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Implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 on Marriage Concerning the Minimum Age of Marriage at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Barru District, Barru Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage, specifically related to the regulation of the minimum age for marriage, at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Barru District, Barru Regency. The law stipulates that the minimum age of marriage for both men and women is 19 years, aiming to reduce early marriage and its negative impacts. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews with KUA officials, community leaders, and couples undergoing the marriage process. The findings reveal that the KUA of Barru District has made significant efforts to socialize and enforce the regulation. However, challenges remain, including cultural traditions that support early marriage, limited awareness among rural communities, and the availability of judicial dispensation mechanisms. This research highlights the need for continued education and cross-sector collaboration to effectively implement the law and protect the rights and welfare of young people in the region.



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Keywords: marriage,law, age, early marriage, policy,implementation.

A. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a fundamental institution in Indonesian society, deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and social norms. However, the prevalence of early marriages has raised significant concerns regarding the health, education, and overall well-being of young individuals. Recognizing these issues, the Indonesian government amended the Marriage Law through Law Number 16 of 2019, which sets the minimum age for marriage at 19 years for both men and

women. This legislative change aims to protect the rights of children and promote their development.

The implementation of this law, particularly at the grassroots level, involves various stakeholders, including the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). The KUA plays a pivotal role in overseeing marriage registrations and ensuring compliance with legal requirements. Their responsibilities include providing counseling, verifying documents, and educating the public about marriage laws. The effectiveness of the KUA in enforcing the new age requirement is crucial for the law's success.

Despite the legal framework, challenges persist in the practical application of the law. Cultural traditions, economic pressures, and limited awareness often lead to the continuation of underage marriages. Studies have shown that in certain regions, the rate of early marriages remains high, indicating gaps between legislation and practice. For instance, research in Balusu District, Barru Regency, revealed ongoing instances of early marriages despite the legal age requirement .

To address these challenges, the KUA has implemented various strategies, including community outreach programs and collaboration with local leaders. These initiatives aim to raise awareness about the implications of early marriage and the importance of adhering to the legal age limit. However, the effectiveness of these measures varies across different regions, influenced by local customs and societal attitudes.

Furthermore, the provision for marriage dispensation in the law allows exceptions under specific circumstances, which can undermine the intent of the legislation. The ease of obtaining such dispensations has been criticized for potentially facilitating underage marriages. A study in Mejayan District highlighted concerns over the frequency and justification of granted dispensations, suggesting a need for stricter oversight .

The role of education in preventing early marriages cannot be overstated. Ensuring that young individuals, especially girls, have access to quality education is a key factor in delaying marriage and promoting empowerment. Educational programs that focus on reproductive health, legal rights, and personal development are essential components in changing societal perceptions and behaviors regarding early marriage.

Moreover, the involvement of religious and community leaders is vital in reinforcing the importance of adhering to the legal marriage age. Their influence can help shift cultural norms and encourage communities to prioritize the well-being of their youth. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local leaders are necessary to create a supportive environment for the law's implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are also critical in assessing the effectiveness of the law and the KUA's role. Regular data collection, analysis of marriage trends, and feedback from communities can inform policy adjustments and targeted interventions. Transparency and accountability in the dispensation process are particularly important to prevent misuse and ensure that exceptions are granted only when truly warranted.

In conclusion, while Law Number 16 of 2019 represents a significant step towards protecting young individuals from the adverse effects of early marriage, its success depends on comprehensive implementation strategies. The KUA's active engagement, community education, and strict regulation of dispensations are essential components in achieving the law's objectives. Ongoing research and policy refinement will further enhance efforts to eradicate early marriages in Indonesia.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to explore the implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning marriage, specifically focusing on the minimum age requirement enforced by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Barru District, Barru Regency. The qualitative approach was selected to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the policy is implemented in practice, including the perceptions, experiences, and challenges encountered by stakeholders.

The research was conducted at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Barru District. The selection of this site was based on purposive sampling due to its relevance in applying marriage law regulations at the community level. The informants in this study consisted of KUA officials, marriage counselors, local community leaders, and married couples who had engaged with the KUA after the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants to obtain detailed insights

into how the minimum age requirement for marriage is enforced, as well as the challenges and responses from the community. Observations were made to examine the administrative procedures and counseling sessions conducted at the KUA. In addition, relevant legal documents and marriage registration records were analyzed to validate the implementation process.

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes three concurrent steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying the information obtained. The data were then displayed in a structured narrative and matrix form to facilitate interpretation. Lastly, the conclusions were drawn based on emerging patterns and verified through triangulation.

To ensure data validity, the researchers employed triangulation of sources, techniques, and theories. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from different informants. Technique triangulation was applied by combining interviews, observations, and documentation. Theoretical triangulation was done by interpreting findings using different legal and sociological perspectives. This methodological framework is designed to ensure a rigorous and reliable analysis of the policy implementation, offering in-depth insights into the factors that support or hinder the enforcement of the minimum age for marriage under Indonesian law.

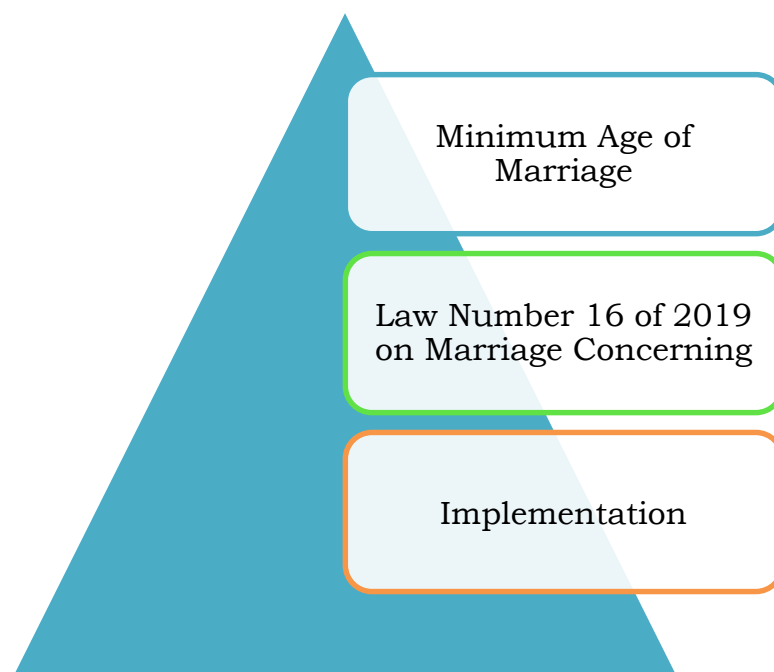


Figure 1 Research Flow Diagram

C. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ Research Results

The implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Barru District has shown significant progress. The officials at KUA have made efforts to socialize the new minimum age requirement for marriage, which has increased from 16 to 19 years. This change aims to promote more mature and responsible marriages. Many communities are becoming aware of the importance of marrying at a suitable age, especially for physical and psychological readiness. Mr. Kml., a marriage counselor at KUA Barru, emphasized in an interview that the marriage law is intended to protect children under the age of 19 from early marriage. According to him, “The Marriage Law is expected to protect children under the age of 19 by restricting marriage until that age.” This reflects the institution’s commitment to aligning marriage practices with legal protections for youth.

Ahmad Kamal further stated that while the regulation is clear, its implementation faces challenges. In reality, many underage marriages still occur for various reasons, including cultural pressure, economic issues, or unplanned pregnancies. He added, “We try to educate the public through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, KUA, and counselors about the risks of free relationships and the importance of waiting until 19 to marry.”

The KUA’s approach includes proactive engagement with the community. Through counseling sessions and public seminars, they aim to inform parents and teenagers about the risks of early marriage. This community-level effort supports the broader legal framework, ensuring that the spirit of the law is felt in daily practices. These efforts are ongoing and require cooperation from multiple stakeholders. Another source, Mr. Hms., Head of KUA Barru, highlighted the positive aspects of the policy. He explained that the new minimum age requirement has helped improve the quality of marriages. He believes that older couples are more physically, mentally, and financially prepared, which contributes to lower divorce rates and healthier families.

Idris stated that “delaying marriage allows young people to build better foundations for life. They are more likely to finish school, get jobs, and prepare themselves emotionally.” These improvements have long-term implications, not only for individuals but also for the well-being of the broader community. However, the implementation has also led to a rise in marriage dispensation requests at religious courts. When couples under 19 wish to marry, they are

required to obtain permission from the court. This legal workaround sometimes undermines the purpose of the law, especially when judges approve dispensations too easily or without adequate psychological assessments.

Despite this challenge, the existence of the dispensation mechanism indicates a flexible legal approach, allowing for case-by-case assessment. Yet, many stakeholders believe that stricter control and clearer guidelines are needed to prevent the misuse of this legal provision. Otherwise, the goal of protecting children could be compromised.

The staff at KUA recognize that one of the weaknesses in implementation is the lack of capacity among some officials. Not all marriage officers are well-versed in the legal changes or their social implications. This issue points to the need for consistent training and updates to ensure effective law enforcement. Another factor influencing the success of the law is community perception. In some rural areas, traditional views on early marriage persist. Families may push for marriage to avoid social stigma from teenage relationships or pregnancies. Changing these perceptions requires a long-term educational effort.

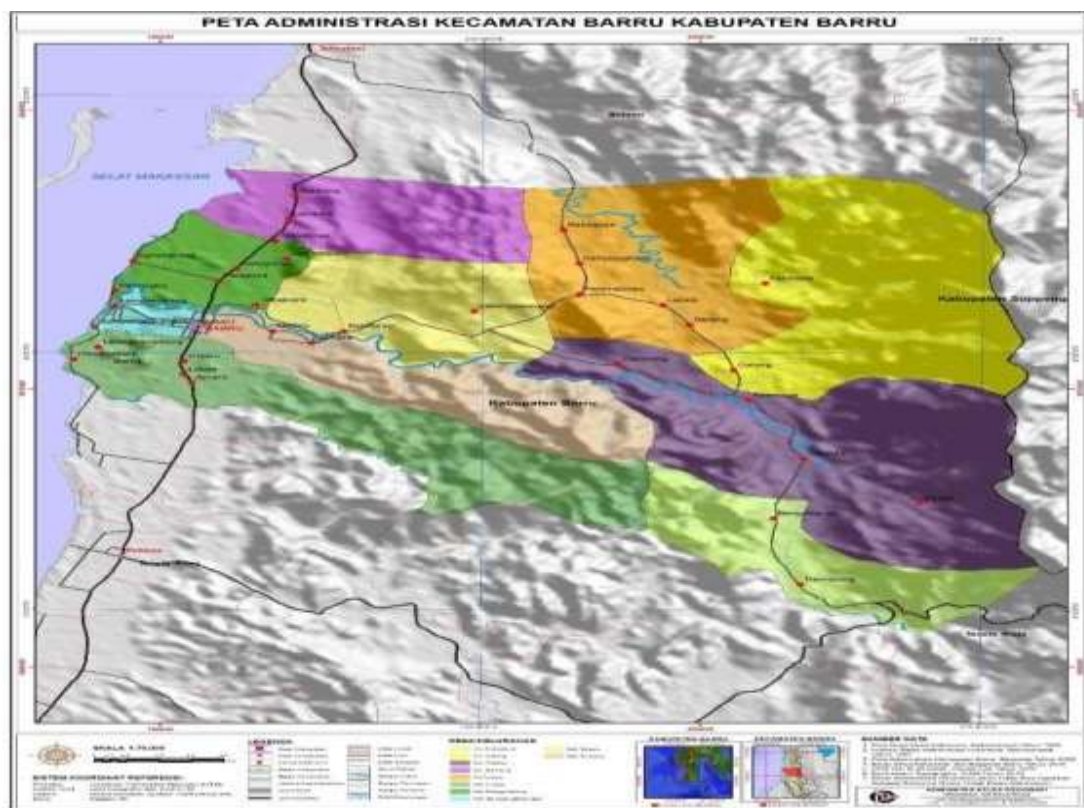
The difference in perspective between Idris and Kamal highlights the complexity of policy implementation. While Idris focuses on the long-term benefits such as mental readiness and economic stability, Kamal underscores the importance of child protection and psychological maturity. Both views are valid and reflect the multi-dimensional nature of marriage reform. Both counselors agree that public awareness is essential. Even though legal restrictions exist, their impact depends on how well the community understands and accepts the underlying principles. This indicates that legal reform must be accompanied by cultural and educational initiatives to shift societal norms.

The KUA Barru has initiated various collaborative programs with local schools and youth organizations to disseminate information. These programs focus on reproductive health, legal literacy, and life planning. Their goal is to create a generation that values marriage readiness and understands the implications of early unions. One success indicator is the decreasing number of marriages involving teenagers. Since the enactment of the revised law, records show a reduction in early marriage cases in the district. However, this success is not uniform and depends largely on local leadership and institutional consistency.

Parents also play a crucial role. Some parents support the regulation because they understand its benefits. Others resist it due to economic pressure or cultural expectations. Therefore, KUA counselors often engage with parents directly during premarital sessions to foster mutual understanding. From the interviews, it was found that many young people are willing to wait until they reach the legal age once they are informed about the benefits. This shows that youth education is effective and should be continued through formal and informal platforms.

Overall, the implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 has contributed to reducing early marriages and raising awareness. However, it also revealed gaps in enforcement, public understanding, and resource capacity. Continuous evaluation and adaptive policies are essential to address these challenges. In conclusion, while the implementation of the law at KUA Barru is progressing, it must be supported by better regulation dissemination, improved human resources, and a holistic social approach. Both legal protection and cultural transformation are necessary to ensure that the goals of the law are realized sustainably.

1. Location Map



The location map of Barru District can be described as follows:

Figure 2 Map of Barru District Location

➤ DISCUSSION

The implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Barru District has shown encouraging progress in reforming marriage practices, especially concerning age requirements. The increase in the legal minimum age for marriage from 16 to 19 years aims to protect adolescents from premature unions and to promote psychological, emotional, and economic readiness. This legislative change is seen as a significant step towards more responsible and sustainable marriages. Mr. Kml, a marriage counselor at KUA Barru, affirmed that the law is meant to safeguard youth from the consequences of early marriage. He highlighted that such protection is essential in ensuring the well-being and future of minors. As a result, community awareness is gradually increasing, especially among those who have received counseling or educational outreach. The law's presence is increasingly felt not only as a rule but as a cultural shift in understanding marriage readiness. Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to its complete and uniform implementation.

Despite the legal clarity, the practical enforcement of the law faces notable challenges. Early marriages continue to occur due to several socio-cultural and economic factors. Cultural norms that favor early marriage, financial difficulties, and unplanned pregnancies are among the most cited reasons. These realities reflect a disconnect between legal ideals and societal practices, highlighting the complexity of behavioral change. Mr. Kml noted that his office regularly educates the community about the risks of free relationships and the importance of waiting until the legal age. Through seminars, outreach, and premarital counseling, KUA tries to bridge this gap. However, change is slow and requires consistent community engagement. Legal instruments alone are not sufficient without active societal support and transformation. Therefore, implementation must be accompanied by intensive and targeted educational campaigns.

Mr. HMI Head of KUA Barru, emphasized the positive implications of the new regulation. He argued that delaying marriage provides youth with more time to prepare emotionally, financially, and intellectually. This preparation results in stronger marital relationships, healthier families, and lower divorce rates. According to Idris, young people who marry at a more mature age are more likely to complete their education and pursue stable employment. These outcomes are aligned with the broader goals of sustainable family

development. The improved quality of marriage under the new regulation demonstrates how legal reform can contribute to broader social welfare. In addition, the regulation aligns with global efforts to end child marriage and improve reproductive health. However, these benefits depend heavily on how well the law is embraced at the community level. Strong leadership and institutional consistency remain key factors in achieving this.

Nevertheless, one unintended consequence of the regulation is the rise in marriage dispensation cases submitted to religious courts. When couples below the age of 19 wish to marry, they are required to seek legal permission through a formal court process. While this mechanism provides flexibility, it can also undermine the spirit of the law if not properly regulated. Cases of dispensations being granted too easily or without psychological assessments are of particular concern. Such leniency may inadvertently perpetuate early marriage under the guise of legality. Therefore, there is a need for clearer guidelines and stricter evaluation criteria for judges handling such cases. A balance must be struck between legal flexibility and child protection principles. Without this, the law's long-term objectives may be compromised.

Another key challenge in implementing the law is the limited capacity and preparedness of some KUA personnel. Not all marriage officers are fully informed about the legal amendments or equipped to address the social dynamics surrounding early marriage. This deficiency highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and legal training for staff. Regular capacity-building initiatives must be institutionalized to ensure that the law is enforced uniformly and effectively. The success of legal reform depends significantly on the competencies of those tasked with implementation. In addition, staff must be trained to conduct culturally sensitive outreach that resonates with local values. By strengthening institutional capacity, KUA can serve as a more effective agent of change. These improvements will also enhance public trust in the institution's authority and credibility.

Community perception remains a central factor in the success or failure of the law. In rural areas, traditional views that favor early marriage still dominate social expectations. Families may insist on early unions to avoid the stigma of premarital relationships or pregnancies. These entrenched norms require long-term cultural transformation through sustained education and advocacy. KUA has responded by collaborating with schools and youth organizations to raise awareness on reproductive health and life planning. This approach combines legal education with cultural sensitivity to gradually shift mindsets. Changing social

norms is a generational process that must be supported by consistent messaging. Furthermore, involving religious and community leaders can help legitimize and reinforce the law's intent. Without changing community attitudes, legal interventions may face passive resistance.

The difference in emphasis between Mr. Ids and Mr. Kml illustrates the multidimensional nature of policy implementation. While Idris highlights the long-term benefits of delaying marriage, such as emotional and economic maturity, Kamal stresses the need for child protection and psychological readiness. Both perspectives are valid and reflect different but complementary aspects of the issue. This divergence also underscores that legal reform requires a holistic approach encompassing legal, psychological, educational, and social dimensions. Effective implementation depends not only on legislation but also on how it is interpreted and applied by various stakeholders. Recognizing the value of both views enables a more nuanced and inclusive approach to reform. This balance is essential for building a comprehensive and effective response to early marriage. Moreover, policy debates must remain open to diverse experiences on the ground.

Public awareness and education remain the most effective tools in ensuring compliance with the new regulation. Legal provisions, no matter how well-written, will have limited impact without community understanding and acceptance. Therefore, KUA's initiatives to promote legal literacy and marriage readiness are critical in driving behavioral change. Educational campaigns that target both youth and parents have shown promising results. Many teenagers, once informed of the risks and consequences of early marriage, express willingness to wait. This demonstrates the power of information and the importance of early intervention. Outreach efforts must therefore be sustained and expanded through formal education, social media, and community forums. When people understand the rationale behind a law, they are more likely to support and follow it. This is the foundation of voluntary legal compliance and long-term cultural change.

Encouragingly, statistics indicate a decrease in early marriage cases in Barru District since the enactment of the revised law. This trend suggests that the combination of legal reform and public education is yielding results. However, this progress is not uniform across all areas and remains highly dependent on local leadership and institutional performance. Some regions show more success than others due to more active enforcement and outreach. Parental attitudes also vary; some embrace the regulation for its protective benefits, while others resist due to economic pressure or social expectations. Direct engagement with parents during premarital

counseling has helped reduce this resistance. These interactions foster dialogue and shared understanding between officials and families. Moving forward, KUA should continue tailoring its approach based on local needs and responses.

In conclusion, the implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 in KUA Barru District has made measurable strides in reducing early marriage and promoting marriage readiness. Nonetheless, several implementation gaps remain, particularly in enforcement consistency, human resource capacity, and community perceptions. Strengthening institutional competence, refining legal mechanisms like dispensations, and enhancing cultural education are essential next steps. The intersection of law, culture, and education must be carefully managed to achieve sustainable results. Stakeholder collaboration—from judges to educators to religious leaders—is vital in reinforcing the law’s principles. Legal protection alone cannot succeed without societal buy-in and normative change. Therefore, a dual approach—legal and cultural—is required to fully realize the spirit and objectives of the law. Continued evaluation and adaptive policy design will ensure long-term success in protecting the youth and improving marital outcomes.

D.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Conclusion

The implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage in the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) of Barru District has brought positive change by raising the legal minimum age for marriage, thereby aiming to protect children and promote more mature and stable marital unions. Despite the progress observed, challenges persist in the form of cultural traditions, economic pressures, and the inconsistent enforcement of the law. While institutional efforts such as counseling and public education have yielded improvements, early marriages still occur, especially when marriage dispensations are misused. Moreover, differences in interpretation and emphasis among KUA officials reveal the multifaceted nature of policy implementation. Nonetheless, the law has laid a strong legal foundation to reduce early marriage rates, and its success largely depends on collaboration between institutions and the community.

➤ Recommendations

1. Strengthen legal enforcement: Authorities should ensure that the process of granting marriage dispensations is regulated strictly, with thorough psychological assessments and clear eligibility standards to prevent the law from being undermined.
2. Capacity building for KUA staff: Ongoing training and legal education should be provided to KUA officers to improve their understanding and capability in handling marriage-related issues under the new legal framework.
3. Community engagement and education: More extensive and culturally sensitive outreach programs should be conducted to educate parents, youth, and community leaders on the benefits of delaying marriage and the risks of early unions.
4. Cross-sector collaboration: The government, religious institutions, educational bodies, and civil society organizations must work together to reinforce the objectives of the law through integrated programs and consistent messaging.
5. Monitoring and evaluation: A regular evaluation system should be implemented to monitor the effectiveness of the law's enforcement, community response, and the impact of educational campaigns on reducing early marriages.

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