

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BATAM CITY GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGE

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Abstract

Early marriage remains a significant social issue in Indonesia, particularly in Batam City, despite legal regulations setting the minimum marriage age at 19. This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Batam City Government's role in reducing early marriage rates, identifies obstacles, and proposes solutions. Using an empirical legal approach, data were collected through observations at the UPTD for Women and Children Protection (PPA) and the Population and Civil Registration Office, along with secondary sources such as legal documents and reports. Findings reveal that economic pressures, cultural norms, lack of education, and limited reproductive health awareness contribute to persistent early marriages. From 2019 to 2024, Batam recorded 119 early marriage cases, with economic hardship and premarital pregnancies as primary drivers. The government faces challenges, including weak community adherence to legal standards, insufficient coordination among agencies, and resistance from traditional leaders. Proposed solutions include intensifying public education campaigns, integrating reproductive health into school curricula, providing economic support for low-income families, and enhancing parental guidance programs. Strengthening inter-agency collaboration and conducting regular program evaluations are also critical. This study highlights the need for a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach to effectively reduce early marriage rates, ensuring better protection of children's rights and long-term societal well-being.

Keywords: Early Marriage, Government Effectiveness, Batam City

INTRODUCTION

Early marriage is a phenomenon involving marriage at a very young age and is a serious concern at both national and international levels. In many parts of the world, including in Indonesia, early marriage is still a significant challenge even though it has been the subject of debate and countermeasures for many years. The area of study also covers various aspects and involves many parties, such as religious institutions, government institutions (executive and legislative), and mass media (online, print, and television) (Musfiroh, 2016). Global concerns about the practice of female child marriage imply that child marriage violates children's human rights, limits their choices and opportunities, and makes them vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse (Sistem et al., 2023). The complex factors behind the practice of early marriage include difficult socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms, promiscuity, lack of access to education, and pressure from various parties, including the family. The issue of early marriage is very important to pay attention to, and there is even a village in Indonesia that responds very positively to this early marriage. Because they think that early marriage is a tradition from ancestors that must be preserved from generation to generation (Muntamah et al., 2019).

In reality, early marriage will have an impact on the perpetrators, both negative impacts, and this will affect the personal and social lives of those who do it (Elisabeth Putri Lahitani Tampubolon, 2021). Article 1 of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage (Marriage Law), states that marriage is a physical and mental bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and lasting family (household) based on God Almighty (Yunita & Az'zahra, 2021). One of the requirements for marriage in Indonesia according to Marriage Law Number 1 of 1974 relating to emotional, psychological and biological maturity has been regulated by limiting the age of marriage to the prospective bride and groom, namely the prospective groom may only marry if he has reached 19 (nineteen) years of age and the prospective bride has reached 16 (sixteen) years of age and many people who have not been able to carry out the age limit rules have finally chosen to apply for marriage dispensation (Herviani et al., 2022). A person who wishes to apply for dispensation to marry may apply to the Religious Court for Muslims and to the District Court for non-Muslims (Marwiyah et al., 2023).

The regulation on the minimum age limit for marriage stipulated in Article 7 paragraph (1) is considered contrary to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and the protection of human rights, especially children's rights. The age limit referred to in Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and Regulation of the Minister of Religion No.11 of 2007 concerning Marriage Registration Chapter IV article 7 as mentioned above in developmental psychology is included in the age limit of adolescence (Bawono et al., 2022). Responding to the problems that arise due to the impact of the marriage age limit, civil society urged the government to revise the contents of the Marriage Law, especially Article 7 of the Marriage Law. The Constitutional Court finally issued a decision to support the amendment of the Marriage Law with the Constitutional Court Decision Number 22/PUU-XV/2017 concerning the judicial review of Law Number 1 Year 1974 concerning Marriage, specifically related to Article 7 paragraph 1, which can be implemented immediately (Heryanti, 2021). Before it was passed to 19 years for women, of course this law underwent a very long judicial review process, which began with a submission in 2014, but was rejected by the Constitutional Court, and continued in April 2017 there were 3 applicants representing survivors of child marriage represented by a team of lawyers from the 18+ coalition submitting an application in the Marriage Law which was recorded as Case Number 22/PUU-XV/2017.

After experiencing several delays, the Constitutional Court partially granted the petition in December 2018. After going through many processes with consideration of the increasing number of child marriages, it was determined on October 14, 2019 that the minimum age limit for women was changed from 16 years to 19 years and this rule came into effect on October 15, 2019, and Law No.1 of 1974 was officially amended to Law No. 16 of 2019. Seeing a significant change, namely the change in content in article 7 paragraphs (1-3), which reads; "(1) Marriage is only permitted if the man and woman have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years (2) In the event of a deviation from the age provisions as referred to in paragraph (1), the parents of the male party and / or the parents of the female party may request dispensation from the Court on very urgent grounds accompanied by sufficient supporting evidence. (3) The granting of dispensation by the Court as referred to in paragraph (2) must listen to the opinions of both prospective brides and grooms who will enter into marriage". Seeing the change or equalization of age between women and men, namely 19 years, is certainly a polemic in itself for the community and the court handling this case, especially for judges this will be a concern in deciding cases. Considering that before it was raised, there were many applications for marriage dispensation, even more so if the age was raised.

Since the formation of the Marriage Law regulation until now, the reality of community life shows that there are still early marriages. Namely, a marriage that occurs with conditions that do not meet the age requirements of both one party and both parties, even though in a marriage which can be said to be a success in forming a family, basically there must be mature thoughts or attitudes and a mentality that is ready to undergo family formation from both parties, only then can they create a harmonious family (Mawara, 2020). Generally, marriage can take place if both parties, both men and women, have reached puberty or adulthood so that they are able to carry out individual duties in the household (Fadilah, 2021). Whereas the ideal age of marriage for women is 21-25 years, while for men is 25-28 years. Because at that age the reproductive organs in women are well developed and strong, and psychologically they are considered mature to become prospective parents for their children. While the physical and psychological condition of men at that age is also strong so that they are able to support family life and protect it both psychologically emotionally, economically, and socially (Amalia, 2009).

Basically, the determination of the age limit of marriage is intended for the benefit and goodness, especially for the prospective bride and groom (Bastomi, 2016). Child marriage ends their adolescence, a period of physical, emotional and social development before entering adulthood. Girls who marry before they are old enough certainly have a variety of negative impacts, such as lack of knowledge about reproductive health which can cause new problems, increase maternal and child mortality rates because they are not old enough to give birth, cannot get a proper education up to college level, because they have to take care of the household and take care of children. Of course, these factors are very unfair for girls, where gender discrimination has been seen since they were young (Yoshida et al., 2023). The state has determined that children have special characteristics and characteristics and in accordance with these characteristics, children still have reasoning power that is not good enough to distinguish good and bad things so that they need guidance and protection in order to ensure balanced physical, mental and social growth and development (Mulyana et al., 2023). Early marriage puts young people at risk of pregnancy and childbirth, while the biological maturity of young men and women in urban areas is overshadowed by the possibility of premature aging, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, reproductive tract infections, including sexually transmitted diseases and disability (Yulianti, 2023). Changes in the age limit of marriage aim to prevent and minimize the occurrence of underage marriage or early marriage, prevent and minimize the occurrence of many divorces. With the determination of the minimum age of marriage, it is hoped that it will be able to realize the purpose of marriage without ending in divorce and obtain good and healthy offspring (Farah, 2020).

Batam City is one of the cities in Indonesia with a very strategic location, which is located at the entrance of the Strait of Malacca, Singapore and Malaysia so that Batam becomes a stopover place for international ships passing through the Batam Islands. This condition causes many foreign residents to come to Batam, both for work and tourism (Maternity, 2015). The presence of foreign residents in Batam City has an impact on many things, one of which is the influence of outside culture that considers pre-marital sex as a normal thing so that it has an impact on adolescent relationships that lead to early marriage. In fact, in Batam City, there are still many cases of early marriage committed by children who are still of school age, with an age range of 14-17 years. It is known that the background of early marriage cases in Batam City is that most of them are pregnant outside of marriage (Elisabeth Putri Lahitani Tampubolon, 2021). While there have been efforts by government and non-government organizations to address these issues, there are still obstacles in reaching victims and changing social norms that allow for the continuation of these two issues (Beddu, 2023).

The government has responded with several policy breakthroughs. These include changes to the minimum age of marriage for women, child marriage as a priority in the RPJMN, and national campaigns. In addition, government partner institutions have also developed several intervention programs, such as the national campaign to stop child marriage, Child Friendly Cities, Community Based Integrated Child Protection (PATBM) and sexual and reproductive health education. The various policy and program efforts above are not enough to prevent and overcome child marriage and its negative impacts. A faster, bigger and more integrated effort is needed to address this issue (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). Previous research is one of the references for researchers in conducting research so that the author can enrich the theory used in examining the research being conducted. From previous research, researchers did not find research with the same title as the current research. However, researchers raised several studies as references in enriching the study material in this study. The following is previous research in the form of several journals related to the current research. The first research by (Aznidawati et al., 2021) found that the cause of the prevalence of early marriage is due to promiscuity which results in getting pregnant first. Another factor is economic problems where there is no money to continue education and then get married in order to reduce the burden on parents'

costs. Based on this, the parents' attitude towards their surroundings is the most important thing that influences the action to carry out early marriage.

The second study by (Fres, 2022) said that religious counselors have a significant role to play in educating the public about individual rights, mental health and the importance of healthy relationships within the household. In addition, they also help provide emotional and spiritual support to victims to overcome the trauma and stress caused by domestic violence and early marriage. Meanwhile, some challenges are faced by religious educators, such as limited resources and diverse understanding in the community regarding these issues. The importance of increased training and coordination between authorities, religious institutions and community organizations needs to be enhanced to maximize the role of religious extension workers in addressing domestic violence and early marriage.

The third study by (Mawara, 2020) suggests the role of the religious affairs office in anticipating underage marriage, namely by socializing the adverse effects of performing underage marriage and explaining directions regarding marriage in accordance with Islamic legal regulations. The factor that causes underage marriage is none other than pregnancy outside of marriage due to promiscuity and the lack of parental role towards the child. The need for strict religious education from an early age for school children. In this case, parents are very important because it is the parents who have more time with the child. The fourth study by (Sulastris, 2017) discusses the factors that cause early marriage in Talang Beringin Village, North Seluma Subdistrict, Seluma Regency, which are due to unstable psychological factors and cultural factors. The factors causing the high divorce rate in the area are infidelity, economics, forced marriage, parents who always enter into domestic affairs, and violence in the household and the psychological impact of wives due to early marriage seen from personality aspects such as emotions in the form of feelings of regret, and feelings of pressure.

The fifth study by (Beddu, 2023) discusses the contribution of religious educators in reducing the prevalence of domestic violence and early marriage, and their role in helping victims of the negative impacts of these two phenomena. The results show that religious educators have a significant role in educating the community about individual rights, mental health, and the importance of healthy relationships within the household. In addition, they also assist in providing emotional and spiritual support to victims to overcome the trauma and stress caused by domestic violence and early marriage. While some challenges faced by religious educators, such as limited resources and diverse understanding within the community regarding these issues. The importance of increased training and coordination between authorities, religious institutions, and community organizations needs to be improved to maximize the role of religious extension workers in addressing domestic violence and early marriage. In an effort to show the novelty between this research and previous studies, the researcher tries to find several aspects that have not been found by previous researchers. This study specifically evaluates the effectiveness of the Batam City government's role in reducing the rate of early marriage, in contrast to previous studies that discussed the factors of early marriage, the psychological impact and the approval of early marriage dispensation. This research brings novelty by evaluating the effectiveness of the government's role in reducing the number of early marriages in Batam City and finding solutions to the obstacles and challenges in overcoming this problem.

Based on the background that has been described above, this research aims to understand more deeply about early marriage by examining the effectiveness of the government's role in handling the problem of early marriage in Batam City. The formulation of the problems that will be studied in this research are: 1) How effective is the role of the Batam City Government in formulating policies and programs to deal with the problem of early marriage? 2) What are the obstacles and challenges faced by the Batam City Government in its efforts to reduce the number of early marriages? 3) What are the solutions of the Batam City Government in an effort to reduce the number of early marriages in Batam City?

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research that the author uses in this research is using empirical legal methods in the form of an analysis of the Effectiveness of the Government's Role in Efforts to Reduce Early Marriage Rates in Batam City. The types of research approaches used by the authors in this study are (1) Statute Approach which prioritizes statutory legal materials as basic reference materials in conducting research. (2) Conceptual Approach, where this research approach presents an analytical point of view of solving research problems in terms of legal concepts. (3) Empirical Approach which refers to an approach that emphasizes data collection based on direct experience, observation and concrete facts (Disemadi, 2022). The type of data that the author uses in this research is primary data consisting of: (1) Primary data obtained by direct observation at the UPTD of Women and Children Protection (PPA) of Batam City and the Population and Civil Registration Office of Batam City (2)

Secondary legal data is data that provides explanations related to primary legal materials, which include legal science books, legal journals, legal reports, print media, along with electronic media. The data collection technique that the author uses in this research is the observation method (D. Tan, 2021). Data analysis technique is a systematic process for searching and compiling data obtained from documentation, interviews, and so on into a category. Arranging in this case is sorting out what is important and also making conclusions. The data analysis technique used by the author in this research is qualitative analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effectiveness of the Batam City Government's Role in Developing Policies and Programs to Address the Problem of Early Marriage

Underage marriage or also called early marriage consists of two words, namely "marriage" and "early". "Marriage" in Law Number 16 of 2019 (article 1) is "a physical and mental bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a family (household), which is happy and eternal based on God Almighty". Meanwhile, "Early" in the Big Indonesian Dictionary means "early in the morning, before the time". Based on this definition, it can be interpreted that early marriage is a marriage that is carried out when someone has not reached the minimum age limit stated in the Law for marriage. Another opinion states that early marriage is underage marriage (young age) which should not be ready to carry out marriage (Kahfi & Lesmana, 2023).

Indonesia as a state of law has regulated marriage in Law Number 16 of 2019 which is an amendment to Law Number 1 of 1974. In the Law, it has been regulated regarding the conditions for a person to enter into a marriage, one of which is to require a sufficient age as stipulated in Article 7 paragraph 1 which reads that "Marriage is only permitted if the man and woman have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years" (W. Tan, 2021). Paragraph 2 explains that if there is a deviation from paragraph 1, then a person can request dispensation from the court or other officials. Officials and courts are those determined by the parents of the prospective bride and groom. Relaxation of regulations is given by the government to couples who will carry out the marriage process. The concession is given to the bride and groom who are not old enough but want to get married (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 1974). Parents must protect their children from early marriage is the content of article 26 of Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 1974) this shows the important role of parents in accompanying and preparing their children so that they are truly ready in age and mentally when deciding to settle down (Kahfi & Lesmana, 2023).

Therefore, early marriage has become a serious issue in many parts of Indonesia, including Batam City. The problem of early marriage is not only a family issue but also a national challenge that affects various aspects of people's lives (Andani et al., 2024). Batam City with its rapid population growth and cultural diversity has faced complex problems related to early marriage. Although there are regulations governing early marriage, the practice of early marriage continues for economic, social, cultural reasons, and lack of legal awareness. This is because Batam City has unique characteristics that make it a strategic location for migrant workers and industry, but these characteristics also present various social challenges. As a city bordering Singapore and Malaysia, Batam is a destination for migration and intense economic activity (Novia et al., 2022). This has the potential to create complex social dynamics, including high rates of early marriage which creates various other problems, such as high rates of domestic violence, rampant child neglect, high rates of malnutrition, lack of access to education, limited economic opportunities, and several other serious problems (Elisabeth Putri Lahitani Tampubolon, 2021).

Based on data obtained by researchers from the Batam City Religious Court, which is the spearhead of marriage validation in the Batam City community, it has been found that the number/high number of cases of early marriage in Batam City from 2019 - 2024, namely:

Tabel 1. Early Marriage Rate in Batam City from 2019 - 2024

Month	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023	Year 2024
January	2	2	1	1	1	3
February	2	4	2	1	3	0
March	1	2	2	1	0	0
April	2	0	2	3	0	0
May	2	0	1	1	1	3
June	0	3	2	2	1	3
July	0	7	2	3	1	3
August	1	3	1	1	1	0

September	0	5	4	1	2	3
October	2	5	1	1	2	1
November	5	2	3	0	1	0
Desember	3	0	0	1	0	0
Total	20	33	21	16	13	16

Grand Total = 119 Early Marriage Events

Source: Author, 2025

Meanwhile, based on data from BKKBN Kepri since 2016 related to the number of underage women who married early has reached 69,075 girls (the number continues to increase every year). Of the 69,075 number spread in the Bintan Regency area as many as 10,012 girls, Tanjung Pinang City with 8,204 children, Lingga Regency as many as 5,078 children, Anambas Regency 3,605 children, Karimun Regency 928 children, Batam City 2,814 children. As for boys who married early in the Riau Islands who married early since 2016, there were 18,574. In order are Batam City as many as 7,659 children, Bintan Regency 2,676 children, Karimun Regency 2,459 children, Tanjung Pinang City 2,075 children, Natuna Regency 1,341 children, Anambas Regency 1,008 children (Aznidawati et al., 2022).

Based on the data collected by the researcher, it was found that early marriage in Batam City is often triggered by the majority of economic factors. Children who come from low-income families often do not have adequate access to good education and career opportunities. In this situation, early marriage is considered as a way out to reduce the family's economic burden (Indrianingsih et al., 2020). However, early marriage is not a solution and even worsens economic conditions. This is because early marriages that occur at a young age are usually not accompanied by adequate economic skills and parenting skills. As a result, many young couples often experience difficulties in making ends meet, which in turn can exacerbate the cycle of inter-generational poverty (Liesmayani et al., 2022).

In addition to economic factors, culture and social norms in Batam City also play a role in encouraging the practice of early marriage. In some cases, marrying at a young age is still considered normal and even socially acceptable. Influences from the social environment, especially in spaces with a patriarchal culture, often influence girls to feel that they have no other choice but to get married. This view puts an additional burden on adolescents, especially girls, who are not yet physically and emotionally ready to enter married life (Wahyuni, 2020).

Another cause of the high rate of early marriage in Batam City is the lack of access to reproductive health education for adolescents in Batam City. Adequate reproductive health education is very important so that young people understand the physical and psychological consequences of early marriage if it occurs (Fadilah, 2021). Unfortunately, reproductive health education programs are still very limited in schools because it is still considered a "taboo". As a result, many teenagers do not understand the health risks faced when marrying and having children at a young age, such as pregnancy and birth complications that can be fatal to life-threatening.

Based on data collected by researchers from several agencies directly related to the handling of early marriage in Batam City, the reasons/backgrounds for early marriage in the Riau Islands, especially in Batam City, are due to pregnancy outside of marriage, avoiding adultery and the majority are related to economic factors. Based on the data that has been described, it has proven the ineffectiveness of regulations related to the prevention of early marriage in Indonesia, especially in Batam City, as evidenced by the rampant occurrence of early marriage today.

Obstacles and Challenges Faced by the Batam City Government in Efforts to Reduce Early Marriage Rates

The high rate of early marriage from year to year in Batam City is one of the serious problems being faced by the Batam City government. In its development, the Batam City government has made efforts to reduce the rate of early marriage, but in its implementation it still faces various challenges including social, economic, cultural challenges to institutional/facility limitations. One of the main obstacles is the strong influence of culture and social norms in the community that still views early marriage as natural/even desirable (Suprima, 2022). In some cases found in Batam City, marrying at a young age is considered as a step to maintain family honor and even done to avoid social risks such as extramarital relations/adultery (Anwar et al., 2024). This view is especially true in societies with a strong patriarchal culture, where women's roles are often identified with wives and mothers, so young age is not considered an obstacle to marriage. As a result, government socialization on the importance of delaying early marriage often does not get full support from the community (Dewi et al., 2024).

Apart from cultural factors, limited access to education is also a big barrier. Many teenagers in Batam City do not have the opportunity to obtain adequate education due to poverty and limited

educational facilities, especially in the outskirts of the city (Daulay et al., 2024). School dropout is one of the factors that trigger high rates of early marriage, as children who do not continue their education are often considered “ready” for marriage by their families and social circles. On the other hand, a lack of understanding of the legal minimum age of marriage and a lack of knowledge about the health and social impacts of early marriage exacerbate the situation, as many parents and adolescents are not fully aware of the legal and health consequences of marriage at a young age (Mariana Irbach Khonsa Rahmayanti et al., 2024).

In addition to social and educational factors, poverty is another major cause that drives the practice of early marriage in Batam. In many low-income families, early marriage is considered a way to reduce the economic burden or obtain financial support from the partner's family. Difficult economic conditions often force families to marry off their children early, as they feel unable to provide a proper education and life for their children (Kurnia et al., 2024). This makes government interventions that only focus on socialization and education less effective without real economic support for these families.

Unfortunately, efforts to improve the community's economy through empowerment programs or skills training for low-income families are still limited in Batam City. In addition, limited government resources in the form of budget, manpower and infrastructure are also a major challenge in implementing a comprehensive program. Although there have been programs designed to prevent early marriage, their implementation in the field is often hampered by the lack of resources (Ihzar et al., 2024). The Batam City Government needs greater support, both from the central government and the private sector, to ensure that these programs can reach all levels of society that are vulnerable to early marriage.

Another important obstacle is the lack of community participation in supporting government policies related to early marriage. Efforts to overcome early marriage require the active role of the community, especially religious leaders, traditional leaders, and community leaders who have a great influence in shaping the mindset and habits of the community (Nur Farida Kusumawati et al., 2023). Unfortunately, not all community leaders share the government's view on the need to delay the age of marriage. In some cases, they support the practice of early marriage on the grounds of tradition or narrowly understood religious teachings. This makes the government's approach, which relies solely on socialization, less effective, because the messages conveyed are not always accepted by the community. Without the support of local community leaders, government programs are often ineffective in reaching their targets and having a significant impact (Abrori, 2024).

Batam City Government is also faced with the challenge of inter-agency coordination. Addressing the problem of early marriage requires cooperation from various parties, including the Education Office, Health Office, and Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office. However, effective coordination is often difficult to achieve due to different priorities, limited resources and complex bureaucracy. Overall, these barriers suggest that reducing the rate of early marriage in Batam City is an urgent matter.

Solutions of Batam City Government in an Effort to Reduce Early Marriage Rate in Batam City

Early marriage is one of the serious issues faced by Batam City. This phenomenon is not only detrimental to the individuals involved, but also has a negative impact on society at large. Children who marry at an early age tend to lose the opportunity to continue their education, are vulnerable to reproductive health problems, and face economic difficulties as well as the potential for domestic violence (Halawa & Lase, 2024). The high rate of early marriage in Batam City today, which is motivated by various external and internal factors, requires a more strategic and humanist approach to resolution, both repressive and preventive.

The government as the frontline needs to strengthen education and socialization on the negative impacts of early marriage as a form of self-protection, improve access to education and knowledge, and provide tangible assistance for low-income families. In addition, the active involvement of community leaders and good cooperation between government agencies are needed to ensure the effectiveness of the programs implemented (Teni Marzela et al., 2024). The Batam City Government also needs to periodically evaluate the impact of existing programs and make policy adjustments based on the latest data and needs in the field. Therefore, after the researchers conducted interviews with related parties in handling the current high rate of early marriage in Batam city, namely UPTD PPA.

There are several solutions and policy measures that will be implemented periodically, namely increasing public education and campaigns both offline and online about the impact of early marriage based on the facts that occur in reality (Nur Rofiq et al., 2024). The government focused on establishing partnerships primarily with schools, educational institutions, and local communities to conduct seminars and workshops. Campaign materials include information on health risks, lost opportunities for better

education, and the social and economic impacts of early marriage (Alfaris & Rosyid, 2024). In addition, social media is an effective weapon used as a tool to reach children with interesting and educational content.

In addition, sexual education and knowledge of reproductive health should also be strengthened even though it is still considered taboo in society through an integrated curriculum such as in specialized lessons (Zihori Maulida et al., 2024). By doing so, children will have a better understanding of the importance of maintaining reproductive health, respecting their bodies and understanding the consequences and decisions that occur when entering into early marriage. In addition, the government provides counseling centers for teenagers to provide support and information for children in need in the surrounding environment (Salwa et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the Batam City government needs to ensure the implementation of positive programs for children such as scholarship programs and educational assistance, especially for children from underprivileged families so that children have the opportunity to avoid early marriage due to economic factors and develop the skills needed for future blessings (Azizah et al., 2024). In addition, on the other hand, the role of parents is also very important, so in addition to increasing children's knowledge and understanding, the Batam City government must also hold a program specifically on parenting. Parenting training can be an asset to support parents in fostering their children about the side effects of early marriage so as to create wider awareness (Suci & Sulistyaningrum, 2024).

In addition, the government needs to monitor and evaluate the programs that have been implemented. Accurate statistics on early marriage cases should be collected regularly to understand trends/developments in the community and design more effective policies (Tahir et al., 2024). A public satisfaction survey on early marriage prevention programs can also be conducted to assess government performance. With an integrated approach, involving various parties, and oriented towards prevention, the number of early marriages in Batam City can be significantly reduced (Zulka et al., 2024). These efforts not only protect children's rights, but also help create a more prosperous and competitive society. Batam City Government has a key role to play in ensuring that children and young people can grow up in an environment that supports their optimal development. With strong commitment and cooperation from all elements of society, the problem of early marriage can be overcome, paving the way for the younger generation to achieve a brighter future.

CONCLUSION

Batam City with its rapid population growth and cultural diversity has faced complex problems, especially in dealing with the current high rate of early marriage. Although there are strict regulations related to early marriage, the practice of early marriage continues with various internal and external inhibiting factors such as economic, social, cultural, lack of legal awareness and challenges in terms of coordination between related agencies. Therefore, the Government as the frontline needs to strengthen to create innovations and solutions in preventing early marriage in Batam City through several strategic and humanist steps such as strengthening education and socialization about the negative impact of early marriage as a form of self-protection, setting a minimum ideal marriage age, increasing access to education and knowledge, and providing real assistance for low-income families, providing parenting training to parents, and routinely evaluating and surveying early marriage prevention programs in collaboration with various parties such as schools to go down into the community.

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