Early adults in Medan City who are not married
3. Early adults in Medan City whose parents are divorced and live

Object of research

Sugiyono also explained that qualitative research is conducted on natural objects. Natural objects are objects that develop as they are, are not manipulated by researchers and the presence of researchers does not greatly affect the dynamics of the object. The object of this study is the Construction of reality and traumatic marriage in early adulthood after divorce in the context of intrapersonal communication. Researchers will provide questions through in-depth interviews related to the objects studied with the aim of obtaining answers to the problems that are the basis of the research.

Data collection technique

The collected data must also be objective and not biased (Kholil, 2016: 96). In this study, data collection techniques were used by conducting interviews, observations, and documentation.

1. Interview

The interview process is carried out directly or face to face so that researchers obtain information delivered verbally and nonverbally. Several things asked to informants are related to the focus of the study, namely the construction of reality and trauma to marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce in Medan City which is seen based on the breadth and depth of information such as how the construction of the reality of marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce will be seen from 3 moments of reality construction theory, namely externalization, objectification, and internalization. Then regarding trauma about marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce which is seen based on the breadth and depth of information regarding the factors that cause trauma.

2. Observation

Observation plays a very important role. A researcher must make observations and listen carefully to even the smallest details from the informant (Moleong, 2017: 164). The researcher did this by observing how the story line of the informant's divorce, the meaning of marriage for the informant, what caused the informant to be traumatized. So that later it

will be seen how the construction of reality and traumatic marriage in early adulthood after the parents' divorce.

3. Documentation

This research is also conducted by utilizing documents related to notes, photos or works of someone related to the research. Examples of documentation that can be used such as diaries, biographies, photos, motion pictures, artwork, handicrafts and so on.

Data analysis technique

Data analysis in qualitative research has been carried out during the interview process, where researchers can reconfirm a question if the question does not provide enough clear information. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (in Sugiyono, 2019: 246-253). There are several activities in analyzing data according to Miles, Huberman and Saldana, namely:

1. Data condensation

Data condensation is the activity of summarizing, sorting or grouping data that has been collected so that the data does not pile up.

2. Data presentation (data display)

The condensed data will then be presented. In research with a qualitative approach, the data presentation is usually in the form of narrative text. Data presentation is also done with matrices, graphs, tables, models and also images that make it easier for readers to understand the data presented.

3. Drawing conclusions / data verification

Drawing conclusions has been done from the beginning but is still temporary and will change if no data is found that can prove the initial conclusion. Conclusions can answer the focus of the research.

The data validity

Checking technique used is data triangulation. Data triangulation is a data checking technique that uses various data sources such as documents, archives, interview results, observation results, or also by interviewing more than one object that is considered to have a different point of view. Source triangulation is carried out on people who understand the problem to be studied and credible sources of information. Based on these criteria, the following informants will be used as source triangulation in this study, namely:

1. Friends of early adults whose parents are divorced
2. Psychologists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traumatic Reality Construction of Marriage in Early Adulthood in Medan City After Parental Divorce in the Context of Intrapersonal Communication

According to the theory of reality construction, individuals interpret and act according to the conceptual categories in their minds. Reality does not present itself in its



raw form but is filtered through the individual's own way of seeing things. Reality in social life is different from physical reality. Natural reality (mountains, trees, and so on) is something natural. For example, mountains are natural realities, but their meanings vary. For climbers, mountains have the meaning of a challenge. Rainbows are natural realities, but their social meanings vary (Berger, 2015). The process of forming social reality is explained through the development of assumptions from a sociological perspective which states that social reality is formed through actions, as well as types of social interactions such as social interactions between individuals or between groups of individuals that create a reality that is owned and experienced together subjectively and continuously (Bungin, 2013). In the construction of reality there are 3 ongoing dialectical processes, which consist of three moments, namely externalization, objectivity, and internalization (Tamburaka, 2012:77-78).

In this study, the construction of the traumatic reality of marriage in early adulthood after parental divorce was formed through three dialectical processes. In this externalization stage, informants NA, AAP, HS, AN and VWY showed how they accepted and interpreted the values and meaning of marriage taught by the people around them. All the people around the informants continued to provide good values and considered that marriage was something that should be aimed for, even though NA's parents had a negative attitude about marriage but still told NA to get married. The words and attitudes of others towards marriage also shaped the informants' construction of reality regarding marriage. The five informants also agreed with the survey results stating that in Indonesia, married people are the happiest people. In addition, the five informants also revealed the reality of marriage that they encountered in their environment. All informants said that people around the informants constructed the reality of marriage negatively and positively. However, more positively, by constructing marriage as a happiness, a life goal, something that must be expedited. Informants try to externalize themselves to the people around them and try to follow and adapt to the construction of reality in their environment, then become part of their understanding and awareness of marriage. Through this externalization process, informants align the values, meanings, and constructions of the reality of marriage that they have with the social environment around them. This is in line with the theory of Berger and Luckmann (2018) which states that externalization is a moment when individuals adjust to the socio-cultural world.

The objectification stage occurs when informants begin to accept advice and views from others regarding marriage. Informants NA, AAP, HS, AN, and VWY revealed that they listened to stories and advice from friends, family, and lecturers regarding the meaning and value of marriage. Although some informants had traumatic experiences related to their parents' marriage, they still accepted the construction of the reality of marriage of those around them, who constructed marriage as something happy. Informants revealed that their responses were neutral, normal, and listening. For marriage advice given by people around the informants, on average they also gave good advice about marriage. Informants NA, AAP, HS, AN and VWY admitted that the advice given by people around the informants was indeed true, especially if the advice was given by their parents, which is in line with the theory of family communication according to Verderber (in Budyatna and Ganiem, 2011:

169-17) that family communication at least contributes to the formation of self-concept. In this case, they hope to have a positive self-concept towards marriage, which will influence the construction of the reality of marriage.

At this stage, interpersonal communication also occurs, interpersonal communication is the process of conveying certain information, thoughts and attitudes between two or more people so that there is a change in the message between the interlocutor and the communicator in order to achieve mutual understanding of the problems being discussed, which in turn will lead to changes in behavior (Kurniawati, 2016:40). However, even so, the informant still adjusts the existing reality to the traumatic reality they have. The final stage is internalization, at this stage the direct understanding or interpretation of an objective event as a subjective expression of meaning. It does not matter whether the subjective of others is in accordance with the subjective of the individual. In the process of the internalization stage, only one informant, namely HS, initially viewed marriage negatively but then interpreted it more positively, over time and considered it a life lesson. HS let go of the reality of marriage that was frightening for him, the change in the construction of reality occurred because of his own wishes. In line with the theory of Reasoned Action put forward by Ajzen and Fishbein (in Littlejohn and Foss, 2014: 114), which explains that an individual's intention or desire to carry out a certain action is determined by his attitude towards the action itself and beliefs about how others want the individual to act.

Meanwhile, for Informants NA, AAP, AN and VWY tend to view marriage negatively, where they construct marriage as something uncertain, full of risk, something complicated, and not the main goal of life. The construction of NA, AAP, AN and VWY's marriages is in line with the results of research conducted by Aryo and Legowo (2022) with the title of research on the construction of broken home students in Surabaya in realizing their future as a family. After going through three dialectical processes of construction, the results were also obtained stating that students who have broken homes also have fears about going through the process of marriage and building a family. They assume that they do not have the courage to go to the level of marriage, although some have partners, but are still hesitant and not sure about going to the level of marriage like informant VWY. Then it was also found that they think that marriage or forming a family is a complicated journey that requires a lot of preparation and consideration.

Informants NA and AAP also stated that the lack of positive marriage examples around the informant made the informant not yet sure about happiness in marriage. This is in line with Holman's theory regarding marriage readiness, that one of the factors that influences someone to be ready to marry is the background factor. Each individual greatly influences a person's readiness to marry because they experience various things that they see with their own eyes, such as divorce cases (in Witasari, 2022:29).

Informants NA, AAP, AN and VWY also said that the traumatic reality of marriage in the informant was also due to the fear that their marriage would end in divorce like their parents' marriage. As stated by psychology Reynaldi, that in early adulthood whose parents are divorced, most of them are worried that they will repeat the same pattern in their relationship. They internalize their parents' negative experiences and feel that the marriage



is unstable or at high risk of failure. After three dialectical moments of reality construction in informants NA, AAP, HS, AN, and VWY, the informants finally rejected the reality of marriage in society, especially the informant's environment, only HS followed the objective reality construction in society which considers marriage to be something happy and the purpose of life. In the theory of social judgment put forward by Sherif (in Nurdin, 2020: 172-173), it can be seen that what was done by informants NA, AAP, AN and VWY was a rejection (latitude of rejection), because the involvement of the informant's ego was low because the message conveyed did not match the informant's thoughts. Only informant HS gave acceptance (latitude of acceptance) of high ego involvement, which means that the message conveyed was actually in accordance with the mindset of informant HS.

In the context of early adulthood, according to Havighurst (in Sumanto, 2014: 96) said that there are indeed various problems experienced by early adulthood, one of which is the problem of not getting married and getting married late, which is in accordance with informants NA, AAP, AN and VWY experienced that they did not want to rush into getting married. In addition, in early adulthood according to Hurlock, there are several reasons that cause someone not to marry or take a long time, namely the factor of disappointment because their family is not happy. In this case, early adulthood also constructs the reality of marriage as something that is not important and not something that must be rushed, the construction of the traumatic reality of marriage can affect the psychological and social development of individuals, especially in terms of the formation of identity, relationships, and careers (Santrock, 2018).

Traumatic Forms of Marriage in Early Adulthood in Medan City After Parental Divorce in the Context of Intrapersonal Communication

The DSM-III-R manual defines a traumatic event as an event that is beyond the scope of ordinary human experience and would be extremely distressing for almost anyone (in North, Suris and Smith, 2016:200). Simple trauma is the result of a frightening event, Type I trauma includes complete and detailed memories, "signs," and misperceptions. While complex trauma arises from repeated traumatic events. such as isolation, weakened ability to form relationships, self-destructive behavior, and other psychological problems. (Terr, 2003).

Based on the results of interviews with the five informants NA, AAP, HS, AN, and VWY, it can be seen that they experienced traumatic marriages that stemmed from their parents' divorce. However, the intensity and impact of the trauma varied for each informant. Informants who experienced complex trauma tended to view marriage as something unimportant, and full of risks, weakening the ability to form relationships.

Informants NA, AAP, and AN were informants who experienced complex trauma. The informants admitted to being lazy, having feelings of fear and doubt about marriage. Informants NA and AAP have not dated until now, the last time they dated was in high school. NA even feels skeptical about men, does not believe that the man will be loyal and not leave her. This statement is similar to the results of research conducted by Mufidah and Dewi (2022). As a result of the divorce of the informant's parents, it finally had a long-term

traumatic impact, especially related to the romantic relationships experienced by the subject as an adult. with the title "Life History Study of Adult Women Who Experienced Parental Divorce Due to Infidelity NA also admitted that it was more important for NA to find work, while for AAP it was more important to work. The informant tried to avoid being in a relationship because he was hurt by the experience of his parents' divorce. As also conveyed by psychology Reynaldi, people who are traumatized by marriage may have difficulty in establishing new relationships such as dating, because they find it difficult to trust others. The trauma that occurs in the informant due to parental divorce can hinder the achievement of these developmental tasks, especially in terms of forming romantic relationships and marriage.

Informant AN is not lazy to date but just like NA, AN finds it difficult to trust others, plus it is also difficult to socialize. As according to Leslie (in Siburian et al., 2023) children who are traumatized by divorce find it difficult to socialize, these children often withdraw from socializing because they feel inferior. The three informants also said that they had marital trauma because they were afraid that their parents' divorce would happen again in their family later. Meanwhile, informants who experienced type I trauma were not afraid to have relationships and did not lose trust in others, such as informants HS and VWY. Informant HS also had a more positive construction of marital reality towards marriage, but there were still concerns regarding the possibility of a repeat of the divorce experience, as in other informants. Meanwhile, informant VWY did not find it difficult to trust others and was not lazy to date, but the traumatic marriage in VWY still influenced the construction of marital reality. VWY constructed marriage as something complicated and scary. VWY also felt the same way, namely the fear that VWY would later divorce like her parents.

From all the informants' answers, the results of this study also showed that all informants who experienced complex trauma stated that they experienced traumatic marriages, they were afraid that their parents' divorce would happen again to them. Psychology Reynaldi also said that many young people whose parents are divorced are afraid that their marriage will end in divorce or end unhappily just like their parents. The results of this study are the same as the results of a study conducted by Aprianti (2023), entitled Trauma of Marriage of Young Women from Divorced Families. The results of the study showed that the three informants in the study had trauma in marriage because they were afraid of being abandoned by their partners, afraid that divorce would happen again in their families, afraid of domestic violence and afraid that their partner's family would not accept the background of the divorced family. All informants also admitted that even though they experienced complex trauma, they still wanted to get married, it was just not in a hurry, or it was not their main goal and purpose in life.

According to Leslie (in Siburian et al., 2023), the trauma experienced by children due to parental divorce can make children hate their parents. Children still cannot understand and accept what is really happening. This happened to informants AAP and VWY. AAP said that AAP hates his father, Like his early adult friends said that AAP's relationship with his father was not good, like he hated them and didn't want to meet them. While VWY never got along with his mother. The trauma that occurred in the informant due to parental divorce



can hinder the achievement of developmental tasks, especially in terms of forming romantic relationships and marriage. In the context of early adulthood, traumatic marriage can affect the psychological and social development of individuals, especially in terms of forming identity, relationships, and careers (Santrock, 2018). In intrapersonal communication, traumatic experiences involve the stages of intrapersonal communication of sensation, perception, memory and thinking (Rakhmat, 2018:60). Traumatic marriage in early adults whose parents are divorced can trigger negative self-talk related to marriage and interpersonal relationships (Berger & Paul, 2008; Hoemann et al., 2020). Individuals tend to criticize and doubt their ability to build healthy and lasting relationships.

Research Novelty

After presenting the research results that the researcher has studied, the researcher looks at the research results that are the findings in this study. Therefore, the researcher can obtain differences so that it becomes the novelty of this study with previous similar studies that have been conducted by previous researchers. Among the similarities in the theories used in previous similar studies, there are also differences that of course become innovations in the research that the researcher has conducted quite significantly, because the researcher believes that novelty or novelty in scientific research is absolute. This novelty is the emphasis on the research subject where this study not only analyzes the construction of the reality of marriage but also the construction of the traumatic reality of marriage in the context of intrapersonal communication in early adults whose parents are divorced.

Research on the construction of the traumatic reality of marriage in early adults whose parents are divorced in the context of intrapersonal communication has never used this as research material. Only the subject or object is the same but no one combines the two, such as in the study of Aprianti (2023) entitled "Marriage Trauma of Adolescent Girls from Divorced Families", this study only examines the trauma of marriage and its subjects in adolescents. Furthermore, in Praptiningsih's (2016) research entitled "Construction of the Reality of Women Remarriage Actors After Divorce in Jakarta and Bandung", this study only examines the construction of the reality of marriage with female subjects of remarriage, and does not examine the trauma of marriage. Furthermore, in Aulia, Rifayanti, Putri's (2021) research entitled "Perception of Marriage According to Early Adult Women Whose Parents Are Divorced", this study only examines the perception of marriage according to early adults whose parents are divorced, not the construction of the traumatic reality of marriage in early adults whose parents are divorced. In addition, as far as researchers have looked for previous research, there has been no research on the construction of the traumatic reality of marriage in early adults whose parents are divorced in Medan City.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of the research, the researcher concluded in accordance with the objectives of the research as follows:

1. Parental divorce tends to form a negative construction of marital reality in informants. Informants NA, AAP, AN and VWY still construct marriage as something complicated,

- heavy, skeptical and not something that should be rushed. Meanwhile, HS is able to release the construction of subjective reality, namely trauma, fear into objective reality.
2. Trauma experienced by individuals can vary, from severe trauma to mild trauma. Informants NA, AAP and AN experienced severe trauma and informants HS and VWY experienced mild trauma. However, despite experiencing simple trauma, informant HS alone constructs marriage as something happy and a life goal. Meanwhile, VWY still constructs marriage as something complicated and not something that should be rushed. However, all informants are also afraid that their marriage will fail like their parents' marriage.
 3. Not all informants who have a negative construction of marital reality have complex trauma, like informant VWY. This is what makes three different incidents, including: 1) Informants who have negative constructions and experience complex trauma, namely NA, AAP and AN. 2) Informants who have negative constructions and 3) experience simple trauma, namely VWY and Informants who have positive constructions and experience simple trauma, namely HS.

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