



## Research Article

# Challenges and Opportunities of Divorce Certificates in Determining the Iddah Period: A Case Study at the KUA of West Kotawaringin Regency

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### Article Info

Received: 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2024  
Revised: 25<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024  
Accepted: 28<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024  
Available Online: 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 2024

### Keywords:

Divorce Certificate;  
Iddah Period;  
Administrative Challenges;  
Islamic Law

[p\\_2775-2682/e\\_2775-2690/](http://p_2775-2682/e_2775-2690/)

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of Akta Cerai in determining the iddah period and identify the challenges and opportunities faced by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) of West Kotawaringin Regency in the context of divorce administration. The researcher uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, and this research combines in-depth interviews, direct observation, and analysis of relevant documents to map the dynamics of divorce registration practices in the area. The results show that one of the main challenges is the discrepancy between the date of the shar'i divorce and the date of the official recording in the Deed of Divorce, which often results in legal uncertainty for women regarding their rights during the iddah period. This phenomenon is exacerbated by factors such as the lack of public legal awareness, limited technological infrastructure at the KUA, and the high workload of administrative officers. On the other hand, the study also found several opportunities for system improvement, including using digital technology through the SIAP Nikah application and collaboration with local religious institutions to improve community legal literacy. The article highlights the importance of harmonization between Islamic legal principles and state administrative regulations in ensuring gender justice and the protection of family rights. Strategic recommendations include strengthening the capacity of KUAs through officer training, equitable integration of digital systems, and intensive socialization of fiqh iddah and divorce administrative procedures. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of technology implementation and the social impact of related policy interventions.

### To Cite this article:

Suparliyah, T., Helim, A., Hidayati, T. Challenges and Opportunities of Divorce Certificates in Determining the Iddah Period: A Case Study at the KUA of West Kotawaringin Regency. *Journal of Education and Religious Studies*, Vol. 03 No. 01 April 2023. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.57060/jers-xt9vaa67>

## INTRODUCTION

The *iddah* period is a period of waiting for women after divorce or the death of a husband that has legal and social implications in Islamic law. *Iddah* aims to ensure clarity of lineage, provide a time of reflection for the couple, and protect women's rights, including the right to maintenance during this period (Sam'un & Hadi, 2023). The duration of iddah depends on the type of divorce and the woman's biological condition, such as menstruation, pregnancy, or menopause (F. Abdullah et al., 2023). However, implementing iddah provisions frequently faces various obstacles, especially those related to administration and legal compliance. One of the main problems is the

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inaccurate recording of divorce certificates, especially in areas with limited access to marriage and divorce administration services, which makes it challenging to ensure compliance with the iddah period according to Sharia, both in terms of Islamic law and state regulations (Abidin et al., 2024). In addition, people's understanding of iddah is still diverse, leading to differences in application in various regions, while social, economic, and cultural factors also influence how women undergo the iddah period. Therefore, efforts are needed to increase legal literacy and socialization by religious institutions and strengthen the population administration system so that the implementation of iddah can run better. The synergy between the government, religious scholars, and the community is key in protecting women's rights during the iddah period.

In Indonesia, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is responsible for recording marriages and divorces based on Law No. 1/1974 on Marriage and the Compilation of Islamic Law, but the disparity between the date of *syar'i* divorce, such as oral *talak*, and the official recording at the KUA is often a problem that interferes with the accuracy of determining the iddah period (Suparliyah, 2024). In West Kotawaringin District, this challenge is exacerbated by geographical factors, where community access to KUA services is limited due to the large and scattered area, so the divorce reporting process is often delayed or even not carried out. In addition, the influence of a local culture that views divorce as a taboo makes some people reluctant to report to the KUA, while a lack of understanding about the importance of the Divorce Certificate and administrative procedures also further exacerbates the situation (Suparliyah, 2024). As a result, many divorce cases are not adequately recorded, leading to unclear legal status and potential violations of the wife's rights regarding the iddah period and post-divorce benefits. Therefore, a concerted effort is needed from local governments, KUAs, and religious education institutions to improve people's legal literacy, simplify administrative procedures, and expand the reach of KUA services to guarantee family rights.

Divorce in the Islamic legal system in Indonesia shows the importance of the role of administrative and family law, one of which is through the Deed of Divorce, which not only functions as proof of the legality of divorce but also greatly influences the accuracy of determining a wife's iddah period. This study is designed to analyze in depth how the Deed of Divorce affects the accuracy of determining the iddah period in the KUA of West Kotawaringin Regency, as well as to identify the challenges and opportunities in the process of recording the Deed of Divorce related to the determination of the iddah period. By focusing on two main objectives the correlation between the Deed of Divorce and the determination of the iddah period and exploring the inhibiting and supporting factors in divorce administration at the KUA of West Kotawaringin-this study aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of divorce administration practices in the area. The significance of this research is very strategic, both theoretically and applicatively, because the results can complement the literature related to the relationship between official documents such as the Deed of Divorce and the implementation of family law in Indonesia, as well as being a reference for the government to improve the divorce registration system and increase public legal literacy about the importance of the Deed of Divorce as a valid legal evidence tool so that the potential for administrative errors or legal violations can be minimized.

## METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study (Muhaimin, 2020) at the KUA of West Kotawaringin Regency. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 informants consisting of KUA officials, penghulu, ex-husbands or wives, and religious leaders, as well as participatory observation of the Divorce Certificate recording process. In addition, a document analysis of 30 divorce files from 2020-2023 was conducted. This research was conducted in five district KUAs with the highest divorce rates, where informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on their experience in the divorce process. The data obtained were analyzed thematically, while the validity of the research results was strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods. From the ethical aspect of the research, all informants agreed to informed consent with the guarantee of confidentiality of their identity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Results

Table 1. Research results that combine all information in one table structure

Research Aspects	Sub-category	Percentage/ Description	Description
Respondent Profile	Age of Divorced Women	60%	Most of the divorced women are between 25-40 years old.
Type of Divorce	Out-of-Court Divorce	70%	Most divorces occur through divorce without involving the courts.
Challenges in Determining the Iddah Period	The gap between Shar'i and Administrative Divorce Dates	45% Late Divorce Certificates	45% of divorce certificates are recorded 1-3 months before the date of divorce, confusing the start of the iddah. Example: Divorce on 1 January; the divorce certificate was only issued on 1 March.
	Lack of Public Legal Awareness	30% Respondents	30% of respondents did not understand that iddah continues even if the divorce certificate was not issued. Some thought that iddah started after the payment of <i>mut'ab</i> (compensation).
	Limited Infrastructure	KUA -	KUAs in remote areas have difficulty accessing the only system, so they still rely on error-prone manual records.
Opportunities and Innovation	Digital Integration	40% of KUAs Connected to SIAP Nikah	The SIAP Nikah application for real-time data synchronization has been developed, but only 40% of KUAs in Kotawaringin Barat are connected due to network constraints.
	Collaboration with <i>Majelis Taklim</i>	-	Legal counselling through recitations at learning assemblies increased the community's understanding of the importance of speedy registration.
	Officer Training	80% of KUA Staff Attend Workshop	The workshop on fiqh iddah and modern administration was attended by 80% of the KUA staff.

The table reveals various divorce aspects and determines the iddah period in West Kotawaringin District. From the survey results, as many as 60% of divorced women are in the age group of 25-40 years, indicating that productive age is the most prone time range for divorce. In addition, 70% of divorces are conducted through out-of-court divorce, often not immediately recorded administratively. The main challenge in determining the iddah period is the gap between the date of the *shar'i* divorce and the administrative record at the KUA. 45% of divorce certificates are issued with a delay of 1-3 months from the date of divorce, confusing starting the iddah period. For example, a woman received a divorce on 1 January, but the Certificate of Divorce was only issued on 1 March, when the iddah should have started in January. In addition, the lack of public legal awareness is also an obstacle, with 30% of respondents not understanding that the iddah period remains in effect even though the divorce certificate has not been issued. Some respondents even assume that the iddah period only begins after the payment of *mut'ab* (compensation). On the other hand, KUA infrastructure in remote areas is minimal, with many offices still relying on error-prone manual recording systems.

The results of this study indicate that several factors significantly affect the accuracy of determining the iddah period in West Kotawaringin Regency. First, the high proportion of divorce through out-of-court divorce (70%) reflects the community's low understanding of the importance of formal procedures in divorce. This contributes to the delay in recording the divorce certificate, affecting the accuracy of determining the iddah period. The time gap between the date of divorce and official registration (up to 1- 3 months) is a serious issue because it can interfere with the wife's rights, including post-divorce benefits and certainty of the children's legal status.

Secondly, the lack of public legal awareness (30% of respondents did not understand the iddah rules) shows the need for more massive educational efforts. Many people have misconceptions about the beginning of the iddah period, such as linking it to *mut'ab* payments, even though iddah begins when the divorce is given. Third, the limited infrastructure of KUAs in remote areas, such as the lack of internet access for digital systems, makes the recording process slower and more error-prone. Although the SIAP Nikah application has been developed as a technological solution, only 40% of KUAs in Kotawaringin Barat can use it effectively due to network constraints.

However, there are positive opportunities to improve this situation. Collaboration with Majelis Taklim and legal counselling through learning can be an effective medium to improve the legal literacy of the community. In addition, the training of KUA officers, which has been attended by 80% of staff, shows a strong commitment to improving administrative procedures and better understanding iddah fiqh. Integrating technology and social approaches can be a strong foundation for overcoming the challenges and ensuring that family rights are protected reasonably and timely.

## **Discussion**

### **Iddah in the Framework of Islamic and State Law**

Article of the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) explicitly states that the iddah period due to divorce starts from the date of the divorce, not from the date of official registration at the relevant institution, such as the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). This principle is based on Islamic law, which emphasizes the importance of justice and protecting women's rights in divorce. However, in practice, the absence of written evidence often prevents women from claiming their rights, including ensuring that their iddah period is correctly calculated following religious rules. This phenomenon reflects the dichotomy between the normative law established by the state and the social reality the community faces on the ground. In the context of previous research, this issue has also been highlighted from a legal and social perspective.

Many divorce cases in Indonesia, especially in rural areas, are still dominated by oral divorce processes that are not immediately recorded administratively (Annisa, 2024; Latupono, 2024). This is exacerbated by the lack of public understanding of the importance of official registration through a Deed of Divorce (Meryaniwal & Talwasa, 2021). The study showed that around 65% of divorces in rural areas of Central Java did not have official documents because the divorce process was only carried out orally without reporting to the KUA. This finding parallels the conditions in West Kotawaringin District, where 70% of divorces occur through out-of-court divorce and are often only recorded after several months. This inconsistency creates an opening for potential legal and social conflicts, especially concerning the establishment of the iddah period and women's post-divorce rights.

In addition, it is essential to harmonize formal law and local norms in resolving divorce issues (Alqawasm, 2024; Nafisah et al., 2024). The study showed that marriage and divorce are often governed by customs rather than formal laws in some traditional communities. For example, in the Sundanese customary system, divorces are frequently settled through extended family deliberations without involving official institutions such as the KUA (Bukido et al., 2021; Pambayun, 2023). While this can provide flexibility in resolving conflicts, it also has the potential to overlook critical legal-formal aspects, such as the recording of the iddah period and the legal status of children. In this context, the phenomenon observed in Kotawaringin Barat- where 45% of *Akta Cerai* were issued with significant delays-shows how local norms and administrative constraints can obscure the implementation of normative law.

From an international legal perspective, the principle of protecting women's rights in divorce has also been regulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Abimbola et al., 2023; Aghbari et al., 2024; Suadi, 2022), which Indonesia has ratified. Article 16 of CEDAW emphasizes the importance of equality in marriage and divorce and protecting women's rights during and after the marriage relationship ends (Journal & Economics, 2024). However, in practice, the implementation of this principle is often hampered by structural factors, such as lack of access to legal services, low legal literacy, and limited administrative infrastructure. This is reflected in the fact that in remote areas, such as Papua and Kalimantan, access

to the KUA is minimal due to geographical constraints, so the process of divorce registration is often delayed or even not done at all.

Several studies suggest a multidimensional approach involving various parties, including the government, religious institutions, and civil society. Research by Wijayanti (2021) shows that integrating digital technology in KUA administrative systems can improve efficiency and accuracy in marriage and divorce registration (Ridlo et al., 2022; Shiddiqi et al., 2024). For example, the *SIMKAH* application developed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs can help synchronize data in real time, thus speeding up the recording process and reducing the risk of administrative errors. However, the study also found that infrastructure constraints, such as the lack of internet access in remote areas, remain a significant obstacle to the equitable implementation of this technology.

On the other hand, education and advocacy approaches are also essential in raising community awareness about the importance of official registration and understanding their legal rights. Collaboration between KUAs *Majelis Taklim* and local religious institutions can effectively disseminate information on iddah fiqh and administrative procedures for divorce (Raniasati, 2024). Through legal counselling at the community level, people can better understand that the iddah period starts when the divorce is granted, not from the official registration date.

Discrepancies between normative law and practice indicate an urgent need for systemic reforms in managing marriage and divorce administration in Indonesia. These reforms should include improving technological infrastructure, strengthening the capacity of KUA officers, and improving the legal literacy of the community. Thus, women's rights, including those relating to the iddah period, can be better guaranteed and respected following established legal principles.

### **Implications of Delayed Recording**

The delay in issuing a divorce certificate has the potential to violate women's rights, particularly concerning the right to receive iddah maintenance and the prohibition of marriage during the iddah period. This is a serious issue, given that the iddah period is essential in Islamic law to protect women's post-divorce rights, both emotionally and financially (Ashraf, 2023). In West Kotawaringin District, this phenomenon is further exacerbated by the two marriages conducted during the iddah period due to ignorance. Cases like this reflect the gap between the legal regulations that have been established and the community's understanding of the importance of these rules. This phenomenon also parallels the findings of previous research in various parts of Indonesia, which show that similar problems remain a significant challenge in implementing family law.

It highlighted how the delay in recording divorce in several regions caused some women to lose their right to iddah maintenance (Arief, 2025; Maksum et al., 2021). In this context, livelihood iddah is fulfilling material needs and respecting women's rights after marriage. The study found that around 35% of divorced women did not receive iddah maintenance because their divorce was not immediately officially recorded. In addition, the lack of understanding about their rights makes many women reluctant to report or demand these rights. This finding is similar to the situation in Kotawaringin Barat, where the delay in the Akta Cerai not only interferes with the right to iddah maintenance but also triggers other violations, such as marriages during the iddah period due to a lack of clear information.

In addition, there is an increasing trend of marriage cases without regard to the legal status of the prospective wife, including whether she is undergoing an iddah period (Wirastri & van Huis, 2024). One of the leading causes is the lack of legal literacy in the community, especially in rural areas (Badri et al., 2024). This study emphasizes that ignorance of the legal rules of iddah harms the women concerned and can lead to legal conflicts for the parties involved. In this context, the marriage case during iddah in West Kotawaringin can be understood as a direct impact of the lack of public awareness about the importance of official registration and the applicable laws.

From an international perspective, the principle of protecting women's rights in divorce has also been regulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Article 16 of CEDAW emphasizes the importance of equality in marriage and divorce and the protection of women's rights

during and after the marriage relationship ends. However, in practice, the implementation of this principle is often hampered by social, cultural, and administrative factors. For example, delays in divorce registration frequently lead to women losing their rights to post-divorce alimony and access to joint property (M. A. bin Abdullah, 2024). The study also highlights the importance of education and advocacy approaches to improve people's understanding of their legal rights. Several studies suggest multidimensional strategies to address these challenges involving various parties, including the government, religious institutions, and local communities. Integrating digital technology in KUA administrative systems can help speed up divorce registration and reduce the risk of violating women's rights (Sitompul, 2024). For example, the SIAP Nikah application developed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs enables real-time data synchronization, making the recording process more efficient and transparent. However, the study also found that infrastructure constraints, such as the lack of internet access in remote areas, are still a significant obstacle to the equitable application of this technology. In West Kotawaringin, for example, only 40% of KUAs are connected to the digital system, so this effort has not been fully optimized.

On the other hand, education and advocacy approaches are also essential to raise awareness about the importance of official registration and understanding their legal rights. Collaboration between KUAs Majelis Taklim and local religious institutions can effectively disseminate information on iddah fiqh and administrative procedures for divorce. Through legal counselling at the community level, people can better understand that the iddah period starts when the divorce is granted, not from the official registration date. In addition, this approach can also increase the sense of collective responsibility in ensuring that women's rights are not neglected. Furthermore, training KUA staff to deal with modern challenges is essential. The study found that around 80% of KUA staff had attended workshops on fiqh iddah and modern administration, which helped increase their capacity to handle complex cases. However, challenges remain, especially in remote areas, where the number of KUA officers is still limited, and the workload is very high. Therefore, additional support from the central government is needed to strengthen the infrastructure and human resources in these KUAs.

Overall, the phenomenon of delayed divorce certificates and its impact on women's rights violations indicates an urgent need for systemic reforms in the management of marriage and divorce administration in Indonesia. These reforms should include improving technological infrastructure, strengthening the capacity of KUA officers, and improving the legal literacy of the community. Thus, women's rights, including determining the iddah period and receiving iddah alimony, can be better guaranteed and respected following established legal principles. This effort will not only improve gender justice but also strengthen the integrity of the family law system in Indonesia.

### **KUA's Role as Mediator**

The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) has a strategic role that is not only limited to the administrative function of recording marriages and divorces but also as a mediator tasked with ensuring that both parties understand the legal and religious consequences of the divorce process, including an understanding of the iddah period. In this context, the KUA is expected to assist married couples in understanding their respective rights and obligations and explain in detail the rules related to divorce, iddah maintenance, and the prohibition of marriage during this period. Unfortunately, the high workload is one factor inhibiting this function's optimization. Data shows that a KUA officer often has to handle more than 100 marriage and divorce cases in a year, so the time available to provide in-depth assistance is minimal.

This heavy workload is not a new phenomenon but has long been an issue faced by many KUAs in Indonesia, especially in areas with large populations or high divorce rates. Research by Susanti (2020) shows that in some rural areas, an average KUA officer must handle up to 150 marriage and divorce cases per year, while the number of personnel is minimal. This causes officers to focus on administrative aspects only, such as recording documents, rather than providing more in-depth educational and mediation services. As a result, many married couples do not have an adequate understanding of the legal consequences of divorce, including the importance of complying with

iddah rules.

In addition, this condition is also influenced by the lack of infrastructure support and human resources in KUAs. In many remote areas, adequate technological facilities are unavailable, making administrative processes slower and more complicated. For example, in West Kotawaringin District, only 40% of KUAs are connected to the *SLAP Nikah* digital system, which should help speed up the registration process and facilitate information delivery to the community. These constraints make it increasingly difficult for KUA officers to carry out their duties effectively regarding administration and mentoring.

From a psychosocial perspective, the mediation function performed by the KUA is essential to reduce the negative impact of divorce, especially for women and children. Suitable mediation can help create an amicable agreement between husband and wife regarding the distribution of post-divorce rights and responsibilities, such as child maintenance and iddah allowance. However, with high workloads, KUA officers often lack time to utilize this approach. As a result, many cases end without a fair settlement for both parties, especially for women, who are frequently the aggrieved party. To overcome this challenge, concrete steps are needed from the central and regional governments. One solution is to increase the number of professionals in KUAs so that the distribution of work can be even. In addition, regular training for KUA officers is also essential to increase their capacity to provide effective mediation services. Digital technology must also be optimized so that administrative processes become faster and more efficient and officers can focus more on assistance and education. Thus, the KUA will function as an administrative institution and a strategic partner in maintaining gender justice and protecting family rights in the community.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the main challenges in determining the iddah period in the KUA of West Kotawaringin Regency stem from the gap between the practice of syar'i divorce and the formal administrative process, such as the delay in recording the divorce certificate and the lack of public understanding of the iddah rules, which has an impact on the violation of women's rights, including the right to iddah maintenance and the prohibition of marriage during the iddah period; however, there are significant opportunities to improve the system through the use of technology and community empowerment, with strategic recommendations to accelerate the integration of digital systems in all KUAs for real-time recording, the establishment of responsive teams that provide legal assistance to women, and the inclusion of fiqh iddah education modules in the curriculum of Madrasah Diniyah or community recitation. For further research, an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of digital technology in improving the accuracy of recording in KUAs, especially in remote areas, as well as a study of the socio-emotional impact of iddah period violations on women and the development of a community-based inclusive legal assistance model so that solutions are more relevant to the needs of local communities, so that the divorce handling system and the determination of the iddah period can be more fair, transparent, and following the principles of Islamic law.

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