

Article

Child Marriage Challenges and Institutional Countermeasures: Exploring Factors, Impacts, and Government Strategies in Islamic Context

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ABSTRACT ENGLISH:

Child marriage has shifted from a social phenomenon into a normalized community practice, creating a stark distinction and paradox with Islamic values that emphasize human welfare (*maslahat al-ummah*) and the protection of future generations (*hifzh al-nasl*). This practice also directly hinders the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Gender Equality and No Poverty. This study aims to identify the driving factors of early marriage and analyze the strategic role of the regional government as the authorized guardian (*ulil amri*) in mitigating its negative impacts to build a resilient society. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders (*Population control and family planning Office*, public health Office, and the Office of Religious Affairs in Empat Lawang Regency), participatory observation, and focus group discussions. The findings indicate that the normalization of child marriage is driven by social constructs that view early marriage as an instant remedy for low educational attainment, poverty, lack of parental supervision, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. There is a stark distinction between the community's cultural justification and true Islamic principles; public misinterprets early marriage as a moral shield, whereas Islam substantively warns against creating a "weak generation" (*dzurriyyatan dhi'afan*). The regional government's role as the authorized guardian (*ulil amri*) in mitigating these impacts through reproductive health education and family assistance programs remains fragmented. The integration of religious institutions like the KUA in deconstructing this flawed understanding is not yet optimal. These findings imply that future policies must shift toward bottom-up community engagement and aggressive pre-marital counselling at the village level.

Keywords: Child Marriage Factors, Islamic Values, SDGs, Ulil Amri.

ABSTRACT INDONESIAN:

Pernikahan anak telah bergeser dari sekadar fenomena sosial menjadi praktik masyarakat yang ternormalisasi, sehingga menciptakan distingsi dan paradoks yang tajam dengan nilai-nilai keislaman yang menekankan kemaslahatan umat (*maslahat al-ummah*) dan perlindungan generasi masa depan (*hifzh al-nasl*). Praktik ini juga secara langsung menghambat pencapaian SDGs, khususnya *Gender Equality* dan *No Poverty*. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor pendorong pernikahan dini dan menganalisis peran strategis pemerintah daerah sebagai pemimpin otoritatif (*ulil amri*) dalam memitigasi dampak negatifnya demi membangun masyarakat yang tangguh. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dihimpun melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pemangku kepentingan utama (DPPKB, Dinas Kesehatan, dan KUA di Kabupaten Empat Lawang), observasi partisipatif, serta diskusi kelompok terpusat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa normalisasi pernikahan anak didorong oleh konstruksi sosial yang menganggap pernikahan dini sebagai solusi instan atas rendahnya tingkat pendidikan, kemiskinan, kurangnya pengawasan orang tua, dan kehamilan di luar nikah. Terdapat distingsi antara justifikasi kultural masyarakat dengan prinsip Islam yang sejati; masyarakat sering kali menyalahartikan pernikahan dini sebagai pelindung moral, padahal Islam memperingatkan agar kita tidak melahirkan "generasi yang lemah" (*dzurriyyatan dhi'afan*). Peran pemerintah daerah sebagai *ulil amri* dalam memitigasi dampak tersebut melalui edukasi kesehatan reproduksi dan program pendampingan keluarga masih terfragmentasi. Integrasi lembaga keagamaan seperti KUA dalam mendekonstruksi pemahaman keliru ini juga belum optimal. Temuan ini mengimplikasikan bahwa kebijakan di masa depan harus bergeser ke arah pelibatan masyarakat berbasis *bottom-up* (dari bawah ke atas) dan konseling pranikah yang agresif di tingkat desa.

Kata Kunci: Faktor Pernikahan Anak, Nilai Keislaman, SDGs, Ulil Amri.

Introduction

Child marriage remains a critical socio-religious challenge in Indonesia, particularly within rural landscapes. According to demographic data from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Indonesia and the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN, 2020), child marriage is disproportionately concentrated in rural areas, where the prevalence for those marrying under 15 and 18 years old stands at 16.87%, compared to a significantly lower 7.15% in urban centres (Suhariyati, 2019). This upward trajectory is further reflected in national legal trends; in 2022, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection reported that religious courts processed approximately 55,000 applications for marriage dispensation nearly doubling the previous year's figures due to applicants failing to meet the minimum age requirements stipulated by state law (Jayani, 2021).

This reality presents a direct obstacle to Indonesia's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, it hinders the realization of SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which explicitly targets the elimination of all harmful practices, including child, early, and forced marriage under Target 5.3. This phenomenon is vividly mirrored in Empat Lawang Regency, South Sumatra. Data from the Central Agency of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021), reveals that the percentage of first-marriage age in 2022 for adolescents under 16 reached 15.78%, while those aged 17 to 18 surged to 22.28%. These metrics surpass the average rural child marriage rates documented by UNICEF (Badan Pusat Statistik, Bappenas, Puspaka, 2020), underscoring the severity of the issue in this region and threatening localized progress toward the 2030 SDGs agenda.

While this practice has become deeply ingrained in local tradition due to systemic issues like educational deficits and pervasive poverty, it stands in stark contrast to the religious demographics and values of the region. Out of a population of 357,673 in Empat Lawang Regency, Central Agency of Statistics records that the vast majority (269,808 residents) are Muslim. Islam views marriage (*Nikah*) as a solemn, sacred covenant (*Mithaqan Ghalizha*) built upon mutual readiness, emotional maturity, and the capacity to sustain a stable family (*Sakinah Mawaddah Warahmah*). By prematurely thrusting unprepared youth into marital responsibilities, this practice violates the higher objectives of Islamic jurisprudence (*Maqasid al-Shariah*), which explicitly mandates the protection of lineage (*Hifdh an-Nasl*), intellect (*Hifdh al-Aql*), and human well-being. Therefore, although often culturally justified under the guise of religious permissibility, widespread early marriage in Empat Lawang regency fundamentally contradicts core Islamic tenets that inherently mirror the human dignity and protection principles championed by the SDGs.

Early marriage also influences the appearance of various negative effects in economic, health, education, etc. These negative effects not only affect teenagers who engage in early marriage, but also in their children and families. Therefore, in order to overcome this, the local government as the primary stakeholder has undertaken various efforts to prevent and countermeasure the number of early marriage cases in Empat Lawang regency. Several related agencies such as The Health Office, The Office for Women Empowerment and Child Protection, The Office for Population Control and Family Planning and The Office of Religious Affairs have various programs implemented as an effort to reduce early marriage in

Empat Lawang regency. The majority of stakeholders are associated with local governments, including various components of educational institutions such as junior high and high schools. This study attempts to explain the various factors of early marriage cases in Empat Lawang regency and the role of local government itself as key policy stakeholders in addressing the case.

Method

This study was examined using a descriptive qualitative method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary data collection was conducted using in-depth interview techniques, participatory observation and focus group discussion with the key opinion leaders, society, child marriage couple as key informant. As the additional information is taken from primary stakeholders involving the local government, such as the Office for Women Empowerment and Child Protection, Population Control and Family Planning Board, the Health Office and the Office of Religious Affairs. The collected data are analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis framework, which are data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Early marriage is a form of marriage involving individuals below the minimum age limit set by each country. According to the Indonesian Republic Law Number 23 of 2002, the child is defined as someone who has not yet reached the age of 18. This principle was also emphasized in Law Number 1 of 1974, which stipulates that early marriage occurs when men marry under the age of 19 and women. Meanwhile, adolescence is a transition from childhood to adulthood. The World Health Organization (WHO) determines that adolescence lasts between 10 and 19 years. The National Population and Family Planning Agency also mentioned the age range of teenagers from 10 to 24 years old, with the record that the teenager is unmarried. Based on data from the Central Statistical Agency of Empat Lawang regency, the number of teenagers in the age range of 15-19 years in 2022 reached 31,888. This age group ranks second as the largest population group in Empat Lawang regency. Meanwhile, teenagers aged 10–14 in the same year reached 30,775 and the remaining 27,000 were under 10 years of age. Data on youth population are also divided by gender.

Factors and Impacts of Child Marriage

The research results of the Gajah Mada University Population Policy Study Center (2014) explained that there are at least five main factors that are the cause of this widespread early childhood marriage phenomenon (Djamilah & Kartikawati, 2014). First of all, poverty factor. Poverty is one of the common problems found especially for people living in rural areas. UNICEF explained that the marriage percentage of children under the age of 15 and 18 in rural areas is 16.87% while in urban areas it is only 7.15% (Badan Pusat Statistik, Bappenas, Puspaka, 2020). Secondly, the low level of education. Low educational factors also affect the economic level of the family. Generally, the higher the parent's education, then they will choose to postpone their children's marriage. Third, local traditions and customs. Often the norms, values and customs believed by the local community can affect early childhood

marriage practices (Zuhriah & Imam, 2022). Basically, this is quite related to the previous two factors, people's perception and habits to marry children who have dropped out of school are still very prevalent, especially for people in rural areas. Fourth, changes in society's values. The shift in mindset and values adopted by society as a result of globalization makes children tend to be more permissive and open to their partners. For example, there are many trends in free association, free sex and unwanted pregnancies. Fifth, lack of social media awareness and influence. The acceleration of information dissemination to teenagers and children today is made easier by the presence of social media close to them. This unfortunately is not accompanied by education and socialization related to sex education and the potential risk of problems such as reproductive health, education, and social culture that can arise due to this aberrant behavior (Sabariman, 2019).

As for early marriage cases in Empat Lawang regency itself, based on the indepth interview the prevalence of early marriage in Empat Lawang Regency is due to several things as follows.

First, lack of parental supervision. This setting is that most of the residents in Empat Lawang regency have livelihood as farmers in various sectors such as plantations, agriculture, and agriculture. fisheries and forestry. Based on interviews and observations, most cases of early marriage are experienced by teenagers with parents who have a profession as farmers or workers on farms that require them to work in gardens or forests far from home for several days. Therefore, this work often requires parents to separate and leave their homes and children to work in a garden or forest far from where they live. As a result, the daily control of teenage children is a difficult thing to do and often results in the emergence of these free associations. Although the Village Regulation (*PerDes*) on children's curfew has been enforced, the implementation of this regulation has not been maximized. This is due to the lack of awareness from the community and village officials themselves.

Second of all, the low level of education. The lack of knowledge as a result of the low education level of parents is one of the factors of the proliferation of early marriage. This is because most of the residents who work as farmers only receive education until high school. It's not uncommon for some of them to drop out of school until they finish elementary school. As a result, an understanding of the importance of parents' role in growing children is especially low in adolescents. Knowledge and understanding of the negative effects of marriage are not a meaningful consideration due to their lack of knowledge of it. Central statistical agency data shows the Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) in Empat Lawang regency is only 7.65 years and Expected Years of Schooling (EYS) is 12.08 years. This low educational background of parents has an impact on children's motivation to continue school, especially to higher education. In addition, this low level of parental education also has an effect on the understanding of child development psychologically and physically that lead to the emerge of other negative impacts such as pregnancy out of wed-lock and early marriage cases itself (Zuhriah & Imam, 2022).

Third, poverty factors and low economic levels. The poverty factor became one of the factors that led to the emergence of child marriages. This is because some families with low economic status consider that by marrying their children, the responsibility that parents have

for their children becomes lighter (KPAI, 2018). These married teenage couples are also considered to be no longer the responsibility of parents and their rights and needs will be fulfilled by their spouses. Unfortunately, on the contrary, most of the underage teenage couples have to work harder to meet the needs of their families due to the lack of ability to find jobs with a very young age. Central Statistical Agency in Empat Lawang regency reported that in 2022 the number of poor people in Empat Lawang regency was 44,172 out of Empat Lawang's total population of 357,673 people. In addition, the majority of people in Empat Lawang regency are farmers with the fluctuated income and low economic background.

Fourth, pregnancy out of wed-lock. Out-of-marriage pregnancy is one of the causes of early marriage in Empat Lawang regency. Basically, early and child marriage is a quite common phenomenon for people in Empat Lawang regency since the past. Initially, however, this marriage was carried out because of the low level of education and economy of the community at the time (Hidayatullah, 2015). However, the trend of early marriage cases in Empat Lawang regency is currently shifting to marriage caused by pregnancy outside of marriage. This is due to the prevalence of juvenile delinquency and low family and community environmental supervision (Tahoba, 2011).

This phenomenon was normalized without any social punishment. This normalization is reflected with traditional wedding processions that are still made festive and exaggerated even though the surrounding community is aware of the fact that the couple is an underage teenage couple with pregnancy cases outside of marriage. These events are often attended by local government officials whose notables have a role to prevent and cope with this (Batubara & Manik, 2023).

For couples who have experienced out-of-wedlock pregnancy, the marriage must be officially carried out immediately. Therefore, many of these teenage couples have applied for marriage dispensation to the Religious Affairs Office who plays role as the regional authority. However, the implementation is still a huge bottleneck due to the unavailability of state religious courts in Empat Lawang regency so that marriage dispensation must be submitted to the Lahat Regency Religious Court which is quite far away. As a result, many prospective teenage couples choose to marry religiously by religious figures in their village because of these limitations (Jayani, 2021).

The Role of Local Government in Child Marriage

Local government institutions play a very important role in every policy involving the welfare of the people. In various development programs, regional government institutions are one of the important elements in implementing the program (Muhadara, 2016; Rahmawati, 2014). In the prevention and countermeasures of early marriage in Empat Lawang regency, the majority of programs implemented are top-down and people rely heavily on government instructions due to low awareness and understanding of the negative effects of early marriage (Muntamah et al., 2019). Based on the results of the in-depth interview, there is still no program bottom-up based program and initiated by the local community.

On the other hand, local government cooperation and collaboration with various other parties still needs to be improved. The interaction and collaboration between these stakeholders require a collaborative and synergistic communication with one another. [Najiyati and Rahmat \(2011\)](#) define synergy as a combination and collaboration that can provide better output and results. Although commonly used in tourism development studies, this strategy is applicable to other development issues ([Najiyati & Susilo, 2011](#); [Silalahi, 2004](#)).

Prevention and countermeasures of early marriage practices are included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This is written in the 5.3 SDGs target which is focusing on abolishing all dangerous practices such as child, early and forced marriage, and also female circumcision. As the result of that, the multi-stakeholder's cooperation is necessary in achieving program goals which is reducing number of early marriage cases and solving the negative impacts emerged from the early marriage cases itself ([Zuhriah, & Imam, 2022](#)). Regional government institutions in this case Population control and family planning Office, Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Health Office and Religious Affairs Office have their own authority and programs in order to respond to this. These four organizations were chosen purposively based on pre-research results showing that these institutions have special programs that specifically try to cope with the negative effects of early marriage ([Bryson, 2007](#); [Freeman & Mcvea, 2001](#)).

Child Marriage Prevention

In order to prevent early marriage in Empat Lawang regency, Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Population control and family planning Office and the Health Office collaborated in carrying out various socialization and education programs for teenagers, especially in the field of health and youth association. This regional government organization has a program aimed to prevent child marriages through socialization and education for teenagers aged 15 to 18. These programs include sexual education and reproductive health of adolescents. This program is carried out in cooperation with educational institutions such as junior high schools and high schools that are prioritized to be carried out in sub-districts with the highest child marriage rate in Empat Lawang regency.

In addition, there are some programs that have been socialized to improve the quality of life and the protection of women. The activities include socializing the prevention of violence against women, prevention of domestic violence, prevention of violence for women with disabilities, etc. This program is intended not only for married women with a range of ages 18 and over, but also for teenagers under 18 years of age who are married.

On the other hand, Population control and family planning Office is prioritized in the prevention of early marriage for teenagers and focused on education, socialization and provision of facilities and facilities for teenagers. Several programs such as Youth Counseling Information Center, Youth Development and Welfare Family Income Improvement Business. The Information Center and Youth Development programs are activities intended for teenagers and family groups who have teenage children. The purpose of the program is to provide understanding and improve parents' knowledge, attitudes and behavior in terms of education and youth development. It also aims to provide education on reproductive health of adolescents and initiators for programs involving other adolescents. Some of his activities

include making club movie makers, other events such as the selection of *Bujang Gadis Empat Lawang*, etc (Direktorat Bina Ketahanan Remaja, 2019).

Meanwhile, in the social aspect of religion were carried out by the Religious Affairs Office. Based on the results of the Religious Affairs Office interview in this case, religious organizations are often involved in various Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection and Population control and family planning Office programs, especially in terms of socialization and religious counseling guidance on juvenile delinquency. In addition, religious counseling is also carried out in the form of studies and lectures aimed at parents. Unfortunately, there are still not many religious counseling that are specifically designed to target teenagers and initiated by the Ministry of Religion within this district level. One of the obstacles is that teenagers' low interest in learning the religious knowledge and material of juvenile delinquency prevention socialization is packaged in media or ways that are less attractive and targeted to them. Therefore, the effort is not yet maximal, especially the initiative to implement the program, which is a collaborative program chaired by other local government organizations, thus the role of the Ministry of Religion is only limited as a facilitator or source in the program.

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the local government acts as a policy creator of the prevention program that has been implemented. Policy creators or policy makers play an important role in making decisions and determining the policy direction of a program within an organization or company. In an effort to reduce early marriage in Empat Lawang regency, the programs implemented are individual and implemented by each local government organization that has different work programs and interests (Berliandaldo, Chodiq, Fryantoni, 2021).

In addition, the local government organization is also a coordinator. Coordinators are stakeholders who have the task of coordinating the program and the needs of other stakeholders involved in the program's operation. On the other hand, although delegated to other stakeholders, local governments also play a role as implementer in the program implemented. An implementer is a stakeholder who has a role as a program implementer in the field and implements it to the target program. In the implementation of the early marriage prevention program, the Population control and family planning Office sent the Planned Family Tender and the Family Empowerment and Welfare Driving Team who also collaborated with the Midwife and health workers from the Health Office.

Child Marriage Countermeasure

In the realm of safeguarding children and addressing domestic violence, Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection possesses the authority to extend support for instances of child abuse and domestic violence, including those stemming from early marriage. Findings from interviews reveal that domestic violence incidents also affect minors, attributed to their limited mental preparedness for post-marriage life. This vulnerability is compounded by the unstable nature of teenage couples, who are easily influenced by external factors. Nevertheless, it is observed that a significant number of these teenage couples can be successfully mediated, opting for peaceful resolutions. Secondary data highlights Tebing

Tinggi district, Salam district, and Pasemah Air Keruh District as areas where domestic violence cases are prevalent (Chamidah et al., 2021).

In the health aspects, Population control and family planning Office, in collaboration with the Health Office, spearheads initiatives within the health sector to combat early marriage. Meanwhile, the on-the-ground execution of the program is undertaken by the Family Companion Team and the Family Planning Board. The Family Support Team, established by National Population and Family Planning Agency, serves as the government's extended arm in endeavors aimed at reducing stunting. Comprising midwives, the Family Empowerment and Welfare Team, and Family Planning cadres, this team, affiliated with the Corruption Eradication Commission, is tasked with identifying families at risk of stunting categorized as *4T: Too young, Too old, Too close, and Too many*. In the context of mitigating early marriage, these measures prove valuable in addressing potential adverse effects associated with early unions. This includes providing assistance and education to prospective brides regarding marriage preparedness and the implications of pregnancy, with a focus on addressing stunting issues.

Meanwhile, the Health Office possesses the mandate to address health-related challenges encountered by underage adolescents, particularly in enhancing maternal and child safety. This responsibility stems from the heightened health risks faced by pregnant women under the age of 18, including a higher likelihood of maternal and infant mortality, pregnancy complications, infantile abnormalities, premature delivery, and postpartum depression. These negative outcomes are often a result of the inadequate physical and mental preparedness of these young women. Healthcare professionals such as midwives and obstetricians, operating in community health centers (*PUSKESMAS*) and Regional General Hospitals, are designated as aides and overseers for prospective brides, guiding them in their preparation for marriage and pregnancy from a health perspective (Tahoba, 2011).

According to the Head of Family Planning, findings from interviews underscored the role of the Health Office as a collaborator with Population Control and Family Planning Office in addressing health issues arising from underage pregnancy. This collaboration involves population control through the provision of contraceptives and other reproductive health measures. Furthermore, the Health Office wields authority in managing the well-being of mothers and children post-childbirth at various health facilities, including community health centers and hospitals.

Local Government Role in Islamic Perspective

Child marriage -as described before- has become deeply ingrained in local tradition due to systemic issues like educational deficits and pervasive poverty, it stands in stark contrast to the religious demographics and values of the region (Schaffnit et al., 2019). According to data from the Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the proportion of the population practicing Islam in this regency/city reached 99.9 percent of the total population in 2023, which amounted to 336.69 thousand people (Darmawan, 2024).

In Islam, marriage (*Nikah*) is viewed as a solemn, sacred covenant (*Mithaqan Ghalizha*) built upon mutual readiness, emotional maturity, and the capacity to sustain a stable

family (*Sakinah, Mawaddah, wa Rahmah*). Early marriages often fail to meet these core principles of well-being and maturity. By prematurely thrusting unprepared youth into marital responsibilities, this practice violates the higher objectives of Islamic jurisprudence (*Maqasid al-Shariah*), which explicitly mandates the protection of lineage (*Hifdh an-Nasl*), intellect (*Hifdh al-Aql*), and human well-being (*Hifdh an-Nafs*). Therefore, although often culturally justified under the guise of religious permissibility, widespread early marriage in Empat Lawang fundamentally contradicts core Islamic tenets—tenets that inherently mirror the human dignity and protection principles championed by the SDGs (Candra, 2026).

From an Islamic perspective, the government holds a divinely sanctioned responsibility to foster a just, orderly, and prosperous society while safeguarding the welfare of its citizens. As the highest authority in public policy, local governments act as stakeholders tasked with ensuring that laws protect human rights without conflicting with religious values. This authority is rooted in the Al-Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa verse 59:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤَيِّلُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ

"O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result." (Q.S. An-Nisa [4]: 59)

This verse mandates that Muslims obey Allah, His Messenger, and the *Ulil-Amr* (those who hold governing power). Consequently, when the government establishes legal policies regulating the minimum age for marriage and enforces sanctions against violations, citizens are religiously obligated to comply, provided these regulations preserve public interest and align with the spirit of the Qur'an and Hadith.

Regrettably, the normalization of early marriage by the local community—often validated by the attendance of regional officials at these weddings—has exacerbated the problem. Instead of fostering prosperous households, early marriage traps adolescent couples in vicious cycles of hardship. Many are forced to drop out of school, a direct setback to SDG 4 (Quality Education). This lack of educational attainment directly perpetuates generational poverty, undermining SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Mustofa, Wahyudi, & Marpuah, 2025).

Furthermore, early marriage heavily restricts women's empowerment, a value highly esteemed in Islam. By hindering young women from completing their education and pursuing optimal personal development, the practice severely threatens maternal and neonatal health, directly impeding progress toward SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being).

Addressing this crisis is paramount to ensuring the quality of future generations. Children are a reflection of a nation's future, and building human resources that are physically, mentally, and spiritually robust is an essential instrument of development. Islam strongly warns against leaving behind a vulnerable lineage, as explicitly commanded in *Surah An-Nisa* verse 9:

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَافًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

"And let those fear (in their behaviour toward orphans) who if they left behind them weak offspring would be afraid for them. So let them mind their duty to Allah, and speak justly." (Q.S. An-Nisa [4]: 9)

To mitigate the emergence of a weak, unqualified generation (*Dzurriyyatan Dhi'afan*), local governments must act decisively. In Empat Lawang Regency, despite the implementation of various countermeasure programs, several critical aspects require rigorous evaluation. Notably, the role of religious institutions, specifically the Office of Religious Affairs, is vital in managing the socio-religious aspects of this issue. Unfortunately, youth socialization and education initiatives designed to prevent early marriage remain poorly executed. This stands as a major institutional failure, especially considering the high incidence of early marriages driven by out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Resolving the crisis of early marriage requires multi-sectoral cooperation, reflecting the spirit of collaboration emphasized in SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Local governments cannot act in isolation; they must forge strategic partnerships with religious institutions, educational bodies, civil society organizations, and local religious leaders (*Ulama*) to build an environment that actively deters early marriage in accordance with Islamic principles (Shirey, 2012).

Conclusion

The phenomenon of early marriage is still a problem for the people of Empat Lawang regency. The factors behind this phenomenon including lack of parental supervision, low level of education, poverty factors and low economy, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. In dealing with this, local governments play a role as public policies, coordinators and implementers in implementing various prevention and countermeasures programs from the negative effects of early marriage. Most of the programs implemented are top-down where the community still relies heavily on local government instructions and directions. The community in this case only serves as the object of development and the target of the program implemented. This is due to the low knowledge and public awareness of the negative effects of early marriage itself.

In an Islamic perspective, local governments have power and authority in dealing with the problems of the people, one of which is early marriage. The public should obey and follow this direction as long as it is good. In addition, early marriage countermeasures are essential to avoid the birth of a generation of under qualified and weak both physically and spiritually. Because early marriage involves couples who are still very young with mental, physical, and immature mind readiness, it often has a bad effect on growing children especially for couples who get married due to pregnancy out of wed-lock.

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