Religious and Cultural Constructions of Child Marriage: A Phenomenological Overview in Indonesia

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Abstract

Child marriage is still a serious threat to the development of generations in Indonesia. This study aims to reveal the role of the construction of religious and cultural understanding in cases of child marriage in Tanah Mas Village, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan. The construction of religious and cultural understanding that is not comprehensive and partial can trigger child marriage behavior. This research is important to explore the roots of religious and cultural understanding, as well as construction in the families of perpetrators of child marriage in the community in order to rebuild (reconstruct) religious understanding that can prevent child marriage. This research used a qualitative descriptive method with a phenomenological approach. The research subjects were families of perpetrators of child marriage in Tanah Mas Sampit Village. The research was conducted from June to October 2024. Data collection was carried out using interviews, observation, documentation, and Forum Group Discussion. Analysis data was carried out using Cresswell's inductive analysis model. Data validity testing was carried out by triangulating data, extending observations, peer debriefing, and providing opportunities for other parties to provide input. The results showed that religious and cultural understanding are still the reasons for the high rate child marriage in Tanah Mas. In the aspect of religious understanding, the reason why parents immediately marry off their children is because they want to protect their children from acts that are forbidden by religion, their children's desire to be devoted to their parents, and their fear of falling into promiscuity. Meanwhile, in the cultural aspect, the habits of parents and family, the environment, and lack of access to education are the main reasons for child marriage. The social construction that occurs in the practice of child marriage at the research locus through the stages of externalization, objectification, and internalization that occur in the perpetrator's social environment.

INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is still a major problem in Indonesia. In some cultures, the practice of child marriage is considered normal and even uses religious justification as a form of protecting children from immoral acts *'zinā'*. In fact, child marriage poses a serious threat to the formation of Indonesia's generations (Priebe & Sumarto, 2025). Child marriage directly deprives children of their right to develop their potential to the fullest (Mohammed, 2025). Children who must marry under the age of 18 will have greater vulnerability in terms of access to education, quality of health, potential for violence, and living in poverty. The impact of child marriage will not only has an impact for themselves, but also has an impact on the children who are born and potentially lead to intergenerational poverty (BPS, 2020).

Child marriage is a marriage that occurs when the bride and groom are not yet 19 years old, which refers to law no. 16 of 2019 that concerning marriage. UNICEF states that child marriage is a formal or informal marriage involving children under 18 years old (Ayuwardany & Kautsar, 2021). In line with statement above, the Child Protection Law states that a child is someone who is not yet 18 years old, including those still in the womb (Presiden RI, 2022). As part of efforts to fulfill children's right, promote quality families, and control BKKN's population program through

marriage age maturity initiatives, the ideal minimum age for marriage is established 21 for girls and 25 years for boys (BKKBN, 2024). However, cases of child marriage continue to occur in various regions of Indonesia. Based on Susenas data, the decline in child marriage rates in Indonesia is slow and has even experienced an upward trend in recent years, from 11.1% in 2016 to 11.2% in 2018 (BAPPENAS, 2020). Meanwhile, Central Kalimantan itself occupies the second position in Indonesia with the proportion of women aged 20-24 years who are married before the age of 18 in 2019, which is 20.2% (Peni, Lestari, & Prasida, 2023). Therefore, systematic and integrated efforts are needed to overcome it.

Tanah Mas is one of the villages in Baamang Subdistrict, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan, which has a high rate of child marriage. Based on data from the Baamang District Family Planning Center, at least until the beginning of 2024 there were 16 people who experienced marriage at an early age with the youngest marriage rate at the age of 13 years (Mardiyah, 2024). Preliminary studies conducted by researchers in Tanah Mas Village showed that religious and cultural understanding is one of the reasons for child marriage. The families of child marriage actors in Tanah Mas are adherents of Islam and believe that marrying young is the best way to avoid adultery and believe that marriage is an act of worship that must be hastened if the child has entered puberty. The culture of parents and previous generations who considered marriage at a child's to be common also influenced the behavior of child marriage (Han et al., 2025). Even though one of the perpetrators of child marriage admitted that marrying at the age of a child was a difficult thing that he lived through because he was not mentally ready, domestic violence occurred, the economy was unstable (Rao et al., 2025), had to take care of children at an immature age, resulting in early divorce.

Efforts to prevent child marriage are one of the national issues and a National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Marriage (STRANAS PPA) document has been prepared. This document states that it is very important to prevent child marriage through a religious and cultural approach. People in certain areas still use religious and cultural interpretations as justification for the practice of child marriage. Therefore, norms, culture and values in the community that support the practice of child marriage must receive special intervention (BAPPENAS, 2020). The relationship between religion and culture and child marriage does not only occur in Indonesia. The Sisters in Islam (SIS) Research Report states that the problem of child marriage in Malaysia is closely related to dogmatic beliefs in tradition and religious understanding due to fear of sin, shame, and ostracism (Sisters in Islam, 2018). This shows that the issue of religion and child marriage is an important issue to study. This research was conducted, as an effort to explore the roots of religious and cultural understanding of the perpetrators of marriage in the community in order to rebuild an understanding that can prevent child marriage with the same approach, namely religious and cultural values that can be internalized through the educational process in the community.

The problem-solving approach in this study used Berger & Luckman's social reality construction theory. According to them, the understanding of social reality, including one's religion, is the result of the process of externalization, objectification, and internalization (Berger & Luckman, 2012). Norms and rules that are interpretations of religious texts become something integral to the individual. Norms and rules derived from interpretations of religious texts become an integral part of an individual's identity. People act based on what they truly believe in, not merely by following others. These actions gradually evolve into rational behaviors that become ingrained within the individual and are eventually accepted as a natural part of their belief system. Another approach used is Lickona's (2010) value education approach, which states that a person's behavior is a manifestation of the values he believes in through a continuous process of value internalization. In the context of child marriage, this practice still persists in society because the discourse on child marriage continues to be constructed, legitimized, and controlled by the power of religious and cultural knowledge (Rohmaniyah, 2017). So that there is a process of internalization into individuals and becomes norms and values. A less comprehensive and partial understanding of religion becomes a justification that justifies child marriage. Whereas religious teachings must be

understood comprehensively and thoroughly. Therefore, this practice must also be overcome with religious knowledge. In line with this, Berger & Luckmann state that society is not an objective entity that evolves in a determined and unchangeable way (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Humans create reality through social interaction and continue to give messages and impressions, listening, observing, evaluating, and assessing situations based on how they are socialized to understand and interact with themselves (Dharma, 2018).

Research on the relationship between religion and culture on child marriage cases has been widely conducted. Na'imah (2020) found that the practice of child marriage in Brebes Regency was influenced by the internalization of culture and religious leaders based on the perspective of Islamic law, research by Zuwirda, Siski, & Maiseptian (2023) saw that parents' lack of understanding of the nature of marriage in Islam had an influence on the culture of early marriage in Nagari Kapujan. Furthermore, Barkah, Chalidi, Rochmiyatun, Asmorowati, & Fernando (2023) revealed that a partial and textual understanding of religion with the legitimacy of the *naş* 'religion text' justifies underage marriage in Indonesia. Not only in Indonesia, religious constructions that influence child marriage also occur in several countries. Kamal, Hassan, Alam, & Yang (2015) mentioned that Muslim women living in rural Bangladesh have a greater risk of child marriage than others. Meanwhile, Lebni, Ahmadi, Irandoost, & Saki (2025) mentioned that a set of cultural beliefs rooted in the social, cultural, and religious structure of society in western Iran encourages men to marry teenage girls.

The issue of child marriage in Indonesia is a serious concern, particularly when it intersects with religious beliefs and cultural practices. One of the most commonly cited reasons by parents is to prevent their children from engaging in behaviors deemed inappropriate by religious teachings. A study by Hidayatulloh, Putri, Naotrue, Riswanda, and Fedryansyah (2018) revealed that in Pancawati Village, Bogor, many children were married through unregistered *'sirry'* marriages. Once they reached the legal age for marriage, they proceeded to obtain marriage certificates from the Office of Religious Affairs. One of the main reasons for child marriage cited by families was to prevent immoral behavior prohibited by religion. A similar case was reported in Lalabata Subdistrict, Soppeng Regency, as described by Rahman (2022), who found that parents married off their underage children to preserve the family's honor and dignity. In response, international development agencies committed to ending child marriage have acknowledged the importance of involving religious leaders as part of strategies for driving behavioral change within communities (Walker, 2015). However, there is still a lack of research exploring the motivations for child marriage from the perspective of the key actors, especially the children and their families. This perspective is crucial for formulating comprehensive policies to address child marriage effectively. Understanding how child marriage actors perceive and interpret marriage from religious and cultural standpoints is essential. In line with this, Barkah, Chalidi, Rochmiyatun, Asmorowati, and Fernando (2023) recommend the need to involve underage couples directly in research concerning child marriage practice.

Child marriage in Tanah Mas is a big challenge in East Kotawaringin District. Even though this area is a pilot Family Quality Village (KB) the Provincial Level at Central Kalimantan. The declaration of the KB village itself aims to form a quality family in a region which is measured through dimensions of peace, independence and happiness. Unfortunately, conditions in the field are inversely proportional to expectations. Child marriage is a serious threat to the hope of a quality family. The sociological condition of a "religious" society is a challenge in providing understanding to the community when religious arguments become legitimization or justification for child marriage. On the other hand, the right understanding and approach to religion can be one way to prevent child marriage. Therefore, this research is needed in order to become the basis for the preparation of a local cultural religious education model in preventing child marriage in East Kotawaringin, Central Kalimantan.

METHODS

This research is a field research oriented to empirical data collection. This research is qualitative in nature with a qualitative descriptive method with a phenomenological approach (Berger & Luckman, 2012). The proponent used this method because researchers want to find data that is not observed and measured quantitatively, such as values, mental attitudes, habits, beliefs and culture adopted by a group of people in a particular environment (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this context, the Tanah Mas community, especially the families of perpetrators of child marriage. The research was conducted in Tanah Mas Village, Baamang District, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan Province. Tanah Mas is an area that has a high marriage case. The research was conducted from April to October 2024. The research subjects were the families of child marriage perpetrators in Tanah Mas, totaling 10 people. The main type of data in this study is qualitative data, namely data in the form of detailed descriptions, direct quotes, and documentation. The data obtained is the result of the researcher's capture of the words and actions of the research subject. This research data collection used several techniques, namely interviews, observation, documentation, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The key instrument of the research is the researcher himself. During data collection, researchers try to understand the behavior, opinions, perceptions, attitudes, body language, and characteristics shown by data sources. However, researchers also make auxiliary instruments so that research is more focused and directed. The auxiliary instruments include: interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and document review guidelines.

The analysis used is inductive analysis which means that categories, themes, and patterns all come from the data. In conducting data analysis, researchers used the stages of the data analysis process proposed by Creswell Efforts to draw conclusions will be carried out by researchers continuously while in the field. From the beginning of data collection, researchers began to look for the meaning of objects, note the regularity of patterns, explanations, possible configurations, flow, and propositions. The analysis was conducted using Berger & Luckman's social reality construction theory. According to them, understanding of social reality including one's religion is the result of the process of externalization, objectification, and internalization (Berger & Luckman, 2012). Researchers also use the theory of value internalization proposed by Lickona (2010) which states that a person's behavior is a manifestation of the values he believes in through a continuous process of value internalization.

Data validity testing is carried out to obtain research results that can be accounted for and trusted. Categories of data validity include degrees of trust (credibility) or internal validity, transferability or external validity, dependability or stability, and certainty (confirmability). The credibility test is carried out by triangulating data, extending observations, and peer debreafing. The dependability test is carried out by checking the accuracy of the researcher (audit trail). Confirmability test is carried out by providing an opportunity for other parties to assess and provide input on the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Tanah Mas and the Problem of Child Marriage

Tanah Mas is one of the administrative areas in the form of a sub-district in Baamang District, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan. Baamang Sub-district itself consists of five urban villages and one village, namely Baamang Tengah, Baamang Hilir, Baamang Hilir, Baamang Hulu, West Baamang, Tanah Mas, and Tinduk. Tanah Mas is an expansion of Baamang Hulu Village based on Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 31/2006 on the Establishment, Abolition, and Merger of Villages. Tanah Mas has an area of 16 km2 or 2.50% of the total area of Kecamatan Baamang (BPS Kotim, 2024) and has seven RTs and two RWs. Each RT has its own characteristics, namely: RT 1 to 2 are predominantly Sampit Dayak, RT 3 and 5 are inhabited by a mixed population of Dayakese, Javanese, Banjarnese, and Madurese. RT 4 has a majority Madurese population. RT 7 has a majority of Sampit Dayakese ethnicity. The distance from Tanah

Mas to the capital district is approximately 14 km, which can be accessed via two routes: river and land. The location of the village is not on the edge of the cross-province road (big road) but near the river.

Based on statistical data for 2024, the population in the Tanah Mas area is 1,536 people with 797 men and 739 women (BPS Kotim, 2024). This number is not too dense compared to other areas in Baamang Sub-district. The religion practiced by the majority of the population is Islam with a percentage 99.73% of the total population. They are Muslims who are devout in practicing their religion. This can be seen from the lively commemoration of Islamic holidays, such as the prophet's maulid and the establishment of several Islamic educational institutions such as TPQ, RA, and *madrasah diniyah*. *Ustāż* are brought in alternately every year from Java or Madura. Religious figures in Tanah Mas are called *ustāż* or teachers. They teach religious values through recitations in *langgar*, house-to-house gatherings, social gatherings, and madrassas (Anggraini, 2023). Various *majelis taklim* and *farḍ kifayah* associations are alive and well here. The religiosity of the Tanah Mas community can also be seen from the religious behavior shown. Parents always remind their children to pray before playing. In the afternoons, children study at the *madrasah diniyah* in order to get enough religious provision. According to them, religion is the most important foundation for life and must be given since childhood.

However, it is unfortunate that formal schools in Tanah Mas are still limited. There is only one elementary school and one junior high school (SD-SMP Satu Atap), while there is no SMA/SMK/equivalent. Children who want to continue their education to the SMA/SMK/equivalent level must go to Sampit City or to the nearest sub-district, Besi City. The distance to Sampit City or Besi City is quite far (approximately 14 km), requiring a private vehicle. This is because public transportation in this area is still very limited. This is a challenge for both parents and children. Children whose parents are less well-off are forced not to continue their schooling. In addition, parents worry about their children's safety when they are traveling to and from school. Another concern is the lack of parental supervision of children's socialization outside of school hours due to the distance. They are afraid that their children will get into the wrong relationships and fall into things that are harmful and forbidden by religion. These conditions cause many children in this area to drop out of school, especially after completing junior high school.

Many social problems are found in this area. Apart from school dropouts, another problem is child marriage, which continues to occur. Even though Tanah Mas has been designated as a Family Quality Village (KB) at the Central Kalimantan provincial level since last year 2017 (Setiani & Anggraini, 2022). The data shows that child marriage in Tanah Mas is one of the highest in East Kotawaringin District. One of the family planning extension workers who has been fostering and assisting in this area for a long time stated that it was quite a problem in overcoming the problem of child marriage. This is because coaching and socialization to parents has been carried out continuously, but child marriage also continues to occur. On the other hand, not all marriages at the age of children have been recorded, both in Disdukcapil and BKKN data. This is because underage marriages have not been recorded and have not yet obtained a marriage book. According to informants in the field, new marriages are conducted religiously by local religious leaders. The researcher obtained initial information on marriage data from the Baamang Sub-district Family Planning Center and information from the Tanah Mas Family Support Team. Based on this data, the following research subjects were obtained:

Table 1. Identity of Research Subjects

No	Initial	Neighborhood Association (RT)	Religion	Ethnic	Age	Age at marriage
1.	HLM	03	Islam	Madurese	17	15 Years
2.	HSH	03	Islam	Madurese	42	14 Years
3.	DLL	03	Islam	Madurese	16	15 Years

4.	SRN	05	Islam	Dayaknese	21	18 Years
5.	JMH	04	Islam	Madurese	74	First marriage 14 years old Second married 17 years Third married 25 years old
6.	FTM	04	Islam	Madurese	32	First married 12 years Second marriage at age 17
7.	STK	04	Islam	Madurese	29	14 Years
8.	STKH	04	Islam	Madurese	23	18 Years
9.	MRY	03	Islam	Madurese	17	16 Years
10.	Msr	03	Islam	Madurese	55	First marriage at age 10

There are various reasons behind marriage, including religious, family, and neighborhood aspects. Based on the results of data collection, here are some of the reasons the subjects practiced child marriage:

Table 2. Reasons for Entering into Child Marriage

No	Initial	Age at First Marriage	Reason for Marriage
1.	HLM	15 Years	- Self-will - Dropping Out of School - Parents do not approve of dating for a long time, afraid of committing acts that are prohibited by religion.
2.	HSH	14 Years	- Following the will of parents - Filial piety - Take care of yourself
3.	DLL	15 Years	- Self-will - Dropping out of school - Other siblings and relatives also married young - from adultery
4.	SRN	18 Years	- Dropping out of school - Uncomfortable when walking with the opposite sex that is not their wife/husband (not muhrim)
5.	JMH	14 Years	- Set up by parents - Family traditions
6.	FTM	12 Years	- Married first because of arranged marriage and following parents' wishes - Second marriage of one's own free will
7.	STK	14 Years	- Following parents' requests and fear of being disobedient.
8.	STKH	18 Years	- Feeling old enough to get married
9.	MRY	16 Years	- Seeing cousins and friends marry young, so they are encouraged to marry young too - Has received blessing from mother and support from religious leaders to get married soon. - Parents are worried about their children doing things that violate religious regulations
10.	MSR	10 years	- Married first because of an arranged marriage - Can't argue with parents

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the reasons for perpetrators of child marriage are dominated by family environment/cultural factors and the influence of the construction of religious understanding. Seven out of 10 subjects stated that parents played an important role in their

decision to marry early. This context provides justification that family culture contributes child marriage.

Figure 1. One of The Interviews with The Research Subject of Child Marriage

Six of the subjects stated that following their parents' wishes is a religious teaching as a form of filial piety and fear of becoming a disobedient child. Parents play a big role in child marriage because at that age, children are not yet able to think carefully about their future decisions. As stated by one of the subjects (FTM) who stated that, *"When I made the decision to get married (at the age of 12), I didn't know what to do because I was very young"* (FTM,2024), the parents' reason for marrying off their children at a young age is a culture that has been passed down from generation to generation. On the other hand, a partial understanding of religion is another reason. Parents have concerns that their children will commit acts that are not justified by religion, especially when they have begun to get along and establish relationships with friends of the opposite sex. Religious construction can also be seen through the role of religious leaders in providing input to one of the subjects and her parents who asked for advice when accepting a marriage proposal. Based on the results of observations, it is also known that the practice of child marriage is also carried out in the families of religious leaders.

The Religious and Cultural Constructions of Child Marriage in Tanah Mas

Based on the data collected in the field through interviews, observations, and clarification through focus group discussions, several reasons for child marriage in Tanah Mas can be formulated. The research focuses on religious and socio-cultural constructions. However, during data collection other information was found about the causes of child marriage in Tanah Mas. This information is important to convey in this article as input to various parties in planning follow-up actions to overcome child marriage at the research locus.

Marriage is a Choice that Helps People Avoid Actions Their Religion Forbids

Most of the research subjects mentioned that child marriage is a solution so that children do not fall into things that are forbidden by religion. Parents are worried about the socialization of children. Especially if the child has close friends of the opposite sex. They feel uncomfortable if their children start to get close to them communicate intensely with the opposite sex. This was expressed directly by their parents, who said that, *"Instead of being unclear and already liking each other, is better to get married"* (HSH, 2024). Parents realize that if the turmoil of young age is not channeled into a halal place, it will plunge their children into a bad trade. As happened in several other cases of child marriage in Tanah Mas. This makes parental protection even tighter. Marriage is expected to keep children from negative associations. When married, parents feel calmer because

there is already someone who is responsible and looks after the child. Meanwhile, children themselves admit that by getting married they feel freer to communicate and interact, without any negative views from villagers or neighbors. They themselves feel uncomfortable if a friend of the opposite sex visits the house and will definitely become the talk of the neighbors. In addition, they believe that marriage is an Islamic teaching that is recommended to be hastened when the time has come. As stated by one of the subjects, *"To keep away from zina, getting married sooner is better"* (DLL,2024).

Forms of Filial Piety

Some subjects said that marriage was carried out because of parents' wishes and a form of devotion to parents. Parents who still adhere to a traditional mindset want their children to get married immediately so that parental responsibilities can be fulfilled. As a filial child, following the wishes of parents is part of implementation of religious teachings. Disobeying parents is an act that is not allowed religious teachings. This was conveyed by HLM who said that the decision to get married when she was 12 years old was the will of her parents, while she at that time could not think long about making decisions and just followed her parents. The child considers the parents' decision to be the best decision, although there are also subjects who admit to "crying" when getting married.

The Role of Religious Leaders

Another reason that strengthened the subjects to marry at a young age was the advice and input from religious leaders. They adhere to the belief that Islamic teachings justify marriage at a child's age. This marriage can also be a solution to prevent things that are not morally and religiously justified. One of the subjects and his mother said that before entering into marriage they asked religious leaders for advice and received support to enter into marriage. Permission from religious leaders strengthened their conviction to enter into the marriage. In addition, most child marriages are conducted with a headman who comes from a local religious figure.

Child Marriage Becomes Common Thing

Child marriage in Tanah Mas has occurred for many years and has become common thing. This condition causes children and parents in the next generation to consider that child marriage is not a serious problem. This was conveyed by several subjects who stated that they did not hesitate to marry at a young age because the people around them also did so. As quoted in the following statement from one of the interviewees, *"I got child married because of my parents' blessing. If my parents didn't support me, I wouldn't have gotten child married"* (HLM, 2022). This statement was supported by another interviewee who stated that it is common for young people to marry in their teens. In fact, it has become question if at an age that they consider to be well-established but not yet married. When the research team asked about the age limit considered too "old" to get married, two subjects (brother and sister) said 20 years old. In line with this, one Tanah Mas youth leader, who was 20 years old at the time of the interview, stated that many of his friends of his age were already married. Even children who are far below his age have also been married. He added that this is also in line with young people's lack of interest in continuing their education. People's mindsets about education and marriage are still traditional.

The Perpetrators of Child Marriage Occur from Generation to Generation

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it is known that all perpetrators of child marriage come from families who also do child marriage. One example is SRN who married at the age of 18, has an older brother who married at the age of 17, and a younger brother at the age of 13. Another subject is FTM, who married at the age of 12, has a younger brother who married at the age of 14 and a mother who also married at the age of 14. During the interview some subjects also mentioned that they had cousins who also married "young". This shows that child marriage

continues for generations and continues to occur in the family. This cycle is difficult to break because of the justification and example of the previous generation.

School Dropouts that Occur Continuously

Another concerning finding is one of the factors triggering child marriage is the unequal accessibility of education. According to some subjects, they chose to marry because they could not continue their education to the senior high school level. This is due to the absence of high school education/equivalent in Tanah Mas. Schooling outside Tanah Mas (Sampit City) is quite burdensome, especially for families whose economy is not good. It is even more burdensome when it happens to girls. Parents worry about their children traveling to schools far from home every day. When they drop out of school, there are no activities that can fill their youth. So the most realistic target is to get married and start a family. Parents hope that through marriage, children can plan their future without worrying about their relationships. This condition continues to occur to this day and has contributed to the uninterrupted cases of child marriage.

Analysis of **the Religious and Cultural Constructs of Child Marriage**

The government regulation on the Implementation of Childcare states that a child is someone who is not yet 18 (eighteen) years old, including children who are still in the womb. Furthermore, the Law on Child Protection states that parents are obliged and responsible for: nurturing, maintaining, educating, and protecting children; developing children according to their abilities, talents, and interests; and preventing marriage at the age of children (Pettoello-Mantovani, 2024). According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, parents or other persons responsible for the child bear the primary responsibility for ensuring, within the limits of their ability and financial capacity, the living conditions necessary for the child's development (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). Reflecting on this, child marriage is a violation of the rights of both women and men, because children are vulnerable to losing their rights to education, health, nutrition, protection from violence, exploitation, and being deprived of the happiness of childhood (Samuels et al., 2024).

In Islam itself, marriage is actually an act of worship that must be and part of the sunnah of the prophet (prophet's teaching). Especially if the marriage is intended for the man and woman avoid things that are forbidden by religion. The majority of Islamic legal experts justify early marriage, this is inseparable from the understanding and interpretation of Surah al Thalaq verse 4. In addition, history has recorded that Aisyah was married to the Prophet at a very young age (Setiawan, 2020). This understanding is believed by families of perpetrators of child marriage in Tanah Mas. They choose to protect themselves from actions that are not justified by religion and choose actions that are clearly permitted by religion. However, unfortunately, child marriage is not running well as expected. Some informants who eventually divorced early also said that marriage at a child's age was very difficult because they experienced unwanted things (Sarfo et al., 2024). Psychologically, they are not ready for domestic life, so they often quarrel and even experience domestic violence. On the other hand, the turmoil of young age is still not suppressed (Samuels et al., 2024). Likewise, the economic aspect is not yet ready. These conditions cause the purpose of marriage not to be achieved.

Likewise, the economic aspect is not yet ready. These conditions cause the purpose of marriage not to be achieved. In terms of cultural and ethnic background, most of the research subjects were Madurese who migrated to Tanah Mas. This correlates with research conducted by Rohadi (2023) on the Madurese tradition of kabin ghodeh in Seranau Sub-district, which is close to Tanah Mas (separated by the Mentaya River). Some subjects also came from Seranau Sub-district who moved and settled in Tanah Mas. According to Rohadi, the Madurese here believe that a woman should be married shortly after her menstrual period (12 to 15 years old). If it is past this age, it will be said to be "unsellable". This tradition continues to be passed down from one generation to the next. addition, Madurese are also devout followers of Islam, and believe religious

rules are above other rules including legislation. The same thing conveyed by one of the research subjects who stated that: *"In my opinion, it is common (to marry early), because I am a Madurese. In Madura, most people marry young, not until the age of 20 (early marriage if Madura's people said). So I think it's only natural"* (DLL,2024).

However, we found that not all perpetrators of child marriage in Tanah Mas are of Madurese ethnicity. One of the subjects named SRN comes from Dayaknese ethnicity, has brothers and sisters who also married at the age of children, namely 17 and 13 years old. According to her narrative, actually the choice to marry young is a difficult choice but one of the best ways at that time because it does not continue education (Ashok et al., 2024). Meanwhile, SRN's younger brother chose to marry young because the environment and family also married at a young age. This shows that the living environment also influences the behavior of child marriage.

Using the theory of Berger & Luckman (2012) which says that understanding social reality including one's religion is the result of the process of externalization, objectification, and internalization. So in fact, child marriage in Tanah Mas, which continues to occur, cannot be separated from social construction in society. According to the Berger & Luckman Process (2012), the initial construction begins with externalization, namely self-adaptation to the socio-cultural world as a human product (Dannefer, 1994b). Humans will seek to establish a stable relationship with their social environment called the habituation process. In religious behavior, the objectification process occurs through several actions. First, there is an adaptation to religious texts. Second, there is a process of adaptation to values and actions. In this process there are two attitudes of receiving and rejecting. This is where the figures of figures and parents as role models become important. Next is the process of objectification or self-interaction. Furthermore, the moment of one's self-identification with social reality in the environment is called internalization (Dannefer, 1994a).

Based on this theory, the practice of child marriage in Tanah Mas still persists in the community because the discourse on child marriage continues to be constructed, legitimized, and controlled by the power of religious and cultural knowledge (Rohmaniyah, 2017). The externalization process occurs when a child sees the behavior of child marriage that occurs around them and their environment. Adaptation to the sociocultural situation that occurs in the environment does not provide many choices to the perpetrator (Fang et al., 2024). Furthermore, the objectification of these values and actions occurs through religious interpretations that justify child marriage. Legitimization is also.

This is shown through the example of religious figures who tend to support child marriage, including in practice. On the other hand, this value also persists because it is supported by other factors, namely the lack of access to education so that children "drop out" of school continues to occur (Ashok et al., 2024). Economic, social and cultural pressures do not give parents the space for and many choices so that finally "marrying off children" becomes the rational and best choice (Fang et al., 2024). As for the children themselves, there is no choice when the parents have made the decision. As stated by one of the subjects who stated that at the time of the decision to marry they were not able to think long and believe that the parents' choice was the best choice for their children. So that the final attitude chosen by the perpetrator towards the practice of child marriage is to accept (receiving). Finally, the objectification process is where the values that have been accepted and believed become integral in a person. These values become the basis for behavior and life choices. In line with this, Lickona (2010) says that the process of settling character in a person begins with the internalization of values that a person believes in obtained by the environment and habituation that is carried out every day.

This paper implies that religious and cultural constructions play an important role in the perpetuation of the "tradition" of child marriage in society. So that the role of religion and culture is also treated in providing solutions to these problems. In line with this, Berger again emphasizes the importance of human religious experience which can be institutionalized in various traditions and institutions that try to bind the knowledge and behavior of the people who are adherents (Dharma,

2018). From the point of view of the sociology of education, individuals and the environment do not stand alone but there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. Individual behavior from birth to death is continuously conditioned by the culture of society (Idi, 2015). What is interesting about this case from an educational perspective is the importance of educational intervention in the case. This is because values in society can be reproduced through the education process. Unfortunately, access to this in Tanah Mas is still lacking. This is agreed by Durkheim who stated that education plays an important role in social control and change in society. Individuals adopt social values and interact with them in their daily lives. Through education, individuals and communities can gain control over unfavorable values in society and reproduce culture. Education can provide fundamental changes in society (Idi, 2015). Therefore, religious education is needed that is able to provide meaning and re-understanding of the purpose of marriage.

CONCLUSION

Child marriage in Tanah Mas occur because there is still a construction of religious and cultural understanding that continues to be formed and passed down from generation to generation. Various efforts must be made by the local government and related parties so that cases of child marriage can be resolved. One approach that needs to be taken is the religious and cultural approach. The involvement of religious and cultural leaders is needed to create a social change agenda so that child marriage can be overcome. This study has limitations in terms of the number of subjects, locus, and research time. It is necessary to conduct research with a larger number of subjects and other loci, because it is known that there are several other areas in East Kotawaringin Regency that have high child marriage rates as well. Suggestions for future research are to offer an integrated education concept or model with a cultural and religious approach that can provide solutions to the problem of child marriage.

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