

## Society in Public Service: Challenges Service Recording Marriage in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Marriage registration is a fundamental legal process that ensures the protection of marital rights and administrative recognition. However, many married couples have yet to obtain official marriage certificates, particularly in Bengkulu City, Indonesia. This study aims to identify the factors influencing community participation in marriage registration. Using a descriptive qualitative research method, this research explores societal attitudes and administrative challenges associated with the registration process. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving key informants, including married couples, religious figures, and government officials. A content analysis technique was employed to interpret the findings systematically. The results indicate that low public awareness and limited legal knowledge are the primary factors contributing to the reluctance to register marriages with the civil registry. Many couples believe that religious marriage alone is sufficient and are unaware of the legal consequences of unregistered marriages, such as complications in inheritance, child legitimacy, and access to state services. Additionally, a lack of government-led awareness campaigns and inadequate public outreach efforts have exacerbated the issue, leaving many couples uninformed about the registration process and its legal significance. This study highlights the urgent need for enhanced legal literacy, targeted socialization efforts, and administrative reforms to improve marriage registration rates. Strengthening collaboration between government agencies, religious institutions, and community organizations is crucial to increasing public participation. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on public administration and legal compliance in non-Western governance systems, emphasizing the role of community-driven legal awareness in enhancing civic engagement. Further research is recommended to explore marriage registration challenges across different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to develop more inclusive and effective policy interventions.

## Introduction

Marriage carries critical legal implications beyond its religious and personal significance, particularly in state administration (Annisa, 2020). In Indonesia, state administrative documents are official evidence in decision-making, policy implementation, and government accountability. The issuance of such documents follows a structured procedure that citizens must comply with, ensuring legal recognition and protection. High-quality public services play a crucial role in facilitating the smooth processing of these documents, as the efficiency and accessibility of administrative services directly impact public compliance with legal requirements. One of the prevalent challenges in the state administration is the issue of unregistered marriages, which significantly affects the process of obtaining a birth certificate for children born from such unions (Afif et al., 2024).

Marriage registration is an essential post-wedding procedure within the civil registry, ensuring the union is legally recognized and aligned with prevailing legal provisions. A marriage certificate issued by a designated marriage registrar is the sole official proof of a legally recognized marriage. As a result, marriage registration is not only a procedural obligation but also a fundamental requirement for couples to secure their marital status under the law (Jansen, 2022). The legal framework governing marriage in Indonesia is rooted in constitutional principles. The Indonesian Constitution guarantees every citizen's right to form a family and continue their lineage within a legally binding marriage framework. However, this constitutional right is accompanied by the obligation to register the marriage by existing legal provisions (Awaliah et al., 2022).

A significant legal transformation occurred with the enactment of the Law Number 24 of 2013, which amended the Law Number 23 of 2006 on Population Administration. This legislation mandates that every Indonesian citizen obtain a legally recognized identity, serving as a primary document in accessing various public services nationwide. These administrative requirements include a certificate, which serves as official proof of a child's birth. The Population and Civil Records Office (PCRO) records the birth of children born within a legally recognized marriage, ensuring their official status in administrative matters. A birth certificate is crucial for multiple legal and civil functions, such as acquiring an Identity Card (Kartu Tanda Penduduk or KTP) and a Family Card (Kartu Keluarga or KK), enrolling in educational institutions, securing employment, and obtaining essential documents like passports. One of the primary requirements for issuing a birth certificate is the submission of the parents' legally recognized marriage certificate, which confirms the validity of the marriage and grants legal status to the child in the eyes of the state.

The Law Number 16 of 2019 further strengthens the legal framework surrounding marriage in Indonesia. This law comprehensively regulates various aspects of marriage, including its prerequisites, procedural formalities, and the rights and obligations of prospective spouses. Its primary objective is to ensure legal protection, uphold justice, and establish clear guidelines for marriage governance. The legal requirement for marriage registration is a bureaucratic formality and a

crucial component of the state administration system. Proper marriage documentation strengthens legal certainty for married couples, fostering a stable social and community structure. Marriages conducted solely through religious ceremonies, without official registration, lack full legal recognition, which can lead to complications in administrative matters and limit the legal rights of both spouses and their children (Muchsin et al., 2019)

Marriage registration is a fundamental legal requirement that the state recognizes the rights and obligations of married couples. However, despite its importance, many marriages in Bengkulu City, particularly in the Gading Cempaka District, remain unregistered. Initial observations conducted at the Population and Civil Registration Office (PCRO) of Bengkulu City indicated that the number of marriage certificates issued in Gading Cempaka District in 2023 was only 15 across five sub-districts: Lingkar Barat (4), Cempaka Permai (3), Padang Harapan (0), Jalan Gedang (5), and Sidomulyo (3). In contrast, data collected from various Christian places of worship in the same district—such as HKBP Lingkar Barat, Gekisia Church Bengkulu, GPI Taman Teen, Gethsemane Indonesian Methodist Church, and Indonesian Calvary Baptist Church Bengkulu revealed that 23 marriages took place in the same year. This discrepancy highlights a significant gap between the number of marriages conducted and those officially registered.

The low participation in marriage registration suggests an ongoing issue in public compliance with legal documentation, particularly among non-Muslim communities in Bengkulu City. Interviews with officials from the PCRO indicate that many individuals believe that religious marriage is sufficient for legal and societal recognition, leading them to forgo state registration (Interview with PCRO staff, July 17, 2024). This perception contradicts national regulations and poses long-term legal and administrative challenges for married couples and their children, especially in inheritance, child legitimacy, and access to state services (Muchsin et al., 2019). The lack of marriage registration can result in difficulties when obtaining birth certificates and national identification documents and even securing legal protection in marital disputes (Awaliah et al., 2022).

Despite the existing legal framework, including Law Number 16 of 2019, which governs marriage requirements and registration in Indonesia, there remains a gap between policy implementation and public awareness. The requirement for marriage registration aims to strengthen the state administration system and ensure legal certainty for families. However, societal attitudes, administrative barriers, and potentially economic constraints may contribute to the reluctance to register marriages (Afif et al., 2024). Previous studies have explored marriage registration issues in Indonesia, but they have predominantly focused on Muslim-majority areas where marriage registration is facilitated through religious courts and the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama or KUA). There is limited research on marriage registration among non-Muslim communities, particularly in Bengkulu City, where civil registration procedures differ.

This research is critical because it addresses a gap in the literature regarding marriage registration practices among non-Muslim communities in Bengkulu City.

While previous studies have examined legal awareness and compliance in general terms, few have investigated the specific factors influencing this demographic's lack of marriage registration. Identifying these factors is essential for developing targeted policy interventions that improve compliance and protect married individuals and their families legally. Moreover, understanding the underlying social and administrative barriers can help policymakers design more effective strategies to increase marriage registration rates.

Given these concerns, this study examines the factors influencing the lack of marriage registration in Bengkulu City. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the following question: What factors contribute to the low participation of non-Muslim communities in marriage registration at the Population and Civil Registration Office (PCRO) of Bengkulu City? By addressing this question, the study will provide empirical insights into the socio-cultural, legal, and administrative barriers that prevent couples from registering their marriages. The findings will be valuable for government agencies, civil society organizations, and religious institutions seeking to bridge the gap between religious and civil marriage recognition, ultimately ensuring better legal protection and social stability for married individuals in Bengkulu City.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Recording Marriage***

Marriage registration is a crucial legal and administrative process that gives married couples official recognition under state law. It is fundamental to ensuring legal certainty, upholding justice, and maintaining social order (Triyanto, 2022). Issuing a marriage certificate and marriage book acts as concrete and valid proof that a marriage has occurred, confirming its legitimacy in religious and legal contexts. Without such documentation, the marriage may not be legally acknowledged, resulting in complications regarding legal accountability, inheritance rights, and civil protections (Bambang, 2022). Even when the religious and customary requirements for marriage are fulfilled, the absence of an official marriage certificate remains a critical issue, as it affects the couple's legal standing and ability to access legal rights.

A common issue in Indonesia is unregistered marriages, where a couple performs a wedding ceremony according to their religious customs but does not proceed with the necessary civil registration. Muslims must complete registration at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), while non-Muslims must be recorded at the Population and Civil Registration Office (PCRO). The absence of marriage registration results in legal ambiguity, as unregistered marriages lack formal recognition under state law (Mangku & Yuliantini, 2022). This situation creates severe consequences, particularly concerning child legitimacy and parental responsibilities. A husband who has not registered his marriage may legally deny fatherhood, leaving children vulnerable without legal rights to inheritance, education, and other social protections. The psychological and social welfare of

children from unregistered marriages are also at risk, as they may face difficulties in obtaining legal documentation such as birth certificates, national identification cards, and family registration documents.

Legal recognition of marriage is not only a matter of fulfilling religious obligations but also a fundamental aspect of securing civil rights and legal protection. According to Rifqi et al. (2020), a marriage certificate obtained from the relevant government agency provides couples with legal proof of their union, which guarantees their descendants' legitimacy and their legal standing as heirs. In divorce cases, the lack of official marriage registration complicates legal proceedings, as state law cannot provide legal certainty for the dissolution of unregistered marriages (Sujana, 2023). As a result, individuals seeking justice through divorce settlements may be denied legal recognition, leaving them without proper access to state protections. This lack of legal acknowledgment can have significant repercussions, particularly for women and children, who may face difficulties in claiming alimony, child custody, and inheritance rights.

The requirement for marriage registration is reinforced by Indonesia's Marriage Law, which mandates that a marriage is only valid under religious and state law. While religious ceremonies establish the spiritual and moral foundation of marriage, they do not automatically confer legal status unless formally recorded by the state (Puspitasari et al., 2023). The consequences of failing to register a marriage extend beyond the couple, affecting their children as well. Offspring from unregistered marriages lack legal recognition, which can prevent them from accessing essential state services, including education, healthcare, and official identification documents (Hiola et al., 2024). Even if parents are religiously married, their failure to comply with state registration laws results in administrative exclusion, where neither the couple nor their children can obtain legal documents essential for civic participation.

Marriage is a legal act with far-reaching legal consequences. If a marriage is legally recognized, then the state also upholds the legal rights and responsibilities of both parties. Although marriage registration is not the sole determinant of a marriage's validity, it proves that the state recognizes the legal existence of the marriage and confers upon the couple the rights and protections afforded to married individuals (Waluyo, 2020). Registration ensures that the couple receives civil legal recognition, reinforcing their legal standing in inheritance, spousal rights, and property ownership.

The legal framework governing marriage registration in Indonesia has undergone significant revisions, particularly with the enactment of Constitution Number 16 of 2019, which amended Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage. This law stipulates that marriage is only permitted if both parties reach the minimum legal age of 19. This provision is intended to ensure that individuals entering marriage are physically, emotionally, and mentally mature, thereby reducing the likelihood of early divorce and promoting the formation of stable families. The law also provides a mechanism for exceptions in exceptional cases, where parents may seek

judicial dispensation for underage marriage, provided they present urgent and justifiable reasons supported by sufficient evidence.

### *Community Participation in Marriage Registration*

Community participation is crucial in implementing policies, particularly in legal and administrative matters such as marriage registration. According to Pertiwi (2020), participation is essential in ensuring that policies serve their intended purpose, benefiting the public as they are created by and for the people. While the state recognizes marriages performed according to religious customs, they must still be registered per legal provisions. The state has no official marriage record without proper registration, leading to significant legal and administrative challenges. This issue becomes more pressing when children are born from unregistered marriages, as their birth records may only list the mother, creating complications in establishing their legal status and rights.

Cohen and Uphoff (1997), cited by Oktami et al. (2018), categorize public participation into four levels: decision-making, implementation, benefit-sharing, and evaluation. Decision-making participation involves individuals or groups contributing input and having access to the decision-making process that affects them. In the context of marriage registration, communities should be actively involved in shaping policies and regulations that affect their marital rights. Implementation participation refers to the active involvement of individuals in carrying out policies or programs, such as following legal procedures for marriage registration. Benefit-sharing participation ensures that individuals receive and utilize the advantages of a policy, such as legal protections and administrative rights conferred by marriage registration. Lastly, evaluation participation allows the community to assess and provide feedback on existing policies, which are critical in identifying barriers to compliance and improving the effectiveness of marriage registration initiatives.

Internal and external factors influence the willingness to participate in marriage registration. Slamet (2003) highlights that internal factor, such as education level, age, gender, income, and occupation, significantly impact an individual's ability and willingness to comply with legal requirements. On the other hand, external factors include the influence of government policies, local authorities, religious leaders, and community facilitators. Combining these factors shapes public behavior regarding marriage registration, determining whether individuals perceive it as necessary or burdensome. Research suggests that demographic aspects such as age, education, income, and employment status are key determinants of participation in legal processes, including marriage documentation.

Several studies have explored the consequences of unregistered marriages and the barriers to legal compliance. Afif et al. (2024) examined the impact of unregistered marriages on legal recognition. They found that couples without official marriage records face significant administrative obstacles, particularly in securing birth certificates for their children. In cases where marriages remain unregistered, spouses and children are at risk of legal uncertainty, lack of

inheritance rights, and limited access to state services. Their study, which focused on Sei Dua Hulu Village, Asahan Regency, highlighted the need for government intervention, improved administrative processes, and legal protection to address these issues. Their findings emphasize the importance of public participation in legal registration to ensure that families are granted their rightful legal status and protections.

Similar concerns were raised by Rosadi (2019), who investigated the effectiveness of marriage registration at the District Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in Tandun, Rokan Hulu Regency. The study identified a lack of public awareness, misconceptions about registration costs, and inadequate socialization efforts as major barriers to compliance. Many individuals assume that marriage registration involves high fees, deterring them from completing the legal process. Moreover, limited education and misinformation contribute to the perception that religious marriage alone is sufficient, even though state recognition is necessary for legal protection. These findings suggest enhanced public education and cost transparency could significantly improve compliance rates.

Further research by Fajri et al. (2023) explored the reasons behind unregistered marriages in Batu Gajah Village, Batang Hari District, South Solok Regency. Their findings revealed age restrictions, financial constraints, unplanned pregnancies, accessibility issues, polygamy, lack of legal knowledge, elopement, and opposition from traditional authorities as common reasons why marriages remain unregistered. To mitigate these challenges, their study recommended greater outreach by religious and civil authorities, infrastructure improvements for easier access to registration offices, and alignment between legal requirements and local customs. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of the issue, requiring both structural and social interventions to improve marriage registration rates.

While existing research has extensively examined the challenges of marriage registration in different regions, there remains a gap in understanding the specific factors influencing non-Muslim communities in Bengkulu City. Most studies focus on Islamic marriage registration at KUA offices, leaving civil registration among non-Muslims relatively underexplored. Additionally, prior research addresses awareness and administrative barriers but does not thoroughly examine sociocultural beliefs, economic influences, and institutional accessibility related to Bengkulu City's unique demographic context.

This research aims to provide targeted recommendations for policy improvements, community engagement strategies, and legal awareness programs by analyzing the underlying sociocultural, economic, and administrative barriers. The findings will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of marriage registration challenges in Indonesia and inform government and civil society efforts to enhance legal compliance and protect marital rights.

## Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method chosen to align with the characteristics of the research subject and to provide an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation. A qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring and interpreting complex social realities that cannot be quantified. Using this method, the research seeks to uncover underlying motivations, perceptions, and contextual factors influencing marriage registration practices in Bengkulu City. The study collected various types of data through direct observations, interviews, and document analysis, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the factors contributing to the lack of marriage registration.

The research was conducted at the Population and Civil Registration Office (PCRO) of Bengkulu City and in the Gading Cempaka Sub-District in August and September 2024. The data collection process included field observations to identify patterns and behaviors related to marriage registration, interviews with key informants, and document reviews to gather relevant administrative data and reports. Interviews were conducted in person and through digital communication platforms to ensure access to diverse perspectives. These methods were employed to gain a holistic understanding of marriage registration practices, the challenges faced by couples, and institutional responses to unregistered marriages.

To ensure that the data collected was relevant and aligned with the research objectives, purposive sampling was used to select informants with direct experience or knowledge related to marriage registration issues. The informants in this study included four couples who had undergone marriage without official registration, one employee from the Population and Civil Registration Office of Bengkulu City, and one pastor from the HKBP Jitra Church in Bengkulu City. The selection of these informants was based on their ability to provide insights into sociocultural, administrative, and religious factors that influence marriage registration.

This study adopts content analysis techniques developed by Bhattacharjee (2012), which involves a systematic approach to examining textual and recorded data. The analysis consists of several key steps, including sampling relevant textual data, identifying key themes, applying theoretical concepts, and determining frequently occurring patterns and their relevance to the research problem. Through this structured approach, the study aims to identify common themes and recurring barriers that prevent couples from registering their marriages. The results of this analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of how social perceptions, administrative obstacles, and religious beliefs interact in shaping marriage registration practices in Bengkulu City.

## Results and Discussion

### *Community Perceptions and Legal Awareness of Marriage Registration in Bengkulu City*

The findings of this study reveal a significant gap between the number of marriages performed and those officially registered in Bengkulu City, particularly

in Gading Cempaka District. Data from the Population and Civil Registration Office (PCRO) indicates that only 15 marriage certificates were issued in 2023, whereas observations in several churches in the district show that at least 23 marriages were conducted in the same period. This discrepancy suggests that public participation in marriage registration remains suboptimal, with many couples failing to complete the necessary administrative procedures to obtain an official marriage certificate.

Interviews with four married couples who had not registered their marriages provide insight into the reasons behind this low participation. Two of the couples acknowledged the importance of having a marriage certificate\* but cited practical difficulties, particularly time constraints and work commitments, as reasons for not completing the registration process. One participant, a 39-year-old man, explained:

*"We don't have a marriage certificate yet because we recently got married and have only recently settled here. I was reassigned a few months before our wedding, and I've been busy with work, so my wife and I haven't had the time to go to the Civil Registry. Maybe later, when I find the time, I will take care of it." (FT, 39)*

Another participant shared a similar sentiment, emphasizing that despite receiving guidance from their pastor about the necessity of registering their marriage, they had postponed it due to their busy schedules:

*"My husband and I don't have a marriage certificate yet. Before we got married, our pastor advised us to register our marriage with the Civil Registry, but we thought we'd do it later when we had free time, and it doesn't interfere with our jobs." (FY, 25)*

In contrast, two other couples expressed a lack of urgency or necessity for obtaining a marriage certificate, believing their religious marriage certificate was sufficient proof of their union. One couple dismissed the need for state registration, stating:

*"We don't have a marriage certificate because it's not an urgent matter for us. We already have the church-issued marriage certificate, which proves that we are legally married in the eyes of religion. My husband and I don't have a marriage certificate. We don't have any plans to register our marriage at the Civil Registry." (KA, 23)*

Another participant, who had been married for four months, linked the delay in registration to financial instability and a lack of permanent residence, noting that marriage registration often involved fulfilling numerous administrative requirements:

*"My wife and I have only been married for four months, and we don't have a marriage certificate yet. For me, the proof that we are legally married is the certificate we received from the church. If we must have a civil marriage certificate, maybe we will take care of it later when I have a stable job and a permanent place to stay. We've moved several times because I still work temporary jobs, and I know that registering a marriage requires a lot of documents. We'll do it later if it becomes necessary." (MS, 29)*

These findings highlight several key factors influencing the lack of marriage registration in the community, including time constraints, lack of awareness,

perceived lack of necessity, and economic conditions. Couples who prioritize work and daily responsibilities tend to delay registration, while those facing financial instability and housing insecurity consider it a low priority. Moreover, there is a general perception among some couples that religious marriage certification is sufficient, leading to complacency regarding legal registration.

Legal understanding also plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward marriage registration. Legal awareness refers to how well individuals understand the regulations governing marriage and their implications. In Indonesia, Law Number 16 of 2019 governs marriage registration, ensuring legal protection, justice, and administrative clarity for married individuals. This law underscores that marriage registration is not just a bureaucratic formality but an essential step in ensuring a marriage is legally recognized. Proper registration protects spouses' rights, establishes clear legal guidelines, and prevents potential disputes related to inheritance, child legitimacy, and access to state services.

Despite these legal provisions, community participation in marriage registration remains low. The data analysis confirms that many marriages go unregistered, particularly in Gading Cempaka District. The contrast between the 15 marriage certificates issued by the PCRO and the 23 marriages recorded in churches indicates that many couples conduct religious marriages without following through with civil registration. This trend suggests that, while religious institutions continue to play a key role in solemnizing marriages, there is insufficient public awareness or motivation to comply with state registration requirements.

These findings emphasize the need for greater socialization and accessibility in marriage registration. Public awareness campaigns, particularly through religious institutions, could help shift the perception that a religious marriage alone is sufficient. Streamlining administrative processes and reducing bureaucratic barriers could also encourage more couples to register their marriages. Addressing couples' economic and logistical constraints—such as the perceived high cost, time demands, and extensive paperwork requirements—could further improve marriage registration rates and ensure legal recognition for all married individuals in Bengkulu City.

### *Factors Influencing Marriage Registration Participation in Bengkulu City*

The study examined various factors influencing the participation of Bengkulu City residents in registering their marriages with the Population and Civil Registration Office (PCRO). Data was collected from multiple informants, including married couples, religious leaders, and government officials. The findings highlight both internal and external factors that contribute to the low rate of marriage registration, using the framework proposed by Slamet (2003), which classifies influencing factors into supporting factors (such as willingness, ability, and opportunity) and inhibiting factors (which can be internal or external).

Internal factors affecting marriage registration include economic stability, employment status, legal awareness, and perceptions of urgency. Many couples

who have not registered their marriages cited financial constraints and job instability as major reasons for postponing the process. Those without permanent jobs or stable housing expressed concerns about the costs of obtaining a marriage certificate and the bureaucratic requirements involved. One respondent explained:

*"We haven't taken care of the marriage certificate yet because, for now, we don't see it as urgent. My wife and I still don't have a permanent residence or a stable job, so we think we can handle it the registration later. Marriage registration requires time, money, and documents, so we will do it when it becomes necessary."* (MS, 29)

Similarly, another respondent mentioned that work commitments and relocation had delayed the registration process.

*"For me, having a marriage certificate is important, but we just haven't had the time to handle it. We recently moved to Bengkulu because of my job assignment, and I've been busy at work. My wife and I plan to register our marriage when we find the time."* (FT, 39)

Another major internal factor is the lack of legal awareness about the significance of marriage registration. Some couples believe that religious marriage certificates are sufficient proof of marriage and see no immediate need for civil registration. They view the process as something to be addressed later, particularly after having children. One respondent stated:

*"For now, my husband and I have no plans to register our marriage because we don't see it as an urgent matter. Maybe we will do it later when we have children or when my husband suggests it."* (KA, 23)

Furthermore, some couples know marriage registration is necessary but feel uncertain about the procedures and requirements. The lack of clear information discourages them from initiating the process. One couple recalled receiving instructions from their pastor about the need for registration. Still, they felt discouraged due to the lack of procedural clarity and the inconvenience of traveling to the civil registry office.

*"Our pastor advised us to register our marriage with the civil registry before our wedding. However, my husband and I don't know what documents are needed or how long the process takes. Because the registry office is quite far from our home, we have postponed it until we have more time."* (FY, 25)

External factors also play a significant role in marriage registration participation. Government initiatives and public figures, including religious leaders, influence public awareness and engagement with legal registration processes. In this context, religious leaders, such as pastors, serve as important figures who encourage marriage registration among non-Muslim couples. However, their role is primarily advisory rather than obligatory, leaving the final decision to the couples themselves. A local pastor explained:

*"As part of the church's premarital counseling, we advise couples to register their marriage with the civil registry. However, we do not impose this requirement – it is ultimately up to the couple to decide."* (JS, 37)

The research also found that the local government's efforts to promote marriage registration have been insufficient. According to an official from the Population and Civil Registration Office, there has been only one socialization program regarding marriage registration in the past nine years, and it was limited to community leaders rather than the general public. This lack of public engagement has contributed to the widespread lack of awareness and participation.

*"In terms of government efforts to address the lack of marriage registration awareness, I would say they have not been effective. The last socialization program on marriage registration was conducted about nine years ago, and even then, it was only attended by community leaders, not the wider public." (AD, 41)*

Given these findings, it is evident that the government, religious institutions, and community organizations must take a more proactive role in increasing public awareness about marriage registration. The government should develop policy reforms and strategic initiatives that simplify registration, provide financial support for economically disadvantaged couples, and ensure more frequent and widespread socialization programs. Collaboration between government agencies, religious figures, and local leaders can effectively disseminate accurate information, address misconceptions, and encourage greater public participation in marriage registration.

Enhancing public awareness through information campaigns, legal counseling, and improved administrative accessibility can have a significant positive impact on marriage registration rates. Increased awareness of the legal benefits of marriage registration—including rights related to inheritance, child legitimacy, and access to state services—can motivate more couples to complete the registration process. Through these efforts, the state can strengthen legal compliance, improve administrative efficiency, and ensure excellent protection for married couples and their families

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that public participation in marriage registration in Bengkulu City remains low. Many individuals who have entered into marriage have yet to obtain official marriage certificates, as evidenced by the discrepancy between the number of marriages performed and the number of marriage certificates issued. The primary factors contributing to this low participation rate are internal and external. Internally, many couples cite work commitments, unstable living arrangements, and limited awareness of the legal implications of unregistered marriages as reasons for postponing or neglecting marriage registration. Additionally, lower levels of education contribute to a lack of understanding regarding the necessity of marriage certification and its role in ensuring legal protection.

Externally, the absence of proactive government initiatives, inadequate socialization, and limited public outreach further exacerbates the problem. The Population and Civil Registration Service of Bengkulu City has not consistently

conducted awareness campaigns to educate the public on marriage registration's procedures, requirements, and significance. The role of local government, community leaders, and religious institutions remains insufficient in bridging this information gap. As a result, many individuals remain unaware that failure to register their marriage can lead to legal uncertainties, particularly regarding inheritance rights, child legitimacy, and access to state services. This study highlights that the lack of structured engagement between administrative institutions and the community contributes to the widespread neglect of marriage registration, reinforcing a cycle of legal and administrative vulnerability.

This research has certain limitations, focusing only on one sub-district within Bengkulu City. The findings, therefore, may not fully represent the broader patterns of marriage registration participation across the city or other regions. Additionally, challenges in obtaining data arise due to the reluctance of some respondents to disclose personal information regarding their marital status. Future research should expand the scope of the investigation to include multiple sub-districts and examine diverse socio-economic backgrounds to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing marriage registration practices.

From a Non-Western Public Administration perspective, this study underscores the need for a governance approach that integrates community-based participatory administration and localized governance mechanisms. Unlike Western bureaucratic models that emphasize rigid institutional frameworks, public administration in developing contexts like Indonesia should prioritize culturally embedded governance strategies that align with local social structures and traditions. The role of religious and community leaders should be expanded beyond advisory functions to active collaboration with government agencies in facilitating marriage registration awareness. This aligns with the concept of responsive governance, where policies are not only state-driven but also shaped by societal norms and communal institutions.

Practically, strengthening administrative decentralization can improve service accessibility by enabling sub-district offices to handle marriage registration more efficiently. Simplifying bureaucratic procedures, reducing administrative costs, and incorporating digital registration platforms can encourage higher participation. Furthermore, targeted public awareness campaigns leveraging traditional communication channels, religious institutions, and community forums could increase legal literacy and compliance with civil registration laws.

Addressing the low participation in marriage registration requires a multi-stakeholder approach where the government, religious authorities, and community organizations work together to ensure that every marriage is properly documented. The government must take a more active role in consistent socialization efforts to educate the public about the significance of marriage registration, not just as a bureaucratic requirement but as a means of securing legal rights and social protection. Encouraging a more inclusive and participatory public administration approach will improve marriage registration rates and contribute to stronger legal institutions and a more accountable civil registry system.

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