

Premarital Counseling Strategies of the Head of the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office for Early-Marriage Prevention

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Abstract:

Early marriage remains persistent in Putri Betung District, where educational limitations, economic pressures, local cultural norms, and insufficient family readiness influence marriage decisions. This study analyzes the premarital counseling strategies employed by the head of the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office (KUA) to prevent early marriage. A qualitative case study was conducted at the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office in February 2026 using observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Three informants were purposively selected, consisting of one head of the KUA and two Islamic religious counselors. The data were analyzed using an interactive model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, while source and technique triangulation were employed to establish credibility. The findings, interpreted through an adapted Porter's Five Forces framework, identified five interconnected strategies: community education and outreach, marriage guidance, persuasive engagement with religious and community leaders, cross-sectoral collaboration, and individual-awareness

development. These strategies were implemented through scheduled and incidental counseling activities and supported by coordination with village authorities, schools, health services, and community figures. However, their implementation was constrained by the cultural acceptance of early marriage, economic vulnerability, low educational attainment, limited reproductive-health literacy, extensive geographical coverage, and inadequate institutional resources. The findings indicate that these strategies were reported to strengthen public understanding of marital readiness, although the study did not measure a statistical reduction in early-marriage cases. Therefore, the reported outcomes should be understood as perceived improvements in knowledge, awareness, and institutional coordination rather than conclusive evidence of a reduction in early marriage.

Keywords: early marriage, premarital counseling, Religious Affairs Office, marriage guidance, institutional leadership

A. Introduction

Early marriage remains a complex social problem in Indonesia because it affects educational continuity, reproductive health, family welfare, child protection, and human-resource development. Law Number 16 of 2019 established 19 years as the minimum marriage age for women and men, but legal reform alone has not removed the practice.¹ More broadly, the implementation of legal guarantees in Muslim-majority societies is shaped by national legal systems, public policy, and cultural and religious considerations. This indicates that formal regulation acquires practical meaning through the institutional and social contexts in which it is implemented.² Marriage decisions are also shaped by limited education, economic hardship, cultural expectations, unintended pregnancy, religious understanding, and inadequate family preparation. Indonesian evidence further associates early marriage with interrupted education and continuing economic vulnerability. Prevention therefore requires sustained education and support involving families, communities, and public institutions, particularly the Religious Affairs Office (Kantor Urusan Agama—KUA) as the frontline provider of Muslim marriage and family services.³

¹ Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019 tentang Perubahan atas Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan, Pub. L. No. Undang-Undang Nomor 16 Tahun 2019, 16 LN.2019/NO.186, TLN NO.6401 4 hlm. (2019), <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/details/122740/uu-no-16-tahun-2019>.

² Muzayyin Ahyar, 'Muslim Societies, Civil and Political Rights, and The Guarantee of Religious Freedom: A Comparative Study Between Indonesia and Turkiye Constitutions', *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2023): 47–50, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v5i2.9738>.

³ Bimo Walgito, *Bimbingan Dan Konseling Perkawinan*, Revised ed. (Andi, 2017); Syamsu Yusuf, *Psikologi Perkembangan Anak Dan Remaja*, 19th printing (Remaja Rosdakarya, 2019).

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The KUA's responsibilities extend beyond marriage registration to marriage guidance, family counseling, religious outreach, and community education. These services are intended to prepare prospective couples mentally, spiritually, psychologically, socially, and economically for family life.⁴ The head of the KUA is responsible for planning activities, coordinating Islamic religious counselors, developing partnerships, and adapting programs to local needs. Premarital counseling consequently depends not only on official materials but also on leadership that connects administrative services, religious education, and community participation.⁵

Previous Indonesian studies show that KUA counseling combines legal education, religious guidance, social outreach, and cooperation with community institutions. Continuous counseling has been reported to support marital readiness and understanding of the consequences of early marriage, while persuasive approaches are important when family decisions are influenced by parents, religious figures, and local customs. Communication must also be adjusted to participants' educational and social backgrounds, because lectures alone may not adequately address differences in knowledge and experience.⁶

International research supports a broader, culturally responsive model of premarital counseling. Muslim marriage preparation often relies on imams, but collaboration with professional counselors, families, and community institutions is needed to overcome limited awareness, stigma, and practical barriers to participation.⁷ Religious premarital counseling also addresses partner expectations, family roles, communication, conflict, parenting, health, and financial management, while religious values and family responsibility remain important for Muslim couples. Religious leaders can nevertheless discourage,

⁴ Raihan Budi Adriansyah and Khatibah, 'Strategi KUA Dalam Sosialisasi Dampak Negatif Pernikahan Usia Dini Bagi Remaja Di Desa Simpang Marbau', *Asas Wa Tandhim: Jurnal Hukum, Pendidikan Dan Sosial Keagamaan* 5, no. 2 (2026): 491–506, <https://doi.org/10.47200/awtjhpsa.v5i2.3483>.

⁵ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 'Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam. Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam Nomor 189 Tahun 2021 Tentang Petunjuk Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Perkawinan Calon Pengantin', Kementerian Agama RI, 2021.

⁶ Uswatun Hasanah et al., 'Peran Pendidikan Pra Nikah Dalam Mencegah Pernikahan Dini Di Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Kecamatan Krejengan Kabupaten Probolinggo', *Al-'Adalah : Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 141–54, <https://doi.org/10.31538/adlh.v8i1.3269>; Putri Ramadhan and Januar Januar, 'Strategi Komunikasi Penyuluh Agama Islam Pada Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Pranikah Di Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Kecamatan IV Koto', *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 3, no. 05 (2024): 01–08, <https://doi.org/10.56127/jukim.v3i05.1659>.

⁷ Amal Killawi et al., 'Perceptions and Experiences of Marriage Preparation Among U.S. Muslims: Multiple Voices from the Community', *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 44, no. 1 (2018): 90–106, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12233>.

ignore, or reinforce early marriage, showing that religious authority becomes preventive only when supported by appropriate knowledge and cooperation.⁸

Evidence concerning child-marriage programs also requires caution. Educational support, life-skills development, and economic opportunities show promising results, but their effects vary according to program design, target groups, implementation quality, and local conditions. Changes in knowledge or social attitudes do not necessarily produce measurable changes in marriage behavior. Claims concerning prevention should therefore distinguish reported improvements in awareness from demonstrated reductions in early-marriage cases.⁹

Despite the available literature, limited attention has been given to how a KUA head plans, coordinates, implements, and evaluates premarital counseling as a local prevention strategy. Much Indonesian research has examined the general role of counselors, program implementation, or KUA functions in urban areas and regions of Java and Sulawesi. It does not sufficiently explain implementation in Putri Betung District, where geographical distance, educational conditions, economic difficulties, community structures, and local cultural values may influence program reach and acceptance. Examining this setting can clarify how national marriage policies are translated into locally appropriate practices.

This study adapts Porter's Five Forces to organize the social pressures surrounding marriage decisions and the KUA's responses.¹⁰ The framework is not used to treat families, prospective couples, religious leaders, or communities as market actors. It was selected because it can place several pressures—such as cultural influence, economic hardship, family authority, alternative responses to social problems, and institutional constraints—within one classification and connect them with educational, persuasive, preventive, and collaborative strategies. Institutional Theory would focus more strongly on legitimacy, organizational rules, and conformity, while the Social-Ecological Model would arrange influences across individual, family, organizational, community, and

⁸ Jimoh Amzat, 'Faith Effect and Voice on Early Marriage in a Nigerian State', *Sage Open* 10, no. 2 (2020): 2158244020919513, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020919513>.

⁹ Margaret E. Greene et al., 'Scope, Range and Effectiveness of Interventions to Address Social Norms to Prevent and Delay Child Marriage and Empower Adolescent Girls: A Systematic Review', *BMJ Open* 14, no. 1 (2024): e071275, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-071275>; Anju Malhotra and Shatha Elnakib, '20 Years of the Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Systematic Review', *Journal of Adolescent Health* 68, no. 5 (2021): 847–62, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.11.017>.

¹⁰ Michael E. Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors* (Free Press, 1980).

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policy levels. Leadership theories would concentrate more directly on the characteristics and behavior of the KUA head.¹¹

Porter's framework is therefore used as a contextual organizing tool, not as a literal application of business competition or a claim that it is superior to alternative theories. It does not measure the strength of each pressure or prove that a particular strategy reduces early marriage. Accordingly, this study examines the premarital-counseling strategies reported by the head of the Putri Betung KUA, their implementation, the involvement of related actors, and the factors supporting or limiting the programs. The study contributes a local account of religious-institution leadership and community-based prevention while maintaining cautious conclusions about program outcomes.

B. Literature Review

1. Premarital Counseling and Marital Readiness

Premarital counseling is an educational and preventive process that prepares prospective couples for marital responsibilities, communication, conflict management, reproductive health, parenting, and financial planning. It extends beyond legal and religious requirements by developing the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and economic readiness needed to establish a stable family.¹²

In Indonesia, premarital counseling is institutionally implemented through the *Bimbingan Perkawinan* (Bimwin) program administered by the Religious Affairs Office. The program provides prospective couples with knowledge concerning marriage regulations, spousal rights and obligations, reproductive health, communication, child development, and household management to support the formation of a *sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah* family.¹³

Its effectiveness depends on relevant materials, competent counselors, appropriate delivery methods, and participant involvement. Systematic premarital education can strengthen legal awareness, psychological maturity,

¹¹ Kenneth R. McLeroy et al., 'An Ecological Perspective on Health Promotion Programs', *Health Education Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1988): 351–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019818801500401>; Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 147–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101>.

¹² Walgito, *Bimbingan Dan Konseling Perkawinan*; Yusuf, *Psikologi Perkembangan Anak Dan Remaja*.

¹³ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 'Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam. Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam Nomor 189 Tahun 2021 Tentang Petunjuk Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Perkawinan Calon Pengantin'.

religious understanding, and knowledge of family responsibilities.¹⁴ Because participants have different educational, social, and cultural backgrounds, counseling should employ contextual and interactive communication rather than function solely as an administrative requirement.¹⁵

2. Early Marriage and Its Determining Factors

Early marriage refers to marriage occurring before an individual has attained sufficient legal, physical, psychological, social, and economic maturity. Indonesian Law Number 16 of 2019 establishes 19 years as the minimum marriage age for men and women. However, reaching the legal age does not necessarily indicate comprehensive marital readiness because individuals may still experience emotional immaturity, economic instability, limited reproductive-health knowledge, and insufficient understanding of marital responsibilities¹⁶.

Early marriage is influenced by interconnected cultural, social, educational, and economic conditions. Economic hardship may encourage families to perceive marriage as a way to reduce household responsibilities, while limited education restricts access to information about reproductive health and the consequences of early marriage. Cultural norms may also legitimize marriage at a young age when it is associated with family honor, protection from prohibited relationships, or local traditions. Marriage decisions are therefore shaped not only by individual preferences but also by family expectations and the wider social environment.¹⁷ Comparative evidence from Yobe State, Nigeria, similarly illustrates that marriage practices are embedded in local religious and customary structures, including the continued acceptance of early marriage in some rural communities.¹⁸

The consequences may include interrupted education, limited employment opportunities, reproductive-health risks, psychological problems, family conflict, and economic vulnerability. Their effects can extend to children,

¹⁴ Hasanah et al., 'Peran Pendidikan Pra Nikah Dalam Mencegah Pernikahan Dini Di Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Kecamatan Krejengan Kabupaten Probolinggo'.

¹⁵ Ramadhan and Januar, 'Strategi Komunikasi Penyuluh Agama Islam Pada Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Pranikah Di Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Kecamatan IV Koto'.

¹⁶ UU No. 16 Tahun 2019.

¹⁷ Harsoyo and Rahmad Purwanto Widyastomo, 'Faktor Pertimbangan Pernikahan Dini Dan Strategi Pencegahan: Early Marriage Consideration Factors and Prevention Strategies', *Jurnal Riset Sosial Humaniora Dan Pendidikan* 1, no. 3 (2022): 84–103, <https://doi.org/10.56444/soshumdik.v1i3.224>; Soerjono Soekanto, *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar*, 48th Printing (Rajawali Pers, 2017).

¹⁸ Abubakar Ibrahim Adamu and Ishaq Abdullahi, 'Polygamy in Comparative Religious Perspective and Its Social Implications for Unmarried Women in Yobe State, Nigeria', *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 141–82, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v7i2.10789>.

families, and community welfare.¹⁹ Family resilience among young couples consequently requires access to education, counseling, social assistance, and institutional support.²⁰

3. Institutional and Leadership Strategies of the Religious Affairs Office

The Religious Affairs Office performs administrative, educational, religious, and social functions in Muslim family development. Beyond marriage registration, the KUA provides premarital counseling, family guidance, religious outreach, and information concerning marriage regulations. Early-marriage prevention therefore requires legal measures supported by education about its health, psychological, educational, and social consequences.²¹ Continuous counseling can strengthen understanding of marital readiness, while persuasive engagement is needed when decisions are influenced by parents, religious figures, customary leaders, and local values.²²

International studies confirm that religious institutions frequently address marital, family, social, and psychological concerns, requiring collaboration among religious leaders, professional counselors, families, and community institutions.²³ Religious premarital counseling covers marital values, family roles, communication, financial management, parenting, health, and conflict resolution. However, religious leaders may discourage, ignore, or reinforce early marriage depending on their knowledge and counseling orientation.²⁴ KUA strategies must therefore combine education, prevention, persuasion, and cooperation with village authorities, schools, health services, family-planning counselors, and community organizations.²⁵ Evidence from the

¹⁹ Lisa Cameron et al., 'Child Marriage: Using the Indonesian Family Life Survey to Examine the Lives of Women and Men Who Married at an Early Age', *Review of Economics of the Household* 21, no. 3 (2023): 725–56, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11150-022-09616-8>.

²⁰ Fitriyani et al., 'Building Family Resilience Among Early Marriage Practitioners in North Bogor, Indonesia', *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 8, no. 2 (2025): 835–52, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v8i2.26643>.

²¹ Ahmad Wafiq and F. Setiawan Santoso, 'Upaya Yuridis Dan Sosiologis Kantor Urusan Agama Dalam Pencegahan Pernikahan Usia Dini', *Ulumuddin: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 7, no. 1 (2017): 17–30, <https://doi.org/10.47200/ulumuddin.v7i1.181>.

²² Zulfadli Zulfadli, 'Peran Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Dalam Meminimalisir Pernikahan Dini (Studi Kasus Di Kabupaten Pangkep)', *BUSTANUL FUQAH: Jurnal Bidang Hukum Islam* 4, no. 1 (2023): 75–87, <https://doi.org/10.36701/bustanul.v4i1.872>.

²³ Osman M. Ali et al., 'The Imam's Role in Meeting the Counseling Needs of Muslim Communities in the United States', *Psychiatric Services* 56, no. 2 (2005): 202–5, <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.56.2.202>; Killawi et al., 'Perceptions and Experiences of Marriage Preparation Among U.S. Muslims'.

²⁴ Amzat, 'Faith Effect and Voice on Early Marriage in a Nigerian State'.

²⁵ Muhlis Hoddin et al., 'Strategi Penyuluh Kantor Urusan Agama Dalam Mencegah Pernikahan Usia Dini', *El-Fatih: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Penyuluhan Islam* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.65178/elfatih.v2i1.16>.

KUA of Kraksaan District further demonstrates the importance of partnership-based prevention. Cooperation among KUA officials, village authorities, health services, local government, and religious organizations enabled child-marriage applications to be addressed through coordinated legal, administrative, and community mechanisms.²⁶

Community engagement does not automatically produce measurable reductions in early marriage. Educational support and life-skills development show promising results, but their effects depend on local context, implementation, target groups, and evaluation design.²⁷ The KUA head integrates these strategies through planning, task distribution, partnership development, coordination, and evaluation, while adapting them to geographical limitations, customary traditions, community structures, and available resources.²⁸ Leadership is therefore reflected in the ability to coordinate institutional resources and translate national policies into locally appropriate programs through contextual religious outreach.²⁹

4. Adaptation of Porter's Five Forces Framework

Porter's Five Forces identifies new entrants, substitutes, supplier and buyer power, and rivalry as external forces influencing organizational strategy.³⁰ Although developed for business analysis, this study adapts the framework to organize the social pressures surrounding early marriage and the KUA's responses. Institutional Theory focuses more on legitimacy, rules, and organizational conformity, while the Social-Ecological Model arranges influences across individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels.³¹ Leadership theories primarily examine leaders' characteristics and behavior. Porter was selected because it allows several pressures and institutional responses to be considered simultaneously, not because it is superior to these alternatives.

The framework was used after the main strategies had been identified from the research data. The threat of new entrants represents adolescents entering marriage without adequate preparation, while substitutes refer to early

²⁶ Ahmad Hirzan Anwari et al., 'Prevention of Child Marriage by the KUA of Kraksaan District through Partnership: A Perspective of Lawrence Meir Friedman's Legal System Theory', *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2024): 12–17, <https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v6i2.9181>.

²⁷ Greene et al., 'Scope, Range and Effectiveness of Interventions to Address Social Norms to Prevent and Delay Child Marriage and Empower Adolescent Girls'.

²⁸ Adriansyah and Khatibah, 'Strategi KUA Dalam Sosialisasi Dampak Negatif Pernikahan Usia Dini Bagi Remaja Di Desa Simpang Marbau'.

²⁹ Moh. Ali Aziz, *Ilmu Dakwah: Edisi Revisi* (Prenada Media, 2019), https://books.google.com/books/about/Ilmu_Dakwah.html?id=9qXljwEACAAJ.

³⁰ Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*.

³¹ McLeroy et al., 'An Ecological Perspective on Health Promotion Programs'; DiMaggio and Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited'.

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marriage being viewed as a solution to economic hardship, unintended pregnancy, family concerns, or social pressure. Supplier power represents the influence of parents, religious figures, customary leaders, and cultural norms, whereas buyer power concerns the ability of adolescents and families to make informed decisions. Rivalry describes the tension between cultural acceptance of early marriage and messages promoting legal compliance, education, health, and marital readiness.³² These forces were connected respectively with community education, marriage guidance, persuasive engagement, individual-awareness development, and cross-sectoral collaboration.

This adaptation does not treat families and communities as market actors or marriage as a commercial transaction. It does not test Porter's economic propositions, prove direct relationships between strategies and outcomes, or demonstrate a numerical reduction in early-marriage cases. Because the categories depend on local conditions, they cannot be directly applied to other KUA offices. The framework is therefore used only to organize the findings within the Putri Betung context.

C. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case-study design to obtain an in-depth and contextual understanding of the premarital counseling strategies implemented by the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in preventing early marriage. The case-study design enabled the researcher to examine institutional strategies, program implementation, and social interactions within a specific organizational setting.³³ The research was conducted at the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office, Gayo Lues Regency, Aceh, Indonesia, in February 2026.

1. Participants/Subjects

The study involved three participants selected purposively based on their knowledge, institutional responsibilities, and direct involvement in premarital counseling and early-marriage prevention. The participants

³² Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*.

³³ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (SAGE Publication, 2018); Sarah Crowe et al., 'The Case Study Approach', *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 11, no. 1 (2011): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-100>.

consisted of one head of the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office and two Islamic religious counselors.

The head of the KUA served as the principal informant because of his responsibility for planning, coordinating, implementing, and evaluating premarital counseling programs. The two religious counselors provided information concerning counseling materials, implementation methods, community outreach, participant responses, cross-sectoral cooperation, and the barriers encountered during program implementation. The selection of these participants enabled the study to examine the programs from leadership and implementation perspectives.³⁴ Prospective couples, parents, religious leaders, marriage registrars, and community members were discussed as recipients, partners, or beneficiaries of the KUA programs, but they were not interviewed as research participants.

2. Instruments

The researcher served as the primary instrument in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. Supporting instruments included a semi-structured interview guide, an observation sheet, field notes, and documentation guidelines.

Interviews with the KUA head focused on program planning, counseling strategies, institutional coordination, supporting factors, implementation barriers, and program evaluation. Interviews with the two religious counselors explored counseling materials, communication methods, community-education activities, community responses, and cooperation with related institutions. Observations were used to record counseling activities, interactions, and communication methods, while documentation included program guidelines, counseling materials, activity records, and institutional policies related to marriage guidance and early-marriage prevention.

3. Research Procedure

The research procedures comprised preparation, data collection, data analysis, and data verification. During the preparation stage, the researcher determined the research focus, selected the participants, and prepared the interview, observation, and documentation guidelines. Data were collected in February 2026 through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation.

³⁴ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.

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The data were analyzed using an interactive analytical model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.³⁵ Interview results, observation notes, and documents were selected, coded, classified, and organized into themes concerning counseling strategies, program implementation, institutional cooperation, supporting and inhibiting factors, and program outcomes.

The credibility of the findings was established through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the KUA head and the two religious counselors. Technique triangulation was performed by comparing interview findings with observational data and relevant documentation. This process ensured that the findings were contextually grounded, transparent, and academically accountable.³⁶

D. Findings

The interview, observation, and document data were reviewed to identify the strategies used by the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office to address early marriage. The KUA head and the two religious counselors reported that early marriage was related to educational limitations, economic difficulties, cultural expectations, social pressure, and religious understanding. These conditions required the KUA to combine education, religious counseling, community involvement, and cooperation with related institutions.³⁷ Statements concerning prospective couples, parents, adolescents, and community members in this section are based on reports from KUA personnel because those groups were not interviewed.

1. Identified Premarital Counseling Strategies

The KUA head and the two religious counselors reported five main strategies: community education and outreach, marriage guidance, persuasive engagement, cross-sectoral collaboration, and building individual awareness. Porter's Five Forces was used only to organize the social conditions addressed by each strategy.³⁸

Table: 1 Premarital Counseling Strategies Identified in the Research Data

³⁵ Matthew B. Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd edn (Sage, 2014).

³⁶ Crowe et al., 'The Case Study Approach'.

³⁷ Cameron et al., 'Child Marriage'.

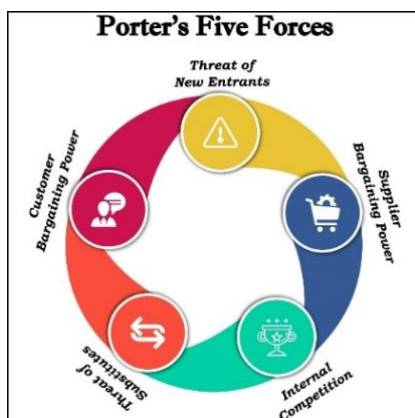
³⁸ Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*.

Strategy	Main Forms of Implementation	Adapted Five Forces Category
Community education and outreach	Counseling in mosques, schools, Islamic study groups, and community forums	Threat of new entrants
Marriage guidance	Bimwin, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, simulations, and case studies	Threat of substitutes
Persuasive engagement	Personal dialogue, family counseling, and engagement with influential community figures	Bargaining power of suppliers
Cross-sectoral collaboration	Cooperation in education, reproductive health, marriage regulations, and family counseling	Intensity of rivalry
Individual-awareness development	Moral education, personal responsibility, and future planning	Bargaining power of buyers

The classification did not treat families, prospective couples, religious leaders, or communities as market actors. The categories were used to connect the reported social conditions with the KUA's responses. These conditions included adolescents entering marriage without adequate preparation, early marriage being viewed as a solution to family problems, the influence of parents and community leaders, differences between cultural expectations and marriage regulations, and the ability of adolescents and families to make informed decisions. The classification did not show that any strategy directly reduced early-marriage cases.

Figure: 1 Integrated Premarital Counseling Strategy Model at the Putri Betung Religious Affairs Office

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Source: Adapted from Porter (1980) and processed from research data, 2026.

2. Educational Outreach and Marriage Guidance

The KUA head and the two religious counselors reported that education and outreach were directed toward adolescents, parents, prospective couples, and community members. The activities were conducted through mosques, schools, Islamic study groups, and community forums. The reported materials covered the minimum legal age of marriage, reproductive health, psychological readiness, educational continuity, family responsibilities, and the consequences of entering marriage without adequate preparation. These activities were consistent with the educational role of Islamic outreach in addressing social problems.³⁹

In the adapted framework, community education addressed the threat of adolescents entering marriage without adequate preparation. The KUA personnel reported that limited information and the acceptance of early marriage as a common practice could influence family decisions. Educational activities were therefore intended to provide adolescents and families with information before marriage decisions were made.

This educational orientation corresponded with QS Al-Isrā' [17]:36:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

³⁹ Aziz, *Ilmu Dakwah: Edisi Revisi*.

“And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned.” (QS Al-Isrā’ [17]:36)

The verse emphasizes that decisions should be based on knowledge and responsibility.⁴⁰ According to the KUA head and the two counselors, premarital education was intended to provide legal, health, psychological, and social information before marriage. However, the study did not directly examine changes in the knowledge of adolescents or families. Previous studies have also emphasized the importance of legal education and continuous religious counseling in efforts to prevent early marriage.⁴¹

The KUA personnel also described Bimbingan Perkawinan (Bimwin) as an important form of marriage preparation. They reported that Bimwin was not treated merely as an administrative requirement. It was intended to prepare prospective couples psychologically, spiritually, socially, and economically. The materials included Islamic marriage regulations, spousal rights and obligations, family communication, conflict management, reproductive health, parenting, and household financial planning.⁴²

According to the KUA personnel, Bimwin was delivered through lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, simulations, and case studies. In the adapted framework, Bimwin addressed the threat of early marriage being viewed as a solution to economic difficulties, adolescent relationships, unintended pregnancy, or family pressure. The program was intended to offer education, self-control, future planning, and marriage preparation as more responsible responses.

The emphasis on readiness corresponded with QS An-Nūr [24]:33:

وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ...⁴³

⁴⁰ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya* (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2019).

⁴¹ Wafiq and Santoso, 'Upaya Yuridis Dan Sosiologis Kantor Urusan Agama Dalam Pencegahan Pernikahan Usia Dini'.

⁴² Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 'Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam. Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam Nomor 189 Tahun 2021 Tentang Petunjuk Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Perkawinan Calon Pengantin'.

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“Let those who are unable to marry remain chaste until Allah enriches them out of His bounty.” (QS An-Nūr [24]:33)

The verse indicates that marriage should be accompanied by sufficient capability and that individuals who have not attained such capability should exercise self-restraint. This principle was also reflected in the following hadith:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَيْهِ بِالصَّوْمِ فَإِنَّهُ لَهُ وَجَاءٌ

“O young people, whoever among you is able to marry should marry; whoever is unable should fast, for fasting is a restraint for him.”⁴³

The KUA head and the two religious counselors explained that the ability to marry was not limited to physical maturity or reaching the minimum legal age. In their view, it also included psychological, economic, social, spiritual, and moral readiness. Premarital education was therefore intended to help prospective couples understand their future family responsibilities.⁴⁴ This statement represents the views of KUA personnel because prospective couples were not interviewed directly.

3. Persuasive, Collaborative, and Individual-Awareness Strategies

The KUA head and the two counselors reported that religious leaders, customary leaders, parents, and community figures were involved because they could influence marriage decisions. The KUA used personal dialogue and family counseling to explain marriage regulations, reproductive-health risks, psychological readiness, educational disruption, and possible social and economic consequences. According to the KUA personnel, families appeared more willing to receive counseling when respected religious, customary, or community figures were involved. This statement was based

⁴³ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl Al-Bukhārī., *The Book of Wedlock*, "Hadith No. 5065. (In Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, n.d.); Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *The Book of Marriage*, "Hadith No. 1400c (In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, n.d.), accessed 16 July 2026, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:1400c>.

⁴⁴ Hasanah et al., 'Peran Pendidikan Pra Nikah Dalam Mencegah Pernikahan Dini Di Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Kecamatan Krejengan Kabupaten Probolinggo'.

on the observations of KUA personnel rather than interviews with the families concerned.

In the adapted framework, the influence of parents and community figures was placed under the bargaining power of suppliers. The KUA did not attempt to disregard their influence but involved them in delivering counseling messages through channels accepted by the community.

This persuasive approach corresponded with QS An-Nahl [16]:125:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ...

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and debate with them in the best manner.” (QS An-Nahl [16]:125)

The verse emphasizes wisdom, appropriate teaching, and constructive dialogue in communicating religious messages. The KUA personnel reported that this approach helped them communicate legal and religious information in ways that were easier for the community to understand.⁴⁵

The participants also reported cooperation with village authorities, schools, madrasas, health centers, family-planning counselors, religious counselors, and community organizations. Schools and madrasas were involved in education for adolescents, health workers provided reproductive-health information, village authorities assisted in contacting families, and religious counselors delivered legal and religious guidance. These partnerships were intended to extend educational activities beyond the KUA office.

This cooperation was connected with the intensity of rivalry between the community's acceptance of early marriage and messages concerning legal age, education, health, and marriage readiness. The KUA personnel reported that cooperation helped related institutions deliver more consistent information. However, the study did not include numerical records showing how many institutions, schools, villages, or community members were reached. The findings indicate that religious and legal counseling needed support from educational, social, economic, and health services.⁴⁶ The involvement of different parties was also consistent with the educational, preventive, and collaborative roles of KUA religious counselors.

⁴⁵ Zulfadli, 'Peran Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Dalam Meminimalisir Pernikahan Dini (Studi Kasus Di Kabupaten Pangkep)'.

⁴⁶ Fitriyani et al., 'Building Family Resilience Among Early Marriage Practitioners in North Bogor, Indonesia'.

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The strategy of building individual awareness emphasized responsibility, emotional maturity, educational continuity, future planning, and the consequences of marriage decisions. According to the KUA personnel, counseling recipients were encouraged to consider their physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and economic readiness before marriage. In the adapted framework, this strategy was connected with the bargaining power of buyers. It was intended to help adolescents and families make informed decisions, but the study did not directly examine whether their decisions or behavior changed.

4. Implementation, Supporting Factors, Barriers, and Reported Outcomes

The KUA head and the two religious counselors reported that premarital counseling was conducted through scheduled and incidental activities. Scheduled activities mainly consisted of Bimwin, while incidental activities included counseling in schools, religious outreach, engagement with parents, and cooperation with village authorities. The KUA head coordinated the involvement of religious counselors, marriage registrars, health workers, school representatives, village authorities, and community figures. This cooperation was intended to provide counseling recipients with religious, legal, educational, psychological, and health information.⁴⁷

The KUA personnel reported using lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, simulations, and case studies. These methods were adjusted to the educational and social backgrounds of counseling recipients. Different methods were considered necessary because recipients differed in their education, previous knowledge, and ability to understand the materials.⁴⁸

Table: 2 Supporting and inhibiting factors in premarital counseling

No.	Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
1	Support from village authorities and related institutions	Cultural acceptance of early marriage

⁴⁷ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 'Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam. Keputusan Direktur Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam Nomor 189 Tahun 2021 Tentang Petunjuk Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Perkawinan Calon Pengantin'.

⁴⁸ Ramadhan and Januar, 'Strategi Komunikasi Penyuluh Agama Islam Pada Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Pranikah Di Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Kecamatan IV Koto'.

2	Participation of religious counselors, marriage registrars, and community leaders	Economic pressure on families
3	Cooperation with schools, madrasas, health centers, and family-planning counselors	Low educational attainment and limited reproductive-health literacy
4	Reported increasing awareness among some parents and adolescents	Limited human resources and institutional funding
5	Availability of religious and community forums	Wide geographical coverage and difficulty reaching all villages

The KUA personnel identified institutional cooperation and religious and community forums as supporting factors. They also reported growing awareness among some parents and adolescents concerning marital readiness, although this could not be confirmed directly because these groups were not interviewed.

Reported barriers included cultural acceptance of early marriage, economic pressure, low educational attainment, limited understanding of reproductive health, insufficient personnel and funding, and difficulty reaching every village. Some families reportedly viewed early marriage as a way to protect family honor, prevent prohibited relationships, or reduce household responsibilities. These findings indicate that program implementation was influenced by cultural, economic, educational, and organizational conditions.⁴⁹

The KUA attempted to address these barriers through community education, cooperation with schools and health services, village-level religious counseling, personal family counseling, and social media. However, the effect of each measure was not recorded separately.

The KUA head and two counselors reported better understanding of marital responsibilities among prospective couples, greater awareness of educational and marital readiness among some parents and adolescents, and stronger cooperation with related institutions. These outcomes reflect the observations of KUA personnel because the groups concerned were not interviewed directly. Moreover, the study lacked complete numerical data on

⁴⁹ Harsoyo and Widyastomo, 'Faktor Pertimbangan Pernikahan Dini Dan Strategi Pencegahan'; Soekanto, *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar*.

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Bimwin activities, participants, areas reached, underage-marriage applications, and early-marriage trends. It therefore shows reported improvements in knowledge, awareness, and cooperation, but does not establish that the strategies reduced early marriage in Putri Betung District.

E. Discussion

The findings suggest that early-marriage prevention in Putri Betung District cannot rely solely on marriage regulations. Marriage decisions are also shaped by cultural expectations, economic conditions, educational attainment, religious understanding, and support from related institutions. The KUA therefore needs to combine its administrative authority with educational, persuasive, religious, and collaborative roles. In this context, the KUA head is responsible for translating national marriage policies into strategies suited to local conditions.

1. Premarital Counseling as an Institutional Strategy

Premarital counseling needs to begin before marriage registration because family decisions may already have been made and supported by community figures when prospective couples visit the KUA. Educational activities in schools, mosques, Islamic study groups, and community forums allow information about marital readiness to be delivered before marriage plans become difficult to reconsider. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing legal education, continuous counseling, and community outreach as early forms of prevention.⁵⁰

The finding also expands the meaning of the KUA's function. Premarital counseling is not merely an administrative service for registered couples but part of a broader responsibility to prepare adolescents, families, and prospective couples for marriage. Bimwin should therefore combine legal and religious knowledge with communication, conflict management, reproductive health, parenting, financial planning, and spousal responsibilities.⁵¹

International studies support this wider approach. Marriage preparation among Muslim communities often depends on religious leaders, but stronger

⁵⁰ Muhammad Julian et al., 'Peranan Kantor Urusan Agama Dalam Mengantisipasi Pernikahan Usia Dini: Studi Kasus Kecamatan Citeureup Kabupaten Bogor', *As-Syar'i: Jurnal Bimbingan & Konseling Keluarga* 4, no. 1 (2021): 50–61, <https://doi.org/10.47467/as.v4i1.610>.

⁵¹ Alissa Qotrunnada Munawaroh et al., *Modul Bimbingan Perkawinan Untuk Calon Pengantin* (Direktorat Bina KUA dan Keluarga Sakinah, Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam, Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2016).

results require cooperation among imams, professional counselors, families, and community institutions.⁵² Religious premarital counseling also needs to address marital values, partner expectations, communication, financial management, parenthood, and conflict resolution.⁵³ Furthermore, culturally appropriate counseling for Muslim couples should consider the importance of religion, family responsibility, relationship effort, and the couple's bond.⁵⁴

This broader approach is particularly relevant in Putri Betung, where the wide service area, differences in educational background, economic hardship, and the influence of local customs affect the delivery and acceptance of counseling. Consequently, the KUA cannot rely only on office-based Bimwin. Counseling must also be communicated through accessible community forums and methods appropriate to local social and educational conditions.

2. Interpretation through Porter's Five Forces Framework

Porter's Five Forces was selected because it offers a way to examine several social pressures and connect them with the KUA's responses at the same time. Its use in this study is conceptual rather than literal. The framework does not treat families, adolescents, prospective couples, religious leaders, or community members as market actors. Instead, it helps organize how cultural expectations, economic pressure, family influence, community authority, and individual decision-making relate to educational, persuasive, and collaborative strategies.

This focus differs from other possible approaches. Institutional Theory is more suitable for explaining how organizational practices are shaped by legitimacy, professional norms, and institutional rules. The Social-Ecological Model organizes influences across individual, family, organizational, community, and policy levels.⁵⁵ Leadership theories generally focus more closely on the characteristics, behavior, and decisions of leaders. These theories could provide valuable explanations, but the present study required a framework that could organize several external pressures and the KUA's responses within one structure.

The strength of Porter's framework in this study lies in its ability to show that the KUA responds to several pressures simultaneously. Community

⁵² Killawi et al., 'Perceptions and Experiences of Marriage Preparation Among U.S. Muslims'.

⁵³ Annabella Osei-Tutu et al., 'Premarital Counseling Practices among Christian and Muslim Lay Counselors in Ghana', *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Advancing Theory and Professional Practice through Scholarly and Reflective Publications* 74, no. 3 (2020): 203–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542305020916721>.

⁵⁴ Noratthiah Nordin et al., 'Relationship Standards and Malay Muslim Couples' Marital Satisfaction', *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 49, no. 4 (2023): 825–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12659>.

⁵⁵ McLeroy et al., 'An Ecological Perspective on Health Promotion Programs'.

education addresses limited knowledge, Bimwin offers an alternative to rushed marriage decisions, persuasive engagement responds to the influence of parents and community authorities, individual-awareness development supports responsible decision-making, and cooperation among institutions addresses conflicting messages. The framework thus connects social conditions with specific forms of KUA action without claiming that one pressure operates independently from the others.

Nevertheless, adapting a business framework to a social and religious issue has clear limitations. Porter's original categories cannot fully represent personal relationships, religious values, family authority, or cultural obligations. The study also did not measure the strength of each pressure, compare them numerically, or show that a particular response directly reduced early-marriage cases. The categories may also overlap because parents, religious leaders, and community institutions can perform several roles at once.

The theoretical contribution of this adaptation therefore lies in offering a contextual way of organizing the relationship between social pressures and the responses of a local religious institution. It does not extend or verify Porter's original business theory. Instead, it shows how selected elements of the framework can be used carefully to examine the preventive role of a KUA while recognizing that marriage decisions are relational, cultural, and religious rather than commercial.

3. Religious and Community Authority, Contextual Barriers, and Implications

Formal regulations are not the only source of authority in marriage decisions because families may continue to follow cultural expectations and advice from respected local figures. Imams frequently address marital, family, social, and psychological concerns, but limited counseling training makes cooperation with professional services important.⁵⁶ Religious leaders may discourage, ignore, or support early marriage depending on their understanding of premarital relationships, morality, pregnancy, and family honor. Faith-based actors can support prevention when they address religious, cultural, educational, and economic causes together.⁵⁷ This finding

⁵⁶ Ali et al., 'The Imam's Role in Meeting the Counseling Needs of Muslim Communities in the United States'.

⁵⁷ Azza Karam, 'Faith-Inspired Initiatives to Tackle the Social Determinants of Child Marriage', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13, no. 3 (2015): 59–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2015.1075754>.

explains the KUA's involvement of community figures through dialogue that connects marriage regulations with locally understood religious and cultural values.

Cultural expectations and economic hardship also influence marriage decisions in Putri Betung. Early marriage may be viewed as a means of protecting family honor, preventing prohibited relationships, or reducing household responsibilities. Its possible consequences include educational disruption, economic vulnerability, and long-term family difficulties. Counseling should therefore use accessible language and methods appropriate to local educational and social conditions. International evidence shows that education, skills development, community engagement, and economic opportunities may support delayed marriage, although results depend on program design and local conditions.⁵⁸ Community programs can reduce risk in particular settings, but changes in awareness do not always produce changes in marriage behavior. Reported awareness in Putri Betung should consequently not be interpreted as proof of declining early-marriage cases.

Limited personnel, funding, transportation, communication facilities, and the wide service area also restricted counseling activities. Cooperation with religious counselors, schools, village authorities, health workers, and community leaders can help address these barriers because family readiness requires religious, educational, health, and economic support.⁵⁹ Theoretically, the findings suggest that the KUA head must combine formal authority with communication and cooperation. Premarital counseling therefore functions as both an educational service and a way of coordinating community resources. Early-marriage prevention should be treated as a shared responsibility rather than the exclusive responsibility of the KUA.

Practically, counseling should begin before marriage registration through schools, family outreach, religious gatherings, and community forums. Bimwin should combine religious and legal knowledge with communication, conflict management, reproductive health, parenting, and financial planning. Cooperation among institutions requires scheduled activities, clear responsibilities, information sharing, and regular evaluation. Personnel,

⁵⁸ Amanda M. Kalamar et al., 'Interventions to Prevent Child Marriage Among Young People in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review of the Published and Gray Literature', *Journal of Adolescent Health* 59, no. 3 (2016): S16–21, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.06.015>; Malhotra and Elnakib, '20 Years of the Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage'.

⁵⁹ Fitriyani et al., 'Building Family Resilience Among Early Marriage Practitioners in North Bogor, Indonesia'.

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funding, transportation, and communication facilities should also be strengthened, while digital education should complement direct counseling.

The study was limited to one KUA and three internal informants—one KUA head and two religious counselors—without directly interviewing prospective couples, parents, adolescents, marriage registrars, religious leaders, or community members. It did not follow counseling recipients over time or use complete numerical records of activities, participants, locations reached, underage-marriage applications, and early-marriage trends. The findings therefore cannot establish a direct reduction in early marriage or be generalized to all KUA offices. Future research should involve external groups, compare several KUA offices, combine interviews with numerical indicators, and follow counseling recipients over time to examine whether reported awareness is followed by delayed marriage and improved family readiness.

F. Conclusions

Based on the accounts of the KUA head and two religious counselors, premarital counseling in Putri Betung functioned as more than an administrative service. It combined early education, marriage preparation, persuasive engagement, and cooperation with related institutions to address the cultural, economic, educational, and religious conditions influencing marriage decisions. The main contribution of the study lies in showing how the KUA head connected national marriage policies with locally appropriate counseling and community cooperation. The adapted Porter framework also provided a contextual way to organize the relationship between social pressures and KUA responses without treating families and communities as market actors.

The reported outcomes were limited to perceived improvements in knowledge, marital readiness, public awareness, and cooperation among institutions. The study did not provide numerical evidence that the strategies reduced early-marriage cases. Future evaluation should therefore include direct feedback from prospective couples, parents, and adolescents, involve several KUA offices, and use long-term records of counseling participation and early-marriage trends.

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