

Analysis of social construction and preventive efforts of child marriage practices after Law No. 16 of 2019: Study in Ponorogo

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Abstract: Child marriage remains a socio-legal issue in Indonesia despite the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019, which establishes 19 years as the minimum marriage age for both males and females. This study aims to analyze the social construction of child marriage practices following the change in marriage age regulation in Ponorogo Regency. This research employed a qualitative field study approach using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis conducted in three research areas: Ngrayun, Sawoo, and Pulung Districts. The findings reveal that regulatory changes have not fully transformed social practices within the community. The persistence of child marriage is influenced by cultural norms, family economic pressures, pregnancies outside marriage, limited understanding of the consequences of child marriage, and the existence of marriage dispensation mechanisms as a legal pathway for underage marriage. This study demonstrates that child marriage is not merely a matter of legal compliance but represents the outcome of interactions between social values, cultural structures, economic conditions, and local institutions. Therefore, effective prevention requires a community-based approach through strengthening education, improving family economic empowerment, and enhancing collaboration among government institutions, religious organizations, and civil society.

Keywords: Child marriage, Law No. 16 of 2019, Social construction, Cultural norms, Legal transformation, Ponorogo Regency

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Introduction

Child marriage is still one of the social and legal issues that has received serious attention in various countries, including Indonesia. This phenomenon is not only related to violations of the marriage age limit, but also related to issues of education, reproductive health, family resilience, poverty, and sustainable development (Rahmatillah & Nurlina, 2019). In the Indonesian context, child marriage shows that there is tension between the country's legal policies that are not (Rouf, 2020) AKIN strengthens child protection with social practices of the community that still maintain certain values and norms. According to data from the National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS) and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the proportion of women aged 20–24 years who marry before the age of 18 still shows significant numbers despite decreasing in recent years (Central Statistics Agency, 2020; Budianto, 2024). This condition shows that regulatory changes have not automatically been able to eliminate the practice of child marriage in society.

Normatively, the Indonesian government has made important changes through Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage by setting the minimum age of marriage to 19 years for men and women. This policy is a form of strengthening child protection and efforts to align marriage law with the principles of equality and the best interests of children. However, the implementation of these regulations faces challenges because the practice of child marriage is still found in various regions, including Ponorogo Regency. Data from the Ponorogo

Religious Court shows that applications for marriage dispensation still occur after regulatory changes, with most cases related to pregnancies outside marriage (Gema Surya FM, 2024). This phenomenon shows that there is a gap between formal legal norms and the social reality of society.

The sustainability of child marriage practices cannot be understood only through a formal legal perspective. In certain societies, the decision to marry children is still influenced by social constructions that develop from generation to generation. Economic factors, cultural norms regarding family honor, social pressure, religious interpretation, and low access to education are factors that contribute to the sustainability of these practices. In some communities, child marriage is even seen as a solution to overcome certain social problems, such as pregnancies outside marriage or family economic limitations. Therefore, understanding child marriage requires an analysis that considers the relationship between the legal, cultural, economic, and social actors involved.

A number of previous studies have discussed child marriage from various perspectives. Research on the maturation of the age of marriage shows that the practice of child marriage is related to the social and cultural conditions of society that require gradual intervention (Hisbah, 2018). Research on economic factors also shows that family economic pressure is one of the important reasons that encourage marriage decisions at a young age. Meanwhile, the study on marriage dispensation highlights the problem between child protection mechanisms and the need of society to solve social problems through legal channels (Khaerani, 2019)

Other research suggests that child marriage is the result of a complex interaction between state laws, local cultural values, religious norms, and societal pressures (Grijns & Horii, 2018). Studies on the impact of child marriage also show that the practice can affect the sustainability of children's education and social development (Ikhsanudin & Nurjanah, 2018). Although previous research has made important contributions in elucidating the causative factors and impacts of child marriage, most research has still focused on the identification of determinants and has not examined much of how changes in marriage age regulations are negotiated in people's social lives.

Based on the study, there is a research *gap* regarding how the community responds to changes in marriage age regulations after the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019. Formal legal changes do not always result in direct changes in social behavior because community practices are influenced by values, norms, and social structures that have been formed previously. In the context of Ponorogo Regency, the high number of marriage dispensation applications after regulatory changes shows that there is a negotiation process between formal law, local norms, and the social interests of the community.

This study uses the perspective of social construction Berger and Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) to understand how the practice of child marriage continues to be produced and maintained through processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization in people's lives. This perspective allows research to see law not only as a written rule, but as part of a social reality that is interpreted and negotiated by various actors of society.

In contrast to previous research that placed child marriage as a result of economic, cultural, or legal factors separately, this study offers a contribution through an integrative analysis of the relationship between regulatory changes, social construction of society, and the role of local actors in maintaining or preventing child marriage practices in Ponorogo Regency. Based on these problems, this study aims to analyze the social construction of the people of Ponorogo Regency towards the practice of child marriage after the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019. In particular, this study analyzes (1) the forms of social construction that affect the sustainability of child marriage practices, (2) the social, cultural, economic, and legal factors that maintain the practice, and (3) the role of social actors in efforts to prevent child marriage at the local level.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach (Mundir, 2013) with a field research design to analyse the social construction and preventive efforts of child marriage practices following the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019 in Ponorogo Regency. The qualitative approach is used to deeply understand the views, experiences, and institutional practices in responding to child marriage, particularly related to the factors that perpetuate the practice, the roles of social actors, and the prevention efforts. The research analysis uses the social construction perspective of Berger and Luckmann through the processes of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation to examine the relationship between legal norms, social values, and community practices.

The research was conducted in Ponorogo Regency with a focus on the Ngrayun, Sawoo, and Pulung Districts. The three sub-districts were purposively selected because they have characteristics of rural and mountainous areas and show dynamics in child marriage practices and marriage dispensation requests. The research informants numbered 4 people, who were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in handling or preventing child marriage. The informants consisted of three heads of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in the districts of Ngrayun, Sawoo, and Pulung, as well as one official in the field of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (P3A) of Ponorogo Regency. The selection of informants is intended to obtain an institutional perspective from the sub-district and district levels regarding the implementation of regulations, the condition of child marriage, and prevention strategies.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through in-depth interviews with informants and field observations. Secondary data is obtained from documents and data from the Ponorogo Religious Court regarding marriage applications and dispensations, child marriage data from 2020–2025, regulations related to marriage age limits, and documents on child marriage prevention programs. Secondary data is used to strengthen and confirm the findings from the interviews. Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were directed at the implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019, factors that perpetuate child marriage, the role of social actors, the mechanism of marriage dispensation, and the implementation of prevention programs such as BRUS and BRUN. Observations were conducted to understand the social and institutional context at the research location, while documentation was used to obtain statistical data, marriage dispensation documents, and prevention program documents.

Data is analysed interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data from interviews, observations, and documentation are categorised into themes that align with the research focus, namely the dynamics of child marriage post-Law Number 16 of 2019, factors that perpetuate the practice of child marriage, the construction and role of social actors, and preventive efforts. Next, the findings are analysed using Berger and Luckmann's social construction perspective to explain the relationship between legal norms and the social construction of society.

The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation is conducted by comparing information from KUA in three sub-districts and P3A Ponorogo Regency and matching it with data from the Religious Court. Technique triangulation is conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. The process was carried out to ensure the consistency of information, strengthen the credibility of the data, and produce findings that can be academically accountable.

Results and Discussion

The research results show that child marriage practices in Ponorogo Regency have undergone complex dynamics following the enactment of Law No. 16 of 2019. Although the regulation has set a minimum age of 19 years with the same standard for both men and women, data from the Ponorogo Religious Court shows an interesting pattern. This phenomenon indicates a tension between the ideality of formal regulations and the complex reality of social practices (Ponorogo Religious Court Data, 2025).

Table 1. Number of Marriage Dispensation Applications in Ponorogo from 2021–September 2024

No.	Year	Number of Marriage Dispensation Applications
1	2021	266 case
2	2022	184 case
3	2023	161 case
4	2024	93 case

Source: Research data, 2025

Geographically, child marriage cases are most commonly found in mountainous and rural districts, especially Ngrayun (175 cases), Sawoo (120 cases), and Pulung (90 cases) in the 2020–2025 period. The factors that drive this practice are multidimensional, including out-of-wedlock pregnancies (36.36% of cases), cultural pressure, economic limitations, low levels of education, and the role of social actors (religious leaders, parents, village officials) as value brokers that legitimize early marriage. These findings confirm that legal regulation alone is not enough; deep social construction and multisectoral preventive efforts are needed to address the practice of child marriage in a sustainable manner.

In-depth interview data with key informants revealed that Ponorogo society still maintains a complex perception of child marriage. Most early marriages are triggered by out-of-wedlock pregnancies, which reflects the urgency in a context where social norms still strongly favor early marriage as a solution to maintain family reputation. In various interviews, informants explained that they felt pressured to marry their children to avoid harsh social stigma.

One of the informants emphasized: *"The marriage rate under 19 years old in Ngrayun is indeed quite high, the majority are girls. Since I took the lead, KUA has firmly refused to register marriages under the age of 19. We always recommend that the relevant parties apply for a marriage dispensation to the Religious Court."* (KUA Ngarayun, 2025) This statement reflects strict administrative actions, but also acknowledges that many people still apply for dispensations, showing resistance to formal regulations.

Aida Fitriana Miyasari (Head of P3A Division of Ponorogo Regency, August 2025) added: "Efforts are still being carried out because it has become an agenda every year to hold socialization to the community; schools from elementary to high school levels are the main targets of our program." This shows that the response of government institutions is to increase the intensity of socialization and education, recognizing that changing social norms requires time and a sustainable approach.

Statistical data from the Ponorogo Religious Court reveals a trend of marriage dispensation applications that reflect the dynamics of child marriage practices. First, despite the decline in 2022–2024, the number of dispensation applications remains high, reflecting that the practice of child marriage has not been fully resolved. Second, the approval rate of applications is very high (91–95%), indicating that judges still approve most dispensation applications, especially when accompanied by the reason of pregnancy. Third, out-of-wedlock pregnancies are consistently the dominant reason, averaging 50–68% of total applications, indicating that moral and social issues remain the main factors of child marriage practices.

The data provides confirmation that the practice of child marriage in Ponorogo is not only a violation of formal regulations, but also a reflection of deep social constructions related to morality, family honor, and religious interpretation. From the perspective of stakeholders, the responses given

vary widely. The heads of KUA in the three sub-districts showed a strong commitment to rejecting the registration of marriages under 19 years old, but they also acknowledged that the community still applied for a dispensation, which was ultimately granted by the court.

This phenomenon indicates a "gap" in the implementation of regulations, where even though KUA filters the administration, the marriage dispensation mechanism still provides a legal outlet for people who want to carry out child marriage. The data also shows that the decline in the number of cases in recent years is likely the result of increased intensity of prevention efforts, including the BRUS (Bina Remaja Age Zikah) and BRUN (Bina Remaja Age Nikah) programs carried out consistently by KUA (Field data, 2025). However, the still significant numbers show that social construction is a long-term process that cannot be solved through administrative intervention or formal regulation alone. A deeper understanding of the cultural, economic, and social roots that perpetuate the practice of child marriage is needed in order for prevention strategies to be more effective and sustainable.

The discussion of this research is focused on analyzing post-regulation social constructs with a higher conceptual depth. The research does not only present empirical data, but also seeks to interpret these data within the framework of social construction theory and the context of Islamic family law. With this approach, the discussion will reveal how the practice of child marriage is the result of a complex process that involves the externalization of cultural values, objectification through social practices, and the internalization of these norms into the collective consciousness of society (Setiawan, 2020).

Persistence of Child Marriage Post Law No. 16 of 2019

Persistence of Child Marriage Post-Law No. 16 of 2019 Research findings reveal that although Law No. 16 of 2019 has set the marriage age limit to 19 years with the same standard for both men and women, this regulatory change has paradoxically impacted child marriage practices in Ponorogo. This paradox is evident from the increase in marriage dispensation requests in 2021 (266 cases), a few years after the new regulation came into effect. This phenomenon distinguishes the findings of this research from previous studies that might assume regulatory changes would automatically reduce child marriage practices.

The explanation for this paradox can be found in the marriage dispensation mechanism that is still available in Article 7 paragraph (2) of Law No. 16 of 2019. Although the regulation sets stricter age standards, the state simultaneously provides a "legal entry point" through marriage dispensation that can be submitted to the Religious Court. In practice, judges often grant dispensation requests with an approval rate of 91–95%, especially when accompanied by the reason of premarital pregnancy. This phenomenon shows that social and cultural norms are still very strong in shaping judges' decisions, even though the law has been formally established (Yuhermansyah & Akhir, 2019).

These findings confirm that legal regulations do not exist in a social vacuum. Instead, the law is always constructed and negotiated within specific socio-cultural contexts. In other words, the people of Ponorogo have developed a strategy to "combine" their compliance with formal regulations while maintaining child marriage practices through available legal mechanisms. This is a manifestation of Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, which shows that legal reality is the result of an ongoing negotiation between formal norms and existing social values (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The findings indicate a fundamental gap between the ideality of formal law and the reality of social practice. On one hand, Law Number 16 of 2019 reflects the state's commitment to strengthening child protection through the establishment of stricter minimum marriage age limits. However, on the other hand, the existence of a marriage dispensation mechanism still opens up space for marriages to be conducted at ages below the limits set by the law. This condition shows that formal law does not work entirely deterministically, but rather provides certain space for negotiation and adaptation to the social dynamics that develop in society.

This phenomenon simultaneously reveals the duality in legal practice in Indonesia. On one hand, it is the realm of formal law that seeks to institutionalise universal principles, particularly regarding child protection, gender equality, and the fulfilment of basic rights. Meanwhile, on the other hand, it is the realm of legal practice that occurs in interaction with local social and cultural norms, various religious interpretations, as well as the social pressures and economic conditions faced by the community. In the context of Ponorogo, empirical data shows that the realm of practice still has a strong influence in shaping the choices, considerations, and decisions of the community regarding underage marriage. Thus, the existence of more protective regulations has not automatically resulted in changes in social behaviour, because the effectiveness of the law is also determined by the ability of formal norms to interact and negotiate with the social structures that are deeply rooted in the community's life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Factors That Sustain Child Marriage Practices

The persistence of child marriage practices amidst regulatory changes is influenced by a number of interconnected factors. First, economic factors, especially poverty and limited access to jobs and education. In several rural areas of Ponorogo, such as Ngrayun, Sawoo, and Pulung, child marriage is seen as a way to reduce the family's economic burden. This condition makes marriage considered a practical solution when children do not continue their education (Field data, 2025). These findings are in line with Khaerani (2019), which highlights the importance of economic factors in child marriage practices.

Second, social and cultural factors. Local norms still influence the interpretation of maturity and readiness for marriage. Measures such as reaching puberty and the stigma against women who are considered "too old" to be single can encourage families to hasten marriages. These findings are in line with Grijns and Horii (2018), who showed the intersection of legal norms and local traditions in child marriage practices.

Third, religious factors. Religious interpretations that emphasise maturity as a measure of readiness for marriage are still found in society. This condition can lead to differences in interpretation between positive law and local religious understanding. Affaruddin and Nadhifah (2019) show that these differences in understanding also affect marriage practices and can be negotiated through the available legal mechanisms.

Fourth, the factor of legal implementation, particularly the existence of marriage dispensations. Although Law No. 16 of 2019 sets the marriage age limit at 19 years, dispensations allow for marriages below that age under certain conditions. The rate of dispensation approval reaching 91–95% in research data indicates that legal norms still confront the social conditions of society. Thus, regulatory changes have not automatically altered the practice of child marriage.

The findings of this research show that child marriage is not only maintained by economic, cultural, or religious factors separately, but through the interaction between social norms and legal mechanisms. Unlike Grijns and Horii (2018), who emphasise the conflict between state law and local tradition, this research shows that both are continuously negotiated in practice. These findings also complement Khaerani (2019), who emphasised economic factors, and Ikhsanudin and Nurjanah (2018), who focused on the impact of child marriage on education. Thus, the contribution of this research lies in explaining that regulatory changes do not immediately alter the social construction of society, but can be followed by adaptive strategies to maintain child marriage practices within the new legal framework.

The Role of Social Actors in the Construction of Child Marriage Practices

The social construction of child marriage practices in Ponorogo society is not formed individually, but through the interaction of various social actors who play a role in shaping, maintaining, or changing the meaning of child marriage. In the perspective of social construction by Berger and

Luckmann, social reality is formed through the processes of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation that occur continuously in societal life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In the context of child marriage, this process can be seen through the involvement of families, religious leaders, communities, educational institutions, and the government in shaping the understanding of the ideal age for marriage, maturity, parental responsibility, and child protection.

Parents become actors who hold an important position in the construction of child marriage practices because the family is the first space where values and norms regarding marriage are introduced and internalised. In the context of Ponorogo society, the decision to marry off children at an early age can be influenced by the perception of marriage as a form of protection for children, especially girls, from the risks of free association and premarital pregnancy. Thus, child marriage is not always perceived as a form of child vulnerability, but can be viewed as a preventive measure and a form of parental responsibility. These findings align with Wulandari et al. (2025) which show that the decision for child marriage is often related to the family's perception of moral protection, family honour, and the child's future. This indicates that parental decisions are the result of the interaction between family considerations and the social norms that develop within the community.

Besides the family, religious leaders play a role in shaping the community's understanding of marriage through the interpretation and dissemination of religious teachings. Understanding of marriage readiness, household responsibilities, and the age limit for marriage can influence how society legitimises the practice of child marriage. When marriage at a young age is understood primarily through the measure of biological maturity or the ability to fulfil certain obligations, the child's age may not be seen as a major obstacle to marriage. On the contrary, a religious understanding that places psychological maturity, the ability to fulfil responsibilities, and the protection of children's interests as important considerations can serve as a basis for preventing child marriage. This condition reinforces the findings of Ardiansari & Dimiyati (2021) which show that religious understanding and the authority of religious leaders have an influence on the acceptance or rejection of child marriage by the community.

The community also plays a role in maintaining social constructs through the process of normalisation. When early marriages have occurred repeatedly and are accepted as a common practice, society can form the perception that child marriage is part of social customs that do not need to be questioned. In certain conditions, families that delay child marriage can even receive social judgement because they are considered different from the local customs. The process shows that norms regarding marriage do not only originate from family decisions, but are also produced through continuous social interactions. These findings are in line with Anwar et al. (2024), who explain that community norms, social pressure, and environmental acceptance can be factors that sustain the practice of child marriage even though formal regulations have set a marriage age limit.

Educational institutions have a different position because they have the potential to be actors that bring about change to the social construct. Schools can provide knowledge about education, reproductive health, life skills, family readiness, and the consequences of child marriage. Education not only serves as a means of conveying information but also as a tool to build children's ability to make decisions about their future. That role is in line with Anjani et al. (2024), who show that the continuity of education and the enhancement of children's knowledge can be one of the protective factors in preventing child marriage. Therefore, educational institutions can function as spaces for the reproduction of new values that place the readiness and well-being of children as an important part in determining marriage decisions.

Meanwhile, the government and related institutions play a role through regulation, socialisation, services, assistance, and supervision of child marriage practices. The enactment of Law No. 16 of 2019, which equalises the minimum marriage age for men and women, represents a form of state intervention in changing the formal norms regarding marriage. However, regulatory changes do not automatically alter the social constructs that have developed within society. When legal norms confront family values,

religious understanding, and community habits that have been internalised, there is a possibility of a gap emerging between legal provisions and social practices. These findings reinforce Suprayogi (2023) results, which indicate that the existence of regulations alone is not enough to stop child marriage if it is not accompanied by changes at the family and community levels.

Thus, the construction of child marriage practices in Ponorogo is formed through the relationships among actors, rather than through the influence of a single actor in isolation. Parents play a role in decision-making and the reproduction of values within the family; religious leaders play a role in providing religious interpretations; society plays a role through normalisation and social pressure; educational institutions play a role in shaping children's knowledge and capacity; while the government and related institutions play a role through regulation and preventive intervention. The relationship shows that the practice of child marriage is a social reality that continues to be produced and negotiated through the interactions of various actors.

In that framework, prevention efforts are not sufficient through the enforcement of formal regulations alone, but need to be directed towards changing the underlying social constructs. The meaning of "protection," for example, needs to be redirected from the understanding that marrying off children is a way to protect them from moral risks to the understanding that protection is realised through the continuity of education, fulfilment of children's rights, psychological readiness, and decision-making ability. Similarly, the meaning of "parental responsibility" needs to be directed not only towards the obligation of marrying off children but also towards the responsibility of providing space for children to grow, receive education, and prepare for family life in a mature manner. The change in meaning requires the involvement of all social actors so that the new norm is not only formally established but also accepted and internalised in the life of the community.

Preventive Efforts Against Child Marriage Practices Post Law No. 16 of 2019

Preventive efforts against child marriage practices in Ponorogo following the enactment of Law No. 16 of 2019 show that prevention cannot rely solely on changes in legal norms, but requires the involvement of social actors who interact directly with families and communities. The research results show that religious leaders, village officials, parents, judges, and staff of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) have a strategic position as intermediaries between formal norms and the social norms that develop in the community. That position is important because legal norms regarding the age limit for marriage need to be translated into understanding and practices that are acceptable to the community. These findings are in line with Baihaqi et al. (2025), which show that preventing child marriage requires the involvement of various actors at the family, community, and institutional levels so that regulatory changes can be followed by changes in social behaviour.

The role of these social actors works through different forms of intervention. Religious leaders play a role in building religious understanding regarding marriage that not only emphasises the aspect of permissibility but also readiness, responsibility, and protection for children. Parents are an important target because the decision of a child's marriage is often related to the family's perception of protection, honour, and the child's future. Village officials play a role in providing information, coordinating, and connecting families with available services. KUA staff play a role through education, guidance, consultation, and assistance for prospective brides and grooms as well as teenagers. Meanwhile, judges hold a strategic position in the marriage dispensation process because the considerations given in each application are a concrete form of implementing the principle of child protection. Thus, prevention occurs through a complementary mechanism of education, mentoring, changing understanding, and the application of legal norms.

The findings indicate that preventive strategies need to be directed towards changing the social constructs that underlie the acceptance of child marriage. If early marriage is still understood as a form of protection for children, then merely conveying a normative prohibition may not be sufficient to

change family decisions. Therefore, interventions need to shift the understanding of protection from the act of marrying off children to fulfilling children's rights to education, health, safety, and psychological development. Similarly, the concept of parental responsibility needs to shift from the obligation of arranging a child's marriage to the responsibility of providing guidance and ensuring the child is prepared to determine their own future. This approach to changing meaning aligns with the social constructionist perspective of Berger and Luckmann, who view social reality as something formed through processes of interaction, institutionalisation, and continuous internalisation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, preventing child marriage is essentially a process of reconstructing the social understanding that has developed in society.

At the institutional level, preventive efforts in Ponorogo are realised through several programs involving the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) and local government. One of them is the School-Aged Adolescent Guidance (BRUS) program, which is aimed at adolescents in primary to secondary education levels. This program provides education on the risks of child marriage, the importance of continuing education, and life skills. The placement of adolescents as targets for prevention is significant because interventions are carried out before marriage decisions arise. Through this education, adolescents are not only placed as objects that need protection but also as subjects who need to have the knowledge and capacity to make decisions about their future. These findings are in line with Adhiyanti et al. (2025), which show that education and capacity building for adolescents are important parts of child marriage prevention strategies.

In addition to BRUS, there is the Marriage Age Adolescent Guidance (BRUN) aimed at teenagers who have married at a young age. Unlike BRUS, which is more preventive before marriage, BRUN has a protective and continued preventive function through counselling, family development, and psychological support. The existence of such programs shows that prevention strategies do not stop at efforts to keep children from marriage, but also include reducing vulnerability for teenagers who are already married. This approach is important because groups that have experienced marriage at a young age still need support to avoid becoming more vulnerable to problems in family life. In this context, Manafe et al. (2026) also emphasise the importance of mentoring for married adolescents as part of the Ponorogo protection approach.

The next program is Pre-Marital Counselling (BINWIN) which provides preparation for prospective brides and grooms regarding their readiness to enter married life. The guidance material covers economic, psychological, biological aspects, as well as responsibilities in family life. In the context of preventing child marriage, this program can serve as a space to strengthen the understanding that readiness for marriage is not only determined by the fulfilment of administrative requirements or biological maturity but also by psychological, social, and economic readiness. By expanding the understanding of marriage readiness, interventions can be directed towards the formation of more comprehensive social standards regarding maturity before marriage. These findings can be compared with Ramelan & Nurtsani (2024), who found that providing knowledge about marriage readiness can support efforts to prevent child marriage.

Preventive efforts are also carried out through public awareness campaigns involving local governments and community organisations. Campaigns through social media, posters, community discussions, and other communication media serve to expand information about the risks of child marriage and the importance of protecting children's rights. This strategy is relevant to social construction because changing practices not only requires changes in individual decisions but also changes in the evolving norms within the community. When communities receive consistent information about the impact of child marriage and the importance of educational continuity, the space for normalising child marriage can be reduced. This is in line with Rizqi et al. (2024) who show that changes in knowledge and community norms are an important part of the strategy to prevent child marriage.

However, the existence of these various programs does not by itself indicate that the social construction regarding child marriage has completely changed. The results of interviews with KUA Sawoo, Pulung, and Ngrayun in 2025 indicate a need to strengthen funding support, coordination, and program sustainability. These issues are important to consider because programs that are implemented in a limited or unsustainable manner have the potential to produce temporary changes. Therefore, strengthening prevention is not only related to increasing the number of activities but also to ensuring the continuity of implementation, accessibility of targets, coordination among actors, and evaluation of intervention outcomes.

In this context, prevention strategies need to be developed through a multistakeholder approach that integrates the roles of families, religious leaders, village governments, marriage registration offices, educational institutions, courts, and community organisations. Such collaboration is necessary because each actor has a different sphere of influence on the social construction of child marriage. Families have a direct influence on children's decisions, religious leaders have authority in shaping religious understanding, schools have the space to strengthen children's capacities, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) has a role in marriage services and education, while the government and judicial institutions have the authority in policy implementation. By integrating these roles, prevention can shift from a sectoral approach to a more comprehensive social change.

Thus, the preventive efforts against child marriage practices post-Law No. 16 of 2019 in Ponorogo cannot be understood merely as the implementation of government programs or the application of legal provisions. Prevention is a process that involves changing understanding, strengthening the capacity of children and families, mentoring, and forming social norms that are more orientated towards child protection. The BRUS, BRUN, BINWIN programs, and public awareness campaigns serve as instruments that can support this process, while the involvement of social actors is an important factor in translating formal norms into community life. Therefore, the sustainability of the program, strengthening inter-institutional coordination, and regular evaluations are necessary so that regulatory changes through Law No. 16 of 2019 can be followed by changes in social construction and marriage practices in the Ponorogo community.

Conclusion

This research shows that the practice of child marriage in Ponorogo Regency still persists after the enactment of Law No. 16 of 2019, although the number of marriage dispensation requests shows a declining trend. These conditions indicate that regulatory changes have not fully transformed the social constructs of the community. The practice of child marriage is still influenced by premarital pregnancies, economic conditions, low education levels, socio-cultural norms, and religious interpretations that view marriage as a solution to moral and family honour issues. That construction is reinforced through interactions with family, religious leaders, the community, and social institutions.

Preventive efforts through regulations, socialisation, education, and the BRUS, BRUN, and BINWIN programs have been carried out, but they still require strengthened coordination, sustainability, and changes in public understanding. Therefore, preventing child marriage is not sufficient through law enforcement alone, but requires social reconstruction that prioritises education, marriage readiness, fulfilment of rights, and child protection. A collaborative approach between families, religious leaders, communities, schools, marriage registrars, the government, and the courts becomes important to support this change.

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