

THE ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS IN PREVENTING EARLY MARRIAGE IN JAWAI DISTRICT, SAMBAS REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the role of the Religious Affairs Office of Jawai Subdistrict in preventing early marriage. It examines the influencing factors, as well as obstacles and solutions in preventing early marriage. The study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results show that the role of KUA Jawai Subdistrict is not yet optimal. Internal constraints include lack of facilities, limited budget, and human resource shortages, while external constraints involve low public awareness. The study suggests social media use and increased legal awareness campaigns as key strategies.

Keywords: Early Marriage; Religious Affairs Office; Roles

A. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a sacred covenant between a man and a woman that is legally recognized by the state. The purpose of marriage is to live together and have an eternal relationship. Marriage is a sacred thing that unites a man and a woman by making a contract or agreement to bind themselves in a legal bond both physically and spiritually and to allow sexual relations between the two parties (husband and wife) to realize a happy family life that includes love and peace in ways that are approved by Allah SWT, Soemiaty (2008) in (Restika & Aspin, 2023:544)

Early marriage is a marriage carried out by men and women who are under the age of majority, which according to Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage, in Chapter II article 7 paragraph (1) it is stated that the minimum age limit for marriage for women is the same as the minimum age limit for marriage for men, namely 19 (nineteen) years. Early marriage is a violation

of the law. Early marriage is not a new phenomenon, either in Indonesia or in other countries (Yana & Rohani, 2022:27).

Table1 Number of early marriages in 2022, 2023 and 2024 in Jawai District, Sambas Regency

No.	Year	Number of Men (person)	Number of Women (person)	Total (person)
1.	2022	3	12	15
2.	2023	1	16	17
3.	2024	7	20	27

*Data source*Jawai District Religious Affairs Office, 2025

Based on this data, the rate of early marriage in Jawai District remains high. Early marriage is a social phenomenon that remains widespread in Jawai District. In Jawai District itself, based on data from the local KUA, applications for marriage dispensation for minors have increased

from year to year, which indicates that the practice of early marriage is still a social problem that requires serious attention.

In analyzing this phenomenon, this study uses the role theory proposed by Zubaedi (2013), which divides the role of an individual or institution into three main indicators: motivator, communicator, and facilitator. These three indicators serve as a reference in analyzing the extent to which the Jawai District Religious Affairs Office (KUA) plays a role in preventing early marriage in the community. According to Zubaedi, the role of motivator reflects the ability of an individual or institution to provide encouragement and encouragement to the community to make changes for the better. In the context of this research, the KUA is expected to be able to act as a driving force in increasing public awareness of the negative impacts of early marriage. As a motivator, the KUA has a responsibility to instill moral and spiritual values in the community through counseling and marriage guidance activities. These activities are expected to change the perspective of the community who still consider early marriage to be normal. Zubaedi (2013) emphasized that motivators must also be able to provide inspiration and role models for the community. In this case, KUA officials are required to be role models in implementing religious and legal values, so that the messages conveyed are well received by the community. In addition to motivating, Zubaedi's theory also positions institutions as communicators. The role of a communicator implies the ability to effectively

convey messages, information, and policies to the public. In this study, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) plays a role in conveying information regarding marriage regulations stipulated in Law Number 16 of 2019. As a communicator, the KUA must ensure that the messages delivered are not only informative but also persuasive. This means that the communication must be able to change public behavior, making them more aware of the importance of age and mental readiness in marriage.

This research is novel because it focuses on the role of the Jawai District Religious Affairs Office in preventing early marriage through marriage guidance and community outreach activities through non-civil servant religious instructors in villages, directly reaching the community through non-formal activities. This differs from previous research, which focused more on the role of the KUA in formal activities carried out by KUA employees in preventing early marriage, such as administrative services and outreach to educational institutions.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the role of the Office of Religious Affairs in preventing early marriage. This approach was chosen because it comprehensively describes the implementation process, factors, and emerging obstacles that influence the role of the Office of Religious Affairs in preventing early marriage. The study was conducted in a natural setting, with the researcher

acting as the primary instrument in data collection and analysis, directly observing conditions in the field and interacting with relevant informants.

The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling, taking into account the direct involvement of those who are members of the community who are married under the age of 19. Informants consisted of the Head of the KUA, Penghulu, Functional Counselors, Couples who are married under the age of 19 and school youth. Data collection techniques included field observations to see the implementation of activities directly, semi-structured interviews to dig up in-depth information, and documentation studies of various official documents such as Laws and Regulations of the Minister of Religious Affairs.

The data obtained were analyzed interactively using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction was carried out to filter important information relevant to the research focus, then presented in the form of a narrative description that facilitates interpretation, and finally verified to ensure the validity of the findings. To maintain data validity, this study also applied source and method triangulation techniques, by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain an objective and accurate picture. With this approach, the study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the role of the Office of Religious Affairs in preventing early marriage in

Jawai District and contribute to future policy improvements.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of the Office of Religious Affairs in Preventing Early Marriage is an effort to reduce the number of early marriages in Jawai District. According to data from the Jawai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), the number of early marriages continues to increase annually. The KUA's role in preventing early marriage is crucial. In the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 637 of 2024 concerning the Scope of Activities of Functional Positions of Registrars and Islamic Religious Instructors, the duties of Islamic religious instructors, including functional instructors at the KUA, include guidance, counseling, and development activities in the community which implicitly include prevention efforts. Early marriage through religious education and counseling. More specifically, functional Islamic religious counselors at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) play a role in providing guidance on harmonious and healthy families, which includes fostering harmonious and healthy households.

In this context, counselors play an active role in providing counseling and education to the community regarding the importance of marriage at an appropriate age and the negative impacts of early marriage, thereby functionally contributing to the prevention of early marriage. Therefore, although preventing early marriage is not explicitly mentioned in the decree on counselor duties, such prevention is part of the counseling and family

development duties that fall within the scope of the work of functional counselors at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA).

The Role of Motivators In its implementation, the Jawai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) implements various motivational and developmental programs, including marriage guidance and counseling. These programs serve as an educational tool that not only provides knowledge about marriage law and ethics but also instills awareness of the importance of mental, physical, and economic preparation before marriage. These activities serve as a preventative measure to reduce the number of early marriages in the community.

The role of communicators in preventing early marriage through various effective and adaptive communication strategies. The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) provides information on the minimum marriage age limit according to Law Number 16 of 2019 directly to prospective brides and grooms during administrative registration, through marriage guidance and premarital counseling. This face-to-face communication approach allows officers to provide clear, persuasive, and tailored explanations tailored to the circumstances of the prospective bride and groom. Furthermore, the KUA utilizes social media such as Facebook as a modern means of outreach to reach a wider audience, especially young people. However, outreach activities in schools have not yet been carried out, leaving a gap in direct education for adolescents. The KUA also involves religious leaders, non-civil servant religious instructors, and village amils as partners

in conveying messages about preventing early marriage at the village level through religious study and community outreach activities. To address differences in community education levels, the KUA uses an adaptive communication approach, using language that is easy to understand and explanations tailored to the educational background of the target group. Overall, the role of the Jawai District Office of Religious Affairs as a communicator is reflected in educational, persuasive, and collaborative efforts through direct communication, the use of digital media, and the involvement of community leaders to create legal and social awareness in preventing early marriage.

The role of the KUA facilitator is to provide consultation space and services for the community and facilitate collaboration with Community Health Centers (Puskesmas) and Family Planning Centers (Balai KB) in implementing marriage guidance activities. This cross-sector collaboration strengthens public education about the health, social, and economic risks of early marriage. Furthermore, the KUA has innovated by providing online consultation services to expand public access to marriage guidance. Overall, the KUA of Jawai District has played an active and consistent role in carrying out its community guidance function through an educational, persuasive, collaborative, and adaptive approach, thus making a significant contribution to reducing the number of early marriages in its region.

Factors Influencing Early Marriage in Jawai District: It can be concluded that the phenomenon of early marriage is a complex social problem influenced by various interrelated factors. The three main factors identified in this study are premarital pregnancy, self-determination, and peer influence.

Premarital pregnancy is the most dominant factor contributing to early marriage. The high number of premarital relationships among teenagers leads to unwanted pregnancies, which ultimately force young couples to marry to maintain family honor and social status. This situation often places parents in a dilemma between maintaining family dignity and complying with legal provisions regarding the age of marriage. Premarital pregnancy also demonstrates the weakness of adolescent moral education and reproductive knowledge, as well as a lack of supervision from families and educational institutions.

The second factor is self-determination, indicating that some teenagers choose to marry young based on personal decision, not pressure from others. They feel ready to start a family even though they are not yet psychologically and financially mature. This phenomenon indicates a misconception about marriage readiness, often influenced by romanticism, a desire for independence, or an escape from family conflict. Parents, in this case, tend to give their children the freedom to make their own marriage decisions, without providing guidance and careful consideration of the long-term consequences.

The third factor is peer influence, where the social environment provides a strong social push for adolescents' decisions to marry young. During adolescence, individuals are highly susceptible to peer influence and tend to imitate the behavior of their peers. Seeing friends marry young often creates the perception that marrying as a teenager is normal and even desirable. This influence reinforces adolescents' motivation to make similar decisions without considering their own readiness and the potential future consequences.

Overall, these three factors are interconnected and form a social pattern that reinforces the practice of early marriage in Jawai District. This phenomenon indicates that the problem of early marriage is not caused by a single factor, but rather the result of an interaction between internal factors (such as adolescents' desires and emotions) and external factors (such as social norms, environmental pressure, and lack of family control). Therefore, efforts to address early marriage must be carried out comprehensively and collaboratively, involving the active roles of families, educational institutions, community leaders, and government agencies. Education on reproductive health, strengthening moral and religious values, and social supervision need to be strengthened so that adolescents can understand the meaning and responsibilities of marriage more maturely. Thus, it is hoped that the number of early marriages in Jawai District can be reduced and the younger generation will have better opportunities to grow, learn, and achieve a more prosperous future.

Obstacles and solutions to preventing early marriage are interconnected and constitute a major impediment to the implementation of programs and policies aimed at reducing the number of early marriages in the region. However, the Jawai District Religious Affairs Office has sought to find various strategic solutions to address these obstacles to ensure more effective and sustainable early marriage prevention efforts.

The most prominent internal obstacle is budget constraints. The Jawai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) does not yet have a dedicated funding allocation for early marriage prevention activities, such as counseling, marriage guidance, and outreach to villages. This limitation directly impacts program implementation in the field, as all operational activities are highly dependent on budget support. The limited operational funds also make it difficult for the KUA to expand its educational outreach to the community on a regular and comprehensive basis. This internal obstacle reflects the still-low level of structural support and government policies for strengthening the KUA's role as an implementing agency in child protection and early marriage prevention.

Meanwhile, external obstacles faced by the KUA are the lack of public awareness and understanding of the Marriage Law, particularly regarding changes to the marriage age limit according to Law Number 16 of 2019. Most residents of Jawai District still adhere to the old rules in Law Number 1 of 1974 which allows women to marry at the age of 16. This low level of legal understanding is caused by the lack of direct

socialization and education carried out in the community, so that many still consider that marriage under the age of 19 is normal and legal. This condition is further exacerbated by the influence of old cultures and customs that are deeply rooted in the social life of the community.

Facing these various obstacles, the Jawai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) has sought innovative and adaptive solutions. To overcome internal obstacles, the KUA utilizes social media as a digital outreach and education platform on the dangers and negative impacts of early marriage. This strategy is considered effective because it can reach a wider audience without requiring significant costs. Through digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, the KUA can disseminate information in the form of infographics, educational videos, and interactive content that attracts the public, especially the younger generation. This use of technology is a smart step in offsetting budget constraints while strengthening the KUA's role in the era of digital information.

To address external barriers, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) implemented a strategy of direct outreach and legal counseling to the public regarding Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning the minimum age for marriage. This outreach activity not only focused on explaining the legal aspects but also emphasized the importance of physical, mental, social, and economic readiness in building a household. The education provided highlighted the negative impacts of early marriage on reproductive health, education, and family welfare, with the hope of broadening the public's

perspective so that they no longer view early marriage as a solution to social problems.

Overall, the research results indicate that the success of efforts to prevent early marriage in Jawai District depends not only on existing regulations and policies, but also on the synergy between government support, the active role of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), public awareness, and the use of information technology. Increased budget allocations, strengthened cross-sectoral collaboration (such as schools, social institutions, and religious leaders), and training for KUA officers are needed to improve their capacity to provide more effective counseling. With a holistic, adaptive, and sustainable approach, efforts to prevent early marriage are expected to produce significant results in creating a healthy, educated, and independent young generation.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings on the role of the Office of Religious Affairs in preventing early marriage in Jawai District, it can be concluded that the Office of Religious Affairs plays a crucial and strategic role in reducing the number of early marriages by acting as a motivator, communicator, and facilitator. These three roles complement each other in building public awareness, particularly among adolescents and prospective brides and grooms, so that they understand the importance of age, mental, and social readiness before entering marriage.

Research also shows that early marriage in Jawai District is influenced by three main factors:

premarital pregnancy, adolescents' own volition, and peer influence. In carrying out its role, the Jawai District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) also faces several obstacles, both internal and external. To overcome these obstacles, the KUA has implemented several adaptive and innovative solutions utilizing social media and direct community outreach.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the role of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in preventing early marriage in Jawai District has been successful, although structural and social challenges remain. Successful prevention of early marriage requires support from various parties, not only the KUA as the primary implementer, but also government agencies, educational institutions, religious leaders, and the wider community.

Therefore, the researcher recommends that the KUA of Jawai District increase cross-agency collaboration with institutions such as the Education Office, Community Health Centers, and the Women's Empowerment Office to carry out joint outreach activities, as well as increase routine outreach to schools and villages to improve legal literacy and public awareness regarding the minimum age for marriage. With this collaborative, educational, and sustainable strategy, it is hoped that the number of early marriages in Jawai District can be reduced, so that the younger generation can grow into mature, productive, and empowered individuals in facing the future.

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