

The Role Of The Family Learning Center (Puspaga) in Preventing Child Marriage (Case Study at The Community Empowerment, Women and Child Protection Office in Jambi City)

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of the Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA) in preventing child marriage in Jambi City, identifies the main challenges in its implementation, and examines the efforts undertaken to strengthen its services. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a case study design at the Jambi City Community Empowerment, Women and Child Protection Office (DPMPPA). Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving PUSPAGA managers, family counselors, and service recipients. The findings indicate that PUSPAGA performs three principal roles: preventive-promotive, curative-mediative, and coordinating-referral. These roles are generally aligned with the mandate of Ministerial Regulation of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection No. 6 of 2023. However, their implementation remains constrained by limited service coverage, insufficient professional personnel, low public awareness, inadequate facilities and budgetary support, and suboptimal cross-sector coordination. The study also identifies several institutional responses, including expanding services to the sub-district level, developing online consultation services, strengthening public education, improving professional capacity, and enhancing coordination with relevant institutions. The findings suggest that PUSPAGA has an important institutional role in addressing the risk of child marriage, but its preventive function requires stronger service accessibility, institutional capacity, professional resources, and intersectoral collaboration. Strengthening these dimensions is essential to support more comprehensive and sustainable child marriage prevention in Jambi City.

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Introduction

Marriage according to Article 1 of Law Number 1 of 1974, is an innate bond between a man and a woman, as husband and wife, with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family based on the One Godhead. This bond is carried out according to the laws of religion and each belief, and must be recorded in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

Marriage in Islam is a sacred bond which is the sunnah of the Prophet, aiming to perfect religion, maintain honor, and achieve happiness in the hereafter. Marriage is valid if it fulfills its pillars and conditions, such as the existence of a contract, guardian, witness, and bride and groom. Marriage is also seen as a means to build a household that *is sakinah* (calm), *mawaddah* (full of love), *warahmah* (full of affection) (Al-Zuhaili, 2004:34).

Marriage is one of the implementations of *Al-maqashid al-khamsah*, namely *hifzhul nasl*. Marriage is a sacred agreement between a man and a woman to build a happy household. And it is valid if it has fulfilled the principles and conditions. A good marriage is a marriage that is recorded and proven by a marriage certificate so that it will bring benefits to the wife and her descendants (Auda, 2008:39).

The Word of Allah swt. in Q.S Al-Nissa verse 1:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ۝١

"O man, fear your Lord who created you from one (Adam) and He created from him his mate (Eve). From these two Allah multiplied many males and females. Fear Allah in whose name you ask each other and (maintain) family relations. Indeed, Allah is always watching over and watching over you (Q.S Al-Nissa verse 1).

Although the government has set a minimum age limit for marriage through Law Number 16 of 2019, the practice of child marriage in Indonesia still shows a relatively high number. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the prevalence of child marriage in 2023 was recorded at 6.92%, then decreased to 5.90% in 2024. However, in 2025 the phenomenon of child marriage will still be a serious problem, where around 19% of adolescents will marry under the age of 19 (BPS, 2023).

At the regional level, similar conditions also occur in Jambi Province. Data shows that the proportion of women aged 20-24 years who marry before the age of 18 is still around 5.10% (BPS, 2026). This shows that the practice of child marriage is still ongoing and is a challenge in efforts to protect children in the regions.

The phenomenon of child marriage can also be seen from the high number of marriage dispensation applications submitted to religious courts. Nationally, in 2023, there

were around 41,000 marriage dispensation applications (Badilag, 2024). This high number shows that the practice of child marriage is still legalized through legal mechanisms for various reasons, such as economic factors, social pressure, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. At the regional level, including in Jambi City, applications for marriage dispensation from 2023 to 2025 are also still relatively high, which indicates that public awareness of the minimum age limit for marriage is not yet fully optimal.

In Jambi Province in particular, the Child Marriage rate is still a serious concern with various causative factors behind it, such as economic factors, low education, socio-cultural norms, and a lack of understanding of the negative impact of Child Marriage (Wahyudi & Kusmayandi, 2021).

Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia is still relatively high despite a downward trend in recent years. In 2020, around 10.82% of women aged 20-24 years were married for the first time before the age of 18 (BPS, 2020).

Child marriage has serious consequences, especially for young women who are the main victims of this practice. The impact of reproductive health is one of the most worrying aspects, where adolescent girls who marry early face a high risk of pregnancy and childbirth complications, maternal death, and other reproductive health problems due to biologically immature reproductive organs (Anita, 2020).

In addition, child marriage also results in the loss of access to education, limited economic opportunities, and increased vulnerability to domestic violence. Realizing the complexity of the problem of child marriage and its multidimensional impact, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection has initiated various prevention programs, one of which is the establishment of the Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA) (KPPPA, 2019). PUSPAGA is a vehicle to improve family knowledge and skills in child care and protection, as well as strengthen the family function in preventing various social problems including child marriage.

This program is implemented at the district/city level by involving various stakeholders, including the Community Empowerment and Protection of Women and Children Office. In Jambi City, PUSPAGA is managed by the Office of Community Empowerment and Protection of Women and Children with the aim of providing education to the community, especially families, about the importance of preventing Child Marriage and its impacts. The programs implemented include counseling, family counseling, anti-Child Marriage campaigns, and skills training for adolescents and parents. However, the effectiveness of the implementation of the PUSPAGA program in preventing Child Marriage in Jambi City still needs to be studied in depth to find out the extent to which this program has succeeded in achieving its goals. The effectiveness of a program can be measured from various aspects, including the accuracy of the target, program socialization, program objectives, and program monitoring (Siagian, 2019).

In the context of PUSPAGA, effectiveness is not only measured by the number of activities carried out, but also by the real impact on the reduction of child marriage rates in the region. Evaluation of the effectiveness of PUSPAGA is important to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as formulate recommendations for improvement that can increase the impact of the program in the future.

Several previous studies have shown that child marriage prevention programs involving family education and community empowerment have great potential in changing behaviors and social norms that support child marriage practices (Greene, 2019). However, the implementation of these programs often faces various challenges, such as limited resources, low community participation, lack of coordination between institutions, and still strong cultural roots that legitimize child marriage in some communities.

In the context of Jambi City, research on the effectiveness of PUSPAGA in preventing Child Marriage is very relevant considering the still high rate of Child Marriage in the region and the importance of evaluating government programs that have been implemented. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of how PUSPAGA operates, the obstacles faced, and its contribution to efforts to prevent Child Marriage in Jambi City.

Furthermore, this research is also important in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially target 5.3 which calls for the elimination of harmful practices including child marriage (United Nations, 2015).

Indonesia as a country committed to the achievement of the SDGs needs to continue to evaluate and strengthen national and regional programs that contribute to these targets, including the PUSPAGA program in the prevention of Child Marriage.

The family is the smallest social unit in society that has an important role in the formation of character, moral values, and the quality of human resources in the future. A quality family will give birth to a generation that is resilient and highly competitive. However, various social problems such as child marriage are still serious challenges that can hinder the realization of a prosperous and empowered family. Child Marriage, or marriage under the age determined by law, has the potential to cause various negative impacts, both physically, psychologically, economically, and socially for children, especially women (Lestari, 2018).

According to Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, the minimum age of marriage for men and women is set at 19 years. This provision aims to provide protection for children so that they have the opportunity to grow and develop optimally before entering married life. However, the reality on the ground shows that the practice of Child Marriage still occurs in various regions in Indonesia, including in Jambi City.

Based on data from the Religious Justice Agency (Badilag) of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, in 2022 there will be more than 50,000 applications for marriage dispensation throughout Indonesia (Badilag, 2023). In Jambi Province itself, the number of marriage dispensation applications is still relatively high, which shows that public awareness of the importance of marriage age readiness is not optimal. This phenomenon is influenced by various factors, including low education, family economic conditions, cultural factors, and a lack of understanding of the risks of child marriage to children's reproductive health and quality of life (BPS, 2023).

As a form of the government's efforts to strengthen family resilience and protect children's rights, the Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA) was established under the coordination of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection

(KemenPPPA). PUSPAGA functions as a forum for learning, consultation, and mentoring services for families to be able to carry out family functions optimally. PUSPAGA is here to provide education to parents, children, and the community about the importance of good parenting, gender equality, reproductive health, and the dangers of early marriage (KPPPA, 2020).

In Jambi City, PUSPAGA, which is under the Community Empowerment, Women, and Child Protection Office (DPMPPA), has a strategic role in efforts to prevent child marriage through socialization, education, and family development activities. However, the effectiveness of the implementation of the program needs to be studied in depth, considering that there are still cases of child marriage in this region. A study of the effectiveness of the PUSPAGA program is important to find out the extent to which this program has achieved its goals in reducing the rate of child marriage and to provide input in the development of child protection policies and family empowerment in the future (DPMPPA Jambi, 2023).

That to analyze the basis of child marriage, we can see from:

a. Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage

Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage is the main legal basis that regulates the procedures, conditions, and purposes of marriage in Indonesia. This law was passed on January 2, 1974 and came into effect on October 1, 1975. The main purpose of this law is to create legal certainty in marriage matters and to form a happy, eternal family, and based on the One Godhead, in accordance with the moral and religious values of the Indonesian nation.

In Article 1 it is stated that "Marriage is an innate bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family (household) based on the One Godhead." This formulation emphasizes that marriage is not only formal and outward, but also spiritual, because it is based on religious values. Thus, the validity of marriage is not only determined by state law, but also by the religious laws and beliefs of each party.

In addition, Article 2 paragraph (1) emphasizes that "Marriage is valid if it is carried out according to the law of each religion and its beliefs." While Article 2 paragraph (2) states that "Each marriage is recorded in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations". This provision shows the dualism of the legal requirements for marriage, namely religious requirements (material) and registration requirements (formal). This means that a marriage is only considered valid and recognized by the state if it has fulfilled the provisions of religious law and is registered with the authorized marriage registration institution (KUA for Muslims and the Civil Registration Office for non-Muslims).

This law also regulates the minimum age limit for marriage. In Article 7 paragraph (1), it was originally stated that the minimum age of marriage is 19 years for men and 16 years for women. However, this provision was later amended through Law Number 16 of 2019, so that the minimum age of marriage for men and women is set at 19 years old.²⁴ This change is a form of protection for children's rights and the government's efforts to reduce the rate of early marriage in Indonesia.

In addition, Law Number 1 of 1974 also regulates the purpose of marriage, the rights and obligations of husband and wife, the prohibition of marriage, the registration of marriage, divorce, and the position of children and joint property. All of these provisions

aim to maintain legal order in society, ensure legal protection for women and children, and uphold moral and religious values in married life (Soemiyati, 1982:25).

Thus, Law Number 1 of 1974 not only becomes a formal legal guideline regarding marriage in Indonesia, but also reflects the values of justice, gender equality, and moral responsibility in forming a harmonious family, in accordance with the philosophy of Pancasila and the spirit of national development in the field of family law (Subekti & Tjitrosudibio, 2004:43).

b. Marriage According to Islamic Law

In Islamic law, marriage (*nikah*) is a sacred bond (*'aqd*) between a man and a woman with the aim of forming a family (*usrah*) that is *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. Marriage is seen as part of the worship and *sunnah* of the Prophet PBUH which is highly recommended for Muslims who are capable physically and mentally (Al-Zuhaili, 2004:14).

Terminologically, scholars define marriage as an agreement that provides the ability of a husband and wife relationship and establishes rights and obligations between the two (Syarifuddin, 2006:35). Imam al-Shafi'i said that marriage is a contract that legalizes the relationship between a man and a woman that was previously haram without marriage (Shafi'i, 1990:5).

The law of marriage according to Islam is the *sunnah* of *muakkadah* (a highly recommended *sunnah*), because the Prophet ﷺ said:

"Nikah is my sunnah, whoever hates my sunnah is not of my group." (HR. Ibn Majah).

Marriage also has the value of *maqāṣid syari'ah*, namely protecting offspring (*Hifz Al-Nasl*), maintaining honor (*Hifz Al-'Ird*), and building a dignified social order (Auda, 2008:39). Therefore, in Islam, marriage is not just a social contract, but a sacred contract and contains high religious values (KA RI, 2000:14).

The validity of marriage in Islamic law is determined by the fulfillment of the marriage principles and conditions, namely the existence of a prospective husband, future wife, guardian of the marriage, two witnesses, and *ijab kabul*. Without the fulfillment of these principles, the marriage contract is invalid according to the *sharia*. In addition, Islam also regulates the ethics and responsibilities of husband and wife in the household in order to create a harmonious and blessed family.

c. Age Limit for Marriage According to Law Number 1 of 1974

The marriage age limit is one of the important aspects regulated in Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. This provision is intended to provide protection for prospective husbands and wives, so that when they get married they are physically, mentally, and socially mature.

In Article 7 paragraph (1) of Law Number 1 of 1974 it is stated that:

"Marriage is only allowed if the man has reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years and the woman has reached the age of 16 (sixteen) years."

However, these provisions were later amended through Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974. These changes are in accordance with the times and the need for child protection. In Article 7 paragraph (1) the results of the amendment state that:

"Marriage is only allowed when a man and a woman have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years."

With these changes, the minimum age of marriage for men and women is now equalized to 19 years. The goal is to provide equal opportunities for men and women to obtain education, develop their potential, and achieve psychological maturity before entering married life (KPPPA, 2020:8).

In addition, Article 7 paragraph (2) of Law Number 16 of 2019 also stipulates that:

"In the event that there is a deviation from the age provisions as referred to in paragraph (1), the parents of the man and/or the parents of the woman may request a dispensation from the court on the grounds of urgency accompanied by sufficient supporting evidence."

This provision provides legal space in certain situations, but still with the supervision and consideration of the judge, so that there is no abuse in the practice of child marriage.

This change in the age limit is a form of the state's commitment to child protection and gender equality, and is in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the target to abolish early marriage (UNICEF Indonesia, 2023:5).

d. Revision of the Marriage Law in 2019

Law Number 16 of 2019 is the result of a revision of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage. This amendment was passed as the government's effort to adapt laws and regulations to social development, child protection, and the principle of gender equality.

Prior to the revision, the minimum age limit for marriage was different between men and women, namely 19 years for men and 16 years for women as stipulated in Article 7 paragraph (1) of Law No. 1 of 1974. This provision is considered discriminatory against women and has the potential to cause the practice of child marriage which has a negative impact on women's health, education, and welfare.

Based on these considerations, the government together with the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia then passed Law Number 16 of 2019 on October 14, 2019. In this revision, Article 7 paragraph (1) is amended to:

"Marriage is only allowed when a man and a woman have reached the age of 19 (nineteen) years."

With this change, the minimum age of marriage for men and women is equalized to 19 years. The main goal is to protect children from the risk of early marriage, while providing equal opportunities in terms of education, emotional maturity, and social readiness before building a household (KPPPA, 2020:10).

In addition, this revision also adds the provisions for marriage dispensation in Article 7 paragraph (2) which reads:

"In the event that there is a deviation from the age provisions as referred to in paragraph (1), the parents of the man and/or the woman may request a dispensation from the court on the grounds of urgency accompanied by sufficient supporting evidence."

Applications for dispensation can only be made through religious courts or district courts, and must be accompanied by urgent reasons assessed by the judge. This is so that there will no longer be the practice of child marriage carried out arbitrarily without legal consideration and the benefit of the child (MA RI, 2020:4).

The changes are a progressive step in the national legal system, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which target the elimination of child marriage worldwide (UNICEF Indonesia, 2023:7).

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to examine the role of the Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA) in preventing child marriage in Jambi City. A case study was considered appropriate because the research focused on understanding the implementation of PUSPAGA within its actual institutional and social context, particularly its preventive-promotive, curative-mediative, and coordinating-referral functions. The main unit of analysis was the Community Empowerment, Women and Child Protection Office (DPMPPA) of Jambi City, particularly the PUSPAGA service unit. The research focused on the implementation of PUSPAGA programs, the obstacles encountered in preventing child marriage, the perspectives of relevant stakeholders, and the efforts undertaken to strengthen PUSPAGA services. The qualitative case study approach enabled the researchers to examine the phenomenon through multiple sources of information and to interpret the findings within the institutional context of PUSPAGA (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research participants were selected purposively based on their direct knowledge, institutional involvement, or professional experience relevant to PUSPAGA and child-marriage prevention. The participants included PUSPAGA personnel and relevant stakeholders from institutions connected with child-marriage prevention and marriage-dispensation services in Jambi City. The key informants included Jihan Nurzahra, S.Pd., as a PUSPAGA counselor; Thilia Marina, as Head of the PUSPAGA/Child Protection Section of DPMPPA Jambi City; religious affairs officers from the South Jambi and Jelutung District Offices of Religious Affairs (KUA), including Yusuf and Muhammad Jabir, S.Ag.; and representatives of the Jambi City Religious Court, including Poswita and Yakub. The selection of these participants was based on their institutional positions and their relevance to the research questions. In addition, PUSPAGA-related documents and official records were examined as supporting sources. The use of purposive selection ensured that the information was obtained from participants who were able to provide substantive information concerning the implementation, coordination, constraints, and prevention efforts associated with PUSPAGA.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using guiding questions covering the role and functions of PUSPAGA, prevention and educational activities, counseling and mediation services, referral mechanisms, institutional coordination, obstacles to implementation, available resources, and strategies undertaken to address identified constraints. The interviews were directed primarily to participants who had direct knowledge of the PUSPAGA program or whose institutional functions were related to child-marriage prevention. Observations were used to obtain contextual information concerning the implementation of PUSPAGA services and the institutional conditions supporting program implementation. Documentation was used to complement the interview and observation data and included PUSPAGA profile documents, reports of PUSPAGA activities, statistical information concerning child marriage and marriage-dispensation cases, relevant laws and regulations, and other documents related to child-marriage prevention. The combination of interviews, observations, and documentary evidence was intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the case rather than relying on a single source of information.

The data collection and analysis were conducted iteratively. First, interview

information, observation notes, and documentary materials were organized according to the research objectives. Second, the researchers conducted data reduction by identifying information relevant to the role of PUSPAGA, implementation constraints, and efforts to prevent child marriage. Third, relevant statements and documentary evidence were coded and grouped into categories representing recurring issues and patterns. Fourth, related categories were compared and synthesized into broader themes. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study. The analysis followed the qualitative data analysis procedures of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification proposed by Miles et al. (2019). Data displays in the form of thematic categories and comparative descriptions were used to facilitate interpretation and to identify relationships among information obtained from different participants and documents.

Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from PUSPAGA personnel with information provided by external stakeholders, including KUA and Religious Court representatives. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing interview findings with observation results and documentary evidence. In addition, the researchers compared statements from different informants concerning the same issue to identify consistencies and discrepancies before drawing conclusions. Relevant interpretations were checked against the available documentary evidence and the institutional context to reduce the possibility of relying on a single participant's perspective. These procedures were employed to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. The use of multiple data sources and systematic comparison is consistent with qualitative research standards for establishing the trustworthiness of case-study findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2019).

Results and Discussion

The Role of the Jambi City Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA) in Preventing Child Marriage in Jambi City

a. Preventive and Promotive Role

The preventive role of PUSPAGA Jambi City appears to be most prominent in information services and outreach/guidance services that target the community before family problems, including the potential for child marriage, actually occur (DPMPPA, 2023). Premarital counseling services for prospective brides, for example, directly target age groups at risk of early marriage, by providing briefings on psychological readiness, couple's communication, and readiness to build a family before the marriage contract is held. Similarly, education that has been expanded to the sub-district and neighborhood (RT) levels shows that PUSPAGA does not only work reactively waiting for the arrival of clients, but actively reaches out to the community at the grassroots level, where child marriage decisions often start from socio-cultural and economic family factors.

This promotive role is in line with the mandate of the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 6 of 2023 which positions PUSPAGA as a forum for family learning services that are preventive and promotive, not just as a case handling institution (Permen PPPA). Thus, in terms of policy design, the preventive-promotive role of Puspaga Pinang Masak is quite aligned with the national mandate that directs PUSPAGA to reduce the rate of child marriage from upstream, namely at the stage of forming family awareness and readiness, not only in handling the impact after child marriage occurs.

The promotive role of PUSPAGA Pinang Masak is a form of efforts to prevent child marriage which is carried out through increasing family knowledge, awareness, and

capacity. The promotive role is not only directed to children, but also to parents, prospective parents, and the community who have responsibilities in raising and protecting children. Through socialization, education, counseling, consultation, and family learning activities, PUSPAGA seeks to build an understanding that child marriage has various consequences for child development, education, health, psychological conditions, and family resilience (Permen PPPA).

Conceptually, PUSPAGA is indeed placed as a place of family learning. Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 12 of 2022 concerning the Implementation of Child-Friendly Regencies/Cities explains that PUSPAGA is a place of learning to improve the quality of family life through increasing the capacity of parents or families as well as those responsible for children in carrying out their responsibilities of parenting and child protection. These provisions show that PUSPAGA has an educational and preventive orientation, because the intervention is carried out by improving the ability of families before more serious problems arise (Permen PPPA).

In the context of preventing child marriage, this function is very important because the decision to marry a child is often not only caused by the child's desires, but also influenced by the family's mindset, social conditions, culture, economy, education level, and lack of understanding of the impact of marriage on the child's age. Therefore, PUSPAGA Pinang Masak can act as an educational space for families to provide an understanding of the ideal marriage age, children's rights, the importance of education, psychological and economic readiness in building a household, and the risks that can arise if marriage is carried out when the child does not have adequate readiness (KPPPA RI).

The role of promotive can also be seen through the family empowerment approach. PUSPAGA not only provides information in one direction, but encourages families to be able to recognize the problems faced and make decisions that are more oriented towards the best interests of the child. Thus, the family is not placed solely as a party that must accept the prohibition on child marriage, but as a party that needs to be given knowledge and skills in order to prevent child marriage from the family environment itself. In addition, the promotive approach has advantages because it can be done before conditions that require further treatment occur. If the family has an understanding of the impact of child marriage, then the possibility of child marriage can be suppressed from the early stages. This is in line with PUSPAGA's position as a service oriented to increase family capacity, not only as a place to solve problems after problems occur (Permen PPPA).

b. Curative and Mediative Roles

In addition to the preventive role, PUSPAGA Jambi City also carries out a curative-mediative role through counseling/consultation services and mediation of minor domestic conflicts. This role is relevant to the context of preventing child marriage in a broader sense, because some cases of marriage dispensation applications in the Religious Court are rooted in the family's inability to manage conflicts or socio-economic pressures that ultimately encourage families to marry their children at an early age. Data from the Directorate General of the Religious Justice Agency shows that marriage dispensation applications in Indonesia are still at a significant number every year, most of which are submitted due to parents' concerns about child association and out-of-wedlock pregnancy conditions (Badilag, 2024). With the availability of counseling and mediation services at Puspaga Pinang Masak, families in these vulnerable situations have room for early intervention before making a decision to marry their children as a solution to the problems they face.

The existence of counseling and consultation services has relevance to efforts to prevent child marriage because the decision to marry a child at an early age under a number of

conditions can arise as a family response to the problems being faced. For example, conflicts between children and parents, parents' concerns about children's associations, unplanned pregnancies, social pressures from the environment, family economic problems, and concerns about the child's future can cause marriage to be seen as one of the solutions to solve these problems. In such situations, families need a consultation room that can help them understand the problem more objectively before making decisions that affect the child's future (KPPPA).

Data on marriage dispensation cases shows that the issue of child marriage is still one of the problems that requires serious attention. The Supreme Court through the Directorate General of the Religious Justice Agency noted that marriage dispensation cases are still being filed in a significant number. The application is related to, among others, the condition of children who are considered to have a close relationship with the opposite sex, parents' concerns about child association, and premarital pregnancy conditions. The data shows that there are various social and family factors that can be behind the decision to apply for a marriage dispensation (Badilag, 2024).

In such conditions, the existence of PUSPAGA can be a form of initial intervention before family problems develop to the stage of submitting a marriage dispensation to the Religious Court. Through counseling, families can get the opportunity to convey the problems they face and get assistance in understanding the available options. Counseling can also help parents understand that marriage is not always a solution to conflicts between children, pregnancy, or relationship problems between children and parents. On the contrary, marriage decisions need to consider physical, psychological, social, economic, educational, and best interests for the child (KPPPA RI).

The mediative role of PUSPAGA is also important when problems arise from communication conflicts between children and parents. In some families, differences in views between parents and children regarding association, education, relationships with the opposite sex, or future plans can cause tension. If these conflicts are not managed properly, parents can make decisions unilaterally without considering the wishes and interests of the child. Through the mediation process or communication facilitation, PUSPAGA can help bring together views between children and parents so that decisions taken can be based on more mature communication and consideration (Perma RI 5, 2019).

Thus, the mediative function of PUSPAGA is not only related to resolving conflicts that have occurred, but can also function as a protection mechanism for children. When family conflicts can be resolved through communication and mentoring, the pressure to make marriage a solution can be minimized. This is important because child marriage can have long-term consequences for the sustainability of education, health, psychological conditions, economic independence, and the quality of family life formed by the child (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 35, 2014).

c. Coordinating and Referral Roles

The third role carried out by PUSPAGA Jambi City is the coordinating role, which is to connect prevention services at the family level with handling more severe cases through a tiered referral mechanism to the Women's and Children's Protection UPTD (UPTD PPA). This mechanism is important in the context of preventing child marriage because it is not

uncommon for indications of child marriage risk to be intertwined with other problems that are beyond the authority of PUSPAGA, such as domestic violence, sexual violence against children, and exploitation. With a clear referral path to the UPTD PPA, PUSPAGA can ensure that case handling does not stop at an inadequate stage, but continues to units that have more complete legal authority and psychological resources (Permen PPPA 2, 2022).

The coordinating role is important because the problem of child marriage in practice does not always stand alone. Children who are at risk of marriage at an early age can face other problems, such as violence in the family, sexual violence, unplanned pregnancy, pressure from parents, family conflicts, exploitation, school dropouts, and social and economic problems. This condition shows that the prevention of child marriage requires an approach that is not only oriented to marriage problems, but also looks at the factors that cause children to be in vulnerable conditions (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 35, 2014).

Under certain conditions, PUSPAGA may find that the problems submitted by the family have been beyond the capacity of the consultation or counseling services that can be provided. If indications of violence or forms of violation of children's rights are found, then the handling should not stop at providing advice to the family. The case needs to be directed to institutions that have special authority and competence to carry out further handling. In this context, the referral mechanism to the Women's and Children's Protection UPTD (UPTD PPA) is an important part of the child protection system (Permen PPPA 2, 2018).

Explained by Jihan Nurzahra S.Pd as the Counselor of PUSPAGA Jambi City:
"The role of the service carried out includes consultation on family issues, handling bullying cases referred by partner schools, and prevention of early marriage, including handling cases of marriage dispensation applications referred by the Jambi City Religious Court to DPMPPA/Puspaga. According to him, throughout 2025 there will be three clients handled related to child marriage cases, while until mid-2026 there will be no new clients with similar cases recorded (Nurzahra, 2026)."

Then explained by Thilia Marina as the Head of the Puspaga/Child Protection Section of DPMPPA Jambi City:

"There is a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Puspaga/DPMPPA Jambi City and the Jambi City Religious Court which was signed in October 2025, with the aim that the Religious Court does not necessarily grant every application for marriage dispensation submitted, but first considers the results of mentoring and education from Puspaga. The existence of this MoU shows that there are concrete efforts to integrate the role of PUSPAGA into the religious justice process, so that the potential for child marriage can be prevented before the determination of the marriage dispensation is issued by the court (Marina, 2026)".

The roles carried out include initial assessment of clients, education and socialization, as well as self-coaching for adolescents regarding social boundaries. Psychologists also emphasized the importance of education directed at parents so as not to normalize marriage at a young age, considering that some of the misconceptions about early marriage actually come from the immediate family environment. These findings reinforce the picture that the role of PUSPAGA does not only target children or prospective brides directly, but also targets changes in the mindset of parents as the parties who often determine child marriage decisions.

However, based on an interview with Mr. Yusuf as the Religious Extension Officer, KUA of South Jambi District and Mr. Muhammad Jabir, S.Ag., as the Head of KUA of Jelutung District said that:

"The person concerned does not know clearly about the Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA), both in terms of the form of activities, the scope of the program, and the technical implementation in the field. It was further explained that in the South Jambi District KUA there is a program from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, namely School-Age Youth Guidance (BRUS), which targets students at the high school/vocational school level and Madrasah Aliyah/Islamic Boarding School at the same level. This program is carried out through cooperation (MoU) with the school, and for the South Jambi District area, the schools that have been covered in the cooperation are SMKN 3 and MTs Nurul Hidayah (Yusuf, 2026)".

Then based on the results of an interview from the Jambi City Religious Court with Mrs. Poswita as the Deputy Legal Clerk of the Jambi City Religious Court, she said that:

"She knows a little about PUSPAGA, because she has participated in the Children's Conference organized by the Jambi City Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office (DPMPPA), with participants from various other related agencies. According to her explanation, the role of the Religious Court is basically at the final stage of a child marriage problem, namely when the case has been submitted in the form of a marriage dispensation application. The application is generally submitted because the bride-to-be has become pregnant out of wedlock, but not all applications submitted are granted by the judge. She also emphasized that the Religious Court does not have a preventive function against child marriage, because the court's authority is to handle cases that have been submitted (repressive/curative). For every child who applies for a marriage dispensation, they are required to attach a recommendation from a psychologist from the University of Jambi (UNJA) who has established cooperation (MoU) with the Religious Court. The psychologist's recommendation aims to assess the mental readiness of the prospective bride, both male and female, in facing and carrying out marriage (Poswita, 2026)".

Finally, the results of the explanatory interview from Mr. Yakub as the Deputy Registrar of Applications for the Jambi City Religious Court stated that:

"He did not know about PUSPAGA, but regarding the data on marriage dispensation cases handled by the Jambi City Religious Court, the following information was obtained: Year 2024: 62 cases, Year 2025: 46 cases, Year 2026 (January to August): 24 T-shirts. He also explained that not all marriage dispensation applicants were granted by judges. One of the main conditions to consider is the recommendation from a psychologist who has conducted an assessment and explanation to every couple who applies for a marriage dispensation. He also said that there was once a case of marriage dispensation that was filed because the child (student) was forced to marry by his own parents (Yakup, 2026)".

Referring to Merton's role theory which emphasizes that a social role is always attached to a set of normative expectations from the surrounding environment, the three forms of PUSPAGA's role above preventive-promotive, curative-mediative, and coordinating are basically an elaboration of normative expectations outlined in regulations, both at the level of marriage laws and ministerial regulations regarding PUSPAGA (Meton, 1957).

However, the suitability of institutional design with regulatory mandates has not automatically described the effectiveness of these roles in the field. As will be further described in section B, a number of structural and non-structural constraints also affect the extent to which these normative roles can be carried out optimally, especially in the context of the vast coverage of Jambi City compared to the capacity of one PUSPAGA service point currently available.

Obstacles and Obstacles Faced by Family Learning Centers (PUSPAGA) in Preventing Child Marriage in Jambi City

a. Limited Service Coverage Compared to Regional Coverage

The Puspaga Pinang Masak service is currently still centralized at one service point at the city level, while the plan to expand to the sub-district level is only at the discourse stage that depends on the interest of the community. This condition poses accessibility challenges for people who live far from the central service location, considering that Jambi City consists of several sub-districts with diverse demographic and socio-economic characteristics (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 32, 2004). The centralization of services in one location has the potential to cause the most vulnerable groups of people to risk child marriage, who are often in suburban areas with more limited access to transportation and information, to be the least likely group to take advantage of PUSPAGA's services.

Centralization of services in one location also has the potential to create inequality of access between sub-districts. The community groups that are most vulnerable to the risk of child marriage, who often come from families with limited economic conditions or live in suburban areas with lower access to transportation and information, are actually the least likely group to obtain PUSPAGA's services. In fact, this group is the main target that needs consultation, education, psychological assistance, and referral services in efforts to prevent child marriage (KPPPA RI).

From the perspective of public services, these conditions show that the existence of services alone is not enough to ensure the fulfillment of people's rights. Local governments also need to ensure that services can be accessed by community groups that are targeted by services. Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services emphasizes that the implementation of public services must pay attention to the principles of equal rights, equal treatment, affordability, and facilities and special treatment for vulnerable groups. Thus, the provision of PUSPAGA services needs to consider aspects of affordability and the characteristics of the community that is the target of the service (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 25, 2009).

In addition to geographical barriers, limited service points can also reduce the effectiveness of the implementation of prevention programs because the reach of socialization and assistance cannot be carried out evenly in all sub-districts. As a result, people who lack information about the existence and benefits of PUSPAGA services tend not to know the mechanism of access to services and the importance of consultation before problems develop into more complex. In the long term, this condition can widen the gap in child and family protection services between regions in Jambi City and hinder the efforts

of local governments in realizing child marriage prevention services that are inclusive, easily accessible, and fair for all levels of society (Ministerial Regulation PPPA 12, 2022).

b. Limited Number of Professionals

The number of clinical psychologists, general psychologists/counselors, and mediators specifically prepared for Puspaga Pinang Masak is relatively limited when compared to the potential number of families and children of vulnerable age to early marriage throughout Jambi City. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the proportion of women aged 20-24 years who marry before the age of 18 is still a structural problem in various regions, including Jambi Province, so that the target population of child marriage prevention services is basically much larger than the capacity of one city-level PUSPAGA service unit (BPS, 2026). The gap between the capacity of professionals and the breadth of this target population has the potential to cause service queues, limited consultation time per client, and limited coverage of outreach/guidance activities to all existing villages.

The gap between the capacity of professionals and the breadth of the target population has the potential to cause service queues, limited consultation time per client, and limited coverage of outreach and guidance activities to all existing villages. Under certain conditions, service personnel must handle various types of problems simultaneously, ranging from childcare problems, family conflicts, violence against children, mental health, to cases related to the risk of child marriage. As a result, a high workload can affect the intensity of assistance and the quality of services provided to each client (Ministerial Regulation, PPA 12, 2022).

Limited human resources also have an impact on preventive efforts which are one of the main functions of PUSPAGA. Ideally, professionals not only provide consulting services in the office, but also carry out education, counseling, early detection, and direct assistance activities in schools, urban villages, and communities. However, with a limited number of personnel, the implementation of these activities becomes less optimal because the available personnel are more focused on handling cases that have entered. This condition causes promotive and preventive approaches to not be able to reach all target groups evenly (Permen PPA 2, 2022).

In addition, the limited number of professionals has the potential to hinder the sustainability of case assistance. Child marriage prevention generally cannot be solved through a single consultation, but requires comprehensive assessment, continuous counseling, coordination with families, schools, local governments, and referrals to other institutions if necessary. If the number of assistance personnel is not proportional to the number of cases that must be handled, then the assistance process risks becoming less intensive, so that the effectiveness of interventions in preventing child marriage can decrease (Ministerial Regulation PPA 2, 2022).

Thus, strengthening the capacity of human resources through increasing the number of psychologists, counselors, mediators, and other support personnel is an important need so that PUSPAGA Pinang Masak is able to provide fast, quality, and reach the community more broadly. This capacity building will also support the implementation of promotive, preventive, curative, and referral functions more effectively in an effort to reduce the rate of child marriage in Jambi City.

c. Socio-Cultural Factors and Low Public Awareness

The barriers are not only structural-institutional, but also rooted in socio-cultural factors of the community that still views early marriage as commonplace, even in some cases considered a solution to parents' concerns about child association. Previous research on the factors that cause child marriage in Jambi Province shows that social norms, family economic pressure, and low understanding of the reproductive health impacts of early marriage are still the main drivers of this practice in various regions of Jambi (Wahyuni & Kusmayadi, 2021). This condition is a challenge for PUSPAGA, because the success of preventing child marriage does not only depend on the availability of services, but also on changing the mindset of the community which requires a continuous and cross-generational education approach, not just a one-time intervention.

In some communities, child marriage is still seen as a form of protection for girls, a way to maintain family honor, or a strategy to reduce the economic burden of the household. Not a few parents also think that marrying children is a better option than letting their children date or risk behaving in behavior that is considered deviant from societal norms. This view causes the practice of child marriage to gain social legitimacy so that its prevention efforts often face rejection or lack of support from the surrounding environment (BPS).

This condition is a challenge for PUSPAGA, because the success of preventing child marriage does not only depend on the availability of services, but also on changing the mindset of the community that requires a continuous and cross-generational education approach, not just a one-time intervention. Counseling and socialization programs provided to individuals or families will be difficult to have an optimal impact if the values that develop in the social environment still support the practice of child marriage. Therefore, changing people's behavior requires a gradual process through consistent dissemination of information, strengthening literacy about children's rights, reproductive health, the importance of education, and the social, psychological, and economic consequences of early marriage (UNICEF).

In addition, the success of changing mindsets also requires the involvement of various parties outside PUSPAGA, such as religious leaders, traditional leaders, educators, community organizations, village governments, and mass media that have an influence on the formation of public opinion. This collaboration is important to create a social environment that supports the postponement of the age of marriage and encourages the community to make education and the development of children's potential a priority. Thus, efforts to prevent child marriage are not only carried out through the resolution of cases that have occurred, but also through the transformation of social values and norms that are the root of the problem so that the resulting changes can be more sustainable (KPPPA RI, 2020).

d. Limitations of Facilities, Budgets, and Online Service Systems

The plan to develop online consultation services by Puspaga Pinang Masak is still in the planning stage and depends on the results of the evaluation of the ongoing face-to-face services. The unavailability of online service channels is also an obstacle in itself, especially for community groups who have mobility limitations and for teenagers who tend to be more open to accessing private consultation services through digital media than coming

directly to the service office. This limitation is also related to the availability of the budget and supporting technical facilities needed to build a secure and confidential online service system.

In the digital era, the use of information technology has become one of the important means in the implementation of public services, including counseling and child protection services. The presence of online consultation services can expand the range of services because people are no longer limited by geographical distance, operational time, or transportation costs. For teenagers, digital media also often provide a sense of security and comfort to convey personal or sensitive issues, such as family conflicts, pressure from the environment to get married, and concerns related to reproductive health. Therefore, the absence of online services has the potential to cause some target groups to choose not to seek help even though they are facing problems that require professional assistance (KPPPA RI)

In addition to increasing accessibility, online services can also function as an early detection medium for the risk of child marriage. Through digital-based consultation, people can obtain information, education, and counseling services more quickly before problems develop into more complex cases. This system also allows PUSPAGA to provide initial services to people in areas far from service offices, then make referrals or follow-up assistance if needed. Thus, online services can complement face-to-face services, not replace them, so that the scope of services becomes wider and more flexible.

However, the implementation of online services requires readiness that is not only limited to the provision of applications or communication platforms. PUSPAGA needs to ensure the availability of adequate technological infrastructure, clear operational standards of procedures, cyber security systems, personal data protection mechanisms, and increasing the capacity of human resources in providing counseling virtually. These aspects are important considering that the services provided are related to personal information, psychological conditions, and confidential family issues. Without a good management system, online services have the potential to pose a risk of data leakage and reduce public trust in services (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 27, 2022). Therefore, the development of online consultation services can be one of the strategies to increase the effectiveness of preventing child marriage in Jambi City. When supported by careful planning, adequate budgets, secure digital infrastructure, and competent professionals, online services have the potential to expand the reach of PUSPAGA Pinang Masak, increase public access to counseling services, and strengthen promotive and preventive efforts in preventing child marriage.

e. Cross-Sector Coordination That Is Not Optimal

The last obstacle identified is the aspect of cross-sector coordination. Although a tiered referral mechanism between PUSPAGA and UPTD PPA is structurally available, the effectiveness of child marriage prevention basically requires broader coordination, not only with the UPTD PPA, but also with other agencies such as the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), Religious Courts as the grantor of marriage dispensation, education units, and village governments. This suboptimal cross-sector synergy has the potential to cause PUSPAGA intervention to be carried out only after a case has emerged, even though ideally

child marriage prevention requires an early warning system involving various stakeholders in an integrated manner (KPPPA RI, 2024).

Child marriage prevention is a multidimensional issue so that it cannot be effectively handled by one institution alone. The factors behind the occurrence of child marriage, such as poverty, school dropouts, low understanding of reproductive health, family conflicts, and the influence of social norms, are within the scope of authority of various institutions. Therefore, each stakeholder has a complementary role in detecting, preventing, and dealing with risk factors before they lead to child marriage.

In this context, education units play an important role in identifying students who are at risk of dropping out of school or showing indications of being married at a child's age. The village government and regional apparatus have a strategic position because they are closer to the community so that they can detect changes in family social conditions and provide education directly to residents. On the other hand, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) and the Religious Court have an important role in ensuring that every marriage application or marriage dispensation considers the best interests of the child in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations (MA RI). If coordination between agencies is effective, information about families or children who are in vulnerable conditions can be conveyed more quickly to PUSPAGA for assessment, counseling, and assistance before the marriage takes place.

On the other hand, if cross-sector coordination has not run optimally, each agency tends to work based on its own duties and authorities without a structured information exchange mechanism. As a result, the opportunity to intervene early becomes smaller, because PUSPAGA is only aware of cases when families have applied for marriage dispensation, children have dropped out of school, or marriages have been planned. This condition causes efforts to be more curative or case handling than preventive, so that the effectiveness of prevention programs is less optimal (KPPPA RI, 2026).

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen coordination through cross-sector communication forums, the preparation of operational standards for joint procedures, a more integrated referral mechanism, and a data and information sharing system that still pays attention to the protection of personal data. In addition, the implementation of regular coordination meetings, joint socialization, and clear division of roles between agencies can strengthen the early warning system against the risk of child marriage. With better synergy, PUSPAGA Pinang Masak not only plays a role as a consulting service provider, but also becomes part of a child protection system that is able to carry out prevention in a more comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable manner in Jambi City.

In summary, the obstacles and obstacles faced by Puspaga Pinang Masak Jambi City in preventing child marriage can be described as follows:

Yes	Obstacle Aspects	Brief Description
1	Range of Service	Services are still centralized at one point at the city level, not yet reaching all sub-districts.
2	Human Resources	The number of psychologists, counselors, and mediators is relatively limited compared to the target population.

3	Socio-Cultural	There is still a view of the public that considers it reasonable to marry at a young age.
4	Facilities and Budget	Online consultation services are not yet available; limited budget for the development of facilities.
5	Cross-Sector Coordination	Synergy with KUA, Religious Courts, and education units has not been fully integrated.

Explained by Jihan Nurzahra S.Pd as the Counselor of PUSPAGA Jambi City:
"The achievement of the program is still ineffective due to the inadequate condition of the consultation room in terms of comfort and confidentiality, as well as schedule constraints that often clash between clients. As an illustration, she conveyed one case of interfaith marriage consultation to a female client who was willing to attend with her family, while the prospective husband and his family were not present on the agreed schedule, so the mentoring process could not run optimally. She also emphasized that until now there has been no special operational budget for field activities, both for the implementing honorarium and transportation needs. The constraint of limited human resources was also emphasized by another Coordinator, who said that the number of coordinators and psychologists is still very limited, with only one psychologist available, while budget support is conditional and scheduling coordination between clients has not run smoothly. This condition is in line with the findings in the previous section regarding the gap between the capacity of professional personnel and the breadth of the target population of Puspaga services in Jambi City" (Nurzahra, 2026).

Then explained by Thilia Marina as the Head of the Puspaga/Child Protection Section of DPMPPA Jambi City:

"Until now, there is no standard and standardized psychological assessment instrument or tool to be used in the client assistance process, so the assessment process is still carried out on a limited basis and is not fully sustainable. He also added that the available service room is not soundproof, so it has the potential to reduce the client's sense of security and confidentiality when consulting, and there is no permanent operational vehicle available, so that field activities have been dependent on borrowing vehicles belonging to the Head of Division incidentally" (Marina, 2026)

The main obstacle faced is the absence of special fund allocation and the demands for program efficiency, so program planning for the following year still requires a more complete database before it can be formally proposed. This statement emphasizes that budget constraints not only hinder daily operational activities, but also hinder the planning process of child marriage prevention programs in the medium term.

Overall, the results of the interviews show that the obstacles faced by PUSPAGA Pinang Masak Jambi City in an effort to prevent child marriage are multidimensional, complex, and interrelated between one aspect and another. These obstacles not only come from internal institutional factors, but are also influenced by the external conditions and social environment of the community that are the target of PUSPAGA's services. From the internal side, limited human resources, facilities and infrastructure, financing support, and work instruments and mechanisms are some of the factors that can affect the optimization of the implementation of PUSPAGA's programs and services, both in education,

socialization, consultation, counseling, and assistance activities for children and families who are in vulnerable conditions. These limitations can ultimately affect the range of services and the intensity of interventions provided to the community, especially groups that have a higher risk of experiencing child marriage.

In addition, cross-sector coordination is also one of the important aspects that still needs to be strengthened, considering that the prevention of child marriage is not a problem that can be solved by one institution alone. Various factors behind child marriage, such as family economic conditions, low levels of education, school dropouts, lack of understanding of reproductive health, family conflicts, social pressure, and the influence of societal norms and culture, are related to the authority and role of various institutions. Therefore, the existence of PUSPAGA needs to be supported by stronger synergy with UPTD PPA, education units, village governments, KUAs, religious courts, health workers, religious leaders, community leaders, and various other parties so that the process of identification, prevention, counseling, mentoring, and referral can be carried out more quickly and integrated. If these various obstacles are not overcome immediately, there is a possibility that the implementation of the PUSPAGA function will be more reactive, namely providing treatment after child marriage problems arise, rather than carrying out preventive functions through early detection and intervention before the risk develops into a case.

Thus, optimizing the role of PUSPAGA Pinang Masak not only requires increasing internal capacity through the fulfillment of human resources, facilities and infrastructure, budgets, and adequate work instruments, but also requires strengthening coordination and cross-sector cooperation networks in a sustainable manner. This strengthening is important so that PUSPAGA is able to carry out its promotive and preventive functions more optimally, increase public access to counseling and education services, detect families or children who are in vulnerable conditions early, and provide referrals and assistance according to needs. With adequate institutional support, resources, policies, and coordination, PUSPAGA Pinang Masak is expected to not only play a role as a place for consultation when problems have occurred, but also can become a strategic part of the child protection system in Jambi City that is able to prevent child marriage in a comprehensive, integrated, responsive, and sustainable manner.

Efforts Made by the Family Learning Center (PUSPAGA) in Preventing Child Marriage in Jambi City

Facing various obstacles as described in part B, the Jambi City DPMPPA through Puspaga Pinang Masak has and is planning a number of efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of child marriage prevention. These efforts are described below.

a. Expansion of Service Points to the District Level

The Jambi City DPMPPA plans to expand the PUSPAGA service to the sub-district level in response to the limited service coverage which is currently still concentrated in one location. This effort is in line with the direction of the national policy that encourages local governments to expand PUSPAGA service points to bring community access to family learning services closer (KPPPA RI, 2016). This expansion is expected to overcome the gap in service accessibility, especially for people in sub-district areas far from the city center, as

well as bring preventive services closer to groups that are statistically more vulnerable to child marriage practices.

The expansion of PUSPAGA services to the sub-district level is expected to overcome the gap in service accessibility, especially for people in sub-district areas far from the city center. With the availability of service points closer to people's residences, obstacles in the form of transportation costs, travel time, and mobility limitations can be reduced. This condition is important because community groups that need preventive services often come from families who have limited resources, so distance and access costs can be factors that hinder them from obtaining assistance (KPPPA RI, 2021).

In addition to expanding the reach geographically, the existence of services at the sub-district level also allows PUSPAGA to take a more contextual approach in accordance with the social characteristics of the local community. Each region has different dynamics, both in terms of family economic conditions, education levels, parenting patterns, and community understanding of the issue of child marriage. With closer services, the assistance staff can more easily build relationships with the community, map vulnerable groups, and develop education and prevention strategies that suit the needs of each region. The expansion of services also has the potential to strengthen PUSPAGA's preventive function because interventions can be carried out before the problem develops into a child marriage case. Through the existence of services at the sub-district level, the early identification process of families who face risks, such as children who have the potential to drop out of school, family economic pressure, or the existence of marriage plans at a young age, can be carried out more quickly. This allows for the provision of counseling, education, and assistance to children and families before marriage decisions are made.

However, the success of the expansion of PUSPAGA services does not only depend on the addition of service locations, but also requires the readiness of supporting resources, such as the availability of psychologists, counselors, mediators, operational budgets, infrastructure, and coordination with sub-district officials, sub-districts, schools, and community institutions. Without this support, the expansion of service points risks only increasing the number of locations administratively without being followed by improving the quality and effectiveness of services.

Thus, the development of PUSPAGA to the sub-district level is an important step in strengthening the child marriage prevention system in Jambi City. If implemented gradually and supported by careful planning, the expansion of this service will not only increase public access to family learning services, but also strengthen the role of local governments in building a child protection system that is more inclusive, responsive, and prevention-oriented (KPPPA RI, 2026).

b. Development of Online Consulting Services

The second effort is the development of online consultation services, which are planned to complement the face-to-face services that have been running. This service is projected to reach community groups who have mobility limitations and teenagers who tend to be more comfortable accessing private consultation services through digital media. The development of online services is also relevant to the characteristics of today's young generation who are more familiar with technology-based communication, so that it has the

potential to increase the intensity of the use of premarital and parenting counseling services as part of efforts to prevent child marriage from an early age.

The presence of online consultation services is one of the strategic alternatives to expand the reach of PUSPAGA services without being limited by geographical and time constraints. People who are far from the location of the central service, have limited transportation, or experience obstacles to come directly to the service office can still get early access to information and assistance. This is important because some people who need services are actually in vulnerable conditions, either due to economic limitations, family pressure, or a less supportive social environment to seek help directly (KPPPA RI).

For adolescent groups, online services also have added value because they provide a more flexible and private consultation space. Issues related to child marriage often involve sensitive issues, such as family pressure, interpersonal relationships, concerns about the future of education, and reproductive health problems. In this situation, some adolescents may find it easier to convey problems through digital media than having to come directly to a service institution. With online consultation channels, psychological barriers such as embarrassment, fear of being known by others, or concerns about social stigma can be reduced. In addition to serving as a consultation medium, online services can also be developed as a means of education and prevention through the provision of digital information about positive parenting, children's rights, reproductive health, marital readiness, and the impact of marriage on children's age. The dissemination of information through digital platforms allows educational messages to reach more target groups, especially the younger generation who have a high level of interaction with information technology. With this approach, PUSPAGA not only waits for the community to come when facing problems, but can be more active in building public awareness and knowledge before the risk of child marriage occurs (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 27, 2022).

However, the development of online consultation services still requires careful planning in order to run effectively. Some aspects that need to be considered include the readiness of technology infrastructure, the availability of counselors who are able to provide services virtually, the preparation of online service procedures, as well as data protection systems and user information confidentiality. This is important because PUSPAGA services are related to family issues and personal conditions that require a high level of security and trust. In addition, online services need to be designed as part of an integrated service system, not as a substitute for face-to-face services. Some cases may require direct assistance, more in-depth assessments, or referrals to other institutions so that the connecting mechanism between online consultation and direct services needs to be well prepared. With the right integration, online services can be the initial entrance (*First Contact Service*) which makes it easier for the community to get assistance and then directed to the form of assistance that suits their needs (KPPPA RI).

Thus, the development of online consultation services by PUSPAGA Pinang Masak can be a service innovation that supports expanding access, increasing affordability, and strengthening efforts to prevent child marriage in Jambi City. Through the use of safe and inclusive technology, PUSPAGA can reach target groups that previously had difficulty

obtaining services and strengthen preventive approaches through education and continuous assistance (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 27, 2022).

c. Strengthening Tiered Education to RT Level

The Jambi City DPMPPA also strengthens the pattern of education and socialization of child marriage prevention to the sub-district and Neighborhood Units (RT) levels, as an effort to reach the community at the level closest to the family's daily life. This multi-level education approach to the smallest community level is in line with UNICEF's recommendations which emphasize the importance of changing social norms at the community level as one of the key strategies in ending child marriage practices (UNICEF Indonesia, 2023). By reaching the RT level, it is hoped that the community's collective awareness of the risks and impacts of child marriage can be formed more evenly, not only depending on the initiative of individual families who voluntarily visit PUSPAGA services.

By reaching the RT level, it is hoped that the community's collective awareness of the risks and impacts of child marriage can be formed more evenly, not only depending on the initiative of individual families who voluntarily visit PUSPAGA's services. This is important because most families who face the risk of child marriage do not necessarily have adequate knowledge about the services available or do not have the awareness that the conditions they face require assistance. Through an active approach at the community level, information about the impact of child marriage on education, reproductive health, psychological conditions, and family economic sustainability can be conveyed directly to the community (KPPPA RI).

The implementation of education at the sub-district and RT levels also has advantages because it involves local actors who better understand the characteristics of the local community. RT chairs, community cadres, religious leaders, traditional leaders, as well as women and youth groups can act as a liaison between the government and families who need support. They have a strategic position in recognizing changes in social conditions in the surrounding environment, such as children at risk of dropping out of school, families with high economic pressure, or the emergence of marriage plans at a young age. With the involvement of local actors, the early detection process can be carried out faster before cases develop into problems that are more difficult to handle (KPPPA RI).

In addition to providing information, community-based education also plays a role in building changes in social norms which have been one of the driving factors for child marriage. In some community environments, the decision to marry children at a young age is still influenced by the view that marriage is a solution to family economic problems, concerns about children's associations, or efforts to maintain certain social values. Therefore, it is not enough to change understanding through the delivery of information all at once, but requires a continuous dialogue process involving various elements of society so that there is a mutual agreement on the importance of protecting children's rights and providing opportunities for children to grow and develop optimally (UNICEF Indonesia).

The community-based approach also allows DPMPPA and PUSPAGA to map community needs more accurately. Each village has different social characteristics so that educational strategies can be adjusted to local conditions, both through community meetings, family forums, school activities, and other community groups. Thus, socialization is not only one-way in the form of information delivery, but also a dialogue space to understand the obstacles, perceptions, and needs of the community in preventing

child marriage. Nevertheless, the success of the approach to the RT level still requires continuous support, such as increasing the capacity of local cadres and apparatus, the availability of educational materials that are easy for the community to understand, and consistent coordination between DPMPPA, PUSPAGA, the village government, and other stakeholders. If implemented systematically, this community-based education strategy can strengthen efforts to prevent child marriage from the most basic level, so that changes not only occur in individuals, but also in the social environment where families make decisions (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 35, 2014).

d. Capacity Building and Addition of Professional Personnel

In line with the service expansion plan, the Jambi City DPMPPA is also considering the addition of professionals, both psychologists, counselors, and mediators, to support PUSPAGA operations at the sub-district level in the future. With a total of more than a hundred employees from various categories as described in Chapter III, there is an institutional space that can be optimized to support the strengthening of PUSPAGA human resource capacity in the future, both through reallocation and advanced training for existing personnel.

Strengthening human resources is an important aspect because the expansion of PUSPAGA services not only requires additional service locations, but must also be followed by the readiness of personnel who have competence according to service needs. Psychologists, counselors, and mediators have a strategic role in providing assessments, psychological assistance, family counseling, conflict mediation, and child marriage prevention education. With the increase in the coverage of service areas, the need for professionals will also be greater so that the quality of service is maintained and the community at the sub-district level receives services equivalent to the services available at the city level.

Optimizing the human resources that are already available in the DPMPPA environment can be one of the initial strategies to strengthen the capacity of PUSPAGA. This step can be done through mapping employee competencies, identifying the needs of service personnel, and preparing a gradual capacity building program. Employees who have related tasks to family empowerment, child protection, social services, and community assistance can be given capacity building through basic counseling training, communication with children, early detection of child marriage risks, handling family cases, and service referral mechanisms.

In addition to developing internal competencies, meeting the needs of professionals can also be done through collaboration with various parties, such as universities, psychology professional organizations, community service institutions, and experts who have competence in the field of child and family protection. This collaboration can help overcome the limited number of permanent professionals while expanding the support network for PUSPAGA in providing more comprehensive services (KPPPA RI).

The addition and strengthening of service personnel is also needed to maintain a balance between the service function and the prevention function. If the number of personnel is inadequate, most of the resources will be absorbed to handle cases that have occurred, while promotive and preventive activities such as family education, community

socialization, and assistance to vulnerable groups are less than optimal. With more adequate manpower availability, PUSPAGA can carry out its role more broadly, not only as a place for consultation when problems arise, but also as a family learning center that actively builds family resilience and prevents the risk of child marriage.

However, strengthening the capacity of human resources needs to be carried out in a planned manner by considering the real needs of each sub-district area. Each sub-district has different social characteristics, population numbers, vulnerability levels, and family problems so that the distribution of manpower needs to be adjusted so that services can run effectively and evenly. In addition, sustainable budget support is needed to ensure the availability of manpower, the implementation of training, service operations, and the periodic improvement of service quality.

Thus, the strategy of strengthening PUSPAGA's professional personnel through adding personnel, optimizing available employees, and improving competencies is an important step in supporting the success of service expansion in Jambi City. The availability of adequate human resources will strengthen PUSPAGA's ability to provide responsive, quality, and reach more families as part of efforts to prevent child marriage in a sustainable manner.

e. Strengthening Cross-Sector Coordination and Referral

The last effort identified is to strengthen coordination between PUSPAGA and UPTD PPA and the village government in handling cases that require further intervention. In the future, this strengthening of coordination should ideally be extended to the Office of Religious Affairs and Religious Courts, considering that the two institutions are the parties directly authorized in the process of marriage administration and the granting of marriage dispensation. A more integrated cross-sector synergy will allow PUSPAGA to play a more optimal role as an early prevention node, before a case continues to the marriage dispensation application in court.

Strengthening cross-sector coordination is needed because the prevention of child marriage is a problem that involves various aspects, ranging from child protection, education, health, family socio-economic conditions, to legal and administrative aspects of marriage. Each institution has a different but interrelated role. PUSPAGA has the main function of providing family education, counseling, and psychosocial assistance, while UPTD PPA plays a role in handling child protection cases that require further intervention. The village government has a strategic position because it is the party closest to the community and has initial information about the condition of families and at-risk children (KPPPA RI).

Meanwhile, the involvement of the KUA and the Religious Court is important because the two institutions have a direct point of contact when the family submits a marriage plan or a marriage dispensation application. If coordination has been established from the early stages, information about the child's condition, family background, and the results of PUSPAGA's assistance can be part of the consideration in the decision-making process. Thus, the handling process not only focuses on administrative aspects, but also considers the principle of the best interests for the child and the long-term impact of marriage on the child's age.

The integration of coordination can also support the formation of more effective early detection mechanisms. So far, some cases of child marriage have only received attention

when the family has made the decision to marry the child or when an application for marriage dispensation has been submitted. This condition shows that interventions are often reactive, i.e. carried out after the problem is at an advanced stage. With a stronger coordination system, information about children at risk can be received earlier so that PUSPAGA and related parties can conduct counseling, family mediation, educational assistance, and provide alternative solutions before child marriage becomes an option (KPPPA RI).

In addition to the case referral mechanism, cross-sector coordination also needs to be directed at joint prevention efforts through education and socialization activities. KUA, for example, can play a role in providing understanding to the community about marriage readiness and the impact of child marriage through religious activities or community development. Village governments can help mobilize citizen participation through community forums, while schools can be an important partner in identifying children who are under pressure to leave school or marry at an early age. With a joint approach, the message of preventing child marriage will be stronger because it is conveyed by various parties who have influence in the community. To support sustainable coordination, more formal work mechanisms are needed, such as periodic coordination forums, the preparation of joint referral procedures, the division of roles between agencies, and an information exchange system that still pays attention to the principles of child personal data protection. The clarity of this mechanism is important so that each institution understands its own responsibilities and that there are no overlaps or gaps in case handling (Law of the Republic of Indonesia 27, 2022).

Thus, strengthening the network between PUSPAGA, UPTD PPA, the village government, KUA, and the Religious Court is a strategic step to build a more comprehensive child marriage prevention system. Through integrated coordination, PUSPAGA not only functions as a consultation service after problems arise, but can also develop into part of an early warning system that is able to detect, prevent, and handle the risk of child marriage in a faster, more integrated, and sustainable manner in Jambi City.

Explained by Jihan Nurzahra S.Pd as the Counselor of PUSPAGA Jambi City:

"Puspaga Pinang Masak has also taken a number of short-term adaptive steps to get around the existing limitations. The Puspaga Coordinator explained that for clients who are not present at the consultation schedule, the team will contact them again by phone, and if the client responds, the counseling process will continue through the media; As for clients who remain unable to be present, mentoring activities will continue to be carried out as much as possible according to existing conditions. Regarding the limitations of operational facilities, he also said that for activities that require mobility to other agencies such as religious affairs offices and schools, the Puspaga team has been borrowing vehicles belonging to the Head of Field, and the implementation of activities is still sought to run voluntarily by the team even without adequate facility support" (Nurzahra, 2026).

Then explained by Thilia Marina as the Head of the Puspaga/Child Protection Section of DPMPPA Jambi City:

"The signing of the MoU with the Jambi City Religious Court in October 2025 is a strategic effort to ensure that every marriage dispensation application is not granted automatically, but rather considers the results of preventive assistance from Puspaga first. In addition,

despite being faced with limited human resources and budget, he said that the Puspaga unit still strives to carry out its main duties and functions consistently, while continuing to collect data to support the preparation of programs in the coming years, as well as strengthening educational activities carried out not only preventively but also as further learning after a case of early marriage occurs" (Marina, 2026).

A number of expectations that can also be the direction of future development, namely the availability of service facilities that are in accordance with standards, standard and tested psychological assessment instruments or tools, permanent operational vehicles that no longer depend on incidental loans, and an increase in the number of psychologists considering that currently there is only one psychologist available to handle all clients of Puspaga Jambi City. These expectations are in line with the efforts to increase capacity and add professionals that have been planned by the Jambi City DPMPPA as described earlier, and can be used as one of the basis for technical recommendations in the preparation of policies to strengthen Puspaga in the future.

Based on the results of interviews with all informants, the efforts that have been and will be made by Puspaga Pinang Masak Jambi City can be summarized as follows:

Yes	Efforts	Source/Informants
1	Re-contact clients who are absent by phone and continue counseling	Puspaga Coordinator
2	Carrying out activities voluntarily with makeshift facilities (borrowing Kabid vehicles)	Puspaga Coordinator & Psychologist
3	MoU with the Jambi City Religious Court for the marriage dispensation to consider the results of Puspaga's assistance	Head of Puspaga Section
4	Continue to carry out the tupoksi and collect data for the preparation of the next year's program	Head of Puspaga Section
5	Post-case continuing education as learning, in addition to preventive education	Head of Puspaga Section
6	Propose standardization of facilities, assessment tools, operational vehicles, and the addition of psychologists	Psychologist Puspaga

Overall, both the secondary data and the results of the above interviews show that the Jambi City DPMPPA through Puspaga Pinang Masak has identified the obstacles faced and formulated strategic measures, both medium-term policies and short-term adaptive measures, to strengthen the effectiveness of child marriage prevention. However, the success of these efforts will ultimately depend on the consistency of implementation, budget availability, additional human resources, and political commitment of local governments in making child marriage prevention a priority for sustainable regional development.

Conclusion

The role of PUSPAGA Jambi City in preventing child marriage has been carried out through three main functions, namely preventive-promotive, curative-mediative, and coordinate-referral. These functions are realized through educational and socialization activities, premarital consultation, counseling, family assistance, mediation, and dissemination of information about the impact and risks of child marriage. PUSPAGA also builds coordination with UPTD PPA, Religious Courts, KUA, village governments,

education units, and other related parties. The implementation of this role is basically in accordance with the duties and functions of PUSPAGA, but in practice it is still not optimal because it is influenced by limited resources and conditions in the field. The obstacles faced by PUSPAGA Jambi City in preventing child marriage are multidimensional, including the limited coverage of services that are still centralized, the inadequate number of professionals, limited facilities and infrastructure, budgets, and service support instruments. In addition, the unavailability of online consultation services is one of the obstacles in expanding public access. From the external side, there are still people who consider marriage at a young age to be acceptable because it is influenced by certain social, cultural, economic, and mindset factors. Cross-sector coordination is also not fully optimal so that the process of early detection, referral, and assistance for children at risk of child marriage still needs to be strengthened. PUSPAGA Jambi City's efforts to increase the effectiveness of child marriage prevention are carried out through several steps, namely plans to expand services to the sub-district level, develop online consultation services, strengthen education and socialization to the sub-district and RT levels, increase capacity and add professionals, and strengthen coordination with various related agencies. In addition, PUSPAGA seeks to optimize available resources through follow-up consultations, educational activities in the field, and proposals for additional facilities, assessment instruments, operational vehicles, and psychologists. These efforts show PUSPAGA's commitment to improving the quality and reach of services, although its implementation still requires budget support, human resources, infrastructure, and local government commitment.

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