

A Socio-Legal Systematic Review of Adolescent Reproductive Health Regulation and Child Marriage Prevention in Indonesia

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Abstract:

The issue of early marriage in Indonesia remains a serious challenge, despite progress in regulations regarding adolescent reproductive health. This study is motivated by the high number of marriage dispensations granted, which indicates a persistent gap between legal norms and social realities. The study aims to analyze the implementation of adolescent reproductive health regulations in preventing early marriage in Indonesia from a socio-legal perspective, in order to assess their effectiveness in curbing the practice of child marriage. A systematic literature review was conducted on 20 relevant articles, legal documents, and policy reports published between 2015 and 2025. The findings indicate that while the revision of Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019 and various policies—such as the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (STRANAS PPPA) and the GenRe program—have strengthened child protection, implementation still faces socio-cultural obstacles, weak cross-sectoral coordination, and resistance to sex education. Customary practices, religious interpretations, and marriage dispensation mechanisms serve as primary impediments to regulatory effectiveness. However, reproductive health education has proven effective in improving adolescents' knowledge and attitudes regarding the risks of early marriage. The study concludes that successfully preventing early marriage requires an integrative socio-legal approach combining law, education, and culture through multi-level collaboration among the government, educational institutions, religious leaders, and the community.

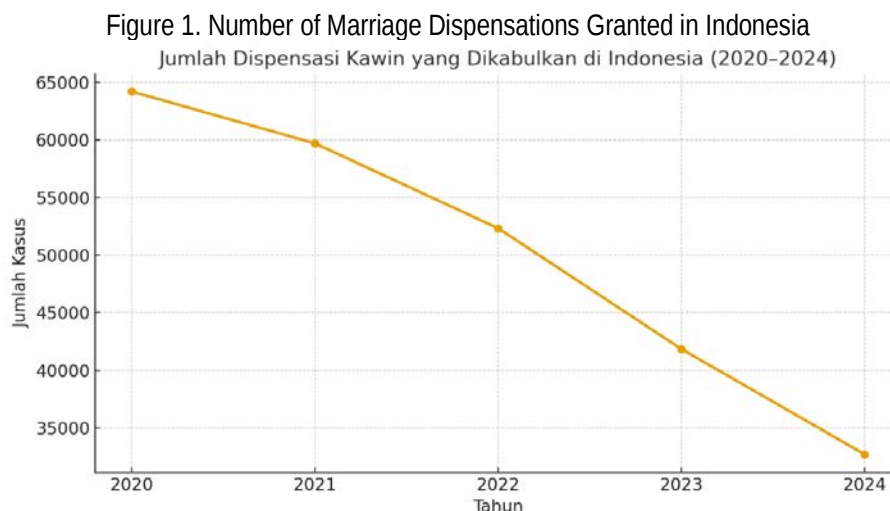
Keywords: adolescent reproductive health; early marriage; marriage dispensation; regulatory implementation; socio-legal.

INTRODUCTION

The issues of adolescent reproductive health and early marriage (child marriage) are closely interconnected global problems with long-term consequences for the well-being of individuals, families, and national development (Waite, 1925). Adolescents, as a vulnerable age group, face various health, social, and economic risks, particularly related to limited access to information and comprehensive reproductive health services (Widyowati, 2025). Fulfilling reproductive health rights, including appropriate sexual education and youth-friendly services, is key to enabling them to make responsible decisions about their future. In Indonesia, although the trend of child marriage has shown a decline in recent years (Melani et al., 2024), the prevalence

remains high in Southeast Asia and globally. Early marriage is seen as a violation of children's human rights and an obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Health), SDG 4 (Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) (Yoshida et al., 2023).

The impact of early marriage is very complex, especially for adolescent girls, because it increases the risk of obstetric complications, high maternal and infant mortality rates, and susceptibility to cervical cancer due to underdeveloped reproductive organs (Fadlyana & Larasaty, 2016). In addition, child marriage has implications for school dropouts, a cycle of poverty, domestic violence, and mental health problems (Noviana, 2015). Recognizing the urgency, the government has taken legal steps by revising Law Number 1 of 1974 to Law Number 16 of 2019, which sets the minimum age for marriage for men and women at 19 years (Umboh, 2024). On the other hand, the regulatory framework related to adolescent reproductive health (ARH) is strengthened through the Health Law and its derivatives, such as Minister of Health Regulation No. 2 of 2025, as well as the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN)'s Generation Planning program which emphasizes education, health promotion, and youth-friendly services (Zatila et al., 2025). However, the implementation of these regulations still faces significant challenges. Legally, there is still a loophole in the form of a marriage dispensation mechanism that allows marriages under the age of 19, and its use remains high. Based on data collected by the National Commission on Violence Against Women over the past five years, this can be seen in the following graph.



Source: National Commission on Violence Against Women

According to the graph, 64,211 cases of marriage dispensations were recorded in 2020, a sharp increase of almost threefold compared to the 23,700 cases in 2019. This surge was the impact of the revision of Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019, which set the minimum age for marriage at 19. As a result of this new regulation, many families applied for marriage dispensations as a legal solution to allow child marriages to continue. In 2021, the number decreased to 59,709 cases, although it remains at a high level. This figure confirms that despite increased legal awareness, the marriage dispensation mechanism is still widely used, especially in rural areas where social and cultural norms remain strongly influenced.

In 2022, the number of cases declined again to 52,338. This decline represents a positive trend, but still indicates serious challenges in regulatory implementation, particularly related to the differing perceptions between national law and prevailing social values. In 2023, 41,852 cases were recorded, a significant decrease compared to the previous year. This trend is thought to be the result of more intensive child marriage prevention programs, including adolescent reproductive health education, the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN)'s Generation Planning (GenRe) program, and cross-ministerial and institutional involvement. In 2024, the number of marriage dispensations declined significantly to 32,706 cases. This figure can be interpreted as a sign of the effectiveness of preventive policies, coupled with the strengthening of the role of local governments, educational institutions, and health services in suppressing the practice of child marriage. Data trends from 2020 to 2024 show a consistent decline in the number of marriage dispensations in Indonesia, from 64,211 cases in 2020 to 32,706 cases in 2024. This decline indicates positive progress in implementing regulations and efforts to prevent child marriage. However, the still-tens of thousands of cases each year confirm that the marriage dispensation mechanism remains a legal loophole exploited by the public. This requires a more comprehensive

strategy, including strengthening public education, consistent law enforcement, and aligning legal norms with local culture to effectively suppress the practice of child marriage in Indonesia.

From a health perspective, the provision of Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) services at community health centers (Puskesmas) and educational institutions is still suboptimal, both in terms of coverage and quality. Adolescents' knowledge of the risks and consequences of early marriage is also unequal, resulting in many not understanding its long-term impacts on physical, mental, and social health. Furthermore, utilization of Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) services remains relatively low, due to limited access, a lack of information, and cultural barriers that discourage adolescents from using these services (Anggraeni & Santoso, 2014). From a socio-legal perspective, there is a significant gap between national legal provisions (law on the books) and their implementation in daily practice (law in action). This gap arises because the implementation of regulations in the field is heavily influenced by various social, cultural, economic, and political factors that vary from region to region. Furthermore, public perception and the views of religious leaders play a significant role in determining the extent to which regulations regarding early marriage prevention can be effectively implemented. Thus, the success of legal implementation depends not only on the quality of the regulations but also on the social dynamics and local values that shape public acceptance of the policy (Fatoni et al., 2015). Other obstacles that arise in efforts to provide adolescent reproductive health services include weak coordination between institutions that should work in an integrated manner, including at the local government level, health facilities, and educational institutions. Furthermore, the ability and competence of health workers to provide adolescent reproductive health education and services remains inadequate, resulting in information that is less comprehensive and does not always meet adolescents' needs. These challenges are compounded by strong cultural resistance, where sexual education is often viewed as sensitive or inappropriate for open discussion. This view leads many parties, including parents, educators, and community leaders, to be reluctant to support adolescent reproductive health education programs. As a result, the dissemination of important information about reproductive health is limited and uneven, hampering the effectiveness of risk prevention programs for adolescents (Juniar et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have examined the impact of early marriage on reproductive health (Ariani et al., 2021), (Susiloningtyas & Fitriana Rahayu, 2022), adolescent knowledge levels (Oktavia, 2021), and the implementation of child marriage prevention policies in general (Fatoni et al., 2015). However, a significant research gap exists: the lack of a comprehensive systematic review in the past five years that integratively examines how the implementation of the entire spectrum of child marriage prevention regulations directly relates to child marriage prevention, particularly following the 2019 Marriage Law revision. Furthermore, socio-legal approaches that combine legal analysis with social, cultural, and institutional factors are still minimal, even though this is crucial for understanding the dynamics of policy implementation in practice. Studies also lack attention to implementation barriers across sectors and levels of government (central, provincial, district/city) involving various actors such as the Health Office, Education Office, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Religious Courts, and the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN). Therefore, this systematic review is crucial for synthesizing existing empirical evidence, identifying successful implementation patterns and consistent barriers, and providing a strong foundation for formulating more effective and integrated policies in the future. Its primary objective is to comprehensively examine the implementation of the KRR regulation in Indonesia and analyze its effectiveness in the context of preventing early marriage from a socio-legal perspective. More specifically, this study aims to identify and synthesize research findings on the implementation of KRR regulations and programs at the operational level, analyze socio-legal factors that act as barriers and drivers to implementation, and assess the extent to which the KRR regulation has contributed to reducing the number of child marriages in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a systematic literature review method to examine the implementation of adolescent reproductive health regulations in preventing early marriage in Indonesia from a socio-legal perspective. The systematic review method was chosen because it can provide a comprehensive overview of concepts, theories, regulations, and previous research findings relevant to reproductive health issues and the prevention of early marriage. The literature collection process was carried out through searching scientific articles, reputable journals, proceedings, laws and regulations, reports from international and national institutions, and textbooks that discuss the topics of adolescent reproductive health, legal regulations, child protection, and socio-legal practices in preventing early marriage. Literature sources were obtained from international databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar, as well as from Sinta-accredited

national journals and relevant official policy/regulatory documents (e.g., the Marriage Law, the Child Protection Law, the Health Law, and Ministerial Regulations related to reproductive health). The inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study are as follows:

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Articles in the Literature Review

Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication Year	Articles, journals, proceedings, and policy documents published in the last 10 years (2015–2025) to maintain relevance to the current regulatory context.	Publication more than 10 years ago (before 2015).
Research Topics	Research or documents that discuss the implementation of adolescent reproductive health regulations, policies on preventing early marriage, and socio-legal perspectives in Indonesia.	Research that is not relevant to reproductive health regulations, prevention of early marriage, or socio-legal perspectives.
Language	Articles in Indonesian or English.	Articles in languages other than Indonesian and English.
Publication Type	Scientific articles, reputable journals, proceedings, textbooks, official reports from national/international institutions, and legal documents (UU, PP, Permen, Perda).	Publications that do not originate from accredited scientific sources, or unofficial legal documents.
Content Suitability	Articles or documents with relevant empirical results/conceptual studies, fully accessible (full text), and suitable for socio-legal analysis.	Articles in the form of opinions, popular news, blogs, or non-scientific content that is not based on academic/legal studies.

The data analysis process was conducted by compiling and grouping various research findings and previous documents into several main themes, namely the implementation of regulations on adolescent reproductive health, policies to prevent child marriage, and socio-legal approaches to implementing these policies in Indonesia. After grouping, each category was analyzed to identify emerging patterns, assess the effectiveness of regulatory implementation, and identify obstacles and opportunities for strengthening existing policies. The results of this analysis were then combined through a synthesis process to obtain a more comprehensive picture of how reproductive health regulations work in the context of preventing early marriage. This synthesis also serves to uncover understudied research gaps related to legal implementation, intervention effectiveness, and social dynamics that influence practice in the field. Thus, this analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of reproductive health regulations to efforts to suppress child marriage, encompassing normative and implementative perspectives, as well as social realities in society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) is an essential human right that affirms the need for adolescents to have access to comprehensive information, education, and health services tailored to their needs. ARH focuses not only on physical or biological aspects, but also encompasses psychological and social aspects related to adolescents' ability to make wise and responsible decisions about their bodies and futures (World Health Organization) (Agustina, 2019). Comprehensive reproductive health education plays a crucial role in fostering healthy lifestyles, preventing unplanned pregnancies, and reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among adolescents. Research by (Rosida et al., 2024) confirms that fulfilling ARH rights plays a significant role in preventing early marriage. Adequate knowledge about reproduction enables adolescents to better understand the physical and social risks of early marriage. This is in line with findings (Hapsari & Manggalou, 2025) which show that low levels of ARH literacy contribute to high rates of early marriage, especially in rural areas. Physical, psychological, and social unpreparedness due to a lack of understanding about reproductive health often results in an increased risk of pregnancy complications and mental health disorders in adolescent girls.

Numerous studies confirm that fulfilling Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) rights plays a significant role in preventing early marriage. Adolescents' access to accurate information, accessible health services, and education on future planning has been shown to improve their understanding of the medical, psychological, and social risks of child marriage. When adolescents have adequate knowledge about reproductive health, they are more likely to

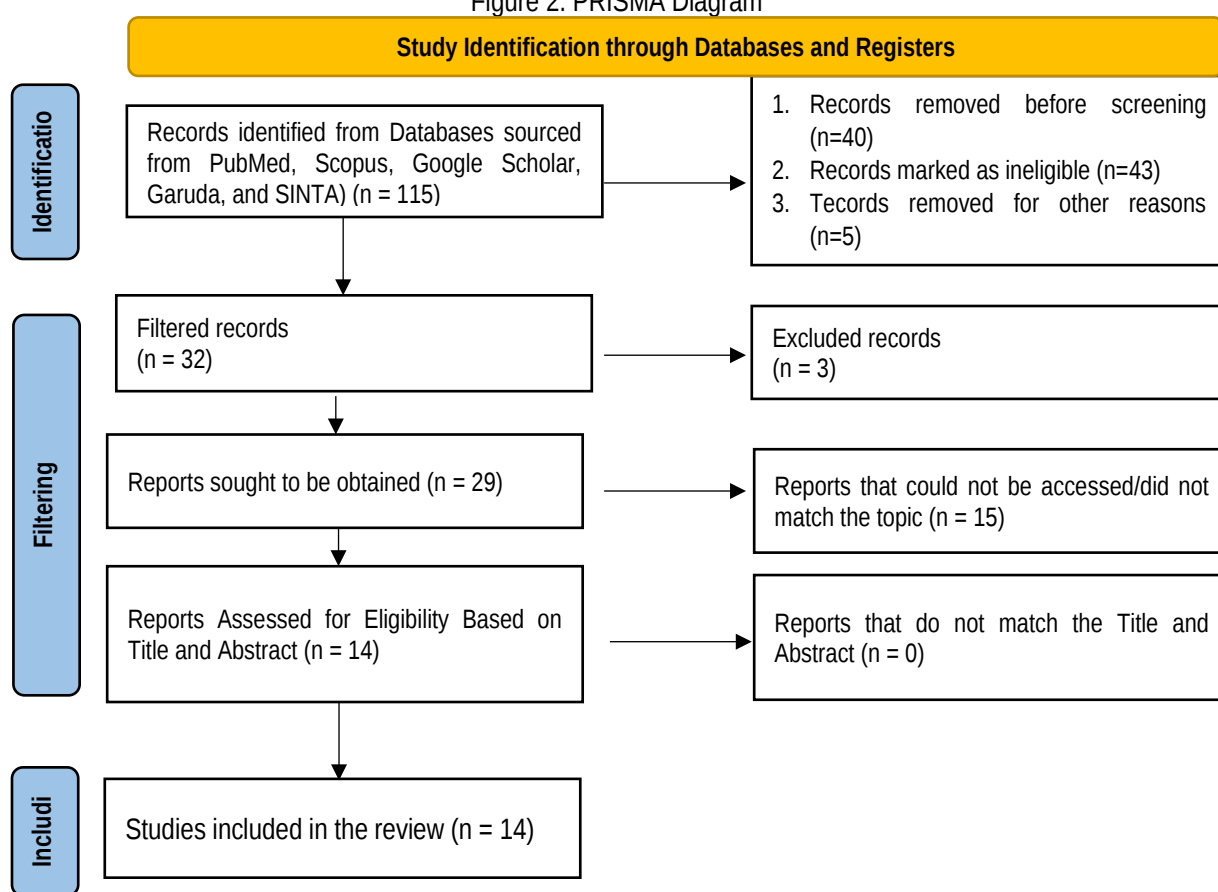
make safe and responsible decisions, including delaying marriage until they reach a more mature age. Therefore, fulfilling Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) rights is not only part of adolescent health protection but also an effective preventive strategy in reducing early marriage rates (Rosida et al., 2024). Adequate knowledge about reproduction enables adolescents to better understand the physical and social risks of early marriage. This is in line with findings (Hapsari & Manggalou, 2025) that show that low Adolescent Reproductive Health literacy contributes to high rates of early marriage, particularly in rural areas. Physical, psychological, and social unpreparedness resulting from a lack of understanding about reproductive health often leads to an increased risk of pregnancy complications and mental health disorders in adolescent girls. The implementation of comprehensive child marriage and family planning (KRR) education and services is a crucial foundation for developing a healthy and empowered young generation. This approach focuses not only on preventing health problems but also on strengthening adolescents' capacity to make rational and responsible life decisions. Efforts to mainstream KRR through formal and non-formal education policies and programs need to be continuously enhanced as a long-term strategy to reduce early marriage rates and improve adolescent health in Indonesia.

The socio-legal approach is an analytical framework used to understand how law works in real social contexts. This approach seeks to bridge the gap between law in books, namely legal norms and rules as written in legislation, and law in action, namely how the law is implemented in everyday social practice. The effectiveness of regulatory implementation is often determined not only by the quality of the legal norms themselves, but also by the extent to which these norms are accepted and implemented by society within the existing social, cultural, and economic context. In the context of child marriage prevention and adolescent reproductive health policies, the socio-legal approach helps identify various non-legal barriers that influence regulatory implementation. Socio-cultural factors, such as patriarchal norms, customary practices, and gender inequality, often become major obstacles to policy implementation despite a strong legal basis. Research (Tanaka, 2025) shows that resistance to child marriage prevention policies in some regions is often caused by conservative religious interpretations and cultural legitimacy that still considers early marriage to be normal. In line with this (Fonataba, 2025), emphasized that the success of local law implementation depends heavily on public understanding of regulatory objectives and the local government's ability to implement a socio-cultural approach. Without adaptation to local values and participatory dialogue, legal policies often remain normative without delivering real change on the ground. Therefore, implementing a socio-legal approach is crucial in ensuring that the law is not merely repressive but also transformative, involving the social, cultural, and moral dimensions of society.

Indonesia's regulatory framework reflects the government's strong commitment to ensuring the protection of children and adolescents, particularly in preventing early marriage. One important reform step was the amendment of Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage to Law No. 16 of 2019. This revision standardized the minimum age for marriage for both men and women to 19. This age was intended to strengthen legal protection for children and ensure that individuals entering marriage are physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared. In addition to protecting children's rights, this policy also serves as a crucial instrument in efforts to reduce the number of child marriages in various regions. The revised regulations emphasize that the government views early marriage not only as a social and cultural issue but also as a matter of long-term health and well-being. Therefore, this legal amendment lays an important foundation for creating a safer environment and supporting optimal development for the younger generation. This revision is a significant step in reducing the number of child marriages in Indonesia, as it not only strengthens the legal basis but also encourages greater involvement of local governments in its implementation. The amendment to the minimum age for marriage provides a stronger foundation for prevention efforts and provides a reference for local officials to develop derivative policies, educational programs, and oversight mechanisms in their respective regions. With clearer implementation obligations, local governments are expected to strengthen their cross-sectoral roles, from health services and education to child protection, to ensure more effective prevention of early marriage. This revised law ultimately serves not only as a formal regulation but also as a catalyst for social change, leading to increased public awareness of the importance of physical and psychological readiness before marriage (Kasmianti, 2021). Furthermore, the government issued the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (STRANAS PPA) in 2020 through the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA RI). This document emphasizes four main pillars: improving education for children and families, strengthening supportive environments, increasing access to services, and strengthening cross-sectoral coordination. STRANAS serves as a national policy guide across ministries and institutions to systematically and sustainably reduce the number of child marriages (Kementrian PPPA RI, 2020).

In addition to national-level legal and policy arrangements, efforts to prevent early marriage are also strengthened through programmatic approaches, one of which is the Generation Planning Program (GenRe) run by the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN). This program emphasizes providing education on reproductive health, developing adolescent character, and providing friendly and accessible counseling services to the younger generation. Through various coaching activities, GenRe aims to encourage adolescents to plan their futures in a mature and responsible manner. The active involvement of adolescents in this program has been shown to increase their understanding of reproductive health issues while contributing to a tendency to delay marriage. Thus, the national legal and policy framework in Indonesia appears to integrate legal aspects, education, and a community-based program approach in an effort to reduce the practice of child marriage. The successful implementation of this policy is largely determined by cooperation between various sectors and consistent implementation and oversight at the regional level, so that its benefits can be felt more evenly across the region (Mutmainah & Mahendra, 2019). This section presents a synthesis of findings from twenty journal articles, organized into three interrelated thematic categories to examine the Implementation of Adolescent Reproductive Health Regulations in Preventing Early Marriage in Indonesia:

Figure 2. PRISMA Diagram



The literature identification and selection process in the Systematic Review: Implementation of Adolescent Reproductive Health Regulations in Preventing Early Marriage in Indonesia: A Socio-Legal Perspective was conducted systematically following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The search was conducted through PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and Garuda databases to obtain relevant publications. From the search results, 40 records were removed due to duplication or irrelevance, while 43 other records did not meet the inclusion criteria because they were not appropriate to the Indonesian context or did not include socio-legal aspects. A total of 32 records were screened based on title and abstract, resulting in 29 reports worthy of further review. After the evaluation process, 14 studies were declared to meet the criteria and were included in the review. These studies served as the basis for the analysis to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of adolescent reproductive health regulations, identify barriers to

implementation, and understand the role of regulations in preventing early marriage from a legal and social perspective. The 14 articles reviewed in this study can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Extraction of 14 Articles

No	Author Name & Year	Research Title	Research Results / Main Findings
1	(Wakhidah et al., 2023)	Impact and Solutions of the Implementation of Marriage Age Restrictions in Indonesia	The marriage age restriction regulation has had a positive impact on gender equality and child protection, but has increased the demand for marriage dispensations. Its implementation requires internalization of legal values and cooperation between the state, religious scholars, and traditional leaders.
2	(Yustianugraha, 2022)	Child Marriage in North Lombok from the Perspective of Criminal and Customary Law	The North Lombok government is conducting legal and health outreach to prevent child marriage. Marriage dispensations are still common, and criminal sanctions are rarely applied due to cultural factors and difficulties in proving the marriage.
3	(Damayanti et al., 2025)	Legal Protection for Adolescents Against Reproductive Health Rights in Minor Marriages (Mranggen, Demak)	Adolescents' knowledge of reproductive health rights remains low. Although regulations regarding the minimum age of marriage exist, their implementation is influenced by cultural and social factors. A more comprehensive legal and educational approach to adolescent protection is needed.
4	(Andika et al., 2025)	A Legal Analysis of the Role of the Indonesian Marriage Law in Relating to Early Marriage and Divorce	Marriage Law No. 1/1974 in conjunction with Law No. 16/2019 provides a clear legal basis, but implementation remains hampered by cultural barriers, minimal oversight, and loopholes in marriage dispensations. Recommendations: stricter restrictions on dispensations and cross-sector legal education.
5	(Aji, 2025)	Implementation of NTB Provincial Regulation No. 5 of 2021 concerning the Prevention of Child Marriage (Gerunung Village)	The Gerunung Village Government is conducting outreach and youth empowerment programs to prevent child marriage. Obstacles include low community participation, minimal awareness, and high levels of promiscuity among adolescents.
6	(Kementrian PPPA RI, 2020)	National Strategy on the Prevention of Child Marriage (STRANAS PPA)	The national strategy for preventing child marriage consists of five pillars: improving children's capacity, enabling environments, access to services, strengthening regulations, and stakeholder coordination. The target is to reduce prevalence from 11.2% (2018) to 8.74% (2024).
7	(Irhamni & Sahadewo, 2023)	Child Marriage in Indonesia: A Literature Review	Child marriage is correlated with low education, informal employment, and poverty. Key factors include economic pressure, religious values, and present-tense bias. Prevention programs need to be evidence-based, such as video-based educational interventions in schools.
8	(Tanjung, 2019)	The Role and Discretion of Religious Court Judges in Handling Marriage Dispensation Applications: A Socio-Legal Study of Local Legal and Cultural Practices	Religious judges exercise caution when deciding on marriage dispensations in accordance with the Marriage Law and Supreme Court Regulation No. 5 of 2019, but local cultural values often influence their decisions. Judges are needed who are sensitive to local values without neglecting children's rights.
9	(Ramadhani, 2023)	Legal Protection for the Health Rights of Sasak	The implementation of legal protection for the health rights of Sasak women involved in early marriage has been

No	Author Name & Year	Research Title	Research Results / Main Findings
		Women Perpetrating Early Marriage (Merariq Kodek) in North Lombok Regency	carried out in accordance with local regulations and customs, although there are still obstacles in implementation.
10	(Nugraha et al., 2019)	An Analysis of Islamic Law and Positive Impacts on Early Marriage in Pandeglang	There is a gap between legal norms and societal practices; marriage dispensations often weaken legal protections. Interpretations of Islamic law that emphasize puberty need to be contextualized to align with the maqā (maqā).yesid al-sharī'ah and national law.
11	(Dewi et al., 2025)	Implementation of Law No. 16 of 2019 in Reducing Early Marriage Rates in Village Communities (Study in Pamongan Village, Kediri)	The implementation of Law No. 16 of 2019 has been successful, from the outreach stage to its implementation. The legal impact of early marriage is the interruption of education. Research highlights the need for public awareness and legal oversight.
12	(Widodo & Mumpuni, 2025)	Implementation of Marriage Dispensation Following Amendments to the Marriage Law (A Study at the Klaten Religious Court)	Although requests for exemptions have decreased, the granting rate remains high due to premarital pregnancies. Psychologist requirements are ineffective; exemptions do not yet serve as emergency protection and require regulatory strengthening.
13	(Aprianti et al., 2023)	Adolescent Reproductive Health Education on Early Marriage Prevention in Lembar Hamlet, West Lombok	Reproductive health education increased adolescents' knowledge from sufficient (50%) to good (83.3%) after training; effectively preventing early marriage.
14	(Muntamah et al., 2019)	Early Marriage in Indonesia: Factors and the Role of the Government (Perspective of Legal Enforcement and Protection for Children)	The main factors contributing to early marriage include culture, economics, and religion. Social impacts include divorce, gender discrimination, and child rights violations. A stronger government role is needed in law enforcement and child protection.

The implementation of adolescent reproductive health regulations to prevent early marriage in Indonesia demonstrates the complex dynamics between legal norms, socio-cultural contexts, and policy effectiveness on the ground. This study combines findings from various legal, social, and health studies to assess the extent to which a socio-legal approach can bridge the gap between normative regulations and societal realities.

The Effectiveness of National Regulations and the Challenges of Marriage Dispensation

The revision of Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019 represents a significant milestone in strengthening legal protection for children and gender equality, as it sets the minimum age for marriage at 19 for both men and women. This legal reform is intended to curb the practice of child marriage, which has negatively impacted adolescents' reproductive health, education, and psychosocial well-being (Wakhidah et al., 2023). Furthermore, empirically, the changes to the marriage law have created a new paradox. Although normatively, these regulations strengthen child protection, in practice, there has been a significant increase in the number of marriage dispensation applications in Religious Courts in various regions. This phenomenon indicates that social resistance to legal policies remains strong, particularly in communities that view marriage as a solution to premarital pregnancy or social pressures related to family honor (Andika et al., 2025). This condition aligns with research findings that reveal ethical and legal dilemmas in religious court practices. Judges are often ambivalent between enforcing strict positive legal norms and responding to sociocultural pressures demanding the legalization of child marriage. Through a socio-legal approach, Tanjung demonstrates that judicial discretion is an adaptive instrument in balancing these two forces: on the one hand, judges are bound by the principles of child protection as stipulated in Law No. 16 of 2019, Supreme Court Regulation No. 5 of 2019, and the Convention on

the Rights of the Child; but on the other hand, they cannot deny customary values and religious views that consider marriage as a mechanism for social salvation (Tanjung, 2019).

A similar perspective is expressed by (Widodo & Mumpuni, 2025), who highlight that although the number of requests for dispensation declined after the law was revised, the granting rate remains high. Reasons such as premarital pregnancy are the most frequently cited justifications used by applicants and accepted by the courts. Even when regulations require a psychologist's recommendation or medical examination for prospective underage brides, these mechanisms have not been effective. Many courts lack adequate expertise or assessment tools, so recommendations are merely administrative in nature and unable to determine a child's psychological readiness for marriage. As a result, marriage dispensation, which should be an emergency protection measure, has instead become a formal legalization of early marriage. This interrelationship between studies demonstrates that law enforcement in the realm of child marriage faces a dualism between national legal ideals and local socio-cultural realities. Ideally, the law is intended to protect children from early marriage, but in practice, cultural values and social pressures make the law flexible and compromising. In areas with strong patriarchal values, such as Lombok, Pandeglang, and parts of Central Java, early marriage is still considered a legitimate way to maintain family honor, prevent adultery, or resolve an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. In such situations, the judge's role is no longer merely that of law enforcer, but also of social mediator, striving to accommodate customary values without negating the principle of children's rights.

These findings also demonstrate that legal implementation in Indonesia cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context. The state's efforts to strengthen legal regulations by limiting the marriage age have not been fully successful due to the weak internalization of legal values at the grassroots level. Society tends to view early marriage not as a violation of the law, but as a moral or social solution to adolescent problems, particularly those related to sexuality. This is where synergy between legal approaches, educational and cultural approaches, becomes crucial. Legal reform must be accompanied by a cultural translation strategy, namely the process of translating modern legal values into language and social symbols acceptable to the local community. Thus, formal law enforcement requires an integrative socio-legal approach. Regulations such as Law No. 16/2019 and Regulation No. 5/2019 must be accompanied by reproductive health education programs, strengthening the capacity of judicial officials, and empowering communities based on local wisdom. This approach allows for dialogue between state law and societal values, rather than the dominance of one or the other. When legal values are accepted as part of a community's moral system, the effectiveness of legal protection for children will increase, and the practice of marriage dispensation can be significantly reduced. Conceptually, the relationship between these four studies forms a strong argument: that legal revision without social transformation will result in a legal gap, namely the gap between ideal norms and actual societal behavior. To close this gap, a socio-legal approach is needed that emphasizes not only normative aspects but also takes into account the social structure, culture, and morality of the society that is subject to the law. In this way, law no longer stands as a rigid system but becomes a living and adaptive means of social engineering to societal changes.

Socio-Cultural Dimensions and the Influence of Customs

Research (Ramadhani, 2023) confirms that local customs and cultural factors have a significant influence on the continued practice of early marriage in various regions in Indonesia. In North Lombok, the Merariq Kodek tradition, the practice of kidnapping prospective brides as part of traditional wedding rituals, is still considered a form of social honor and a symbol of maturity. According to (Yustianugraha, 2022) early marriage is not viewed as a violation of the law or a violation of children's rights, but rather as an expression of culture and community identity. Although local governments have implemented various legal outreach and reproductive health programs, their effectiveness is limited because the community upholds customary values over positive legal provisions. This phenomenon indicates that the existence of national laws, such as Law No. 16 of 2019, has not been able to penetrate the cultural layers that shape people's perspectives on marriage. (Yustianugraha, 2022) highlights that the low application of criminal sanctions against perpetrators of child marriage is not caused by weak regulations, but by the strong social legitimacy of customs that view early marriage as a normal occurrence. State law ultimately loses its coercive power when confronted with more binding social norms in everyday life.

A similar situation was found in research (Nugraha et al., 2019) in Pandeglang, which explored how the interpretation of Islamic law contributed to strengthening the legitimacy of early marriage. In community religious practices, the concept of "baligh," or a sign of biological maturity, is often used as a justification for child marriage, even though it normatively contradicts the principle of *maqā* (obligatory marriage). *Yesid al-sharī'ah* emphasizes the protection of life, mind, and offspring (*hifz al-nafs, al-'aql, al-nasl*). This literal interpretation of religious law

reveals the tension between formal legality and socio-religious morality within traditional societal structures. These three studies demonstrate that transforming societal values is key to the success of regulations to prevent early marriage. Legal regulations and reproductive health policies will not be effective without a shift in social paradigms regarding the meaning of marriage and the age of maturity. Legal approaches must be contextualized through socio-legal strategies that combine cultural dialogue, progressive religious interpretation, and education based on local values. In this way, law is positioned not as a force opposing culture, but as an instrument that adapts to local wisdom to strengthen child protection.

Furthermore, these results demonstrate the importance of reconstructing religious and customary understandings to align them with the principles of adolescent reproductive health. Within the framework of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (laws of the law), the welfare of children should be the primary goal, not merely fulfilling the formal requirements of marriage. This means that reproductive health regulations cannot be effective without the support of religious and customary leaders who act as agents of value change at the community level. When religious, legal, and customary norms synergize within a unified understanding that prioritizes child protection, the practice of early marriage can be suppressed in a more sustainable manner. Thus, the successful implementation of adolescent reproductive health regulations depends not only on the strength of positive law but also on the law's ability to engage in dialogue with culture and religion. Inclusive, participatory, and contextual laws are more likely to change societal behavior than coercive approaches that solely emphasize sanctions. This socio-legal approach serves as a bridge between the idealism of child protection and a social reality still steeped in traditional and religious values.

Reproductive Health Approach and Preventive Education

From a public health perspective, research (Aprianti et al., 2023) provides empirical evidence that adolescent reproductive health education plays a significant role in reducing early marriage. Their results showed a substantial increase in adolescent knowledge after receiving counseling, which resulted in changes in attitudes toward early marriage. This education not only broadens knowledge about reproductive health but also strengthens adolescents' awareness of the importance of physical, psychological, and social readiness before marriage. These findings align with those confirming that low reproductive literacy is a major cause of the high rate of child marriage. When adolescents do not understand the medical and social risks of early marriage, such as pregnancy complications, educational disruption, and gender inequality, they tend to view marriage as a solution to social or economic pressures (Damayanti et al., 2025). This education-based approach also aligns with macro policies promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kementrian PPPA RI, 2020) through the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (STRANAS PPA). This document places child capacity building and reproductive education as one of the five main pillars of prevention. This approach emphasizes that preventing early marriage cannot rely solely on legal sanctions, but must go through a process of empowering children with knowledge and life skills (life skills education) so that children are able to make healthy and independent decisions.

When linked to the legal context and socio-legal approach, these three studies emphasize that legal protection for children must be educational and preventative, not merely repressive. Positive laws such as Law No. 16 of 2019 clearly stipulate the minimum age for marriage, but without increasing reproductive knowledge at the individual and community levels, these regulations are unlikely to result in behavioral change. In this context, research (Irhamni & Sahadewo, 2023) provides an important conceptual foundation through the concept of evidence-based educational interventions in schools. This approach emphasizes that reproductive education based on empirical data and tailored to local needs is far more effective in fostering legal and health awareness among adolescents. Therefore, an effective socio-legal strategy must position reproductive health education as a preventive mechanism that complements legal regulations. Education serves as a means of internalizing legal values, while law legitimizes the importance of child health and protection. The synergy between the two creates a holistic model of child protection, where the state acts not only as a regulator through law but also as a facilitator of social behavior change through education. This approach broadens the meaning of law as a tool of social engineering that plays an active role in shaping public awareness of reproductive health and gender equality issues. Therefore, in the context of preventing early marriage in Indonesia, reproductive education and the law must be viewed as two sides of a single child protection system. Law without education will only foster formal compliance, while education without a legal basis risks being unsustainable. Both, when integrated through a socio-legal approach, can produce fundamental behavioral changes, foster critical awareness in adolescents, and strengthen the community's commitment to rejecting early marriage as a normal social practice.

The Role of Government and the Structural Approach

Research (Muntamah et al., 2019) highlights that the role of local governments is a key element in implementing regulations to prevent child marriage. Within the context of decentralization policies, regions are responsible for translating national policies into concrete programs that align with the social and cultural characteristics of local communities. The West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government, through Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2021 concerning the Prevention of Child Marriage, has implemented various preventive measures, such as legal outreach, gender equality campaigns, and youth empowerment through educational activities and life skills training. However, (Aji, 2025) found that the effectiveness of these policies remains limited due to low community participation and weak legal awareness. This suggests that the existence of regional regulations does not automatically result in changes in social behavior without the support of internalization of values at the community level.

These findings align with the findings of the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kementrian PPPA RI, 2020), which confirmed that the national strategy for preventing child marriage has not been fully integrated at the village level. Although national policy has a strategic direction through five main pillars: increasing children's capacity, supporting environments, access to services, strengthening regulations, and coordination between stakeholders, its implementation is often hampered by limited human resources, weak cross-sectoral coordination, and a lack of social support from the community. Thus, there is an implementation gap between macro policy design at the central level and its implementation on the ground. From a socio-legal perspective, this gap reflects that legal regulations without the support of adaptive social and cultural structures are unable to effectively change behavior. Local governments play a role not only as implementers of regulations but also as a bridge between formal law and the social realities of society. Early marriage is deeply rooted in cultural and economic structures, so prevention efforts require an interdisciplinary approach combining legal policies, education, and socio-economic empowerment (Muntamah et al., 2019).

The link between research (Aji, 2025; Faizah & Tuhah, 2025), and the National Strategy for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (STRANAS PPPA) (2020) emphasizes the importance of a collaborative and multi-level governance approach. The central government needs to strengthen vertical coordination with local governments, while horizontally involving educational institutions, civil society organizations, and religious authorities in prevention programs is essential. This collaboration not only strengthens legal legitimacy but also builds a sense of social ownership of child marriage prevention policies. In other words, program success is measured not only by the existence of regulations but also by the extent to which these policies are internalized as shared values by the community. Through this approach, governance in the issue of child marriage moves from a top-down model to a participatory and adaptive model, where national policies are rearticulated according to the local context. This effort enables the development of a more sustainable child protection system, where law, education, and culture mutually reinforce each other as pillars of social change. Within the socio-legal framework, the integration of legal policies and participatory governance practices is an important basis for ensuring that the prevention of early marriage is not only a normative agenda, but also a living and contextual social movement at the grassroots level.

Socio-Legal Synergy in Preventing Early Marriage

Research findings demonstrate that a socio-legal approach is key to the successful implementation of regulations to prevent early marriage in Indonesia. This approach emphasizes that child marriage cannot be resolved solely through legal tightening, but must be addressed through an integration of legal norms, socio-cultural values, and public health strategies. Within this framework, positive legal aspects, such as Law No. 16 of 2019, Supreme Court Regulation No. 5 of 2019, and the National Strategy for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (STRANAS PPPA) (2020), serve as normative and structural foundations that guarantee legal child protection, while social and reproductive health aspects serve as cultural and preventive mechanisms that change community behavior and mindsets. Research from the legal dimension (Nugraha et al., 2019; Tanjung, 2019; Widodo & Mumpuni, 2025) shows that regulatory enforcement still faces a dilemma between ideal national legal norms and local realities. Judges and law enforcement often must negotiate strong cultural pressures and customary values, so the effectiveness of the law depends on the extent to which it can adapt to the social context. On the other hand, socio-cultural studies (Ramadhani, 2023; Yustianugraha, 2022) reveal that customary practices and traditional religious interpretations still serve as moral justifications for child marriage. Therefore, legal reform must be accompanied by a reconstruction of cultural and theological values to align with the principles of child protection and reproductive health.

From a public health perspective (Aprianti et al., 2023; Damayanti et al., 2025), reproductive health education is a strategic tool for raising adolescent awareness of the risks of early marriage. Educational interventions have proven effective in changing behavior and strengthening legal awareness, demonstrating the complementary relationship between education and law within a prevention framework. A synthesis of these findings demonstrates that effective early marriage prevention policies are interdisciplinary and collaborative, combining the strengths of legal regulations, socio-cultural approaches, and reproductive health education. This approach not only enforces norms but also builds awareness and sustainable social change. Thus, socio-legal strategies serve not only as a bridge between law and society but also as a paradigm for social transformation that enables the law to exist and function within complex cultural realities.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of regulations regarding adolescent reproductive health plays a crucial role in preventing early marriage in Indonesia. The effectiveness of these policies is largely determined by the synergy between legal, social, and educational aspects. Legally, Law Number 16 of 2019 and West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Regulation Number 5 of 2021 have provided a normative foundation for protecting children from early marriage. However, at the implementation level, various obstacles remain at the community level. Socio-cultural factors, such as the strong influence of customary values and societal perceptions of family honor, are key obstacles to the effective implementation of comprehensive legal norms. From a public health perspective, reproductive health education plays a strategic role in increasing adolescents' knowledge, awareness, and attitudes toward the various risks posed by early marriage. The implementation of planned and sustainable educational programs has been shown to reduce the likelihood of early marriage by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of physical and psychological readiness before entering marriage. A socio-legal approach provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the interrelationships between law, culture, and education in the context of child marriage prevention. The success of regulatory implementation depends on the law's ability to adapt to socio-cultural conditions and involve various stakeholders, including local governments, educational institutions, religious leaders, and the community. Overall, preventing early marriage requires cross-sector collaboration encompassing legal, health, and socio-cultural aspects. Strengthening regulations needs to be accompanied by improvements in reproductive education and community empowerment to ensure effective and sustainable protection for children and adolescents.

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