

DRIVERS OF HIGH INCIDENCE OF URFI MARRIAGES AND THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OFFICE IN MITIGATING THE ISSUE

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Abstrak: Nikah Sirri secara rahasia atau Nikah Urfi yang berdasarkan adat cukup dikenal luas di kalangan masyarakat Indonesia. Status pernikahan itu bertentangan dengan Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 tentang Perkawinan dan berlakunya Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 9 Tahun 1975 tentang Peraturan Pelaksanaan Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974. Berkenaan dengan itu penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis realitas terjadinya nikah Urfi di Desa Mahato Kecamatan Tambusai Utara, dengan fokus penelitian pada faktor penyebab terjadinya dan peran keberadaan kantor urusan agama dalam mengatasi masalah itu. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan kualitatif berbasis studi deskriptif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data observasi, wawancara, dan studi dokumentasi. Berikut adalah perbaikan redaksinya. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa faktor penyebab tingginya angka pernikahan urfi adalah adanya anggapan bahwa kepemilikan surat nikah bagi setiap pasangan suami istri tidak dianggap penting. Padahal, keadaan ini dapat menyulitkan mereka terlebih bila mana terjadi kebutuhan administrasi. Kantor urusan agama memberikan edukasi kepada masyarakat terutama bagi kaum muda, sehingga menjadi langkah preventif. Penelitian ini mendukung teori *Social Exchange Theory* oleh George Homans, yang menjelaskan bahwa keputusan individu dalam hubungan sosial, termasuk dalam pernikahan, sering kali dipengaruhi oleh pertimbangan manfaat dan biaya, termasuk dalam hal administrasi dan legalitas pernikahan.

Kata Kunci: Nikah Urfi, Kantor Urusan Agama, Administrasi Pernikahan

Abstract: Secret marriages or Urfi marriages based on custom are widely known among Indonesians. This type of marriage is contrary to Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage and the implementation of Government Regulation No. 9 of 1975 on the Implementation of Law No. 1 of 1974. In light of this, this study aims to analyze the reality of Urfi marriages in Mahato Village, Tambusai Utara District, with a focus on the factors causing their occurrence and the role of the religious affairs office in addressing the issue. The research method used is qualitative, based on descriptive studies, with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and document analysis. The following is the revised version. The results of the study reveal that the factor causing the high rate of Urfi marriages is the perception that a marriage certificate is not important for every married couple. However, this situation can cause difficulties for them, especially in the event of administrative problems. The religious affairs office provides education to the community, especially young people, as a preventive measure. This study supports George Homans' Social Exchange Theory, which explains that individual decisions in social relationships, including marriage, are often influenced by considerations of benefits and costs, including administrative and legal aspects of marriage.

Keywords: Urfi Marriage, Office of Religious Affairs, Marriage Administration

INTRUDUCTION

Marriage does not only aim to channel sexual desires legally, but also contains noble values that are achieved through family formation (Arsal, 2012). One of the main goals of marriage is to have children and build a harmonious household. The formation of a legally valid household is carried out through a marriage agreement in accordance with religious teachings and fulfills the stipulated requirements. In Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, it is explained that, Marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and lasting family (household) based on God Almighty (Sostroamitdjo & Aulawi, 1978). Meanwhile, in the Islamic Law Code, marriage is described as a very strong contract, which aims to obey God's commands and is carried out as worship (Abdurrahman, 2004).

Marriage in Indonesia itself has several sub-categories. These terms include monogamous marriage, polygamous marriage, mut'ah marriage, silent marriage, customary marriage, muhalil marriage, and interfaith marriage (Abror, 2017). However, in this problem, the author will only discuss secret marriages or nikah urfi or sirri that occur in the research area, namely in Mahato Village, North Tambusai District.

A secret marriage is a marriage that is conducted without fulfilling the requirements and procedures stipulated by laws and regulations. There are differences of opinion regarding the validity of secret marriages, due to differences in interpretation of the provisions of Article 2 paragraph 2 of Law

Number 1 Year 1974 concerning Marriage. What is clear is that the provisions of Article 2 paragraph 2 which require separate registration of marriage are different from the provisions of Article 2 paragraph 1 which regulates the validity of marriage which must be carried out in accordance with the law and religious beliefs (Shomad, 2010). According to Islamic law, sirri or secret marriages are valid, provided that the conditions and pillars of marriage have been fulfilled. However, from a legal and regulatory aspect, this type of marriage is incomplete because it has not been registered (Al Munawar, 2020).

Secret marriages are not a new phenomenon and are not strange, as this type of marriage has been practiced by many people from time to time. Not infrequently, these secret marriages involve several people in terms of age, education level, and also economic level. This marriage has also caused controversy from various parties on the grounds that it harms women (Hidayanti, 2024; Tahir et al., 2017).

Secret marriages are usually conducted without official notification to the wider community, the execution of this contract is allowed and legally valid, even though it is not officially registered by the state. With the presence of the woman's guardian and the man's family, and witnessed by two witnesses in accordance with religious procedures, and in accordance with agreed terms and conditions. In many cases, secret marriages are performed for a specific purpose, and the marriage is performed with the aim of being unknown to the general public (Syakir, 2002).

Most people believe that a silent marriage is considered valid under Islamic law if it has fulfilled the terms and conditions, even if the marriage is not registered at the Office of Religious Affairs, or the divorce is conducted outside the religious court to which it is entitled. As a result of this understanding, there is legal dualism in Indonesia, namely on the one hand, marriages must be registered at the Office of Religious Affairs, and on the other hand, marriages that are not registered are still valid and recognized by the community, or on the one hand, divorce is only valid if it is carried out before a court session, and on the other hand, divorce conducted outside the court session is still valid and recognized by the community (Abror, 2017; Hidayanti, 2024).

Based on reality, underhand marriage is one of the problematic marriage models and tends to prioritize subjective interests. This marriage model also has a number of negative impacts, such as unclear marital status, child status, or the possibility of marriage rejection. This is due to the absence of an official letter or legal marriage certificate, registered at the Office of Religious Affairs or the Civil Registry Office (Nawir, 2024).

This may be because some Muslim communities still understand these marriage provisions with more emphasis on the fiqh perspective, and so the practice of silent marriage flourishes. They often try to avoid the system and method of regulating the conduct of marriage according to the Marriage Law which is considered too bureaucratic and complicated, the length of

the administrative process, and the high cost of marriage, which causes these laws and regulations to be often ignored by some Indonesian Muslims (Eliza 2009).

Although this is an issue that is considered minor, its impact will be far-reaching. In this case, the lack of public awareness of the law places emphasis on personal potential. Legal awareness as such can be defined as the potential or power of citizens that includes perception, recognition, knowledge and understanding of the law including its consequences (Rmulyo 1974).

Observations and at the same time preliminary interviews conducted with several perpetrators of secret marriages, which show that the research area in North Tambusai District, many residents perform secret marriages for several reasons such as weak economy, low education, strong understanding of classical fiqh, and lack of government attention to the problem of secret marriages performed by the community.

To ensure the orderliness of marriage institutions in the community, Law Number 1 of 1974 and Government Regulation Number 9 of 1975 stipulate that every marriage must be registered by an authorized official. However, reality shows a different phenomenon. This can be seen from the rampant sirri marriages or secret marriages that occur in the community. Based on Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, a marriage is considered valid if it is valid according to the religion and beliefs of each party, and the marriage must be registered. However, in the Compilation of Islamic Law, marriage is considered valid if it is

valid according to Islam, while the registration requirement aims to ensure the orderliness of marriage for the Islamic community. Based on these two rules, it can be seen that marriages must still be registered to create marriage order in the community (Gunawan, 2013; Hidayanti, 2024; Pane & Rozali, 2016; Tahir et al., 2017). Although marriage is said to be valid if it is legal according to religion, if it is not registered, it can be said that the marriage is a sirri marriage (Aminah, 2014).

This research has a distinction in the approach and analysis of the phenomenon of sirri marriage that occurs in Mahato Village, North Tambusai District. In contrast to previous research, this study examines sirri marriage from legal, religious, and social perspectives simultaneously, focusing on the causal factors and the role of the Religious Affairs Office in dealing with this problem. This research also supports George Homans' *Social Exchange Theory* (Homans, 1958), which explains that the decision to marry, including choosing a sirri marriage, is influenced by a more subjective consideration of social benefits and costs. In this context, people often choose sirri marriage to avoid the complicated bureaucracy and high cost of marriage. In addition, this study reveals the negative impacts of sirri marriages, such as unclear marital legal status and children's rights, which can cause problems in the future.

Moreover, it emphasizes the important role of religious affairs offices in educating the community about the importance of legal marriage registration in accordance with applicable laws. This study

fills a gap in previous research by proposing a more proactive approach from the religious affairs office in the prevention and counseling of sirri marriages, which is expected to help create order in marriage administration and protect the rights of spouses and children.

This research offers novelty by examining sirri marriage in Mahato Village, North Tambusai Subdistrict, through a more comprehensive and multidimensional approach, which includes legal, religious, and social aspects. The novelty of this research lies in a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of sirri marriage, which has not been widely discussed in the local context, especially in relation to the social and economic factors that influence it. This research also focuses on the role of the Office of Religious Affairs as an institution that can contribute to the prevention and education of the practice of irregular marriage, which has received less attention in previous studies. Thus, this study is expected to provide a new, more practical understanding of the importance of marriage registration and the active role of the religious affairs office in maintaining the orderly administration of marriage in Indonesia.

METHOD

In this research, the author uses a descriptive study approach with a focus on understanding the phenomenon of urfi marriages and the factors that drive the high incidence of these marriages. This approach aims to describe in depth the problems that occur in society related to urfi marriages, as

well as to see the social realities that develop in relation to the prevailing laws and regulations and existing social conditions. The type of research used is field research with a qualitative approach. Qualitative research was chosen because it allows the author to reveal social phenomena in depth without relying on numerical measurements. Through this research, the author aims to understand the phenomenon of urfi marriage in Mahato Village and the role of the Religious Affairs Office in overcoming the problem (Creswell, 2007).

This research was conducted in Mahato Village, North Tambusai Subdistrict, Rokan Hulu Regency, Riau Province, because the area has a fairly high rate of urfi marriages and is considered relevant to be the location of the research. In addition, this village has social and cultural characteristics that can provide a clearer picture of the factors that influence the practice of urfi marriage, both in terms of economy, education, and religious views. The practice of urfi marriage in this village has also not been widely studied, so this research is expected to provide new insights into the social dynamics in the area. The selection of this location is also based on the involvement of the local Religious Affairs Office, which plays an important role in overcoming the problem of urfi marriage, so that it can provide a deeper perspective on the role of religious institutions in regulating marriage in the community.

The data used in this study consisted of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly through interviews with informants who are involved

in or have knowledge related to urfi marriages. The main informants in this study are the head of the religious affairs office of North Tambusai Regency and several community members in Mahato Village who know or are involved in the practice of urfi marriage. Secondary data were obtained through literature studies, which included books, articles and journals relevant to the topic of urfi marriage. One of the secondary sources used was an article entitled *The Causes of Silent Marriage* written by Nurleni, Karsadi, and Syahbudin. The journal discusses the factors that lead to silent marriages, which have detrimental impacts on women and children, although it has not provided solutions to minimize the practice.

This research used three main techniques in data collection, namely observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted in Mahato Village, North Tambusai Subdistrict, to directly observe the practice of urfi marriage that occurs in the community, as well as social interactions related to the marriage. Interviews were conducted with key informants, namely the Head of the Religious Affairs Office of North Tambusai District, community leaders, and individuals involved in urfi marriages. Through semi-structured interviews, researchers explored information regarding the factors causing urfi marriages and the role of the Religious Affairs Office in overcoming this problem. In addition, data were also collected through documentation studies, by examining marriage administration records and related reports available at the Religious Affairs

Office, to gain a deeper understanding of the applicable procedures and regulations.

The collected data will be analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, which aims to describe the phenomenon of urfi marriage in depth. Data from interviews and observations will be grouped and interpreted to identify key themes relating to the causes of urfi marriages and the role of the religious affairs office in mitigating the problem.

Data validity is guaranteed through source triangulation and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from various informants to ensure data consistency and validity. Member checking was conducted by re-verifying the results of interviews with key informants to ensure that the data collected was accurate and reliable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Marriages conducted secretly are often referred to as Nikah Sirri (Secret) or Urfi marriages, which are based on custom (Sya'rawi, 2006). This practice is quite widely recognized in some communities, especially among Indonesian Muslims. Etymologically, the word marriage means union or merger, while in the context of sharia, marriage is basically a contract (marriage) and in the metaphorical sense, is *al-wath'u* (sexual intercourse), according to the valid opinion, because there is no mention of the word nikah in the book of Allah except for the meaning of *attazwiij* (marriage). The word *siri* comes from the Arabic *sirrun*, which means secret or something hidden. From this root word,

Nikah Sirri is defined as a marriage that is hidden, in contrast to public marriages that are carried out openly (Huda & Azmi, 2020).

According to the terminology of Maliki Fiqh, Nikah Sirri is a marriage that is carried out at the behest of the husband, with witnesses who keep it from his wife or congregation, even the closest family (Sobari, 2018). The Maliki Mazhab prohibits secret marriages, and this kind of marriage can be annulled, with the possibility of both parties being subject to Had punishment (flogging or stoning) if sexual intercourse occurs and is recognized or witnessed by four witnesses. The Hanafi and Shafi'i Mazhabs also do not allow secret marriages. Meanwhile, according to the Hambali Mazhab, even if the marriage is performed secretly by the bride and groom, their guardians, and witnesses, as long as it is in accordance with the provisions of Islamic sharia, the marriage is considered valid, although the law is makruh (Huda & Azmi, 2020; Paijar, 2022).

These secret marriages are legal according to religion and/or custom, but are not announced to the wider community, nor are they officially recorded in state registration institutions, such as the Religious Affairs Office for Muslims, or the Civil Registry Office for non-Muslims. Some of the reasons for this practice include cost, inability to afford the administrative costs of registration, as well as concerns about violating regulations, such as the prohibition for civil servants to marry more than one without court permission. On the other hand, marriages are also often concealed due to certain considerations, such

as fear of negative stigma from a society that considers secret marriages as taboo, or other reasons that force individuals to keep them secret (Muamar, 2005).

Sirri marriages are sometimes referred to as misyar marriages. Some scholars consider these two terms to have the same meaning, although many distinguish them. In addition, sirri marriages are often equated with "urfi" marriages, which are marriages based on custom, as is common in Egypt. However, the terms misyar and urfi marriage are rarely used in the Indonesian context. The similarity between these terms lies in the fact that they all refer to a form of marriage that is not announced (kept secret) and is not officially recorded through an authorized official (Faizah, 2014; Gunawan, 2013; Hidayanti, 2024). Secret marriages that are not officially recorded at state registration institutions are often referred to as underhand marriages. These marriages are considered not to be carried out in accordance with state law and are considered illegal, so they have no legal consequences related to legal recognition and protection (Mualy, 2011).

Factors Causing the High Rate of Urfi Marriages

According to Article 11 paragraph 2 of Government Regulation Number 9 of 1975 concerning the Implementation of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 11 of 2007 concerning marriage registration, a marriage is considered to have been officially registered if the marriage certificate has been signed by the bride and

groom, two witnesses, the marriage registration officer, and for those who are Muslim, also the guardian or his representative. Article 11 paragraph 3 explains that by registering the marriage certificate, the marriage has been officially registered (Nuruddin & Tarigan, 2004).

Based on the regulations on marriage registration, namely Government Regulation No. 9 of 1975 concerning the implementation of Law No. 1 of 1974 concerning marriage and Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 11 of 2007 concerning marriage registration, until now there is still a practice of secret marriage. This is due to the paradigm that has developed in some communities about the lack of understanding of the legal consequences of legal events, namely marriage. This is often found in several areas, including the one currently being researched, namely Mahato Village, North Tambusai District. This is confirmed by the authorities, namely the local Religious Affairs Office, that there is still a practice of secret marriage (Tamrin, 2025).

Based on an interview conducted by the author with Kamelia Rambe, one of the parties who has an unregistered marriage in the Mahato Village area, this is due to a lack of education so that according to her, marriage registration is just a time-consuming and costly process. She said that her marriage could only take place at her home given that her husband-to-be's profession was only a day laborer, so the marriage was only attended by family, leaders, local residents, and the hamlet head who acted as a witness in accordance with the terms and pillars of marriage

according to Islamic teachings (Romlah, 2025).

The author also interviewed Mrs. Maisarah, the reason Maisarah did not register her marriage was because the marriage registration fee was expensive, and they could not afford the administrative costs. Therefore, according to Ms. Maisarah, they chose to marry secretly, according to religious teachings it is legal and also does not require spending a lot of money (Maisarah, 2025).

The author also interviewed Mrs. Jannah, the reason why Mrs. Jannah married secretly was because the cost of official marriage was high, she could not afford the cost. According to Mrs. Jannah, she heard from a religious figure in Mahato Village that she was advised to apply for a marriage book, so she registered with a religious figure in Mahato Village, but after 7 months the marriage book had not been issued, so Mrs. Jannah was lazy to apply for a marriage book (Jannah, 2025).

Finally, the author interviewed Mrs. Hamidah. Mrs. Hamidah's reason for conducting an underhand marriage was because of the high cost of marriage registration, and they could not afford the administrative fees. She said that it was already difficult to pay for daily food expenses, so we just let it go without using a marriage certificate, because according to religious law our marriage is valid, if according to the state it is not, then let it go (Hamidah, 2025).

Looking at the reality in the community as above, the issue of secret marriages is clearly inseparable from people's legal awareness. Provisions regarding

marriage registration will not be effective due to a lack of legal awareness from the community itself. Many people deliberately do not register their marriages to hide one's status. In other words, they deliberately do not register their marriage for personal gain. This is usually done by someone who does not want their good name to be tainted because they were previously married.

In addition, many people also perform secret marriages due to one's ignorance of the importance of marriage registration. This usually happens in remote areas so they assume that if their marriage is in accordance with their religion and beliefs, then the marriage is valid. This loss of public awareness of the importance of registration demonstrates the lack of socialization of Law No. 1/1974 on Marriage. Public legal awareness clearly plays a very important role in the implementation of provisions regarding marriage registration issues (Al Munawar, 2020; Faizah, 2014; Yusuf, 2020).

A few years after Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage was enacted, perhaps the issue of marriage registration was not considered important by some people. However, along with the progress of the times, the issue of marriage registration began to be considered important. Because in the future, the issue of registration will be increasingly important in marriage (Faizah, 2014; Gunawan, 2013).

The following are the factors that cause the high number of underage marriages in Mahato Village, North Tambusai District as follows:

- a. In this area, there are still many people who are poorly educated and still

consider that marriage registration conducted by the Marriage Registration Officer at the Religious Affairs Office is only a time-consuming and expensive marriage process, so they prefer to marry off their children or family through local clerics, even though with this marriage they consider their marriage valid.

- b. The community's very limited economic income in daily life. Therefore, they argue that they cannot afford the administrative costs at the religious affairs office and the transportation costs to go to the religious affairs office. Due to the economic conditions of the community in Mahato Village, most and almost all people work as farm laborers because most of the land in Mahato Village is rice fields and plantations. Because of the economic conditions of the community like this, in terms of social status, they are in the middle and lower classes, with a daily income that is only sufficient, even less. This is why people are reluctant to register their marriages at the religious affairs office because it is quite expensive.
- c. There is a sense of shame and laziness for both families as well as the bride and groom to register themselves or register their children for marriage at the local Religious Affairs Office. Since the source of the problem lies in the mentality of the people performing the marriages, this laziness and embarrassment is caused by their marital status which apparently stems

from the illicit sex (outside of *niakah*) that they had.

- d. Lack of awareness and understanding of the law in the community, there are still many people in Mahato Village who do not realize and fully understand how important it is to register marriages. Despite the fact that marriages are registered at the religious affairs office, some of them may simply be following custom. Or perhaps they consider it a tradition commonly practiced by the local community. Not fully realizing the benefits of registering a marriage. From the above, it is clear that there are many factors that lead to the large number of underage marriages in Mahato Village, which has led to the assumption that the possession of a marriage certificate for each married couple is considered unnecessary, although this situation will cause difficulties for them if a problem or event occurs that requires a marriage certificate as evidence. Therefore, a marriage certificate is very important for every married couple to have, even though it is not a requirement for the validity of the marriage.

The Role of the Religious Affairs Office in Minimizing the Practice of Urfi Marriage

Marriage as the beginning of the formation of family ties between a man and a woman must be registered at an institution appointed by the government because the marriage that occurs will cause new problems in society such as child maintenance,

inheritance distribution, and so on. The procedure or process of marriage registration includes notification of marriage, examination of marriage, announcement of intention to marry, marriage agreement, signing of marriage certificate, and making a copy of marriage certificate.

In Indonesia, one of the institutions in charge of registering marriages is the Office of Religious Affairs for those who marry in accordance with Islamic teachings. In carrying out marriage registration, marriage registration officers are not always able to carry out their duties and functions perfectly in accordance with what has been previously planned. There are always obstacles that get in the way if a solution is not sought, no matter how small the obstacle, it will affect the success of the marriage registration program itself. The role of the North Tambusai Regency Religious Affairs Office in minimizing the practice of underage marriage includes:

- a. Coordination of work with all sectors (village heads, hamlet heads) that support the effective implementation of marriage registration in various ways, including giving warnings to religious leaders/ulamas who intentionally or unintentionally marry men and women, so that the marriage is reported to the Marriage Registration Officer at the North Tambusai Religious Affairs Office.
- b. The Religious Affairs Office works with religious teachers in Mahato Village to provide counseling and guidance to the people of Mahato Village and all villages in Tambusai Utara Sub-district on the importance of

marriage registration in every religious study group in Mahato Village.

- c. Conducting Marriage Registration and Happy Family Counseling organized by the Marriage Advisory, Development, and Preservation Agency at the Religious Affairs Office to prospective brides and grooms.
- d. The Office of Religious Affairs in collaboration with its partners in each village, namely the Marriage Registration Officer (Petugas Pencatatan Pernikahan/Amil Desa) together with village apparatus staff, conducts counseling every two months to the community, which is held at the District Religious Affairs Office and is also often held at the village hall according to an agreed-upon arrangement. Through this opportunity, it is hoped that the community will become more aware and understand how important it is for a marriage to be completed with a marriage certificate. This concern is not only related to themselves but also to the community as a whole, so that it can indirectly create order in marriage administration.

Obstacles Faced by the Religious Affairs Office Minimizing the Practice of Urfi Marriages

Every institution, agency, or organization, whether small or large scale, will inevitably face various obstacles in carrying out activities to achieve its goals. These obstacles can be large or small, and can come from outside the organization or from within the organization itself. Although an organization has a neat structure, a clear

division of tasks and authority, and well-organized power, obstacles are still unavoidable. An organization is an open system where everyone can participate and contribute in carrying out an activity, which will certainly involve many parties in the surrounding environment. Every obstacle, no matter how small, can affect the smooth running of the activities being carried out by the organization.

Based on the data collected by the author through interviews, there are several obstacles faced by the Office of Religious Affairs of North Tambusai Regency in an effort to minimize the practice of underage marriage by the community in its working area. According to Mr. Tamrin, S.Ag, M.Sy, as the Head of the Religious Affairs Office of North Tambusai Regency, there are several factors that become obstacles for the Religious Affairs Office in carrying out this task, including:

- a. The very limited economic income of the community. People who have limited income often argue that they cannot afford the administrative costs at the religious affairs office or the transportation costs to go to the office. Most of the population in Tambusai Utara Sub-district work as farm laborers, considering that most of the land in the area is rice fields and plantations. With limited economic conditions, the people in this village are generally in the lower-middle social class, with a daily income that is only sufficient, sometimes even less. This causes the community to be reluctant to register their marriages at
- the religious affairs office because it is considered to require quite high costs.
- b. Shyness and laziness to register a marriage. Many families and brides-to-be are embarrassed or reluctant to register their marriages at the religious affairs office. The main cause of this problem lies in the mental state of the people involved in the marriage, i.e. laziness and embarrassment due to the fact that their marital status is actually derived from an illegitimate relationship, or in some cases, an "accident".
- c. Lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of marriage registration. There are still many people in Tambusai Utara Regency who have not fully realized the importance of marriage registration. Although marriages that occur are already registered at the religious affairs office, many just follow the custom without understanding the benefits of such registration. They consider it a common tradition without realizing that marriage registration under Law Number 1 Year 1974 concerning Marriage has a very important purpose, namely to document the legal act of marriage and provide legal protection for married couples and children born from the marriage.
- d. The low level of education in the community. Most of the perpetrators of underage marriages in Tambusai Utara Subdistrict have a low level of education, many of whom have only

studied up to senior high school or even junior high school. With limited education, they tend not to realize the importance of marriage registration, which should be an important step for the legality of their marriage in the eyes of the state.

From the above, it can be seen that many factors have led to an increase in the number of underage marriages, which has resulted in a lack of understanding of the importance of marriage certificates. The community considers that having a marriage certificate is not necessary, even though this condition can make it difficult for them if a problem occurs that requires a marriage certificate as legal evidence. Therefore, it is very important for every married couple to have a marriage certificate as a form of legal recognition, although it is not a requirement for the validity of their marriage (Tamrin, 2025).

CONCLUSIONS

From the above, it can be seen that many factors contribute to the high rate of secret marriages in Mahato Village, leading to the assumption that a marriage certificate is not necessary, even though it may cause difficulties if one day it is needed as legal evidence. Therefore, a marriage certificate is very important for every married couple to have, although it is not a valid or invalid requirement for marriage. The Office of Religious Affairs of North Tambusai District plays a role in minimizing illegal marriages through coordination with various sectors (village heads, hamlet heads), working with local ustadz to provide counseling to residents of Mahato Village and the entire North

Tambusai District, as well as organizing Marriage Registration and Happy Family programs implemented by BP4 at the Office of Religious Affairs. However, some of the obstacles faced by the Office of Religious Affairs include: the limited economic income of the community, which makes it difficult for them to pay administrative and transportation costs to the Office of Religious Affairs; the lack of understanding of the importance of marriage registration; and the low level of education, where most of the perpetrators of illegal marriages have only studied up to senior high school or even junior high school. This research supports George Homans' Social Exchange Theory, which states that individual decisions in social relationships, including marriage, are often driven by considerations of benefits and costs. In this case, the people of Mahato Village prefer to marry secretly because they consider the administrative costs and legal procedures not worth the benefits, while they feel that a legal marriage according to religion is sufficient. This theory explains how marriage decisions are influenced by social considerations of personal benefits and perceived costs.

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