

The strategy of the office of religious affairs in reducing rates of child marriage in Tanjungsari District of Bogor Regency

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Abstract

Child marriage in Indonesia is one of the problems that connects not only the minimum age of marriage but also child protection and human rights. Factors underlying early marriage practices include traditional, family, religious views, and the economy. Based on the data, child marriage has negative social impacts, ranging from the occurrence of divorce to a lack of family resilience, and neglectful parenting styles for children. This study aims to discuss the strategies of the Office of Religious Affairs in Tanjungsari District of Bogor Regency to reduce the rates of child marriages. This study uses the qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The primary data were collected through interviews, and secondary data were obtained through library research and documentation. Interviews were conducted with two informants: the head of KUA and his or her employee in Tanjungsari District. The research findings indicated that the strategies to reduce the rates of child marriage in the Tanjungsari District have been executed poorly. It can be seen that early marriage still exists while many locals lack of knowledge, understanding, and education.

Keywords: KUA; early age of marriage; strategy; Tanjungsari Bogor

Introduction

Marriage is a common sunnatullah or natural law (God's decree) and applies to all of His creatures and indeed of the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. Compared to other creatures, humans are special in the world because they have privileges. Humans can distinguish either good or evil and right or wrong. Therefore, the provisions embedded in the law of human marriage are different from other creatures. God also creates humans in a pair with the intention to have children through a religious marriage contract. Marriage is a union between a man and a woman that unites their life legally, mentally, or physically. This is in accordance with Law No 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage in Article 7, Paragraph 1. Here, carrying out a marriage is not based on both parties having reached the puberty phase only, more specifically having a certain age. As stated in the Law, marriage can only be permitted if men and women have reached their age 19 years. The law is an amendment to Law No 1 of 1974 stating that men must be 19 years old and 16 years old for women. This is why the latest law comes to equalize the age limit for men and women.

This rule was issued to reduce the number of early marriages and prevent negative impacts that arise due to early marriage, such as domestic violence, malnutrition, divorce, and poverty (Afifah, 2011; Djamilah & Kartikawati, 2014; Sudarso et al., 2020). Indonesia ranked second in Southeast Asia for cases of early marriage. This is in line with the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN)'s statement that Indonesia is a country with the highest number of cases of early marriage in the world. Data obtained by the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) that Indonesian young women aged 10-14 as many as 22,000 are married. Based on research data conducted by the Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Indonesia in 2016, it was revealed that the number of early marriages in Indonesia was in the top, number 2 in the Southeast Asia region. Around 2 million out of 7.3 Indonesian women aged 15 years have married and dropped out of school. As mentioned by Dema and Sarinah (2018), the term early marriage refers to a marriage between a man and a woman who are still young to be well-prepared physically, mentally, and materially. Therefore, early marriage will bring more negative impacts and apply age restrictions for a marriage. One of the reasons to limit the age for marriage is to reduce maternal and child mortality. Scientific studies suggest that a young uterus is more likely to have a baby born with defects and also has an impact on the safety of the mother at childbirth (Djamilah & Kartikawati, 2014).

The phenomenon of early marriage in Indonesia is a factor in the mindset of people's lives and ignorance of marriage knowledge. This is, in fact, very detrimental to children and the surrounding community should understand more about the nature of marriage, the marriage law, and the law governing child protection. In Law No 35 of 2004 on the Amendment to Law No 23 of 2002 on Child Protection. It says that a child is a person under the age of 18, including the child in the uterus. Children have rights that must be protected, guaranteed, and fulfilled by their parents, society, family, government, and state. Indonesia ranked 37th with the highest number of underage marriages in the world and 2nd in Southeast Asia. Research indicated that early marriage often happens in rural areas where most populations lack of motivation to go to school, so they do not have the knowledge and tend to be narrow-minded (Sakina, 2017).

The phenomenon of early marriage occurs in the community because the government lacks to educate society about the meaning of marriage as well as the positive and negative impacts of early marriage (Hong Le et al., 2014; Mas' udah & Budirahayu, 2020). Based on the preliminary interviews at the Office of Religious Affairs of Tanjungsari District relating to the prevalence of early marriage, it is worth noting that many children still marry at the age of under 19 years. For this to be prevented, the government strategy is certainly much needed in response to the prevalence of early marriage. We are interested in conducting this research in Tanjungsari District to find out the causal factors of underage marriage and how the role of the Office of Religious Affairs to undertake its duties and functions in practice.

Research Method

Marriage is a common sunnatullah or natural law (God's decree) and applies to all of His creatures and indeed of the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. Compared to other creatures, humans are special in the world because they have privileges. Humans can distinguish either good or evil and right or wrong. Therefore, the provisions

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The phenomenon of early marriage in Indonesia is a factor in the mindset of people's lives and ignorance of marriage knowledge. This is, in fact, very detrimental to children and the surrounding community should understand more about the nature of marriage, the marriage law, and the law governing child protection. In Law No 35 of 2004 on the Amendment to Law No 23 of 2002 on Child Protection. It says that a child is a person under the age of 18, including the child in the uterus. Children have rights that must be protected, guaranteed, and fulfilled by their parents, society, family, government, and state. Indonesia ranked 37th with the highest number of underage marriages in the world and 2nd in Southeast Asia. Research indicated that early marriage often happens in rural areas where most populations lack of motivation to go to school, so they do not have the knowledge and tend to be narrow-minded (Sakina, 2017). The phenomenon of early marriage occurs in the community because the government lacks to educate society about the meaning of marriage as well as the positive and negative impacts of an early marriage (Hong Le et al., 2014; Mas'udah & Budirahayu, 2020). Based on the preliminary interviews at the Office of Religious Affairs of Tanjungsari District in relating the prevalence of early marriage, it is worth noting that many children still marry at the age of under 19 years. About this to be prevented, the government strategy is certainly much needed in response to the prevalence of early marriage. We are interested in conducting this research in

Tanjungsari District to find out the causal factors of the underage marriage and how the role of the Office of Religious Affairs to undertake its duties and functions in practice.

Results and Discussion

1. Factors Affecting Child Marriage

Child marriage refers to a marriage between a child under the age of 19 years. It certainly violates the rules of the marriage law (Landung et al., 2009; Mas' udah & Budirahayu, 2020). According to (Nashir, 2022), early marriage is an underage marriage so that the bride and groom do not have readiness physically, mentally and materially. This is also in line with Dlori's statement that teenagers who decide to get married do not basically have these preparations.

From the statements above, it is necessary to study positive and negative impacts of early marriage. According to (Arianto, 2019), on a positive note, child marriage can prevent someone from committing adultery or sex before marriage and relieve the burden on parents because their daughter is no longer the parents' responsibility. Early marriage has also three negative impacts. First, child marriage makes up at a high rate of maternal and child mortality. Many scientific studies suggest that a young uterus is more likely to have a baby born with defects and also has an impact on the safety of the mothers at childbirth. Second, many teenagers leave education because of marriage. Early marriage forces individuals to leave school or become a dropout of school. For teenagers who are going to continue at the university level, they may think long because taking care of themselves, home and family is not easy. Third, domestic violence (KDRT) and divorce is the third impact. Young people generally have unstable emotions so they are very vulnerable to commit a domestic violence or domestic divorce, if they have differences of opinion between them (Hasanah, 2018). As explained by (Apriliani & Nurwati, 2020), household harmony requires three things: 1) physical resilience which refers to fulfilment of physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education needs; 2) social resilience that leads to religious values and commitment in the family; 3) psychological resilience to carry out conflict management in the family, positive emotional control, positive self-concept and concern for each life partner or husband and wife.

Marriage at an early age is a phenomenon in society and it often occurs due to several factors. According to Dema and Sarinah (2018) and Parsons et al. (2015), the following are the contributing factors to do early marriage: 1) First factor refers to an economic factor which early marriage often occurs among families who have financial problems at home, so their parents ask their daughters to marry men who have more income; 2) Second factor is an education factor that parents have less knowledge and poor education so they tend to want their children to marry at a young age without thinking about the future; 3) Third factor is parental factors which boys and girls are dating so it is feared that they will have sex before marriage or they are a target of slander from the surrounding community. Therefore, their parents agree to ask their children to marry; 4) The next factor refers to tradition factors. Early marriage occurs because children are afraid of being labelled as spinsters, so parents immediately force their children to marry without thinking about their children's future; 5) The final factor is broken home factor. Children who are victims of broken homes will be forced to marry at a young age, for various reasons. One of the reasons is due to economic

pressure. This happens because the parents are free of responsibility to live their children's life because they are already busy with their new family.

The statement above is in line with the interviews conducted by researchers located in Tanjungsari District. Interviews were conducted by researchers with two sources, namely the chairman and employees of KUA Tanjungsari District. The following is a description of the results of the interview about early marriage. 1) Education is the first factor. At this point, the role of education for children is very influential. For example, children drop out of school and then work and feel enough with their income or they drop out of school and then don't work so they will do less productive activities a lot. such activities are juvenile delinquency or having free sex which then leads to getting pregnant out of wedlock which forces them to get married at an early age. 2) Economy is the second factor. The economic problems occur in underprivileged or poor families, and so parents ask their daughter to marry a man with more income in order to relieve the economic burden. 3) Social media is the third factor. The social media has a considerable impact on early marriage, and this can be reflected in teenagers who like to watch negative content. 4) the next factors refer to pregnancy out of wedlock. The increased cases of underage marriages have recorded at KUA Tanjungsari District. It is interesting to note that promiscuous behaviour among young people in Tanjungsari District has become a great concern. This could happen because they did not know how to keep relationships between a man and a woman that have been regulated in Islam. They practiced a dating and often met and went together in which they finally committed adultery. They actually knew the impacts of pregnancy outside of marriage which were clearly proven that four out of seven married due to pregnancy outside of marriage.

Based on the data, the findings showed that there are many cases of pregnancy outside of marriage. The researchers discovered some of the girls were two months pregnant and some others were five months pregnant.

According to the interviews, underage marriages that occur here are mostly because they are pregnant out of wedlock, rarely happen on their own volition. Therefore, it can be concluded that underage marriages currently occur due to unintended pregnancy or pregnancy outside of marriage.

2. Strategies in Reducing Rates of Early Age Marriage

Strategy is a way or method to overcome problems or to achieve goals and produce a detailed policy (Wurangian, 2015). According to David (2005) strategy is a science applied in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of a goal. Based on the aforementioned definitions, it can be concluded that the definition of strategy is a process consisting of various methods or methods used to achieve a goal through the process of formulation, implementation, and evaluation. David (2005) also mentions that strategy provides the following indicators, such as strategy formulation is an organizational activity to formulate deeper internal problems in terms of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and goals of the organization so that the organization can determine alternative strategies. According to Abdussamad and Amala (2016), strategy of formulation is a stage of mental, moral, and spiritual development, whereas the strategy of implementation is the process of making and determining rules or policies within an organization. Furthermore, Abdussamad and Amala (2016) explicated that strategy of evaluation consists of reviewing internal and external factors so that they can be more mature in determining strategies. It is a measuring tool for

strategy success. [Taufiqurokhman \(2016\)](#) states that strategy of evaluation is divided into two main points, namely measuring performance and making corrective steps. Village governments are obliged to play a role in tackling cases of underage marriage and the government has the authority to make regulations to regulate people's lives so that they are more structured and improve living condition the local community. The KUA's strategy in Tanjungsari District to overcome and reduce the rates of underage marriage is illustrated the following:

Strategy of Formulation

In this study, the formulation of the government's strategy to reduce rates of early marriage through activities that can build good morals and mentality. The mental and moral development is carried out by the KUA in collaboration with the BKKBN by making and then implementing a course program for prospective brides. The prospective bride and groom course is introduced as an educational method used to increase a person's knowledge and understanding of married lives so as to reduce the number of divorces and domestic violence. Of course, this activity is of useful so that the marriage becomes good and becomes a happy, loving and supportive family.

The Bride and Groom Course activities are carried out by asking the two prospective brides to get education and provisions, especially for couples who marry early so that they are better prepared to get married. This activity emphasizes on prospective brides at an early age because that age is very vulnerable to divorce because their emotional state is not yet stable and they are not mentally ready to face a marriage.

Strategy of Implementation

The government consists of implementing programs and procedures. To reduce cases of early marriage that occurred in Tanjungsari District, the government carried out a socialization program to the community about the meaning of marriage and the negative and positive impacts of early marriage. In addition, the government issued also very strict regulations regarding marriage (Law No 16 of 2019) and marriage age limit for prospective brides who will get married. The implementation of socialization is very important and must be done because this program is a forum provided by the government in order to gain knowledge, education and understanding about early marriage so that parents will think long before marrying their children at an early age. Because early marriage has more negative impacts than positive impacts. In addition, early marriage also results in increased unemployment and lower quality of human resources. Therefore, the government must really carry out socialization in the midst of society to realize that early marriage needs to be anticipated.

KUA's socialization in Tanjungsari District is carried out in the following: 1) KUA Tanjungsari District clearly stated that child marriage has numerous long-term negative implications. The main purpose of the socialization activities is to raise awareness of the negative impacts on early marriage for the community members so that they understand better and do not make decisions to marry at an early age. The targets of this program are teenagers and parents who have teenagers; 2) KUA Tanjungsari District provides knowledge about promiscuity and curbs activities and associations that are believed to lead to promiscuity; 3) KUA Tanjungsari District insists all young men and women to limit the use of social media. It is intended that teenagers know and can control the use of social media so that they can use social media

wisely; 4) Teenagers are given information and enlightenment about the negative impact of age limit of marriage in terms of health and psychology, so that teenagers can think repeatedly about having free sex which can lead to early marriage.

To overcome and reduce the rates of underage marriage in Tanjungsari District, KUA has made huge efforts to carry out its role in reducing the rates of underage marriage by providing counselling to the community and adolescents such as collaborating with several schools to conduct marriage counselling on the law on marriage, then in collaboration with the health department to provide health education about the impacts of underage marriage.

Strategy of Evaluation

The government's strategy evaluation to end early marriage consists of two aspects, namely measuring the performance of the government, especially the government and the local KUA and taking corrective actions to ensure that activities conform to plans. Government's measurement performance can be clearly seen from the good or bad coordination between the Tanjungsari sub-district government and the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), the Religious Courts, the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), and all relevant parties to play an active role in dealing with early marriage problems. The government must also cooperate with the community to build the mental and moral as well as maintain relationship among people so that cases of early marriage can be handled well.

Based on the aforementioned illustrations, it can be concluded that the government's actions to encounter child marriage is carried out through good cooperation and coordination between the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), and the Board of National Population and Family Planning (BKKBN) to provide counselling to the community in dealing with the issue. KUA's actions in Tanjungsari District are taken with lack of success because the government's strategy is only carried out through socialization. Meanwhile, this socialization does not apply effectively to deal with early marriage due to COVID-19 pandemic in which various activities should be done with a limited way and the programs have not been carried out consistently and periodically.

Conclusion

Indonesia has a higher rate of child marriage cases which are caused by the lack of knowledge and understanding of the meaning of marriage, the applicable provisions of marriage and the way parents educate their children. The Indonesian people, accordingly, much need guidance on early marriage which aims to reduce the number of early marriages in Indonesia. The negative impacts of early marriage outweigh the positive ones. It is proven that many problems that arise as a result of early marriage include the number of divorces, cases of domestic violence (KDRT), the increasing number of unemployment and human population. Supports from the government are of helpful to deal with these problems. Also, there needs a strong relationship between the government and relevant parties as well as government cooperation with the community.

In addition, government should impose policies or regulations regarding marriage in Indonesia. Lack of knowledge and understanding is a contributing factor in the increasing number of cases of early marriage, especially in rural areas. Considering that rural areas tend to be far from access to information, it is certainly necessary for socialization to prevent early marriage. KUA Tanjungsari has basically carried out

socialization regarding early marriage but it is apparent that this does not work to stop child marriages. Besides, the impacts of Covid-19 outbreak as of today is an issue that affects various activities which are very limited and those activities have not been carried out consistently and periodically according to program.

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