

Exploring Sociocultural Determinants and Resilience Mechanisms Among Young Married Couples in Rural Meratus, South Kalimantan

Mariani Mariani,^{1*} Yusna Zaidah,¹ Raihanah Abdullah,² Muhammad Wahdini,³ Fauziah Hayati¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin – Indonesia; ²Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur – Malaysia; ³Muhammadiyah University of Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya – Indonesia

*Corresponding Author. Email: dr.mariani@uin-antasari.ac.id

Abstract:

This study examines the sociocultural determinants and mechanisms of family resilience among young couples in the Dayak Meratus community, South Kalimantan. Contrary to the global narrative that views early marriage as a structural vulnerability, this study demonstrates the existence of resilience mechanisms rooted in local culture. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach with 22 informants, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, and then analyzed thematically. The results indicate that institutionalized social practices such as arranged marriages, communal living patterns, land grants as initial economic capital, and minimal external intervention serve as social capital that strengthens family resilience. Resilience is determined not only by biological age but also by kinship support, cultural values, and the interaction between customary law, Islamic law, and state law. From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* and *ʿurf*, these practices contribute to the protection of offspring, honor, and economic stability, although they still pose potential conflicts with marriage age regulations. This study emphasizes the importance of a contextual socio-legal approach in understanding the phenomenon of early marriage in Muslim indigenous communities.

Keywords:

Dayak Meratus; early marriage; family resilience; legal pluralism

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Introduction

Early marriage remains a persistent global concern, particularly in developing countries, where it is widely associated with structural vulnerability, gender inequality, and human rights issues.¹ International organizations and global health campaigns consistently define marriage below the age of 18 as “child marriage” and advocate for its elimination due to its strong correlation with adverse outcomes, including low educational attainment, reproductive health risks, and increased divorce rates.² This dominant discourse largely frames early marriage as a social problem rooted in poverty, limited access to education, and weak institutional protection.³

In Indonesia, early marriage continues to be a significant social phenomenon shaped by multiple intersecting factors, including economic hardship, cultural traditions, and unintended pregnancies. Empirical data and policy analyses frequently link early marriage to higher divorce rates, emphasizing the role of psychological and economic immaturity in marital instability.⁴ Similar patterns are also observed in other Southeast Asian contexts, including Malaysia.⁵ In response, the Indonesian government has raised the legal minimum age of marriage to 19 years through Law Number 16 of 2019, aiming to ensure greater physical, emotional, and economic readiness among couples.⁶

However, this dominant narrative does not uniformly apply across all sociocultural contexts. Preliminary observations in the indigenous Dayak

¹ Susan B Schaffnit and David W Lawson, “Married Too Young? The Behavioral Ecology of ‘Child Marriage,’” *Social Sciences* 10, no. 5 (2021): 161, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10050161>.

² Shella Oetharry Gunawan and Syamsul Bahri, “Impacts of Early Childhood Marriage in Indonesia Viewed from Child Protection Laws Perspectives,” *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 6, no. 2 (December 30, 2023): 362, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhkv6i2.20262>.

³ Asfa Widiyanto, Siti Zumrotun, and Heru Saputra, “The Prevention of Underage Marriage in Indonesia: State, Religious Authority and Human Rights,” *Justicia Islamica* 21, no. 2 (2024): 401–22, <https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v21i2.9771>.

⁴ Aryanti Aryanti, Efridani Lubis, and Rohmad Adi Yulianto, “Legal Analysis of Divorce Due to Early Marriage,” *Jurnal Hukum Jurisdiction* 5, no. 1 (2023): 36–49, <https://doi.org/10.34005/jhj.v5i1.110>.

⁵ Muhammad Rasydan Junuh and Mohd Norhusairi Mat Hussin, “Sorotan Literatur terhadap Kesejahteraan Pasangan Muda Menurut Undang-Undang Keluarga Islam di Malaysia,” *Journal of Shariah Law Research* 9, no. 2 (2024): 227–52, <https://doi.org/10.22452/jslr.vol9no2.6>.

⁶ Achmad Fausi and Asmuni Asmuni, “Determination of the Minimum Age Limit for Marriage: Balancing Legal Supremacy and the Objectives of Sharia in Indonesian Marriage Law,” *Mazahib: Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 23, no. 1 (2024): 117–54, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v23i1.7611>.

Meratus community in South Kalimantan reveal an empirical anomaly. Despite the continued prevalence of early marriage, divorce rates remain relatively low. This phenomenon challenges the widely accepted assumption that early marriage inevitably leads to family instability. Instead, it suggests that factors beyond age, such as communal solidarity, customary norms, and religious values, play a significant role in sustaining marital resilience.⁷

Existing studies on early marriage in Indonesia have predominantly focused on its negative impacts, particularly in relation to reproductive health, education, and child protection.⁸ Other research highlights the influence of cultural practices and kinship systems in sustaining early marriage, especially in rural and indigenous communities.⁹ For instance, studies by Syahrudin Hidayat et al. emphasize the role of tradition in rural marriage practices,¹⁰ while Deni Setiyawan et al. demonstrate how local customs, such as *abhakalan* in Madura, reinforce early marriage norms.¹¹ Meanwhile, other scholars focus on the risks and advocate for stricter limitations.¹²

Despite these contributions, the existing literature remains fragmented. It separates the analysis of sociocultural determinants from the examination of family resilience outcomes. More importantly, there is still a lack of integrative studies that explain how early marriage can coexist with stable family structures in certain communities. In particular, indigenous groups such as the Dayak Meratus have not been sufficiently examined through a framework that

⁷ Tiara Rismayanti, Danu Aris Setiyanto, and Muhammad Auzai, "Long-Distance Relationship Family Resilience Strategy and Its Relevance to the Development of Islamic Family Law in Indonesia," *JIL: Journal of Islamic Law* 3, no. 2 (August 2022): 132–58, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v3i2.842>.

⁸ Gunawan and Bahri, "Impacts of Early Childhood Marriage in Indonesia Viewed from Child Protection Laws Perspectives."

⁹ Winshery Tan, Shenti Agustini, and Agustianto Agustianto, "National Legal Interventions in Overcoming Underage Marriages in Indigenous Communities," *Jurnal Hukum Novelty* 15, no. 1 (2024): 127–42, <https://doi.org/10.26555/novelty.v15i1.a28029>.

¹⁰ Syahrudin Hidayat, Abdul Ghofur, and Ummul Baroroh, "The Norm of Marriage Age Limit and Cultural Contestation of Child Marriage Law in Rural Communities," *Jurnal Hukum Islam* 21, no. 1 (June 10, 2023): 55–82, https://doi.org/10.28918/jhi.v21i1_03.

¹¹ Deni Setiyawan et al., "Exploring Abhakalan Culture (Early Marriage) in Madura: A Dialogue of Customary Law, Religion, and The State," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 24, no. 2 (2024): 345–64, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v24i2.36070>.

¹² Iwan et al., "Reconceptualizing the Marriage Age Limit in Indonesia: Efforts to Strengthen Family Resilience in North Sumatra," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 1 (2024): 161–78, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v18i1.11090>.

connects sociocultural dynamics, resilience mechanisms, and normative legal systems.¹³

This gap points to a broader theoretical limitation. Current scholarship largely relies on vulnerability- and impact-based approaches while insufficiently exploring the role of legal pluralism and the interaction among state law, Islamic law, and customary law in shaping marital stability. As a result, the internal mechanisms that enable resilience within early marriage contexts remain under-theorized.¹⁴

Addressing this gap, this study positions itself at the intersection of family resilience theory and socio-legal studies by employing a legal pluralism approach. It examines how multiple normative systems coexist and interact within the Dayak Meratus community and how these interactions sustain marital stability. Rather than viewing early marriage solely as a deviation from legal norms, this study explores how social solidarity, customary obligations, religious values, and communal support networks function as resilience-generating mechanisms.

This study has two main objectives. First, it aims to identify the underlying factors that contribute to family resilience or vulnerability in the context of early marriage. Second, it examines the coping and adaptation mechanisms young couples employ within their sociocultural environment. By doing so, the study seeks to provide empirical nuance to dominant national and global assumptions, particularly by explaining why early marriage in this context does not necessarily lead to high divorce rates.

The contribution of this study is both empirical and theoretical. Empirically, it expands the geographical and sociocultural scope of early marriage research by focusing on an understudied indigenous community in Southeast Asia. Theoretically, it integrates legal pluralism and family resilience

¹³ Arne Huzaimah et al., "Controversy of Early Marriage Between Religious Doctrine and Customs in Minority Areas in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah* 22, no. 2 (2024): 139–51, <https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v22i2.2344>.

¹⁴ Ahmad Rusyaid Idris, Muhammad Khusaini, and Syaiful Anwar Al-Mansyuri, "Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: The Fulfillment of Child Custody Rights in Divorce Cases Caused by Early Marriage," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v3i1.8907>.

frameworks, shifting the analytical focus from impact-oriented narratives toward a structural and sociocultural explanation of marital stability.

Ultimately, this research aims to generate context-sensitive policy recommendations that balance legal regulation with sociocultural realities. Instead of advocating uniform prohibition, it highlights the importance of strengthening community-based resilience mechanisms and culturally informed legal approaches to address early marriage.

This study employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of young married couples and identify socio-cultural factors shaping family resilience in rural Meratus, South Kalimantan. A phenomenological design is appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of how individuals interpret early marriage within their socio-legal and cultural contexts, particularly in a setting characterised by the interaction among state law, Islamic norms, and customary practices. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. A total of 22 informants, including young married couples, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and community figures, were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria (married before the age of 19, married for at least one year, and residing in rural *Meratus*), complemented by snowball sampling. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, indicated by the recurrence of themes and the absence of new significant insights.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through a systematic and iterative process. First, the data were repeatedly reviewed to become familiar with them. Second, open coding was conducted to identify meaningful units related to family resilience, sociocultural practices, and legal norms. Third, these codes were grouped into broader categories and themes, such as communal support, customary obligations, religious values, and coping strategies. Finally, the themes were interpreted by linking empirical findings to the theoretical framework of family resilience and legal pluralism, particularly to explain how interactions between state law, Islamic law, and customary law shape marital stability. Document analysis of national marriage laws, child protection regulations, and relevant customary norms was used to complement and contextualize the findings. This study adhered to research ethics involving human participants; all informants provided informed consent, and their identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

Discourse on Local Legal Culture in Indonesia

The discourse on local legal culture in Indonesia is not only concerned with how customs and local wisdom shape legal practices, but also with how these cultural-legal structures influence social institutions, including family formation and resilience. In a plural society like Indonesia, where customary law (*adat*), Islamic law, and state law coexist, legal culture reflects a prismatic and mixed legal system that integrates multiple normative orders.¹⁵ Within this framework, family resilience cannot be understood as a universal or static concept; rather, it must be situated within specific sociocultural and legal contexts, particularly in communities where early marriage remains socially embedded.

Local wisdom plays a significant role in shaping both marital norms and mechanisms of dispute resolution within families. Studies on indigenous communities, such as the coastal Lampung society, demonstrate that legal culture rooted in local wisdom functions as a living normative system that regulates social behavior and maintains communal harmony.¹⁶ Similarly, sociological approaches to Indonesian law emphasize that local wisdom is essential in preserving cultural identity while simultaneously influencing legal practices at the community level.¹⁷ In this context, early marriage is often not merely a legal issue but part of a broader cultural system that includes kinship values, reciprocity, and communal responsibility.¹⁸

Indonesia's plural legal system further reinforces this dynamic. The interaction among state law, Islamic law, and customary law reflects ongoing

¹⁵ Tyesta Addy Listya Wardhani, Muhammad Dzikirullah H Noho, and Aga Natalis, "The Adoption of Various Legal Systems in Indonesia: An Effort to Initiate the Prismatic Mixed Legal Systems," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2104710>.

¹⁶ Zainab Ompu Jainah et al., "Legal Culture of Coastal Lampung Indigenous People Based on Local Wisdom," *International Journal of Law and Politics Studies* 6, no. 3 (2024): 218–21, <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijlps.2024.6.3.17>.

¹⁷ Debora Aswinda Solin and Wisnu Pratama Iryanto, "Looking at Citizens Indonesia's Local Wisdom through Law Sociological Approach for Efforts to Maintain the Richness of Nation," *The Indonesian Journal of International Clinical Legal Education* 1, no. 1 (2019): 261–66, <https://doi.org/10.15294/iccle.v1i1.36329>.

¹⁸ Atun Wardatun, "Knitting Reciprocity and Community: Countering the Privatization of Family in Bimanese Muslim Local Marriage of Eastern Indonesia," *J. Islamic L.* 5, no. 2 (2024): 197–221, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v5i2.2771>.

tensions and accommodations within contemporary legal pluralism.¹⁹ This condition illustrates that legal compliance is often negotiated through cultural legitimacy rather than solely through formal state enforcement. Moreover, globalization and legal development have encouraged a continuous transformation of legal culture, requiring a balance between preserving national identity and adapting to modern legal standards.²⁰

Furthermore, legal culture is closely linked to legal awareness and legal reform. The role of foundational values such as Pancasila demonstrates that Indonesian legal development is not merely technical but also ideological, emphasizing social justice, communal welfare, and moral order.²¹ In communities with strong customary traditions, these values are often internalized through local practices, shaping how families respond to legal norms, including those related to marriage age and family structure.

In this regard, family resilience should be understood as a culturally contingent construct, shaped by the interaction between legal norms, social expectations, and local wisdom. The persistence of communal values in local marriage practices, particularly in Eastern Indonesian Muslim societies, shows that family structures are not purely individual but are embedded in networks of reciprocity and collective responsibility. Therefore, understanding family resilience in the context of early marriage requires situating it within this broader legal-cultural framework, where law, religion, and tradition intersect dynamically.

Family Resilience as a National Issue

The discussion of family resilience has been presented comprehensively, drawing on various strands of literature to define it, identify its determinants, and examine its significance at the national level. However, the analysis

¹⁹ Rr Dewi Anggraeni, "Islamic Law and Customary Law in Contemporary Legal Pluralism in Indonesia: Tension and Constraints," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 23, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v23i1.32549>.

²⁰ Teguh Musa Wiguna and Wardah Yuspin, "Globalization of National Culture and the Legal System: A Comparative Perspective of the Indonesian Legal System and the British Common Law System," *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review* 5, no. 10 (2022): 122–29, <https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssr.v5i10.592>.

²¹ Prakoso Prakoso, Fathur Rokhman, and Eko Handoyo, "Pancasila as a Foundation for Legal Reform: Evaluating the Impact of Civic Education on Indonesian Legal Systems," *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 5, no. 3 (2024): 1429–68, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jllr.v5i3.16498>.

remains largely situated at a general conceptual level. It has not yet been sufficiently connected to the specific focus of this study, namely, early marriage and its sociocultural context. As a result, the discussion risks overlooking the contextual variability that fundamentally shapes how family resilience is constructed and sustained in different communities.²²

To strengthen analytical depth, this section should move beyond universalistic assumptions and explicitly position family resilience as a context-dependent construct. Empirical studies demonstrate that family resilience is closely associated with mental health, caregiving processes, and adaptive capacities, all of which are shaped by relational and environmental factors.²³ In societies where early marriage is socially embedded, resilience cannot be measured solely through standardized indicators such as economic stability or psychological well-being. Instead, it is influenced by culturally specific norms, kinship systems, and communal expectations that regulate marital relations and conflict resolution.²⁴

Furthermore, social support plays a crucial role in mediating family resilience, though its effects vary across sociocultural and structural contexts.²⁵ In the Indonesian setting, institutional interventions such as marriage guidance programs also demonstrate that resilience is not merely an internal family capacity but is shaped by broader socio-legal frameworks.²⁶ It indicates that

²² Xuan Cheng et al., "The Association between Family Resilience and Mental Health: A Three-Level Meta-Analysis," *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 53 (December 2024): 224–31, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2024.10.017>.

²³ Surangkana Suparit, Nanchatsan Sakunpong, and Thasuk Junprasert, "Family Resilience Processes among Guardians Caring for Children and Youths with Leukemia," *Heliyon* 9, no. 6 (June 2023): e17205, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e17205>.

²⁴ Zulkarnain Zulkarnain, Habib Iman Nurdin Sholeh, and Ahmad Zaenul Muttaqin, "Local Wisdom in Sebimbangan Traditional Marriage Practices: A Maqāṣid Shari'ah Perspective," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 24, no. 1 (2024): 119–37, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v24i1.119-137>.

²⁵ Yanqiu Lu and Li Yan, "Impact of Perceived Social Support on Family Resilience in Patients with Ischemic Stroke: A Mediation Model Analysis," *Geriatric Nursing* 60 (November 2024): 456–61, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2024.10.004>.

²⁶ Mursyid Djawas et al., "Creating Family Resilience in Indonesia: A Study of 'Marriage Guidance' Program in Aceh and South Sumatera," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 17, no. 1 (2022): 299–324, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v17i1.6150>.

family resilience operates as a dynamic regulatory process influenced by interactions between individuals, families, and their environments.²⁷

Moreover, the role of legal and cultural frameworks must be taken into account. Normative structures derived from Islamic law and local wisdom shape family practices, including early marriage, within a moral and social order that emphasizes harmony and collective well-being.²⁸ Therefore, family resilience should be understood as the outcome of ongoing interactions among legal norms, cultural values, and social institutions, rather than as a fixed or universal condition.

By integrating these perspectives, the discussion more effectively supports the main argument of this research: that family resilience in the context of early marriage is not inherently weak or problematic, but is contingent upon the sociocultural and legal environment in which it is embedded.

Dayak Meratus Community

Rural Meratus refers to the mountainous region of South Kalimantan inhabited predominantly by the Dayak Meratus people. Historically, this community is believed to have migrated from coastal areas due to social conflicts, a hypothesis supported by archaeological findings, including nautical-themed ceremonial artifacts. The livelihood of the Dayak Meratus community is closely tied to the forest, with economic activities centered on shifting cultivation, plantations, and hunting. Within this socio-ecological setting, *adat* (customary law) plays a central role in regulating not only daily behavior but also life-cycle events such as birth, marriage, and death, making it a core element of social identity and collective order.²⁹

The Dayak Meratus community maintains a deeply embedded relationship with nature, which is reflected in both their spatial organization and ritual practices. Sub-communities such as Dayak Kiyu distinguish between protected

²⁷ David MacPhee, Erika Lunkenheimer, and Nathaniel Riggs, "Resilience as Regulation of Developmental and Family Processes," *Family Relations* 64, no. 1 (2015): 153–75, <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12100>.

²⁸ Ahmad Syukran Baharuddin et al., "Catalysing Global Peace through the Strengthening of Forensic Science Application in Sharī'ah Law," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC)*, 2019, 77–103.

²⁹ Leonard C Sebastian and Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff, "Islam, Muslims, and State," in *Indonesia and Islam in Transition* (Springer, 2024), 23–69.

forest areas and agricultural land, reinforcing ecological balance through customary norms. Before cultivating land, ritual ceremonies are conducted, accompanied by mantras addressed to ancestral spirits to ensure both agricultural success and environmental harmony.³⁰ Communal practices such as traditional forest management and *manugal* (planting rituals) further illustrate how local wisdom sustains both ecological preservation and social cohesion.³¹

In the domain of marriage, the Dayak Meratus community demonstrates a complex normative system that combines formal and informal institutions. In addition to marriages recognized by the state and religion, there exist informal relational practices such as *palas*, which are socially acknowledged within certain limits. Customary law governing marriage is grounded in principles of harmony, adherence to norms, and social order. The practice of *jujuran* functions not merely as a material exchange but as a symbolic affirmation of inter-family alliances and responsibilities.³² Violations of such customs may result in social sanctions and delegitimization of the marriage within the community.³³

At the same time, the Dayak Meratus community reflects a broader pattern of legal pluralism in Indonesia, where adat, Islamic law, and state law interact dynamically. This interaction demonstrates that community life is shaped not by a single legal system but by overlapping normative frameworks that are continuously negotiated in practice.³⁴

³⁰ Miftahul Anwar, Hafizianor Hafizianor, and Asyysifa Asyysifa, "Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Dayak Meratus dalam Pengelolaan Hutan Secara Tradisional di Desa Atiran," *Jurnal Sylva Scientiae* 6, no. 1 (March 2023): 115, <https://doi.org/10.20527/jss.v6i1.8204>.

³¹ Suriansyah Murhaini and Achmadi, "The Farming Management of Dayak People's Community Based on Local Wisdom Ecosystem in Kalimantan Indonesia," *Heliyon* 7, no. 12 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e08578>.

³² Fathul Achmadi Abby, Ifrani Ifrani, and Muhammad Topan, "Perkawinan Adat Suku Dayak Meratus di Kalimantan Selatan," *Jurnal Penegakan Hukum Indonesia* 2, no. 1 (2021): 21–39, <https://doi.org/10.51749/jphiv2i1.17>.

³³ Intan Metrayani Sidauruk, Siti Komariah, and Yadi Ruyadi, "Pelestarian Lingkungan Masyarakat Dayak Kiyu Meratus Berbasiskearifan Lokal Pertanian Manugal," *Kronik: Journal of History Education and Historiography* 6, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.26740/kjhi.v6i1.17799>.

³⁴ Otong Sulaeman et al., "Negotiating Gender Justice in Minangkabau Marital Disputes: Between Adat, Islamic, and State Law," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 24, no. 1 (2025): 39–49, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i1.11848>.

These sociocultural characteristics are crucial for understanding the practice of early marriage and the formation of family resilience within the Dayak Meratus community. Early marriage, in this context, is embedded in kinship systems, customary obligations, and communal values that maintain social stability. The strong role of adat, collective support mechanisms, and emphasis on harmony contribute to sustaining resilience among young families. Therefore, family resilience in this community is not merely an individual capacity but a socially constructed outcome shaped by the interaction between cultural norms, legal structures, and lived practices.

The Culture of Young Marriage in the Dayak Meratus Community

Through in-depth interviews, this study explores information related to the age of marriage, the background of the couple, the place of residence after marriage, and the husband's livelihood as indicators to understand the dynamics of young family life in the local sociocultural context, as can be seen in the table below:

Table 1.
Young Married Couples of Meratus Dayak Community

No.	Marriage Age (Year)		Marriage Background	Post-marriage residence	Employment
	Husband	Wife			
1	21	14	Matchmaking	Own house near husband's family	Beekeepers
2	21	15	Matchmaking	Follow wife's parents	Farmer/Gardener
3	17	15	Matchmaking	Follow wife's parents	Panning
4	17	15	School friends	Own home far away from	Stone quarry
5	19	14	Matchmaking	Own house adjacent to other relatives	Rubber farmers
6	22	15	Get acquainted on social media	Follow husband's parents	Rubber farmers
7	23	14	Set up by parents	Own house near husband's parents	Rubber farmers
8	30	15	Matched with an uncle	Own house near wife's parents	Wood Laborer
9	22	14	Introduced by a	Own house near	Farmers

No.	Marriage Age (Year)		Marriage Background	Post-marriage residence	Employment
	Husband	Wife			
10	18	15	friend Known on social media/dating	other relatives Own house near husband's parents	Self-employed
11	36	15	Set up by friends	In one's own home near relatives	Wood Laborer
12	28	15	Set up by Grandma	Follows parents because husband works outside the area (madam)	Mine workers
13	20	15	Introduced by a friend	Follow parents	<i>Meriang</i> (Sharpening Bamboo)
14	23	15	Introduced by the uncle	Follow parents	Merchant
15	34	15	Set up by the ex-wife's family	Own home	Wood Chipper
16	25	15	Known on Social Media	Own home	Farmers
17	23	15	Worn by uncle	Own home	<i>Meriang</i> (Sharpening Bamboo)
18	25	14	Matchmaking	Wife joins parents because husband is madam	Builders
19	17	15	School friends	Follow husband's parents	Farmers
20	22	15	Matchmaking	Own house far away from relatives	Farmers

The table above presents the demographic and socio-economic profile of 20 (twenty) young married couples living in rural Meratus, South Kalimantan. This data was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted to understand the general characteristics of young families in rural Meratus communities and to identify the factors that influence their lives. The following is an explanation of the contents of the table above:

Marriage Age

Based on the age-at-marriage data, all female informants were married before age 19. In contrast, only 4 male informants married at or below this age, with the majority marrying later. This disparity reflects a clear gendered pattern in the timing of marriage, indicating the presence of differentiated sociocultural and normative expectations for men and women.³⁵

Rather than being merely a demographic imbalance, this pattern represents a sociocultural construction in which marriage functions as the primary marker of female adulthood. Women are socially prepared for domestic roles at an earlier age. At the same time, men are afforded greater flexibility to delay marriage until they are economically and socially ready. It reflects broader discourses within Islamic family law and social practice in Indonesia, where gender roles and marital expectations are often shaped through the interaction of religious interpretation and cultural norms.³⁶

From a family resilience perspective, this condition operates in an ambivalent manner. On the one hand, early marriage among women may indicate structural inequality and limited opportunities for personal development. On the other hand, within the local cultural system, early role internalization can facilitate adaptive capacity, as individuals enter marriage with socially recognized roles and expectations.

Thus, family resilience in this context is not solely determined by biological or psychological maturity, but by the alignment between culturally constructed roles and the support systems surrounding young couples. This finding underscores that resilience is context-dependent and shaped by the interaction between gender norms, cultural expectations, and socio-legal structures.

Marriage Background

Based on the data, most newly married couples choose to live either with their parents or near extended family. Specifically, 8 couples (40%) reside with parents or relatives, while 10 couples (50%) live independently but remain

³⁵ Iwan Setiawan et al, "Reforming Marriage Law in Indonesia: A Critical Examination of Islamic Law on the Ban of Interfaith Marriages," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 18, no. 2 (2024): 179–98, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v18i2.11134>.

³⁶ Nurnazli Nurnazli et al, "The Contestation of Islamic Boarding School Womens's View of Wifes' Rights in Poligamy," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 24, no. 1 (2024): 149–68, <https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v24i1.1349>.

geographically close to their families. Only 2 couples (10%) live far from their families, primarily due to work-related mobility. This pattern indicates a strong preference for maintaining spatial proximity to kinship networks during the early stages of marriage.

This residential arrangement reflects not only economic considerations but also a sociocultural system that prioritizes collective living and interdependence. Living with or near extended family provides access to shared resources, reduces financial burdens, and facilitates the distribution of domestic responsibilities.

From a family resilience perspective, this pattern functions as a kinship-based support mechanism that mitigates the potential vulnerabilities associated with early marriage. The presence of extended family enables young couples to access emotional support, conflict mediation, childcare assistance, and economic backup, thereby strengthening their adaptive capacity.

Thus, resilience in the Dayak Meratus community is not constructed at the level of the nuclear family alone but is embedded within a broader kinship structure. The tendency to remain within family proximity demonstrates that collective support systems act as a buffer against instability, making early marriage more sustainable within this sociocultural context.

Post-Marriage Residence

Based on the data, most newly married couples choose to live either with their parents or near extended family. Specifically, 8 couples (40%) reside with parents or relatives, while 10 couples (50%) live independently but remain geographically close to their families. Only 2 couples (10%) live far from their families, primarily due to work-related mobility (locally referred to as *madam*). This pattern indicates a strong preference for maintaining proximity to kinship networks during the early stages of marriage.

This residential arrangement reflects not only economic considerations but also a sociocultural system that prioritizes interdependence and collective living. Living with or near extended family reduces financial burdens. It enables the sharing of domestic responsibilities while also reinforcing social cohesion within the community.

From a family resilience perspective, this pattern operates as a kinship-based support system that mitigates the potential risks associated with early

marriage. The presence of extended family provides emotional support, conflict mediation, childcare assistance, and economic backup, thereby strengthening young couples' adaptive capacity.

Thus, family resilience in the Dayak Meratus community is not centered solely on the nuclear family but is embedded within broader kinship structures. The tendency to remain within close family proximity indicates that collective support serves as a buffer against instability, making early marriage more sustainable in this sociocultural context.

Post-Marriage Livelihoods

The findings show that husbands generally act as the primary breadwinners in young families within the Dayak Meratus community. Their livelihoods are diverse, with the majority engaged in agriculture, including farming and rubber tapping. In contrast, others work as beekeepers, construction workers, bamboo processors, wood laborers, and gold panners. This diversity reflects a livelihood system that is both rooted in traditional ecological practices and responsive to emerging economic opportunities.

The dominance of agriculture-based occupations indicates the continuity of cultural values that emphasize a close relationship with nature. At the same time, the presence of non-agricultural work demonstrates an adaptive response to changing economic conditions, suggesting that households are not economically static but can diversify.

From a family resilience perspective, this livelihood pattern represents a form of economic adaptive capacity. The combination of traditional and non-traditional income sources enables families to manage risks, cope with uncertainty, and sustain their livelihoods over time. Economic flexibility, in this sense, becomes a crucial foundation for maintaining stability in young marriages.

Thus, family resilience in the Dayak Meratus community is supported not only by cultural and kinship structures but also by households' economic adaptability. The integration of tradition and adaptation within livelihood strategies highlights that resilience is produced through the interaction between cultural continuity and economic transformation.

Local Legal Culture of the Dayak Meratus Community in Shaping Family Resilience

Based on the empirical findings, several local legal, social, and cultural practices have been identified as significantly contributing to the formation of family resilience among young married couples in rural Meratus. These practices are not merely inherited traditions; rather, they function as socially institutionalized resilience mechanisms embedded within the community's customary law (*adat*) and lived practices. Over generations, these mechanisms have structured how individuals enter marriage, organize family life, and adapt to socio-economic challenges.

Pre-Marriage Matchmaking

Arranged marriage has long been an integral part of social life in the rural Meratus community, where parents and extended family members play a central role in determining marital partners. When a daughter is considered "ready" for marriage, families often feel a moral obligation to facilitate matchmaking. This practice reflects the operation of a customary legal system in which marriage is not viewed as an individual decision but as a collective, socially regulated institution.

However, this practice frequently conflicts with formal legal provisions, particularly when it involves underage girls. Limited legal awareness regarding the minimum age of marriage and the importance of marriage registration contributes to the persistence of child marriage, which in turn raises concerns related to the protection of women's and children's rights.³⁷

Despite these legal tensions, arranged marriage in the Dayak Meratus community functions as a socially institutionalized mechanism of resilience. By embedding marital relationships within extended kinship networks from the outset, this practice establishes a system of social control that regulates interactions between individuals and families. It fosters values such as cooperation, collective responsibility, and kinship solidarity, which contribute to the stability of young marriages.

³⁷ Qodariah Barkah, Arne Huzaimah, Siti Rachmiyatun, et al., "Abandonment of Women's Rights in Child Marriage; An Islamic Law Perspective," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial* 17, no. 2 (2022): 383–411, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-Ihkam.v17i2.6725>.

From this perspective, family resilience is not solely dependent on individual readiness. Still, it is supported by socially structured relationships that provide guidance, supervision, and support. Thus, while arranged marriage may pose normative challenges from a legal standpoint, it also serves as a culturally embedded mechanism that sustains social harmony and strengthens family resilience within the community.

Group Living Habits

The majority of young married couples in the rural Meratus community choose to live either with their parents or near extended family members. This pattern is not merely a cultural preference. Still, it reflects a socially institutionalized kinship system rooted in customary law (*adat*), which emphasizes harmony, normative conduct, and social order.³⁸ Living with or near extended family serves multiple functions beyond maintaining cultural continuity. It strengthens kinship ties, facilitates cooperation, and ensures the intergenerational transmission of customary values. In this context, residential arrangements are socially regulated and aligned with the broader objective of preserving collective harmony within the community.

From a family resilience perspective, group living serves as a kinship-based support mechanism that enhances young couples' adaptive capacity. The presence of extended family provides immediate access to emotional support, conflict mediation, childcare assistance, and shared economic resources. This collective structure reduces the vulnerability typically associated with early marriage by redistributing responsibilities across a wider social network.

Moreover, the persistence of this living pattern amid increasing exposure to modernization and state legal systems demonstrates the adaptive capacity of customary law. While certain aspects of family structure, such as gender roles, may evolve, the core values of mutual respect and cooperation remain intact. These values underpin positive family interactions, which are essential components of family resilience, including the ability to meet needs, adapt to change, and sustain collective well-being. Thus, group living in the Dayak Meratus community should be understood not simply as a tradition but as an institutionalized resilience mechanism, where cultural norms and kinship structures actively shape the stability and sustainability of young families.

³⁸ Abby, Ifrani, and Topan, "Perkawinan Adat Suku Dayak Meratus di Kalimantan Selatan."

Land-Giving Habits

Empirical findings indicate that most young married couples in the rural Meratus community engage in agriculture as their primary livelihood, with access to land typically obtained from parents, either as a gift or through informal lending. This pattern reflects not only economic dependence on the agricultural sector but also the operation of a customary system in which land functions as both an economic and cultural resource.

The practice of transferring land to newly married couples constitutes a socially institutionalized mechanism of economic resilience embedded within the kinship structure. Rather than leaving young families to establish livelihoods independently, the family actively provides productive assets that enable immediate economic participation. In this sense, land becomes foundational capital that reduces vulnerability, supports income generation, and ensures continuity of agrarian traditions across generations.

From a family resilience perspective, this practice significantly strengthens adaptive capacity by integrating economic support with social solidarity. Access to land allows young couples to secure food resources, maintain financial stability, and develop sustainable livelihoods under the guidance of parents or community leaders. It aligns with broader findings that social support plays a critical role in shaping family coping strategies and resilience outcomes.³⁹

Moreover, the moral obligation of parents to provide land reflects a normative framework of intergenerational responsibility, where family welfare is collectively maintained rather than individually pursued. It reinforces social cohesion and ensures that each new household is structurally supported from its inception. In addition, the practice represents an adaptive response to local ecological conditions, where agriculture remains the most viable economic base.

Thus, the tradition of land-giving in the Dayak Meratus community should be understood not merely as cultural inheritance, but as an institutionalized system of economic support that integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions. This mechanism plays a crucial role in sustaining

³⁹ Lu and Yan, "Impact of Perceived Social Support on Family Resilience in Patients with Ischemic Stroke: A Mediation Model Analysis."

family resilience by linking resource access, cultural continuity, and collective responsibility within a single socio-legal framework.⁴⁰

Lack of outside influence

The relatively limited exposure to external cultural influences in the rural Meratus community helps preserve strong traditional values, such as loyalty, mutual respect, and cooperation. These values serve as a mechanism of cultural cohesion, strengthening emotional bonds and commitment among young married couples. In a context marked by geographic isolation and shared daily challenges, these norms foster collective endurance and reinforce relational stability within marriage.

Compared to more individualistic relationship patterns often associated with modern societies, marriages in this community tend to be more family-oriented and embedded within communal expectations. In this sense, limited external influence does not merely reflect isolation. Still, it operates as a socially structured condition that sustains normative consistency and relational cohesion.

However, this condition also presents a dual dynamic. While strong adherence to tradition enhances stability, limited access to external knowledge and evolving social norms may constrain adaptive capacity. A lack of exposure to diverse relationship models and legal awareness can limit young couples' ability to navigate complex marital challenges in changing socio-legal contexts.⁴¹

Additionally, generational tensions may emerge as younger individuals encounter new values and aspirations that differ from established expectations. It creates a need for negotiation between maintaining inherited norms and accommodating social change. From a family resilience perspective,

⁴⁰ Khoiruddin Nasution, Ocktoberrinsyah Ocktoberrinsyah, and Syah Muhammad Mousa Alzaki, "Complete Family Construction for Working Wives in Indonesia and Australia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (2025): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v9i1.25840>.

⁴¹ Mansur Mansur et al., "The Return of Doi Menre' Ba'da Duhul in Bugis Marriage Law, South Konawe: Islamic Education and Sociology of Islamic Law Perspective," *El-Ussrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 2 (2024): 480–500, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i2.25574>.

this tension highlights that resilience is not solely about stability, but also about the capacity to adapt.⁴²

Thus, limited external influence in the Dayak Meratus community should be understood as a dual-function resilience mechanism: it strengthens cultural cohesion and relational commitment, while simultaneously posing constraints on adaptive transformation. The sustainability of family resilience in this context ultimately depends on the community's ability to balance the preservation of ancestral values with selective adaptation to modern socio-legal developments.

Dimensions of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a* and 'Urf on Family Resilience of Young Couples in Meratus

The phenomenon of early marriage in the Dayak Meratus community presents a distinctive pattern of family resilience that cannot be simplistically categorized as either beneficial or harmful. While early marriage is often associated with social, health, and educational vulnerabilities, the Meratus context demonstrates culturally embedded adaptive mechanisms that sustain household stability. From the perspective of Islamic law, this phenomenon can be critically examined through the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* and 'urf, while simultaneously engaging with state regulations on the minimum age of marriage.

Empirically, several dimensions of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* are reflected in local practices. First, *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (protection of offspring) is manifested in the social expectation that marriage preserves honor and prevents social deviance. Second, *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of property) is realized through the tradition of land-giving, which provides economic security for newly married couples. Third, *ḥifẓ al-nafs* and *ḥifẓ al-'aql* are partially supported through communal living arrangements that offer emotional, social, and economic support systems.

However, these benefits must be evaluated within a clear normative boundary. Early marriage, particularly at a very young age, poses significant risks to *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, in terms of maternal and child health, and to *ḥifẓ al-'aql*,

⁴² Fitriyadi Fitriyadi et al., "Redefining Legal Frameworks: Progressive Methods in Ascertaining Children's Lineage from Fasid Marriages in Religious Court Proceedings," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 24, no. 1 (2024): 148–71, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v24i1.12894>.

especially through the disruption of educational continuity. Therefore, while certain aspects of local practice generate *maṣlahah*, they simultaneously carry the potential for *mafsadah* that cannot be overlooked.

In this regard, local customs such as arranged marriage, land distribution, and communal living may be categorized as *'urf ṣaḥīḥ* insofar as they support social cohesion, economic sustainability, and family resilience. Yet, the validity of *'urf* in Islamic legal theory is conditional. It is acceptable only when it does not produce harm or contradict higher objectives of the Sharia.⁴³ Consequently, when early marriage poses measurable risks, particularly regarding health, legal protection, and educational access, it must be critically re-evaluated within the hierarchy of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*.

This analysis leads to a clear academic position. Early marriage in the Meratus context can be conditionally justified only when it demonstrably fulfills *maṣlahah* without generating dominant *mafsada*. Where the potential harms, especially those related to life safety (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) and intellectual development (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), outweigh the benefits, the practice cannot be legitimized solely based on *'urf*. In such cases, state law, particularly the minimum age regulation under Marriage Law No. 16/2019, represents a necessary legal intervention aligned with the protective objectives of the Sharia.

Thus, the phenomenon of early marriage in the Dayak Meratus community reflects a dynamic interaction between *'urf*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*, and state law. The challenge lies in constructing a normative synthesis that preserves local wisdom while ensuring the fundamental objectives of human protection, especially for women and children, are not compromised.

Conclusion

This research shows that early marriage in the Dayak Meratus community does not always lead to family vulnerability but can instead foster strong resilience through institutionalized sociocultural mechanisms. Practices such as arranged marriage, kinship-based residence patterns, land grants as economic capital, and high social cohesion serve as social capital that supports

⁴³ Yarmunida Miti, "Revealing the Enforcement of Mbasuh Dusun Tradition for Pregnant Women Outside of Marriage in Indonesia," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (2023): 618–43, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v8i2.8437>.

family stability. Family resilience in this context is the result of the dynamic interaction among customary law, Islamic law, and state law, making it contextual and not explainable solely through a universal normative approach.

Academically, further comparative research across communities is needed to test the generalizability of the findings and strengthen the integration between family resilience theory and legal pluralism. In practice, policymakers need to develop a more context-specific approach that accommodates local wisdom while protecting women and children. Intervention programs should not only focus on delaying marriage, but also on strengthening family capacity, providing legal education, and increasing access to education and reproductive health services.[a]

Author Contribution Statement

Mariani Mariani: Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Data Curation; Resources; Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing

Yusna Zaidah: Conceptualization; Supervision; Methodology; Validation; Resources; Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing.

Raihanah Abdullah: Formal Analysis; Validation; Visualization; Writing, Review & Editing.

Muhammad Wahdini: Data Curation; Investigation; Literature Review; Writing, Review & Editing.

Fauziah Hayati: Data Curation; Investigation; Validation; Visualization; Writing, Review & Editing.

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