

# Analysis of Child Marriage and Related Policies in Indonesia: Sustainable Development Issue

*By* Noverman Duadji

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Noverman Duadji \*\*, Novita Tresiana \*\*

## ABSTRACT

Child marriage is a prevalent social problem in developing countries, including Indonesia, and its implementation has been prohibited in all regions of Indonesia. The revision of the marriage law that lifts up the minimum age limit for child marriage and the implementation of the child protection policy does not inevitably guarantee that the practice of child marriage can be avoided. It affects the success of achieving the goals of sustainable development. The research objective of this study was to analyze the success of the factors and the effectiveness of the implementation of policies on handling the practice of child marriage in achieving sustainable goals in Indonesia. Data collection was performed using a profile approach utilizing data from the National Development Planning Agency of 2016-2019, desk review of the literature, and stock-taking of relevant research studies. Moreover, the effectiveness of policy implementation is assessed using a contingency analysis of the factors of policy commitment and government capacity. The results showed that the effectiveness of policy implementation from the factor of policy commitment was performed through the integration of the goals of SDGs into the national strategy for preventing child marriage, enforcement of main policy changes, mapping of regional-based issue trends and root causes, mapping of regional-level derivative policies issued before main policy revision changes, harmonization and synchronization of various policies through derivative policies, planning and development at the regional and village levels. Adjustment in the factor of implementation capacity of policy is indicated by institutional convergence and synergy of various parties, including learning from various good practices in the regions. The contingency matrix-based policy application model for handling the practice of child marriage will be effective if it utilizes a progressive model.

**Keywords:** *Child Marriage, Changes in Policy Implementation, SDGs, Elimination of harmful practices for children, Indonesian territory*

## INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is a precarious practice and a global problem. By 2030, every country, including Indonesia, will make child marriage a target for achieving the fifth goal of SDG, which is achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls where one of its targets is to abolish the practice of child marriage (Dahal, 2016). The Convention on the Rights of the Child stated that child marriage is a marriage that is done through civil, religious, or customary law, and with or without official registration or consent in which one or both couples are children under the age of 18 (Widiantara and Yuhan, 2019; Simon et al., 2020). Dewi (2018) stated that the practice of child marriage is related to the fact that it violates children's human rights, limits their choices and opportunities, and makes them prone to violence, exploitation, and abuse. Child marriage also

marks the culmination of adolescence for both girls and boys, which should be a period of physical, emotional, and social development before entering adulthood (Erulkar, 2013).

The issue of the practice of child marriage is crucial to study as it has developed into a common social problem that not only occurs in Indonesia but also in several countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan (South Asia), Malawi, Chad, Mozambique, and Niger (Africa) (Khana et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2013). This problem arises at the intersection of two hierarchies: gender and age. Women are always in the position of the least power; at worst, they are powerless and customarily have to surrender to men. Conversely, in the age hierarchy as adolescents, they must obey their parents and family or older members of the community (Grijns and Horii, 2018; Bartels et al., 2018; Mirzaee et al., 2021)

The Indonesian government has prohibited the practice of child marriage in all regions. It is regulated through three main policies, including: Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, and Supreme Court Regulation (Perma) Number 1 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Adjudicating Application for Marriage Dispensation. Those three policies are related to child protection, which is by limiting the age of marriage and granting child marriage dispensation (Hizbullah, 2019; Tresiana and Duadji, 2020). The three of them serve as the foundation for adjusting the implementation of various policies related to this matter.

Studies on the practice of child marriage are highly varied, in which they are related to multi-dimensional social issues and have a chain impact on the success of the country's national development (Fadlyana and Larasaty, 2016; Baysak et al., 2020). One of the studies also connects the poverty factor with the continuity of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the strong linkages between the 17 goals and 169 targets by considering the social, economic, and environmental aspects of development. Poverty (goal 1 of SDG) is not only a risk factor for the practice of child marriage (goal 5 of SDG) but also a risk factor for child development and contributes to results below average in terms of food and nutrition (goal 2 of SDG), health (goal 3 of SDG), education (goal 4 of SDG), proper water and sanitation (goal 6 of SDG), and birth registration (goal 16 of SDG) (Girls Not Brides, 2019; Parson and Edmeades, 2015).

Studies in Indonesia and three countries in South Asia including India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan illustrate how children, particularly girls from poor and marginalized families, confront the highest risk of child marriage. Furthermore, child pregnancy is more prevalent among those

with low education who come from low-income households. Child marriage is a family strategy to escape poverty, involving economic defense as a result of tribal hostilities in Pakistan and clan development and cultural traditions in India (Khanna et al., 2013; Paul, 2019; Bartels et al., 2018). A study conducted by Paul (2019) found that child marriage because of poverty does not make children better off, but passes the burden of poverty on to the next generation.

Besides poverty, contributing factors include geography (Johnson et al., 2019), lack of access to education (Mim, 2017), gender inequality (Sarfo et al., 2020) social conflict and disaster (Dzimiri et al., 2017; Dewi and Dartanto, 2018; Mazurana et al., 2019), lack access to comprehensive reproductive health services and information (UNICEF, 2018; Salam et al., 2016), social norms that reinforce particular gender stereotypes (for instance, women should marry at a young age) (Gemignani and Wodon, 2015), culture (interpretation of local religions and traditions) (Karam, 2015; Saskara, 2018). Other aspects like matchmaking and society's acceptance of child marriage become the driving factors for the practice of child marriage (Yusha, 2020).

Several recent studies and research in Indonesia showed that the most powerful relevance is not only to poverty but also to disasters and geography. In certain conditions such as natural disasters and humanitarian crises, child marriage has increased threefold. The reasons, among others, are that parents intend to get rid of economic burdens, safety factors, and fear of unwanted pregnancy. Natural disasters and humanitarian crises commonly give families a feeling of insecurity. This condition is oftentimes a reason for families to marry off their daughters as a form of protection (Pettay et al., 2020; Dewi and Dartanto, 2018; Haryanto, 2012). Moreover, living in a rural geographic area also becomes a risk factor for child marriage (Yulanda, 2019; Bappenas, 2018).

The practice of child marriage involved complicated implications relating to how children can develop their health and nutrition, welfare and education, and the environment where they grow. It is highly related to the continuity of the nation's generation. Recognition of the SDGs that children are agents of change and torch-bearers for sustainable development clarify the relationship between the practice of child marriage and the development of future human resources of a nation (Sheehan et al., 2017). Five challenges due to the practice of child marriage that can adversely affect human resource development in the future include: the potential for failure to continue education; the potential for increased maternal mortality; the potential for increased infant mortality (IMR); the potential for increased domestic violence and divorce; and finally the

potential for economic loss with an estimated of <sup>1</sup> at least 1.7% of gross domestic income (GDP) (Rabi et al., 2015).

Diverse problems and challenges in achieving the goals and targets of the SDGs require not only social adjustment but also the way to change the implementation of specific policies based on regional development. (Bappenas, 2018; Febryano et al., 2021). This case attracts attention not only from scholars but also policymakers. Children must grow optimally and become excellent and competitive human resources with the guaranteed risk of the practice of child marriage. Several studies have observed that child marriage is only related to factors such as family resilience, (Baumont et al., 2020), mentoring model (Astrid, 2019), and optimizing children's capacity (Lo Forte et al., 2019). However, researchers rarely disclose how the contingency analysis model (commitment factor and policy implementation capacity) should see the success of these factors and the effectiveness of implementing policies in handling the practice of child marriage.

<sup>12</sup> The research objective of this study was to analyze the success of the factors and the effectiveness of the implementation of policies in handling the practice of child marriage in achieving sustainable goals in Indonesia. The resulting policy recommendations will be useful for related policymakers and stakeholders to realize a just, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable management of handling detrimental practices, as well as consider local ideas and initiatives.

## METHODS

This study mapped child marriage using a profile approach based on the development of the main areas of development planning in Indonesia (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2018). It aims at determining the characteristics of child marriage in each area of development planning so that policy recommendations will be specific and sustainable for each region.

Data sources on <sup>1</sup> child marriage in Indonesia in the last four years were collected from the Ministry of National Development Planning. Data obtained from 34 provinces in Indonesia were <sup>25</sup> divided into four regions based on the main areas of development. Region A consists of five provinces, including Aceh, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, Riau, and Riau Islands; region B consists of 11 provinces, including Jambi, <sup>5</sup> South Sumatra, Bengkulu, Bangka Belitung Islands, Lampung, Banten, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, and West Kalimantan; region C covers six provinces, including East Java, Bali, <sup>3</sup> Central Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, East

Kalimantan, and South Kalimantan; and region D consists of 12 provinces including West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, West Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, Gorontalo, North Sulawesi, Maluku, North Maluku, Papua, and West Papua. The population of underage married children was divided into 4 groups: year 1 (2016), year 2 (2017), year 3 (2018), and year 4 (2019).

Profile analysis was performed using multivariate variance (MANOVA) and SAS 9.4 application (Huberty and Olenjnik, 2005; Da Silva et al., 2015). The procedures and steps taken included: First, using Box's M test to check the assumption of homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrix Box (1949). The null hypothesis is rejected if the data from all groups have the same variant-covariance matrix, which is called heterogeneous. The next step was to check the data distribution from which the multivariate data should be distributed normally for each group. We used the Shapiro-Wilk test for univariate normality test and skewness and Mardia kurtosis for the multivariate normality test. Subsequently, deepening the profile analysis was carried out through several tests. We reject the null hypothesis if the values of all those tests are less than an alpha level of 5%, or if the F statistic exceeds the critical value. If only the first hypothesis is the area of rejection, then the last two hypothetical tests are not performed as they are deemed meaningful (Usman, et all,2013; Sabbag, 2019; Khattree and Naik, 2005).

This study also used desk review and stock-taking for data collection. Desk reviews were conducted to map policy commitments, government capacity, social literature, economics, child marriage politics, and sustainable development. It aimed to enrich the concept of implementing specific policies, in line with sustainable development. The stocktaking was seen from the results of research and recent publications on policy implementation, policy changes, development strategies, planning and budgeting in international/global, national, and local, and some lessons learned/local initiatives.

Data collected through profile analysis, desk review, and stock taking was reviewed using contingency analysis (Lester, 1994). The contingency matrix was used to see support for strategic policy implementation models for governance in handling the practice of child marriage. The contingency model in realizing fair, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable governance was considerably influenced by two factors, including the commitment and capacity of the government. The government's commitment was observed when it provides support through data recognition and policy strengthening. Government capacity was observed when it has a good coordination

mechanism and the ability to bridge the interests of various stakeholders. Based on these two factors, the government's ability to implement policies was divided into 4 categories (Figure 1), including: (a) Progressive is implementation with high policy commitment and government capacity characterized by the utilization and recognition of specific data/evidence, enforcement of main policies, harmonization, synchronization of main and derivative policies, central and regional institutions, coordination and synergy in central, regional, and village levels; (b) Delayer is low policy commitment and high capacity; (c) Struggler is high commitment, but with inadequate capacity (d) Regressive is insufficient commitment and capacity.

Government Commitment	Government Capacity	
	High	Low
<i>High</i>	Progressive	Struggler
<i>Low</i>	Delayer	Regressive

Figure 1. Contingency Matrix

Source: Lester 1994

All publications were read by a team of writers who then performed thematic categorization of the findings in the publication. The results of the categorization were then analyzed by considering the profile analysis. Then, the analysis of changes in policy implementation was triangulated by the research team and subsequently elaborated in the discussion section.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Results*

#### **Profile of Child Marriage in Indonesia**

The profile of child marriage is an overview of the current trends in the practice of child marriage in particular areas, which illustrates the root of the problem and the basis for recommendation proposals. It becomes one of the ways the government can achieve successful implementation of policies and programs. Mapping child marriage trends was performed by using MANOVA profile analysis with SAS 9.4 software as shown in Figure 2. It shows that each region has different characteristics in the four main development areas (Region A, B, C, and D).

**Figure 2.** Region Group Profiles for Marriage Rate Profiles

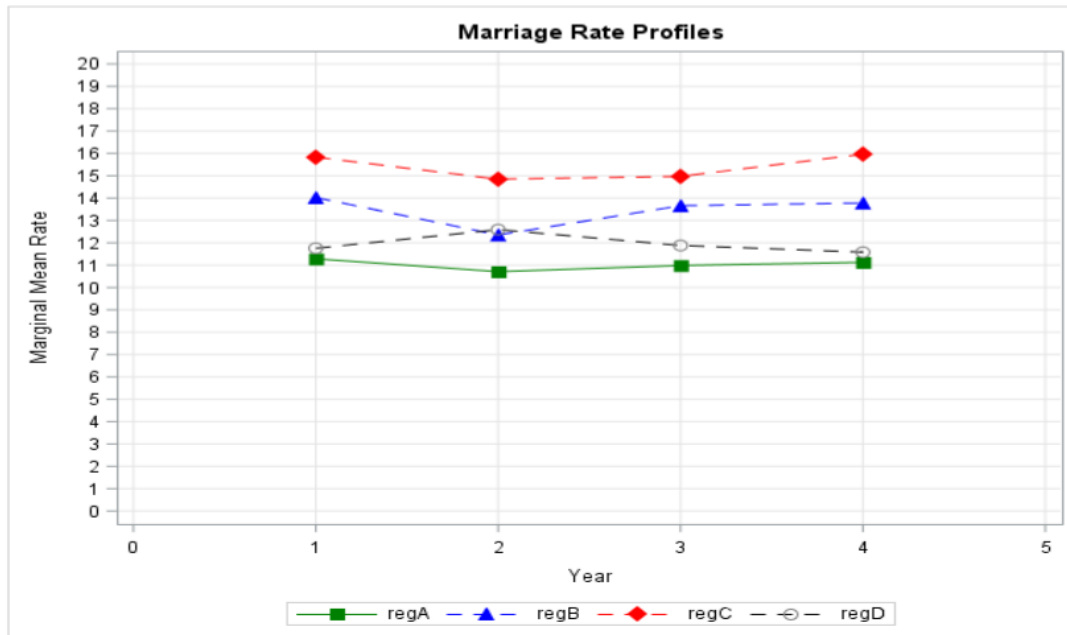


Figure 2 shows the order of cases of child marriage based on the four main area divisions in Indonesia as follows: region C (East Java, Bali, Central Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, and South Kalimantan) has the highest number of cases of child marriage, followed by region B (Jambi, South Sumatra, Bengkulu, Bangka Belitung Islands, Lampung, Banten, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, and West Kalimantan), region D (West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, West Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, Gorontalo, North Sulawesi, Maluku, North Maluku, Papua, and West Papua), and finally region A (Aceh, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, Riau, and Riau Islands). The trend of cases in each region seems remarkable. This trend fluctuated in region C over the years. Meanwhile, in regions B and D, this trend only converged in the second year; however, for the following years, the trend was similar to the initial year of data. In region A, the trend shows that the cases occurring every year have an average relative value equal to the highest number of child marriage cases.

The suspected root cause is used as an evidence base of policy to deal with the practice of child marriage. Akoglu, et al. (2015) argued that mapping with presumptions would lead to an anomaly of accuracy in the analysis of results. In region C, the suspected root cause for a large number of child marriages is low access to education services, especially, education services that support knowledge of sexual and reproductive health. It is because coverage of quality education



services is also essential in children's growth. The suspected root cause in region B is a high poverty rate. The proposed policy solution for region B is to improve the capacity of primary caregivers for children. In addition, attempts to strengthen the child welfare system are also significant, for instance, social assistance and protection programs. The impact of child marriage will be experienced not only by children who marry early but also by those born from such marriages, and it has the potential to establish intergenerational poverty. In region D, the possible root cause is a low level of health awareness. The proposed recommendation is to apply a social participation model (Duadji and Tresiana, 2018a) for all ages through community forums in order to strengthen awareness of health and prevent child marriages in the coming years. Lastly, in region A, the number of cases tends to be stable each year, and thus strengthening statutory policies is highly recommended. An empirical study conducted by Duadji dan Tresiana (2018b) pointed out that collaborative governance-based city programs can be implemented as a proper policy of each district government that can be established holistically, interactively, and sustainably.

In general, this study identified several interrelated factors that are considered related to the practice of child marriage, including education, health, psychology, poverty (economy), geographical conditions, disasters, and state failure. Several factors simultaneously act as a driving force and a defense to avoid the practice of child marriage as long as it is implemented using the right approach.

The damaging impact of child marriage, particularly for girls, is a pregnancy that occurs at an early age and vulnerability to maternal and child mortality. <sup>14</sup> Pregnancy and childbirth complications are recorded to be the second leading cause of death for women aged 15-19 years with diverse health risks being faced. The high number of marriages before the age of 15-18 years is potential to increase the maternal mortality rate (359/100,000 births), infant mortality rate (32/1000 births), and malnourished babies (4.5 million/year) leading to generation loss in the future (Duadji and Tresiana, 2020). Irani and Roudsari (2019) and Efevbera et al. (2017) linked reproductive organs that are not ready for intercourse and pregnancy with an increased risk of cervical cancer. The risk of children being born due to the physical condition of pregnant women at an early age, who are still growing and need nutritional intake, results in insufficient nutritional intake for the baby in the womb, impact the fetus's body, and improper brain growth. The fetus will be born in malnutrition such as low body weight and height. Imperfect brain growth while in the womb leads to lower intelligence for babies and children compared to those born to women

over the age of 21. It shows the need to provide quality education and inclusive <sup>2</sup>sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) services. Comprehensive sexual education programs in Pakistan, Peru, and Kenya indicate that they have a significant role in reducing early pregnancy and child marriage. It can be a solution to prevent child marriage, particularly in region C.

Psychologically, child marriage has a damaging effect because the children are not emotionally stable (Aulia and Darmansyah, 2020). This condition increases the vulnerability to domestic violence (KDRT), in which 44% of girls who marry early experience domestic violence with high frequency and 56% with low frequency. Cases of marriage at a young age (12-21 years) three times more end in unilateral divorce, victims of sexual violence and pedophilia, which cuts off access to education and the world of work.

Another impact of child marriage is impoverishment (Dewi and Dartanto, 2018). Children from families with a low-income economic quintile are most at risk of child marriage. Poverty becomes the major driver of marriage, particularly for girls in developing countries. The impoverishment encountered by these children has the potential to develop new impoverishment and strengthen the poverty chain.

Other driving factors include geography and disaster. The data show that <sup>2</sup>girls in rural areas are twice as likely to marry at a young age compared to girls in urban areas. Rumble et al., (2018) stated that the factor of living in rural areas has a high risk for children to marry early. Marshan, et al. (2013) found that girls living in urban areas are more likely to have opportunities outside of marriage and childcare than those living in rural areas. It may indicate the need to intervene at the regional level, particularly in rural areas, to prevent or respond to the practice of child marriage. Increasing the involvement of the village government also serves as one of the strategies that can be performed, such as the practice that occurred in several villages by forming a child-friendly village child protection group (KPAD) (Duadji and Tresiana, 2020). The literature study also found that the risk of girls who are married off is higher in situations following a natural disaster. A study conducted by Dewi and Dartanto (2018) showed that in Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka, child marriage has increased due to the force to marry a widower after the tsunami. In some cases, marriages occur to receive government assistance specifically given to those who get married and start a family.

Finally, child marriage affects the failure of the state to implement programs and attempts <sup>6</sup>to improve the quality of human resources (HR). It resulted in the country losing economic and

political opportunities in international relations (Al Mamun, 2019). A poverty alleviation policy is not enough, in which a child protection system, child welfare in social assistance and protection programs, and child care are needed to be strengthened.

### **Government Commitment: Strengthening Policies on Handling the Practice of Child Marriage**

The government's commitment is a factor in the effectiveness of declining the number of the practice of child marriage. Its success can be observed from the integration of the SDGs into national, regional, and village planning, enforcement of key policies and mapping, as well as synchronization and harmonization of various related derivative policies.

The government has determined a vision to protect children's rights and human resource development for future generations of the nation. Three major national policies as a fundamental aspect of the prevention of child marriage include: **First**, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Child marriage is included in goal 5: achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, in which one of the targets is the abolishment of child marriage. It has become the foundation for various national policies; **Second**, integrating the target of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to reducing the number of the practice of child marriage into the National-Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN) of 2020-2024 as stated in Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020. The number of the practice of child marriage is targeted to decline from 11.2% in 2018 to 8.74% in 2024; **Third**, implementing the RPJMN of 2020-2024 policy direction and strategy into the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (STRANAS PPA).

The government's attempts in implementing the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (Stranas PPA) are performed through enforcement of key policies, mapping, harmonizing, and synchronizing policies. Some of which are carried out as follows:

- a. Strengthening the implementation of three main policies associated with child protection and policies for regulating the age of child marriage
- b. Integrating the national strategy for preventing child marriage which is led by the national planning agency
- c. Integrating the issue of child marriage into the indicators of the Child-Friendly City Program and initiating a national campaign to end child marriage which is led by The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection

- d. Mapping and harmonizing various forms of existing policy is carried out by the government to achieve the target of reducing the number of the practice of child marriage. 17 Regional Regulations in Cities and Regencies, 12 regulations at the village level, 20 Circular at the Village/Sub-District level were issued before the new marriage law was passed. Therefore, it is necessary to observe and adjust to the development of existing policies. The regulation of child marriage in regional regulations remains an appeal and notification if the practice of child marriage becomes a matter that must be watched out together. Harmonization is required so that various regulations at the central and regional levels can be harmonized, mutually supportive, and effective in their implementation in the field.
- e. Synchronization between laws is also extremely urgent. The synchronization among them: *first*, synchronization of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Marriage that still needs to be synchronized with the Supreme Court Regulation (Perma) Number 1 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Adjudicating Application for Marriage Dispensation. This attempt is made to the consistency and firmness of judges in deciding dispensation cases in line with the spirit of preventing or rejecting child marriage. Second, the synchronization between Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections and Law Number 16 of 2019 is performed to create consistency regarding the provisions of voters who still use the age limit of 17 years or are married or have already been married. Third, Law Number 24 of 2013 concerning Population Administration that still uses the age limit of 17 years or is married or has been married for citizens who are required to have an electronic identity card. The government strives so that the two regulations do not have the potential to open up gaps of tolerance or loosening of the practice of child marriage. Synchronization ensures the integration of the main policies in the derived policies.

Various supports in the form of rules and regulations at different kinds of levels of government have the potential to prevent child marriage. It aims to improve, strengthen, and formulate derivative policies that do not conflict with the main policies and establish synergies of development plans and programs at all levels of government, including central, regional, and village. Duadji and Tresiana (2020) and Febryano (2021) stated that although the practice does not disappear suddenly, rules and regulations can be a considerable political statement against child marriage, particularly for areas where child marriage remains a culture. Upstream approaches like the formation of regulations and norms take a long time, and their effectiveness needs to be

reviewed. Study support is required to understand regulations or sanctions that have a positive impact on the prevention of child marriage.

### **Government Capacity as Policy Executor**

Government capacity is a factor in the effectiveness of policy implementation. Its success is observed from the existence of institutional convergence and synergy among various stakeholders, including at the central, regional, and village levels in taking lessons from various good practices in the regions.

The implementation of each strategy at all levels is escorted by the ministries/agencies, sectors, and related stakeholders, including:

- a. At the national level, it will be escorted by Bappenas, KPPPA, Ministry of Religion, Ministry of Education and Culture, BKKBN, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Regional Representative Council (DPD).
- b. At the regional level, it will be escorted by Regional Government Organizations (OPD) related to women's affairs and child protection, such as the PPPA and KB Service, the Education Office, the Health Service, the Social Service, P2TP2A, youth organizations (OSIS, Mosque Youth Forum), children's forums in various levels, etc.
- c. At the village level, it will be escorted by the village head, children's forum, PATBM, Mosque Youth Forum, OSIS, teachers, GenRE, etc.

The synergy, commitment, and active role of local governments in implementing policy are reflected in their integration in regional development planning at the provincial, district, and city levels through several policy instruments including: Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government. The regional government synergizes, harmonizes, and integrates into Regional-Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMD) and Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD); Ministry of Internal Affairs Regulation Number 64 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for the Preparation of Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) for children's programs. Besides, the local government developed the Institutional Formation of Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) for the Protection of Women and Children to strengthen the institutional aspect.

A study by Plan Indonesia and Coram International (2015) illustrated the synergy of various parties including taking lessons from various good practices in the regions as efforts made to

abolish child marriage in Indonesia. Some of the programs include programs to improve access to education and information on the reproductive health of adolescents in Rembang, Sukabumi, and West Lombok; programs to strengthen the environment to enable the fulfillment of the sexual and reproductive health rights of children in Mataram City and North Lombok District; Programs to provide life skills education to face the world of work in Sikka, Nagekeo, and Lembata Districts. All of them are local initiatives that can leverage success at the community level. Stakeholder coordination is a great potential to support efforts to prevent child marriage.

## DISCUSSIONS

The development process adopting the paradigm of pursuing growth, is centralized, focuses on infrastructure, and ignores environmental conservation affect the abandonment of some vulnerable groups of the community, including children. [Watson \(2021\)](#) stated that children must bear multiple vulnerabilities, not only double vulnerabilities but also triple vulnerabilities. Various risks must be confronted by children in remote villages, those in indigenous communities, those with disabilities, those in refugee camps, and those from minority groups (religion/belief, ethnicity/custom, gender identity, and sexual orientation). One of the forms of vulnerability confronted by them is marriage, and this vulnerability is further increased by *a regressive model of policy implementation*, marked by the absence of policy commitment and government capacity ([Lester, 1994](#)). This condition is likely to fail in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

[Girls Not Brides \(2019\)](#) mentioned that one of the principles in the Sustainable Development Goals is No One is Left Behind. This principle of inclusiveness is beyond the male-female category and includes vulnerable groups of children who have been marginalized and forgotten in development. Some of the emphasis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for children include justice and equality, children as agents of change, and children as torch-bearers for sustainable development. It indicates that the government's capacity is directed at the welfare of children. The basic rights of children in a region/country are an essential marker of progress in the process of realizing the SDGs.

Child marriage is not a mono-factor problem. The socio-cultural system, particularly government policies, becomes one of the issues that must be faced by several countries, especially Indonesia ([Sunaryanto, 2019](#)). [Bappenas \(2018\)](#) recorded data from international organizations including United Nation Development Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) which placed

Indonesia in second place <sup>1</sup> in the number of child marriages following Cambodia; The Council of Foreign Relationship (CRF) said that Indonesia is one of the <sup>1</sup> ten countries with the highest number of child brides/grooms. One in five girls in Indonesia are married under the age of 18; research conducted by the United Nations organization that focuses on protecting the rights of children and young people, the United Nation Children Fund (UNICEF), revealed that that one in six girls in Indonesia is married before the age of 18 or as many as 340.00 people. Meanwhile, 50,000 girls are married under the age of 15 each year.

Two factors that contribute to the high practice of child marriage are socio-cultural (Ahonsi et al, 2019) and government policy factors, which include government capacity (Lester, 1994). The socio-cultural factor is reflected in the perspective in seeing children. Today's children are adults in the future so that the growth and development throughout the child's lifespan will affect their chances and quality of life. A study by Duadji and Tresiana (2020) described children, particularly the female sex, for example, that the loss of opportunities to grow and develop at the age of the child will result in adult women losing the opportunity to gain access to decent and legal work. The low capacity of women's leadership results in low <sup>2</sup> participation of women in policy formulation and decision making, the more vulnerable to violence and discrimination, the downturn <sup>2</sup> in women's health status and quality of life.

Studies in several countries in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Syria, Kenya, including Indonesia, have a socio-cultural perspective of the interconnected value of children, influencing the high rate of child marriage (Seth et al., 2018; Dahal, 2016; Khanna et al., 2013; Bartels et al., 2018; Mirzaee, 2021; Dewi, 2018). Girls remain placed as subordinates because of the patriarchal culture and client patrons such as in Indonesia, conflict conditions and family resilience in Syria, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and traditions and clan development in India. These countries show that their viewpoint and perspectives on the value of girls are not considered in terms of age, but physically, affecting the opportunity to access formal education so that the dropout rate experienced by girls is higher than that of boys. This state makes women more vulnerable to poverty. The poverty chain has implications for the perception of girls as a burden on the family. Therefore, there is an idea that the sooner the marriage is done, the faster the burden on the family will be reduced. The number of the practice of child marriage occurs mostly in low-income families. The lack of information related to sexual education contributes to the emergence

of unwanted pregnancy conditions. In this state, the major choice that is often taken is to marry off the child.

The factors of policy and government capacity also contribute to the widespread practice of child marriage (Simon et al, 2020). It affects how the process of making, improving, and enforcing policies becomes a problem that occurs in many countries, including Indonesia (Nugroho, 2012). Indonesia has ratified several international conventions associated with girl protection from the practice of child marriage, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child which was ratified by Presidential Regulation No. 36 of 1990, Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which was ratified through Law Number 7 of 1984, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which was ratified through Law Number 12 of 2005, and the International Convention on 10 Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which was ratified by Law Number 11 of 2005.

In Indonesia, the practice of child marriage is considerably related to the dualism of the prevailing regulations, which is Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection. There is a clash in Indonesian government policies regarding the recognition of the age of marriage of the age of 16 years (in the Marriage Law) and the recognition of the age category of children of the age of 18 years (in the Child Protection Law). Revision of the marriage law through Law no. 16 of 2019, which raises the minimum age limit for marriage for boys and girls to 19 years does not necessarily guarantee that the practice of child marriage can be avoided. Marriage regulations allow submission of marriage dispensation if the bride and groom do not meet the minimum age requirement for marriage through a judge. A study conducted by Hizbullah (2019), described several related issues associated with marriage dispensation that has further expanded the practice of child marriage, including: an increase in application for marriage dispensation, granting of dispensation by judges, unwanted pregnancies, and premarital sex proposed by families. Granting by the judges is concerned with subjectivity involving considerations of values, norms, and culture by adopting parental concerns. Likewise, the Child Protection regulation states that parents and the community are obliged and responsible for preventing child marriage. However, in reality, many children are still forced to marry at an early age and this is socially legitimized by families and society (Duadji and Tresiana, 2020; Rumble et al., 2018; Saskara, 2018; Pettay et al., 2020).



Based on this illustration, it can be seen that the challenges and potential for minimizing the practice of child marriage, particularly in Indonesia, are quite complicated. Challenges include not only the need for attempts to strengthen children to be resilient and as agents of change in line with the SDGs targets but also support for policies and capacity for implementing child protection that has not guaranteed that children are protected from the practice of child marriage.

The developed contingency analysis by Lester (1994) shows the effectiveness of its implementation. The effectiveness of the implementation of policies on the handling of the practice of child marriage is performed with two adjustments, including the factors of the government commitment and capacity.

*The first change* relates to the factor of government commitment through the utilization of data/evidence and strengthening policies. Mapping of data and specific evidence-based on areas, as the root of the problem and the foundation for program design performed by the government, demonstrates a shift in the understanding of children. Children are no longer merely objects of development, but become the subject of various existing programs (Ahonsi et al., 2019). Evidence-based policy model (Cairney, 2017) and experience-based studies in Australia from 2007 to 2017 (Solesbury, 2001; Hanrahan, 2017) illustrates the evolution of evidence-based policy adjustment that has contributed to the role of data/evidence in determining the success of policy decisions and the support of reliable models. Accurate information can improve the basis for decision-making, avoid mistakes, and set the political environment by providing evidence that results in a balance. It can improve targeting performance and sharpen the determination of priority areas, resulting in the design and implementation of area-based targeting methods. This process with multiple effects has a further effect on the successful implementation of public policy. The failure of a country to minimize the practice of child marriage is associated with a failure to understand the key issues and root causes of each region, not leaving local needs, negating local wisdom and particularity. The mapping of root causes according to a grouping of uniform/contiguous regions connect with essential policies in a country.

*Strengthening regulations* and strategies for implementing measurable and systematic national strategic policies in harmony among stakeholders at central, regional, and village levels is one form of government commitment. Determining the direction of the national development policy for child protection is performed by strengthening the child protection system that is responsive to the diversity and characteristics of the child's living space. Mapping, harmonization,

synchronization, enforcement of regulations, and filling in regulatory gaps are performed to achieve the target of minimizing the number of the practice of child marriage, harmonizing various regulations at the central and regional levels, mutually supporting and effective in their implementation in the field. It is crucial as a tool for policy review and to improve the quality of policies so that they are right on target (Lo Forte, 2019; Febryano, 2021). The actions are done for a collective movement to eliminate the gap of tolerance or to loosen up the practice of child marriage. The encouragement for a new marriage policy change, besides being able to pave the way for all stakeholders to protect all girls from child marriage, will also require socialization regarding the changed regulations. Excellent implementation needs to be done for the Child Protection Law which stipulates that parents are obliged to prevent child marriage. Integrated attempts to prevent child marriage from non-governmental organizations and local governments are necessary to be developed. Several grassroots initiatives ranging from local assistance, the involvement of traditional leaders and local leaders can support the accomplishment of the successful implementation of the policy (Aceituno et al., 2020; Ajide et al., 2017).

*The second change*, is related to the factor of government capacity to implement policies through good coordination among stakeholders. Aligica (2006) stated that stakeholder analysis shows the extent of power/influence and the extent of the importance of each stakeholder in determining the implementation of the next coordination. Three findings of the analysis include: *the first finding*, that BAPPENAS, KPPPA, Ministry of Health, BKKBN, Ministry of Religion, and local governments have high interest and influence. The influence is obtained from the indicators in the strategic plan, in which the importance is indicated by the existence of programs that are directly oriented to prevention efforts. *The second finding*, all programs associated with the issue of child marriage prevention are present at ministries/agencies that have targeted interventions for reproductive health, adolescents, families, and women, including KPPPA, Ministry of Religion, BKKBN, Ministry of Education and Culture, and Ministry of Health. *The third finding*, power/influence is high, but the importance remains low because the programs have not been oriented towards preventing child marriage, including the Ministry of Home Affairs; Ministry of Education and Culture; Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Areas, and Transmigration; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Social Affairs; and the Ministry of Communication and Information. These ministries have direct programs concerning adolescents and youth at the regional level (Ministry of Villages and Ministry of Home Affairs) that have the

potential to prevent child marriage; BPS in providing accurate data; Independent research institutes and universities, along with community organizations in conducting research also play an important role in providing data and information.

Conducting a stakeholder analysis is a huge potential for supporting attempts to prevent child marriage. Strengthening is performed through coordination and convergence by strengthening the National Secretariat as a liaison in implementation strategies, using exploratory studies, and assessing child marriage, including forming a communication strategy referring to the characteristics of the target group, socio-cultural conditions, and educational background in stages, and have specific targets in the particular time frame at the national level (Bappenas, 2018).

At the regional level, Regional Integrated Service Units were formed at the provincial, district, and city levels to strengthen the implementation of coordination and synergy of programs and activities (Duadji and Tresiana, 2020). The perspective of the approach of the social change systems theory formulates outcomes and possible strategies to accomplish the goals. Emerson et al. (2012) stated that a multi-sector approach is also recommended. The argument that supports this proposal is the presence of a variety of regional contexts, so it is important to accommodate the diversity of contexts through a variety of strategies. The drive for adjustments requires coordination forums integrating child marriage prevention at various levels of government with an excellent reporting and documentation model.

Policies for handling the practice of child marriage following major policy changes require an adjustment in the right model and have relevance to the policy, which gives advantages for stakeholders in realizing a fair, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable handling of detrimental practices for children. The previous policy model had a high risk of failure. The root causes and the recommendations are not based on evidence/data (Cairney, 2017), incorrect way of seeing children in development (Watson, 2021; Dahal, 2016), policy advocacy which is a weak political commitment (Febryano et al, 2021), and unintegrated implementation capacity (Emerson et al, 2012). Howlett (2017) observed the importance of the choice of policy instrument to obtain effective implementation policy design. Contingency analysis in policy implementation requires a focus on changing the conditions performed on targets by establishing data support, policies, and government capacity, at the central, regional, and village levels, including the adoption of local initiatives (Nguyen and Rieger, 2019). The choice of regressive implementation needs to be fixed with more appropriate and sustainable options.

By using [Lestern's \(1994\)](#) analysis, the choice of policy implementation will be successful by employing the progressive model choices. The relevance of progressive policy implementation is based on the integration of goals of SDGs into national and local development policy and planning adjustments, convergence institutions as a coordination forum between central stakeholders, development of an integrated service unit at the local level, and the adoption of support from local initiatives in strengthening prevention models at the level of society. The results are expected to be effective in implementing a just, equitable, and sustainable management policy.

## CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of policies on handling the practice of child marriage following adjustments in policies on marriage and child protection requires changing the right model and policy support. Previously, the implementation of the policy model had a high risk of failure, including the absence of evidence support, weak policy advocacy, weak synergy, and coordination among stakeholders. The contingency matrix-based policy application model for handling the practice of child marriage will be effective if it utilizes a progressive model.

Several levels for the effectiveness of policy implementation in handling the practice of child marriage include: (a) *Collaboration of the government*, non-governmental organizations, local governments, and village governments to integrate encouraging the enforcement of main policies and synchronization on derivative policies on the practice of child marriage. Several community-based integrated child protection model initiatives; arrangements of village regulations, knowledge sharing programs, and public awareness campaigns in collaboration with the media, community activists, children, youth, and local governments; smart practices from local initiatives can be considered as *a reference role model for effective programs and activities*. (b) *The central government (Bappenas)* is necessary to lead the development of joint innovative action plans or co-design innovative solutions in a cross-stakeholder framework and perform the division of tasks and specific roles. (c) The government along with elements of the media, activists, local, and village governments, including children, establish innovative socialization and educational activities so that the practice of child marriage does not become the norm. (d) Capacity building of children through decision-making programs, area-based child protection, strengthening of children's forums. (e) Cooperation with research centers and NGOs in building data and documentation of good practices at the local level.

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