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# Islamic Boarding School Strategies for Preventing Underage Marriage: A Study at Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School

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## ABSTRACT

Underage marriage remains a persistent social issue in Indonesia despite the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019, which raised the minimum legal age of marriage for both men and women to nineteen years. Although legal reform provides stronger protection for children, its effectiveness largely depends on the active participation of educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), in promoting awareness and preventive education. This study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, in preventing underage marriage following the legal reform of marriage age. This study employed a qualitative field research design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving boarding school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and community leaders selected purposively according to their involvement in educational and marriage-related issues. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while source and method triangulation were employed to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. The findings reveal that the Islamic boarding school implements an integrated prevention strategy consisting of Islamic family education (fiqh munakahat), dissemination of marriage law reform, character education, counseling services, parental engagement, and collaboration with religious and governmental institutions. The effectiveness of these programs is supported by strong institutional commitment, parental involvement, and students' increasing awareness of educational attainment before marriage. Nevertheless, economic hardship, socio-cultural traditions, and peer influence remain major barriers to prevention efforts. The study contributes to the growing literature by demonstrating that Islamic boarding schools function not only as religious educational institutions but also as strategic social agents in child protection and underage marriage prevention through value-based education and community engagement.

**Keywords:** Underage Marriage, Minimum Age For Marriage, Islamic Boarding Schools, Child Protection, Islamic Education.

## I. Introduction

Marriage is one of the most fundamental social institutions in human society, serving as the foundation for family formation, generational continuity, and the development of high-quality human resources. From an Islamic perspective, marriage is regarded as *mitsaqan ghalizhan* (a solemn covenant),



intended to establish a family characterized by *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (affection), and *rahmah* (compassion) (Herring, 2023). Consequently, marriage is not merely perceived as the fulfillment of biological needs but also as an act of worship that requires physical, psychological, emotional, social, educational, and economic readiness so that spouses are capable of fulfilling their respective rights and obligations responsibly. Despite its noble objectives, child marriage remains one of the most persistent and complex social challenges across many countries, including Indonesia (Abdullah, 2021). This phenomenon extends beyond legal considerations and is closely associated with economic hardship, cultural traditions, educational attainment, social environments, and religious understanding within communities. Numerous studies have demonstrated that child marriage contributes to increased school dropout rates, heightened maternal and child reproductive health risks, economic instability within households, domestic violence, and the perpetuation of intergenerational poverty. These multidimensional consequences indicate that child marriage requires comprehensive preventive strategies involving legal, educational, social, and religious interventions.

As part of its commitment to protecting children's rights, the Government of Indonesia enacted Law Number 16 of 2019, amending Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, by equalizing the minimum legal age of marriage for both men and women at nineteen years. This legislative reform aims to improve family welfare, ensure the fulfillment of children's rights, promote educational attainment, and reduce the prevalence of child marriage (Indonesia, 2022). Nevertheless, the enactment of legal reforms alone has not automatically transformed deeply rooted social practices. The implementation of this policy continues to encounter significant challenges, particularly within communities where early marriage remains socially acceptable due to economic pressures, cultural traditions, and customary norms (Alfian, 2022). Educational institutions play a strategic role in supporting government policies through educational processes, character development, and the cultivation of students' awareness regarding the importance of adequate preparation before entering married life (Mubasyroh, 2024). Among these institutions, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) occupy a particularly significant position. As Islamic educational institutions, *pesantren* function not only as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as institutions for character formation, moral development, and the cultivation of Islamic values (Lukens-Bull, 2022). The twenty-four-hour educational environment characteristic of *pesantren* enables continuous internalization of religious teachings, thereby providing considerable potential for shaping students' attitudes and behaviors toward responsible adulthood and family life.

Previous studies have predominantly examined child marriage from the perspectives of law, reproductive health, socio-economic conditions, and the implementation of Indonesia's marriage law following the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019. Other scholars have also explored the contribution of Islamic education to adolescent character development and moral formation (Nisa & Fadli, 2024). Nevertheless, studies specifically investigating how Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) translate changes in the legal minimum age of marriage into educational programs and preventive strategies remain relatively limited (Samnuzulsari et al., 2025). Most existing research continues to focus on the causes and consequences of child marriage, whereas preventive mechanisms developed by Islamic educational institutions have received comparatively little scholarly attention. In addition, the integration of religious education, character development, counseling services, parental involvement, and collaboration with government agencies and community leaders in preventing child marriage has not yet been comprehensively examined through empirical research. This situation indicates a significant research gap. Although numerous studies have identified the determinants and impacts of child marriage in Indonesia, only a few have comprehensively explained how *pesantren* operationalize national marriage policies into educational strategies that enhance students' awareness of the importance of physical, psychological, educational, and economic preparedness before marriage. Unlike general formal schools, *pesantren* integrate religious instruction, character education, discipline, and continuous supervision within students' daily lives (Ayudiputri et al., 2024). These distinctive characteristics provide *pesantren* with greater opportunities to instill values that encourage adolescents to postpone marriage until they reach legal adulthood and adequate personal maturity.

The novelty of this study lies in its examination of child marriage prevention through an integrated educational approach that combines Islamic religious education, character formation, dissemination of marriage law, guidance and counseling services, parental engagement, and collaboration with government institutions and community leaders within a comprehensive prevention framework (Kusmayanti et al., 2024). Furthermore, this research is conducted at Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, an institution that has received limited scholarly attention regarding the implementation of Indonesia's revised minimum marriage-age policy. Consequently, this study is expected to provide new empirical evidence concerning the contribution of Islamic boarding schools to strengthening child protection through educational interventions grounded in Islamic values. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of scholarship in Islamic education, sociology of education, and child protection, particularly concerning the role of religious educational institutions in supporting the implementation of public policy (Malik, 2022). Practically, the findings are expected to serve as references for the Government of Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Islamic boarding school administrators, educators, parents, and community leaders in designing more effective, collaborative, and sustainable strategies for preventing child marriage (Kuswanto et al., 2024). The study is also expected to enrich policy discussions on strengthening educational institutions as strategic partners in achieving national child protection goals (Rahman & Rahma, 2024).

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, in preventing child marriage following the amendment to Indonesia's minimum legal age for marriage. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of these strategies and to explain their implications for strengthening child protection and advancing Islamic education (Holil et al., 2025). The strategic role of *pesantren* in preventing child marriage is inseparable from its distinctive educational system, which emphasizes the integration of religious knowledge, moral formation, and social responsibility. Unlike formal schools that primarily focus on classroom-based learning, *pesantren* implement a holistic educational model in which students live within the institution under continuous guidance from *kiai*, teachers, and dormitory supervisors. This educational environment enables the sustained internalization of Islamic values and ethical principles, allowing students to develop not only intellectual competence but also emotional maturity, self-discipline, and social awareness. These characteristics make *pesantren* an important institution for cultivating adolescents' readiness to face future family life responsibly.

In recent years, the Indonesian government has increasingly emphasized the importance of child-friendly Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren Ramah Anak*) as part of broader efforts to strengthen child protection within religious educational institutions. This policy orientation reflects the recognition that *pesantren* possess considerable potential to prevent various social problems affecting adolescents, including child marriage, violence, and school dropout (Musfianawati, 2022). Through preventive education, mentoring, counseling services, and collaboration with parents and government agencies, *pesantren* can function as community-based institutions that support the implementation of national child protection policies while maintaining Islamic educational values (Hamzah & Fajri, 2024). Furthermore, several recent studies conducted in Indonesia indicate that preventive programs implemented within Islamic educational institutions are more effective when they involve multiple stakeholders. Educational campaigns concerning reproductive health, marriage law, adolescent development, and family resilience become significantly more influential when combined with parental participation, community engagement, and institutional support (Samsir et al., 2025). Such collaborative approaches contribute not only to increasing adolescents' legal awareness but also to strengthening their aspirations for higher education, career development, and personal maturity before entering marriage. Therefore, child marriage prevention should not merely be understood as legal compliance but as a comprehensive educational process aimed at preparing adolescents to establish healthy, resilient, and prosperous families in the future.

Accordingly, Islamic boarding schools are expected to become active partners in implementing Indonesia's child protection agenda by integrating religious teachings with social education and public policy.

Through systematic educational strategies, *pesantren* can contribute substantially to reducing child marriage while simultaneously promoting the objectives of Islamic education, namely the development of morally upright, intellectually capable, and socially responsible individuals. This perspective provides the conceptual foundation for examining the strategies adopted by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School in preventing child marriage within the contemporary Indonesian context.

## II. Literature Review

### 2.1. Child Marriage

Child marriage refers to a marital union in which one or both parties are below the age of eighteen years. Internationally, this practice is recognized as a violation of children's rights because it deprives children of opportunities to obtain education, maintain physical and mental health, and achieve optimal social and economic development. In the Indonesian context, although Law Number 16 of 2019 has established nineteen years as the minimum legal age for marriage for both men and women, the practice of child marriage continues to occur in various regions due to the interaction of cultural norms, economic hardship, limited educational attainment, and religious interpretations within local communities (Arif et al., 2024).

Recent studies indicate that child marriage is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be explained solely from a legal perspective. Poverty, low parental education, gender inequality, limited access to education, and weak implementation of public policies significantly contribute to the persistence of child marriage in Indonesia (Albert & Sesmiarni, 2022). Consequently, effective prevention requires a comprehensive approach involving legal protection, educational intervention, family empowerment, and community participation. Beyond its legal implications, child marriage produces long-term consequences for individual and societal development. Adolescents who marry prematurely are more likely to discontinue their education, experience reproductive health complications, encounter economic vulnerability, and face domestic conflicts. These consequences ultimately influence national human capital development and sustainable development goals, particularly those related to education, gender equality, and child protection.

### 2.2. Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pesantren*) as Islamic Educational Institutions

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) represent one of Indonesia's oldest and most influential Islamic educational institutions. Their educational philosophy extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge by emphasizing character formation (*akhlaq*), spiritual development, discipline, leadership, and social responsibility. Unlike conventional schools, *pesantren* implement a boarding education system in which students (*santri*) live within the institution under continuous supervision by *kiai*, teachers, and dormitory mentors. This educational environment facilitates the continuous internalization of Islamic values in students' daily lives (Ayudiputri et al., 2024). Contemporary *pesantren* have undergone substantial transformation while maintaining their traditional identity. Many institutions have integrated formal education, vocational training, information technology, and community development programs into their educational systems. This transformation has strengthened the strategic role of *pesantren* as institutions capable of addressing contemporary social challenges, including child protection, gender equality, family resilience, and adolescent development (Zulka et al., 2024). Recent literature also highlights the emergence of the Child-Friendly *Pesantren* concept, which emphasizes the fulfillment of children's rights through safe educational environments, violence prevention, counseling services, psychological support, and collaboration with parents and government institutions. Such developments demonstrate that *pesantren* are increasingly recognized not only as centers of Islamic learning but also as strategic partners in implementing national child protection policies.

### III. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a field research design. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the strategies implemented by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, in preventing child marriage following the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019, which amended Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage. Through this approach, the researcher explored participants' experiences, perspectives, and practices within the natural social setting of the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). The study was conducted at Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School because the institution actively provides Islamic education, character development programs, and various educational activities designed to prepare students for responsible family life. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, a sampling technique in which participants are intentionally chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Accordingly, only individuals possessing direct knowledge, experience, and involvement in implementing child marriage prevention programs were included as research participants (Nasution, 2019). The participants comprised the head of the Islamic boarding school, male and female Islamic teachers (*ustaz* and *ustazah*), students (*santri*), parents of students, and community leaders who had actively collaborated with the boarding school in educational and character-building activities. The inclusion of diverse participant groups enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive perspectives regarding the implementation of child marriage prevention strategies.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources (Gunawa & Hasanah, 2018). Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with research participants, direct observations of teaching and learning activities, students' character development programs, and various educational initiatives designed to enhance students' awareness of the importance of adequate preparation before marriage. Secondary data were obtained from institutional documents, including the boarding school's profile, student development programs, internal policy documents, institutional archives, government regulations, books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other relevant literature related to child marriage prevention and Islamic education (Fiantika et al., 2022). Data were collected using observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Hardani, 2017). Direct observations were conducted to examine the boarding school's educational environment, classroom learning processes, character education activities, the teaching of *fiqh al-munakahat* (Islamic family law), and other educational programs associated with child marriage prevention. Semi-structured interviews were employed to provide flexibility for exploring emerging issues during the interview process while maintaining consistency with the research objectives. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded with participants' informed consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate analysis. Documentation involved collecting supporting materials such as photographs of educational activities, academic schedules, student development program archives, meeting minutes, and other institutional documents relevant to child marriage prevention initiatives implemented at Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School.

The principal research instrument was the researcher as the human instrument, who was responsible for determining the research focus, collecting data, analyzing findings, interpreting results, and drawing conclusions (Siyoto, 2019). To facilitate systematic data collection, several supporting instruments were employed, including observation guidelines, semi-structured interview protocols, an audio recorder, a digital camera for documentation, field notes, and documentation checklists. These instruments ensured that the data collection process was conducted systematically and comprehensively. Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, 2018). During the data reduction stage, the collected information was selected, organized, categorized, and simplified according to the research objectives. The data were subsequently presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation of relationships among categories and the identification of emerging patterns. Finally, conclusions were drawn through an iterative verification process to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the empirical conditions observed in the field.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the head of the Islamic boarding school, teachers, students, parents, and community leaders. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing evidence derived from observations, interviews, and documentation to enhance the consistency and credibility of the findings. In addition, member checking was carried out with several participants to confirm that the interview transcripts and interpretations accurately represented their intended meanings. The application of these validation techniques enhanced the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and trustworthiness of the research findings, thereby ensuring their scientific rigor and reliability.

## IV. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Result

#### a. Overview of Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School

Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic educational institutions in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, committed to educating and nurturing young generations by fostering religious knowledge, moral integrity, and the competencies required to face contemporary social challenges. As an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), the institution adopts a holistic educational philosophy that integrates Islamic teachings with general education, enabling students (*santri*) to develop intellectual competence alongside strong spiritual and ethical values. The educational system implemented at Nurul Azhar Talawe is designed to balance religious instruction with general academic learning. In addition to studying the Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Arabic language, and other Islamic sciences, students also receive formal education in accordance with the national curriculum. This integrated approach aims to produce graduates who possess comprehensive religious understanding while remaining academically competent and socially adaptive in responding to the demands of modern society.

Character education constitutes one of the school's primary educational priorities. The institution continuously cultivates values such as discipline, responsibility, independence, honesty, mutual respect, and social awareness through both curricular and extracurricular activities. These values are systematically internalized through daily routines, religious practices, classroom learning, mentoring programs, and communal life within the boarding school environment. Such an educational approach reflects the fundamental philosophy of *pesantren*, which emphasizes not only intellectual development but also the formation of students' moral character and personality. Furthermore, Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School actively promotes educational programs aimed at preparing students for responsible adulthood and family life. Through Islamic teachings, character-building activities, counseling services, and continuous guidance from *kyai*, teachers, and dormitory supervisors, the institution seeks to instill awareness of the importance of maturity, responsibility, and readiness before entering marriage. These educational efforts support broader national initiatives to strengthen child protection and prevent child marriage by fostering informed decision-making and holistic personal development among adolescents.

#### b. The Role of *Fiqh al-Munakahat* Education in Enhancing Students' Awareness of Child Marriage Prevention

One of the primary strategies implemented by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School to prevent child marriage is the integration of *fiqh al-munakahat* (Islamic family law) into its educational curriculum. Based on the findings of this study, the instruction of *fiqh al-munakahat* extends beyond the discussion of the legal requirements and pillars of marriage. Instead, it provides students (*santri*) with a comprehensive understanding of the objectives of marriage in Islam, the rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives, parental obligations, and the importance of physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and economic readiness before establishing a family. Through this comprehensive educational approach, students are encouraged to



recognize that marriage constitutes a sacred trust (*amanah*) requiring maturity in multiple dimensions of life rather than merely biological readiness.

According to an interview with one of the Islamic teachers (*ustaz*), *fiqh al-munakahat* instruction is consistently linked to contemporary social realities so that students not only understand Islamic legal principles from a normative perspective but also appreciate the practical consequences of entering marriage prematurely. As the participant explained:

*"In teaching fiqh al-munakahat, we do not merely discuss the legal aspects of marriage. We also explain why Islam strongly emphasizes a person's readiness before marriage. We provide real-life examples of the consequences of early marriage, including school dropout, economic hardship, high divorce rates, and difficulties in raising children. Through this approach, students understand that marriage is not simply about whether it is legally permissible, but about being fully prepared to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted by Allah."*

This statement indicates that the instructional process extends beyond the transmission of religious doctrine by adopting a contextual learning approach that connects Islamic teachings with social issues encountered in contemporary society. Such an approach encourages students to critically reflect on the phenomenon of child marriage while understanding that Islamic teachings prioritize the principle of *maslahah* (public welfare) in every major life decision, including the determination of the appropriate time for marriage. Consequently, religious education functions not only as a means of conveying legal knowledge but also as an instrument for developing critical thinking and ethical decision-making among adolescents. Classroom observations further revealed that teachers consistently integrate discussions of *fiqh al-munakahat* with Indonesia's legal framework, particularly Law Number 16 of 2019, which establishes nineteen years as the minimum legal age for marriage for both men and women. The revised legal provisions are introduced as part of the curriculum to help students understand that the legislation does not contradict Islamic values but rather represents the state's effort to protect children's rights and promote public welfare (*maslahah*). As a result, students acquire a balanced understanding of both Islamic jurisprudence and Indonesian positive law, enabling them to appreciate the complementary relationship between religious principles and national legislation in addressing child marriage.

Beyond formal classroom instruction, students' understanding is reinforced through religious sermons (*pengajian*), Islamic lectures, group discussions, and regular mentoring sessions conducted in the boarding school dormitories. During these educational activities, teachers consistently encourage students to prioritize completing their education, improving their competencies, developing future career aspirations, and preparing themselves adequately before making decisions regarding marriage. The repeated exposure to these messages across multiple educational settings facilitates a continuous process of value internalization, allowing students to gradually adopt responsible attitudes toward marriage and family life.

One student described a significant change in perspective after participating in *fiqh al-munakahat* classes. Previously, the student believed that reaching puberty automatically signified readiness for marriage. However, after receiving systematic instruction from the teachers, the student realized that marriage requires far more than biological maturity. The student stated:

*"Previously, I believed that once a person reached puberty, they were already eligible for marriage. However, after studying at this Islamic boarding school, I realized that marriage requires knowledge, stable employment, responsibility, and psychological maturity. Therefore, I intend to complete my education before considering marriage."*

This testimony demonstrates that *fiqh al-munakahat* education contributes significantly to transforming students' perceptions of marriage. Rather than merely increasing their religious knowledge, the learning process cultivates awareness that successful family life depends largely on an individual's

preparedness to assume the diverse responsibilities associated with marriage. As students develop a more comprehensive understanding of marital readiness, their inclination to enter marriage prematurely appears to diminish substantially. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that religious education plays an important role in shaping adolescents' attitudes, values, and decision-making processes. However, this study further demonstrates that the effectiveness of religious education in preventing child marriage depends not solely on the delivery of Islamic legal content but also on educators' ability to relate Islamic teachings to contemporary social realities, national legal developments, and the practical challenges faced by young people. Consequently, *fiqh al-munakahat* instruction becomes more contextual, practical, and responsive to students' developmental needs, thereby enhancing its educational relevance and preventive impact.

From the perspective of Islamic education, these findings suggest that the instructional process successfully integrates the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of learning. Students not only acquire knowledge regarding Islamic marriage law but also develop values, attitudes, and decision-making skills that enable them to approach marriage responsibly and thoughtfully. This holistic integration strengthens the role of Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School as an educational institution that not only transmits Islamic knowledge but also actively contributes to the implementation of Indonesia's child protection policy through comprehensive educational strategies aimed at preventing child marriage.

c. Supporting Factors Influencing the Islamic Boarding School's Strategy for Preventing Child Marriage

Based on the findings of this study, the successful implementation of child marriage prevention strategies at Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School is supported by a number of interconnected factors that collectively strengthen the effectiveness of the institution's educational programs. These factors include the strong commitment demonstrated by the school leadership and teaching staff, active parental support, a conducive boarding school environment, students' increasing awareness of the importance of education and personal development, and collaborative partnerships with various external stakeholders. Rather than functioning independently, these supporting factors complement one another and create an integrated educational ecosystem that encourages students to develop a mature understanding of marriage as a lifelong commitment requiring comprehensive preparation. Consequently, the prevention of child marriage is not approached merely as a legal issue but as an educational and moral responsibility shared by all members of the school community. Among these supporting factors, the institutional commitment of the boarding school's leadership emerged as the most influential. The findings indicate that the school's administrators have incorporated child marriage prevention into the overall framework of student development and character education. Instead of treating the issue as a separate program, the leadership has embedded it within the school's educational philosophy, emphasizing that academic achievement, moral excellence, and personal maturity should precede marriage. According to the head of the boarding school:

*"All of our ustaz and ustazah share the same commitment to reminding students not to rush into marriage. We consistently teach them that educational success should remain their highest priority because knowledge and good character are the primary foundations for building a harmonious and prosperous family (sakinah). Therefore, every mentoring and educational activity is directed toward encouraging students to pursue ambitious goals and not to be easily influenced by negative social pressures."*

This statement demonstrates that the success of the prevention strategy depends not only on administrative policies but also on the collective commitment of educators to consistently reinforce the same educational values throughout the learning process. The alignment of vision between school leaders and teachers ensures that preventive messages are repeatedly conveyed across both formal and informal educational activities. Such consistency creates a coherent educational environment in which students continuously receive guidance encouraging them to prioritize education, self-development, and responsible



life planning before considering marriage. The research further revealed that teacher commitment extends beyond classroom instruction. Teachers actively serve as mentors and role models who maintain close relationships with students through daily interactions within the boarding school environment. They regularly provide personal advice, motivate students to pursue higher education, discuss future career aspirations, and help students understand the long-term responsibilities associated with marriage and family life. Because students and teachers interact continuously throughout the day, educational messages concerning marital readiness are reinforced through everyday conversations, religious activities, mentoring sessions, and communal living. This continuous interaction strengthens students' internalization of Islamic values related to responsibility, patience, and long-term planning.

Another crucial supporting factor identified in this study is parental involvement and family support. Interviews with several parents indicated that continuous communication between the boarding school and families has substantially enhanced the effectiveness of student guidance. Parents receive regular updates regarding their children's academic progress, moral development, and behavioral achievements while also being encouraged to motivate their children to complete their education before entering marriage. This collaborative relationship enables families to reinforce the same educational values promoted within the boarding school, thereby reducing contradictory messages that students might otherwise receive at home.

One parent explained:

*"We greatly appreciate the communication established by the boarding school. The teachers regularly remind us to continue motivating our children to focus on their studies rather than thinking about marriage at an early age. We believe that education is far more important because it provides the foundation for their future lives and enables them to become responsible adults."*

This testimony illustrates that parental participation constitutes an essential component of the child marriage prevention strategy. When parents and educators share common educational objectives, students receive consistent guidance regardless of whether they are residing in the boarding school or spending time with their families. Such continuity strengthens students' commitment to completing their education and postponing marriage until they have achieved sufficient maturity. The findings also highlight the importance of a conducive educational environment within the boarding school. As a residential educational institution, Nurul Azhar Talawe provides a structured learning environment in which students are supervised continuously throughout the day. This residential system enables teachers to monitor students' academic progress, moral development, and social interactions more effectively than would be possible in conventional day schools. Through daily routines—including congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, religious lectures, student organizational activities, communal service, and disciplined living—students gradually develop values such as responsibility, self-discipline, humility, cooperation, and emotional self-control.

The boarding school environment also minimizes students' exposure to various external social pressures that frequently contribute to early marriage. Instead, students are surrounded by peers and educators who consistently emphasize educational achievement, religious commitment, and personal growth. Such an atmosphere fosters positive peer influence and encourages adolescents to view education and self-improvement as essential prerequisites for future family life. Consequently, the boarding school functions not only as a center of religious learning but also as a protective environment that supports adolescents' psychological and social development. Another significant supporting factor is the growing awareness among students regarding the value of education. The findings indicate that, after participating in various educational and mentoring programs, many students expressed aspirations to continue their education at universities or other higher educational institutions before considering marriage. This shift in perspective reflects the success of the boarding school's efforts to cultivate long-term educational goals rather than immediate family formation. Students increasingly recognize that higher education, professional competence, and financial independence constitute important foundations for establishing stable and harmonious families.

This heightened educational awareness is closely associated with the comprehensive learning experiences provided by the boarding school. Through religious instruction, character education, counseling, and discussions concerning contemporary social issues, students develop a broader understanding of marriage as a major life responsibility requiring adequate preparation. Consequently, they become more capable of making informed decisions regarding their future and less vulnerable to social pressure encouraging early marriage. In addition to internal institutional strengths, collaboration with external stakeholders substantially contributes to the effectiveness of the prevention strategy. The boarding school actively cooperates with the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama/KUA), local government authorities, religious scholars, community leaders, parents, and other relevant institutions through educational seminars, counseling activities, public awareness campaigns, and community outreach programs. These collaborative initiatives expand the dissemination of information regarding the risks associated with child marriage while strengthening public understanding of national marriage regulations and children's rights.

Such partnerships ensure that educational messages delivered within the boarding school are reinforced by families and the surrounding community. Consequently, responsibility for preventing child marriage extends beyond the educational institution itself and becomes a collective responsibility shared among educational institutions, families, religious authorities, local government, and society as a whole. This collaborative approach enhances the sustainability of prevention programs because students encounter consistent educational messages across multiple social environments. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of child marriage prevention strategies cannot be attributed to a single factor. Rather, successful implementation depends upon the synergistic interaction among institutional commitment, competent educators, supportive families, a positive educational environment, motivated students, and collaborative community partnerships. Each component strengthens the others, creating a comprehensive educational system that promotes students' intellectual, moral, emotional, and social development. Therefore, the success achieved by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School lies not only in the implementation of educational and character-building programs within the institution but also in its ability to establish sustainable collaboration with families, government agencies, religious institutions, and the wider community. This collaborative educational model creates a supportive social environment that strengthens child protection, promotes educational attainment, and contributes significantly to the prevention of child marriage through holistic, value-based, and community-oriented educational practices.

#### d. Inhibiting Factors Affecting the Islamic Boarding School's Strategy for Preventing Child Marriage

Although Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School has implemented various strategies to prevent child marriage, the findings of this study indicate that their implementation continues to encounter several challenges arising from both internal and external factors. These obstacles include families' economic conditions, cultural norms that continue to perceive early marriage as socially acceptable, the relatively low educational level of some parents, the influence of adolescents' peer environments, and the increasingly difficult challenge of controlling the impact of social media. These factors interact with one another, creating significant challenges for the boarding school in optimizing the implementation of its child marriage prevention programs. One of the major obstacles is the economic condition of families. Based on the interview findings, some parents still believe that marrying off their children at a young age can reduce the family's economic burden. This perception is particularly prevalent among economically disadvantaged households, where children's education is often not regarded as the primary priority. One of the Islamic teachers explained:

*"There are still members of the community who believe that once a daughter has grown up, it is better for her to get married rather than continue her education. Their main reason is the family's limited financial resources. This way of thinking remains one of the greatest challenges we face in educating the community."*

This statement indicates that economic difficulties are not merely associated with the family's ability to finance education but also shape parental perceptions when making decisions regarding their children's future. Under such circumstances, the boarding school is confronted not only with educational challenges but also with broader social and economic realities that continue to influence the practice of child marriage. Another significant obstacle arises from cultural traditions that continue to support marriage at a relatively young age. Based on interviews with community leaders, some members of society still believe that early marriage is an appropriate way to preserve family honor and protect adolescents from inappropriate social relationships. Although such views are generally motivated by good intentions, they often overlook the psychological, educational, and economic readiness required for a successful marriage. One community leader stated:

*"Some people still believe that marrying their children at an early age is the best way to protect them from negative social influences. However, we have gradually begun to educate the community that education is also an essential preparation before a person enters marriage."*

These findings suggest that changes in the legal minimum age for marriage have not yet been fully accompanied by corresponding changes in public attitudes and social values. Therefore, legal reforms should be complemented by educational and cultural approaches to facilitate the gradual acceptance of new perspectives within society. In addition to cultural influences, the low educational attainment of some parents also constitutes a significant obstacle to the implementation of child marriage prevention programs. Several parents have not fully understood the long-term consequences of child marriage on reproductive health, educational attainment, and family welfare. Consequently, parental support for their children's continued education has not always been optimal. These findings underscore the importance of providing educational outreach to parents so that they develop perspectives consistent with those promoted by the boarding school regarding the importance of adequately preparing young people before marriage.

The findings further reveal that adolescents' peer environments represent another challenge that cannot be overlooked. The rapid development of information technology and social media has provided young people with extensive access to information and social interactions that are not always consistent with the values promoted within the boarding school. According to one teacher:

*"Today's challenges are very different from those we faced several years ago. Students can easily access various kinds of information through their mobile phones whenever they are outside the boarding school. Therefore, we continually remind them to choose their friendships carefully and to use social media wisely."*

This statement illustrates that technological advancement has introduced new challenges for Islamic educational institutions. The boarding school's supervision becomes less effective when students are outside the campus environment, making closer cooperation with parents essential in monitoring students' activities at home and encouraging responsible use of digital media. Furthermore, the study found that changing deeply rooted social attitudes requires a considerable period of time. Although the awareness programs conducted by the boarding school have positively influenced many members of the community, some groups continue to maintain traditional views supporting early marriage. As a result, the positive outcomes of the prevention initiatives have not yet been experienced equally across all segments of society. Based on the overall analysis, these inhibiting factors demonstrate that preventing child marriage is a multidimensional issue that cannot be addressed solely through educational interventions within the boarding school. Economic conditions, cultural traditions, parental educational backgrounds, social environments, and technological developments collectively influence adolescents' decisions regarding marriage. Consequently, effective prevention requires a collaborative approach involving Islamic boarding schools, families,

government institutions, religious leaders, community leaders, child protection agencies, and other educational institutions.

The findings of this study further indicate that the success of child marriage prevention programs depends not only on the quality of the educational initiatives implemented by the boarding school but also on the readiness of the surrounding social environment to embrace change. The stronger the support provided by families, communities, and government institutions for children's education and development, the greater the likelihood of successfully preventing child marriage. Conversely, if these external factors are not adequately addressed, even well-designed educational programs implemented by the boarding school will encounter substantial limitations in achieving their intended outcomes.

#### 4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the strategies implemented by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School to prevent child marriage are carried out through an integrated educational approach. These strategies are not limited to the delivery of *fiqh al-munakahat* (Islamic family law) instruction but also encompass character education, guidance and counseling services, teachers' role modeling, strengthened communication with parents, and collaboration with the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), village government, and community leaders. These findings suggest that child marriage prevention within the boarding school is not regarded as an isolated or incidental activity but rather as an integral component of a continuous and comprehensive educational system. These findings can be interpreted through the perspective of Islamic educational theory, which views the purpose of education not merely as the transmission of knowledge (*ta'lim*) but also as the development of character (*tarbiyah*) and moral refinement (*ta'dib*). Within the context of this study, the teaching of *fiqh al-munakahat* extends beyond explaining the legal requirements and pillars of marriage. It also serves to internalize values of responsibility, maturity, and preparedness for family life. Accordingly, the educational process implemented at the boarding school reflects the fundamental objectives of Islamic education, namely the development of individuals who possess strong faith, sound knowledge, and exemplary moral character.

When analyzed using Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's Social Construction Theory, the strategies adopted by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School demonstrate the three interconnected processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. During the externalization stage, the boarding school communicates values emphasizing the importance of marital readiness through classroom instruction, religious lectures, and character-building activities. These values subsequently become objectified as institutional norms, traditions, and routines embedded within the boarding school's daily life, including the cultivation of discipline, encouragement to pursue higher education, and the development of personal responsibility. Finally, through the process of internalization, students gradually adopt these values as part of their own worldview, leading them to recognize that marriage should only be undertaken after achieving adequate physical, psychological, spiritual, educational, and economic readiness. Thus, changes in students' attitudes and behaviors do not occur instantaneously but emerge through a continuous educational process. The findings further demonstrate that the contextual teaching of *fiqh al-munakahat* contributes significantly to transforming students' perceptions of marriage. Teachers not only explain Islamic legal principles but also relate them to the social, psychological, economic, and educational consequences associated with child marriage. This contextual approach enables students to connect religious teachings with contemporary social realities, allowing the knowledge acquired in the classroom to evolve into practical awareness that informs responsible decision-making regarding marriage.

These findings are consistent with previous studies concluding that religious education plays a significant role in shaping adolescents' character and increasing awareness of marital preparedness. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that the effectiveness of religious education depends not solely on the delivery of Islamic legal knowledge but also on the integration of classroom learning, teachers' role modeling, disciplined daily routines, counseling services, and parental involvement throughout

the educational process. In other words, the effectiveness of child marriage prevention strategies results from the synergy among multiple educational components that complement and reinforce one another. The findings also reveal that the boarding school environment constitutes one of the major factors contributing to the success of the prevention strategy. The residential education system enables continuous supervision and character development throughout the twenty-four-hour daily routine, providing teachers with greater opportunities to mentor students, monitor their personal development, and cultivate moral values. Such a supportive educational environment encourages the development of disciplined learning habits, responsibility, self-control, and future-oriented thinking, all of which influence students' perspectives on marriage and long-term life planning.

From the perspective of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, these findings indicate that students' behaviors are shaped through the observation of role models who possess authority and credibility, particularly the boarding school's leaders and Islamic teachers (*ustaz* and *ustazah*). The teachers' demonstration of commitment to education, responsibility, simplicity, and personal maturity provides concrete behavioral models that students observe and imitate. Through the process of observational learning, these values gradually become internalized and eventually develop into relatively stable behavioral patterns that encourage students to prioritize education and personal development before entering marriage. This study also found that family involvement makes a substantial contribution to the success of child marriage prevention initiatives. Effective communication between the boarding school and parents facilitates the development of shared perceptions regarding the importance of children's education and future preparation. These findings suggest that students' development is influenced not only by the educational environment of the boarding school but also by parental support, which represents the child's primary educational environment.

When interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, these findings demonstrate that adolescents' behavior is shaped by interactions among multiple social environments, including the family, school, community, and governmental institutions. Consequently, child marriage prevention strategies become more effective when these social systems share common goals and commitments toward protecting children's rights. Conversely, if one or more of these environments continue to support cultural norms favoring early marriage, the effectiveness of educational interventions will inevitably be constrained. The study further identified several inhibiting factors, including families' economic limitations, the relatively low educational attainment of some parents, cultural traditions that continue to tolerate child marriage, and the influence of social media on adolescent behavior. These findings demonstrate that child marriage is a multidimensional social issue that cannot be addressed solely through educational interventions or legal reforms. Rather, effective prevention requires coordinated policies encompassing education, child protection, public health, family economic empowerment, and broader community development.

Compared with previous studies, this research offers a distinct contribution. While earlier studies have primarily examined the causes and consequences of child marriage from legal, reproductive health, or socio-economic perspectives, the present study focuses on how an Islamic educational institution develops integrated preventive strategies through religious education, character formation, habituation, counseling services, and collaboration with families and communities. Accordingly, this research provides a broader perspective by demonstrating that Islamic boarding schools function not only as religious educational institutions but also as agents of social change capable of supporting government policies aimed at preventing child marriage. The implications of this study suggest that the educational model implemented by Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School has the potential to be replicated by other Islamic boarding schools and religious educational institutions throughout Indonesia. The integration of *fiqh al-munakahat* education, character development, teachers' exemplary conduct, strengthened family communication, and collaboration with multiple stakeholders represents a comprehensive and relevant approach to enhancing child protection and reducing the incidence of child marriage. Therefore, this study contributes not only to the advancement of scholarship in Islamic education but also provides practical recommendations for the Government of Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Islamic boarding school administrators, educators,



and local communities in designing more comprehensive, collaborative, and sustainable child marriage prevention programs

## V. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Nurul Azhar Talawe Islamic Boarding School implements child marriage prevention strategies through a comprehensive and sustainable Islamic educational approach. These strategies are realized through contextual instruction in *fiqh al-munakahat* (Islamic family law), character development programs, teachers' role modeling, guidance and counseling services, strengthened communication with parents, and collaboration with the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), village government, religious leaders, and community leaders. The integration of these educational initiatives not only enhances students' understanding of Islamic marriage law and Indonesia's positive legal framework but also fosters awareness of the importance of physical, psychological, educational, economic, and spiritual readiness before entering married life. The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of these strategies is supported by the strong commitment of the boarding school's leadership, the consistency of its educators, a conducive residential learning environment, active family support, and collaboration with various stakeholders. Nevertheless, the implementation of these strategies continues to face several challenges, including families' economic constraints, the relatively low educational attainment of some parents, cultural norms that continue to tolerate early marriage, and the influence of adolescents' social environments and digital media. These findings confirm that child marriage is a multidimensional issue requiring the active participation of multiple stakeholders and therefore cannot be addressed solely through educational institutions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the advancement of Islamic education by demonstrating that Islamic boarding schools function not only as institutions for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as agents of social change that support child protection through character formation and the internalization of Islamic values. Furthermore, this study enriches the literature on the implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 by illustrating how national marriage policies can be translated into integrated educational programs within the context of Islamic boarding schools. From a practical perspective, the findings provide important implications for the Government of Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Islamic boarding school administrators, and other Islamic educational institutions. Specifically, they highlight the need to develop child marriage prevention models that extend beyond legal awareness campaigns by integrating religious education, character development, guidance and counseling services, family empowerment, and community partnerships. Such a holistic educational model may serve as an effective alternative for strengthening child protection initiatives while enhancing the quality and well-being of Indonesia's younger generation. This study has certain limitations because it was conducted at a single Islamic boarding school using a qualitative research approach. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Future research is therefore recommended to include multiple research sites, compare different types of Islamic boarding schools, and employ mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Islamic educational strategies in preventing child marriage)

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