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Safeguarding the Future: Child Protection and the Prevention of Child Marriages in Indonesia

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Introduction- Child protection is an issue in Indonesia, which has a varied cultural heritage and has experienced economic downturns. According to Arliman (2017), Indonesia has created policies, efforts, and governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure Children's protection and wellness. The nation's legal structure consists of global and across-the-country conventions, which disclose the relevance of the initiatives placed by the federal government to protect and safeguard Children's' lawful rights. According to Vaitla et al. (2017), the focus has been on securing wellness and constitutional freedoms, specifically in the problem of early marriages. The country's decision to promote child protection through fundamental laws such as the constitution originates from the implications for the future and children's health. Olojede et al. (2020) reveal numerous problems in managing children's issues, such as forced marriage, denying their basic civil liberties, and gender-based violence. Despite the federal government's efforts, numerous difficulties proceed and remain prevalent in different Indonesian areas and regions.

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Safeguarding the Future: Child Protection and the Prevention of Child Marriages in Indonesia

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I. Introduction

Child protection is an issue in Indonesia, which has a varied cultural heritage and has experienced economic downturns. According to Arliman (2017), Indonesia has created policies, efforts, and governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure Children's protection and wellness. The nation's legal structure consists of global and across-the-country conventions, which disclose the relevance of the initiatives placed by the federal government to protect and safeguard Children's' lawful rights. According to Vaitla et al. (2017), the focus has been on securing wellness and constitutional freedoms, specifically in the problem of early marriages. The country's decision to promote child protection through fundamental laws such as the constitution originates from the implications for the future and children's health. Olojede et al. (2020) reveal numerous problems in managing children's issues, such as forced marriage, denying their basic civil liberties, and gender-based violence. Despite the federal government's efforts, numerous difficulties proceed and remain prevalent in different Indonesian areas and regions. By resolving such problems facing children, this record intends to identify various difficulties and children's defense civil liberties in Indonesia, focusing on child marriage prevention. The report aims to review the elements that contribute to early child marriages and intends to discover efficient challenges that can be applied to intervention and prevention. The report will examine the general context that influences child security in Indonesia and examine major policies and regulations established to protect children's rights. Additionally, the report will identify the social and cultural factors that Influence the issue of early child marriage among children. By exploring the intersection between social, economic, gender, and traditions, the study aims to identify the existing gaps and opportunities that can be promoted to enhance child protection and promote the future of Indonesian children. In general, this report will serve as a comprehensive investigation of Indonesia's Journey in promoting and safeguarding children from the influence of child marriages. Hence, the study aims to contribute to the existing framework and efforts to ensure effective child protection rights in the country.

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II. Factors Influencing Child Protection needs in Indonesia

a) Structural Factors

The legal framework guiding child protection in Indonesia consists of the international and local legislation conventions ratified by the government. As demonstrated by Hayes and O'Neal (2018), various national-level laws encompass and provide different forms of child exploitation and child abuse. These laws include child Protection and eliminating violence in the household. Regarding international laws, Indonesia has signed various agreements, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This convention highlights guiding principles set forth for the standards and principles that promote children's protection and rights.

Despite the respective laws, regulations, and conventions., challenges have persisted over a long time in the country due to structural factors that limit the enforcement and implementation of existing child laws. Gatignon and Capron (2023) demonstrate that the institutional infrastructure plays a significant role in involving stakeholders such as NGOs and government agencies. Collins (2017) demonstrates that despite the respective laws and conventions, the country's various issues, such as inadequate training, limited resources, etc, hinder effective responses to child protection rights.

Indonesia has deep-rooted social and cultural factors that affect the government's efforts to promote child protection. According to Al-Saadoon et al. (2021), the attitude and cultural norms towards the children in the country influence parenting practices. This continues further to the challenges that encompass children's rights, such as child labor, early children's marriages, and gender violence. The respective structural factors are essential considerations for the development of a holistic approach toward child protection, especially with issues of early marriages. These approaches, hence, should encompass a wide range of social and cultural considerations for children.

b) Social-Cultural Factors

Social and cultural phenomena in Indonesia demonstrate an intricate interplay between gender dynamics, traditions, and socio-economic pressures. Despite different prohibitions in different practices, Wood (2019) shows that cultural practices and traditions promote the persistence of inequality, poverty, and

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gender discrimination. In Indonesia, gender norms in the society entrenched the society that dictates that young girls are supposed to get married at a young age, hence reinforcing values that are patriarchal and prioritize social and economic security over the autonomy and rights of girls. This practice often perpetuates a vicious cycle whereby, to escape poverty and economic hardship, early marriages have to be perpetuated. Through this, the majority of the population does not see this issue as an infringement on the well-being and rights of girls. Economic differences promote the issue of early marriages, particularly in various communities where they perceive their daughters as a means to alleviate their financial strain through marriages. According to Epstein (2022), the view is that girls are resources that help limit them from acquiring adequate education. The lack of education limits their abilities to perpetuate the existing poverty, hence fueling the issues of early marriages. Despite the existing legal frameworks, enforcement to stop early marriages among the communities is weak due to a high level of resistance from the respective cultures.

Society conforms to the conventional expectations and norms about early marriages, outweighing young females' well-being. According to Kohno et al. (2020), social pressure obliges households to marry off their daughters early to avoid being viewed as not fitting into the culture and premarital relationship. This is additionally driven by the families' desire to support the community's reputation and honor. World Health Organization. (2018) adds that limited access to education and information on reproductive and sexual rights and health additionally promotes the concerns, leaving the society at large uninformed of the available effects of early marriages, consisting of minimal threats and constraints to the economic and education chances. Resolving this difficulty will need a holistic technique involving factors to consider cultural and traditional standards and effective education chances to promote young girls' empowerment to existing policies and regulations. Furthermore, the efforts to combat early child marriages ought to encompass the engagement of society and a high level of awareness, which will help to move the existing mindsets worrying about gender and Children's marriages.

III. Trends of Marriage in Indonesia

According to data from the Demographic Health Survey conducted in 2017, about 15% of girls in the country get married before 18 years, and approximately 3% get married before the age of 14. Timæus and Moultrie (2015) demonstrate that households with low expenditure rates are five times more likely to get married before the age of 18 than girls from households with a high level of expenditure. Additionally, the data demonstrated that a girl from a rural area is three times more likely to marry than a girl in an urban setting. Based on education attainment, girls who attain education even to the university level are less likely to marry before age 19. The figure below shows the spread of early child marriages based on Indonesian provisions. Raj et al. (2019) data also shows that girls who marry before the age of 18 years are less likely to access the benefits that come with social protection directed to poor households. The data demonstrates that only 18.3% are most likely determined through the KPS bad program. This reveals that households with their daughters wed before 18 are not identified even if they stay in homes with low expenses. This information shows that very early marriages prevail throughout different regions among various national societies and areas. According to the data provided by Mourtada et al. (2017), Child marriages are typically practiced in rural areas compared to urban regions. This reveals the disparities in access to education, learning, and other resources in rural areas, promoting the concern. Furthermore, in rural areas, various practices, such as religious and ethnic practices, prioritize child marriages.

IV. Consequences of Child Marriage

a) Social-Economic Impact

Child marriages impact financial development and advertise destitution within Indonesia. According to Rasmussen et al. (2019), very early child marriages limit the possibility of contribution to society via efficient and formal workforces in the country. Additionally, data from Rietveld et al. (2020) demonstrates that girls marrying below the age of 18 are more likely to be engaged in informal practices such as agriculture. In this case, 41.7% of the girls worked in the informal sector in 2015. These show the limitations that early marriages have. Girls who marry at the age of 18 have low opportunities for education and hence have low educational attainment to get jobs in the formal sector. Woessmann (2016) demonstrates that education is a major contributor to economic development and prosperity. Education equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate challenges and secure stable employment. Depriving children's rights through early marriages hinders them from breaking from the poverty cycles and negative societal norms. Lack of education extends beyond the wide societal implications. According to Håkansson (2022), early marriages promote poverty cycles, which hinder government efforts in enacting economic development and inclusivism. This shows that addressing economic disparity and socioeconomic effects of marriages will require prioritization to reduce gender differences and inequalities in society and promote education. This will help the country break the existing cycles of poverty and empower the community to realize its potential to eradicate child marriages.

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b) Health and Well-being

Early marriages lead to early pregnancies, which poses health risks to both the infant and the adolescent. Adolescents and young females are considered not to be fully developed for childbirth and pregnancies. Kaplan (2023) highlights that most of the complaints are reported by young mothers who bear children at a young age. Early pregnancy has contributed to a high rate of maternal deaths due to conditions such as obstructed labor, etc., which cause long-lasting and severe effects for both the mother and the child. Additionally, girls who marry at a young often lack access to enough support and parental care services. While having inadequate access to reproductive knowledge and family planning matters, they are imposed too early on childbearing. Erfina et al. (2019) conclude that the majority of adolescent mothers are not able to access healthcare services due to social stigma and financial limitations in Indonesia. Hence resulting in derived health outcomes.

c) Gender Inequality

Hamdy and Hudri (2022) indicate that Indonesian society highly embraces patriarchal norms. This norm reinforces women and girls' subordinate roles to become mothers and wives. Giaquinta (2016) adds that early marriages deepened these norms while perpetuating the disempowerment of girls in society. At a young age, girls are normalized to marriage and become mothers over personal autonomy and ambitions. Girls are expected to conform to the expectation of society and their traditions regarding gender responsibilities. This limits their opportunities to access health and make their own decision and employment. Ngulube (2018) shows this result of power dynamics within a marital setup. Girls involved in marriage are typically expected to be subservient to husbands, promoting limited autonomy in making decisions regarding education, finances, etc. Ngulube (2018) shows that this imbalance perpetuates gender inequality in the country and also undermines the health and rights of girls, further promoting vulnerability and dependency.

Gender inequality leads to violence and abuse. Child and adolescent marriages promote physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. The vulnerability of young girls involved in marriage increases the risk of violence and exploitation due to power dynamics. Due to the nature of the culture, Duadji and Tresiana (2022) demonstrate that child marriages are often characterized by harmful abuse and violence in Indonesia. Forced marriages lead to sexual abuse, leading to an increase in reproductive risks and frequent pregnancies. The normalization of child marriages leads to the development of a culture of abuse due to abuse imposed on the girls. As this is often socialized as part of marriage life, it perpetuates violence society and inequality in society. This shows that challenges in the issues of early marriages and gender inequality must be dealt with. Through recognition of the rights of women in society, Indonesia can create a just and equitable culture that is free from discrimination and violence.

V. Prevention of Child Marriage

The government of Indonesia has made significant efforts in promoting child prevention over the last decade. One major factor in promoting child protection is the development and effective response through developing policies and strengthening the existing ones. This requires clear attention to attain a positive child response and protection over time.

a) Overview of Existing Policies and Programs

In recent years, Indonesia has put in place policies to address child marriage through the encasement of various programs and policies aiming to prevent and protect children. This shows the efforts by the Indonesian government to promote early child marriages and protect their rights. Indonesia has a decentralized government system provides a sustained effort and resources to support child protection and early marriages in the country. Historically, Arliman (2017) demonstrates that the government of Indonesia responded to child rights issues at an individual level or through the relevant agencies; however, over the decade, the government has aimed to fight child abuse systematically and, hence, has adopted a system-strengthening approach to assess the violation and potential child rights abuse. Additionally, the government of Indonesia has committed to international child rights standards and support. In this case, Besson and Kleber (2019) demonstrate that the country has signed various global human and child protection treaties that bind it legally and morally to non-discrimination and equality in developing national policies promoting child protection. In 1984, Indonesia signed the Convention on Eliminating Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). 1990, the government also signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nevertheless, the country recorded a high rate of discrimination against women and children for many years. In 2012, the Indonesian federal government signed the Optional Protocol on the Participation of Children in Dispute and Optional Procedure on the Sale of Children. The respective conventions reveal the country's efforts to advertise child defense legal rights and commitment to international criteria.

The government of Indonesia has taken the problem of children's protection and gender disparity as a nationwide advancement agenda. Throughout the last decade, it is clear that the government has made amazing efforts to adapt to global conventions that advertise children's rights and the existing procedures. In addition, the government has integrated the Optional

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Protocols right into nationwide legal legislation and regulations. According to Arliman (2017), the government made various constitutional amendments that strengthen methods to prevent child abuse and secure children's rights. This shows that the nation has developed a new vision for positive participation in securing children over the last decade. The children's protection legislation in the constitution of Indonesia -- which serves as the foundation of children's defense- was amended in 2014. Other regulations modified to advertise children's defense rights include the Regulation of Anti-Trafficking, the Legislation of Elimination of Residential Physical Violence, and the Juvenile Crook Justice System. In addition, child protection is not only demonstrated in the Indonesian constitution but also in the development of Child Protection Law and different specific laws with regard to Child Protection for Instance Child Protection law, which protects the Child to be involved in forced marriages and protects them from different forms of violence. Furthermore, the country has national development plans such as the National Long-Term Development Plan, Medium-Term Development Plan, and the National Action Plan, which also outlines the strategies and actionable plans for the protection of children.

b) Intervention Programs

Various Intervention programs have been initiated, which consist of different approaches from raising awareness, providing support, and empowering individuals concerning promoting gender equality and child marriages. The response programs play an extensive function in resolving the complex child marriage concern in Indonesia. One of the response programs to animate children's marriage includes awareness projects. According to Schaffnit et al. (2019), awareness campaigns educate against cultural norms contributing to children's marriage. These campaigns are done through direct participation of the areas from the ground level. As an example, UNICEF and Plan International have carried out these projects to help the area be associated with education and learning and discussion sessions that promote raising awareness regarding the negative influences of child marriages. Furthermore, the federal government has promoted religious leaders and local influencers to promote sensitization of the problems. By fostering seminars with area members, Elyasu (2020) demonstrates that precise details concerning early marriages are passed, which aim to alter assumptions and mindsets and advertise alternate means to encourage women.

Another response program that has been promoted in Indonesia includes educational Campaigns. Van Eerdewijk et al. (2017) show that education programs empower women with the required abilities and knowledge to determine their future. Education and learning programs are commonly done at routine degrees to facilitate targeted neighborhoods that are at threat. For instance, the Indonesian non-governmental organization Women's Education Challenge program has conducted educational sessions for girls, especially in marginalized communities. These programs offer mentorship programs, scholarships, and other essential training opportunities to the ladies who are at risk of child marriage, therefore encouraging them to look for college and have the essential skills that can help them look for future empowerment. In addition, various other responses implemented at college, such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Learning (CSE), have been applied to animate reproductive health, equality, and civil rights. The respective response programs empower girls and help them test the existing status quo with regard to conventional norms and understandings regarding sex and existing inequality in society.

Support and assistance services have also been applied for family members and individuals who facilitate children's marriage. For instance, Non-governmental organizations such as KARINA, which is church-based, give support services to children who are in danger of early marriage and aid the survivors to get over psychological obstacles. The services provided by these organizations include psychological and counseling services to help them overcome psychological trauma, provide legal resilience, and build resilience for the children and families limited in accessing their respective needs. Also, the organization provides economic empowerment training to give vulnerable families and individuals opportunities to earn their livelihood.

VI. Analysis using the Inspire Framework

The inspiring framework will be used to analyze the intervention frameworks and existing policies in addressing child marriage. Through this framework, the weaknesses and strengths of the existing intervention programs and policies are assessed, their efficiency is assessed, and the challenges and existing gaps are identified.

a) Strengths

The strengths of the policies and intervention programs in Indonesia that have been put in place primarily lie in child protection and Indonesian Marriage law. The constitution of Indonesia has been amended to strengthen child protection rights. Additionally, the existence of laws and international convention treaties promoting child protection demonstrates a strong commitment by the Indonesian government to promote and protect the rights of children and prevent child marriages. Prameswari and Agustin (2018) demonstrate that the Indonesian marriage cap is above 19 years.

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This protects the minors from forced and adverse consequences of marriage. Additionally, the child protection law protects the children from any violence and prohibits them from marriage, either forced marriage or early marriage. Additionally, intervention programs have aimed to prevent child marriages and strengthen gender equality. Community programs challenge the existing attitudes and norms that surround child marriage through direct community involvement. These programs provide the necessary information for the children and community to make informed decisions.

b) Weaknesses

As the legal framework has been put in place to protect children from early marriages, there exist weaknesses during enforcement and implementation of the respective. As demonstrated by Zahroh and Najicha (2022), Indonesia has a weak mechanism characterized by a limited capacity to promote law enforcement. Additionally, Indonesia has inadequate resources, such as a limited number of law enforcers per person >>> which limits the effectiveness of enforcing the existing regulatory framework in child protection. Harris et al. (2018) highlight that the agencies in law enforcement lack the necessary resources to monitor and enhance compliance with the perpetrating community. Cultural norms and traditional practices also hinder the effectiveness of law enforcement. While most individuals, especially in rural areas, support early marriages as part of their cultural traditions, it becomes hard for the respective community to join hands and report the cases to law enforcers. Okongwu (2021) shows that the cultural practices condone and encourage gender disparity and early child marriages, which undermine the government's efforts to enforce the legal provision efficiently. Additionally, Kusumo et al. (2022) show some loopholes and inconsistencies in the legal framework, such as bribery, that contribute to the existing disparities in fighting early marriages and child protection across various provinces in Indonesia. The differences in socioeconomic status and the interpretation of law lead to unequal and different efforts for children's protection across the country. Additionally, community-based education and awareness initiatives lack effective coordination and evaluation, which limits their impact. Also, there is insufficient funding, which leads to limited resources and manpower in facilitating full, complete coverage at the grassroots level, which limits the effectiveness of the respective programs and initiatives in addressing child marriages in different provinces.

c) Analysis of Effectiveness

According to Subchi et al. (2021), Child marriage remains an issue in Indonesia despite the existence of intervention programs and a legal framework enacted more than a decade ago. This proves there are still limitations in the effectiveness of the intervention programs, laws, and overall regulatory framework in the country. Various factors contribute to the ineffectiveness and persistence of child marriages. There is high cultural resistance to embracing transformation about gender disparity and child marriages. Also, some legal enforcement agencies lack the capacity and adequate resources for effective enforcement. The mechanisms for legal enforcement are weak in monitoring compliance, leading to widespread impunity.

However, community-based programs have positively impacted community awareness and education. The community level engages with families and community directly, hence sensitizing on the negative consequences of child marriages, leading to community empowerment. As an example, the Comprehensive Sexuality Education Program has equipped young girls with knowledge that helps them to make educated choices, for this reason decreasing the rate of exploitation and susceptibility. These programs provide accurate details and can potentially alter women's attitudes and the area. Nonetheless, there are obstacles such as inadequate financing, lack of coordination, which limits the application, and a high level of performance in promoting children's defense and avoiding child marriages.

d) Gap Identification

Comprehending existing voids and obstacles can aid in identifying locations for improvement. Among the major gaps is the existing weak mechanism in child marriage enforcement. Despite the regulation's existence, weak enforcement with restricted resources in terms of training and capacity adds to impunity. Additionally, the government has inadequate and restricted accessibility to reliable support solutions. While numerous non-governmental intervention programs exist, accessibility to sustainable solutions is frequently minimal, specifically in rural areas and marginalized cultures. For instance, child marriage survivors may struggle to access legal aid and counseling services due to geographical barriers.

Deeply rooted traditions and cultural norms that encourage early marriage are a barrier to effective child marriages. Most Indonesian communities practice early marriages as a tradition and cultural practice. In most cases, social and religious customs may encourage children's marriages to secure economic stability and preserve the community's reputation. Hence, challenging these customs will require cultural and sensitive approaches addressing the respective beliefs and attitudes.

Another gap exists in the socioeconomic and gender inequalities. These inequalities and disparities that exist in the Indonesian community contribute to the vulnerability and exploitation of children in marriages.

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Most of the girls that get involved in early marriages in Indonesia are from unstable or low economic families, especially in the rural areas. According to Roksa and Kinsley (2019), low socioeconomic status also leads to limited access to economic opportunities and education programs, which lead to support for the family's financial status. While addressing these issues, strategies that promote gender equality and socioeconomic status lead to access to economic opportunities and education for girls.

VII. Recommendations for Reform

a) Strengthening the Implementation Mechanisms

While successfully resolving the issue of child marriage in Indonesia, it is crucial to strengthen different systems that have been established. This will certainly include reinforcing lawful enforcement firms and offering them the required resources to fight children marriage. According to Ulfa et al. (2023), one of the methods to advertise this is to give the essential training and tools to advertise surveillance and evaluation to determine locations of enhancement. Daka et al. (2020) reveal that with the prosecution of perpetrators, Indonesia can reduce the degree of child marriages. Police should be educated to communicate with the area to enhance children's legal rights at the grassroots level.

b) Addressing Socioeconomic Status

For long-lasting children marriage security, solving the socioeconomic variables is necessary. Indonesia must focus on improving the education system for the poor. Budu et al. (2021) highlight that Education and learning enhance the economic chances for inadequate families. The government must focus on supplying professional training and financial backing for susceptible women. In this instance, the families can be empowered financially, for this reason, resorting to very early child marriages. Additionally, furnishing ladies with the needed understanding will equip them with the expertise to make educated choices.

c) Promoting Community Engagement

Indonesia should focus on extensive sensitization versus child marriages. According to Melnikas et al. (2020), this will be crucial in fighting the negative attitudes and cultural standards that advertise sex variation and child marriages. Community-based understanding backed with ample sources at the grassroots degree needs to be presented to inform society about the effects of children's marriages. The government can work with the neighborhood and religious leaders to advertise assistance in stopping alternate methods to encourage women and children nationwide.

VIII. Conclusion

The legal framework guiding child protection in Indonesia consists of the international and local legislation conventions ratified by the government. As demonstrated by Hayes and O'Neal (2018), various national-level laws encompass and provide different forms of child exploitation and child abuse. Social and cultural phenomena in Indonesia demonstrate an intricate interplay between gender dynamics, traditions, and socio-economic pressures. Despite different prohibitions in different practices cultural practices and traditions promote the persistence of inequality, poverty, and gender discrimination. Early child marriages limit the possibility of contribution to society via efficient and formal workforces in the country. Hamdy and Hudri (2022) indicate that Indonesian society embraces patriarchal norms. This norm reinforces women and girls' subordinate roles to become mothers and wives. Early marriages deepened these norms while perpetuating the disempowerment of girls in society. Early marriages lead to early pregnancies, which poses health risks to both the infant and the adolescent. Adolescents and young females are considered not to be fully developed for childbirth and pregnancies. The government of Indonesia has made significant efforts in promoting child prevention over the last decade. One major factor in promoting child protection is the development and effective response through developing policies and strengthening the existing ones. This requires clear attention to attain a positive child response and protection over time. While successfully resolving the issue of child marriage in Indonesia, it is crucial to strengthen different systems that have been established. This will certainly include reinforcing lawful enforcement firms and offering them the required resources to fight children marriage. or long-lasting children marriage security; solving the socioeconomic variables is necessary. Indonesia must focus on improving the education system for the poor. Education and learning enhance the economic chances for inadequate families. Indonesia should focus on extensive sensitization versus child marriages. This will be crucial in fighting the negative attitudes and cultural standards that advertise sex variation and child marriages.

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