

When the State Tackles Family Law Issues: The Attitudes of Surabaya and Sidoarjo Religious Offices on Child Marriage, *Sirri* Marriage, and Domestic Violence

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how the Religious Offices in Surabaya and Sidoarjo implement preventive measures against child marriage, *sirri* marriage, and domestic violence—issues that have the highest incidence rates in East Java. Notably, only a limited number of Religious Offices have actively engaged in such preventive efforts. This study examines the implementation, challenges, and evaluation of these preventive measures through interviews with relevant stakeholders. The findings indicate that the preventive initiatives undertaken by the Religious Offices in Surabaya and Sidoarjo are to promote family well-being by fostering healthy family relationships in both thought and action, ensuring financial stability, upholding the principles of Islamic marriage, and protecting families from violence. These efforts seek to establish a stable family structure capable of raising future generations.

[Artikel ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana Kantor Urusan Agama Surabaya dan Sidoarjo dalam melakukan pencegahan terkait perkawinan anak, nikah siri, dan KDRT. Pasalnya, tidak semua Kantor Urusan Agama mengimplementasikan pencegahan terkait isu-isu di atas. Kantor Urusan Agama di Surabaya dan Sidoarjo menjadi acuan utama penelitian ini. Penelitian ini sendiri mengkaji bagaimana pelaksanaan, tantangan, dan evaluasi pencegahan dari ketiga problematika tersebut dengan wawancara mendalam kepada para aparat Kantor Urusan Agama Surabaya dan Sidoarjo. Di simpulkan bahwa implementasi pencegahan yang dilaksanakan oleh Kantor Urusan Agama Surabaya dan Sidoarjo tidak lain adalah dengan mewujudkan keluarga sejahtera dengan mengatur pola hubungan keluarga yang baik dalam pemikiran dan tindakan. Fokus mereka adalah meningkatkan kemampuan dalam mengelola kebutuhan finansial, pemahaman terkait prinsip-prinsip perkawinan menurut Islam, serta menguatkan pemahaman para pasangan terkait tindakan anti kekerasan.]

KEYWORDS

Child marriage, *sirri* marriage, domestic violence, religious office

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 22 August 2023

Approved for Publication: 30 December 2024

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Holilur Rohman, Muhammad Jazil Rifqi "When the State Tackles Family Law Issues: The Attitudes of Surabaya and Sidoarjo Religious Offices on Child Marriage, Sirri Marriage, and Domestic Violence" *Al-Ahwal: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 17, no. 2 (2024): 267-86, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2024.17207>.



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Introduction

Child marriage, domestic violence, and *sirri* marriage are among the most pressing family-related issues in Indonesia, each carrying severe negative consequences. These challenges are not unique to Indonesia but are also prevalent in other developing countries under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, as noted by Aristiana and Waone.¹ Historically, child marriage has been a common practice in Indonesia since the pre-independence era, as highlighted by Jazil. The recent legal reform raising the minimum marriage age for women from 16 to 19—now equal to the requirement for men—has inadvertently led to a rise in requests for marriage dispensations each year.²

In the sociological context, child marriage in Surabaya City and Sidoarjo Regency can be analyzed through data on marriage dispensation requests submitted to the Surabaya and Sidoarjo Religious Courts. Most applicants seeking dispensation are believed to be influenced by economic, social, familial, and customary factors, with premarital pregnancy being a frequent driving force.³ The process of child marriage begins when a couple attempts to register their marriage at the Religious Office (Kantor Urusan Agama or KUA). If either party is below the legally required age, the registration is denied, and an N9 rejection letter is issued. Following this, the parents of the prospective bride and groom may file a marriage dispensation request with the religious court. The court then examines the case, considers the stated reasons for the request, and conducts hearings in which the child and their family members provide testimony. Based on this evaluation, the

¹ Aristiana Prihatining Rahayu and Waode Hamsia, "Resiko Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga (KDRT) Pada Pernikahan Usia Anak Di Kawasan Marginal Surabaya," *Pedagogi: Jurnal Anak Usia Dini dan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 4, no. 2 (October 4, 2018): 81–82.

² Muhammad Jazil Rifqi, "Dinamika Perkembangan Batas Usia Perkawinan Dalam Perspektif Hukum Progresif," *Arena Hukum* 15, no. 2 (August 31, 2022): 285–306.

³ Yunianto, *Pernikahan Dini Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam* (Bandung: Nusa Media, 2018), 7.

judge determines whether to approve or deny the dispensation. If granted, the dispensation allows the couple to proceed with their marriage registration at the KUA, despite being under the legal marriage age. The following section presents the decisions on marriage dispensation cases from the Surabaya and Sidoarjo Religious Courts.

Table 1. Marriage dispensation decisions in Surabaya and Sidoarjo Religious Courts

	Marriage Dispensation Decision					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Surabaya ⁴	93	118	176	374	-	123
Sidoarjo ⁵	79	95	99	332	287	169

No less concerning than child marriage is the increasing prevalence of *sirri* marriages, which are informal unions conducted without official registration at the Religious Office. The ease of accessing religious officiants (*ustaz*) through social media platforms has contributed to the rise of such practices. For instance, websites like *jasapernikahansiri.com* offer services that facilitate *sirri* marriages.⁶ According to judges at the Bojonegoro Religious Court, individuals who opt for *sirri* marriages often do so without the approval of their families, or in order to conceal second marriages by falsifying their identities.⁷ Despite the clear negative implications of *sirri* marriages for women and children—particularly in terms of legal protection and social recognition—these practices persist. From a fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) perspective, *sirri* marriages are considered valid as long as the essential conditions and requirements of a marriage contract are met, and there are no legal impediments to the union. Once these conditions are fulfilled, the marriage is deemed legitimate and gives rise to legal consequences such as spousal obligations, inheritance rights, and other related matters.⁸ Data on *sirri* marriages were obtained from cases in which couples had already filed for *isbat nikah* (marriage validity) at the Religious Courts in Surabaya and Sidoarjo, as outlined below:

⁴ “Statistik Permohonan Informasi 2018 - Pengadilan Agama Surabaya Klas 1A,” accessed September 13, 2022, <https://pa-surabaya.go.id/halaman/content/statistik-permohonan-informasi-2018>.

⁵ “SIPP,” accessed September 13, 2022, https://sipp.pa-sidoarjo.go.id/list_perkara/page/

⁶ “Jasa Nikah Siri Profesional Mendapatkan Surat Nikah Siri, Rahasia Aman,” *Jasa Nikah Siri Lengkap Mendapatkan Surat Nikah Siri*, accessed September 17, 2022, <https://www.jasapernikahansiri.com/>.

⁷ “Marak Jasa Nikah Siri Di Medsos Klaim Sediakan Wali Saksi Dan Ustad,” accessed September 17, 2022, <https://pa-bojonegoro.go.id/Marak-Jasa-Nikah-Siri-di-Medsos-Klaim-Sediakan-Wali-Saksi-dan-Ustad>.

⁸ Holilur Rohman, *Maqasid Hukum Perkawinan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Magnum Pustaka Utama, 2022), 187.

Table 2. Marriage *isbat* Decision decisions in Surabaya and Sidoarjo Religious Courts

	Marriage <i>Isbat</i> Decision					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Surabaya ⁹	278	226	249	173		121
Sidoarjo ¹⁰	38	26	58	35	35	40

The final case examined in this study concerns domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women and children. For instance, the Surabaya Office for Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Population Control (DP3PA) recorded at least 104 cases of domestic violence between January and September during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Ida Widayati and Tomi Andriyanti, the primary causes of domestic violence were weak economic conditions within households and broader social factors. In addition, violence against children increased during the pandemic due to the shift to online learning. Children who would ordinarily receive instruction at school under the supervision of teachers were instead taught at home, with parents—often mothers—assuming the role of educators. This added responsibility contributed to stress and tension in the household, sometimes leading to abuse.¹¹ DP3PA reported 50 cases of child abuse between January and June 2021, and 66 cases from January to July 2022.¹² Furthermore, the Surabaya District Court handled 40 cases of abuse during the same period.¹³

Previous research on the prevention of child marriage has been conducted across various regions in Indonesia. Notably, Jusanita and Rahmiati, among other scholars, have carried out studies in Awangpone District of Bone Regency.¹⁴ Similar attention has been given to the issue of domestic violence, which encompasses physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. For example, Chairiah conducted a study highlighting the protection of children who are victims of domestic violence.¹⁵

⁹ "Statistik Permohonan Informasi 2018 - Pengadilan Agama Surabaya Klas 1A."

¹⁰ "SIPP," accessed September 13, 2022, https://sipp.pa-sidoarjo.go.id/list_perkara/page/

¹¹ JawaPos.com, "Sisi Lain Pandemi, Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga di Surabaya Meningkat," *JawaPos.com* (blog), November 13, 2021, <https://www.jawapos.com/surabaya/13/11/2021/sisi-lain-pandemi-kekerasan-dalam-rumah-tangga-di-surabaya-meningkat/>.

¹² "Kasus Kekerasan Anak di Surabaya Meningkat, Ini Pemicunya," kumparan, accessed September 17, 2022, <https://kumparan.com/beritaanaksurabaya/kasus-kekerasan-anak-di-surabaya-meningkat-ini-pemicunya-1yaRc6s5K2x>.

¹³ Praditya Fauzi Rahman, "40 Kasus KDRT dan Penganiayaan di Surabaya Telah Disidangkan Selama 2022," *detikjatim*, accessed September 17, 2022, <https://www.detik.com/jatim/hukum-dan-kriminal/d-6202752/40-kasus-kdrt-dan-penganiayaan-di-surabaya-telah-disidangkan-selama-2022>.

¹⁴ Jusanita Jusanita and Rahmiati Rahmiati, "Pencegahan Pernikahan Dini oleh Organisasi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Muda," *Siyasatuna: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Siyasa Syar'iyah* 1, no. 2 (May 2, 2020): 253–62.

¹⁵ Dakwatul Chairah, "Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Perempuan Dan Anak Korban Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga Di Kabupaten Sidoarjo," *Al-Jinayah: Jurnal Hukum Pidana Islam* 5, no. 1 (2019): 153–75.

Research on *sirri* marriages has also been undertaken by several scholars. Supraptiningsih¹⁶ and Sufyan,¹⁷ in their studies in Proppo District of Pamekasan Regency, identified the high cost of formal weddings, complex administrative procedures, and the belief that fulfilling only the religious requirements of marriage suffices for its legitimacy as key contributing factors to the prevalence of *sirri* marriages. In the cities of Majene, Mamuju, and Polewali Mandar (Polman) in West Sulawesi, it was found that *sirri* marriages frequently occur, particularly because many men consider the official marriage certificate (marriage book) to be unimportant.¹⁸ Similar practices have been observed by Malinah and Jatningsih in Sumberrejo, Sidoarjo Regency,¹⁹ and among the predominantly Madurese community in Ketegan District, also in Sidoarjo Regency.²⁰

The three interconnected dilemmas—child marriage, unregistered (*sirri*) marriage, and domestic violence—pose significant threats to the well-being and long-term prosperity of families. Consequently, proactive efforts to campaign for their prevention are urgently required. In this context, the Religious Office (KUA), as the frontline institution responsible for overseeing marriage-related matters, warrants closer examination regarding its role in implementing preventive measures. As noted earlier, Surabaya and Sidoarjo represent the regions with the highest incidence of child marriage, unregistered marriages, and domestic violence within East Java Province. Accordingly, several KUAs located in these areas serve as key sites for this study. This field research aims to investigate the implementation, challenges, and evaluation of prevention strategies related to the three issues mentioned above. Data were collected through interviews with relevant stakeholders, including KUA officials and other concerned parties.

Strategies to Prevent Child Marriage in the Religious Office in Surabaya and Sidoarjo

Prior to the amendment of the Marriage Law, the minimum legal age for marriage was 19 years for males and 16 years for females. However, in 2019, a revision to the law standardized the minimum age of marriage at 19 years for both men and women. Consequently, any marriage involving individuals below the age of 19 is now classified as a child marriage. While this regulation represents a significant

¹⁶ Umi Supraptiningsih, "Perlindungan Hukum Anak Dan Istri Dalam Perkawinan Siri Di Kecamatan Proppo Kabupaten Pamekasan," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 12, no. 2 (2017): 248–71.

¹⁷ Akhmad Farid Mawardi Sufyan, "Analisis Terhadap Tingginya Nikah Siri Di Kabupaten Pamekasan | Al-Manhaj: Journal of Indonesian Islamic Family Law," April 14, 2020, <http://ejournal.iainmadura.ac.id/index.php/almanhaj/article/view/3234>.

¹⁸ Juraeri Tahir et al., "Faktor-Faktor Penyebab Nikah Siri Di Sulawesi Barat," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 5, no. 2 (August 30, 2017): 283–302.

¹⁹ Pipin Mailinah and Oksiana Jatningsih, "Perkawinan Siri Dalam Persepsi Perempuan Pelakunya di Desa Sumberrejo Kecamatan Wonoayu Kabupaten Sidoarjo," *Kajian Moral dan Kewarganegaraan* 7, no. 2 (August 14, 2019), <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id>.

²⁰ Muflikhatul Khoiroh, Imron Mustofa, and Mila Rosyidah, "Analisis Hukum Islam Terhadap Perkawinan Siri Di Ketegan, Sepanjang, Sidoarjo," *Al-Hukama'* 12, no. 01 (August 24, 2022): 61–93.

step toward the prevention of child marriage, it contains a legal loophole through the provision for marriage dispensation.²¹ According to the amended law, parents or guardians of prospective brides or grooms who have not yet reached the legal age of marriage may apply for a dispensation through the religious court. Nonetheless, exceptional cases have emerged that challenge the effectiveness of this provision. For example, there are instances in which the marriage dispensation application is submitted directly by the underage individual, rather than the parents. This occurs when parents refuse to support the marriage—such as in cases where the prospective groom has converted from Christianity to Islam, leading to parental disapproval. In such situations, the underage individual takes the initiative to apply for the dispensation independently, often under circumstances where the prospective bride is already pregnant out of wedlock.²²

In adjudicating applications for marriage dispensation, judges are required to adhere to the provisions of Supreme Court Regulation (Perma) No. 5 of 2019. Article 17 of the regulation explicitly mandates that judges must prioritize the best interests of the child.²³ In practice, judges often also take into account additional factors, such as pregnancy outside of wedlock, when considering requests for dispensation. Furthermore, in such cases, judges may instruct the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) to supervise and provide support to the young couple after marriage. This oversight aims to mitigate the adverse effects commonly associated with early marriage, including psychological, social, economic, and health-related challenges, as well as the risk of domestic violence.²⁴ These interconnected risks are further compounded by limited educational attainment, which restricts access to decent employment and contributes to long-term financial instability within families. This situation has sparked widespread discussion regarding the effectiveness of the legal amendment to the minimum marriage age. While the revision was intended to curb child marriage, evidence suggests that the practice persists—and in some instances has increased—due to the availability of legal loopholes, particularly the mechanism of marriage dispensation.²⁵ Although the dispensation process is legally sanctioned, its implementation may have broader societal implications. When judges grant dispensations, it can inadvertently normalize underage marriage within the community, reinforcing the perception that such unions are acceptable in situations deemed "urgent." This dynamic raises concerns about the consistency of

²¹ Tri Hendra Wahyudi and Juwita Hayyuning Prastiwi, "Seksualitas Dan Negara: Permasalahan Dispensasi Perkawinan Anak Di Indonesia," *Aspirasi: Jurnal Masalah-Masalah Sosial* 13, no. 2 (December 27, 2022): 207.

²² Yoga Abiansyah Dwi Putra and Yunanto Yunanto, "Perlindungan Hukum Seorang Anak Sebagai Pemohon Dispensasi Kawin Pasca Revisi Undang-Undang Perkawinan," *AL-MANHAJ: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial Islam* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 2023): 458-463.

²³ Wahyudi and Prastiwi, "Seksualitas Dan Negara," 217.

²⁴ Wahyudi and Prastiwi, 220.

²⁵ Syarifah Lisa Andriati, Mutiara Sari, and Windha Wulandari, "Implementasi Perubahan Batas Usia Perkawinan Menurut UU No. 16 Tahun 2019 Tentang Perubahan Atas UU No. 1 Tahun 1974 Tentang Perkawinan," *Binamulia Hukum* 11, no. 1 (2022): 66.

legal protection for children and the effectiveness of existing regulations in genuinely addressing the root causes of child marriage.²⁶

Concerns surrounding the practice of child marriage primarily relate to violations of children's rights, the restriction of their life choices and opportunities, and their increased vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and abuse. In Indonesia, the protection of children's rights is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees every child the right to survival, growth, and development, as well as protection from violence and discrimination. These constitutional guarantees have been reinforced through statutory legislation. Law No. 23 of 2002, which was later amended by Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, defines a child as an individual under the age of 18 and places a clear obligation on parents to prevent child marriage. The Government of Indonesia's commitment to addressing child marriage was further demonstrated through the enactment of Law No. 16 of 2019, which amended the Marriage Law (Law No. 1 of 1974) by raising the minimum legal age of marriage for women from 16 to 19 years, thereby aligning it with the minimum age for men. Despite this legislative progress, the law still permits individuals below the legal marriage age to apply for a marriage dispensation through the Religious Courts under certain conditions deemed acceptable by the law. This provision, while offering flexibility in exceptional circumstances, has also raised concerns about its potential to undermine the broader goal of eliminating child marriage in practice.

Judges, as key actors in the judicial system, play a strategic role in controlling and preventing child marriage. Under Supreme Court Regulation No. 5 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Adjudicating Applications for Marriage Dispensation, judges are granted the authority not only to approve or reject such applications but also to provide advice to children, parents, or guardians on the potential consequences of proceeding with early marriage. This advisory role is intended to discourage unnecessary or harmful applications by highlighting the negative impacts of child marriage. Among the adverse effects commonly considered by judges are: (1) disruption or termination of the child's education; (2) physical and emotional unpreparedness for reproduction; (3) long-term social, economic, and psychological burdens; and (4) an increased risk of divorce, often triggered by minor conflicts due to emotional immaturity of the spouses. The regulation thus serves as a mechanism to tighten the conditions under which child marriage may be permitted, emphasizing the importance of protective legal scrutiny. When a marriage dispensation is granted, judges are expected to follow a set of guiding principles and considerations, including: (1) whether the benefits of the marriage outweigh its potential harms; (2) the best interests of the child; (3) the financial stability and income of the prospective spouses; (4) mutual consent between the prospective bride and groom; (5) the level of the children's religious education; and (6) parental recognition and support of the proposed marriage. These

²⁶ Muhammad Jazil Rifqi, "Analisis Utilitarianisme terhadap Dispensasi Nikah pada Undang-Undang Perkawinan Nomor 1 tahun 1974," *Al-Ahwal: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 10, no. 2 (January 7, 2018): 162.

considerations aim to ensure that, if a dispensation is granted, it is done with full awareness of the implications and in circumstances that genuinely support the welfare of the child.²⁷

Information regarding child marriage was obtained from Muhammad Yahya, Head of the Religious Office (KUA) in Wiyung District, Surabaya. He noted that marriages involving individuals under the age of 19 are frequently driven by specific circumstances, particularly cases of pregnancy outside of wedlock. In such situations, couples are required to apply for a marriage dispensation through the Surabaya Religious Court. For instance, in a recent case, a 17-year-old girl who was five months pregnant prompted her parents to request a marriage dispensation on her behalf.²⁸ Beyond premarital pregnancy, other contributing factors to child marriage include arranged marriages. Both the Wiyung and Simokerto Offices of Religious Affairs actively direct underage couples to seek legal dispensation from the Religious Court before proceeding with marriage. At the Simokerto office, premarital counselling sessions are held for couples who have registered for marriage. These sessions provide essential guidance, highlighting the potential long-term consequences of early marriage and emphasizing that marriage is a sacred and lifelong commitment. In addition, the Religious Office conducts public outreach programs to raise awareness about the risks associated with child marriage. These efforts aim to increase community understanding of the potential dangers faced by young couples who marry below the legal age. Importantly, such initiatives underscore the critical role of parents in supervising their children's social interactions and fostering strong religious and educational values to prevent undesirable outcomes.²⁹

The Sukolilo Religious Office has implemented several strategies to address child marriages, particularly those resulting from pregnancy outside of wedlock. These strategies include: (1) conducting outreach activities involving various stakeholders such as the Integrated Service Post (Posyandu), the Family Welfare Development program (PKK), and local ward officials. According to Ahmad Tholhah, Head of the Sukolilo Office, he was frequently invited to participate in awareness campaigns aimed at preventing early marriages during the tenure of Tri Rismaharini as Mayor of Surabaya; (2) providing advocacy services for couples already facing unplanned pregnancies. This advocacy is particularly relevant when such couples begin processing marriage-related documents, such as the N1 form, at the sub-district level; (3) extending public education efforts through outreach personnel assigned by the Religious Office; and (4) supporting the implementation of the Surabaya City Government's Elsimil BKKBN initiative, which aims to reduce

²⁷ Mansari Mansari and Rizkal Rizkal, "Peranan Hakim Dalam Upaya Pencegahan Perkawinan Anak: Antara Kemaslahatan dan Kemudharatan," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 4, no. 2 (November 20, 2021): 329-350.

²⁸ Muhammad Yahya, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Wiyung District, Surabaya), March 1, 2023.

²⁹ Muhadji, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Simokerto District, Surabaya), March 3, 2023.

stunting rates. This involves collaboration with community health centres to monitor and support couples during the first two years of marriage.³⁰

In addressing cases of child and *sirri* (unregistered) marriages, the Balongbendo Religious Office provides pre-marital guidance to prospective couples, focusing on equipping them with the knowledge and values necessary to build a prosperous family. This office also organizes community-wide marriage education programs, typically held twice a year. Although the Ministry of Religious Affairs mandates only one such program annually, Balongbendo has extended its implementation. However, these programs often fail to generate enthusiasm among participants, as they are scheduled on weekdays, which may not be convenient for many couples.³¹ At the Porong Religious Office, the most frequent causes of child marriage are pregnancies outside of marriage, lack of religious education, and economic hardship. Economic deprivation and poverty often lead parents to marry off their children early, viewing marriage as a means of reducing their financial burden and hoping that their children will attain a more stable life. According to Laulatus Shalihah, a family extension officer at the Porong Office, many early pregnancies occur among youth who receive only general education—ranging from junior high to high school—without sufficient religious instruction.³² Similarly, the Taman Sidoarjo Religious Office reports that underage marriages in the area are frequently driven by exposure to promiscuous behaviour, which often results in pregnancies outside of wedlock. These early marriages tend to be unstable, as the emotional and cognitive immaturity of young couples often leads to conflict, culminating in a high incidence of divorce.³³

Efforts to prevent child marriage at the Wonoayu Religious Office in Sidoarjo are implemented through a range of educational and administrative strategies. These include: (1) public outreach programs in local villages to disseminate information about the Marriage Law, particularly regarding the legal minimum age for marriage, the consequences of underage marriage, and effective parenting practices; (2) counselling sessions aimed at discouraging underage marriages and encouraging community compliance with legal provisions; (3) delaying administrative services for marriage registration in certain cases as a deterrent; and (4) conducting Sakinah Family guidance programs, which involve counselling and advising couples—especially those at risk of early marriage—on how to build a harmonious and stable family life.³⁴ Similarly, the Porong Religious Office contributes to the prevention of child marriage by conducting community outreach

³⁰ M. Fajar Rahmawan, Interview (Religious Office in Sukolilo District, Surabaya), March 13, 2023.

³¹ Ischaq Fathani, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Balongbendo District, Sidoarjo), March 13, 2023.

³² Hamdan Lutfi, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Porong District, Sidoarjo), March 24, 2023.

³³ Meeftahorrahrman, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Taman District, Sidoarjo), March 27, 2023.

³⁴ Syaiful Bukhori, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Wonoayu District, Sidoarjo), March 3, 2023.

through collaboration with village governments and local health centres. The office highlights the various risks associated with underage marriage, including marital conflict, divorce, and reproductive health issues. Additionally, the Porong office serves as a marriage counselling centre, offering guidance to affected parties and raising awareness among the general public. Special attention is also given to junior high school students, who are deemed particularly vulnerable to engaging in risky social behaviours. Despite these efforts, a lack of adequate human resources limits the expansion of these educational programs. Therefore, increased investment in counselling and pre-marital coaching is essential to strengthen public understanding of child marriage prevention and the principles of a Sakinah family. The Porong Religious Office has also adopted a firm policy of refusing to process marriage applications for individuals under the age of 19, aligning its actions with the legal mandates of the Marriage Law.³⁵

Overcoming *Sirri* Marriage at KUA Surabaya and Sidoarjo

Article 2, paragraph (2) of the Marriage Law stipulates that every marriage must be registered in accordance with prevailing regulations. While a marriage may be deemed valid under religious law, failure to register it renders it unrecognized by the State. The Constitutional Court has identified two principal reasons for the necessity of marriage registration. First, from the State's perspective, marriage registration is imperative as part of its responsibility to protect, uphold, and fulfil human rights. Second, marriage constitutes a fundamental legal act that carries significant juridical implications for the individuals involved. Although registration does not determine the religious validity of a marriage—which remains governed by religious law—it is essential for purposes of civil administration.³⁶ The registration of marriage ensures that legal rights and obligations arising from the marital relationship, particularly those within the family context, are recognized and protected by the State.³⁷

Unregistered marriages are commonly referred to as *sirri* marriages. More specifically, *sirri* marriage refers to a union conducted solely according to religious norms or local customs, without being officially announced to the public or recorded by the authorized institutions—namely, the Religious Office (KUA) for Muslims or the Civil Registry Office for non-Muslims. This practice persists because marriages conducted in accordance with religious belief are often perceived as legally and morally sufficient, leading many couples to forgo formal registration. The predominant reasons for engaging in *sirri* marriages include the perceived complexity of administrative procedures, the desire to avoid legal scrutiny, and the intention to conceal the marriage, particularly in cases involving polygamy or second marriages. However, *sirri* marriages carry significant legal and social

³⁵ Lutfi, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Porong District, Sidoarjo).

³⁶ Zainuddin and Zulfiani, *Kepastian Hukum Perkawinan Siri Dan Permasalahannya: Ditinjau Dari Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 Tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974*, 2022nd ed. (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, n.d.), 4.

³⁷ Iskandar Ritonga, *Hak-Hak Wanita Dalam Undang-Undang Perkawinan Dan Kompilasi Hukum Islam*, 1999th ed. (Jakarta: Nuansa Madani, n.d.), 31.

consequences, particularly for women and children. Children born from unregistered unions are considered, under the law, to be born out of wedlock. As a result, they are legally recognized only as having a civil relationship with their mother, and not with their father, which can affect inheritance rights and civil status.³⁸

One of the predominant issues arising from *sirri* marriages is the denial of paternity for children born from such unions, along with disputes related to inheritance and the division of assets. Additionally, aligning population data becomes complicated due to the absence of official documentation. The lack of legal protection renders children born from unregistered marriages vulnerable, as they often face challenges in accessing their civil rights. Although the Constitutional Court Decision No. 46/PUU-VIII/2010 provides some remedy—stating that children born out of wedlock have civil relations not only with their mother and her family but also with the biological father, provided that paternity can be established through scientific methods or other legally recognized evidence—implementation remains complex. In cases where parents do not possess a marriage certificate, birth registration becomes problematic. The resulting family documents, such as the family card (Kartu Keluarga), typically list the child as the offspring of the mother only, with no formal marital relationship recorded between the parents.³⁹ However, the issuance of Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 108 of 2019 has provided a partial solution. This regulation allows individuals without marriage certificates or other legal documentation to obtain a family card, provided they submit a Letter of Absolute Responsibility for data accuracy, witnessed by two individuals. As such, while *sirri* couples can now be issued a family card, their marital status is explicitly noted as "unregistered marriage."⁴⁰

Issuing family cards to unregistered marriage partners aims to ensure that all citizens, including children born from *sirri* (unregistered) marriages, are included in a family card. However, in accordance with the law, the issuance of a family card does not alter the legal status of the marriage if it remains unregistered. Consequently, the wife and children in such unions are not entitled to inheritance rights or other legal benefits in the event of divorce. This process functions merely as a data collection measure for population administration.⁴¹ The legality of marriage is essential for accessing legal protection. Children born from unregistered marriages are considered to have the same status as children born

³⁸ Ahmad Dimyathi and dkk., *Hukum Keluarga Islam Kontemporer*, 2022nd ed. (Malang: CV. Literasi Nusantara Abadi, n.d.), 31.

³⁹ Okta Nofia Sari, Andi Sari Damayanti, and Reza Hadrian, "Akibat Hukum Pencatatan Nikah Siri Sebagai Bentuk Perlindungan Hukum," *WELFARE STATE Jurnal Hukum* 2, no. 1 (June 5, 2023): 102–3.

⁴⁰ Hana Miftakhur Rochmah and M. Adib Hamzawi, "Sinkronisasi Permendagri Dan Undang-Undang Perkawinan Terhadap Penerbitan Kartu Keluarga Bagi Pasangan Nikah Siri," *JURIH: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 1, no. 2 (June 5, 2023): 154.

⁴¹ Basit Alliya Abdul, "Tinjauan Yuridis Pemberian Kartu Keluarga (Kk) Bagi Pasangan Pernikahan Siri" (skripsi, Universitas Mataram, 2023), <http://eprints.unram.ac.id/35309/>.

out of wedlock. Nevertheless, with the issuance of a birth certificate, such children may obtain legal recognition and protection, as the state is obliged to guarantee their rights from the moment of conception—ensuring protection from discrimination and violence, and supporting their development. To legalize an unregistered marriage, it is necessary to submit an application to the court for a marriage certificate, known as *isbat nikah*. The Religious Courts, which have the authority to issue such certifications, initially focused on marriages conducted before the enactment of Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage. However, given various limitations and the growing number of unregistered marriages, the scope of this provision has been expanded. Article 7 of the Compilation of Islamic Law now allows for *isbat nikah* applications in cases where couples lack official proof of marriage.⁴²

The Benowo Religious Office (KUA) has implemented preventive measures against *sirri* marriages. These include: (1) conducting marriage counseling, particularly for couples intending to marry. The goal is to emphasize the importance of registering marriages with the KUA. Topics such as reproductive health, mental and physical preparedness for married life, and other crucial aspects of marriage are discussed. These sessions are typically facilitated by experienced counselors or speakers; and (2) providing guidance and reassurance to prospective brides and grooms who approach the KUA. Many couples initially hesitate to register their marriage due to misconceptions about high costs, often opting instead for *sirri* marriages. In reality, marriages conducted within the KUA incur no cost. Only marriages conducted outside the KUA office involve administrative fees, which must be transferred directly to the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The Benowo KUA consistently educates couples on the legal importance of officially registering their marriages. Failure to do so not only affects the legal status of the union but also jeopardizes the civil rights of children, who may face difficulties obtaining birth certificates or being listed on a family card—both essential documents in civic life. Furthermore, inheritance issues in Indonesia often become contentious, especially when the legal status of a marriage is unclear.⁴³ In the Genteng region, some community members perceive the marriage registration process at the KUA as overly complex, leading to the continued practice of *sirri* marriages. Although such unions are valid under religious law, they carry significant administrative consequences. For instance, unregistered parents may face difficulties when attempting to obtain birth certificates for their children, ultimately requiring them to undergo the *isbat nikah* process. Several factors contribute to the prevalence of *sirri* marriages, including: (1) a lack of legal

⁴² Ramdani Wahyu Sururie, “Polemik Di Seputar Hukum Isbat Nikah Dalam Sistem Hukum Perkawinan Indonesia,” *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 11, no. 2 (December 1, 2017): 239–40.

⁴³ Agus Muhtamil, Interview (Head Religious Office in Benowo District, Surabaya), March 13, 2023.

awareness regarding the obligation to register marriages; (2) premarital pregnancies; and (3) instances of polygamy.⁴⁴

Preventive Coaching on Domestic Violence in the Religious Office in Surabaya and Sidoarjo

According to Law Number 23 of 2004, domestic violence is defined as any act committed by a person against another individual within the domestic sphere—such as a spouse, child, or blood relative—that causes physical or psychological suffering through neglect, threats, coercion, or the violation of personal rights. Women, who are most often the victims, frequently refrain from reporting such violence to the authorities due to fear of retaliation or escalation of the abuse. Furthermore, domestic violence is often perceived as a private family matter, leading victims to conceal their suffering to avoid exposing what is seen as a family disgrace.⁴⁵ Although the enactment of this law was intended to reduce incidents of domestic violence, in practice, such cases have continued to emerge and, in some instances, have even increased.⁴⁶

Domestic violence can manifest in various forms, each carrying significant physical, psychological, and social consequences. One form is physical violence, which involves acts that cause bodily harm, ranging from minor to severe injuries, and may leave lasting physical scars. This includes behaviors such as hitting, slapping, kicking, or other forms of physical assault. Another prevalent form is psychological violence, which inflicts emotional suffering and mental distress on the victim. It is characterized by threatening behavior, intimidation, verbal abuse, and actions intended to demean or belittle, leading to fear, anxiety, or long-term psychological trauma. Sexual violence also constitutes a serious aspect of domestic abuse, particularly when one partner is coerced into sexual activity without consent or regard for their health and well-being. Additionally, economic violence arises when a family member neglects their financial responsibilities, such as failing to provide basic necessities or intentionally withholding economic support. This form of abuse compromises the victim's financial independence and overall well-being, thereby undermining the stability of the household.⁴⁷

Domestic violence often stems from a variety of interrelated factors, many of which are rooted in unequal power dynamics within the household. A common cause is the imbalance in the husband-wife relationship, where the husband perceives himself as having greater authority over his wife. Cultural norms that

⁴⁴ Umi Wasi'ah, Interview (Religious Office in Genteng District, Surabaya), March 29, 2023.

⁴⁵ Herlyanti Yuliana Anggraeny Bawole, "Karakteristik Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga Terhadap Perempuan Ditinjau Dari UU No. 23 Tahun 2004 | JPAI: Jurnal Perempuan Dan Anak Indonesia," April 17, 2023, 84, <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/v3/index.php/jpai/article/view/44346>.

⁴⁶ Bima Guntara, Ayni Suwarni Herry, and Ari Widiarti, "Perlindungan Hukum Korban Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga (KDRT)," *AMMA : Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 12 (January 10, 2023): 1639-1640.

⁴⁷ Emi Sutrisminah, "Dampak Kekerasan Pada Istri Dalam Rumah Tangga Terhadap Kesehatan Reproduksi," *Majalah Ilmiah Sultan Agung* 50, no. 127 (June 21, 2023): 23-34.

dictate a wife's obedience to her husband can reinforce this dynamic, often resulting in abusive behavior when the wife resists or challenges his demands. Financial dependence also contributes significantly to domestic violence, particularly when the wife lacks independent income and feels compelled to comply with her husband's wishes, even in the face of abuse. Furthermore, some families adopt violence as a means of conflict resolution, responding to internal or external pressures with aggression rather than constructive dialogue. Competition between spouses—whether in the workplace or community—may also fuel tension, despite marriage ideally functioning as a partnership that balances each other's strengths. In some cases, frustration arises when one or both partners are underage or unprepared for the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, often still reliant on their parents or in-laws for support. Substance abuse, including the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs, can exacerbate these issues by impairing judgment and increasing aggressive behavior. Children who witness such abuse within the home may internalize these experiences, potentially perpetuating the cycle of violence in their own future relationships.⁴⁸

In addition to causing direct harm to victims, domestic violence significantly affects children who witness such incidents within the household. Although children may not be the immediate targets of abuse, their exposure to violent behavior leaves psychological imprints, making them indirect victims. Observing such violence can have detrimental effects on a child's mental health, manifesting in stress, fear, and emotional instability. The experience of witnessing violence—especially when perpetrated by one parent and tolerated or endured by the other—can lead to long-term trauma, as children internalize these events within the context of familial relationships.⁴⁹ Therefore, cases of violence involving children must be addressed with urgency and seriousness, given that children require special protection to prevent both direct and indirect forms of violence, whether within the home or in broader society. Fundamentally, children are not equipped to safeguard themselves from physical, psychological, or sexual harm, all of which can obstruct their healthy development. Unfortunately, not all children receive the protection they need, and violence often originates from parents due to various contributing factors, including family dysfunction, disharmony, economic hardship, parental selfishness, emotional neglect, and poor communication.⁵⁰

The seriousness of this problem cannot be resolved easily because there is no accurate data on the abuse that occurred to victims of domestic violence, which is

⁴⁸ Ayu Setyaningrum and Ridwan Arifin, "Analisis Upaya Perlindungan dan Pemulihan Terhadap Korban Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga (KDRT) Khususnya Anak-Anak dan Perempuan," *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah : Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, dan Humaniora* 3, no. 1 (February 14, 2019): 13.

⁴⁹ Iva Nurfaizah, "Dampak Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga (KDRT) Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Anak," *Gunung Djati Conference Series* 19 (February 10, 2023): 102.

⁵⁰ Ayu Setyaningrum and Ridwan Arifin, "Analisis Upaya Perlindungan dan Pemulihan Terhadap Korban Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga (KDRT) Khususnya Anak-Anak dan Perempuan," *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah : Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, dan Humaniora* 3, no. 1 (February 14, 2019): 10-11.

considered private territory even though they have been legalized in marriage institutions. So it's not too exaggerated if someone thinks domestic violence is a severe public health problem to pay attention to. However, some public also doesn't accept domestic violence as a crime.⁵¹ If someone has experienced domestic violence, a psychologist advises them not to be silent, give up and accept what they are experiencing. But he must save himself by any means so that conditions that threaten him can be avoided. At the juridical level, Article 10 of Law 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence illustrates that victims of domestic violence have the right to obtain protection from any party, family, prosecutors, police and others. Meanwhile, for the perpetrators, it is explained in article 44 of the same law that people who commit physical violence in domestic areas will be jailed for at least five years or a fine of up to 15 million.⁵² Efforts to recover victims who have experienced abuse from their families and the surrounding environment so that they do not take actions that can lead to a worse situation. Restoring their health through medical treatment, however, if there is a physical injury, providing psychological counselling, as well as spiritual guidance, all of which is so that the victim can stabilize his condition so that the victim can carry out social activities in society.⁵³

Domestic violence is often a contributing factor to divorce. Therefore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs considers the provision of premarital guidance to be a crucial measure for prospective brides and grooms. However, in practice, only a limited number of Religious Affairs Offices have implemented such marriage guidance programs. For instance, the Candi Religious Affairs Office has not yet introduced a premarital guidance initiative. According to the office, this is due to the perception that such programs do not fall within the core responsibilities of the officials, coupled with financial constraints in delivering the guidance.⁵⁴ In contrast, the Karangpilang Religious Affairs Office delegates the responsibility of providing premarital guidance to the Marriage Development and Preservation Advisory Board (BP4). This body seeks to reduce the risk of marital breakdown through a variety of theoretical and practical approaches. BP4 offers advice and counselling to couples preparing for marriage, ensuring they have a comprehensive understanding of marital life. Additionally, BP4 in Karangpilang provides mediation services, ongoing counselling, and consultations on various marital issues. In cases where divorce becomes a concern, BP4 Karangpilang employs several strategies. These include organizing premarital programs specifically tailored to prospective couples, aimed at equipping them with conflict-resolution skills for handling future disputes. Furthermore, the board promotes the concept

⁵¹ Sutrisminah, "Dampak Kekerasan Pada Istri Dalam Rumah Tangga Terhadap Kesehatan Reproduksi."

⁵² Ronald D. Hukubun et al., "Sosialisasi Dampak Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Korban Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga Di Negeri Latuhalat," *Sejahtera: Jurnal Inspirasi Mengabdikan Untuk Negeri* 2, no. 1 (2023): 42.

⁵³ Setyaningrum and Arifin, "Analisis Upaya Perlindungan dan Pemulihan Terhadap Korban Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga (KDRT) Khususnya Anak-Anak dan Perempuan," 17.

⁵⁴ Abdul Ro'uf, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Candi District, Sidoarjo), March 1, 2023.

of a *sakinah* (harmonious) family to the broader community through lectures, Friday sermons, Islamic study circles, and even by hosting *sakinah* family competitions.⁵⁵

The Head of the Tarik Sub-district Religious Office explained that the factors contributing to domestic violence are varied and complex. For example, some cases originate from a husband's frustration after losing money through gambling, which leads to anger and subsequent abandonment of his wife. In response to such issues, the Religious Office integrates preventive measures into its procedures, particularly during the registration process for prospective brides and grooms. From identity verification through to the final registration stages, officials provide direction and guidance aimed at fostering the development of prosperous and harmonious families. The guidance emphasizes the importance of spiritual and religious practices, encouraging couples to strengthen their relationship with Allah as a source of inner peace. Couples are advised to perform the five daily prayers, maintain open and respectful communication, and fulfill their mutual rights and obligations as husband and wife. Although many individuals undergoing divorce are aware of the theoretical foundations for building a harmonious family, conflicts often persist due to personal egos. As a result, divorce is frequently chosen as the ultimate resolution, despite it being intended as a last resort rather than an immediate response to household problems.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Underage marriages and unregistered (*sirri*) marriages are not ideal forms of marriage, as they result in various forms of harm and deviate from the core objectives of Islamic marital law. Similarly, domestic violence perpetrated by any family member undermines the foundational goals of marriage as envisioned in Islam. Therefore, all practices and tendencies that lead to underage marriage, unregistered marriage, and domestic violence must be actively prevented to foster the establishment of a *sakinah* (peaceful and harmonious) household.

Efforts to mitigate these issues must begin at the earliest stages to minimize potential harm. Several Religious Affairs Offices in Surabaya and Sidoarjo have identified contributing factors to child marriage, including out-of-wedlock pregnancies, lack of education, and economic hardship. In response, they have implemented preventive strategies such as premarital counseling sessions aimed at educating couples about the challenges and responsibilities of married life. Some offices have even delayed the administrative process of marriage registration as a deterrent. In addition, these offices engage in public outreach and advocacy to raise awareness across all segments of society about the negative consequences of early marriage, domestic violence, and unregistered marriages. They emphasize

⁵⁵ Ahmad Zainul Ma'arif, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Karangpilang District, Surabaya), March 1, 2023.

⁵⁶ Ibnu Batutah, Interview (Head of the Religious Office in Tarik District, Sidoarjo), March 3, 2023.

the importance of upholding the rights and obligations of each partner within both the family and broader society.

The initiatives undertaken by the Religious Affairs Offices in Surabaya and Sidoarjo are part of a broader effort to build prosperous families grounded in the values of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* (tranquility, love, and compassion). Their work includes promoting healthy family relationships, managing household finances responsibly, upholding Islamic marital principles, ensuring the proper care and upbringing of offspring, fostering respectful gender relations, facilitating dignified divorce when necessary, and maintaining family harmony in diversity. To enhance these preventive efforts, it is essential that the Religious Affairs Offices in Surabaya and Sidoarjo receive more robust institutional and community support. Such reinforcement will further empower their mission of fostering strong, healthy, and resilient families.

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