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# Analysis of the Implementation of Policies and Programs by the Situbondo Regency Government in Efforts to Reduce Early Marriage Rates

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## Abstract

**General Background:** Early marriage remains a persistent social problem in Indonesia, contributing to educational discontinuity, psychological vulnerability, health risks, and weakened family resilience. **Specific Background:** In Situbondo Regency, despite stricter legal frameworks and the implementation of multiple preventive programs by the local government, marriage dispensation cases remain relatively high, indicating implementation challenges. **Knowledge Gap:** Previous studies have largely focused on the causes and impacts of early marriage, while limited attention has been given to in-depth analysis of how local government policies and programs are implemented and what factors shape their effectiveness. **Aims:** This study aims to analyze the implementation of early marriage prevention policies and programs by the Situbondo Regency Government and to identify supporting and inhibiting factors influencing their outcomes. **Results:** Using a qualitative empirical approach, the findings show that programs such as PERAK CINTA, BRUS, BINWIN, premarital health checks, psychological counseling, and cross-sector coordination have been implemented with clear objectives and structured mechanisms, yet their effectiveness is constrained by limited resources, uneven communication, strong cultural norms favoring early and unregistered marriages, and low community awareness. **Novelty:** This study integrates policy implementation analysis with local socio-cultural dynamics using the Van Meter and Van Horn framework in the context of early marriage prevention. **Implications:** Strengthening budget allocation, community education, and cross-sector synergy is essential to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of early marriage prevention policies at the local level.

## Highlights:

- ♦ **Policy Execution:** Early marriage prevention policies are implemented through structured, cross-sector programs with clear operational mechanisms.
- ♦ **Implementation Barriers:** Cultural norms, limited resources, and low community awareness significantly constrain policy effectiveness.
- ♦ **Strategic Implication:** Strengthening community engagement and inter-agency coordination is crucial for sustainable prevention outcomes.

**Keywords:** Early Marriage, Policy Implementation, Local Government, Prevention Programs

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## Introduction

As emphasized in Article 28B paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman to form a happy family. The state is responsible for protecting children's rights and ensuring that the implementation of marriage is in accordance with legal provisions.[1] The amendment of Law Number 1 of 1974 to Law Number 16 of 2019 stipulates that men and women must marry at a minimum age of 19 to prevent the social, health, and psychological effects caused by early marriage.[2] In addition, this provision is in accordance with the Compilation of Islamic Law, which stipulates that a person must be physically and mentally mature enough before marriage. Although regulations have been tightened, child marriage remains a significant issue in Indonesia. BPS data show that 6.92% of women aged 20–24 were married before the age of 18.[3] A similar situation occurred in Situbondo Regency, which every year recorded hundreds of marriage dispensation requests from 2020 to August 2025.

**Table 1.** Early Marriage Rates in Situbondo Regency for 2020-2025

No	Year	Case Decided
1	2020	445
2	2021	475
3	2022	510
4	2023	427
5	2024	295
6	November 2025	180

These figures indicate that the practice of child marriage remains strong within culture, economic conditions, and the social environment, even though the trend shows a decline. Child marriage is triggered by a number of interrelated conditions, including economic, educational, family, cultural, and adolescent behavioral aspects. First, family economic pressure is often a major factor. Families living under financial constraints tend to see child marriage as a way to ease the burden of life or as an opportunity for the child to gain a more stable economic situation through their partner.[4] Secondly, low levels of education affect teenagers' tendency to marry at an earlier age. The lack of positive activities, limited access to information, and restricted schooling opportunities make them more vulnerable to early marriage practices.[5] Third, the decisions of parents also play a major role. Some families marry off their children out of concern for teenage socialization, a desire to maintain family ties, or reasons to keep family assets within the kinship circle.[6] Fourth, the values of tradition and community customs also reinforce this practice. In some communities, rejecting a marriage proposal is considered taboo or impolite, causing parents to feel compelled to marry off their children even if they are not yet of age. Additionally, some families have a tradition of marrying off children at a young age, which leads to the practice being repeated across generations. Fifth, pregnancy outside of marriage is a significant factor. Teenage relationships that violate social and moral norms often result in unplanned pregnancies, prompting families to marry off their children quickly to avoid stigma and provide clear status for the baby to be born. This situation usually forces teenagers into marriage before they are emotionally or mentally ready.

Early marriage also has many negative effects, including psychological instability, reproductive health risks, an increased likelihood of domestic violence, and decreased family resilience.[7] As a result, local governments participate strategically in the creation and implementation of initiatives aimed at curbing such practices. Implementation is an act or execution of a plan that has been carefully and thoroughly prepared. Simply put, implementation can also be interpreted as execution or application. Browne and Wildavsky suggest that implementation is an expansion of mutually adjusting activities.[8] The Situbondo Regency Government has implemented various programs and policies, one of which is DP3AP2KB, which runs a program known as PERAK CINTA (Prevention of Child Marriage). Registration of early-age couples, health check-ups at community health centers, and psychological counseling facilitated regularly twice a week with a psychologist from RS Elizabeth are some of the structured service flows in this program.[9] The interview results show that counseling has had a significant impact as several couples have decided to cancel their wedding plans after understanding the risks involved.

Government policies and programs have a very important function in this context. First, they serve as a guideline for related institutions to take systematic preventive measures against early marriage practices. Second, they act as a tool for cross-sector coordination, because addressing early marriage cannot be done by a single agency, but requires cooperation between the government, judicial institutions, educational institutions, community leaders, and families. Third, policies and programs also serve as a means of public education, to raise legal and social awareness in the community about the importance of the ideal age for marriage.[10] In addition, DP3AP2KB conducts socialization on the prevention of early marriage in youth communities, schools, Islamic boarding schools, and priority villages. Involving the Children's Forum is a peer approach method considered effective in delivering prevention messages to teenagers. The local government also uses the DIMANAKAH application, which helps with data collection and provides information to couples who refuse to marry after counseling. Cross-sector collaboration, such as with the Religious Court and the Health Office, supports these efforts. This is carried out to ensure that every request for a marriage dispensation receives thorough guidance and evaluation.[11]

However, the implementation of the program has not been optimal. DP3AP2KB faces several challenges, including limited budget which prevents outreach from reaching all vulnerable villages, cultural influences such as strong practices of unofficial marriages (nikah siri), low levels of education among the community, and the role of community leaders who encourage young couples to marry. The number of marriage dispensations remains high despite prevention efforts, as this



issue affects the program's performance. Based on these conditions, this study was conducted to analyze the implementation of policies and programs by the Situbondo Regency Government, particularly through DP3AP2KB, in efforts to reduce the number of early marriages. This study aims to identify program implementation, supporting and inhibiting factors. The findings of the study are expected to provide more comprehensive and strategic policy recommendations to strengthen efforts to prevent early marriage in Situbondo Regency.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type.[12] This approach was chosen because it is capable of revealing the empirical conditions, processes, and policy dynamics from the perspective of the parties involved in efforts to reduce the rate of early marriages in Situbondo Regency. The types and sources of data in this study include primary and secondary data.[13] Primary and secondary data in this study were obtained from in-depth interviews with relevant parties such as DP3AP2KB, the Religious Court, the Health Office, and community leaders. Official government agency documents, legislation, early marriage statistics, agency reports, and supporting scientific literature serve as sources of secondary and primary data. Data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods: in-depth interviews with DP3AP2KB of Situbondo Regency and the Situbondo Religious Court to understand the implementation of programs, supporting factors, obstacles, and policy effectiveness; observation, to directly see how programs and related services are carried out; and documentation, which includes collecting quantitative data, regulations, activity reports, and other relevant administrative documents. The collected data was then analyzed through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by sorting out important data from documentation and interviews, presentation was done in the form of a systematic description, and conclusion drawing was conducted inductively to obtain a comprehensive picture of how early marriage prevention policies are implemented in Situbondo Regency.

## Results and Discussion

### A. Analysis of the Implementation of Government Policies and Programs of Situbondo Regency in Efforts to Reduce Early Marriage Rates

In Situbondo Regency, various integrated programs and the participation of related agencies are used to implement policies for preventing early marriage. With support from the Religious Court and the Health Office, the local government through DP3AP2KB serves as the main facilitator for the implementation of prevention programs. The PERAK CINTA (Prevent and Resolve Child Marriage) program, which serves as the foundation for all prevention efforts, is an example of the implementation of this program.[14] Having a structured service flow, this program demonstrates a clear collaborative working mechanism between related institutions in handling early marriage requests. This service flow includes registering for marriage dispensation through the DIMANAKAH application, health checks for prospective brides and grooms at the community health center, and psychological screening and counseling processes at DP3AP2KB.[15] Counseling is conducted twice a week with a psychologist at Elizabeth Situbondo Hospital. This counseling is conducted in groups and is free of charge. The counseling, which provides understanding about the potential social, psychological, and health risks, can help prospective brides and grooms change their choices and prevent early marriage.

In addition, DP3AP2KB promotes the prevention of early marriage in schools, vulnerable villages, Islamic boarding schools, and various youth activities. The Children's Forum has been considered more effective in delivering messages to adolescent age groups, thus being used as peer education agents. Nevertheless, the program still faces several obstacles, such as limited budgets, strong practices of unregistered marriages, low levels of public education, and community leaders who should drive change but instead, in some cases, encourage early marriage.[10] PA Situbondo stated during the interview that many marriage dispensation requests are caused by cultural and economic factors, as well as a lack of parental supervision and pregnancies out of wedlock. PA emphasized that marriage dispensation is not a policy aimed at facilitating child marriage, but a way to protect marriages through legal registration.[16] PA also stated that they always request recommendations from DP3AP2KB and health centers, including the results of psychological counseling for prospective brides and grooms. Before granting the request, the judge considers the family situation, mental maturity, and reproductive health risks.[17] PA acknowledges that although laws have been tightened by the government, there are elements that are difficult to control. These include family pressure, overly liberal dating, and the practice of early marriage in rural areas.

Therefore, information from both agencies indicates that although the policies designed to prevent early marriage work together, they have not fully succeeded in reducing the high number of marriage dispensation applications. Data shows that the Situbondo Regency government has an extensive early marriage prevention program. Perak Cinta has a clear service flow and collaborates across sectors. The presence of an application makes the registration and marriage dispensation application process easier, thereby reducing the practice of unofficial applications. Psychological counseling programs have proven to be an effective intervention, as they can change the decisions of prospective brides and grooms who initially intended to marry early. Socialization in schools and villages demonstrates preventive efforts aimed at the broader community. However, in terms of implementation, the program is not yet optimal. Budget limitations result in uneven socialization, especially in remote villages. Cultural obstacles such as unregistered marriages, societal views that 'long-term engagements must be quickly married off,' and the lack of involvement from community leaders make prevention difficult.

The initial analysis indicates that the implementation of early marriage prevention policies has been underway, but its effectiveness is still influenced by various structural and cultural factors. To assess the extent to which these policies are being implemented effectively, a theoretical approach capable of measuring key variables in policy implementation is required. Therefore, the next section analyzes program implementation using George C. Edwards III's implementation theory, which focuses on four main aspects: communication, resources, implementers' dispositions, and bureaucratic structure.

First, Communication Research results show that cross-sector communication in Situbondo is running quite effectively. This is evident from:

1. The existence of formal cooperation (MoU) between DP3AP2KB, the Religious Court, and the Health Office in implementing the PERAK CINTA Program.
2. The use of the DIMANAKAH application as an information system that facilitates administrative communication regarding marriage dispensation applications.
3. The outreach conducted by many actors, namely KUA, the Children's Forum, religious counselors, and the DP3AP2KB team, reaches sub-districts, villages, schools, and study groups.

According to Edwards, policy can only be understood if information is conveyed clearly, consistently, and continuously to both the implementers and the policy targets. In the case of Situbondo, these three conditions have been met. However, communication has not fully reached the grassroots community, particularly the village religious leaders. This has caused some policy information to not be evenly received by villagers with low levels of education.

Secondly, Resources From field findings, human resources in policy implementation are relatively sufficient:

1. DP3AP2KB has counseling staff and collaborates with psychologists from Elizabeth Hospital.
2. KUA counselors are actively going out to the community and schools.
3. Religious Court judges are selective in granting dispensations.
4. The outreach budget is minimal, so not all villages can be reached.
5. Activities such as BRUS and Binwin are running, but other programs cannot be carried out due to lack of budget support.
6. Limited facilities also cause some activities to have to be conducted collectively (for example, group psychological counseling).

In Edwards' theory, resource shortages cause policies to not operate optimally. This is evident in Situbondo, especially in the uneven reach of programs. The disposition of research findings shows that policy implementers have a high level of commitment: Religious Court judges are more selective in granting marriage dispensations. DP3AP2KB consistently conducts psychological screening and routine counseling. KUA counselors have an educational tagline, 'Go to College, Don't Get Married Yet,' which has proven effective in influencing teenagers. The Child Forum is also actively involved in mobilizing education. According to Edwards, when implementers have strong will, policies are easier to implement. This condition is clearly visible in Situbondo. However, this high commitment often clashes with societal culture, causing implementers to face significant challenges in the field.

The Bureaucratic Structure of the PERAK CINTA Program has a clear and structured SOP, which is: The bride and groom register in the DIMANAKAH application, the bride and groom undergo a health check at the Community Health Center, the bride and groom receive psychological screening and counseling at DP3AP2KB, The assessment results are submitted to the Religious Court as consideration for the judge. This SOP aligns with the Van Meter & Van Horn concept, which emphasizes the importance of operational standards to ensure consistent implementation. A clear bureaucratic structure makes policy implementation easier and the results more measurable. One of the impacts can be seen in cases where couples withdraw before marriage after participating in counseling. This shows that the policy is not merely a formality, but yields tangible results. Overall, it can be concluded that the implementation of policies and programs by the Situbondo Regency Government in efforts to reduce early marriage has been carried out through a structured and collaborative mechanism.

Although still facing budget limitations and socio-cultural challenges within the community, overall program implementation, ranging from health check-ups, psychological counseling, cross-regional outreach, to selectivity in dispensation hearings, has shown that the local government has strategic steps that are focused and have tangible impacts. Thus, policy implementation can be considered effective, even though it still requires strengthening in terms of program reach and changes in community mindset to achieve more optimal early marriage prevention. In Situbondo Regency, early marriage prevention policies and programs have been well implemented thanks to cross-agency coordination, clear standard operating procedures (SOP), and comprehensive programs such as Perak Cinta, DIMANAKAH, health check-ups, and psychological counseling. However, factors such as limited budgets, the culture of unregistered marriages, the lack of involvement of community leaders, and uneven socialization hinder optimal implementation.

## B. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Policy and Program Implementation

After understanding how the implementation of policies and programs to prevent early marriage is carried out by the Situbondo Regency government along with various related sectors, the next step is to understand the factors that influence both the success and obstacles in their implementation. The policy implementation process is essentially influenced not only by the quality of the programs or policy instruments designed but is also largely determined by social and cultural conditions, resources, communication patterns, as well as the characteristics of the implementers in the field. Therefore, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of government efforts in reducing early marriage, this analysis uses the Van Meter and Van Horn theoretical framework, which presents six main variables that affect policy [ISSN 2714-7444 \(online\), <https://acopen.umsida.ac.id>](https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12979), published by [Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo](https://umsida.ac.id)

implementation success. Based on this theory, the supporting and inhibiting factors identified in this study can be explained as follows:

**Supporting Factors:** First, the goal of the early marriage prevention policy in Situbondo is clear, namely to reduce the rate of child marriage through health check-ups, psychological counseling, and community education. Second, programs like PERAK CINTA, BRUS, Binwin, and the use of the DIMANAKAH application indicate that the policy objectives have been translated into concrete operational standards. **Inhibiting Factors:** First, some members of the community do not understand the purpose of the policy, especially in villages with low education levels. For instance, some people still believe that graduating from high school means one is ready to marry, so the policy objectives are often not accepted by the target audience. Second, the practice of unofficial marriages (nikah siri) at a rate of 60–70% delays the implementation of prevention goals because couples are already married. **Resources Supporting Factors:** First, there are psychologists from Elizabeth Hospital, KUA counselors, and DP3AP2KB employees who actively conduct screening and socialization. Second, there are health check facilities available through community health centers in all districts. **Inhibiting Factors:** The budget is very limited, so: socialization only reaches a small portion of districts, village forums cannot be evenly covered, educational activities are difficult to carry out without refreshments or incentives. Psychological counseling can only be conducted twice a week, so not all prospective brides and grooms are optimally assisted. There is no budget for BRUS activities, so counselors work without financial support.

**Inter-Organizational Communication and Implementing Activities Supporting Factors:** There are MoUs/partnerships between the Religious Court, DP3AP2KB, and the Health Office. Information flows well through the DIMANAKAH application, making it easier to coordinate marriage registration data. The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), schools, health centers, and children's forums conduct joint socialization. **Inhibiting Factors:** Not all community and religious leaders have received policy information. Some religious leaders even advise secret marriages (nikah siri), weakening government messages. Policy information has not yet reached remote villages due to limited staff coverage and budget constraints. **Characteristics of Implementing Institutions Supporting Factors:** DP3AP2KB has clear SOPs (flow: DIMANAKAH → Health Center → Screening → Religious Court). The Religious Court operates with a strict structure, judges are selective, and decisions are based on psychological and health considerations. KUA has structured programs such as BRUS and Binwin.

**Inhibiting Factors:** The institutional structure in some villages does not support the program because community leaders are not active, and village institutions do not allocate attention to the issue of early marriage. New programs like Perak Cinta have only been running for one year, so institutional adaptation is still ongoing. **Economic, Social, and Political Conditions Supporting Factors:** Political support from the Regent who requests judges to take special consideration in granting marriage dispensation requests. Some members of the community are beginning to understand due to large banners about preventing early marriage. **Inhibiting Factors:** The culture of marrying young is very strong, especially among communities with low human resources. The long-standing engagement tradition that means couples "must get married immediately." Many teenagers do not continue their education due to poverty, making them easier to marry off. The practice of unregistered marriages (nikah siri) is seen as a moral solution, making it difficult to prevent. Parents' perspectives in the villages still prioritize marrying off their children or buying them a cellphone over sending them to higher education.

**Tendencies or Attitudes of Implementing Supporting Factors:** Judges at the Religious Court have a selective attitude: not all requests are granted. KUA counselors are very committed and creative, including creating the tagline 'Go to College, Don't Marry Yet.' DP3AP2KB has a responsive attitude, as seen in efforts to improve the screening and counseling system. **Inhibiting Factors:** Some village officials or religious leaders do not support, and even encourage child marriage through unregistered marriages. Analysis using Van Meter & Van Horn's theory shows that the supporting factors for the implementation of early marriage prevention policies in Situbondo include: Strong cross-sector coordination, clear SOPs, high commitment from implementers, as well as regional political support. However, implementation still faces major obstacles such as limited budgets, a deeply rooted culture of early marriage, the prevalence of unofficial marriages, low public education levels, and minimal involvement of village community leaders. This combination of factors explains why government efforts have been running well but have not been able to completely eliminate the rate of early marriage.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study indicates that the implementation of policies and programs by the Situbondo Regency Government in efforts to reduce early marriage rates has been carried out in a structured, collaborative, and fairly effective manner through various programs such as PERAK CINTA, BRUS, BINWIN, health checks for prospective brides and grooms, psychological counseling, and cross-sectoral socialization. Policy implementers, such as DP3AP2KB, Religious Courts, the Health Office, KUA, community health centers, schools, and the Child Forum, have demonstrated good coordination and commitment, supported by clear SOPs and effective communication via the DIMANAKAH app. Nevertheless, policy implementation has not been optimal as it still faces various obstacles, particularly budget limitations, limited outreach of socialization programs, and strong socio-cultural factors in the community that continue to support early marriage and unregistered marriages. In addition, low education levels, social pressure after engagement, and lack of support from some community and religious leaders are also obstacles. On the other hand, there are several supporting factors, such as clear policy objectives, local political support, the presence of active psychologists and religious counselors, and increasing public understanding through educational media. Thus, although the policy has been implemented well and has had a positive impact, its effectiveness still needs to be improved through expanding program reach, strengthening public education, increasing the budget, and fostering stronger cross-sector synergy so that efforts to prevent early marriage in Situbondo Regency can achieve more optimal results.

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