

Increasing Child Marriage in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic: What Causes It?

Meningkatnya Perkawinan Anak di Indonesia pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19: Apa Penyebabnya?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study seeks to analyze the factors causing the increase in child marriages registered as students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also the increase in child marriage. The research was conducted with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data was collected through literature study, document analysis, distributing questionnaires, observation, and interviews. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of child marriages increased by 300 %. From January to June 2020 there were around 34,000 applications for marriage dispensation and around 97% of applications were granted or allowed to marry. This is a drastic increase compared to the total applications in 2019 of 23,700 applications. This makes Indonesia Rank 7 in the World for Child Marriage Cases. The results show that the increase in child marriage in Indonesia is caused by: 1) Changes in learning patterns; 2) The deteriorating economic condition of the family due to COVID-19, these two things are significant factors; 3) belief in religion, family, and customs; 4) the influence of friends who married early into two small factors. The hope is that the government will not let married children stop getting an education. Rather it provides training or courses both to support the economy and parenting.

Keywords

Child Marriage; Covid-19; Distance Learning; School Closures

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini berupaya untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor penyebab meningkatnya pernikahan anak yang tercatat sebagai siswa di masa pandemi COVID-19. Tidak hanya kehilangan pembelajaran akibat pandemi COVID-19, tetapi juga meningkatnya perkawinan anak. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi kepustakaan, analisis dokumen, penyebaran angket, observasi, dan wawancara. Selama pandemi COVID-19, jumlah pernikahan anak meningkat 300%. Dari Januari hingga Juni 2020 ada sekitar 34.000 permohonan dispensasi nikah dan sekitar 97% permohonan dikabulkan atau dibolehkan menikah. Jumlah tersebut meningkat drastis dibandingkan total aplikasi pada 2019 sebanyak 23.700 aplikasi. Hal ini menjadikan Indonesia peringkat 7 dunia untuk kasus perkawinan anak. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan, bahwa peningkatan perkawinan anak di Indonesia disebabkan oleh: 1) Perubahan pola belajar; 2) Memburuknya kondisi ekonomi keluarga akibat COVID-19, dua hal ini menjadi faktor yang signifikan; 3) Tradisi terhadap kepercayaan, keluarga, dan adat istiadat; 4) Pengaruh teman yang menikah dini, menjadi dua faktor kecil. Harapannya, pemerintah tidak membiarkan anak-anak yang sudah menikah berhenti mengenyam pendidikan. Melainkan memberikan pelatihan atau kursus baik untuk menunjang ekonomi maupun parenting.

Keywords

Pernikahan Anak; Covid-19; Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh; Penutupan Sekolah

1. Introduction

Indonesia is one of the developing countries in the Asian region that faces social problems in the form of child marriage. *Badan Pusat Statistik* (2020c) stated that the decline in the prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia who married before the age of 18 years and before the age of 15 years in the last decade was still running slowly at 11.21 percent in 2018 or only decreased by 3.5 points from 14, 67 percent in 2008. There are 1.2 million girls aged 20-24 whose first marriage occurred at the age of less than 18 years and 61.3 thousand whose first marriage was before the age of 15 years.

Pakasi (2019) explained that child marriage is one of the social problems in the world that has not been fully resolved. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, around 21 percent of girl marriages in the world still occurred, although it decreased from 25 percent in the previous decade (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, 2020c). Countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are among the most common child marriages. This high number is a cause for concern considering that child marriage violates children's human rights, limits their choices and opportunities, and makes them vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse (UNICEF & UNFPA, 2017).

Various sources state that child marriage is influenced by risk factors such as economic factors, culture, health, education, social protection, and employment. However, *Badan Pusat Statistik* (2020a) revealed that there is no known causal relationship between education, meaning that it cannot be ascertained whether marriage is a factor in dropping out of school for children or vice versa, due to dropping out of school, child marriage occurs. The poverty factor is believed to be the main driver of child marriage for women in developing countries with the motive that children for poor families become an economic burden so that marrying children is seen as a solution to improve the family's economic welfare (UNICEF, 2018). However, according to *Badan Pusat Statistik* (2020a) poverty is indeed a driving factor but not the main or only factor affecting child marriage.

Musfiroh (2016) stated four reasons why child marriage occurred in the pre-COVID-19 period, first, the theological reason, namely, related to certain religious interpretations. Second, for moral reasons, early marriage can minimize the occurrence of immoral acts and deviant

behavior among teenagers. With early marriage, free sex and pregnancy outside marriage can be reduced. Third, for health reasons, breast cancer and uterine cancer are few in women who have experienced pregnancy and childbirth at a young age. Fourth, the ideological reason, that early childhood marriage can increase the population of a religious community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the world of education to temporarily stop conventional learning in the form of physical interaction in the classroom as an effort to break the chain of virus spread through social distancing and physical distancing. According to data from UNESCO (2020) early April 2020 was the highest peak where students were affected by the closure as many as 1,598,099,008 people or 91.3% of those registered in 195 countries. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, face-to-face learning in schools has begun to be discontinued and replaced by learning from home since March 2020 as stated in the Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020 dated March 23, 2020 regarding the Implementation of Educational Policies in the Emergency Response Period for COVID-19 (Hasudungan *et al.*, 2022).

This causes not only the loss of lessons in the short term but also the loss of the quality of human resources and long term economic potential (World Bank, 2020), as well as social implications (OECD, 2020). In addition to affecting the continuity of education, the COVID-19 pandemic has also increased poverty. Based on data from *Badan Pusat Statistik* (2020c), the percentage of poor people in March 2020 was 9.78 percent, an increase of 0.56 percentage points against September 2019, and an increase of 0.37 percentage points against March 2019, bringing the number to 26.42 million people. This number is certain to grow even larger in line with the increase in the number of unemployed and the second quarter economic growth which contracted to minus 5.32% (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, 2020a).

Along with the disruption of educational activities and the decline in the community's economy, the phenomenon of child marriage is not absent during the COVID-19 pandemic and has even increased. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) stated that based on data from the Directorate General of the Religious Courts Agency

processed by KPPPA, from January to June 2020 there were around 34,000 applications for marriage dispensation and around 97% of applications were granted or permitted to marry.

The application for dispensation in the first semester of 2020 has increased dramatically compared to the total application in 2019 of 23,700 applications (KPPPA, 2021). On the other hand, Nisa (2021) who is a judge at the Religious Courts in Indonesia said that it is not always the case that the marriage dispensation application is granted by the panel of judges, the application will be assessed based on the best interests of the child. Urgent importance is the reason why KUA (*Kantor Urusan Agama*/Religious Affairs Office) and religious courts give dispensation for child marriage (Zulaiha & Mutaqin, 2021). Although there are many documents that need to be completed as a condition for applying for a child marriage dispensation. For example, a certificate that proves that the age of the bride and groom is still in accordance with the provisions of the law, a certificate from a health worker that supports the parents' statement that the marriage is legal, is very urgent to carry out.

Wijaya (2020) stated that the situation was inseparable from the COVID-19 pandemic which caused children not to go to school so they had more time to meet their partner or girlfriend. The phenomenon of child marriage occurs because many parents think that marrying off their children at an early age is part of the solution to solving economic problems, especially when there are many layoffs, during the COVID-19 pandemic (Deane, 2021). This is not only happening in Indonesia but generally in Asia, where tens of thousands of girls are forced into marriage by their desperate families after falling into poverty in the midst of a pandemic (Berkhout *et al.*, 2021). Referring to these things, this research is about the increasing phenomenon of marriage in children who are registered as students in high school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Method

This study uses descriptive qualitative research methods. This study seeks to describe situations or events related to increasing school children marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The fact is that it is

true that child marriage does not only occur during the COVID-19 pandemic and tends to increase from year to year. However, this study focuses on the factors causing the increase in child marriages that are still in school during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will also discuss the arguments of parents, and the religious court gave an 'approval' to carry out the child's marriage. Thus, there will be differences and similarities between child marriages before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To support this research, it is necessary to collect data through literature study, observation, document examination, distributing questionnaires, and interviews. The questionnaires were conducted openly and closed, while in-depth interviews were conducted with students who had chosen to get married during the COVID-19 pandemic. The documents in question are statutory documents, regulations, and wedding photos. Literature studies are needed to find theories, and relevant/previous research to support the discussion of this research. Interactive data analysis from Miles & Huberman (1994) was used in this study, consisting of: (1) data reduction; (2) data presentation; (3) conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction is an activity to summarize field notes by selecting the main points and focusing on important things related to the research focus, namely the increase in child marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The increase in child marriage due to the COVID-19 pandemic is a phenomenon that has escaped the attention of many parties, especially those who work and take care of education in Indonesia. Child marriage tends to increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. This happened in 18 provinces in Indonesia, including South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and West Nusa Tenggara. This increase makes Indonesia ranked second in Southeast Asia, and 8th in the world for cases of child marriage. Including those who filed for dispensation for child marriage to the court, also increased almost three times.

Indonesia is the second country with the highest number of child marriages in Southeast Asia after Cambodia. Throughout 2019 to 2020, there has been a

decline of 0.6%, but it is still far from the target of a decline of 8.74% in 2024. In its annual record, the National Women's Commission found 23,126 cases of child marriage in 2019. The number of the same cases rose to 64,211 cases during 2020. The number of marriage dispensations throughout 2020 shot three times compared to 2019.

Tabel 1. Child Marriage in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic

No.	Region	Total Cases
1	Province of Central Java	8.700
2	Central Kalimantan Province	300
3	Province of the Special Region of Yogyakarta	700
4	Ponorogo Regency, East Java Province	165
5	Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi Province	70
6	Bone Regency, South Sulawesi Province	198
7	East Java Province	9.453
8	Province of West Nusa Tenggara	800
9	East Kalimantan Province	1.159
10	Merauke Regency, Papua Province	100
11	Gorontalo City, Gorontalo Province	243
12	Bandung Regency, West Java Province	679
13	Aceh Singkil Regency, Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Province	2
14	Karo Regency, North Sumatra Province	50
15	Bintan Regency, Riau Islands Province	40
16	Tanjung Pinang City, Riau Islands Province	35
17	Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java Province	396
18	Special Capital Region of Jakarta	219

The list of three provinces that are the areas with the highest rates of early marriage in Indonesia in 2020. The Bangka Belitung Islands are in the first place for early marriage at 18.76 percent. In second place is West Kalimantan with an early marriage rate of 17.14 percent. While in third position is West Sulawesi with an early marriage rate of 17.12 percent. West Java is the province with the largest actual number of child marriages in

Indonesia. There are four causes of the increase in child marriage in Indonesia (see Figure 1).

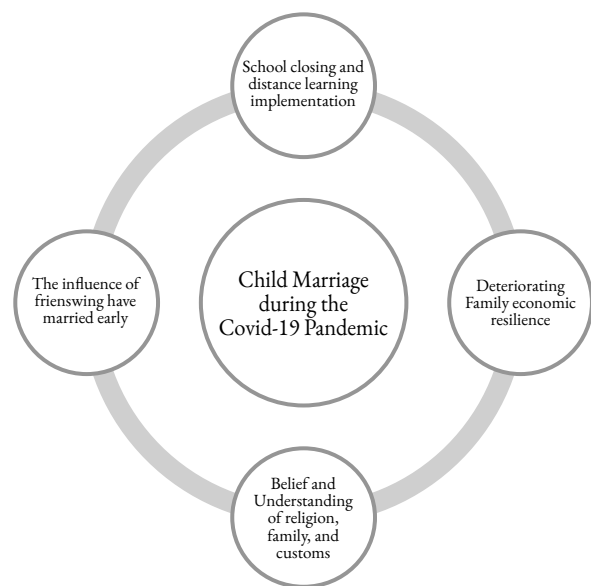


Figure 1. Four Causes of Increasing Child Marriage in Indonesia.

3.1.1. Four causes of increasing child marriage in Indonesia

A. First, changes in learning patterns

When the distance learning policy is implemented as an effort to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus while at the same time ensuring that the education process continues, child marriage is something you never thought would happen. This can be seen from the developing discourses and the problems that may arise due to distance learning, not the least of which is anticipating that there will be a phenomenon of increasing child marriage.

The government and its stakeholders focus on work in an effort to make distance learning a success. Such as providing internet quota assistance, flexibility in the use of School Operational Assistance funds, designing modules, models and learning methods during the COVID-19 pandemic and others. After more than six months of distance learning being implemented, an unexpected problem began to emerge, namely, the marriage of school children. Students who have boyfriends, during distance learning, which some students misinterpret as school holidays, become more intense in meeting their girlfriends, the term is ngapel

(visiting girlfriend's house) to home, said Bunga (not her real name).

"Because learning is carried out by distance learning, we often meet. Before the COVID-19 pandemic we were dating, my boyfriend was my classmate in 10th grade (X). And only meet when you are at school and on weekends. Since COVID-19, we meet more and more often, especially when parents go to work, we are free to meet. And we are often at home, because often seeing each other and not going to school for almost 1.5 years makes us fall into free sex. As a result, my girlfriend got pregnant, and we got married. So, I quit school, we're currently raising children, and I'm working to earn a living with odd jobs, sometimes following my parents. Source: interview with Boy," (Not real name, Bunga's boyfriend).

These social interactions shape their perception and way of thinking about child marriage, which is better than school. This urge is exacerbated by the lack of funds to continue education. Based on the explanation in the introduction to this research, it was found that there were facts of increasing child marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic or when distance learning was still ongoing. Of course, this is a social problem in the future and must be considered immediately to reduce child marriage during this pandemic, at least until distance learning is stopped. The government can stop distance learning if an antivirus has been found and students have been vaccinated.

That with the implementation of distance learning, supervision from schools, especially teachers on student interactions is limited and even replaced by parents. The problem is, parental supervision of students during distance learning at home is very limited considering that parents also have to work to earn a living for the family. Especially if both parents work and the students come from underprivileged families. Another factor that encourages child marriage is that children drop out of school or do not have access to online schools. The reason is, distance learning requires a device to study. Many students do not have smartphones, laptop, internet access is difficult in their villages. So, marriage is considered a solution, even though it is not at all.

B. Second, the deteriorating family economy

The COVID-19 pandemic also poses a big problem for parents because there are also many parents whose economic income is reduced. The economic crisis also hit Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indonesia experienced an economic recession in the third quarter of 2020. The total poor population also increased to 26.4 million people or equivalent to 9.8% of the population in March 2020.

The high number of cases of child marriage is also influenced by the condition of parents who have lost their jobs during the pandemic. This is also exacerbated by the belief that by marrying off children, the burden on parents' lives is reduced. Whereas the marriage of minors will take away the right to education of the child and close the potential for self-actualization of the child.

School closures, declining economic conditions and delays in assistance to affected families increase the potential for girls to become wives before they reach adulthood by 2030. The increasing number of child marriages, especially during the pandemic, has an impact on the greater opportunities for intergenerational poverty. Children who marry early will have a more vulnerable economic condition, it is more difficult to access education, and it is difficult to access opportunities for self-development.

Many parents want to ease the economic burden by releasing their children through marriage. The children find it difficult to pay for school life and eventually parents choose a shortcut by marrying off their children. Because with a daughter being married off, it is as if the parents have let go of the responsibility because it is her husband who takes care of the daughter.

C. Third, understanding of religious traditions, family and customs

The habit of early marriage in the family is due to not being called an old virgin. In certain families, it can be seen that there are traditions or habits of marrying off their children at a young age, and this continues continuously, so that the children in the family will automatically follow the tradition. In families who adhere to this custom, it is usually based on the knowledge and information obtained that in Islam there is no age limit for marriage, the important thing is that

you are *mumayyis* (*baligh*) and reasonable, so you should get married.

A child may be married off because he is considered *baligh*, which means that a person can begin to be burdened with some *syara'* laws, meaning carrying out religious obligations and the end of childhood. *Baligh* for boys is characterized by biological changes such as having a "wet dream", while the sign for girls is that they have had their first menstruation. Age at puberty can be different for each individual. Usually, boys experience physical changes between the ages of 11 to 13 years and girls at the age of 10 to 12 years. Thus, many events occur in the community, especially those who are Muslim, have their children married at a very early age, even under 16 years (especially for girls).

Marrying children at a young age (early marriage), so that their relationship status is certain. In addition, this marriage is carried out in order to avoid acts that are not in accordance with religious and societal norms. This marriage is expected to have a positive impact on both of them. In addition, the customs believed by certain communities are increasing the percentage of early marriages in Indonesia. For example, the belief that it is not permissible to refuse someone's proposal to their daughter even though they are still under the age of 18 is sometimes considered trivial and insulting, therefore, to prevent this assumption, parents marry off their daughters.

The factor of 'biased' religious understanding in Indonesia can be assumed to be one of the many causes of child marriage, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. When economic conditions are difficult and children spend more time at home and playing with their peers than studying online, this further encourages child marriage.

D. Fourth, the influence of friends who married early

Many child marriages occur because there is a tendency to follow their peers in the home environment who have married first. This has become a new standard in society when children can no longer be educated to continue learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce the family's economic burden. Children usually have characters or role models. His friend got married at a young age, it was fleeting and at the time that his friends

were doing well. This is the internal driving force of the child to want to get married early.

The closing of schools, and the start of distance learning have provided a space for encounters between students that are much more intense than when learning is carried out in schools. Then, students and parents have never experienced independent learning or distance learning so far, so they cannot organize and supervise learning at home. Two years of distance learning, this has resulted in not only learning loss but early marriage due to being married by accident.

In this case, a man and a woman are forced to marry at a young age (early marriage) because the woman has been pregnant before out of wedlock. In order to clarify the status of the child being conceived, a marriage is carried out between the two. And as a consequence of pregnancy and early marriage, they are expelled from school. Although this will have a negative impact on both of them, especially if both are still students and have not worked, so this newlywed couple will be prone to quarrels, sometimes just personal things.

The Central Statistics Agency noted that 3.06% of Indonesian youth who married for the first time under the age of 15 came from the lowest 40% of household expenditure groups in 2020. Meanwhile, only 1.85% of the 40% of the middle-expenditure group and 0.91% of the top 20% of the economic group. The same thing happened to young people who married for the first time at the age of 16-18 years. The majority (25.79%) came from the lowest 40% of the economic group. In contrast, only 9.27% came from the top 20% of the economic group. Women are more likely to marry early than men in Indonesia. The Central Statistics Agency noted that 3.22% of women married under the age of 15 in 2020. Meanwhile, only 0.34% of men married at that age. Then, 27.35% of women married at the age of 16-18 years. Meanwhile, only 6.40% of married men in that age category.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Child Marriage

The phenomenon of child marriage is not a new thing in Indonesia. There have been many research studies that have attempted to explain the causes of child marriage. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an

increase in child marriage (Rahiem, 2021; Handayani *et al.*, 2021). In the province of West Nusa Tenggara alone there are around 500 child marriages reported to have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic (Syafuruddin *et al.*, 2021).

The impact of child marriage based on study findings from Djamilah and Kartikawati (2014), among others, is related to reproductive health. In almost all research areas, girls who marry at a young age have the potential to experience high-risk pregnancies (Marshan *et al.*, 2013; Yaya *et al.*, 2019; Kohno *et al.*, 2020). According to the WHO (2020), pregnancy and childbirth women aged 10-19 years are at higher risk of developing eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections than those aged 20-24 years.

Another impact felt by girls who marry at a young age is the threat of mental health (Montazeri *et al.*, 2016; John *et al.*, 2019; Burgess *et al.*, 2022). Girls often experience stress when they leave their families and are responsible for their own families (Parsons *et al.*, 2015; Hidayana *et al.*, 2016; Kowal *et al.*, 2020). In addition, child marriage also has a negative impact on girls, such as being vulnerable to violence from their husbands (Wibowo *et al.*, 2021). Sakhiyya (2021) explained that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of child marriages increased by 300%. High dropout rates especially for girls during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further enlarged long-standing inequalities, whether in the economy, gender, race, disability, social, culture and religion (International Monetary Fund, 2020; Darmody *et al.*, 2021). Pre-existing structural and socio-spatial disparities were the dominant factor in child marriage, even before the COVID-19 pandemic (Kusumaningrum *et al.*, 2022). Avoid adultery until the glorification of marriage encourages a wrong understanding of children and youth in Indonesia about what the concept of marriage is, even though it contains a lot of responsibilities, problems, and so on.

COVID-19 has profoundly affected the lives of girls. Travel restrictions related to the pandemic and physical distancing make it difficult for girls to access health care, social services and community support that protects them from child marriage, unwanted pregnancies and gender-based violence. As schools remain closed, girls are

more likely to drop out and not return. Job loss and increasing economic insecurity can also force families to marry their daughters to ease the financial burden.

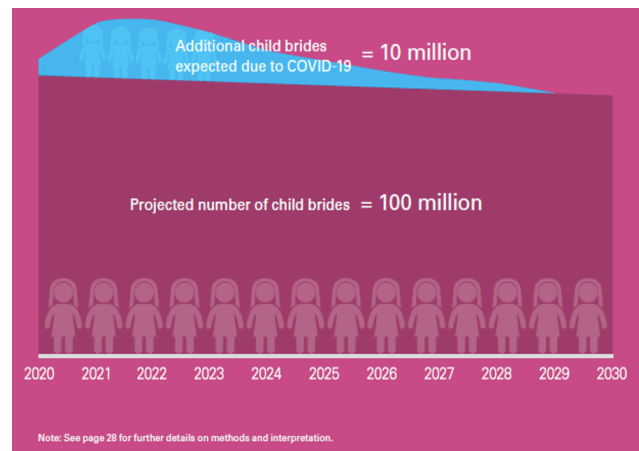


Figure 2. Forecast of child marriage by 2030 (UNICEF, 2021).

Over the next decade, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic (UNICEF, 2021). Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights (UNICEF, 2018). Due to this pandemic situation there is no strong attachment relationship between family members, especially between parents and children (Morelli *et al.*, 2020; Tambelli *et al.*, 2021; Christner *et al.*, 2021). The occurrence of early marriage in Indonesia is caused by economic factors, culture, state policies, and religious understanding. Prior to the pandemic, an increase in early child marriage had occurred, but the number of early marriages has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interestingly, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia said that the cause of the increasing number of child marriages during this pandemic was not much different from the cause of child marriage in normal conditions (Pranita, 2021). Whereas in the findings of this study, school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to why child marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic increased significantly.

And this is an undeniable fact. In 2020 when COVID-19 hit, there were more than 64,000 applications for child marriage dispensation. And the results of this study indicate that more time outside of school makes the

Tabel 2. Marriage Requirements Documents before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Marriage Requirements before the COVID-19 Pandemic (Based on Minister of Religion Regulation Number 20 of 2019)	Marriage Requirements in the COVID-19 Pandemic (Added Requirements)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Photocopy of Identity Card; 2. Photocopy of Family Card; 3. Photocopy of Birth Certificate; 4. Photocopy of National Identity Card and guardian's family card for the bride-to-be; 5. Photocopy of the marriage certificate (marriage book) of parents for the prospective bride; 6. Photocopy of Identity Card of both parents of the prospective bride and groom, and photocopy of Identity Card of 2 (two) witnesses to the marriage contract with the provisions of adult male and Muslim; 7. Tetanus Toxoid immunization/vaccine for brides-to-be. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Permission/Dispensation from the Religious Courts If: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospective Husband Less Than 19 Years Old • Prospective Wife Less Than 19 Years Old • Polygamy Permit 2. Submit a Taukil Wali bil Kitabah letter for the guardian of the prospective bride who is unable to attend the marriage ceremony; 3. Parental Permission (If the bride and groom are under 21 years old).

intensity of encounters of students who are dating at home or other places higher, and this is without parental supervision. Because parents are working to earn a living, especially because the family's economic condition is difficult due to the impact of COVID-19 ([Handayani et al., 2021](#)).

The requirements for marriage at the Office of Religious Affairs in 2021 have additional documents added ([Julian et al., 2021](#)). There are a number of additional documents that a prospective husband and wife need to prepare if they want to get married at the Office of Religious Affairs, namely (see [Table 2](#)).

The findings from [Subchi et al. \(2021\)](#) revealed that the high number of child marriages during the COVID-19 pandemic was due to the granting of an early marriage dispensation request. In fact, strictly speaking the minimum age limit for men and women is 19 years which is regulated by Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage. Based on the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), the readiness for marriage for women is 21 years while for men it is 25 years ([IPB University, 2021](#)).

Compared to the requirements for marriage before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, the documents that must be prepared in accordance with the Minister of Religion Regulation Number 20 of 2019, include: According to [Tsany \(2017\)](#) that child marriage often occurs in underserved youth or often referred to as

underserved youth, namely adolescents aged between 15-24 years because certain situations and conditions are not served by various formal services such as education, health and work. Underserved youth are teenagers who are not served formally such as education (not attending school or dropping out of school).

This means that when learning is not carried out in schools and is not under the supervision of schools and teachers, it will increase the potential of students to fall into relationships that tend to be unhealthy (free sex). Meanwhile, according to [Mubasyaroh \(2016\)](#) there are several factors that cause child marriage to occur. Namely, economic factors, parents, marriage by accident, perpetuating relationships, because of family tradition (the habit of early marriage in the family so that it is not called an old virgin), because of local customs. Child marriage is actually the beginning of new problems. This is also supported by the results of research from [Sari and Ahmad \(2021\)](#) at KUA (*Kantor Urusan Agama/ Religious Affairs office*) Rao Pasaman Timur, West Sumatra Province which states that, social, cultural factors, economic pressure, difficulty getting a job, mass media, and religion be the cause of early marriage.

The risks include violence, improper parenting, and even divorce. Violations of children's rights have a negative impact on the growth and development and life of children in the future.

The government must immediately accelerate the vaccination of students and teachers so that schools can

reopen. After the COVID-19 pandemic is over, increasing child marriage during the pandemic must be the government's priority agenda in an effort to reduce the physical and psychological impact of early marriage. Moreover, this is related to the quality of human resources, including families and taking advantage of the demographic bonus in 2030, as well as Indonesia Gold in 2045. Things that need to be done by the government, such as counseling involving stakeholders, both health workers and Family Welfare Development in the regions.

4. Conclusion

The practice of child marriage has long been practiced, especially in developing countries and involves families with low income. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the practice of marriage experienced a very significant increase. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of child marriages increased by 300%. From January to June 2020 there were around 34,000 applications for marriage dispensation and around 97% of applications were granted or allowed to marry. This is a drastic increase compared to the total applications in 2019 of 23,700 applications. Factors that contribute to increasing the practice of child marriage during the pandemic are: 1) Changes in learning patterns; 2) deteriorating economic conditions of the family; 3) Understanding of religious traditions, family and customs; 4) The influence of friends who married early. In addition, because of the 'convenience' provided by the Office of Religious Affairs in marrying children, it is inseparable because it prevents children from committing adultery which is prohibited by religion while the school is closed, or also because the girl is already pregnant. Families formed as a result of early marriage should not be left alone by the government. This family has become part of the Indonesian family, meaning that the government must pay special attention to this family, which is actually not ready to become a family. In addition to counseling about physical and psychological development, economic counseling should also be given to support the economy of families who are underprivileged. That is, when children marry and form a new family, the economic burden on the family increases. In addition, the high divorce rate for young families due to economic problems, especially during the

COVID-19 pandemic, is an important consideration that economic counseling is carried out.

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