

Justice and Equality in Islamic Family Law Faculty of Sharia, State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu

# INDONESIA'S DYNAMICS OF CHILD MARRIAGE (Legalisation of Child Marriage through Marriage Dispensation in the Islamic Courts)

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#### **Abstract**

Marriage dispensation is an alternative government policy that is expected to be able to overcome various problems in Indonesian family law, but on the other hand it has a negative impact on the growth of child marriage cases which have become one of the concerns of international organizations in the field of human rights. This is because countries with Muslim majority populations experience a significant growth in the number of child marriage cases. Therefore this policy is considered as a loophole that hinders efforts to prevent child marriage cases in Indonesia. An alternative government policy known as marriage dispensation is expected to be able to resolve a number of issues with Indonesian family law, but it also has a detrimental effect on the rise in child marriage cases, which are a concern for international organisations working in the field of human rights. This is due to the fact that child marriages are increasing significantly in nations with Muslim majorities. Therefore, it is believed that this policy is a flaw that undermines efforts to stop child marriages in Indonesia. Researchers found a number of factors that contribute to the growth of child marriage through the marriage dispensation route, with early love relationships being one of the most significant. These relationships have an impact on pre-marital sex, which ultimately results in pregnancy at a young age. The best course of action for the Indonesian government is to implement preventive policies early on with the active participation of parents in Indonesians have a tendency to be receptive to foreign cultures that do not conform to the country's religious and noble cultural values, thus the environment as well as legislation under several strategic ministry sectors work to slow the speed of sociocultural change. After conducting an in-depth study through the literature and a case study approach, the researchers found various factors that trigger the growth of child marriage through the dispensation of marriage, one of the most influential is romantic relationships from an early age which has an impact on premarital sex which ultimately leads to pregnancy at a young age, the right solution that can be done by the Indonesian government is to issue preventive policies early on with the active participation of parents and the surrounding environment as well as regulations under various strategic ministry sectors to inhibit the pace of socio-cultural change where Indonesian people tend to be open to foreign cultures that are not in line with the norms of

religion and noble culture of Indonesia, especially teenagers who are still included in the age of children.

**Keywords:** Legalization, Child Marriage, Marriage Dispensation

# A. Introduction

The state methodically incorporated the concepts that emerged in the development of Indonesian Islamic family law into legislative rules. One of them is the passing of Law Number 16 of 2019 about the First Amendment to Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, particularly the section that governs the minimum age requirement for couples who want to get married.

Child marriage in Indonesia has increased significantly since the law went into effect at the end of 2019 and is now one of the major concerns for national development, according to the 2020–2024 RPJMN, which is focused on the holistic development of family functions in order to develop quality human resources. This shows that the policy has a negative effect and is contrary to what the government and the vast majority of academics who oppose child marriage had anticipated, as it may violate children's rights by preventing them from attending school, reduce their capacity to support themselves, and have implications for intergenerational poverty. A total of 64,222 marriage dispensation instances were documented in 2020, a 158% increase from the prior year. Therefore, as females account for the majority of child marriages, serious steps must be made right once to slow down their rise.

The application of policies, the causes, and the analysis of judges' concerns in cases of dispensation of marriage are then of primary significance in the many types of study that Indonesian academics have performed. However, other from raising the minimum age limit and making repressive measures in sentencing, the contribution of innovative thinking to attempts to reduce child marriage is still extremely small. To draw the essential conclusions about the issues at hand, a thorough analysis of the findings of earlier study is therefore required.

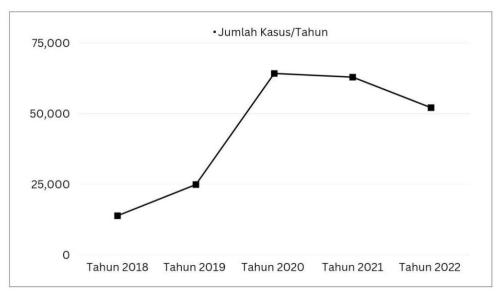
#### **B.** Research Method

This study applied a qualitative research strategy using case study research and literature that used a normative legal perspective. In this instance, the researcher conducts a thorough search of academic databases, libraries, and online sources that are pertinent to the topic under investigation. Additionally, the data is inductively analysed to draw the appropriate conclusions and identify the problem's solution.

# C. Findings and Discussion

# 1. The rise of marriages dispensing cases in Indonesia as a phenomenon

The data below shows that from 2018 to 2022, there were ups and downs in the number of requests for marriage dispensation:



	1	2	3	4	5
Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Overall numbers of	13.822	24.864	64.222	62.919	52.095
cases <sup>1</sup>					

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Direktorat Jenderal Badan Peradilan Agama cq.Subdit Statistik dan Dokumentasi Direktorat Pembinaan Administrasi Peradilan Agama

The biggest number of marriage cases throughout a five-year period from 2018 to 2022 happened in 2020 with a total of 64,222 instances, followed by 2021 with a total of 62,919 cases, and then in 2022, 2019 and 2018 with totals of 52,095, 24,864, and 13,822 cases, respectively. The number of cases of dispensation increased by 158% in 2020, which is the largest growth in the previous five years. This occurred one year after Law Number 16 of 2019, which governs the change in age for parties who seek to engage into Marriage, replaced Law Number 1 of 1974 regarding Marriage.

Before Law No. 1 of 1974's first modification was passed, the minimum age requirement for partners wishing to be married was a man aged 19 and a woman aged  $16^2$ , The age requirement for candidates has altered, though, and is now 19 for women and 18 for males, according Law Number 16 of 2019.<sup>3</sup> The rise of marriage dispensation cases in Indonesia is undoubtedly a result of this.

The following table shows the top 5 provinces in Indonesia by number of marriage dispensation cases in 2022:<sup>4</sup>

No	Provinces	Number of cases DK
1	East Java	15.339
2	Centre Java	12.035
3	West Java	5.778
4	South Sulawesi	2.663
5	Jambi	1.012

This shows that there are a lot of child weddings in Indonesia, and it is believed that this may lead to further issues with family law, such as an increase in the frequency of divorces.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Pasal 7 ayat (1) Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan

 $<sup>^3</sup>$  Pasal 7 ayat (1) Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 tentang Perubahan atas Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Direktorat Jenderal Badan Peradilan Agama cq.Subdit Statistik dan Dokumentasi Direktorat Pembinaan Administrasi Peradilan Agama

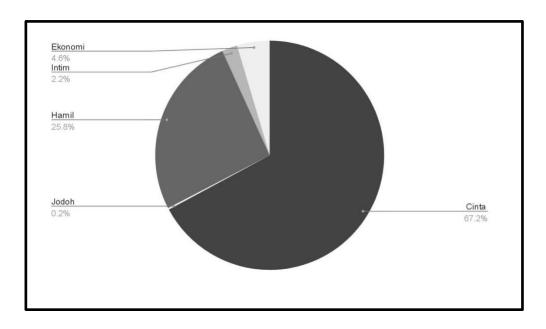
Due to the public's declining level of awareness of the nature/meaning of marriage, it is obvious that the rise in divorces that arise from child marriage will have an impact on the community's paradigm of the sacredness of marriage.

# 2. The justifications for Indonesia's ban on marriage

According to Law Number 16 of 2019, Article 7 paragraph (2), a request for a marriage dispensation must be made to the court with extremely compelling justifications and enough accompanying documentation. Therefore, if the application for a marriage dispensation is not founded on factors that the panel of judges deems urgent, it cannot be approved. The following graphic table illustrates the grounds for requesting a marriage dispensation before the religious court in 2022:

recap the details of the case's justifications for marriage dispensation.

In 2022, in the Religious Courts in all of Indonesia



With a proportion of 67.2%, romance is the highest ranked of the aforementioned five factors, followed by pregnancy with 25.8%, economic problems with 4.6%, personal connections with 2.2%, and planned marriages with 0.2%.

#### a. Love

The atmosphere that pushes teens to find partners at a young age is the reason love is so strong and has a substantial influence on the rise in the number of cases of dispensation of marriage. Teenagers may now meet up and hang out till late at night more easily because to the fast advancement of communication technologies. They frequently become pregnant outside of marriage, and this type of thing does not just occur in metropolitan regions but also in rural ones. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance parental monitoring of youngsters.

# b. Pregnancy

The influence of the open dating culture between the opposing sexes among teens comes in second place to pregnancy after the cause for love. Pre-marital sex becomes a common practise as a result of the absence of parental supervision and guidance for children owing to employment, as well as the community's lax social control over its surroundings, making pregnancies outside of marriage impossible to prevent.

# c. Economy

In addition to the elements that influence love relationships among teenagers, poverty and socioeconomic situations have a significant impact on the rise in child marriages. In order to avoid having to pay for expensive schooling, families with low means sometimes choose to marry off their children. This is done in an effort to lessen the financial responsibility placed on the family head.

### d. Close interactions

Regarding the first and second reasons, parents worry that their children's increasingly close interactions with people of the opposite sex may result in infidelity, which would humiliate the family if it led to an unmarried

pregnancy,<sup>5</sup> Therefore, marriage is taken into consideration as a substitute so that their kids are shielded from actions that might bring shame on the family..<sup>6</sup>

# e. Matchmaking

Sometimes parents may make an attempt to match their children, which leads to child marriage. This is a result of parents' extreme anxiety that their children would age poorly and make poor life partner selections..<sup>7</sup>

# 3. Judges' policies and considerations in Indonesian instances involving marital dispensation

Legally speaking, the Republic of Indonesia's Supreme Court has created rules guiding the handling and resolution of marriage dispensation cases. Marriage is only legal if both parties are at least 19 years old, according to Article 7 paragraph (1) of Law Number 1 of 1974, as revised by Law Number 16 of 2019, which states that both parties must be at least 19 years old. The Supreme Court Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Judging Marriage Dispensation Applications, which was established on November 20 2019 and promulgated on November 21 2019, has refined these rules so that they are understood and upheld by all spheres of society.

The purpose of establishing these guidelines is to:

1) Apply the best interests of the child, the right to life and development of the child, the right to respect for the child's opinion, the respect for human dignity and worth, the prohibition of discrimination based on gender, the principle of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Mahfudin, A., & Waqi'ah, K. Pernikahan dini dan pengaruhnya terhadap keluarga di kabupaten Sumenep Jawa Timur. *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam*, Vol 1 No. 1 (2016), 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Liesmayani, E. E., Nurrahmaton, N., Juliani, S., Mouliza, N., & Ramini, N. Determinan Kejadian Pernikahan Dini Pada Remaja. *Nursing Care and Health Technology Journal (NCHAT)*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (2022), 56.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Ningsih, A. P., Suriah, S., Syafar, M., Muis, M., Sukri, S., & Abdullah, M. T. Analisis Sosial Budaya terkait Pernikahan Usia Dini di Kepulauan Selayar. *Perilaku dan Promosi Kesehatan: Indonesian Journal of Health Promotion and Behavior*, Vol 2 No. 2 (2020), 50.

- equality before the law, the principle of justice, the principle of benefit, and the principle of legal certainty, as referred in article 2
- 2) Ensure the establishment of a legal system that upholds the rights of children;
- 3) Increasing parental involvement in the effort to avoid child marriage;
- Determining whether or not coercion was involved in the request for a marriage exemption;
- 5) Recognising the judicial adjudication of marriage dispensation applications has been standardised.

This is being done as a state effort to guarantee the court upholds the rights of children, which are a gift from Allah SWT. To achieve the best results, however—and keeping in mind that Indonesia is one of the nations that took part in ratifying the convention into national law—social welfare institutions, both public and private, administrative bodies, and legislative bodies must play a part. These institutions must operate in the best interests of children, as emphasised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Thus, the marriage to be carried out must meet the requirements as stipulated in the statutory regulations so that it can be carried out properly. However, for those who do not meet the age requirement, the marriage can be carried out if the court has granted a dispensation to marry according to the applicable provisions.

The judges who adjudicate applications for marriage dispensation are:

- 1) Judges who have already been designated by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as juvenile judges, who have taken training in women in conflict with the law or received technical advice on this topic, who are certified in the juvenile criminal justice system, or who have experience deciding applications for dispensation of marriage; and
- 2) Each judge will decide on the marriage dispensation application if there are no judges as specified above.

Additionally, substitute judges and clerks are not permitted to wear court attire (such as the judge's gown and substitute registrar's jacket), which may have an

adverse psychological impact on the child during the trial process. Finally, the judge must use language and communication techniques that are simple for children to understand during the trial process.

Furthermore, during the trial the judge must provide advice to the Petitioner, Children, Prospective Husband/Wife and Parents/Guardians of the Prospective Husband/Wife. Advice is conveyed to ensure that the Applicant, Children, Prospective Husband/Wife and Parents/Guardians of the Prospective Husband/Wife understand the risks of marriage, related to:

- 1) The possibility of stopping education for children;
- 2) Continuity of children in taking 12 years of compulsory education;
- 3) The child's reproductive organs are not yet ready;
- 4) Economic, social and psychological impact on children; And
- 5) Potential for disputes and domestic violence.

The judge's submission of advice is taken into account when making the decision; if it does not offer advise, the decision will be deemed "null and void". The Judge is also required to identify the following during the examination at trial:

- 1) The child submitted in the application knows and consents to the marriage plan;
- 2) The psychological condition, health, and readiness of children to marry and start a family; and
- 3) Psychological, physical, sexual, or economic coercion against children and/or families to get married or have children.
  - Therefore, the judge may:
- 1) Hear the child's statement without the presence of the parents;
- 2) Hear the child's statement through a remote audio-visual communication examination at the local court or elsewhere;
- 3) Suggest that the child be accompanied by a companion; and so on when examining the child for a dispensation from marriage.

4) Seek advice from psychologists, doctors, midwives, professional social workers, social welfare workers, the Integrated Service Centre for Women and Children Protection (P2TP2A), and the Indonesian/Regional Child Protection Commission (KPAI/KPAD); Additionally, if necessary, present translators or others who frequently interact with kids. The fiqh principle "Rejecting mafsadah is prioritised over obtaining kindness" is often taken into account by judges when giving marital dispensations and emphasises the requirement of minimising potential mafsadah/harm as much as possible rather than attempting to acquire good/benefit.<sup>8</sup>

This is based on the severity of the harm that may result from the denial of a marriage dispensation application, such as an illegal marriage that would violate the law because it would be exceedingly harmful to the woman and the children that would result from the union. This is due to the fact that Indonesian regulations now in effect do not take into account rights resulting from marriages that are not VAT-recorded.<sup>9</sup> so that the problems faced become longer and more complicated.

Apart from that, refusing the dispensation of marriage also has the potential to perpetuate adultery for couples who have been in love for a long time, like married people. So that preserving religion and heredity is the basis and the main goal to be achieved through the granting of a marriage dispensation in the religious court.

However, judges still have to pay attention to obstacles and prohibitions on marriage and consider the commitment of parents to take responsibility for guiding and helping related to economic, social, health problems as long as their children are not yet able.<sup>10</sup>

# 4. A policy analyst who studies the rise in child marriages

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Sudarmaji, W. Pertimbangan Hakim dalam Memutuskan Perkara Dispensasi Nikah Berdasarkan Analisis Maslahah (Studi Penetapan Hakim No. 266/Pdt. P/2020/PA. Pwr di Pengadilan Agama Purworejo). Al-Syakhsiyyah: Journal of Law & Family Studies, Vol. 3 No. 1 (2021), 141-142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Prasetyo, B. Analisis Akibat Hukum Dari Perkawinan Di bawah Tangan. *Serat Acitya*, Vol. 7No. 1 (2018), 144.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Perkara Nomor 6/Pdt.P/2023/PA.Thn

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There is a new hope to slow the rate of growth in the number of child marriage cases in Indonesia after the publication of the most recent regulation regarding the higher minimum age limit for couples who wish to enter into marriage, but what is observed is the opposite, so it is considered less effective in slowing the rate of growth of child marriages. Even if this law has been issued, it may enhance the prevalence of unregistered marriage, which is already widespread in Indonesian culture. This is because as long as the requirements for marriage are satisfied, it will be regarded as religiously genuine... This is in line with Article 2 paragraph (1) of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage.

In addition, the interpretation of the meaning of the sentence "very urgent reasons" in Article 7 paragraph (2) is very multi-interpretative. In fact, in practice, the request for a marriage dispensation case in several religious courts was almost 100% granted. This is made worse by the judge's lack of deliberation, which is the foundation for deciding whether to grant the motion. It might be interpreted as an effort to minimise the harm that child marriage causes. However, it should be noted that despite a decline in the number of cases of dispensation of marriage at the Religious Courts from 2021 to 2022, government policies have essentially not been able to significantly impact the reduction of child marriage cases. This is due to the fact that courts have the discretion to waive the requirements of Article 7 paragraph (1) of Law Number 16 of 2019 based on benefits and the severity of the adverse

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Aulil Amri dan Muhadi Khalidi, Efektifitas Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 Terhadap Pernikahan di Bawah Umur, *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum, Perundang-undangan dan Pranata Sosial*, Vol 6, No. 1 (2021). h. 98. (85-101) lihat juga Muqaffi, A., Rusdiyah, R., & Rahmi, D. Menilik Problematika Dispensasi Nikah Dalam Upaya Pencegahan Pernikahan Anak Pasca Revisi UU Perkawinan. *Journal of Islamic and Law Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 2 (2022). 368.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Himawan Tatura dan Erwin Jusuf Thaib, Efektivitas Pelaksanaan Undang-undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 Tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 Tentang Perkawinan di Kabupaten Pohuwato, *As-Syams: Journal Hukum Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2020), 45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Aris Saifudin dkk, Efektivitas Penerapan Pasal 7 Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 Tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 Tentang Perkawinan Oleh Hakim Dalam Perkara Dispensasi Kawin, *Journal of Lex Generalis (JLS)*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2023). 762.

consequences that might arise from the denial of a marriage dispensation application. In order for the policy of marriage dispensation in the

Therefore, the policy that the government should implement is not just a judiciary-based prevention strategy by raising the marriageable age for candidates, but also one that is backed by initiatives from key government departments, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Communication and Information, and the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission to collaborate in efforts to inhibit the rate of growth of child marriage in Indonesia.

In this case, the Ministry of Social Affairs aims to raise the standard of living for Indonesians to prevent poverty bondage. This effort is further supported by the Ministry of Health, whose responsibility it is to inform the public about the risks associated with early marriage because it can lead to the death of mothers and the birth of children who are disabled. Finally, the Ministry of Education and Culture is tasked with creating a curriculum to instruct young people about the dangers of promiscuity and foreign cultures that are not in line with Indonesia's noble religious and cultural norms as well as the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information and the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission which are tasked with filtering communication and information media that provide non-educational shows. Moreover, the main reason for filing a marriage dispensation application in the Religious Courts is for reasons of romance which are generally influenced by shows that are less educational by showing teenage actors with very free dating styles in various media.

In order to achieve the fundamental goal of the rule, it is necessary for parents, the social environment, governmental organisations, law enforcement authorities, and advocacy organisations to work together.



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#### D. Conclusion

- 1. From 2018 to 2022, there were ups and downs in Indonesia's dispensation of marriage cases. The largest increase, or 158% from the year before, was in the number of DK cases in 2020. From 2021 to 2022, the number of DK cases progressively fell, by 2.03% and 17.2%, respectively.
- 2. The grounds for claims for exemptions from marriage before the Religious Courts in 2023 are as follows: 1). Love 67.2%, 2). maternity (25.8%, 3). 4.6% for the economy, 2.2% for intimacy, and 5. pairing up 0.2%.
- 3. The Republic of Indonesia Supreme Court Regulation Number 5 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Trialling Applications for Marriage Dispensation, as well as Article 7 of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 Regarding Marriage, serve as the foundation for the judge's consideration when deciding the application for marriage dispensation in the Religious Courts. Judges frequently apply the fiqh principle that "rejecting mafsadah is prioritised over achieving benefit"; as a result, almost all requests for marriage dispensation in Religious Courts are accepted with the understanding that if the request is not granted then it will bring greater mafsadah than the benefit to be achieved. Some of these include the common practise of highly common and unregistered weddings.
- 4. The dispensation for marriage rules outlined in article 7 of Law Number 16 of 2019 and the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia's Regulation Number 5 of 2019 are insufficient to halt the rate at which child marriages are increasing in Indonesia. This is due to the fact that these laws exclusively rely on the judiciary, but Indonesia's child marriage issues are extremely complicated and call for joint efforts by both public and commercial institutions, particularly those that have a direct impact on them.

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