



When Clerical Errors Become Court Cases: Administrative Justice and the Judicialization of Marriage Registration in Indonesia

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Abstract: This article analyzes the juridical and socio-legal implications of the judicialization of marriage biodata correction under the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs (PMA) Number 30 of 2024 in Indonesia. The regulation requires that all amendments to marital biodata be resolved through judicial determination, shifting corrective authority from the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) to the Religious Courts. This policy change raises concerns regarding administrative justice, public service efficiency, and access to justice in family law administration. Using a combined normative juridical and socio-legal approach, the study examines the evolution of marriage registration regulations from PMA No. 11 of 2007 to PMA No. 30 of 2024. It analyzes empirical data from biodata amendment cases adjudicated by the Religious Court of Suwawa between January and October 2025. The findings reveal a non-linear regulatory trajectory marked by alternating phases of administrative flexibility and judicial centralization, as well as persistent ambiguity in distinguishing clerical corrections from substantive amendments. Empirically, most court applications involve minor typographical errors previously resolvable administratively. The article argues that this condition reflects over-judicialization of administrative corrections. It concludes that technically non-substantive biodata corrections should be reintegrated into the administrative authority of the KUA through a structured and accountable administrative self-correction mechanism to promote proportionality, efficiency, and public service justice.

Keywords: Marriage Registration; Administrative; Judicialization; Religious Court.

Introduction

The regulation governing personal biodata amendments in marriage registration in Indonesia has undergone significant transformation following the enactment of the Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) No. 30 of 2024 on Marriage Registration. This regulation transfers the authority to correct marital biodata from the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama, KUA) to the Religious Courts through a judicial determination mechanism. While procedurally framed as a legal safeguard, this shift raises critical juridical, administrative, and social concerns, particularly for citizens who previously relied on accessible, low-cost administrative corrections at the KUA level. To date, scholarly discussion has not adequately addressed the cumulative consequences of this authority transfer, particularly with respect to increased administrative burdens, litigation costs, procedural delays, and access to justice. This gap is particularly salient given that many biodata inaccuracies stem from clerical or technical errors by registration officials rather than from applicants themselves. The absence of an integrated analysis of these impacts constitutes the central problem addressed by this study.

Historically, Indonesia's marriage law system evolved from a fragmented colonial framework that differentiated legal regimes by population group, including Christian Indonesians under the Huwelijks

Ordonnantie Christen Indonesië (Staatsblad 1933 No. 74), indigenous communities under customary law, Muslims under Islamic law, and Europeans and Chinese descendants under the Burgerlijk Wetboek. This pluralistic arrangement reflected the absence of a unified national marriage law (Barkah et al., 2025; Sriono, 2023). Legal unification was achieved through Law Number 1 of 1974, which established that marital validity is determined by religious law while state registration serves to ensure legal certainty and protection (Syahrani, 2006). Since then, marriage registration has functioned as a core instrument of family law governance rather than a mere administrative formality.

Existing studies emphasize that marriage registration is essential not only for administrative order but also for protecting individual rights and preventing the persistence of unregistered marriages. Excessive formalism, however, often produces regulatory outcomes that fail to accommodate social realities, particularly at the intersection of religious authority and state law (Grijns & Horii, 2018). From an Islamic legal perspective, unregistered marriages (*nikah siri*) are widely regarded as inconsistent with the objectives of the law due to their lack of enforceable legal standing (Hanapi & Yuhermansyah, 2020). Empirical research further demonstrates the enduring role of religious intermediaries in sustaining non-registered marital practices, underscoring the importance of effective institutional governance in marriage registration (Islamiyah, 2024).

Normatively, marriage registration is also supported in Islamic jurisprudence by the principle of *tawtsiq al-'aqd*, which emphasizes contractual documentation as a means of safeguarding rights and derives legitimacy from Qur'anic injunctions on record-keeping (Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:282) (Sehabudin, 2014). Accordingly, registration serves both legal and social protective functions within family law. Against this backdrop, PMA Number 30 of 2024 introduces a substantial procedural shift. Article 46 paragraphs (1)–(2) mandate that any correction to spousal or parental biodata must be pursued through the Religious Courts. This contrasts with PMA Number 20 of 2019, which permitted administrative corrections at the KUA upon submission of valid civil documentation (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). As a result, individuals affected by administrative errors must now engage in judicial proceedings, incur litigation costs, and endure prolonged resolution processes, raising concerns about the proportionality and fairness of these measures.

From a public administration perspective, public policy should enhance service efficiency and accessibility (Iriawan et al., 2024), reflecting the state's responsibility within a welfare-state framework (Hardiyansyah, 2018). The implementation of PMA Number 30 of 2024, however, potentially conflicts with the principles of accessibility, equity, and transparency mandated by Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services, thereby raising questions about its alignment with good governance standards. Previous studies have addressed administrative deficiencies in marriage registration, overlapping institutional authority, and governance quality in religious services (Adena, 2022; Baihaqi & Alfedo, 2024; Firdaus, 2023; Sangidun & Nikmah, 2022). Nevertheless, no study has comprehensively examined the combined juridical implications and socio-administrative burdens arising specifically from the transfer of the authority to correct biodata under PMA Number 30 of 2024. This study fills that gap by employing a socio-legal approach that integrates normative legal analysis with empirical realities, enabling an assessment of both regulatory coherence and its tangible effects on litigation costs, procedural complexity, and access to justice.

Method

This study employs a combined normative juridical and socio-legal approach to examine the regulatory shift in authority over marriage biodata amendments and its practical implications. The normative juridical analysis is conducted through a doctrinal and comparative review of key legal instruments, including Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs (PMA) Number 30 of 2024, PMA Number 20 of 2019, Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), and Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services. This analysis focuses on normative coherence, institutional realignment of authority, and consistency with principles of public service governance, particularly accessibility, proportionality, and legal certainty (Hardiyansyah, 2018; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019, 2024).

To complement the doctrinal analysis, a socio-legal approach is applied to assess how the regulatory change operates in administrative practice and affects citizens. Socio-legal research is particularly relevant for capturing the interaction between formal legal norms and social realities, mainly where legal compliance generates unintended administrative or economic burdens (Cotterrell, 2018). Empirical data were collected from the Religious Court of Suwawa, under the jurisdiction of the Gorontalo Religious High Court, covering all marriage biodata amendment applications registered between January and October 2025. The Religious Court of Suwawa was selected as a representative peripheral jurisdiction with limited access and administrative capacity.

A total of twelve cases were examined, selected based on three criteria: classification as biodata amendment applications, completeness of procedural documentation, and inclusion within the defined observation period. Data collection involved a systematic examination of case files, judicial determinations, and court fee records to identify patterns in evidentiary requirements, processing times, and administrative costs. All data were anonymized and obtained through the official case management system of the Religious Court of Suwawa, supplemented by the Supreme Court's public decision directory, which provides access to judicial decisions at the first instance and cassation levels.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive framework, employing three complementary techniques. First, legal norm interpretation and comparison were used to map shifts in authority and regulatory intent. Second, thematic coding was applied to the empirical data to identify recurring issues concerning procedural burden and access to justice. Third, a temporal pre–post regulatory analysis was undertaken to trace causal linkages between the enactment of PMA Number 30 of 2024 and observable increases in administrative and financial burdens borne by applicants. Source triangulation was applied throughout the analysis to strengthen the credibility and internal validity of the findings (Afandi, 2022; Iriawan et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

Normative Shifts in Marriage Registration and the Logic of Authority Reallocation

The longitudinal analysis of ministerial regulations on marriage registration from PMA Number 11 of 2007 to PMA Number 30 of 2024 reveals a nonlinear, fluctuating pattern of normative evolution, reflecting persistent tension between administrative flexibility and the state's demand for legal certainty in civil-identity governance. This dynamic must be understood within the framework of Articles 5 and 6 of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), which establish administrative order as a prerequisite for state recognition of marriage, thereby positioning biodata accuracy not merely as a technical matter but as a component of marital legal legitimacy and population data integrity (Instruction of the President of the Republic of Indonesia No. 1 of 1991).

PMA Number 11 of 2007 was enacted in a predominantly manual administrative context and embodied a policy orientation toward administrative simplification. It allowed clerical errors to be corrected directly by the Head of the KUA without judicial intervention, provided that valid supporting documents were available (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2007). This approach granted frontline officials discretionary authority to resolve technical issues efficiently, aligning with public administration principles that emphasize procedural economy and service responsiveness (OECD, 2025). However, the regulation did not clearly distinguish between “administrative correction” and “substantive change,” resulting in interpretive variation across KUA offices and uneven implementation practices.

A decisive normative shift occurred with the enactment of PMA Number 19 of 2018, which removed administrative correction mechanisms and centralized authority for biodata changes within the judiciary, specifically the general courts (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018). This centralization can be interpreted as a policy response to growing concerns about data integrity amid national efforts to integrate digital identities. However, from a regulatory impact perspective, this shift produced an apparent causal effect: by eliminating administrative discretion at the KUA level, even minor clerical errors were reclassified as matters requiring litigation. Consequently, administrative issues were transformed into judicial cases, increasing court caseloads and imposing additional time and financial burdens on citizens, a condition that runs counter to the accessibility and efficiency principles mandated by Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services.

The subsequent issuance of PMA Number 20 of 2019 marked a partial corrective response to the rigidity introduced in 2018. This regulation reinstated limited administrative authority for the KUA to correct simple typographical errors based on official civil registry documents, such as birth certificates or population data statements (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). The reintroduction of administrative discretion demonstrates a discernible cause-and-effect relationship: excessive judicialization generated disproportionate administrative burdens, prompting policymakers to recalibrate toward a more flexible service model. This regulatory adjustment is consistent with socio-legal perspectives that view legal development as responsive to the social consequences of prior regulatory choices (Vivian, 2021). As Banakar consistently argues, law is not a linear or internally coherent system but a socially constructed and often contradictory phenomenon shaped by ongoing institutional and social interactions.

However, this renewed emphasis on administrative ease was again constrained with the introduction of PMA Number 22 of 2024, which explicitly aligned marriage registration with digital integration through the SIMKAH system connected to the national population database. In this context, stricter controls over biodata amendments function as safeguards for data accuracy within an integrated digital environment. PMA Number 22 of 2024 introduced a categorical distinction whereby “corrections” could be implemented only by replacing marriage books, whereas “changes” required judicial determination by the Religious Courts (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). Notably, the regulation failed to provide an operational definition that distinguished “correction” from “change,” thereby reproducing a core ambiguity previously observed under PMA Number 11 of 2007, albeit within a more technologically complex administrative setting.

This definitional ambiguity carries significant structural implications. In the absence of clear operational criteria, KUA officials tend to adopt risk-averse administrative behavior, directing applicants toward judicial mechanisms to avoid procedural error. Such practices contribute to the overjudicialization of administrative matters, whereby technically non-substantive issues are unnecessarily brought before the courts. Rather than simplifying service delivery, digitalization, lacking normative clarity, paradoxically expands litigation pathways and administrative burdens.

PMA Number 30 of 2024 does not substantively depart from the framework established in PMA Number 22 of 2024. Articles 45 and 46 reiterate the exact bifurcated mechanism—administrative correction through book replacement and substantive change through judicial determination—without further conceptual refinement (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). This regulatory repetition signals continued reliance on a data-protection paradigm centered on digital accuracy, while neglecting the need for proportional differentiation between clerical errors and substantive identity changes. When assessed against public service principles, particularly efficiency and ease of access, the absence of normative innovation suggests an unresolved imbalance between legal certainty and service accessibility.

Viewed longitudinally, three overarching patterns emerge. First, regulatory direction has oscillated between administrative flexibility (PMA 11/2007), judicial centralization (PMA 19/2018), partial relaxation (PMA 20/2019), and renewed restriction in the context of digital integration (PMA 22/2024 and PMA 30/2024). This fluctuation indicates regulatory instability rather than a coherent, sustainable reform trajectory. Second, a consistent causal relationship is evident: increased digital integration correlates with stricter manual correction mechanisms and heightened reliance on judicial processes. Third, a persistent regulatory gap persists in the absence of clear operational definitions that distinguish technical corrections from substantive biodata changes, allowing discretionary divergence across implementing institutions.

Table 1. Regulatory Changes in Marriage Registration and Biodata Amendment Mechanisms

No.	Regulation	Relevant Articles	Mechanism for Biodata Correction and Amendment
1	PMA No. 11 of 2007	Art. 34(1)–(2)	Administrative correction by KUA; biodata changes require a court decision
2	PMA No. 19 of 2018	Art. 34(1)–(2)	No administrative correction mechanism; all biodata changes must be processed through the General Court

3	PMA No. 20	Arts. 37–38 of 2019	Simple administrative corrections by KUA based on official civil registry documents; biodata changes may also be handled administratively
4	PMA No. 22	Arts. 45–46 of 2024	Corrections through replacement of the marriage book; biodata changes require a Religious Court decision
5	PMA No. 30	Arts. 45–46 of 2024	Reiteration of PMA No. 22 of 2024 without substantive regulatory refinement

Source: Processed from the Indonesian Legal Documentation and Information Network (JDIH BPK, 2024).

As shown in Table 1, the regulation of marriage biodata amendments in Indonesia has followed a non-linear trajectory. Administrative flexibility at the KUA level under PMA Number 11 of 2007 was replaced by complete judicial centralization under PMA Number 19 of 2018. It was partially relaxed under PMA Number 20 of 2019 (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2007, 2018, 2019). This corrective trend was subsequently reversed through PMA Numbers 22 and 30 of 2024, which reassert restrictive, court-based mechanisms in the context of digital integration without introducing more apparent operational distinctions, thereby perpetuating administrative burden and access-to-justice concerns (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024).

These findings demonstrate that regulatory change in marriage registration is not merely a matter of formal legal adjustment but also reflects broader state strategies aimed at balancing legal certainty, digital transformation, and administrative efficiency. Empirically, however, this balance has not been fully achieved. Ambiguity in regulatory design and the continued tendency toward judicialization remain central issues, directly affecting citizens through increased costs, extended processing times, and heightened procedural complexity.

Administrative Error, Public Burden, and the Legal Boundary between Correction and Amendment

Empirical evidence and comparative scholarship indicate that disputes concerning biodata correction and amendment in marriage registration are not merely technical but are closely linked to public awareness of the legal consequences of administrative accuracy. A growing body of literature confirms that marriage registration functions as a fundamental legal instrument for safeguarding rights, preventing social harm, and maintaining administrative order within both state and religious legal systems (Fitra et al., 2025). A comparative analysis of Indonesia and Malaysia further illustrates that administrative effectiveness is contingent on institutional clarity and service readiness. Malaysia's centralized authority model, supported by an integrated digital system that allows administrative corrections to be handled directly by the registering body, has significantly reduced procedural complexity and increased compliance rates (Fitra et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Islamic legal theory, marriage registration has reached the level of *darūriyyah* (necessity), as the absence of proper documentation exposes spouses and children to tangible legal, social, and psychological risks (Sulfian, 2023). At the same time, socio-legal studies caution that excessive bureaucratization may place citizens in structurally vulnerable positions by intensifying friction between state administrative objectives and diverse socio-religious practices (Nisa, 2018). This tension reinforces the normative argument that administrative errors in marriage registration should not be imposed on citizens through mandatory judicial proceedings. However, it should instead be resolved institutionally by the registering authority (KUA) through mechanisms of administrative self-correction that are consistent with principles of fairness, accessibility, and the protection of rights.

The distinction between correction (*perbaikan*) and amendment (*perubahan*) in marriage registration cannot be adequately addressed through semantic interpretation alone. Instead, it must be situated within the framework of administrative law, which distinguishes between corrective administrative actions and substantive legal acts based on their legal consequences. Linguistically, *perbaikan* denotes the rectification of technical or clerical inaccuracies without altering the substance of recorded information. In contrast, *perubahan* implies a modification that affects the content or meaning

of the data itself (KBBI, n.d.). While these definitions provide an initial reference point, they are insufficient for resolving regulatory ambiguity absent doctrinal grounding.

In administrative law, corrective action constitutes a factual administrative measure intended to restore a document to its original factual accuracy and does not generate new legal effects. By contrast, amendments involving identity or substantive data constitute administrative legal acts (*rechtshandelingen*) that alter an individual's legal status or position and therefore require formalized procedures and heightened legal safeguards. Treating these two categories as interchangeable undermines the principle of legality and distorts procedural proportionality within public administration.

Indonesia's normative framework reflects this doctrinal distinction most clearly in the Population Administration Law (UU Adminduk). Article 71 regulates correction (*pembetulan*) as the rectification of clerical or typographical errors that do not modify substantive population data and may be carried out administratively by civil registration officials. Conversely, Article 52 governs substantive amendments to population data—such as changes to names or places of birth—which may only be effected following a judicial determination and subsequent administrative recording (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 23 of 2006). In this hierarchy of norms, *perbaikan* in marriage registration corresponds functionally to *pembetulan* under UU Adminduk, while *perubahan* denotes substantive modification. Given the absence of explicit definitional guidance in ministerial regulations on marriage registration, UU Adminduk operates as *lex superior* and should therefore guide interpretation to prevent normative distortion at the level of implementation.

Regulatory ambiguity at the technical level has generated significant interpretive divergence in practice. Empirical studies document instances in which registration officials conflate corrective and substantive actions, resulting either in minor clerical errors being unnecessarily routed through judicial proceedings or, conversely, substantive identity changes being processed through informal administrative correction (Baihaqi & Alfedo, 2024). Such misclassification not only contravenes the principle of legality in administrative law but also produces legal uncertainty regarding the validity of personal identity, the integrity of marriage records, and the legal force of derivative documents. Recent findings further indicate that unresolved inaccuracies in marriage certificates have impeded access to essential civil services, including passport issuance, banking transactions, social insurance claims, and family law proceedings.

Accordingly, the distinction between correction and amendment should be understood not as a terminological nuance but as a core issue of administrative legality, procedural proportionality, and legal consequence. Aligning marriage registration practices with the doctrinal framework established by UU Adminduk is therefore essential to resolving normative ambiguity, preventing procedural error, and ensuring consistent application of administrative law. Such alignment strengthens legal certainty while protecting citizens from disproportionate administrative and judicial burdens, thereby reinforcing the integrity of marriage registration as a rights-protective public service.

Authority Transfer, Judicialization, and the Empirical Burden of Biodata Amendment

Under PMA Number 20 of 2019, the regulatory framework explicitly empowered the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) to conduct both corrections and amendments of biodata in marriage certificates through administrative procedures. Article 38(1) stipulates that changes to spouses' names may be processed directly by the district KUA upon receipt of updated birth certificates. This provision reflects the principle of administrative self-correction, whereby administrative bodies are granted internal corrective authority to rectify errors without recourse to judicial proceedings. Within administrative law, such mechanisms are consistent with proportionality and good administration, as purely technical inaccuracies do not necessitate judicial intervention (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

A significant departure from this model is introduced by PMA Number 30 of 2024. Article 46 requires that any amendment to the names of spouses or parents recorded on marriage certificates be based on a court decision. This shift transforms what were previously administrative corrective actions into judicially validated acts, thereby relocating authority from the administrative to the judicial domain

(Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). From the perspective of administrative legality, this reallocation raises substantive concerns. The regulation withdraws KUA's corrective authority without providing operational criteria to distinguish technical corrections from substantive amendments. As a result, evidentiary and financial burdens are transferred to citizens, potentially violating the principle of proportionality and the prohibition against imposing undue burdens on the public as enshrined in Article 10(1)(f) of Law Number 30 of 2014 on Government Administration (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 30 of 2014).

The shift in authority also has implications for state accountability. In marriage registration, the KUA remains a state administrative organ and retains legal responsibility for administrative negligence that causes harm to citizens, including liability under the doctrine of onrechtmatige overheidsdaad (Raden, 2025). When errors originating from administrative negligence must be rectified through judicial proceedings, a structural tension emerges between administrative accountability and judicialized correction mechanisms. This configuration risks insulating administrative bodies from responsibility while externalizing the consequences of error onto citizens.

Normative weakness is further evident in the absence of clear operational definitions in both PMA Number 20 of 2019 and PMA Number 30 of 2024. The lack of distinction between "clerical correction" and "biodata amendment" has led to inconsistent interpretation at the implementation level, thereby undermining the principle of legality, which requires clarity, precision, and predictability in regulatory norms (Damanik et al., 2024). This ambiguity is compounded by regulatory disharmony between PMA Number 30 of 2024 and Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation Number 73 of 2022, which assigns authority over name changes in population documents to the general courts. The coexistence of different judicial forums for interconnected identity data reflects institutional and hierarchical fragmentation within Indonesia's population administration system (Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Empirical findings from the Religious Court of Suwawa illustrate the tangible consequences of this regulatory shift. Between 1 January and 23 October 2025, the court recorded 18 cases classified as biodata amendment applications, each subject to a uniform advance court fee of IDR 230,000. Of these cases, 12 (66.7%) involved minor clerical errors such as one- or two-letter discrepancies, four cases (22.2%) involved moderate errors such as patronymic variations, and only two cases (11.1%) involved complex amendments (Religious Court of Suwawa, 2025; see Table 2). These data demonstrate that the majority of judicial workload consists of non-substantive administrative errors that were previously resolvable at the KUA level under PMA Number 20 of 2019 without litigation.

Table 2. Biodata Amendment Cases at the Religious Court of Suwawa

No.	Case Number	Type of Error	Court Fee (IDR)
1	109/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Name change (one word)	230,000
2	213/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-letter error	230,000
3	217/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Birthplace/year error and name spelling	230,000
4	236/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Birth year error	230,000
5	237/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-vowel error	230,000
6	239/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-letter name error and birth date	230,000
7	240/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-vowel error	230,000
8	249/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-letter spouse name error	230,000
9	256/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-letter spouse name error	230,000
10	261/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Name and patronymic error (both parties)	230,000
11	333/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-letter and one-syllable error	230,000
12	337/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Patronymic error (one word)	230,000
13	353/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Name order error and deletion of one word	230,000

No.	Case Number	Type of Error	Court Fee (IDR)
14	354/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-syllable error	230,000
15	355/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Addition of one family name	230,000
16	356/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-letter first-name error	230,000
17	358/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	One-letter father's name error	230,000
18	359/Pdt.P/2025/PA.Sww	Addition of one word	230,000

Source: Processed from case records of the Religious Court of Suwawa (2025).

Table 2 demonstrates that the majority of biodata amendment cases brought before the Religious Court of Suwawa involve minor clerical discrepancies, such as one-letter or one-word differences. Despite their non-substantive nature, all cases were subject to the same court fees and judicial procedures, indicating a systematic overjudicialization of administrative corrections. This pattern confirms that the transfer of authority under PMA Number 30 of 2024 has disproportionately increased procedural and financial burdens on citizens.

This pattern evidences a clear case of over-judicialization of administrative corrections, whereby minor technical discrepancies are transformed into judicial matters. Such judicialization undermines efficiency and contradicts the principles of responsive public service. By comparison, Article 34(1) of PMA Number 20 of 2019 explicitly permitted administrative correction by the Head of the KUA based on valid documentation, reflecting a service-oriented approach aligned with accessibility and efficiency (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019; Jumroh et al., 2021). The divergence between this normative framework and current practice under PMA Number 30 of 2024 reveals a regression from sound governance principles.

From a governance perspective, good governance serves not only as a normative benchmark but also as an evaluative tool for policy effectiveness. The Suwawa data indicate that transferring corrective authority to the judiciary fails to meet standards of efficiency, effectiveness, and economy, particularly when judicial procedures are imposed for trivial clerical errors. This finding is consistent with prior studies identifying disproportionate administrative burden as a key indicator of governance failure (Cahyadi, 2013).

Beyond cost and procedural delay, evidentiary constraints further exacerbate access-to-justice barriers. Marriage certificates, identity cards, and family registers are classified as authentic deeds under Article 1868 of the Civil Code, which requires additional proof to reconcile discrepancies. However, family members—often the most knowledgeable witnesses—are restricted from testifying under Articles 172 RBg and 145 HIR, a limitation reinforced by Supreme Court Circular Letter No. 3 of 2018, which confines family testimony to syiqaq cases (Civil Code, 1847; RBg, 1927; Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018). As a result, applicants face significant evidentiary hurdles, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, thereby narrowing effective access to justice (Hadrian & Hakim, 2020).

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the implementation of PMA Number 30 of 2024 has not yet aligned with public service principles articulated in Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services and Ministerial Decree No. 63/2003, which emphasize simplicity, accessibility, professionalism, and accountability (Hardiyansyah, 2018; Ministry of Administrative Reform, 2003). Instead, minor clerical discrepancies are elevated into judicial disputes, transforming administrative services into legal burdens. Empirical evidence from the Religious Court of Suwawa thus confirms that the current regulatory framework prioritizes procedural formality over proportionality, resulting in diminished service quality and increased vulnerability for citizens.

Public Service Justice, Access to Justice, and the Limits of Judicialized Administration

Justice in public service delivery, as constitutionally grounded in Pancasila, guarantees not merely the provision of services but also the realization of high-quality, equitable public services for all citizens (Palenewen, 2019). Accordingly, policy evaluation cannot be confined to formal legal compliance but

must also consider whether regulatory arrangements ensure accessibility, equal treatment, and adequate protection of fundamental rights. Viewed through this lens, the transfer of authority over the correction of marriage biodata from the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) to the Religious Courts under PMA Number 30 of 2024 reveals a structural imbalance between normative objectives and administrative realities. Although the regulation aims to safeguard data integrity and prevent manipulation, its implementation imposes disproportionate burdens on citizens—particularly those required to pursue judicial remedies for purely technical administrative errors.

From the perspective of substantive justice, such conditions risk undermining access to justice, understood as the practical ability of individuals to assert, defend, and restore their rights through mechanisms that are affordable, timely, and proportionate (Wicaksana et al., 2022). When access is constrained by procedural complexity and mandatory litigation, citizens are effectively denied the right to prompt, low-cost, and non-bureaucratic public services as guaranteed by Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services. In this context, the judicialization of administrative correction functions not as a protective mechanism but as a barrier to the realization of rights.

From a bureaucratic efficiency standpoint, the shift toward judicialized correction contradicts the core objectives of administrative reform within ministries and public institutions. Bureaucratic reform is intended to cultivate professional public servants capable of delivering high-quality services characterized by reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Zein, 2023). Requiring judicial determinations for minor clerical errors not only increases individual costs and waiting times but also elongates inter-agency coordination chains that could otherwise be streamlined through effective data integration between KUA and civil registry offices (Dukcapil). This regulatory misalignment suggests that public administration remains constrained by a legalistic logic that prioritizes formal certainty over social utility, thereby undermining efforts to achieve service excellence.

Normatively, PMA Number 30 of 2024 constitutes a regulatory response to the state's need for administrative order and national data synchronization. However, its urgency and proportionality must be assessed through an integrated analytical framework encompassing normative coherence, administrative feasibility, and empirical impact. Article 46 paragraphs (1) and (2), which mandate that any change to spousal or parental biodata be effected solely through a Religious Court decision, effectively displace administrative corrective authority from KUA to the judiciary. This shift warrants scrutiny under sound governance principles, particularly transparency and legal certainty, which require policies to be both predictable and responsive to public needs (Widanti, 2022). In administrative law theory, corrective actions are intrinsic to the issuing authority (administrative self-correction) and are designed precisely to prevent overreliance on judicial mechanisms for resolving technical errors. The reallocation of such authority, therefore, raises questions regarding doctrinal consistency and policy coherence.

Prior to the enactment of PMA Number 30 of 2024, KUA possessed full administrative authority to rectify clerical errors in marriage records on the basis of valid civil documentation. This mechanism embodied efficiency, proportionality, and responsiveness, aligning with sound governance principles. By contrast, the current framework requires that all forms of biodata amendment—including non-substantive typographical errors—undergo judicial review. Empirically, this requirement generates additional administrative burdens without demonstrable gains in legal certainty, thereby diminishing policy effectiveness.

Evidence from the Religious Court of Suwawa underscores the urgency of regulatory reassessment. The observed increase in biodata amendment applications following the enactment of PMA Number 30 of 2024 reflects the immediate social impact of policy change, particularly on

communities facing economic and geographic constraints. From a public service justice perspective, this trend is significant, as it erects new obstacles to citizens' constitutionally guaranteed right to accessible and efficient state services (Rumuat, 2024). Consistent with this view, access to justice encompasses not only the availability of justice but also the avoidance of disproportionate administrative hurdles in resolving routine matters (Wicaksana et al., 2022).

From the standpoint of good governance and bureaucratic reform, PMA Number 30 of 2024 presents an apparent policy paradox. The transfer of corrective authority to the judiciary increases litigation costs, processing times, and institutional complexity—outcomes that are fundamentally at odds with efforts to enhance public trust and improve quality of life through efficient public service delivery (Daraba et al., 2023). This disjunction illustrates a regression from governance principles that prioritize utility, proportionality, and citizen-centered service.

Broader governance scholarship reinforces this conclusion. Studies on digital public services demonstrate that efficiency gains from technological integration are undermined when digitalization is not accompanied by improvements in human capacity, infrastructure, and procedural simplification (Yusuf et al., 2025). Similarly, research on sectoral governance reveals that transparency alone does not enhance performance when administrative practice remains rigid and procedurally stagnant (Karunia et al., 2023). Effective governance, by contrast, depends on citizen engagement, adaptive bureaucracy, and streamlined procedures supported by clear standard operating frameworks (Salam, 2023). These insights resonate with analyses of bureaucratic adaptation under volatile and complex conditions, which emphasize the need for flexible yet accountable discretion to maintain institutional order without sacrificing social responsiveness (Giang, 2025).

Synthesizing these findings, it becomes evident that technically non-substantive corrections to marriage biodata should remain within the administrative competence of KUA through a structured administrative self-correction mechanism. Compelling citizens to pursue judicial remedies for such matters not only imposes unnecessary costs but also contradicts the principles of justice, efficiency, and social benefit that underpin public service law. Ultimately, regulatory reform in marriage registration must move beyond procedural formalism toward a recalibration that restores KUA's corrective authority, strengthens institutional accountability, and re-centers public service delivery on accessibility, proportionality, and the protection of citizens' rights.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the judicialization of marriage biodata correction under PMA Number 30 of 2024 represents a significant shift in Indonesia's approach to administrative governance in family law. While the regulation is normatively justified by the objective of safeguarding data integrity and supporting digital integration, its implementation reveals unresolved doctrinal ambiguities and disproportionate social consequences. The absence of a clear operational distinction between clerical correction and substantive amendment has weakened legal certainty at the administrative level and encouraged inconsistent application across institutions. Empirical evidence from the Religious Court of Suwawa indicates that most cases brought before the court concern minor clerical inaccuracies that do not alter legal status or substantive identity. Requiring judicial proceedings for such errors imposes unnecessary costs, delays, and evidentiary hurdles, particularly for communities with limited economic and geographic access. These outcomes illustrate a broader pattern of over-judicialization in which routine administrative matters are transformed into legal disputes, diminishing the efficiency and accessibility of public services.

From the perspective of administrative justice and good governance, this condition reflects a misalignment between regulatory design and public service objectives. The transfer of corrective authority to the judiciary externalizes the consequences of administrative error onto citizens, diluting institutional accountability and constraining meaningful access to justice. Rather than enhancing legal protection, the current framework risks converting marriage registration into a source of procedural burden. Accordingly, this article concludes that technically non-substantive biodata corrections should be reintegrated into the administrative authority of the KUA through a clearly regulated administrative self-correction mechanism. Restoring this competence would strengthen proportionality, reinforce administrative responsibility, and ensure that marriage registration operates as an efficient, accessible, and rights-oriented public service. Future regulatory reform should therefore prioritize normative clarity, inter-institutional coordination, and citizen-centered service delivery as essential elements of sustainable governance in the administration of Indonesian family law.

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