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Implementation Of Early Marriage Age Restrictions Policy (Case Study Of Religious Affairs Office, Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency)

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Article Information	Abstract
<p>Article history: Accepted 20-05-2025 Fixed 25-05-2025 Approved 29-05-2025</p> <p>Keywords: Policy Implementation; PUPD</p>	<p>Abstract: This study aims to describe (1) Implementation of Early Marriage Age Restriction Policy (Case Study of Religious Affairs Office, Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency) (2) Inhibiting factors in the implementation of early marriage policy (Case Study of Religious Affairs Office, Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency). The approach in this study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Data collection in the study using observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The results of this study are that (1) Implementation of Early Marriage Age Restriction Policy in Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency consisting of communication, resources, disposition and bureaucratic structure. Of the four aspects, it is not yet effective enough in implementation. (2) the determining factors for the success of the implementation of the Early Marriage Age Restriction policy in Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency, seen from environmental, social, and cultural aspects, are not yet good enough. There still needs to be a more holistic and sensitive approach to local conditions.</p>

Introduction

Implementation is something that is done to create an impact or consequence, which can be in the form of laws, government regulations, judicial decisions and policies made by government institutions in national life (Martini, 2021). Early marriage is the binding of two people of the opposite sex who are still teenagers in one family bond. Adolescents themselves are children who are in a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, where children experience rapid changes in all areas. They are no longer children, both in body shape, attitude, and way of thinking and acting, but they are not mature adults either. Underage marriages that have not met the age limit for marriage are essentially called still young or children (Ramadhan, 2020).

Underage marriage or known as early marriage is a marriage that should not be carried out because there is no physical or spiritual readiness to be able to carry out the marriage or early marriage is a bond between two people of the opposite sex between a woman and a man who are in their teenage years to live together in one family bond (Yopani Selia Almahisa & Anggi Agustian, 2021).

There are two main reasons for early marriage: first, early marriage as a strategy to survive economically. Poverty is one of the main factors that is the foundation of early marriage. Early marriage increases when poverty levels also increase. The second reason is to protect their daughters. Marriage is one way to ensure that their daughters are protected as wives, give birth to legitimate children in the eyes of the law and will be safer if they have a husband who can take care of them regularly. The cause of early marriage is the sexual behavior of a teenager who has sex outside of marriage which results in pregnancy outside of marriage so that early marriage occurs (Publik, 2016).

Several previous studies have discussed the implementation of early marriage prevention policies in various regions, such as the research of (Nisa, 2023) in Bandar Lampung City which highlighted the implementation of the PUSPAGA, FAD, and GenRe programs but was constrained by social support and funds; (Sachlan, 2019) in Lebak Regency who found that child protection was not optimal due to limited socialization in the village; and (Cholizah, 2022) in West Jakarta who assessed that the implementation of DKI Jakarta Governor Regulation Number 5 of 2020 was still ineffective due to the low intensity of socialization and the high number of marriage dispensations. In contrast to the three studies, this study presents something new by focusing on a case study of the Religious Affairs Office, Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency, which is a red zone for early marriage in Gorontalo Province. This study uses the Edward III policy implementation theory approach and analyzes the inhibiting factors based on Ilman's theory, and reveals the practice of age manipulation at the KUA and the lack of policy socialization to school adolescents. Thus, this study provides a new contribution to the study of the implementation of early marriage age restriction policies by highlighting the strategic role of the KUA at the sub-district level which has not been studied in depth.

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency of Gorontalo Province in 2023, Gorontalo was ranked 3rd with 68.47 percent of cases of early marriage with the majority of its people marrying at a young age in the age range of 19 years. This indication shows that one of the various provinces that marry underage is that Gorontalo Province has a fairly high rate of early marriage in Indonesia. From this, there is a problem that occurs in cases of early marriage. Where it was found that there are still employees at the KUA Paguyaman District who are not firm in handling early marriage by allowing children under the age of 19 to marry by manipulating their birth certificates, legally violating the marriage law that marriage is permitted if men and women have reached the age of 19 years. Not only that, on the other hand, the KUA Paguyaman District has not held socialization in schools, both junior high and high school levels, about preventing early marriage or guidance on early marriage. Early marriage in Paguyaman District is quite high. In fact, the number continues to increase every year.

In this case, the Ministry of Religion of Boalemo Regency refused to marry off minors, this was conveyed by the head of the Islamic community guidance section of the Boalemo Regency Ministry of Religion Office, Midun Paulu when he was present representing the head of the office in a meeting regarding the handling of stunting held by the Boalemo Regency government. He said that the rejection of underage marriage was motivated by various considerations, one of which was supporting the stunting reduction program that was being promoted by the Boalemo regional government. Stunting is a condition of chronic malnutrition that causes children to have a shorter height than their age standards, and has an impact on

long-term physical and cognitive development. Mothers who marry too young tend to be less prepared physically, mentally, and economically. Thus, the existence of this early marriage, the Paguyaman District Religious Affairs Office (KUA) government went directly to the community in the form of counseling on guidance on marriage at the age of marriage which was carried out in schools at both junior high and high school levels (Rumlah, 2022).

On the other hand, the government is also trying to implement policies to limit early marriage. In this case, the policy implemented in Paguyaman sub-district is Marriage Dispensation, in accordance with the regulations of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Article 7 paragraph (2) and paragraph (3) number 16 of 2019 (Judiasih et al., 2020). Marriage dispensation can be interpreted as a legal exemption or leniency given to prospective brides and grooms who do not meet positive legal requirements, so that the law gives the court the authority to grant marriage dispensation with considerations based on the law and Islamic law to find out how to implement the policy of limiting the age of early marriage from the aspects of communication, resources, disposition, bureaucratic structure, and how the inhibiting factors of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage are from the environmental, social and cultural aspects.

Method

The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative research. This research is a study that aims to describe or explain events in the form of phenomena obtained based on a formulated problem. Data were collected through field research using interview techniques and documents related to the topic being studied. This method uses a technique based on considerations of whether the identified informants are skilled, knowledgeable and have a good reputation to answer interview guide questions in accordance with research on the Implementation of Early Marriage Policy (Case Study of the Religious Affairs Office, Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency) (Sugiyono, 2020).

Result and Discussion

This section is the most important part of your article. The analysis or research results must be clear and concise. The results should summarize the (scientific) findings rather than provide data in great detail. Please highlight the discrepancies between your results or findings and previous publications by other researchers

1. Implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage

a. Communication

Based on the research results, communication in the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage at the Paguyaman District Religious Affairs Office is carried out in various ways such as direct socialization to junior high and high schools, counseling at wedding ceremonies (walimatul ursy), and collaboration with other institutions such as the Health Service, Child Protection, and Religious Courts. However, the implementation of this communication is not well structured and has not reached all villages in Paguyaman District. Limited time and resources mean that socialization has not been carried out routinely and comprehensively, so that some people still do not fully understand the age limit for marriage according to Law Number 16 of 2019.

b. Resources

Based on the research results, resources in implementing this policy are still very limited. The KUA Paguyaman District only has a few extension workers, and not all employees receive special training on preventing early marriage. Physical facilities such as operational vehicles, communication media, and other supporting equipment are also minimal. In addition, budget limitations are the main obstacle in carrying out maximum socialization and coaching. As a result, the implementation of the policy only runs on the surface and does not touch the root of the problem in society as a whole.

c. Disposition (Implementer Attitude)

Based on the research results, the disposition or attitude of the implementers at the Paguyaman District KUA generally shows awareness and commitment to the importance of reducing the number of early marriages. KUA employees understand the objectives of the policy and strive to implement it according to the regulations. However, a permissive attitude was also found from several individuals who were not firm in implementing the provisions on the age limit for marriage. There were even indications of manipulation of the age data of prospective brides and grooms so that marriages could still take place. This shows that there is still an inconsistency between understanding the policy and its implementation in the field.

d. Bureaucratic Structure

Based on the research results, the bureaucratic structure at the KUA Paguyaman District already has a standard operating procedure (SOP) in marriage services in accordance with applicable regulations. However, in practice, the implementation of the SOP still experiences deviations due to the strong socio-cultural influence of the community. The internal monitoring process has not been running effectively, and there is no periodic evaluation of the implementation of the policy. The absence of a strong control system means that violations of the marriage age limit are often not dealt with firmly, and even seem to be ignored.

2. Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Early Marriage Age Restriction Policy

a. Environmental Factors

Based on the research results, environmental factors are a significant obstacle in the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage in Paguyaman District. The local community still strongly adheres to the tradition of inter-family marriage or "besanan" which has been agreed upon for a long time, even by previous generations. Family ties and the desire to strengthen relationships between relatives are often the reasons for accelerating child marriage, even though they are not yet old enough. The social environment that supports this practice makes formal policies set by the government difficult to be fully accepted by the community.

b. Social Factors

Based on the results of the study, social factors also influence the high rate of early marriage. The relatively low level of community education makes their understanding of the regulations and negative impacts of early marriage limited. On the other hand, social concerns

such as the stigma of pregnancy outside of marriage and pressure from society cause parents to feel compelled to marry off their children immediately. Lack of education and minimal role of social institutions in the village worsen this condition.

c. Cultural Factors

Based on the results of the study, local culture in Paguyaman District still greatly influences public perception of early marriage. There is a general view that women who do not marry soon will be considered "unsaleable" and will embarrass the family. In addition, when a man proposes with good economic conditions, many families immediately accept without considering the child's age readiness. This culture has taken root and is difficult to combat with a policy approach alone, because it is considered part of the family's honor and future.

Discussion of research Result

1. Implementation of Early Marriage Age Restriction Policy (Case Study of Religious Affairs Office, Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency)

The purpose of this study is to determine the Implementation of Early Marriage Age Restriction Policy (Case Study of Religious Affairs Office, Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency) as with the sub-focus of this study consisting of communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Based on the problems in the field, the researcher tried to dig up information by conducting direct observations and interviews with.

a. Communication

The implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency, can be seen from the perspective of communication which plays an important role in the smooth implementation of the policy. Effective communication between the KUA, the community, and related agencies is very important in ensuring that the policy of limiting the age of early marriage can be understood and accepted by the community properly. Clear and precise communication can be a bridge to change the views and perceptions of the community about early marriage, which is still considered normal in the context of local culture, towards a broader understanding of the negative impacts of early marriage, both in terms of health, psychology, and education.

In the KUA of Paguyaman District, the registrar and administrative officers have a significant role as a transmitter of information related to the policy of limiting the age of early marriage. One form of communication carried out by the KUA is by conducting interviews with prospective brides and grooms and their families to ensure that the marriage to be carried out meets the age requirements set by law. In addition, the registrar is also tasked with providing an understanding of the social and health consequences of early marriage. However, the main challenge in terms of communication is the limited communication skills of some KUA officers, who often have difficulty explaining in a way that is easily understood by people with different cultural and social backgrounds. This ineffective communication can hinder a good understanding of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage.

b. Resources

The implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency, is greatly influenced by existing resource factors, including human resources (HR), financial resources, and institutional resources. In this context, human resources, especially KUA officers, play an important role in implementing the policy of limiting the age of early marriage. KUA registrars and administrative officers have a great responsibility to ensure that marriages registered in this institution meet the age requirements that have been set. However, the limited number of trained registrars and the lack of training on how to effectively socialize this policy to the community are the main obstacles in implementing the policy. Many KUA officers find it difficult to provide counseling or education to the community regarding the impacts of early marriage, due to limited knowledge and skills in communication. In addition, financial resource factors also affect the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy.

In terms of institutional resources, the existence of cooperation with related agencies, such as the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service (DP3A) and other social institutions, is very important to support this policy. However, less than optimal coordination between institutions often becomes an obstacle in implementing the policy. Although the KUA has the task of verifying the age of prospective brides and grooms, without support from other institutions in terms of counseling or training, the implementation of this policy can be less effective. Therefore, it is important for the KUA to strengthen cooperative relationships with various related institutions, as well as ask for support from other parties such as community leaders and religious leaders to help strengthen counseling regarding the dangers of early marriage (Ummah, 2019).

c. Disposition

In the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage at the Paguyaman District Religious Affairs Office (KUA), the attitude and disposition of the policy implementers, such as the penghulu and administrative officers, play a very important role. The disposition of the policy implementers includes how the officers respond to the existing policy and how they carry out their duties in the cultural, social, and structural contexts that exist in society. In general, the attitude of the policy implementers at the Paguyaman District KUA tends to show a good understanding of the objectives of the policy, namely to protect children from the negative impacts of early marriage, such as health and education problems. However, the implementation of this policy is often influenced by challenges at the field level, which are related to the attitude of the implementers in carrying out procedures and interacting with the community (Mizan, 2022).

The attitude of policy implementers at the Paguyaman District KUA regarding age verification of prospective brides and grooms often varies. Most registrars and administrative officers strive to comply with the provisions on marriage age in accordance with applicable regulations, and they are committed to ensuring that registered marriages do not violate these provisions. However, some policy implementers show a more permissive attitude towards families who want to have early marriages, especially when there is pressure from family or society to continue with the marriage even though the age of the prospective bride and groom does not meet the requirements.

d. Bureaucratic Structure

The bureaucratic structure at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency, plays an important role in the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage. KUA has a clearly organized structure, starting from the registrar to the administrative officers who are responsible for ensuring that registered marriages are in accordance with applicable regulations. At the bureaucratic structure level, KUA has the authority to manage the marriage administration process, but the implementation of this policy also depends on coordination with various related institutions and agencies, such as the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service (DP3A), health services, and educational institutions. Therefore, the success of the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage depends not only on KUA, but also on a broader bureaucratic system that covers various sectors related to this issue. At KUA Paguyaman District, the existing bureaucratic structure has established clear procedures for implementing marriages, including verifying the age of prospective brides and grooms. However, the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage is often hampered by several factors, such as the lack of effective coordination between KUA and related institutions (Raudah & Suwandi, 2023).

In the context of bureaucratic structure, another challenge faced by the KUA of Paguyaman District is the lack of authority to intervene in the decisions of families who have decided to carry out early marriages. Although administratively the KUA can postpone or cancel marriage registration if the age of the prospective bride and groom does not meet the requirements, strong social pressure from the community or family often makes it difficult for policy implementers to enforce the rules. This reflects the tension between the bureaucratic structure that wants to implement the policy and the social norms that apply in society. In some cases, the registrar or KUA officer may choose to prioritize compliance with social traditions over more formal policies. Thus, to increase the effectiveness of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage, there needs to be strengthened coordination between the KUA and related institutions, as well as increased capacity of KUA officers in dealing with social pressure that can disrupt the implementation of this policy.

2. Inhibiting factors in the implementation of early marriage policies (Case Study of the Religious Affairs Office of Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency)

- a. The purpose of this study is to determine the inhibiting factors in the implementation of early marriage policies (Case Study of the Religious Affairs Office of Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency) as with the sub-focus of this study consisting of environment, social, and culture. Based on the problems in the field, the researcher tried to dig up information by conducting observations and direct interviews with the Head of the KUA of Paguyaman District, the KUA Registrar, the Islamic Religious Counselors and the Community.
- b. First, from the environmental aspect, informants revealed that limited infrastructure and accessibility are important obstacles in policy implementation. The Paguyaman District area, which is mostly rural, makes it difficult to reach all levels of society effectively. KUA officers often face difficulties in conducting socialization or supervision to people living in remote and hard-to-reach areas. In addition, the lack of adequate supporting facilities or means to educate the community about the impact of early marriage is also an obstacle. This results

in low levels of community participation and awareness regarding the importance of limiting the age of marriage (Rofika & Hariastuti, 2020).

- c. Second, from a social aspect, a factor that greatly influences is the existence of strong social norms related to early marriage. In Paguyaman District, the community still makes early marriage a part of the tradition and social norms that are widely accepted, especially among parents. Informants revealed that there is great social pressure from families and communities to marry off girls at a young age, which is often prioritized over compliance with government rules or policies. Although the KUA has tried to educate the community about the dangers of early marriage, this deep-rooted social view often hinders these efforts. Some parents even feel that marrying off girls at a young age is a way to maintain family honor or avoid other social problems (Mahendra et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study on the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of Paguyaman District, Boalemo Regency, it can be concluded that the implementation of this policy has not been running optimally. Based on the implementation indicators of Edward III, the communication aspect has been carried out through socialization to schools and the community, but it is not evenly distributed and is not systematically scheduled. In terms of resources, the implementation of the policy is constrained by the lack of extension workers, limited facilities, and insufficient budget. In terms of disposition, although most implementers show a positive attitude towards the policy, there are still practices of age manipulation in marriage registration, which reflects the weak integrity of the implementer. In terms of bureaucratic structure, SOPs have been established, but have not been fully implemented due to the influence of local culture and lack of internal supervision. In addition, this study also found inhibiting factors in the implementation of the policy, such as environmental factors, namely the culture of in-laws and agreements between families that encourage child marriage; social factors, such as low levels of education, social stigma, and family pressure; and cultural factors, such as the view that girls who do not marry immediately are considered shameful to the family. These three factors strengthen community resistance to policy changes, thus slowing down the effectiveness of their implementation. Overall, the implementation of the policy of limiting the age of early marriage in Paguyaman District requires strengthening of more comprehensive communication aspects, increasing human resources and budget, and strict law enforcement against violations, in order to ensure child protection and the achievement of policy objectives effectively

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