

## Women's Family Resilience after Contract Marriage in the Puncak Area

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### ABSTRACT:

The phenomenon of contract marriages between local women and foreign men in the *Puncak* area is a clear manifestation of power inequality, lack of legal protection, and the fragility of the social system, one consequence of which is the rise of fatherlessness. This study aims to analyze the practice of contract marriage in Tugu Utara Village and its impact on family resilience and the status of fatherless children in the context of cross-citizenship relationships that are not officially recorded. A qualitative approach with a case study method is used to capture the complexity of social dynamics, with data collection through in-depth interviews and literature study. Field findings show that this practice creates a fragile family resilience structure, characterized by delegative parenting, closed communication, and a lack of recovery mechanisms. Meanwhile, Foucault's power relations theory reveals that economic and symbolic domination by foreign men operates through social normalization and informal community control. Children from such relationships also face civil exclusion as they do not have a state-recognized legal status. This research confirms that the practice of contract marriage is a form of pseudo-marriage that results in social and administrative exclusion and reflects the failure of the state to protect its citizens. Therefore, it is necessary to take an intersectional approach in formulating family protection that includes legal, social, and gender aspects so that the practice can be stopped systemically and sustainably.

**Keywords:** contract marriage, family resilience, power relations, mixed marriages, fatherlessness, exploitation.

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### INTRODUCTION

Globalization has accelerated social transformation and opened various channels of mobility between countries, including tourism-based migration and personal relationships (Suhayati, 2023). In this global flow, patterns of cross-country social relations emerge that are not always accompanied by formal legality or compliance with national legal norms (Abdullah & Tridewiyanti, 2021). One product of this change is the practice of contract marriages or seasonal marriages between local women and foreign men without official registration in state institutions (Azhari et al., 2024).

In areas such as *Puncak* and Singkawang, this phenomenon developed not as a form of traditional love relationship but as a response to economic pressures and opportunities for interaction with foreigners on a seasonal basis (Yenny et al., 2020). In Tugu Utara Village, the practice of contract marriage mostly involves men from the Middle East who make long tourist visits and establish transactional relationships with local women in vulnerable socio-economic positions (Hidayat et al., 2019). Masropah et al. (2020) showed that the intensity of villa rentals

by foreigners encouraged the formation of informal social relations, including sexual relations and illegitimate marriages.

The patriarchal social conditions of society make it easier for women to be exploited through pseudo-relationships framed religiously or culturally but essentially based on economic transactions (Maripah, 2016). Lubis et al. (2021) emphasize that women in contract marriage relationships are often victims of stigma, violence, and structural impoverishment after the relationship ends. Children from these relationships also live without a clear legal status, which impacts their access to basic services such as education and health (Wahab et al., 2018).

Lesmana (2011) showed that local and international media shape public perceptions of the *Puncak* area as a permissive zone for free relations between foreigners and local women. This reinforces unequal power relations because the community begins to view this practice as normal and not requiring intervention. On the other hand, the state is not firmly present in providing legal and social protection to the children and women involved (Aji, 2022).

Melanie Griffiths' (2021) research on mixed immigration status families in the UK shows that citizen women are often victims of a legal system prioritizing immigration control over family protection. She highlights how citizenship does not automatically protect but instead becomes a tool of exclusion in migration policy. This situation parallels Indonesian women in contract marriage relationships, who lack legal protection despite being under their own country's jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, Hailong (2022) states that the protection of children from marriages of different nationalities heavily depends on formal legal recognition of the parents' relationship. However, in unrecorded contract marriages, children have no legal basis to claim or defend their citizenship. Katili (2013) reinforces this by asserting that before the 2006 Citizenship Law, children from mixed marriages automatically followed the father's citizenship, causing many to lose their legal identity when the father left the family.

Puspita and Meidina (2021) note that without a marriage agreement and legal registration, relationships between foreigners and Indonesian women become civilly unprotected, especially regarding inheritance rights, child guardianship, and property distribution. Their study emphasizes the importance of legal arrangements as the foundation for family protection, which is entirely absent in contract marriage practices. IOM's (2014) report on tourist marriages in Yemen also shows that similar practices are not unique to Indonesia but a global phenomenon where local women are exploited by the tourism system, power relations, and state protection absence.

However, most of these studies still focus on formal legal aspects, child psychology, or partial cultural analysis without positioning this phenomenon as a structural failure of the state to guarantee the civil rights of its citizens as a whole. Here lies the real research gap: no study examines the structural vulnerability of families resulting from contract marriages, especially regarding fatherlessness in Indonesia's post-2006 legal and social landscape, particularly in areas with high practice intensity such as Tugu Utara Village.

This research does not aim to examine family resilience normatively as many previous studies have done. Resilience, according to Walsh (2021), requires internal family cohesion, open communication, and an adaptive social support system. This research aims to fill the literature gap on how Indonesia's social and legal structures fail to establish protection systems for women and children from contract marriage. It focuses on unraveling the social, legal, and administrative dimensions of vulnerability faced by families without legal status and offers a critical framework for understanding systemic exploitation wrapped in the guise of personal relationships.

This research aims to analyze the practice of contract marriage in *North Tugu* Village and its impact on family resilience and the status of children without a father in cross-citizenship relationships that are not officially recorded. Its specific objectives are to examine the social and legal structures contributing to the vulnerability of women and children, explore the dynamics of family resilience, and uncover systemic failures perpetuating exploitation. The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the structural vulnerabilities faced by families in contract marriage, contributing to the literature on family resilience and power relations. Additionally, the results can assist policymakers and stakeholders in formulating an intersectional approach to family protection that includes legal, social, and gender aspects. This research is also expected to encourage systemic interventions addressing exploitation's root causes and provide sustainable solutions for affected women and children.

### RESEARCH METHODS

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This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method to explain in depth the social dynamics of contract marriage and its impact on family resilience. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researchers to explore the meaning and understand the social construction formed through interactions among actors in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2021). It was particularly relevant for describing complex social phenomena that were not formally recorded in state administration systems.

The main data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentary studies of scientific papers, journals, institutional reports, and official documents discussing contract marriage, family resilience, and tourism-based migration. Interviews were conducted purposively with three informants: one RT head familiar with the local social environment, one local resident knowledgeable about the practice patterns and networks involved, and one employee working with foreigners at a restaurant in the *Puncak* area. The researchers recognized their position as outsiders, which required building trust sensitively, especially since contract marriage is often considered shameful or disguised using religious or economic justifications (Griffiths, 2021). This challenge in gaining informant openness demanded an empathic, non-judgmental approach in line with qualitative research ethics (Moleong, 2021).

Informants were selected using purposive sampling to capture individuals with direct experience or contextual knowledge of the phenomenon (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for informants to express their perceptions and experiences in depth. This method was effective for exploring sensitive issues, such as transactional relationships and family resilience dynamics (Moleong, 2021). Pseudonyms were used to protect informants' confidentiality. Additionally, observations were conducted over several days to study the behavior of children living in fatherless conditions, their interactions with peers, and relationships with primary caregivers such as mothers, grandparents, or extended family members.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), including data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Coding was done thematically to identify patterns, hidden meanings, and connections to the theoretical framework, especially family resilience theory. Data validity and reliability were ensured by triangulating sources (among

informants) and methods (interviews, observations, document studies), as well as upholding ethical principles including informed consent, anonymity, and neutrality during interviews (Yin, 2021).

Methodological limitations in previous studies that relied solely on legal or statistical approaches (Katili, 2013; Sari, 2024) highlight this study's contribution through its in-depth case study approach. This method provides a holistic understanding of the emotional and relational dimensions of contract marriage practices, their impact on family structure and resilience, and their relevance to women's protection within family sociology.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Description of Research Respondents**

This research involved three resource persons who came from among local residents in the Tugu Utara Village area and its surroundings, Cisarua District, Bogor Regency. The three informants were purposively selected by considering their contextual knowledge of the social dynamics in their respective neighborhoods, especially related to interactions between foreign nationals and local women. The interviews were conducted in-depth with a semi-structured approach so that the interviewees could convey their experiences freely without pressure. The following is a description of each interviewee based on observations and interview transcripts:

Interviewee 1, CM, is a local resident who has lived in the area for a long time and demonstrated general knowledge of the socio-economic conditions and mobility of foreigners in his area. In the interview, this informant said that the local community generally lives in a stable economic condition, although the COVID-19 pandemic has put pressure on livelihoods. He also noted that there is a fairly harmonious interaction between local residents and foreigners, although he realizes that not all parties respond positively to these relationships. This interviewee's attitude tends to be normative and cautious in answering questions that concern the realm of personal relationships.

Interviewee 2, U, is also a native who lives in the vicinity of the tourism site and expressed his views in a neutral tone. He highlighted that economic access in the area is quite good thanks to the presence of jobs and the tourism sector. Regarding social interactions, this interviewee did not mention any significant problems and stated that the community tends to be less concerned about the relationship between foreigners and locals. However, the information provided was general and did not go into depth about the dynamics of personal relationships.

Interviewee 3, G, was the only informant who gave an explicit explanation of the phenomenon of relations between local women and foreigners. She claimed to have interacted directly with women who were allegedly involved in contract marriages and described how these relationships often ended without clarity on legal status. This informant also observed that some women continued in similar professions after separating from their partners, with children from these relationships being cared for by third parties. The information from this informant shows a more concrete and in-depth understanding of the informal relationship practices that occur covertly in her neighborhood.

**Research Results**

To understand the social dynamics and structure of relations in the practice of contract marriages that occur in certain areas, this analysis uses theoretical approaches from two main perspectives, namely Family Resilience according to Walsh and Power Relations based on Michel Foucault's thinking. These two theories were chosen to examine the internal dimensions of the family and the power dynamics hidden in the social interactions between local women and foreign nationals. The analysis was conducted by grouping the interview quotes into main theoretical themes, to see how values, roles, and inequality are interpreted and carried out in the practice of these relationships.

**Table 1. Theoretical Analysis: Family Resilience (Walsh)**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Excerpt</b>	<b>Qualitative Interpretation</b>
<b>Family Resilience (Walsh)</b>	<b>Parenting Patterns</b>	G, U	<p><i>AB: "The child was left with a friend."</i></p> <p><i>U: "They tend not to react in a meaningful way."</i></p>	Children from relationships are abandoned and not cared for by their parents but are left in foster care. According to Walsh, family resilience includes stable and structured parenting. Lack of parental involvement and social reactions indicate weak internal and external support systems. The child only survives physically, not in an emotionally and socially supportive environment.
	<b>Family Communication</b>	CM, G	<p><i>CM: "Some of these relationships are known to the family and some are not."</i></p> <p><i>AB: "I know about it because I have interacted with female contract marriage offenders..."</i></p>	Closed communication in families hinders the post-crisis adaptation and recovery process. Walsh emphasizes the importance of open communication to create shared meaning. If the family is in the dark, then emotional and social support is not present. This creates isolation in women and decreases the overall resilience of the family.
	<b>Social Support</b>	G, CM	<p><i>G: "But the Arab foreigner is still funding the child and the woman is still in this profession."</i></p> <p><i>CM: "The community looks favorably on relationships between foreigners and locals."</i></p>	External financial assistance without emotional engagement is not enough to create resilience. Walsh emphasizes the importance of reflective rather than passive social support. When society is merely an observer or even permissively supportive without structural protection, families lose their social safety net. This pseudo-support actually strengthens the existence of

Theory	Keywords	Source	Excerpt	Qualitative Interpretation
				exploitative relationship structures.
	<b>Flexible Family Structure</b>	G, CM	G: "A woman has a child with a foreigner, and she was abandoned by the child's father." CM: "Some of these relationships are known to the family and some are not."	The family structure changes abruptly to a single family with no companion or substitute roles. In Walsh's theory, flexibility is important, but it must still include clear and mutually supportive roles. If the mother is not fully functional and the father is absent, then this change becomes dysfunctional. There is no significant role adjustment in the family, indicating low structural flexibility.
	<b>Recovery Mechanism</b>	G	G: "I know this because I have interacted with perpetrators of female contract marriage..."	There is no sign of value recovery or post-crisis behavior change. Women continued old relationship patterns, and families were not involved in the recovery process. Walsh mentions that recovery should include emotional, spiritual and value aspects. Without any reflection or repositioning of roles, the family condition only stagnates or even decreases in its social function.

Source: Interview Results (2025)

Based on the Family Resilience analysis table above, it appears that the family system in the context of contract marriage relationships does not have an intact structure and function. Parenting patterns are delegative, family communication is closed, and there is no mechanism for restoring values or roles. In addition, the social support that is present is permissive and uncritical, and the family structure tends to be rigid in dealing with changes in roles due to relationships with foreigners. All of this suggests that resilience is more survival than functional resilience, which in turn reveals systemic vulnerabilities in the social and emotional structure of the family.

**Table 2. Theoretical Analysis: Power Relations (Foucault)**

Theory	Keywords	Sources	Quotes	Qualitative Interpretation
<b>Power Relations (Foucault)</b>	Economic Inequality	CM & G	CM: "The people here are economically well-off, but during Covid-19 conditions began to falter..."	Power inequality in the practice of contract marriage is clearly reflected through economic domination. Local women are in an economically vulnerable position post-pandemic, which makes them more likely to accept structurally unequal

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Theory	Keywords	Sources	Quotes	Qualitative Interpretation
Subordinate Position		U & G	<p><i>AB: "This woman is still in that profession..."</i></p> <p><i>U: "His relationship is unknown to his family."</i></p> <p><i>G: "The child was left with a friend."</i></p>	<p>relationships. According to Foucault, power is not only present legally but flows in everyday relations - including in sexual and economic practices. In this case, foreign men have power because they bring economic resources, while local women adjust to survive. Although there is no explicit coercion, social and economic structures pressure women to remain in subordinate positions. Power here is relational and hidden, yet highly effective in directing women's behavior and choices.</p>
Non-Formal Social Control		CM & G	<p><i>CM: "Some relationships are known to the family, some are not."</i></p> <p><i>G: "This woman is still in that profession..."</i></p>	<p>Social control in this practice does not exist institutionally but is exercised through cultural norms and informal networks. Foucault highlights that modern power no longer needs laws or police to operate, as social norms are sufficient to control behavior. In this context, community leaders, neighbors, and local networks become part of the power structure that reproduces an unequal system. When there is no</p>

Theory	Keywords	Sources	Quotes	Qualitative Interpretation
				intervention or criticism of women who continue to engage in the practice of contract marriage, it shows that social control allows the dominant power to continue to work subtly but effectively.
Normalization of Exploitation		CM & U	<p>CM: <i>“The community views the relationship favorably...”</i></p> <p>U: <i>“They tend not to react significantly.”</i></p>	When this kind of relationship is taken for granted, or not given a critical response by the environment, then power becomes normalized. Foucault calls this “normalization”, when something deviant (exploitation, inequality) is considered normal. Thus, power does not need to show its repressive face because society itself already functions as a controller. In this context, covert exploitation is legitimized by the silence of the community, and unequal relations continue without social correction.

Source: Interview Results (2025)

The results of the analysis based on Power Relations theory show that the relationship between local women and foreigners in the practice of contract marriage does not only occur due to individual choice but is the result of a system of power that flows through economic structures, social norms, and information inequality. Economic inequality, women's subordinate position, weak formal social control, and exploitative normalization processes are the dominant elements in this practice. Power is not present repressively, but through subtle mechanisms that make women accept their vulnerable position as something natural and non-negotiable.

### Structural Fragility in Post-Contract Marriage Family Resilience

The field findings show that the practice of contract marriage, especially in the context of fatherlessness, does not form a resilient family system, but rather creates a fragile and dysfunctional relationship configuration. Based on Walsh's (2021) framework, family resilience should be supported by a shared belief system, flexible organizational patterns, and open communication. However, in interviews with interviewees, these three elements were systematically absent. For example, delegative parenting patterns can be seen when children from contract marriages are not cared for by their own mothers but are entrusted to other people. This not only indicates the absence of emotional attachment, but also the lack of an ideal family organizational structure (Walsh, 2003).

In addition, closed communication between women in contract marriages and their families - where many relationships are unknown to the family - inhibits the development of internal social support that is a prerequisite for family resilience (Walsh, 2016). This kind of communication

suggests shame, stigma, or avoidance of prevailing social norms, so that the crisis experienced is never openly discussed, let alone addressed.

Even more concerning is the lack of critical social support from the surrounding community. The community tends to view the relationship between local women and foreign nationals as something normal or even profitable. This phenomenon shows that what happens is not supportive social capital as envisioned by Walsh, but rather collective permissiveness that legitimizes exploitative relational practices. When the community fails to carry out the function of control and protection, the families involved in this practice lose a layer of external support that is very important for post-crisis recovery (Walsh, 2021).

### **Hidden Power and Subordination of Women in Asymmetrical Relationships**

Analysis based on Foucault's power relations theory reveals that the practice of contract marriage is a form of social domination that is not visibly repressive but works through the internalization of norms and structures of inequality that are allowed to continue. In the interview, one of the interviewees explained that even though the relationship has ended, women continue to work in similar relationships, even without the presence of a man who is responsible for the children born. This is a form of dispossession of agency - where women not only lose control over their bodies and futures but are also trapped in a system of relations that has been normalized by the community.

Foucault (in Aji, 2022) explains that modern power works through hidden social surveillance—where society is part of a mechanism of control, not liberation. When the public does not react to the practice, or even symbolically support it, then power no longer needs to be shown through regulations or state apparatus. It works through silence, indifference, and the repetition of uncriticized practices.

Women involved in these contract marriage relationships do not have a bargaining position. They are not only economically subordinated, but also socially and symbolically subordinated, as the relationship is never formally recognized by the legal system or by traditional social structures such as the family. In fact, in some cases, children from these relationships do not have a clear citizenship status, as discussed in Katili (2013) and Jiang (2022) on the status of children from mixed marriages that are not officially registered. This indicates that the inequality experienced not only affects women, but also the next generation.

### **Contract Marriage as the Hidden Face of the Unrecognized Practice of Intermarriage**

The results of this study also show that the practice of contract marriage has a strong intersection with the phenomenon of mixed marriages that are not legally protected. In many cases, foreign men who become temporary partners come from Middle Eastern countries, while local women come from lower economic classes who do not have access to education and understanding of marriage laws. In the IOM (2014) and Sari (2024) studies, it is mentioned that similar practices occur in relationships between foreign refugees or tourists and local women in the Southeast Asian region, where there is no official registration and no state recognition of the relationship.

This causes the children of these pseudo-relationships to experience difficulties in citizenship recognition, birth registration, and access to basic services such as school and health.

Without legal protection, women and children are in a situation without guarantees - both from the state and the community. This reinforces Griffiths' (2021) findings that families with mixed immigration status are often in a liminal space that is vulnerable to civil and administrative exclusion.

### **Research Gaps and the Need for Structural Social Interventions**

Previous studies have tended to look only at the legal and moral aspects of the practice of contract marriage or intermarriage, without touching deeply on the psychosocial and relational dimensions at the family level (Puspita & Meidina, 2021; Sari, 2024). This study fills this gap by showing how family resilience becomes an illusion when it is not supported by responsive social and legal structures. The resilience found in the field is not a form of healthy or productive adaptation, but a form of survival in limitations legitimized by social normalization.

Thus, the practice of contract marriage is not merely a moral issue but reflects the failure of social and legal protection systems to reach vulnerable groups. Women - and ultimately the children born from this practice - are not able to make free choices. They are victims of power structures and economic conditions that do not provide alternatives, so they cannot be positioned as parties who voluntarily “choose”, but rather as individuals driven by structural coercion.

### **Research Implications**

Field findings from informants show that the practice of contract marriage places local women in an unequal relational position, both economically and socially. One interviewee (G) mentioned that children from contract marriages were entrusted to other people, and the woman concerned continued to work in a similar relationship. This fact indicates the failure of the family system to provide functional care and protection structures. When care is delegative and there is no recovery mechanism, the concept of family resilience (Walsh, 2003; 2021) does not work as it should.

An important implication of this is that family protection policies cannot focus solely on formal legal aspects, as pseudo-practices such as contract marriages exist in a social and administrative gray area. As mentioned by Griffiths (2021), families in mixed or unrecognized status tend to live in vulnerable situations due to the absence of access to civil rights and adequate legal protection. This is evident in the field, where many women and children do not have legal certainty or access to basic services.

The accounts of other informants (CM and U) show that the community does not react critically to these relationships. In some cases, relationships with foreigners are seen as “good” or “not a problem”. This shows the normalization of exploitation and weak social control, as also found in IOM's (2014) study in Yemen and Sari's (2024) study on Rohingya in Indonesia. This pseudo-social support becomes a subtle power mechanism (Foucault, in Aji, 2022) that silences criticism and strengthens exploitative structures.

The practical implication is that the state and the community must see that family resilience cannot be built on the foundation of unequal relationships and without legal registration. If the

state is ignorant, then local communities are also likely to consider these relationships as personal, not social, matters. Thus, this study shows that the concept of family protection in the context of migration and transnational relations needs to be expanded to intersectional protection, which includes aspects of gender, citizenship status, and symbolic power.

## CONCLUSION

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This research revealed that contract marriage in the *Puncak* area, particularly North Tugu Village, is a form of structural exploitation driven by economic inequality, weak legal oversight, and permissive social norms. Family resilience in this context is fragile, marked by delegative parenting, limited communication, and a lack of recovery mechanisms after relationships end. Using Foucault's theory of power relations, the study showed that societal normalization of exploitation and state absence perpetuate these inequalities, severely impacting children who lose civil rights due to ambiguous legal status. The findings highlight the urgent need for an intersectional approach to family protection policies that combine legal reforms with economic empowerment for women and revitalized local social control. The government should enforce stricter surveillance and sanctions, provide legal aid and skills training for victims, while communities and educational institutions must support counseling, economic programs, and rights-based education. Future research should investigate the international networks behind these marriages and develop evidence-based intervention models to effectively combat this exploitation.

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