

Collaborative Governance Analysis in Reducing Marriage Dispensation Requests: A Study of Multi-Layered Verification Mechanisms in Bondowoso Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of collaborative governance to reduce marriage dispensation requests in Bondowoso Regency, East Java, through a multi-layered verification mechanism involving six key stakeholders: Social Affairs Agency (Dinas Sosial P3AKB), Health Agency, Religious Court, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Children's Forum, and community leaders. Utilizing the Ansell and Gash (2008) collaborative governance framework, this qualitative case study employs Miles and Huberman's interactive model for data analysis. Findings reveal that formal collaboration through the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation Agreement, combined with a five-stage verification innovation (digital filtering, mandatory psychological assessment, medical examination at five specialized referral health centers, cognitive filter, and a two-year anti-divorce stamped statement), successfully reduced dispensation requests by 87.6 percent, from 1,077 cases in 2020 to 133 in 2025. However, the persistence of unregistered marriages (37 percent of applicants) and pre-marital pregnancy (25 percent) indicates a displacement effect, suggesting that procedural rigidity in formal mechanisms redirects behavior toward informal practices. The study proposes two norm transformation strategies: victim testimony-based campaigns and religious authority legitimation. This research contributes to collaborative governance literature by identifying structural interdependence and layered institutional design as critical mechanisms for addressing socially rooted problems beyond voluntary compliance.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance; Marriage Dispensation; Structural Interdependence; Multi-Layered Verification Mechanism; Norm Transformation

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INTRODUCTION

The amendment of Law Number 16 of 2019, which raised the minimum marriage age for women from 16 to 19 years in Indonesia, created an implementation paradox at the regional level. Although intended to protect children from early marriage, the regulation paradoxically triggered a surge in requests for marriage dispensation as a legal circumvention mechanism (Wahyudi & Prastiwi, 2022). Bondowoso Regency in East Java Province experienced a dramatic spike in dispensation cases, reaching 1,077 in 2020 following the law's implementation. This phenomenon indicates the failure of a purely normative, legalistic approach to transforming deeply embedded sociocultural norms that legitimize child marriage as a pragmatic solution to premarital pregnancy or economic pressures (Bachtiar et al., 2021; Listyorini & Hanif, 2023; Manaf et al., 2025). The marriage dispensation problem is inherently multidimensional, encompassing legal, reproductive health, psychosocial, economic, and cultural dimensions, and therefore cannot be resolved through single agency intervention. This complexity necessitates a collaborative governance approach that integrates diverse stakeholders with differentiated competencies, resources, and legitimacy toward shared objectives (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012).

Previous research on collaborative governance in child marriage prevention has identified various collaborative dimensions, yet significant gaps remain. Nasyaya (2023) reported that formal collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency successfully created stakeholder interdependence, while Erika et al. (2023) found that excessive government dominance in Bojonegoro reduced other actors' participation. Haris and Anita (2023) mapped functional differentiation among stakeholders in Sumenep but did not analyze the coordination mechanisms that ensure inter-role synergy. Internationally, the collaborative governance scholarship has emphasized institutional design as critical for sustained partnerships (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012; Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011), yet empirical applications in socioculturally rooted social problems remain limited. Prasetyo (2022) identified internal barriers such as infrastructure, budget, and human resources, as well as external barriers such as a permissive culture, low education levels, and poverty in Jepara. Muradillo and Hakim (2023) documented judicial resistance to the approval of dispensations in the Madiun Religious Court. Wahyudi and Prastiwi (2022) identified conservative religious episteme as a fundamental root cause, where judges tend to prioritize religious benefit over reproductive health. However, these studies share three critical limitations: they focus exclusively on formal collaboration without exploring standardized operational mechanisms that create structural interdependence; they fail to comprehensively analyze all five Ansell and Gash (2008) variables holistically; and they have not identified innovative institutional designs that create compulsory structural interdependence beyond voluntary stakeholder awareness.

Bondowoso Regency offers a unique empirical context to address these research gaps. The local government has implemented a tiered regulatory strategy through Regent Regulation Number 153 of 2021, the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation Agreement, and the 2025 Regent's Instruction and Circular Letter, establishing a comprehensive legal foundation for collaborative governance. More significantly, Bondowoso has developed a multi-layered verification mechanism innovation not found in prior studies: digital filtering through the Si Peka Pak! application, mandatory psychological assessment by recruited professional psychologists, medical examination at five specialized referral health centers, a cognitive filter through the SIDIKA application, and a two-year stamped statement prohibiting divorce. This multi-layered mechanism creates compulsory structural interdependence in which the Religious Court cannot process applications without recommendations from two technical agencies (the Social Affairs Agency and the Health Agency), fundamentally transforming collaboration from voluntary compliance to systematic binding (Kurniawan, 2022). Despite an impressive 87.6 percent reduction from 1,077 cases (2020) to 133 cases (2025), critical findings reveal that 37 percent of applicants had previously conducted unregistered marriages and 25 percent experienced pre-marital pregnancy, indicating that 62 percent of cases are ex-post facto, merely legitimizing pre-existing conditions, demonstrating a displacement effect where procedural rigidity drives behavior toward harder to detect informal practices.

Based on these research gaps and empirical phenomena, this study aims to analyze: (1) the marriage dispensation mechanism with a multi-layered verification system in Bondowoso Regency; (2) the role of each stakeholder in the collaborative governance model; and (3) strategies for enhancing collaborative governance effectiveness in minimizing dispensation requests. The theoretical contribution lies in comprehensively testing all five variables of the Ansell and Gash (2008) model, namely starting conditions, facilitative leadership, institutional design, collaborative process, and outcomes, within a single case, while identifying structural interdependence mechanisms as an institutional design innovation that transcends voluntary compliance-based collaborative governance. The practical contribution formulates sociocultural norm transformation strategies through victim-testimony-based campaigns and religious authority legitimization, responding to the persistence of informal practices and contributing to Sustainable Development Goals targets 1 (no poverty), 4 (quality education), and 5 (gender equality).

This article is organized as follows. After this introduction, the method section describes the qualitative case study design, data collection through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, and Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model. The results section presents empirical findings organized around three research questions: the multi-layered verification mechanism, stakeholder roles in collaborative governance, and strategies for enhancing effectiveness. The discussion section interprets these findings through the Ansell and Gash (2008) framework and Donahue and Zeckhauser's (2011) collaborative dimensions, compares the results

with prior studies, and articulates theoretical and practical implications. The article concludes with key contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive case study design to analyze the implementation of collaborative governance for marriage dispensation prevention in Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The qualitative approach enables in-depth exploration and understanding of the roles of individuals and groups related to social problems by constructing comprehensive, complex concepts articulated through words and conducted in natural settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). The case study design is appropriate given the study’s focus on a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). Bondowoso Regency was purposively selected as the research site due to its distinctive multi-layered verification mechanism, which represents a unique institutional innovation in collaborative governance for child marriage prevention.

Research informants were selected through purposive sampling based on direct involvement in the collaborative framework, comprising six key stakeholder representatives: the Social Affairs, Women’s Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning Agency (Dinas Sosial P3AKB), the Health Agency (Dinas Kesehatan), the Religious Court (Pengadilan Agama), the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama), the Bondowoso Children’s Forum (Forum Anak), and community or religious leaders (tokoh masyarakat). Data collection utilized two source triangulation: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews with all six informant categories conducted during November to December 2025, and (2) document analysis of relevant regulations, including Regent Regulation Number 153 of 2021, the 2023 Cooperation Agreement, Regent’s Instruction Number 314 of 2025, Circular Letter Number 313 of 2025, and marriage dispensation statistics for the 2020 to 2025 period.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman’s (1994) interactive model as cited in Saldaña (2014), consisting of three iterative stages: (1) data reduction through coding of interview transcripts and documents based on Ansell and Gash’s (2008) collaborative governance dimensions, yielding 59 coded data points across 14 starting conditions codes, 12 facilitative leadership codes, 19 institutional design codes, and 17 collaborative outcomes codes; (2) data display through code matrices and stakeholder role synthesis tables to facilitate identification of patterns and causal relationships among variables; and (3) conclusion drawing through triangulation of findings across data sources. The researcher’s presence in the field facilitated direct observation of collaborative interactions and institutional dynamics, enhancing the trustworthiness of interpretive findings. Validity was ensured through methodological triangulation between interview data and documentary evidence, member checking with key informants, and peer debriefing with academic colleagues specializing in public administration and collaborative governance research.

Table 1. Data Analysis Framework Based on Ansell and Gash (2008) Variables

Variable	Number of Codes	Data Sources	Key Indicators
Starting Conditions	14	Interviews, regulations, statistics	Power balance, incentives, and prior collaboration history
Facilitative Leadership	12	Interviews, policy documents	Trust building, rule setting, dialogue facilitation
Institutional Design	19	Regulations, cooperation agreements	Procedural rules, inclusivity, and enforcement mechanisms
Collaborative Outcomes	17	Statistics, interviews, documents	Case reduction, capacity change, relational quality

Note. Total coded data = 59 across four major thematic categories. Collaborative process codes were distributed across the four variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

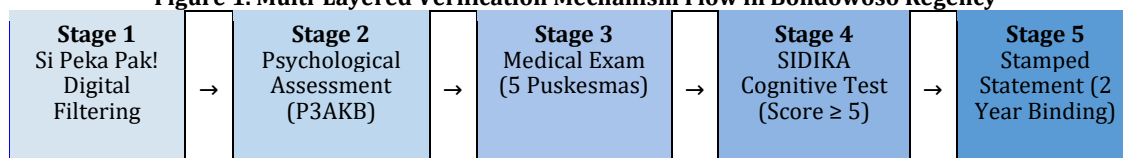
Multi-Layered Verification Mechanism as Structural Interdependence

The marriage dispensation process in Bondowoso Regency has been transformed from a conventional administrative model into an integrated digital system with a multi-layered verification mechanism, creating structural interdependence among stakeholders. The first innovation is digital filtering through the Si Peka Pak! (Sistem Pengaduan Kekerasan dan Perlindungan Perempuan Anak) application, which requires independent applicant registration, comprehensive data uploads, and displays real-time progress status. The second innovation involves the professionalization of mandatory psychological assessment by psychologists specifically recruited by the Social Affairs Agency to evaluate mental maturity, emotional readiness, and psychosocial capability of underage applicants, with confidential recommendations sent directly to the Religious Court.

The third innovation is the designation of five specialized referral health centers (Puskesmas) for medical examination of underage marriage candidates, enabling procedural standardization and enhanced medical staff competency. However, the Health Agency faces a critical humanitarian ethical dilemma. Despite medical ineligibility, it tends to issue recommendations for pregnancy cases on grounds of benefit and protection of the child's civil rights, reflecting a contradiction between the preventive norm of Law Number 16 of 2019 and humanitarian norms. The fourth and fifth innovations comprise the SIDIKA (Sistem Informasi Dispensasi Kawin) application, with a household readiness test requiring a minimum score of 5 as a cognitive filter, and a two-year stamped statement prohibiting divorce, thereby transforming juridical ambiguity regarding urgent reasons into measurable, score-based procedures and legal commitments.

The multi-layered verification model creates a systematic binding through the 2023 Cooperation Agreement, mandating that recommendations from three technical agencies serve as absolute registration prerequisites at the Religious Court. However, the model faces limitations in authority, since psychological and medical recommendations are educative and technical rather than legally binding. In contrast, ultimate authority remains with the independent Panel of Judges, creating asymmetric interdependence. Empirical data demonstrate significant effectiveness as summarized in Table 2.

Figure 1. Multi-Layered Verification Mechanism Flow in Bondowoso Regency



Each stage creates a mandatory prerequisite for the next, establishing compulsory structural interdependence among stakeholders.

Table 2. Marriage Dispensation Cases in Bondowoso Regency (2020 to 2025)

Indicator	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of Cases	1,077	700	401	266	145	133
Annual Reduction (%)	—	35.0	42.7	33.7	45.5	8.3

Note. Source: Religious Court of Bondowoso, processed by authors (2025). Cumulative reduction from 2020 to 2025 reached 87.6 percent.

Despite these achievements, persistence of informal practices remains evident: 37 percent of dispensation applicants had previously conducted unregistered marriages (nikah sirri), and 25 percent experienced pre-marital pregnancy, indicating that 62 percent of cases are ex-post facto, where the system merely legitimizes pre-existing conditions rather than preventing child marriage at the upstream level.

Table 3. Profile of Ex-Post Facto Dispensation Cases in Bondowoso Regency

Category	Proportion of Applicants	Implication
Prior unregistered marriage (nikah sirri)	37%	Dispensation legitimizes the existing informal union
Pre-marital pregnancy	25%	Dispensation issued on humanitarian grounds
Combined ex-post facto cases	62%	System functions reactively rather than preventively

Note. Data compiled from interviews with Social Affairs Agency and Religious Court informants (November to December 2025).

Stakeholder Roles in Collaborative Governance: Functional Differentiation with Structural Interdependence

Analysis of six stakeholder roles reveals a pattern of functional differentiation with structural interdependence contributing to the dramatic reduction in dispensation requests. Table 4 synthesizes the differentiated roles, key contributions, and structural challenges faced by each stakeholder within the collaborative governance framework.

Table 4. Stakeholder Role Synthesis in Collaborative Governance for Dispensation Reduction

Stakeholder	Primary Role	Key Contribution	Structural Challenge
Social Affairs Agency (P3AKB)	Coordinator and primary facilitator	Si Peka Pak! application; mandatory psychological assessment; 210 assessments completed	Limited psychologist availability for expanding coverage
Health Agency	Medical eligibility guarantor	Five referral Puskesmas; standardized examination protocols	Ethical dilemma in pregnancy cases vs. medical standards
Religious Court	Procedural innovator and final adjudicator	SIDIKA application; two-year stamped statement; interdisciplinary judgment basis	Advisory nature of technical recommendations vs. judicial independence
Ministry of Religious Affairs	Religious episteme transformer	Circular Letter on nikah sirri; segmented counseling integrating stunting data	Excluded from the formal 2023 Cooperation Agreement
Children's Forum	Peer counselor and participatory monitor	Digital campaigns; Indonesian Children's Voice Mechanism in Musrenbang	Stigma and credibility gap; excluded from formal agreement
Community and Religious Leaders	Cultural mediator and norm transformer	Integrity Pact in Maesan Village; norm shift from early Engagement to education priority	Scalability limitation; heterogeneous inter-village commitment

Note. Compiled from interviews and document analysis. P3AKB = Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Perlindungan Anak, dan Keluarga Berencana.

Three structural limitations potentially hinder sustainability. First, the normative dilemma between age-standard enforcement and civil rights protection creates executive-level tension. Second, the long-term impact persists among 50,296 female-headed households (PEKKA), including 24 children under 15, indicating limitations in transforming deeply entrenched sociocultural norms. Third, fragmentation between formal and operational design persists as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Children's Forum, and community leaders are excluded from the formal Cooperation Agreement despite performing substantive roles.

Strategies for Enhancing Collaborative Governance Effectiveness

Despite the structured implementation of collaborative governance, its effectiveness in reducing dispensation requests is constrained by structural barriers: the persistence of cultural constructions that legitimize marriage as a pragmatic solution to pre-marital pregnancy, limited geographic reach and human resource capacity for preventive socialization in rural areas, and resistance from certain community leaders to gender equality narratives. Empirical data confirm that the primary root cause stems from regressive sociocultural determinants: the "bekalan" (early

Engagement) tradition, frequently followed by unregistered marriages as informal legitimation to avoid the social stigma of fornication.

Two primary strategies emerge from the findings. The first strategy involves victim testimony-based campaigns producing and massively disseminating educational content based on real testimonies from victims of unregistered and early marriages in Bondowoso. This strategy is grounded in the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1974), which posits that behavioral change occurs when individuals simultaneously perceive severity, susceptibility, and cues to action. The Social Affairs Agency coordinates with the Religious Court, health centers, and Children’s Forum to identify representative cases with measurable consequences: early divorce, economic neglect, child stunting, school dropout, intergenerational poverty, and psychological trauma.

The second strategy mobilizes religious authorities and local opinion leaders to deliver counter-narratives against unregistered and child marriages through widely distributed official video statements. This responds to the Children’s Forum’s critical finding that communities dismiss campaigns delivered by Forum members, arguing that Forum members are still children teaching adults. This strategy draws on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), where subjective norms strongly predict behavioral intention. The Vice Chairman of the Bondowoso Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Kiai Cholil, provides a powerful theological basis, asserting that unregistered marriage, while religiously valid, is rendered impermissible (haram) because it causes harm, particularly to women’s and children’s rights. This progressive fatwa reconciles theological legitimacy with the protection of women’s and children’s rights. Table 5 summarizes both strategies.

Table 5. Proposed Norm Transformation Strategies

Dimension	Strategy 1: Victim Testimony Campaigns	Strategy 2: Religious Authority Legitimation
Theoretical Basis	Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1974)	Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)
Mechanism of Change	Emotional Engagement and cognitive dissonance through concrete local consequences	Subjective norm influence through trusted moral authority endorsement
Key Actors	Social Affairs Agency, Religious Court, Puskesmas, Children’s Forum, Communication Agency	Ministry of Religious Affairs, MUI, kiai or ulama, village heads, respected community figures
Dissemination Channels	Social media (paid promotion), schools, pesantren, community WhatsApp groups	Official video statements from mosques, village halls, and institutional settings
Target Outcome	Perceived severity and susceptibility leading to behavioral intention change	Social and religious validation for delaying marriage and avoiding nikah sirri
Collaborative Dimension	Collaboration for information (Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011)	Collaboration for legitimacy (Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011)

Note. Both strategies integrate to create persuasive synergy: testimonies elicit emotional Engagement while authority endorsement provides social and religious validation.

DISCUSSION

Main Findings and research Context

This study reveals three principal findings regarding collaborative governance in reducing marriage dispensation requests in Bondowoso Regency, East Java. First, the implementation of a multi-layered verification mechanism comprising five sequential stages: digital filtering through Si Peka Pak!, mandatory psychological assessment, medical examination at five specialized referral health centers, cognitive testing via SIDIKA, and a two-year stamped anti-divorce commitment has successfully reduced dispensation requests by 87.6 percent, from 1,077 cases in 2020 to 133 in 2025. Second, the collaborative framework demonstrates functional differentiation and structural interdependence among six key stakeholders, in which each agency contributes specialized competencies while being procedurally bound by the 2023 Cooperation Agreement. Third, despite this quantitative success, 62 percent of remaining cases are ex-post facto (37 percent prior unregistered marriages and 25 percent pre-marital pregnancy), indicating a displacement effect wherein procedural rigor redirects behavior toward informal practices rather than genuinely preventing child marriage at the upstream level.

These findings are situated within the broader context of child marriage governance in Indonesia, where the amendment to Law Number 16 of 2019 raised the minimum marriage age for women but, paradoxically, triggered an increase in dispensation requests (Wahyudi & Prastiwi, 2022; Bachtiar et al., 2021). The Bondowoso case offers a distinctive analytical lens because it

combines formal institutional innovation with empirical evidence of both success and persistent challenges, enabling a nuanced assessment of the effectiveness of collaborative governance beyond simple outcome metrics.

Novelty and Comparison with Prior Studies

Comparison with prior studies reveals both convergences and critical divergences that underscore the novelty of this research. Consistent with Nasyaya (2023), who found that formal collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding in Ogan Komering Ulu created stakeholder interdependence, Bondowoso's 2023 MoU similarly establishes a formal foundation for multi-agency coordination. However, while Nasyaya's case relied on voluntary compliance, Bondowoso's mechanism transforms interdependence from discretionary to compulsory through procedural prerequisites, representing a qualitative advancement in institutional design. Erika et al. (2023) documented excessive government dominance, which reduced participation in Bojonegoro. This finding diverges from Bondowoso's distributed leadership model, where the Regent's office establishes regulatory frameworks while individual agencies exercise domain-specific leadership. This divergence likely stems from Bondowoso's multi-layered design, which structurally distributes authority across agencies, preventing any single entity from monopolistic control.

Haris and Anita (2023) mapped functional differentiation in Sumenep without analyzing coordination mechanisms, whereas this study explicitly identifies structural interdependence as the binding mechanism ensuring inter-role synergy. Prasetyo (2022) identified internal barriers (infrastructure, budget, human resources) and external barriers (permissive culture, low education, poverty) in Jepara, findings consistent with this study's identification of resource limitations and cultural resistance. However, while Prasetyo focused on barrier identification, this study advances beyond descriptive mapping by proposing theoretically grounded norm transformation strategies. Murtaglo and Hakim (2023) documented judicial resistance to dispensation approval in Madiun, aligning with this study's finding of the Religious Court's evolving role. Yet, this study demonstrates how judicial innovation (SIDIKA cognitive filter, stamped statements) can productively channel judicial authority within collaborative frameworks.

Internationally, the findings extend Ansell and Gash's (2008) collaborative governance model by demonstrating that effective institutional design in socioculturally rooted problems requires what we term "enforced collaborative architecture"—mandatory procedural linking mechanisms that structurally bind stakeholders beyond voluntary compliance. This concept enriches Emerson et al.'s (2012) integrative framework by specifying the institutional conditions under which collaborative governance transcends voluntary participation. The displacement-effect finding resonates with Scott and Thomas's (2017) observation that collaborative strategy selection responds to institutional incentive structures, and extends their analysis by documenting unintended behavioral displacement in sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, the distributed leadership pattern aligns with Morse's (2010) integrative leadership concept and Bryson et al.'s (2015) emphasis on designing cross-sector collaborations, yet this study provides empirical evidence for how distributed leadership operates through mandatory procedural mechanisms rather than merely through voluntary coordination (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016; Torfing et al., 2012).

The methodological difference between this study and previous research also warrants attention. While earlier studies predominantly employed single-variable analysis or focused on limited stakeholder perspectives, this research comprehensively tests all five Ansell and Gash (2008) variables within a single case, yielding 59 coded data points across four thematic categories. This holistic application provides a more integrated understanding of how starting conditions, facilitative leadership, institutional design, collaborative processes, and outcomes interact dynamically to produce both intended and unintended effects. The inclusion of six stakeholder categories with triangulated data sources further strengthens the analytical depth compared to prior studies that typically examined two or three actors (Purdy, 2012; Thomson & Perry, 2006).

The findings of this study advance the collaborative governance literature in three significant ways. First, the multi-layered verification mechanism in Bondowoso represents an institutional design innovation that transcends the voluntary compliance paradigm prevalent in existing collaborative governance implementations. Unlike the formal collaborations documented by Nasyaya (2023) in Ogan Komering Ulu and Erika et al. (2023) in Bojonegoro, which rely on stakeholder awareness of mutual dependence, Bondowoso's mechanism creates compulsory structural interdependence through procedural prerequisites that make collaboration a systemic requirement rather than a discretionary choice. This finding extends Ansell and Gash's (2008)

institutional design variable by demonstrating that effective institutional design in socioculturally rooted problems requires mandatory procedural linking mechanisms that structurally bind stakeholders, thereby operationalizing what we term “enforced collaborative architecture,” a concept not previously theorized in the collaborative governance literature.

Second, the study provides the first comprehensive empirical application of all five Ansell and Gash (2008) variables within a single case in the context of Indonesian child marriage prevention. The starting conditions analysis reveals that the 2020 dispensation spike created a crisis-driven urgency that overcame historical institutional fragmentation, aligning with Emerson et al.’s (2012) proposition that shared problem recognition catalyzes collaborative action. The facilitative leadership finding confirms the presence of distributed leadership patterns, in which the Regent’s office establishes the regulatory framework. At the same time, individual agencies exercise domain-specific leadership: the Social Affairs Agency in psychosocial assessment, the Health Agency in medical evaluation, and the Religious Court in judicial innovation. This distributed pattern enriches the understanding of facilitative leadership beyond the single leader model typically assumed in Ansell and Gash’s (2008) framework, resonating with Morse’s (2010) concept of integrative leadership in collaborative settings.

Third, and most critically, the displacement effect finding, where 62 percent of cases are ex-post facto, constitutes the study’s most significant theoretical contribution. This finding demonstrates that collaborative governance effectiveness in socioculturally rooted problems exhibits a paradoxical dynamic: increased procedural rigor in formal mechanisms simultaneously reduces formal case numbers while potentially driving behavior toward informal, harder-to-detect practices. This displacement effect confirms Wahyudi and Prastiwi’s (2022) identification of conservative religious episteme as a fundamental root cause. It extends their analysis by documenting how formal collaborative mechanisms interact with informal social institutions. The persistence of unregistered marriages despite the 87.6 percent formal reduction suggests that collaborative governance measured solely through formal indicators may overestimate actual behavioral transformation, a methodological caution not previously articulated in the collaborative governance literature applied to social norm contexts.

The stakeholder role analysis reveals a pattern consistent with Donahue and Zeckhauser’s (2011) four-dimensional collaboration framework. The differentiation of roles demonstrates collaboration for productivity, with each stakeholder contributing specialized competencies in the psychosocial, medical, judicial, religious normative, peer advocacy, and cultural mediation domains. The integration of confidential psychological assessment data with medical recommendations and judicial decision-making exemplifies information collaboration. The Religious Court’s transformation from a passive adjudicator to a procedural innovator, leveraging interdisciplinary endorsement, illustrates collaboration for legitimacy. However, the exclusion of three substantively contributing stakeholders (Ministry of Religious Affairs, Children’s Forum, community leaders) from the formal 2023 Cooperation Agreement reveals a formal operational fragmentation that threatens long-term sustainability, corroborating concerns raised by Emerson et al. (2012) about the essential role of inclusive participation for the durability of collaborative governance. Figure 2 synthesizes the theoretical model emerging from these findings.

Figure 2. Theoretical Model: Enforced Collaborative Architecture for Socioculturally Rooted Problems

STARTING CONDITIONS Crisis-driven urgency (1,077 cases) Prior institutional fragmentation	FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP Distributed leadership model Regent regulatory framework	INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN Multi-layered verification Compulsory interdependence
	↓	
FORMAL OUTCOMES 87.6% case reduction Enhanced institutional capacity	DISPLACEMENT EFFECT 62% ex-post facto cases Nikah sirri persistence (37%)	NORM TRANSFORMATION Victim testimony campaigns Religious authority legitimization

Solid borders indicate established mechanisms; dashed borders indicate displacement gaps requiring norm-transformation strategies.

The proposed norm transformation strategies operationalize the shared understanding element of Ansell and Gash’s (2008) collaborative process. These strategies address the critical gap

between institutional-level consensus (that child marriage must be prevented) and community-level norm persistence. The victim testimony strategy, grounded in the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1974), creates emotional Engagement and cognitive dissonance by confronting audiences with concrete local consequences, while religious authority legitimization, grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), leverages subjective norms through endorsement from trusted moral authorities. The integration of both strategies creates a persuasive synergy that serves as a mechanism for disseminating a shared understanding from the institutional to the community level. From a practical standpoint, these strategies directly contribute to SDG Target 5.3 (eliminate child marriage by 2030) and align with Indonesia's National Action Plan for Child Marriage Prevention (STRANAS PPA) by addressing root cause sociocultural determinants rather than symptoms.

However, this study acknowledges several limitations. The single case design, while enabling depth, limits external generalizability. The ex-post facto finding relies on self-reported data from dispensation applicants, which may underestimate the actual prevalence of prior unregistered marriages. The proposed strategies remain normative recommendations requiring empirical validation through intervention research. Future studies should employ comparative multi-site designs across regencies with varying collaborative governance models, longitudinal tracking of displacement effects, and experimental evaluation of norm transformation interventions.

This study makes three distinct contributions to the scholarly literature and policy practice. Theoretically, it introduces the concept of “enforced collaborative architecture” as an extension to the Ansell and Gash (2008) model, demonstrating that mandatory procedural linking mechanisms constitute a critical institutional design variable for addressing socioculturally rooted problems. This concept fills a gap in collaborative governance theory, which has predominantly assumed voluntary participation as the foundational premise (Emerson et al., 2012; Innes & Booher, 2018). The identification of the displacement effect, in which formal collaborative success coexists with informal practice persistence, provides a methodological caution for evaluating collaborative governance outcomes, suggesting that formal indicators alone may overestimate actual behavioral transformation in contexts with deeply embedded cultural norms (Vangen & Huxham, 2014; Agranoff, 2012).

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, the single-case design, while enabling analytical depth through 59 coded data points across four thematic categories, inherently limits external generalizability to other regencies with different sociocultural contexts, institutional configurations, and political dynamics. Second, the ex-post facto finding relies in part on self-reported data from dispensation applicants, which may underrepresent the actual prevalence of prior unregistered marriages due to social desirability bias. Third, the proposed norm transformation strategies remain normative recommendations that have not yet been empirically validated through intervention research. Fourth, the study period (November–December 2025) captures a snapshot of collaborative dynamics, whereas the evolution of inter-agency relationships and norm change processes may exhibit different patterns over longer timeframes (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Provan & Kenis, 2008).

The practical implications of these findings are threefold. For policymakers, the Bondowoso model provides a replicable framework for designing collaborative governance mechanisms that create structural interdependence rather than relying on voluntary compliance, which is particularly relevant for addressing other socioculturally rooted problems such as female genital mutilation, child labor, and school dropout (UNICEF, 2023; Parsitau & Murunga, 2023). For practitioners, the study highlights the necessity of integrating all substantively contributing stakeholders into formal cooperative agreements to prevent the formal-operational fragmentation identified in Bondowoso's exclusion of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Children's Forum, and community leaders. For academics, the displacement-effect finding opens a new research agenda on the unintended consequences of collaborative governance in norm-embedded social problems, challenging the assumption that institutional success automatically translates into behavioral change (Skelcher & Sullivan, 2008; Head & Alford, 2015).

Future research should pursue four directions to advance this line of inquiry. First, comparative multi-site studies across regencies with varying collaborative governance models (e.g., Bojonogoro's government-dominant model, Sumenep's stakeholder differentiation model, and Bondowoso's enforced architecture model) would enable cross-case pattern identification and theoretical refinement (Yin, 2018; George & Bennett, 2005). Second, longitudinal tracking of

displacement effects using mixed-methods designs combining administrative data with ethnographic observation would provide more robust evidence on the temporal dynamics of behavioral adaptation to institutional constraints (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gerring, 2007). Third, experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation of the proposed norm transformation interventions, victim testimony campaigns, and religious authority legitimation would test their causal efficacy in shifting community attitudes toward child marriage and unregistered marriages (Shadish et al., 2002). Fourth, the concept of enforced collaborative architecture should be tested in other policy domains involving deeply embedded cultural practices, such as female circumcision prevention, child labor elimination, and traditional justice systems, to assess its theoretical generalizability beyond the context of child marriage (Ostrom, 2010; Ansell & Torfing, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that collaborative governance in Bondowoso Regency has achieved significant quantitative success in reducing marriage dispensation requests through a multi-layered verification mechanism that creates compulsory structural interdependence among stakeholders. The five-stage verification innovation (digital filtering, mandatory psychological assessment, specialized medical examination, cognitive testing, and stamped commitment statement) represents an institutional design advancement that transforms collaboration from voluntary awareness to systematic binding. The 87.6 percent reduction from 1,077 cases (2020) to 133 cases (2025) confirms the effectiveness of enforced collaborative architecture in producing measurable outcomes. However, the critical finding that 62 percent of remaining cases are ex-post facto, with 37 percent involving prior unregistered marriages and 25 percent pre-marital pregnancy, reveals a displacement effect that constitutes this study's most significant contribution. Collaborative governance effectiveness in socioculturally rooted problems cannot be assessed solely through formal indicators; procedural rigor in formal mechanisms may paradoxically redirect behavior toward informal practices. This necessitates complementary norm transformation strategies: victim testimony-based campaigns that create emotional Engagement through localized evidence, and religious authority legitimation that leverages trusted moral endorsement to validate behavioral change. The theoretical implication extends the Ansell and Gash (2008) model by introducing the concept of enforced collaborative architecture (mandatory procedural linking mechanisms that structurally bind stakeholders beyond voluntary compliance) as a critical institutional design variable for addressing problems rooted in cultural norms. The practical implication is that policymakers should design collaborative governance frameworks that integrate both formal procedural mechanisms and sociocultural norm transformation interventions, ensuring that all substantive stakeholders are formally included in cooperative agreements. Future research should employ longitudinal, multi-site comparative designs to track displacement effects and evaluate the effectiveness of norm transformation interventions across diverse sociocultural contexts.

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