



Findings Suffering Daughters on Child Marriage: Comparative Study West Nusa Tenggara Province and Riau Islands Province, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The high rate of child marriage in Indonesia makes this country the fourth highest in the world in 2023. This is ironic with the mandate of point five of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To overcome this problem, this study will compare two regions namely West Nusa Tenggara Province (the highest rates of child marriage in Indonesia) and Riau Island Province (the lowest rate of child marriage). Qualitative methods are used to explore data on the causal factors, the impact of child marriage on girls, and the response of local governments regarding the prevention of child marriage. The results of the study show that the most influential challenge in preventing child marriage is cultural factors. Other factors that also influence are education level, economic conditions, the view that marriage is a solution, and religious interpretation. Child marriage that occurs in West Nusa Tenggara Province and Riau Islands Province has an impact on girls related to reproductive health risks, mental health, loss of access to education, and potential to be a victim of domestic violence. From the comparison of the two regions, the prevention efforts that have been carried out by the local government and those that should be carried out will be mapped.

Keyword:

Child marriage, gender inequality, Indonesia.

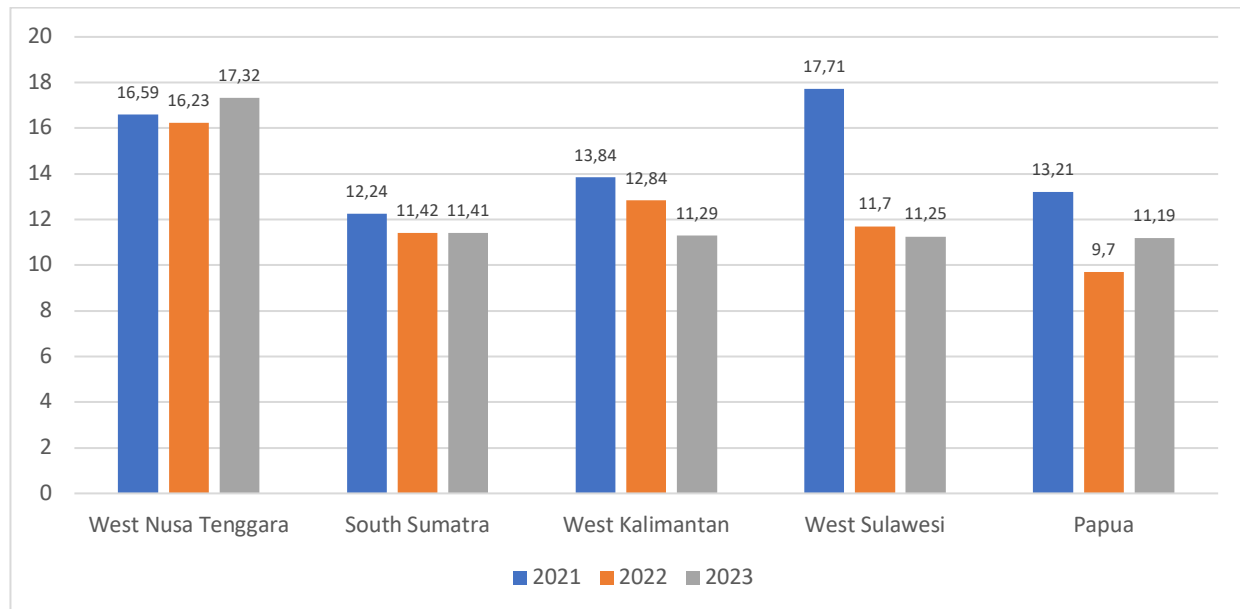
INTRODUCTION

Ending child marriage is a problem that has not been resolved until now. The minimum age limit for child marriage is 18 years, so underage marriage is called child marriage (Wodon et al., 2017). The Sustainable Development Goal's agenda point 5 on gender equality in target 5.3. on eliminating all harmful practices such as child marriage by 2030 is a challenge (United Nations, 2015). Unicef data in 2023 shows that although globally there has been a decline in cases of child marriage, the average is still high. The data noted that one in five

young women aged 20 to 24 were married as children (UNICEF, 2023). Globally, out of 192 countries, the country with the highest child marriage according to Unicef data in 2023 is India, followed by Bangladesh, China, and Indonesia in fourth place (UNICEF, 2023)

Child marriage has been a part of Indonesian culture since ancient times. During the colonial period, the Dutch government issued regulations governing marriage, but there was no clear age limit. After independence, Indonesia enacted Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, which set the minimum age for marriage at 19 for men and 16 for women. However, this law also granted judges the authority to grant dispensations for marriage for those under the age of consent under certain conditions (Judiasih et al., 20 C.E.). The Marriage Law has undergone several changes through amendments. In 2019, the age requirement for marriage between women and men was equalized to 19 years. However, the revision of the law in 2019 also relaxed the requirements for marriage dispensation. Marriage dispensation is the granting of the right to someone to marry even though they have not reached the minimum age for marriage, which is 19 years. This is mainly due to girls who are already pregnant or have just given birth. The development of regulations on child marriage in Indonesia shows the government's efforts to protect children's rights. However, there are still challenges in law enforcement and prevention of early marriage.

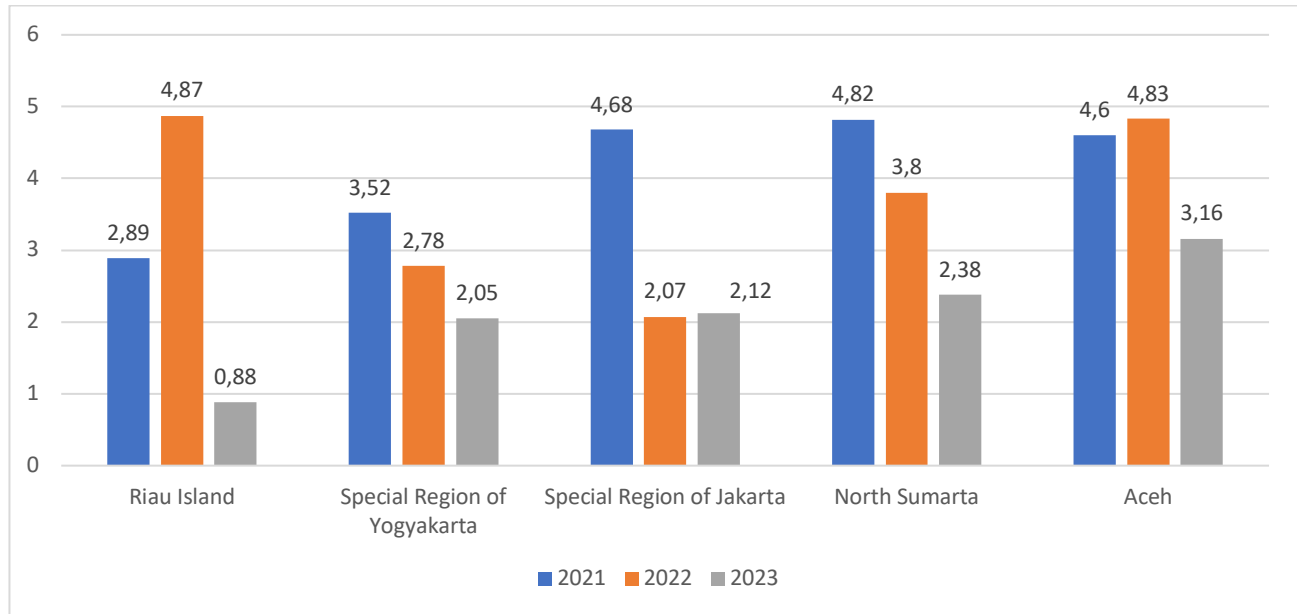
In Indonesia, the average child marriage over the past three years has decreased. The average data on the proportion of women aged 20-24 who are married or living together before the age of 18 by province issued by the Central Statistics Agency states that the average child marriage in Indonesia is 9.23 (2021); 8.06 (2022); 6.92 (2023). Although there has been a decline, Indonesia's decline rate is not yet significant compared to other countries that are competing to reduce child marriage rapidly (India, Bangladesh, Ethiopia) and countries that are already in the stage of eliminating child marriage (Maldives and Rwanda) (UNICEF, 2023). Child marriage is experienced by all provinces in Indonesia with different numbers. The following are the five provinces in Indonesia that have the highest number of child marriages when viewed from 2023 data.



Source: Central Statistics Agency, 2024

Figure 1. Five Provinces with the Highest Number of Women Aged 20-24 Years Who are Married or Living Together Before Age 18 by Province in Indonesia in 2021-2023 (Percent)

The chart above shows a tendency for the number of child marriages to decline in the last three years except in the Provinces of West Nusa Tenggara and Papua Province. West Nusa Tenggara Province actually experienced a significant increase in 2023 by 1.09 percent compared to 2022. Papua Province experienced an increase in 2023 by 1.49 percent compared to 2022. All provinces in the table show a higher percentage of child marriages than the Indonesian average. Meanwhile, the provinces with the lowest number of child marriages in Indonesia can be seen from the following data



Source: Central Statistics Agency, 2024

Figure 2. Five Provinces with the Lowest Number of Women Aged 20-24 Years Who are Married or Living Together Before the Age of 18 Years by Province in Indonesia in 2021-2023 (percent)

The five provinces in the chart above experienced fluctuations in child marriage rates in the last three years with a downward trend in 2023. The largest decline was experienced by the Riau Islands Province in 2023 compared to 2022, which was 3.99 percent. Looking at the data from the two charts above, it is clear that West Nusa Tenggara is the province with the highest number of child marriage cases in 2023, while the Riau Islands is the province with the lowest.

Child marriage in Indonesia is a serious issue that demands immediate attention. This practice not only violates children's rights but also has significant long-term consequences for individuals, families, and society. The urgency of this research lies in several key factors. First, child marriage is a violation of children's rights as guaranteed by both national and international law. Children have the right to health, education, and protection from all forms of violence, including early marriage (Adiya et al., 2023). Child marriage deprives children of these rights and limits their opportunities for optimal development. Second, child marriage has serious health consequences, particularly for girls. They are at risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as other reproductive health problems. Moreover, child marriage often interrupts girls' education, impacting their chances of obtaining decent employment and escaping poverty (Adiya et al., 2023; Sunaryanto, 2019). Finally, child marriage reinforces gender inequality. This practice is often driven by social and cultural norms that subordinate women. Thus, child marriage perpetuates cycles of poverty and injustice.

This research is crucial for understanding the root causes of child marriage in Indonesia, particularly in West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Islands Provinces. By understanding the factors driving child marriage, we can develop more effective interventions to prevent it. Additionally, this research can provide strong empirical evidence to support advocacy for better policies to protect children's rights. In other words, this research is a significant step towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5, which focuses on gender equality and empowering women. This research has the following research questions:

- RQ 1. What are the primary factors contributing to child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara Province and Riau Islands Province, and how do these factors differ between the two regions?
- RQ 2. What are the short-term and long-term consequences of child marriage for girls in West Nusa Tenggara Province and Riau Islands Province?
- RQ 3. What are the most effective local government responses to prevent child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara Province and Riau Islands Province?

METHODS

Research on child marriage uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type. The findings of this research are presented in an analytically descriptive form by paying attention to the process and meaning of a phenomenon. This research uses women's perspectives as the main informants because women's experiences, conditions and situations are part of the important data analysed, although not all informants are women.

This research was conducted in West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Islands. There are two types of data sources used in this research, namely (a) literature data in the form of statistical data from BPS West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Islands, programme reports and activities of supporting institutions, programme reports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Islands, journal articles, local regulations, news and information from websites and online media; and (b) field data obtained through in-depth interviews, informal interviews and group interviews (FGD) with 10 informants, consisting of 3 male informants and 7 female informants. The informants were representatives of various institutions such as the Riau Islands Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Population Control and Family Planning (DP3AP2KB), Family Learning Centre (PUSPAGA), Youth Coalition for Girls, National Coalition of Young People to Prevent Child Marriage, Children's Council of Mataram, Mataram State Islamic University, Natuna Islamic College, Sumbawa Women's Solidarity, Indonesia's Healthy Gemilang Network, Badar Sasak, Bunga Rampai Social Protection House Foundation (RPS) Riau Islands and health workers at the Batam City Health Centre.

In the data analysis phase, the researchers used social analysis to identify and explore the reality of child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Islands. This social analysis is more about reading data and analysing the results of the data that have been processed and produced information. Social analysis is used to see the factors that cause child marriage, the effects that occur, and the government's policy response in dealing with the problem of child marriage in the two provinces.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

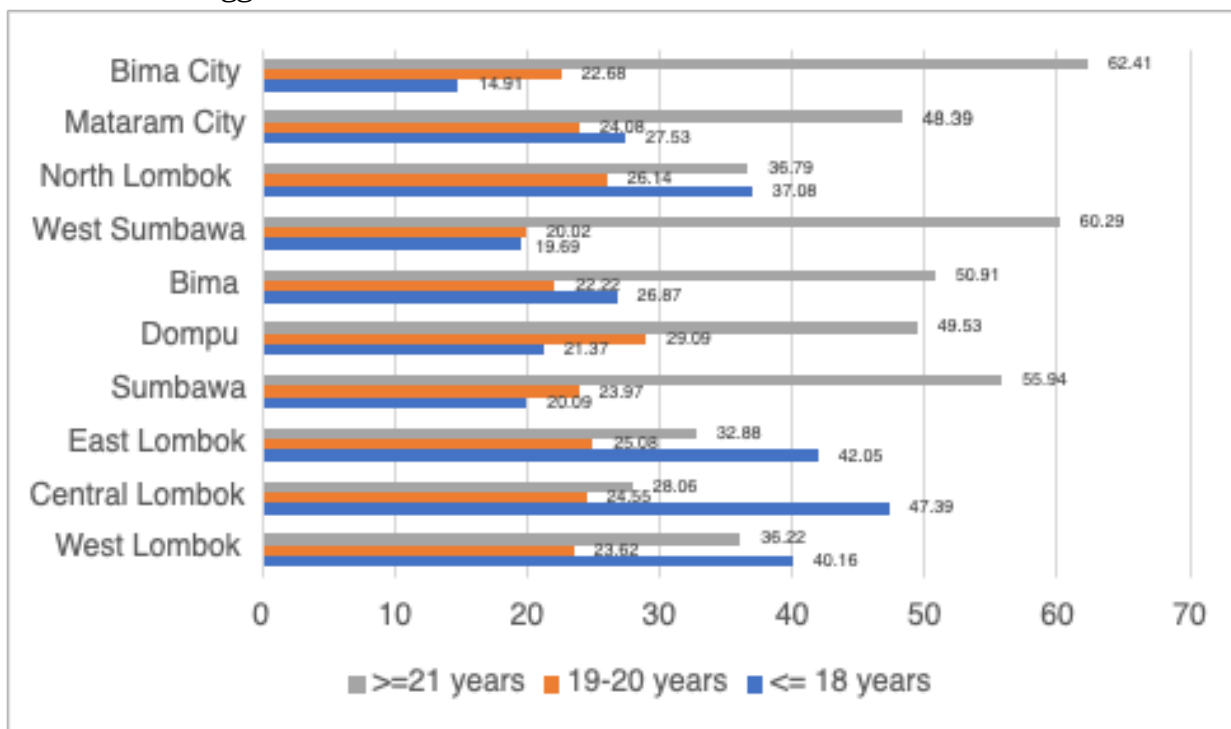
Here are some factors that are the same causes of child marriage cases in West Nusa Tenggara and the Riau Islands Province.

Cultural Factors in Child Marriage

Culture is a factor that greatly influences cases of child marriage in the Provinces of West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Islands. Researchers conducted focus group discussions with academics, non-governmental organizations, local governments, and medical personnel in the Provinces of West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Islands to determine the causal factors, impacts on child couples, and government policies to prevent child marriage.

Culture in the Province of West Nusa Tenggara plays an important role in the high rate of child marriage. However, culture in West Nusa Tenggara cannot be generalized because West Nusa Tenggara consists of four tribes with different cultures (Interview with academics of State Islamic University, July 23, 2024). The West Nusa Tenggara Province consists of four tribes, namely the Sumbawa Tribe (Seteluk, Taliwang, Lunyuk, Batulante, Jereweh, Alas, Moyo Hilir, Moyo Hulu, Utan Rhee, Ropang, Lapelopok, Empang, and Plambang Districts), the Mata Tribe (Empang District, Sumbawa Regency, which borders Dompu Regency), the Mbojo Tribe or often called the Bima Tribe (in the Sangeang Island area, Bima Regency, but its distribution extends to Sumbawa Island), and the Sasak Tribe (three regencies in West Nusa Tenggara, namely Central Lombok, East Lombok, and West Lombok Regencies).

The culture that has a negative impact on the high rate of child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara is in the Sasak Tribe in Lombok, which is called *mararik kodek* (Interview with academics of State Islamic University, July 23, 2024). This is supported by the fact that the number of child marriages in Lombok is higher than in other regencies/cities in West Nusa Tenggara Province. The following is data on the age range for marriage in regencies/cities in West Nusa Tenggara Province in 2022.



Source: Statistics of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2023

Figure 3. Percentage of Ever-Married Female Population Aged 15-49 Years by Regency/City and First Marriage Age Group, 2022

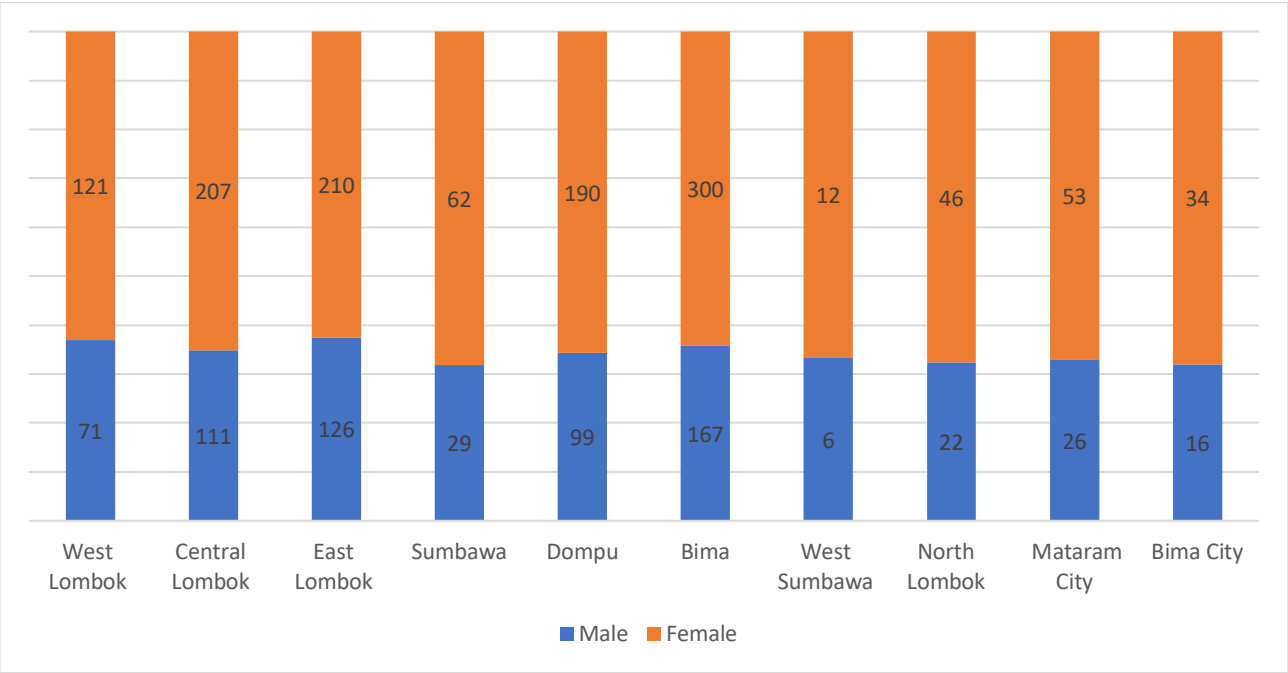
The chart above shows that in all districts in Lombok (North Lombok, Central Lombok, East Lombok, West Lombok, and East Lombok) the age of marriage under 18 years is higher than in other age groups. This is inseparable from cultural influences. *Marariq* comes from the local language which means to marry, and *kodek* means underage (Ramadhan, 2024).

Marariq is a tradition that allows men to run away with women to marry (Rachmawati & Belarminus, 2021). However, as this tradition has developed, there has been misuse by some people to marry underage or child marriage. The girls, for reasons of often coming home late and being worried about being gossiped about by the community, ask their boyfriends to marry them (Rahiem, 2021). Coming home late for traditional communities is closely stigmatized with concerns about the potential for promiscuity. This is also related to the tradition that considers the sanctity of women from virginity before marriage (Smith-Hefner, 2005) so that parents will prefer to marry their children even though they are not old enough but can prevent premarital sex. If there is a girl who is taken away by marariq, it will be considered a disgrace to the family if the marriage is canceled.

Significantly different things happened in the Riau Islands Province which had the lowest number of child marriages in 2023. The culture of marrying off at a young age in the Riau Islands does not exist because this region is a border region, so it has an open culture (interview with Secretary of the Family Learning Center (Puspaga) of the Riau Islands Province). The geographical location of the Riau Islands Province borders Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, and Malaysia. This has caused people to be very familiar with looking for work in these countries since they were little. This was also conveyed in the interview that children after high school, already aspire to work immediately so that they will delay the age of marriage. This is reinforced by the median age of first marriage for women in the Riau Islands Province, which was 23.50 years in 2012.

Low Education Causes Child Marriage

Education is an important factor influencing child marriage in both West Nusa Tenggara and Riau. In 2023, the human development index in West Nusa Tenggara is 70.20, below the national average of 73.55 point. Meanwhile, the HDI for Riau Islands is 77.11, or the fourth highest in the country (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2023). The HDI is based on three key indicators: longevity and healthy life expectancy, knowledge, and an adequate standard of living. On the other hand, the school enrolment rate in West Nusa Tenggara tends to decline. In the school year 2023/2024, the dropout rate at primary school level reached 1,235 children, of whom 665 dropped out of school in the first grade (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology). The reasons for the high dropout rates are complex, as they are linked to economic and social factors. Poverty leads parents to choose not to send their children to school to make ends meet. Child marriage is a practice that deprives children, especially girls, of their right to education.



Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2023

Figure 4. The Number of Out-of-School Children by Gender and by Region in West Nusa Tenggara Province

The chart above shows the number of out-of-school children by gender and by region in West Nusa Tenggara. Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys. The rationale behind the surge in early marriages among young people, particularly in West Nusa Tenggara, can be attributed to several factors. Primarily, many believe that by entering matrimony, they can circumvent the pressures and responsibilities associated with school and home (Rahiem, 2021), provide financial assistance to their families, and avoid strict parenting styles.

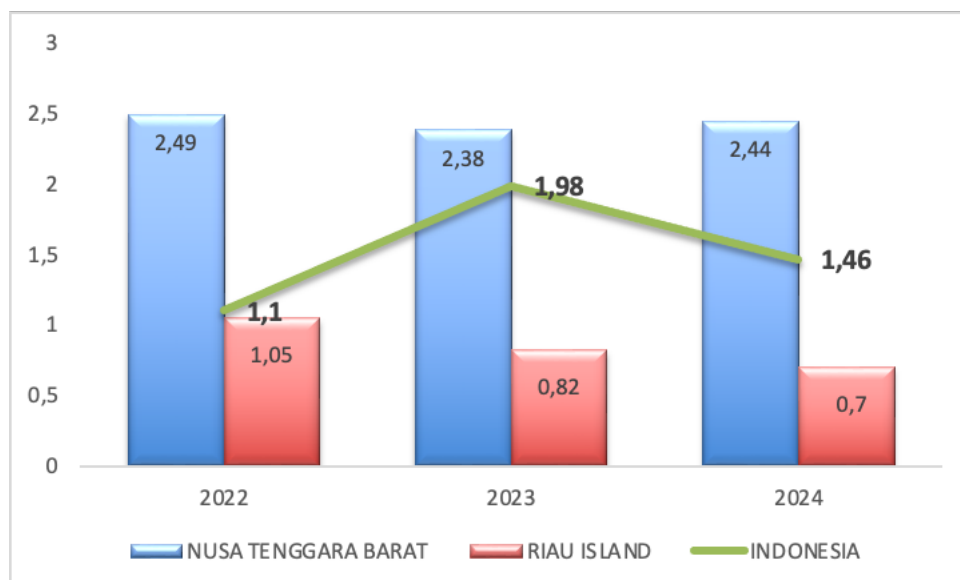
The decision to marry is often influenced by parental encouragement and the perpetuation of a tradition. Furthermore, the practice of early marriage serves to enhance the family's self esteem, as their children are perceived as a valuable asset (Pauziah, 2018). From the perspective of parents, other reasons for marrying their children include the avoidance of sinful behaviour (dating relationships), the reduction of familial burdens by becoming the husband's responsibility, a tradition that has been passed down and raises the family's self-esteem because their children are 'sold' (Fitrianingsih et al., 2015), Family privacy is a matter of significant importance, and it is the prerogative of the parents to decide on this matter (Interview with academics of State Islamic University, July 23, 2024). Additionally, the financial constraints associated with pursuing higher education are a significant factor, and there is a sense of pride in being able to support one's children financially independently (Fitrianingsih et al., 2015).

The aforementioned reasons for early marriage are closely intertwined with low levels of parental and familial education and literacy. Low parental education levels result in a lack of motivation to encourage children to pursue further education, which in turn contributes to the formation of a community-wide perception that child marriage is a common practice (Fitrianingsih et al., 2015). In an interview conducted on 23 July 2024, academics of State Islamic University revealed that a significant proportion of the Sasak population holds the view that pursuing higher education is not a necessity if one is to get married, particularly in the case of girls.

Poverty Causes Child Marriage

The dominant factor driving the high rate of child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Island is poverty. Families facing economic hardship often view early marriage as a solution to reduce their financial burden. By marrying their daughters, families hope to decrease the number of family members requiring sustenance and earn additional income from dowries. This demonstrates that child marriage is frequently seen as a short-term economic solution, although it can ultimately worsen the family's overall economic situation (Angraini et al., 2021; Patmanasari et al., 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2019). Child marriage not only results from poverty but also reinforces the cycle of poverty itself. Girls who marry at a young age tend to drop out of school and struggle to find decent employment. Consequently, they and their children will find it difficult to escape the cycle of poverty.

Child marriage, particularly among girls, can significantly contribute to poverty rates. When girls are married at a young age, they are often forced to drop out of school, limiting their future educational and economic opportunities. Early marriages can also lead to early pregnancies, which can have adverse health consequences for both mother and child, further perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Therefore, the decline in poverty rates may be partially attributed to efforts to reduce child marriage. By empowering girls to stay in school and delaying marriage, these interventions can break the cycle of poverty and create opportunities for economic advancement. It is important to note that the relationship between child marriage and poverty is complex and multifaceted. While child marriage can contribute to poverty, poverty can also be a contributing factor to child marriage. Families facing economic hardship may resort to early marriage as a coping mechanism, hoping to reduce their financial burden. On the other hand, poor families may hope that by marrying off their daughters, they will receive a dowry or financial support from the husband's family. This is seen as a form of economic security for the future.



Source: Statistics, 2024

Figure 6. Poverty Depth Index (P1) According to West Nusa Tenggara and Riau Island

Although poverty is only one of the causes of child marriage, the poverty depth index graph above is in line with the higher number of child marriages experienced by West Nusa Tenggara Province than Riau Islands Province. The observed trends, particularly the increase in certain regions, could indicate a worsening of conditions related to poverty and child

marriage. These issues are often interconnected, with poverty driving families towards early marriages as a coping mechanism and, in turn, limiting opportunities for girls and perpetuating poverty cycles.

How Lifestyle Affects Unintended Pregnancy

Another factor that greatly influences teenagers' desire to marry early is the need to exist due to lifestyle demands. Lifestyle demands, digital influences and lack of parental supervision leads to unwanted pregnancies that force children into marriage. The incidence of promiscuity leading to child marriage occurs in all regions of West Nusa Tenggara, especially in Lombok. Why is the rate of child marriage high in Lombok? An interview with the founder of La Rimpu explained that people in Lombok obey the Tuan Guru rather than the state, they will obey tradition. This is in contrast to communities in Bima and Sumbawa, where there is a high rate of early marriage because of freedom of association. What happens if a child is promiscuous and gets pregnant? If the child is already pregnant out of wedlock, the community upholds the formal religion, which is to marry the child off. This is because it is impossible for the child to give birth alone (without a husband). Therefore, obedience to religious teachings, especially Islam in Lombok, causes religious and community leaders to tend to marry off their children if there is a case of pregnancy outside of marriage.

In contrast to the Riau Islands, Unlike the Riau Islands, promiscuity that leads to child marriage is rarely found. Promiscuity that leads to pregnancy outside of marriage does occur in Natuna Island, the highest area in the Riau Islands. Many cases of pregnancy outside of marriage are found in the archipelago caused by events held in the middle of the night, such as wedding party entertainment and tournament events that trigger teenagers to drink alcohol and get drunk (Interview with the Head of the Health Office in Sei Pancur, Batam City). However, because the culture is different from Lombok which is strongly influenced by religious figures and religious traditions, in cases of pregnancy outside of marriage in the Riau Islands, no data was found relating to increasing rates of child marriage.

Impact of Child Marriage

Cases of child marriage that occurred in West Nusa Tenggara Province and Riau Islands Province both showed negative impacts for girls. The following are the negative impacts that arise from child marriage that we collected from literature studies and field data in West Nusa Tenggara Province and the lowest in Riau Islands Province.

1. The negative impact of child marriage can be related to reproductive health

Child marriage increases the potential for sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV and human papilloma virus (HPV) or cervical cancer (Nour, 2006). The highest age prevalence of women with HIV and HPV is between the ages of 15 and 24. When child marriage occurs, girls are susceptible to HIV because the vaginal lining is not covered by protective cells and the cervix of underage girls is easily damaged during sexual intercourse (Kabir et al., 2019). This increase in HIV occurs due to cervical or vaginal tears and during sexual intercourse. An immature cervix when used for sexual intercourse also has a high potential for cervical cancer. Meanwhile, cervical cancer is a deadly cancer because it is the second highest cause of death for cancer in women (Bayo, 2002).

Girls who marry at a young age also have risks related to pregnancy. Child marriage has proven to have a high potential for causing unwanted pregnancies. A study in India showed that girls aged 20 to 24 who are married at a young age will experience unwanted pregnancies 1.7 times more than girls who marry at a later age (Kabir et al., 2019). This is

related to the number of teenage pregnancies in West Nusa Tenggara. The West Nusa Tenggara Health Service noted that in 2020, teenage pregnancies reached 6,532 cases recorded in health facilities, while in 2021 it reached 6,473 cases (Sinto, 2022). In addition, the risks during pregnancy for girls who engage in child marriage are also high. Complications such as sepsis, bleeding, and preeclampsia for girls under the age of 15 cause a higher risk of death compared to marrying in their twenties (Barua et al., 2007) (Mensch et al., 1998).

2. Girls are Vulnerable to Mental Health Problems

Child marriage causes mental health problems, they are forced to live apart from their families and friendships, increasing the risk of social isolation (Jayawardana, 2023). Girls who undergo child marriage are not aware of the reality of married life and feel unprepared. This causes an impact on their emotions, especially related to the management of domestic work that is culturally imposed on women (Seta, 2023). Depression is the most common mental health consequence of child marriage (Aggarwal et al., 2023; Burgess et al., 2022). For example, in India, problems in the home such as physical and sexual violence by partners cause depression and victims commit suicide (Burgess et al., 2022). The risk of becoming victims is greater for girls because women are more vulnerable to limited physical, financial, and psychological resources (Marphatia et al., 2017).

In addition to problems with domestic work, physical violence, and sexual violence, social pressures related to child care patterns also cause mental health problems experienced by girls who undergo child marriage. For example, people will say, 'You are not taking good care of your child,' this will affect their mental health (BBC.com, 2024).

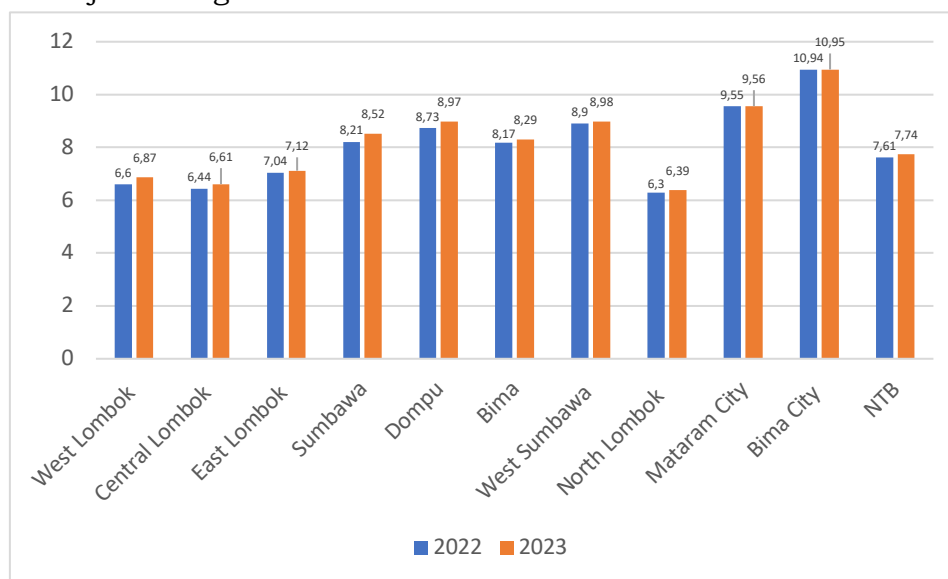
3. Child Marriage Leads To Drop Out and Unworthy Work

Research in Zambia, Bangladesh and Indonesia has shown that low levels of education are significantly associated with early marriage, and education has been identified as a significant predictor of age at marriage (Rofita et al., 2022). Child marriage has implications for the loss of children's opportunities to receive a proper education. Failure to fulfil children's right to education will affect their later lives, such as difficulties in obtaining decent work and even falling into new forms of poverty (structural poverty), working in the formal sector with low wages, and believing that education is not important, thus affecting the education of future offspring. The impact of early marriage on the education of children in the family determines the quality of the offspring (Ikhsanudin & Nurjanah, 2018).

Low levels of education and literacy affect how people view marriage and sexuality. It is also linked to the ability of parents to provide information that children need, such as learning about sexual and reproductive health. (Eleanora et al., n.d.). For example, parents think that when a child starts menstruating, it is time for marriage and that she is vulnerable to early pregnancy. (interview with Badar Sasak activist, 2024). In fact, the age at which children start menstruating is now generally between 9 and 10 years old. Parents' lack of understanding about the reproductive maturity of women for marriage is limited to menstruation without considering the medical, psychological and physical implications. This misconception increases the vulnerability of children to child marriage.

Child marriage also leads to children dropping out of school. The high rate of child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara is supported by the official statistics of BPS West Nusa Tenggara 2023 (Central Statistics Agency, 2024) which states that the average length of schooling in West Nusa Tenggara is 7.74 years, with 3 districts lower than the provincial figure, namely West Lombok, Central Lombok, East Lombok and North Lombok. The average years of schooling is a figure that describes the length (in years) of schooling experienced by

the population aged 25 and over. The data below shows that West Nusa Tenggara's average years of schooling of 7.74 years means that the average length of schooling for children is only up to the age of 14 (junior high school age) and even in all Lombok districts, not up to the completion of junior high school.



Source: Statistics of West Nusa Tenggara Province, 2023

Figure 7. Average length of schooling in West Nusa Tenggara Province

Estrada mentions that cash transfers or educational incentives can keep children in school, reducing the risk of pregnancy and child marriage. Strategies are needed by different stakeholders to keep children in school at all costs. One NGO, Dewan Anak Mataram, has a programme called Dewan Anak Mataran Go to School in cooperation with Plan International (interview with DAM, 23 July 2024). For Batam City, a health worker in Batam City stated that Posyandu (integrated service post) for adolescents, MPLS (Period of Introduction to the School Environment) activities are usually invited to introduce and provide counselling on the effects of free sex and marriage at a young age. children are enthusiastic and think it is not good.

In the underdeveloped, frontier and outermost (3T) areas of the Riau Island, people have a more advanced view of education. They are very aware of the need for children to have higher education, they want to be successful like the people on TV. For example, in Pulau Akar (a hard-to-reach island), people want to develop and prosper, and the Children's Forum is very active. The government has taken the children's ambassadors to the provincial level. The children are being guided to the sub-district level to practise thinking about the development of the nation. In fact, people are determined that children must be wise. She once assisted in the marriage of a pregnant young girl from Setokok Island. Everyone involved thought about how the child would be born, what the neighbourhood association could do to help, and made the case a lesson in the hope that it would not happen to other young people. Eventually, the child (now 25 years old) was enrolled in a Package C programme and is now working in the fashion industry. (interviews with RPS activists).

4. Child marriage and domestic violence

Research suggests that domestic violence is more likely to occur when relationships are unequal, one partner is highly dependent on the other (emotionally, economically and in decision-making) and when coercion is involved. Woollett's (2020) study in Zimbabwe paints

a picture of a child mother's life of vulnerability as she feels isolated, unable to continue her education due to her caring responsibilities and vulnerable to domestic violence due to her inability and pressure to manage the household (Rofita et al., 2022). A study suggests that women who were married as children are more likely to report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV), both physical and sexual, than women who married as adults (Kidman, 2017). The impact of child marriage in the form of domestic violence is reflected in the number of cases that differ significantly between West Nusa Tenggara Province and Riau Islands Province. In Riau Islands Province, there were 55 cases of Domestic Violence recorded in 2021, while in West Nusa Tenggara Province there were 103 cases (Statistics Indonesia, 2023).

Most victims of child marriage violence, which is mostly perpetrated by these couples, have not had the courage to report their experiences. This is because women who experience violence in their homes feel ashamed, afraid, threatened or forced to maintain the continuity of the household and because of the shame of divorce or widowhood.

Government Policy for Handling and Prevention of Child Marriage

The Indonesian government has been striving to protect underage girls from early marriage. One significant step was the 2019 amendment to the Marriage Law, which raised the minimum legal age for marriage to 19 for both men and women. However, this regulatory change has not significantly reduced the number of child marriages. Data shows that the average rate of child marriage in Indonesia remains quite high, reaching 8.64% nationally over the period 2020-2023. Even more alarming is the surge in marriage dispensation cases after the enactment of the Marriage Law amendment. In 2020, the number of marriage dispensations skyrocketed by 173% compared to the previous year. This high number of dispensations continued until 2022.

The increasing trend in child marriage rates in West Nusa Tenggara is an anomaly amidst the decline in the average child marriage rate in Indonesia. This anomaly occurs despite many efforts to prevent child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara Province. Some policies that respond to the prevention of child marriage include Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2021 on the Prevention of Child Marriage, Governor Regulation of West Nusa Tenggara Province No. 34 of 2023 on the Regional Action Plan for the Prevention of Child Marriage in 2023-2026, to form a Task Force for the Prevention of Child Marriage (Task Force PPA) stipulated by a Governor Decree. In fact, a joint commitment to prevent child marriage was formulated and signed by the West Nusa Tenggara Religious High Court, the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Indonesian Ulema Council of West Nusa Tenggara Province, community leaders and religious leaders (Legal and Public Relations Bureau Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2024).

This commitment includes; (1) all village heads (Lurah) to draft village regulations (local: awig-awig) by including social and administrative sanctions in the form of denial of permission to hold a wedding party; (2) all traditional leaders, religious leaders and village priests to make efforts to prevent child marriage in the family and community environment; (3) commitment to implement Law No. 16 of 2019 on Amendments to Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, which sets the age limit for marriage for both men and women at 19 years of age.

This commitment is followed up with the Declaration of Child Marriage Prevention 'Stop Merariq Kodeq' emphasising the commitment of the Village Head in drafting regulations that contain; (1) Social sanctions in the form of marriage not being attended by the village and sub-district governments, village imams and sub-district imams, hamlet imams and

neighbourhood imams, and shara' officials; (2) administrative sanctions in the form of not being given permission to hold a wedding party; and (3) sanctions must attend village/kelurahan meetings, if parents marry at the age of a child (Legal and Public Relations Bureau Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2024).

Another regulation that has been enacted is District Regulation No. 2 of 2024 on the Implementation of Child Protection in East Lombok Regency, and the Governor's Circular Letter of 2008 on the Maturity of Marriage Age requires marriage at the age of 21 (interview with Badar sasak Activist, 2023). It's explained that the Governor's Circular Letter was based on Sasak texts that tell the history of marriages in the past at the age of more than 20. Unfortunately, according to an academics of State Islamic University, the Rengganis text explaining this history has not yet been read. In fact, Tuan Guru Bajang dared to set the age at 21 based on the historical Rengganis text. They have a clear justification for not marrying young. There is already an anti-child marriage movement in West Lombok called GAMAK (Anti Merari Kodek Movement) (Susfita & Darmini, 2022). Bima town claims to be a child-friendly town, and even all the towns in West Nusa Tenggara often get child-friendly town awards. In fact, there are many policies that can be traced. It is not about legal problems, it's more about legal culture and other factors. Law does not stand alone, it is influenced by non-legal factors such as politics, economics, social and cultural factors, etc. Early Marriage Public Awareness Family sees that privacy is not disturbed by others (Interview with academics of State Islamic University, 2023).

In the city of Mataram, there is already a District Regulation No. 4/2012 on the implementation of the protection of women and children against violence, which also addresses child marriage. Apparently, according to Mataram Children's Council Activists, the existence of this policy has not been effective enough to prevent the increase in cases. The evidence is that child marriages are still taking place. Community leaders are still insensitive and even perform these early marriages. There are even school teachers in Mataram who encourage marriage after graduation. The rules that have been made are not implemented properly, the punishments/sanctions that have been given are missing.

While regulations in West Nusa Tenggara are still inferior to the implementation of the culture of child marriage, in the Riau Islands Province collaborates with various parties to commit to preventing child marriage. One form of this commitment can be seen from the ratification of the Riau Islands Provincial Regulation Number 7 of 2010 concerning the Implementation of Child Protection. In this regulation, Article 35 paragraph 1 states that parents are obliged and responsible for preventing marriage at a young age. The implementation of this regulation is carried out in synergy with the Social Service together with the Bunga Rampai Child Social Protection House (RPSA) (Interview with activist from Children's Social Protection House Bunga Rampai, Riau Islands Province).

At the district and city government level, efforts to prevent child marriage are also carried out, such as in Bintan District. The Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in Bintan District makes efforts to prevent child marriage in three ways, namely conducting strict verification of the implementation of marriage administration, Guidance for School Age Youth (BRUS) as a prevention effort. Furthermore, there is the socialization of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning marriage that there is an age limit for child marriage (Ministry of Religion of Riau Islands, 2023).

Synergy with the Health Center is also carried out as in Batam City, precisely by providing adolescent health posts. This program is implemented simultaneously in various regions in Indonesia, although its implementation has not been established in all regions. This program is a forum for adolescent health posts that facilitate understanding the ins and

outs of adolescents during puberty, one of which is to prevent child marriage. The form of activity in one of the health centers in Batam City, namely the Sei Pancur Health Center, is to hold counseling on preventing child marriage to junior high schools, high schools and Islamic boarding schools. The form of counseling is also followed by the formation of the management of adolescent health posts to junior high schools or equivalent high schools and Islamic boarding schools (interview with health workers at the Sei Pancur Health Center, Batam City). The formation of this management can monitor the level of child marriage in each school and Islamic boarding school in the Riau Islands. Another form of synergy with the Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) is to form a Family Assistance Team (TKP) consisting of cadres and health workers. This TKP will assist pregnant women who are at high risk due to child marriage. This TKP has a scope equivalent to the Community Association (RW). In Batam City, each RW has 3 teams that assist (Interview with health workers at the Sei Pancur Health Center, Batam City).

CONCLUSION

Based on this research question, protecting underage girls from early marriage remains a significant challenge in Indonesia. Despite existing regulations, the rate of child marriage remains high. To address this issue, a strong commitment from all parties is needed, along with more systematic and sustained efforts. The West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government and the city and district governments within it have taken preventive steps to reduce the high number of child marriages. However, the implementation of this policy needs to be more holistic in embracing various stakeholders, especially because the challenges in West Nusa Tenggara are related to tradition as a factor causing child marriage. Preventive steps have also been taken by the Riau Islands Province even though in terms of numbers it is the province with the lowest number of child marriage cases for 2023. Other causal factors for child marriages that occur in the West Nusa Tenggara Province and the Riau Islands besides culture are the economy, education, and lifestyle that has led to promiscuity. The impact of child marriages that occur in the West Nusa Tenggara Province and the Riau Islands Province for girls is related to the risks of reproductive health, mental health, interrupted access to education, and potential to be a victim of domestic violence. In further research, we will discuss in more depth the impact of child marriage on reproductive health and mental health aspects.

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