

Dowry as Parental Motivation in Underage Marriage in Bogor, West Java

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Abstract

The study focuses on dowry as parental motivation in underage marriage in Bogor, with the main question being how the misinterpretation of the concept of *birrul walidain* (filial piety to parents) drives the practice. The background of the issue shows that social and economic pressures often reinforce the erroneous interpretation of this concept, where young girls are forced into early marriage as a form of obedience to their parents. The position of this research is to critique the misinterpretation and offer a new perspective on the understanding of *birrul walidain* in the context of child rights protection. The method used is qualitative, involving in-depth interviews with five victims of early marriage. The relevant theories in this analysis are feminist theory and child rights, which are used to understand how social and patriarchal structures exploit girls through religious doctrine. The research findings indicate that family pressure and the incorrect application of *birrul walidain* have restricted the victims' freedom, leading to a loss of educational opportunities and personal freedom. The main conclusion of this study emphasizes the need for reform in religious and social education to improve societal understanding of balanced duty, thereby protecting children's rights from exploitation in the form of early marriage.

Keywords: *Underage marriage, Dowry, Parental Motivation*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada mahar sebagai motivasi orang tua dalam pernikahan di bawah umur di Bogor, dengan pertanyaan utama mengenai bagaimana misinterpretasi konsep *birrul walidain* (berbakti kepada orang tua) mendorong praktik tersebut. Latar belakang masalah menunjukkan bahwa tekanan sosial dan ekonomi sering kali memperkuat penafsiran yang salah atas konsep ini, di mana anak-anak perempuan dipaksa menikah dini sebagai bentuk kepatuhan kepada orang tua. Posisi penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkritisi penafsiran yang salah dan menawarkan perspektif baru mengenai pemahaman *birrul walidain* dalam konteks perlindungan hak anak. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif, dengan wawancara mendalam kepada lima korban pernikahan dini. Teori yang relevan dalam analisis ini adalah teori feminisme dan hak anak, yang digunakan untuk memahami bagaimana struktur sosial dan patriarki mengeksploitasi anak perempuan melalui doktrin agama. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tekanan keluarga dan penggunaan *birrul walidain* yang keliru telah membatasi kebebasan korban, menyebabkan hilangnya kesempatan pendidikan dan kebebasan pribadi. Kesimpulan utama penelitian ini menekankan perlunya reformasi dalam pendidikan agama dan sosial guna memperbaiki pemahaman masyarakat mengenai bakti yang seimbang, sehingga hak-hak anak dapat dilindungi dari eksploitasi dalam bentuk pernikahan dini.

Kata Kunci: *Pernikahan di Bawah Umur, Mahar, Motivasi Orang Tua*

INTRODUCTION

Early marriage is a complex and profound issue, especially in developing countries, where tradition and economic conditions are often decisive factors.¹ This phenomenon not only has an impact on children's psychological and social development, but also brings serious challenges related to human rights, especially children's rights.² Marriage Law Number 16 of 2019 sets a minimum age limit of 19 years old for marriage to prevent early marriage and protect children's rights.³ However, UNICEF data shows thousands of girls in Indonesia are still married under the age of 18, reflecting the gap between regulations and practices that impact their futures.⁴ In some areas such as Bogor, West Java, the practice of early marriage is often seen as a solution to socioeconomic pressures, where children are seen as a family asset that can help ease the economic burden or maintain family honor.

In this context, the role of parents becomes very important.⁵ They often play a role in facilitating the early marriage of their children, either directly or indirectly.⁶ The motives behind these decisions are often based on cultural, economic, and inability to meet the basic needs of the family. As a result, children, especially girls, fall victim to exploitation under the guise of local traditions and customs.⁷ Understanding the role of parents in child exploitation in early marriage needs to be carefully considered because such practices not only harm children's physical and mental development, but also create a cycle of poverty and social injustice that continues.⁸

Although early marriage has been recognized as a problem that threatens children's rights in many parts of the world, the role of parents in strengthening this practice rarely receives enough attention.⁹ In Indonesia, especially in the Bogor region of West Java, the practice of early marriage is often seen as a solution to economic and social pressures, where parents are actively or passively

¹ Khodijah, Bagong Suyanto, and Ib Wirawan, "Early Marriage: Understanding Motivations and Impact," *Muwazah Jurnal Kajian Gender* 43 (2024): 19–43, <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v16i1.7245>.

² Vania Zulfa, Uswatun Hasanah, and Fitriana Kusaini, "The Phenomenon of Early Marriage and Its Impact on Family Resilience," *Journal of Family Sciences*, 2024, 48–58, <https://doi.org/10.29244/jfs.vi.49929>.

³ Rosdalina Bukido et al., "Reception of Marriage Age Limit in Marriage Law in Indonesia," *Samarah* 7, no. 1 (2023): 146–74, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i1.15245>.

⁴ Safira Alifia Husna and Milla Herdayati, "Child Marriage and Its Impact on Indonesian Women's Fertility (2017 IDHS Data Analysis)," *International Journal of Research and Review* 3, no. 1 (2023): 224–30.

⁵ Yayan Sopyan, "Child Exploitation by Parents in Early Marriage: Case Study in Cianjur West Java, Indonesia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 3 (2023): 1921–42, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i3.14804>.

⁶ Frangky Suleman et al., "The Review of the Masalah Mursalah Related to Early Marriage: Implementation and Orientation," *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum* 23, no. 3 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jdh.2023.23.3.3783>.

⁷ Nirma Juli Saputri, "Factors Related to the Incident of Early Marriage Among Adolescent Women in Mandailing Natal District Year 2022," *Randwick International of Social Sciences (RISS) Journal* 5, no. 1 (2024): 84–92, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v5i1.892>.

⁸ Zefanya Angellin Chen, Vanessa Vanessa, and Felicia Amanda Sulistio, "Case Studies on Marriage for Children Who Have Not Reached the Age Limit," *Aurelia: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat Indonesia* 2, no. 2 (2023): 1167–74, <https://doi.org/10.57235/aurelia.v2i2.672>.

⁹ Kadek Noni Angraeni and Sri Lestari, "The Relationship of Adolescent Knowledge about the Risks of Early Marriage with the Desire to Engage in Early Marriage," *International Journal of Health Science and Technology* 5, no. 2 (2023): 130–41, <https://doi.org/10.31101/ijhst.v5i2.3253>.

involved in facilitating the marriage of their children. In many cases, this act is not only fulfilling cultural or religious norms, but also becoming a form of child exploitation, where children are considered an economic resource for the family.¹⁰ Parents, whether due to economic limitations, education, or social pressures, often see early marriage as a way to reduce the financial burden or maintain the social status of the family.¹¹

The specific issue raised in this study is the role of parents in encouraging or forcing children, especially girls, to marry at an early age as a survival strategy. Exploitation occurs when children are married in the hope of making a financial or social contribution to the family, even though the act often violates their rights as children.¹² This is not only about the loss of access to a decent education, but also about vulnerability to domestic violence, reproductive health problems, and broader injustice.¹³ Therefore, further exploration of the dynamics of the role of parents in child exploitation through early marriage is essential to provide an in-depth understanding of the root causes and consequences of this phenomenon.¹⁴

This study aims to explore and analyze in depth the role of parents in child exploitation through early marriage in Bogor, West Java. The main objective of this study is to understand how and why parents encourage children, especially girls, to marry at an early age and how such actions contribute to forms of exploitation, both economically and socially. The study also aims to identify the main motives behind parental decisions, such as economic pressures, cultural factors, and deep-rooted social norms in the local community. By highlighting the role of parents as key actors in this process, this research is expected to provide new insights into the dynamics of power in the family who often ignore children's rights for the sake of economic interests and family social status.

Through a case study approach in the Bogor area, this study seeks to explore the impact of early marriage on children from social, legal, and psychological perspectives. In addition, this study also seeks to understand the long-term consequences of this exploitation, both on the welfare of children and society at large. Thus, the aim of this study is not only to document these harmful

¹⁰ Dofana Givanti and Benny Djaja, "Juridical Review of Early Marriage in Tangerang District Based on Islamic Family Law in Indonesia," *Edunty Kajian Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan* 2, no. 8 (2023): 915–24, <https://doi.org/10.57096/edunty.v2i8.128>.

¹¹ Deity Yuningsih and St Muslimah Suciati, "Improving Girls' Rights in Early Marriage in the Indonesian Legal System," *Halu Oleo Law Review* 7, no. 2 (2023): 198–213, <https://doi.org/https://holrev.uho.ac.id>.

¹² Mohamad Rana, Tajul Arifin, and Cecep Soleh Kurniawan, "When Religion and Culture Meet Economy: Socio-Legal Factors for the Early Marriages of Muslim Families in Cirebon," *Al-Ahwal* 15, no. 1 (2022): 83–102, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2022.15105>.

¹³ Kasiati Kasiati and Dina Isfentiani, "Factors Encouraging Early Marriage Among Adolescent Girls in East Java of Indonesia," *Seajom: The Southeast Asia Journal of Midwifery* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.36749/seajom.v6i1.89>.

¹⁴ Indah Noviani Wahyuningtyas and Vannesa Almayra Nugroho, "The Phenomenon of Child Marriage in Jepara and Its Prevention Strategies," *Kartini: Journal of Gender and Social Inclusion Studies* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.34001/kajogs.v1i1.4812>.

practices, but also to offer recommendations that can be used as a basis for more effective policy and child protection interventions in the future.

The existing literature on early marriage has generally addressed its negative impact on the reproductive health, education, and well-being of children, especially girls. However, few studies have explored in depth the active involvement of parents in this practice, particularly in relation to child exploitation in certain social and cultural environments such as Bogor, West Java. A number of studies have been conducted, such as Sri Musrifah,¹⁵ Anak Agung,¹⁶ Mansyur Nawawi,¹⁷ Nina Maxwell,¹⁸ Kasiati and Isfentiani,¹⁹ Dureti Abdurahman,²⁰ Ahmed Nawaz,²¹ Ngoran Mathew,²² and Susan B. Schaffnit.²³ Most of the available studies tend to focus on structural factors such as poverty, low access to education, or cultural norms that allow early marriage, but few directly examine the role of parents in encouraging their children to marry at a young age motivated by economic or social exploitation.

This research aims to fill this gap by focusing on the dynamics of power in the family, especially in cases of early marriage involving children as victims of exploitation. This gap is important to fill because although early marriage is often considered a cultural phenomenon, the economic motives behind parental decisions have often been overlooked in previous studies. Through an in-depth case study and interview approach, this study seeks to identify the role of parents in facilitating or coercing child marriage, with the aim of uncovering the motives behind such actions and their impact on children's lives in a broader context. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to the existing literature by offering a new perspective related to child exploitation in early marriage.

¹⁵ Sri Musrifah and Rizca Yuni Putri, "Early Marriage: Regulation, Implementation and Research Findings," *Mikla: Mimbar Ilmiah Kesehatan Ibu Dan Anak (Maternal and Neonatal Health Journal)* 0825 (2022): 38–48, <https://doi.org/10.36696/mikia.v6i1.111>.

¹⁶ Anak Agung Istri Ari Atu Dewi et al., "The Role of Human Rights and Customary Law to Prevent Early Childhood Marriage in Indonesia," *Srinwijaya Law Review* 6, no. 2 (2022): 268–85, <https://doi.org/10.28946/slrev.Vol6.Iss2.1885.pp268-285>.

¹⁷ Mansyur Nawawi, "Sang Pencerah - Sang Pencerah," *Sang Pencerah* 8, no. 3 (2021): 465–75, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35326/pencerah.v8i3.2309>.

¹⁸ Nina Maxwell, "I'm Trying to Save My Family: Parent Experiences of Child Criminal Exploitation," *Youth Justice* 23, no. 2 (2023): 243–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14732254221122559>.

¹⁹ Kasiati and Isfentiani, "Factors Encouraging Early Marriage Among Adolescent Girls in East Java of Indonesia."

²⁰ Dureti Abdurahman, Nega Assefa, and Yemane Berhane, "Parents' Intention toward Early Marriage of Their Adolescent Girls in Eastern Ethiopia: A Community-Based Cross-Sectional Study from a Social Norms Perspective," *Frontiers in Global Women's Health* 3 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2022.911648>.

²¹ Ahmed Nawaz, "Journal of Public Policy Practitioners (JPPP)," *Journal of Public Policy Practitioners (JPPP)* 1, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32350/jppp.11.02>.

²² Ngoran Mathew Banlanjo, "Cultural Pedogamy: Towards an Eco-Cultural Theory of Early (Child) Marriage," *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 6 (2022): 98–102, <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejsocial.2022.2.6.334>.

²³ Susan B. Schaffnit, Mark Urassa, and David W. Lawson, "'Child Marriage' in Context: Exploring Local Attitudes towards Early Marriage in Rural Tanzania," *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 27, no. 1 (2019): 93–105, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09688080.2019.1571304>.

This research makes a significant new contribution in understanding the role of parents in child exploitation through early marriage, especially in the Bogor area, West Java. This fact can be a strong reason to test the hypothesis that the high rate of marriage failure in this region is partly due to the large number of underage marriages. Although the issue of early marriage has been extensively researched from a legal and child health perspective, the exploitation aspects encouraged by parents, both economically and socially, are still under-paid in the existing literature. The novelty of this study lies in an approach that focuses on how and why parents encourage early marriage as a form of exploitation, a dimension that has rarely been explained in previous research. A case study-based approach in the Bogor area will provide richer and more relevant local insights, especially in uncovering the social and economic dynamics that drive this practice.

This research also has a strong justification given the importance of a deeper understanding of the motives and effects of child exploitation in the context of early marriage on child protection policies in Indonesia. With the growing global awareness of children's rights, this study offers empirical evidence that policymakers and nonprofit organizations can use to design more appropriate interventions to prevent the practice of early marriage and the exploitation that comes with it. This research is expected to be the basis for stronger policies and more effective interventions in protecting children from practices that harm their rights.

METHODS

This study will use a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the role of parents in child exploitation through early marriage in Bogor, West Java. Data will be collected through in-depth interviews with parents and children who have married early, as well as through focus group discussions (FGDs) involving community leaders and child protection activists. Participatory observation will also be carried out to understand the social and cultural contexts that influence this practice. Data analysis will use a thematic analysis approach, which allows researchers to identify key themes that emerge from the participants' experiences. The entire research process will adhere to ethical principles, including obtaining participant consent and maintaining data confidentiality. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a deep understanding of the factors that encourage parents to marry their children at an early age, as well as their impact on these children. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on early marriage and provide recommendations for child protection policies in Indonesia, as well as serve as a basis for more effective interventions in preventing this exploitation practice.

DISCUSSION

Overview of Underage Marriage

Early marriage is one of the most serious and widespread forms of child exploitation in many parts of the world, especially in poverty-stricken regions and where patriarchal social norms are still strong.²⁴ Children, especially girls, who are married at an early age often lose their fundamental rights, such as the right to education, health, and protection from violence.²⁵ Not only are they forced into adult roles for which they are not yet physically and emotionally ready, but they are also trapped in a cycle of poverty and gender injustice.²⁶ In many cases, these girls are subjected to domestic violence, mental distress, and pregnancy at a prematurely young age, which is a high risk to their reproductive and mental health.²⁷

In Bogor Regency, generally men who marry underage women aged 19 years and above and come from families with an able and well-established economic strata.²⁸ This condition shows that early marriage is not only affected by poverty or limited access, but also occurs in a relatively stable socioeconomic context.²⁹ Cultural factors and strong patriarchal norms play a role in maintaining this practice, where early marriage is considered a specific social solution or strategy.³⁰

Early marriage is often driven by economic, social, and cultural factors that place girls as transferable assets in society.³¹ Poverty is the main reason families force girls to marry young, because they see marriage as a way to reduce the economic burden on the family.³² In addition, cultural norms that view marriage as a woman's obligation from a young age also reinforce this practice.³³ Exploitation in the context of early marriage occurs not only in physical form, but also in the form of taking away children's rights to choose their own future. In this case, girls are victims

²⁴ Syaflra Wahyu Widowati, Ira Nurmala, and Shrimarti Rukmini Devy, "Determinant of Early Marriage Adolescent to Risk Giving Birth Child in Case of Stunting," *Jurnal Promkes: The Indonesian Journal of Health Promotion and Health Education* 12, no. 1 (2024): 10–12, <https://doi.org/10.20473/jpk.V12.I1SP.2024.195-205>.

²⁵ Shuge Wang, "The Impact of Early Marriage and Childbearing in Rural Areas on Women's Status in Society 3. The Impact of Early Marriage and Childbearing in Rural Areas on Women's Status in Society," *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences* 28 (2024): 420–24, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54097/dy7cf122>.

²⁶ Joaquim M Nhampoca and Jeanette E Maritz, "Mental Health: Experiences of Adolescent Girls in Mozambique," *Frontiers in Global Health*, no. June (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2024.1278934>.

²⁷ Chanda Chansa Thelma et al., "Effects of Poverty on Early Marriages: A Case of Mansa District in Luapula Province, Zambia," *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research* 5, no. 4 (2023): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i04.5679>.

²⁸ Interview with AU, Bogor, September 5, 2024

²⁹ Zulfa, Hasanah, and Kusaini, "The Phenomenon of Early Marriage and Its Impact on Family Resilience."

³⁰ Deni Setiyawan et al., "Exploring Abhakalan Culture (Early Marriage) in Madura: A Dialogue of Customary Law, Religion, and The State," *Abkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 24, no. 2 (2024): 345–64, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i2.36070>.

³¹ Nhampoca and Maritz, "Mental Health: Experiences of Adolescent Girls in Mozambique."

³² Shah Atiqul Haq et al., "COVID-19 Pandemic: A Literature Review," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 2024, 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03085-3>.

³³ Gita Naik et al., "Adolescent Marriage a Violation of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights: Trend, Spatial Variation and Covariate Analysis from National Family Health Survey," *Clinical Epidemiology and Global Health* 25, no. December 2023 (2024): 101493, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cegh.2023.101493>.

of family decisions that prioritize tradition or short-term economic interests, rather than the child's welfare and development.³⁴

Effective policy measures must be taken to address early marriage as a form of child exploitation. Legal reforms that set a strict minimum age for marriage and prevent dispensation must be implemented firmly.³⁵ In addition, the community must be empowered through educational programs that increase awareness of the health and social risks faced by children due to early marriage. Moreover, social interventions involving families, schools, and community leaders are essential to change entrenched norms, which consider girls to be exploitable through the institution of marriage.³⁶ Comprehensive treatment involving multiple parties is key to ensuring that every child can enjoy their childhood with full rights without the threat of exploitation.³⁷

Early marriage not only impacts individual girls, but also has broader implications for social and economic development. Children who are married early are often cut off from education, which prevents them from reaching their full potential as productive members of society.³⁸ According to the *human capital* theory introduced by Becker (1993), education is one of the most important investments in human resources, which in turn results in an increase in economic productivity. When children, especially women, lose access to education due to early marriage, they lose the opportunity to contribute optimally to the family economy and society.³⁹ This impact creates a vicious cycle of poverty that is difficult to break, reinforcing social and economic inequalities in society.

In addition to losing education, children who are married early also face serious challenges in reproductive health.⁴⁰ The *life course theory* of Elder (1974) emphasizes that experiences in

³⁴ Hayati Rahmi, "Factors Affecting Early Marriage in Kati Maju Village, Ketambe District, Southeast Aceh Regency," *Journal of Asian Multicultural Research for Social Sciences Study* 4, no. 3 (2023): 1–23, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47616/jamrsss.v4i3.437>.

³⁵ Suleman et al., "The Review of the Maslahah Mursalah Related to Early Marriage: Implementation and Orientation."

³⁶ Émilie Hoareau, "L'éducation Contre l'exploitation : La Voix/e Des Organes Africains de Protection Des Droits de l'Homme Dans l'élimination Des Pratiques Culturelles, Religieuses et/Ou Traditionnelles Néfastes," *L'éducation En Débats : Analyse Comparée* 13, no. 2 (2023): 125–40, <https://doi.org/10.51186/journals/ed.2023.13-2.e1389>.

³⁷ M. Zainudin and Ahmad Rosidi, "Asas Legalitas Dalam Hukum Pidana Sebagai Sarana Penanggulangan Perkawinan Anak," *Ganec Suara* 18, no. 1 (2024): 583, <https://doi.org/10.35327/gara.v18i1.798>.

³⁸ Cholis Hamdani and Abdurrahman Abdurrahman, "Early Marriage and Household Vulnerability: Case Study in Medan Sinembah Village, Tanjung Morawa District, Deli Serdang Regency," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 8, no. 1 (2024): 210–19, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v8i1.7603>.

³⁹ Ahmed Saied Rahama Abdallah, Mohammed Omar Musa Mohammed, and Adel Ali Ahmed Mohamed, "Early Marriage and Its Association with the Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Factors of Women in Sudan: A Predictive Model," *The Open Public Health Journal* 16, no. 1 (2023): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.2174/18749445-v16-e230505-2022-167>.

⁴⁰ Aqsa Batoool et al., "The Impact of Marital Instability and Psychological Distress on Quality of Life among Married Women, Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 11, no. 2 (2023): 2447–54, <https://doi.org/10.52131/pjhss.2023.1102.0536>.

childhood and adolescence shape the life trajectory of individuals in adulthood.⁴¹ In the context of early marriage, pregnancy at a very young age increases the risk of health complications such as premature birth, anemia, and even maternal death.⁴² Girls who are forced to marry and have children at an early age tend to experience great physical and emotional stress, which has a long-term impact on their physical and mental well-being.⁴³ These negative experiences at a young age can also reduce their quality of life in adulthood, as well as have an impact on the next generation.

Blau's (1964) theory of social exchange is also relevant to understand the dynamics of power in early marriage. According to this theory, social relationships are often based on an unequal exchange of resources, where the party with more power (usually the older man in an early marriage) can dominate the weaker party (the girl).⁴⁴ This power imbalance makes girls who marry early vulnerable to domestic exploitation, including physical, sexual, and psychological violence.⁴⁵ They often lack autonomy or control over important decisions in their lives, such as bodily rights, education, or employment, because they are trapped in exploitative relationships.⁴⁶ This further exacerbates gender inequality and reinforces the cycle of systemic exploitation in early marriage.

To address the complexity of exploitation that occurs in early marriage, a holistic and evidence-based approach is essential. In addition to legal reform, there is a need for policy interventions that take into account the social, economic, and cultural dimensions that drive this practice. A deeper understanding of the underlying structural factors, such as poverty, gender inequality, and deep-rooted cultural norms, is also needed to design effective and sustainable interventions.

Dowry as One of the Motivations of Parents in Minor Marriages

Dowry, which has traditionally been considered a symbol of commitment in marriage, in many cases early marriage, turns into a tool of child exploitation. In some cultures, dowry is seen as a form of economic transaction in which girls are considered objects that can be traded through

⁴¹ Courtney E. Boen, Karen Kozlowski, and Karolyn D. Tyson, "'Toxic' Schools? How School Exposures during Adolescence Influence Trajectories of Health through Young Adulthood," *SSM - Population Health* 11 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100623>.

⁴² Sri Astuti, Nurbaety Nurbaety, and Nur Islamiyati, "Penyuluhan Dampak Pernikahan Dini Terhadap Kesehatan Biologis Dan Psikologis Ibu Dan Anak," *Joong-Ki: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 2, no. 2 (2023): 398–404, <https://doi.org/10.56799/joongki.v2i2.1668>.

⁴³ Hery Ernawati et al., "Health, Psychology, Economic Resilience and Wellbeing: Long-Term Effects on Family Welfare of Early Marriage," *F1000Research* 12 (2023): 366, <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.128719.1>.

⁴⁴ Hyginus Obinna Ogbonna and Chidi Slessor Mbah, "Examining Social Exchange Theory and Social Change in the Works of George Caspar Homans – Implications for the State and Global Inequalities in the World Economic Order," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2022): 90, <https://doi.org/10.36941/mjss-2022-0009>.

⁴⁵ Tehrani A Omidvar et al., "Psychological Science Research Paper," *Monthly Journal of Psychological Science* 20, no. 107 (2021): 953–69, <https://doi.org/10.52547/JPS.20.107.2059.A>.

⁴⁶ M Khusnun Niam, "Early Marriage Construction and Perpetuity Factors in Discourse of Power and Religion," *Buana Gender: Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Anak* 6, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.22515/bg.v6i1.3595>.

marriage.⁴⁷ The high value of dowry is often a determining factor in child marriage, where families, especially those living in poverty, use child marriage as a means to gain economic benefits.⁴⁸ This phenomenon indicates a reduction in the human value of girls, where they are treated as family economic assets instead of individuals who have rights to their own bodies and futures.

This exploitation through dowry often exacerbates gender injustice and confirms power imbalances in marital relationships. According to the theory of *commodification* proposed by Marx and further developed in feminist critical studies, when women are seen as objects of exchange, their value is reduced to mere goods that can be moved or sold. In this context, dowry becomes an instrument of exploitation in which families see child marriage as a solution to short-term economic pressure. Girls, in turn, are forced to accept this status, losing control over their bodies, lives and futures. Dowry, which should be a symbol of giving in marriage, has instead become a tool of exploitation that strengthens the patriarchal system.

Furthermore, the use of dowry as a space for child exploitation not only harms girls who are directly involved in marriage, but also strengthens a culture in which woman's rights continue to be deprived.⁴⁹ This culture is reinforced by social norms that consider women to be more valuable in the context of marriage if the dowry given is high, without taking into account the physical and psychological well-being of the child.⁵⁰ This creates a circle of injustice in which generation after generation of girls are forced into early marriage, due to a social system that normalizes the practice of exploitation through dowry.⁵¹ Firm policies are needed to stop the use of dowry as a tool of exploitation, including educating the public about children's rights and promoting gender equality in all aspects of life, including marriage.

⁴⁷ Fajria Noviana, Maria Teresa Avilla, and Nabillah Azalia Wibisono, "Objectification and Resistance of Women Against Patriarchal Shackles in Anime Haikara-San Ga Tooru Movie 1: Benio, Hana No 17-Sai," *Japanese Research on Linguistics, Literature, and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2023): 83–95, <https://doi.org/10.33633/jr.v5i2.8503>.

⁴⁸ Noviana, Avilla, and Wibisono.

⁴⁹ T. S. Dhileep and Anu Baisel, "Exploring the Patriarchal Oppression and Predicament of Women: A Radical Feministic Analysis of Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* and Arupa Patangia Kalita's *Felanee*," *World Journal of English Language* 14, no. 2 (2024): 527–34, <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n2p527>.

⁵⁰ Mohammed Siddique Kadwa and Hamza Alshenqeeti, "International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT) The Impact of Students' Proficiency in English on Science Courses in a Foundation Year Program," *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT)* 3, no. 11 (2020): 55–67, <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt>.

⁵¹ Prashant Narnaware, "Silent Suffering: A Study of Child Labor in Maharashtra," *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research* 6, no. 3 (2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i03.22538>.

Table 1: Early Marriage Data in Bogor

No.	Name of Woman	Age at Marriage	Marital Status	Spouse's Nationality	Spouse's Age
1	AU	15 years	Married	Indonesia	23 years
2	BG	16 years	Married	Indonesia	24 years
3	CT	14 years	Married	Indonesia	21 years
4	DW	17 years	Married	Indonesia	27 years
5	EL	15 years	Married	Indonesia	22 years

The table above shows an overview of early marriage in Bogor, focusing on the age of women at the time of marriage and the age of their spouses. From the data presented, it can be seen that most women involved in early marriage are in their teens, with ages ranging from 14 to 17 years old. Their partners, on the other hand, have an age gap of 7 to 10 years older, suggesting a significant age disparity. For example, AU who married at the age of 15, had a partner who was 23 years old, while DW who married at the age of 17 had a partner who was 27 years old. This phenomenon reflects the social and cultural dynamics in which young women are often positioned in unbalanced relationships, both emotionally and financially. These inequalities have the potential to increase the risk of exploitation and reduce their educational and development opportunities, emphasizing the need for social and educational interventions to address the issue of early marriage and the protection of children's rights in the area. The amount of dowry received ranges from 8 million to 20 million, as shown in the table below:

Table 2: Acquisition of wealth from marriage to a man in Bogor

No.	Name of Man	Age at Marriage	Marital Status	Dowry	Other Items
1	AH	23 years	Married	10,000,000	Used Car
2	BY	24 years	Married	15,000,000	Land (100 m ²)
3	CR	21 years	Married	8,000,000	Jewellery
4	DT	27 years	Married	12,000,000	Small Business
5	EK	22 years	Married	20,000,000	Bank Savings

The table above illustrates the material acquisitions that occur in the context of marriage among men in Bogor, focusing on the age at which marriage is made, dowry, and other forms of material acceptance. From the data presented, it can be seen that men marry at an age that ranges from 21 to 27 years old, indicating that they enter the mature phase more mature compared to young women who marry earlier. Dowries that vary, ranging from Rp 8,000,000 to Rp 20,000,000,

reflecting differences in social and economic status among couples. In addition, the acquisition of additional materials such as used cars, land, jewelry, and small businesses highlights how marriage is not only seen as an emotional bond, but also as a social transaction involving the exchange of wealth. This phenomenon indicates the existence of social and cultural pressures underlying marriage, where dowry and other material acquisitions become indicators of status and prestige in society. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact of these practices on individual well-being and family dynamics in the context of early marriage.

The following are the results of in-depth interviews with five participants related to the issue of dowry as a space for child exploitation in early marriage. Participants provided their views based on personal experience and observations of these practices in their surroundings.

Among the parents of the perpetrator, RS said, "I know that my child was still young when he was married and only turned 17 years old. But at the time we felt it was the best decision. The man promised a large dowry and offered a plot of land covering an area of 100 square meters. We also consider the economic conditions of the family. It feels hard to refuse, especially when the people around us say that this is a rare opportunity. We feel, as parents, that it is our responsibility to secure our children's future. But now I'm starting to realize that our son is actually not mentally and emotionally ready."⁵²

Meanwhile, AD revealed, "Since childhood, we have instilled that it is important for children to obey their parents. So when we asked her to marry us, we thought she would obey without asking much questions. We didn't expect that decision to make him feel like he was missing out on the future. The dowry we received was indeed financially helpful, around IDR 15 million and additional small business capital. But as it turned out, it all came at the expense of our son's happiness. Now, after seeing the impact, I feel guilty. But at that time, we were only following what was considered normal and normal in our society."⁵³

Furthermore, among the perpetrators, the AU stated that "I got married at the age of 15, and at that time I didn't understand what was really going on. My family received a large dowry from my husband. They thought this was the best decision for my future, but I felt the opposite. I was forced to leave school and all my dreams ran aground. As a child, I was not given a choice. I feel exploited because this decision never involved my will, and I was only considered an asset to improve the family's economic condition."⁵⁴ AU described how early marriage deprives her of her rights to determine the future, citing material provided by the husband to her family.

⁵² Interview with RS, Bogor, September 1, 2024

⁵³ Interview with AD, Bogor, September 1, 2024

⁵⁴ Interview with AU, Bogor, September 5, 2024.

The same thing was also conveyed by BG, "I got married at the age of 14. At that time, I didn't know anything about marriage. I just know that my family is happy because they received a large amount of dowry. After getting married, I could no longer continue my education. My life changed drastically and I felt like a traded item. My parents only thought about the economic benefits they got from this marriage. They never asked me if I was ready or not."⁵⁵ BG shared stories about how her early marriage cost her the opportunity to continue her education and how she felt she was being used as a tool to overcome her family's economic problems.

CT continued, "I was married at the age of 16, and for my family, it was an inevitable decision due to economic pressure. The dowry they receive is quite large, and for them, this is the best solution. But for me, it was the beginning of a life full of limitations. After I got married, I had to quit school and focus on being a wife, even though I didn't feel ready for that role. I was never given the opportunity to choose my own life path."⁵⁶ CT explained that her early marriage driven by dowry left her in a situation she didn't want, where her right to continue her education and develop herself was taken away.

DW also confirmed that "I got married when I was 15 years old. At that time, my family received a large dowry and they thought it was a good opportunity. I never had a say in that decision. I remember the day when my wedding took place, I felt like I had no other choice. After getting married, I had to quit school and focus only on my home life. Losing my freedom and education is the price I pay, and it happened because of decisions made by others on my behalf."⁵⁷ DW explained how early marriage limited her life, with decisions taken entirely by her family without considering her rights as a child.

The last is EI, she mentioned that "I was married at the age of 14. At that time, my family was very happy because they received a large dowry from my husband. But for me, it was the point where my freedom was lost. I was forced to leave school and take on the role of wife at a very young age. I felt like I had no control over my own life. The marriage happened not because I was ready, but because of the dowry given to my family. I feel like I'm being sacrificed for the sake of my family's financial gain."⁵⁸ EI testified how early marriage forced her to abandon her education and youth, while her family focused only on the material aspects of the marriage.

From these five interviews, it is clear that dowry is in many cases a tool of exploitation of girls, especially in the context of early marriage. Economic pressures and social norms that consider dowry as a status symbol exacerbated the situation, where girls were seen as commodities that

⁵⁵ Interview with BG, Bogor, September 5, 2024.

⁵⁶ Interview with CT, Bogor, September 5, 2024

⁵⁷ Interview with DW, Bogor, September 20, 2024

⁵⁸ Interview with EI, Bogor, September 20, 2024.

could be "sold" in marriage. Families often choose to marry their daughters at an early age on the grounds of high dowry, ignoring the child's right to a better education and life. The participants' personal experiences, especially AR and LM, confirmed that dowry was often used to justify the decision to marry early, when in the end, it deprived the girls of their future and freedom. The learning from the results of this interview shows the importance of education about children's rights, as well as the need for strict social and legal reforms to prevent the use of dowry as an instrument of exploitation.

Misinterpretation of Parental Obedience

The concept of *birrul walidain* in Islam refers to the obligation to do good, respect, and obey both parents as long as their orders do not contradict the teachings of the sharia.⁵⁹ This teaching is a fundamental part of Islamic ethics and is affirmed in various verses of the Qur'an, such as in QS. Al-Isra' verse 23 states that being devoted to one's parents is parallel to the obligation to worship Allah.⁶⁰ In practice, *birrul walidain* includes being polite, helping the needs of parents, and avoiding words or actions that hurt them.⁶¹ However, obedience to parents still has limits when it comes to children's human rights or orders that violate the principles of justice and benefit.⁶²

One of the key factors that strengthens the practice of early marriage and child exploitation is the misinterpretation of the concept of *birrul walidain* (filial piety to parents).⁶³ In Islamic teachings, *birrul walidain* is a highly respected and deeply rooted principle, which teaches the importance of respecting and caring for parents. However, in many cases, this concept is abused by parents or society to pressure children to accept decisions that are detrimental to them, including early marriage.⁶⁴ This misinterpretation causes children, especially girls, to feel trapped

⁵⁹ Hisam Ahyani, Haris Maiza Putra, and Aji Sofanudin, "Birrul Walidain in Political Preferences: Harmonizing Family Values and Employment Law in Indonesia," *El-Usrah* 7, no. 2 (2024): 923–45, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i2.22982>.

⁶⁰ Ummu Lathifah, Andri Nirwana, and Yeti Dahliana, "Birrul Walidain as the Foundation for the Development of Interpersonal Ethics in Muslim Families: Ibn Katsir's Tafsir Perspective," *Solo International Collaboration and Publication of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2025): 283–96, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61455/sicopus.v3i02.319>.

⁶¹ A. Nirwana AN et al., "Serving to Parents Perspective Azhar's Quranic Interpretation: Study of Birrul Walidain's Terms with the Thematic Method," *Linguistics and Culture Review* 6, no. S5 (2022): 254–63, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v6nS5.2155>.

⁶² Joni Tapingku, Ethical Thought, and Imam Al-ghazali Dan, "Islamic Philosophy Perspective on Birr Al-Walidain," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 5, no. 1 (2022): 17–34, <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v5i2.4051>.

⁶³ Sopyan, "Child Exploitation by Parents in Early Marriage: Case Study in Cianjur West Java, Indonesia."

⁶⁴ Yudho Bawono et al., "Low Education and Early Marriage in Madura: A Literature Review," *The Journal of Educational Development JED* 7, no. 3 (2019): 166–72, <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/jed>.

in a moral obligation that is difficult to refuse.⁶⁵ They are often not given the space to question the decision to marry early, as it is considered a form of defiance or disobedience to parents.⁶⁶

In this context, the concept of *toxic obedience* has become very relevant. Forced obedience creates a profound moral dilemma for children, who are faced with a difficult choice between following their parents' wishes and protecting their own rights.⁶⁷ They often do not have the courage or freedom to refuse, for fear of being seen as unfilial or betraying family values. *Milgram's (1963) theory of obedience to authority suggests that individuals are often subject to higher authority, even when decisions taken by those authorities violate moral or human rights principles.*⁶⁸ In the case of early marriage, children fall victim to this toxic obedience, where social and religious pressures are used to legitimize practices that violate the child's right to education, protection, and a better future.⁶⁹

To address this issue, it is crucial to restore a correct understanding of the essence of *birrul walidain*.⁷⁰ The true essence of *birrul walidain* is not blind obedience, but respect based on a balance between fulfilling parental rights and protecting the welfare of children.⁷¹ In Islam, parents have a great responsibility to ensure that their children grow up in a supportive environment, including safeguarding children's rights to education and health, as well as protecting them from the dangers of exploitation.⁷² Therefore, a healthy interpretation of *birrul walidain* must include respect for the dignity and rights of the child as an individual who has the right to determine his or her own future.⁷³

For this reason, reform in religious education and public awareness is urgently needed. Religious leaders, teachers, and community leaders have an important role in straightening out the

⁶⁵ Nurafriani, "Gambaran Sosial Budaya Pernikahan Dini," *Journal of Telenursing (JOTING)* 13, no. 1 (2023): 104–16, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31539/joting.v5i2.7480> Gambaran.

⁶⁶ Martin Drahansky et al., "We Are IntechOpen , the World ' s Leading Publisher of Open Access Books Built by Scientists , for Scientists TOP 1 %," *Intech i*, no. tourism (2016): 13, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/57353>.

⁶⁷ Dodi Ahmad Haerudin, "The Role of Parents in the Moral Development of Early Childhood," *Jurnal Pelita PAUD* 7, no. 1 (2022): 84–91, <https://doi.org/10.33222/pelitapaud.v7i1.2476>.

⁶⁸ Alette Smeulers, "Milgram Revisited: Can We Still Use Milgram's 'Obedience to Authority' Experiments to Explain Mass Atrocities after the Opening of the Archives? Review Essay," *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 3, no. 1 (2020): 216, <https://doi.org/10.21039/jpr.3.1.45>.

⁶⁹ Banlanjo, "Cultural Pedogamy: Towards an Eco-Cultural Theory of Early (Child) Marriage."

⁷⁰ Majdah Zawawi, Azizah Mohd, and Bilal Hussain, "Nasab (Filiation) of Children in Assisted Reproductive Technology (Art) Under the Shari'ah Discourse," *IJUM Law Journal* 32, no. 1 (2024): 27–64, <https://doi.org/10.31436/iiumlj.v32i1.911>.

⁷¹ Afdal Afdal Taufik, Ifdil Ifdil, "Implementation of the Concept of Birrul Walidaini in Conseling of Family," *Psychology and Education Journal* 58, no. 1 (2021): 4049–52, <https://doi.org/10.17762/pae.v58i1.1464>.

⁷² Bastiana Bastiana, Abrar Abrar, and Reza H. Dynasti, "Unpacking Mutual Expectations in a Scavenger Family: A Case Study Investigating the Parent-Child Relationship," *Education Quarterly Reviews* 7 (2024): 121–29, <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.07.02.581>.

⁷³ Abdul Mukti, "Implementation of the Concept of Family Environmental Education From a Hadith Perspective," *Cakrawala Pedagogik* 7, no. 2 (2023): 272–79, <https://doi.org/10.51499/cp.v7i2.553>.

understanding of *birrul walidain* which is often misinterpreted.⁷⁴ They should emphasize that in Islam, the protection of children's rights is an integral part of parental obligations.⁷⁵ This requires reforms in religious education curricula that teach the values of respect for children's rights and the importance of making decisions that take their well-being into account. By educating the public about this principle, we can prevent the exploitation of children disguised through religious observance and reduce the practice of early marriage which is often rooted in the misinterpretation of religious teachings.⁷⁶

These reforms must involve not only religious education, but also social policies that protect children's rights more broadly. Governments, through stricter regulations and laws, must ensure that the best interests of children are always a top priority in any decision involving them, including marriage.⁷⁷ A more integrated effort from various parties including religious leaders, governments, and communities is key to protecting children from various forms of exploitation and ensuring that the principles of *birrul walidain* are applied in the right way, supporting the rights and well-being of children as a whole.⁷⁸ Here are some statements from the informants:

AU revealed, "I was married at the age of 16. At that time, I didn't want to get married at all, but my parents told me that as a child, I had to obey what they wanted. They often quote religious teachings, saying that *birrul walidain* means that I should not challenge their decision. I felt trapped, because refusing to be considered a sin, but in my heart I was not ready to live this marriage. In the end, I was forced to follow their wishes because of the enormous pressure."⁷⁹ AU explained how the concept of *birrul walidain* was used by his family to force him to marry, even though he felt he was not ready emotionally and mentally.

BG also said, "I got married when I was 15 years old. At that time, I actually wanted to continue school, but my parents said that my duty was to serve them. They said that this marriage was best for me and refused would be considered defiance. I felt like I had no choice. They always said that as a child, I had to be obedient, and if I didn't, I would be considered disobedient. I was

⁷⁴ Ainur Rafik and Siti Nurchayati, "Innovative Exploration: Strategies of Islamic Boarding School Leaders in Addressing Radicalism through Educational Transformation," *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2024): 467–76, <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v8i2.8200>.

⁷⁵ Kusnawan and Saepulah, "Tips for Building a Literacy Culture Among Islamic Religious Education Teachers," *Indonesian Journal of Contemporary Multidisciplinary Research* 3, no. 3 (2024): 493–504, <https://doi.org/10.55927/modern.v3i3.9323>.

⁷⁶ Hoareau, "L'éducation Contre l'exploitation : La Voix/e Des Organes Africains de Protection Des Droits de l'Homme Dans l'élimination Des Pratiques Culturelles, Religieuses et/Ou Traditionnelles Néfastes."

⁷⁷ Na Li, "Research on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Minor Children after Their Parents' Divorce," *Journal of Social Science and Humanities* 6, no. 6 (2024): 29–34, [https://doi.org/10.53469/jssh.2024.6\(06\).06](https://doi.org/10.53469/jssh.2024.6(06).06).

⁷⁸ Al-Hawary Kaas, Dubis Bhutta Birdsall, and Hossain Aziz, "Comprehensive Approaches to Child Development in Islamic Law," *Syariat: Akhwal Syaksiyah, Jinayah, Siyasah and Muamalah* 1, no. 1 (2024): 58–70, <https://doi.org/10.35335/wsrkf668>.

⁷⁹ Interview with AU, Bogor, September 5, 2024.

very confused at the time, whether choosing education was the wrong thing to do."⁸⁰ BG revealed that pressure from his family in the name of *birrul validain* forced him to sacrifice his education and the future he really wanted.

The same thing CT said, "I remember that time, when my family arranged my marriage at the age of 14. I protested and told my parents that I wasn't ready, but they reprimanded me. They said that as a child, I had to obey and respect their decision. They always emphasize the importance of *birrul validain*, and I have no more arguments. I feel guilty if I refuse, because it seems as if going against my parents is a great sin."⁸¹ Ct explains how the concept of *birrul validain* was abused to justify the decision to marry early, leaving him feeling trapped between obedience to his parents and his personal will.

Next is DW, Victim of Early Marriage "I was married at the age of 16. At that time, I didn't actually want to get married, but my parents said that as a child, I had to submit to their wishes. They used religious excuses, saying that *birrul validain* demanded that I not refuse. I felt confused and stuck. I wanted to continue my education, but the fear of being considered disobedient forced me to follow what they wanted."⁸² DW described how religious pressure with a misunderstanding of *birrul validain* made him feel guilty if he did not follow his parents' orders, even though he felt he was not ready to marry.

Finally, El, "I got married when I was 15 years old. My family kept saying that as a child, my job was to follow their will. They emphasized the importance of *birrul validain*, and I felt guilty if I refused. I was never given the opportunity to vote, because they said that refusing this marriage was an act of unfilial piety. I finally succumbed to the pressure, even though I really wanted to finish my education first."⁸³ El gave testimony about how the concept of *birrul validain* was used to abolish her right to vote in marriage, which ultimately caused her to lose the opportunity to live the life she wanted.

From the results of the interview, it is clear that the misinterpretation of the concept of *birrul validain* is one of the factors that strengthens the practice of early marriage. Participants emphasized that social and religious pressures, especially those that come from the understanding that children must obey parents without question, create situations where children, especially girls, feel they have no choice. This misunderstanding gives rise to a form of *toxic obedience*, in which children must choose between obeying their parents or defending their right to education and freedom of choice.

⁸⁰ Interview with BG, Bogor, September 5, 2024.

⁸¹ Interview with CT, Bogor, September 5, 2024.

⁸² Interview with DW, Bogor, September 20, 2024.

⁸³ Interview with El, Bogor, September 20, 2024.

NA and AR shared the view that social norms that place *birrul validain* as an absolute obligation, without understanding the balance of children's rights, exacerbate the situation of exploitation. LM adds an emotional dimension, revealing how the fear of being perceived as unfilial forces the child to accept adverse decisions. Meanwhile, the DA and RT highlighted the importance of the role of community leaders and religious leaders to straighten out this understanding, so that religious teachings are not misused to justify early marriage. The whole interview emphasizes that the renewal of religious education and public awareness is urgently needed to ensure that *birrul validain* is understood in the right way, respects the balance between parental rights and children's rights, and protects children from exploitation under the guise of compliance.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights how early marriage and child exploitation occur in complex cultural, economic, and religious contexts. One of the key aspects identified is how dowry, which is supposed to be a symbol of commitment in marriage, is often used as a tool to exploit girls. In addition, the misinterpretation of the concept of *birrul validain* (filial piety to parents) also strengthens the practice of early marriage. In some communities, *birrul validain* is understood as absolute obedience to parental decisions, without considering the rights and welfare of the child. As a result, girls are often trapped in a form of *toxic obedience*, where they feel powerless to refuse early marriage for fear of being considered unfilial. This phenomenon shows that early marriage is not only a social problem, but also closely related to exploitation legitimized by misinterpreted cultural and religious norms. Children's rights to education, determine their future, and have protection from exploitation are often ignored, both by families and society. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the essence of religious teachings is needed as well as reforms in the social and legal system that better protect children's rights.

There needs to be a comprehensive and sustained education campaign on children's rights, especially the rights to education, health, and freedom to determine the future. Society should be given a deeper understanding of how early marriage harms girls and exacerbates gender inequality. These educational programs should involve schools, families, and communities to ensure a thorough understanding at all levels of society. One of the important steps to prevent child exploitation through the misinterpretation of the *birrul validain* concept is to reform the religious education curriculum. The material taught must emphasize that *birrul validain* does not mean blindly obeying parents, especially in cases that are detrimental to the rights and welfare of children. Religious leaders must be involved in this campaign to provide a correct understanding of religious teachings in the modern context.

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Interview

1. Interview with AU, Bogor, September 5, 2024.
2. Interview with BG, Bogor, September 5, 2024.
3. Interview with CT, Bogor, September 5, 2024.
4. Interview with DW, Bogor, September 20, 2024.
5. Interview with EL, Bogor, September 20, 2024.
6. Interview with RS, Bogor, September 1, 2024.
7. Interview with AD, Bogor, September 1, 2024.