

The Significance of Pre-Marital Education and Post-Marital Counseling in Minimizing Divorce Rates

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ABSTRACT

The increasing divorce rate from time to time raises concern among professionals and researchers in the field of family mental and physical health. This study specifically aims to explore the urgency and effectiveness of pre-marital education and post-marital counseling in minimizing divorce, particularly among couples with relatively young marital ages and short marriage durations. The focus is to understand how preparation before marriage and mediation after marriage can influence the stability of a household. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation techniques. The research was conducted over a five-month period, from January to June 2023, involving 24 individuals from Bandung City who had experienced or were in the process of divorce. These individuals were selected purposively based on the criteria of having multiple divorce cases and a marriage duration of less than five years. The findings revealed that only one of the 24 subjects had received structured pre-marital education before deciding to marry. Meanwhile, all participants underwent post-marital counseling sessions due to conflicts and emotional crises within their marriages. Most of the subjects reported a lack of readiness, poor conflict resolution skills, and minimal knowledge about marital responsibilities. The study concludes that pre-marital education plays a crucial role in mental and emotional preparedness, while post-marital counseling serves as an essential curative strategy to resolve disputes. Therefore, structured educational and counseling programs are strongly recommended to prevent premature divorce and strengthen marital resilience.

Introduction

Divorce cases in Indonesia are relatively very high. Based on data from the Indonesian Statistics report, there were 447,743 cases in 2021, an increase of 53.50% compared to 2020 which reached 291,677 cases. This report shows that more wives file for

divorce than husbands. As many as 337,343 cases or 75.34% of divorces occurred due to divorce lawsuits. Meanwhile, 110,440 cases or 24.66% of divorces occurred due to divorce by divorce. Based on region, the highest divorce cases in 2021 were in West Java, which was 98,088 cases. Followed by East Java and Central Java, with 88,235 cases and 75,509 cases respectively. In terms of trends, divorce cases in the country over the past five years have tended to fluctuate. The highest divorce cases occurred in 2021, while the lowest in 2020. In fact, divorce cases were recorded as increasing throughout 2017-2019 (Katadata Insight Center. 2024. Databoks Katadata. <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/>).

Next, the author will open divorce data in West Java as the province with the highest divorce cases in Indonesia from year to year which continues to increase. As of 2022, the number of divorce cases in Indonesia reached 516,334 cases. This figure increased by 15.31% compared to 2021 which reached 447,743 cases. In 2021, it was recorded that 474,522 residents in West Java had divorce certificates as legal proof of the end of the marriage and changes in status as widowers or divorced widows were recorded. Bandung City is the area with the most divorce certificate owners with a total of 53,335 people. Followed by Bogor Regency and Indramayu Regency with the number of divorce certificate owners, namely 33,360 and 31,161 people respectively. When viewed by age group, number of divorced people the largest is in the 40-44 age group. As of 2021, the number reached 134,750 people. Meanwhile, the number of divorced people living in old age (60-64 years) tends to be less, namely 54,268 people (<https://opendata.jabarprov.go.id/>).

Then, after the data was dug up again. In West Java, the highest divorce cases are in urban areas, namely Bandung City, then followed by Bogor Regency, Indramayu Regency, Cirebon Regency and Ciamis Regency (Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2023. <https://opendata.jabarprov.go.id/>). Due to this, the author will focus this research on the Bandung City area only.

The phenomenon of divorce that continues to increase needs to be the concern of various scientists and practitioners working in the family field to examine what are the causal factors and how preventive, curative and promotive steps are. The focus of this study is preventive or prevention steps. If proper pre-marital education and post-marital counseling are carried out, it is hoped that it can be a preventive step so that the phenomenon of divorce among young couples does not continue to increase.

Literature discussing premarital education and postmarital counseling as an effort to minimize divorce is still limited. Thus, if this is understood more comprehensively, it will strengthen family resilience at the national level. Previous research, such as research by Devianti and Rahima (2021) entitled "Premarital Counseling towards the Samara Family". Then, research by Amilia (2022) entitled "Premarital Counseling and Provision of Marital Psychology Information to Form a Sakinah Family for Prospective Brides and Grooms at the Religious Affairs Office, Lubuk Kilangan District." and research by Prayogi (2021) entitled "Marriage Guidance for Prospective Brides and Grooms: Efforts to Realize National Family Resilience" have not comprehensively explored the urgency of premarital education

and postmarital counseling as an effort to minimize the increasing rate of divorce. Therefore, based on previous studies, studies related to marriage counseling are still limited and researchers have not found a comprehensive one.

The purpose of this paper is to complement the shortcomings of previous studies that tend to analyze premarital education partially, so that it is less comprehensive considering that premarital education requires practice from upstream to downstream so that an integral (whole and comprehensive) approach is needed, as an effort to minimize the increasing divorce. In line with that, there is a main question in this study, namely, *“To what extent is premarital education and postmarital counseling urgent as an effort to minimize the increasing divorce rate?”* The results of this research are expected to be able to resolve the problem of divorce among young adults, especially in urban areas that have high divorce rates.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach that describes the level of divorce cases in urban areas (Creswell. 2014), especially Bandung City, which continues to increase, even West Java Province is the Province with the highest divorce rate in Indonesia, and Bandung City is the city with the most divorce cases. Data collection for this study uses data collection techniques through observation, interviews and documentation (Sugiyono, 2017). There are three stages of data analysis, namely data analysis before the field, data analysis during the field, and data analysis after completion in the field (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014).

The population of this study was taken from all actors facing divorce problems in the Bandung City area. The population is 53,335 people with various age ranges and divorce problems. The characteristics of the sample to be used are clients who have cases of multiple divorces with a marriage age of less than five years. Due to time, cost and other limitations from the researcher, those who meet the characteristics to be used as samples in this study are 24 people who have been divorced or are in the process of divorce who were then interviewed to see whether premarital education is so important as an effort to minimize divorce which continues to increase. The case study was conducted for one month, starting from January 15 to June 15, 2023.

Results and Discussion

Based on the research method explained above. Then there are several research results related to the subjects that are in accordance with the research criteria. If you look at the population that is so large, namely 53,335 people who have divorce certificates in Bandung City. Then the sample that can be taken data (observation, interview, documentation) in this study is 24 research subjects.

Table 1.0 Sample Data Collection Results

No	Respondent Initials	Age (Year)	Do you carry out pre-marital education?	Is Post-Marital Counseling Worth It?	Description/Remarks/Motives for Marriage
1	NRR	34	No	Yes	Married because she wanted to, finally decided to marry a widower who committed domestic violence
2	J	33	No	Yes	Not knowing the previous partner very well, married because of the situation
3	EY	43	No	Yes	Arranged marriage, in the past there was no pre-marital counseling
4	FS	31	No	Yes	When deciding to get married, it turns out that the partner is beyond expectations (domestic violence, cheating)
5	UKW	31	No	Yes	Married because of environmental demands and it turns out that the partner is a gambler & cheater
6	HN	34	No	Yes	Having known your partner for a long time before getting married, but after getting married it is beyond expectations (Cheating)
7	LY	30	No	Yes	Getting married because you want to get out of an uncomfortable situation at that time, not because you are ready.
8	ANW	33	No	Yes	Expectations before marriage are too high, in the end during marriage they often force their will
9	RAU	31	No	Yes	Married because of demands from parents, but after marriage tested by financial problems
10	SML	30	No	Yes	Not ready to get married, ends up often committing domestic violence against children
11	AAD	30	No	Yes	Getting married at an early age, and the motive for getting married is because of the environment
11	RAM	32	No	Yes	Before marriage everything was fine, after marriage pressure came from various directions
12	SKL	38	No	Yes	Before getting married, the couple had an affair, but they still got married because they loved their

					partner and in the end, the partner still had an affair.
13	MH	29	No	Yes	Couple cheating because of LDR
14	SN	33	No	Yes	Getting married even though you don't know your partner, after getting married your partner has sexual problems and free sex
15	GR	28	No	Yes	Married because of venting heartache from ex-boyfriend
16	FR	31	No	Yes	Married because of the environment and ultimately expectations of the partner are too high
17	A	33	No	Yes	Getting married because of an arranged marriage or to repay the partner's parents
18	AAR	35	Yes	Yes	Conducting counseling and even understanding the science of marriage, but in practice there are many tests, including long-distance relationships and infidelity.
19	WSI	33	No	Yes	The partner is beyond expectations, cold, and constantly defends the in-laws, does not mediate.
20	Y	47	No	Yes	The partner is beyond expectations and is not yet finished with himself so he is often temperamental
21	NC	35	No	Yes	Getting married at an early age and having children straight away without the parents' blessing
22	SY	30	No	Yes	Couple beyond expectations, married because of the environment, finally there is an affair
23	OTM	24	No	Yes	Married because I wanted to, didn't know my partner yet, ended up leaving my partner after 7 months of marriage
24	SD	32	No	Yes	Married because of the environment (friends are already married), after marriage the partner is cold and often has phone sex

Based on the results of the study above, among the 24 research subjects, there was only 1 subject who did indeed undergo marriage education before finally deciding to get married. Although after studying pre-marital education, it does not guarantee that you will be free from divorce, but if you look at the average, indeed subjects or people who really do not understand what to prepare and will face when deciding to get married are more

susceptible to divorce than individuals who are mature and ready to live in a household with various joys and sorrows or happiness and problems.

Then, of the 24 subjects, all of them did undergo post-marital counseling because they had problems in their marriage. Some still really wanted to survive, were in the process of divorce, or were already divorced. However, if we look back at the data above, when someone does not study pre-marital education, let alone undergo post-marital counseling when there are problems, then divorce is very likely to occur. It is different with subjects who did not study pre-marital education before, and when there are problems they ask for professional help to solve their problems by undergoing post-marital counseling, then the possibility of successful mediation is very high until finally it is able to suppress the divorce rate which continues to increase sharply.

According to the research results above, when conducted a direct interview, the motives of a person finally deciding to get married are different, which in the end, with that motive, it can determine how strong the resilience of their household is. Therefore, in this study, various perspectives will also be presented regarding the extent of the urgency of pre-marital education and post-marital counseling as an effort to minimize divorce which continues to increase today.

Premarital Education and Postmarital Counseling as Preventive Steps to Minimize the Increasing Number of Divorces

According to Zakiah Drajat (1996), marriage is a contract or agreement to legitimize sexual relations between men and women in order to realize the happiness of family life filled with peace and affection in a way that is approved by Allah SWT. According to Zahri Hamid, what is called marriage according to sharia is: *"The contract (ijab qabul) between the guardian of the prospective wife and the groom with certain words and fulfilling the pillars and conditions. Marriage according to Islamic law is a marriage, namely a very strong contract or mitsaqan ghalizhan to obey Allah's command and carrying it out is an act of worship.."* (Prayogi, 2021).

When deciding to marry a partner, there are many things that need to be prepared. Starting from physical, mental, social, religious and moral readiness to financial. Mentality is broad, communication skills are also indicators of mental health. If these aspects are not mature, then divorce cannot be avoided.

Save M. Dagon (Sari MN, Yusri, & Sukmawati I, 2015) stated that many factors cause cases of conflict in families that end in divorce. These factors include: 1) economic problems; 2) age differences; 3) the desire to have children; 4) different life principles, as well as other factors, namely differences in emphasis and how to educate children and the influence of social support from outside parties. (Harjianto & Jannah, 2019).

In the reality of everyday married life, more than just financial capability is needed to ensure the continuity and sustainability of a relationship.marriage and family. Even when further examined against the results of research on family problems related to financial

factors, what emerged was not only the availability of economic resources, but more on psychological factors, namely how they view and manage money. Olson, et al, (2008) found a very significant difference between happy and unhappy couples in financial management, especially the extent to which husband and wife agree on spending money (Kurniawan, 2016).

Therefore, to achieve family resilience, maximum effort is needed. Not only curative steps as a means of problem solving after marriage, but preventive steps are needed so that before deciding to get married, you must understand and be ready for the various possibilities that occur in marriage. Therefore, pre-marital education is also very urgent as an effort to minimize the increasing divorce rate.

The objectives of premarital counseling are 1) to help prospective couples understand the meaning of marriage, 2) to help prospective couples build a strong foundation and align goals in forming their household, 3) to help prospective couples understand the roles and functions of each between husband and wife, 4) to help prospective couples prepare themselves for marriage including physically, psychologically and spiritually (Mariamah, 2020 in Juningsih, 2021).

Pre-marital counseling is intended to help prospective couples analyze possible problems and challenges that will arise in their household and equip them with the skills to solve problems.. Efforts to help prospective husbands and wives by a professional counselor so that they can develop and be able to solve the problems they face through ways that are respectful, tolerant and with understanding communication, so that family motivation, development, independence, and welfare of all members are achieved. (Devianti & Rahima, 2021).

The need to strengthen the foundations of marriage in carrying out family functions, especially in raising and educating children based on Islamic teachings, is certainly a necessity. The family is the smallest unit in society that has a very strategic function, especially because the family is the first and main educational institution for the formation and development of personality. Therefore, the family needs to be fostered for welfare, happiness and sustainability in accordance with religious teachings and the constitution. Only families that are based on religious values, the quality of human resources that have good personalities can be realized. (Amalia & Akbar, 2017).

Flow and Methods of Premarital Counseling and Providing Psychological Knowledge to Husband and Wife to Minimize the Increasing Divorce Rate

When there is a single frame regarding the importance of premarital education and postmarital counseling, the researcher will explain in more depth regarding the flow or process and methods that can be carried out when conducting premarital education which of course is carried out by professionals who have the capability and have been tested in their fields.

Premarital counseling guidance is the provision of knowledge and skills in a minimum of 16-24 teaching hours to prospective bride and groom. The implementation of premarital counseling can be done through information services and consultation services. The purpose of information services is to provide assistance in order to make decisions appropriately and correctly based on the information obtained. Through information services, prospective brides and grooms can receive and understand various information, in addition, it can also function as prevention and understanding. Meanwhile, consultation services are a form of assistance in gaining insight, understanding, and methods that need to be implemented in dealing with conditions and problems faced by prospective brides and grooms. Technically, one of the materials that can be conveyed to prospective brides and grooms is to provide understanding and awareness to individuals regarding the purpose of Marriage Age Maturation (PUP) (Devianti & Rahima, 2021).

The implementation of premarital counseling services can be carried out with several services, such as information services, consultation services, group counseling services, and individual counseling. The implementation of these services can be done in several ways, both directly (face to face) and indirectly (using mass media), such as home visits, work observations, field trips, sociodramas and psychodramas, bulletin boards, newspapers/magazines, brochures, radio, television, correspondence and telephone (Devianti & Rahima, 2021).

The requirements for implementing pre-marital counseling include: Clients who are prospective brides and grooms who are teenagers or adults who are going to get married. Clients have the motivation and awareness to follow marriage counseling. Officers should not determine the implementation of counseling unilaterally without the agreement of the client, Self-development problems, namely difficulties or obstacles that cannot be solved alone. Counselors are individuals who are experts and trained such as counselors, psychologists, ustadz, religious figures or ulama, doctors, nurses and community leaders (P3N) or other counseling institutions who have each attended various counseling training or training, Application of counseling methods or techniques through counseling, special dialogues, and home visits, Facilities in premarital guidance. Marriage guidebooks, slides, posters, stationery, and other media. (Devianti & Rahima, 2021).

Then, if we look further, in family counseling there is an understanding that the involvement of all family members is very much needed in counseling. The existence of this family support can not only bring about the expected solution, but can also instill a sense of responsibility for each family member to be involved in solving problems together. In other words, counseling clients no longer solve their own problems but receive good support and cooperation from their families. This approach that involves all family members is commonly used in Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Structural Family Therapy (SFT), Experiential Family Therapy (EFT), Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), or Narrative Therapy (Evans et al., 2012 in Ulfiah, 2021).

In Aini and Afdal (2020) explained that marital satisfaction will be achieved if husband and wife can understand each other's roles (Bahr, Chappell, & Leigh, 1983), if both do not carry out their roles well then both parties can negotiate about what should be done. Marital satisfaction when viewed from the roles played also has an impact on the couple. Unbalanced roles (egalitarian roles) between husband and wife in the household can cause marital instability. Bahr et al stated that marital satisfaction can be seen in the form of role agreements, joint role rules as husband and wife (couples) and individual role rules as themselves. Therefore, to achieve satisfaction in marriage, Holman & Li explained that couples should have the ability to carry out the roles in marriage and be able to maintain the development of their marital relationship.

Apart from the above, there is an aspect that is often missed in pre-marital education materials, namely knowledge about the reproduction of prospective brides and grooms. Seven out of 10 studies mentioned premarital course materials delivered to prospective Muslim brides and grooms. Most of the premarital guidance materials focused more on the religious sphere than on reproductive health-related materials. Four out of the seven studies included reproductive health topics in the premarital course materials (Hasanah, et al., 2022).

Ulfiah (2013) stated that there are 4 things that must be understood before entering the gates of marriage. The first is family motivation, before entering the gate of marriage, each prospective husband and wife should know their rights and obligations as husband and wife. This will have implications for the implementation or process of their journey in their household life. Therefore, individuals should have a strong motivation for why marriage is their choice. The second is the wisdom and benefits of marriage, marriage is a gateway to life that is usually passed by most humans in living their lives as husband and wife. If we admit that a strong family is an important requirement for the welfare of society, we must also recognize the importance of steps to prepare resilience to form an ideal family.

Further more choosing a wife or husband, to enter the gates of marriage, you should consider it with a calm mind, a clear heart and open eyes. Don't let your eyes be dazzled by physical beauty, because beauty is not a long-lasting characteristic and will change over time from year to year. Don't be dazzled by the brilliance of gold and wealth, because happiness in life is not guaranteed by these materials, but by the personality of each married couple. Lastly is a good age for marriage. If we understand what was stated by Prof. Sarwono said that the best age for marriage covers a period consisting of several years, although from a medical perspective at the age of 18 years the biological maturity of a girl has been reached, but if we take into account other facts then marriage would be better between the ages of 20-25 years, and God willing, there will be many benefits. (Ulfiah, 2013).

The Urgency of Premarital Education and Postmarital Counseling for the Strength of National Family Resilience

The purpose of premarital education and postmarital counseling is not only individual, but also national or global. If premarital education is actively carried out from upstream to downstream, then the hope is that in addition to being able to reduce the high divorce rate, it will also strengthen family resilience at the national level.

One of the urgencies of pre-marital guidance is to provide understanding, encouragement, knowledge, skills, and to foster awareness in each couple about their future household and family life. Because most of the main factors causing divorce are the lack of guidance and knowledge obtained by each couple before marriage. This is what causes the mental readiness of prospective couples to decrease or decline in building a household later (Rmd et al., 2022).

According to Quraish Shihab, living family life is likened to a building, so that the building becomes a strong building and is resistant to various shocks that occur, it must be built on a strong foundation using various sturdy and strong building materials. The meaning of the word strong foundation here is the provision of educational intake on various teachings and understanding of religion which is also accompanied by physical and mental maturity between prospective husband and wife before carrying out marriage. The importance of pre-marital education that can be done through training and short courses to be able to provide an understanding of various problems in the household that can create conflict. If a conflict in family life cannot be resolved wisely, it will easily lead to the breaking of the bonds of a marriage (Karimullah, 2021).

One of the causes of weak family resilience is because of forcing the will between couples. In fact, men and women do have many differences. If we know the differences between men and women, then it is very unacceptable if we say that every man only has masculine traits and women only have feminine traits. In reality, of course, this is not the case (An-Nu'aimi, 2008).

The general aim of forming a family is to achieve well-being and family resilience. So in this case the main concept of family resilience can be summarized according to Law Number 52 of 2009, including (Prayogi, 2021):

1. Part Three Article 4 Paragraph, states that family development aims to improve the quality of the family so that a sense of security, peace and hope for a better future can arise in realizing physical well-being and inner happiness.
2. A quality family is a family that is formed based on a legitimate marriage and is characterized by being prosperous, healthy, advanced, independent, having an ideal number of children, forward-looking, responsible, harmonious and devoted to God Almighty.
3. Family quality is the condition of the family which includes aspects of education, health, economy, socio-culture, family independence and spiritual mentality as well as religious values which are the basis for achieving a prosperous family.
4. Family resilience and well-being is a condition of a family that has tenacity and toughness and contains physical and material capabilities to live independently and

develop themselves and their families to live harmoniously in increasing physical and spiritual well-being and happiness.

5. Family empowerment is an effort to improve the quality of families, both as targets and as actors of development, so as to create increased physical and non-physical resilience, independence and family welfare in order to create quality human resources.

According to Ulfiah and Hannah (2018), the readiness of couples before starting a family in order to create family resilience must fulfill several things below:

- a. At least one of the couple has work skills to obtain economic resources for the family life that will be built.
- b. Both partners have quality human resources so they are able to manage family resources and ecosystems.
- c. Both partners have the psychological maturity (adequate age) and personality to fulfill the functions, roles and duties of the family, and are able to commit to implementing family planning.
- d. The couple is committed to building a family, sharing and giving love and affection, protecting, fulfilling each other's rights and obligations, loyalty, and willingness to sacrifice. The couple has entered a mature age to start a family.

This study is limited by its small sample size, which consisted of only 24 participants from a specific urban area, namely Bandung City. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to broader populations or rural settings. Additionally, the study relied solely on self-reported data through interviews, which may be subject to personal bias or incomplete disclosure. The research also focused only on individuals with short-term marriages and multiple divorces, excluding other demographic variables such as educational background, socio-economic status, or cultural influences that may also impact divorce decisions.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand the sample size and include participants from diverse geographic and socio-cultural backgrounds to enhance generalizability. A mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative measurements, such as standardized scales on marital satisfaction or conflict resolution skills, is also recommended to support qualitative findings with empirical data. Furthermore, longitudinal studies that track couples over time may provide deeper insights into how pre-marital education and post-marital counseling influence long-term marital stability.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study further strengthens scientists or practitioners in the field of family physical and mental health how important premarital education and postmarital counseling are when there are problems in the household that may require professional help. Because if we look at the divorce data that continues to increase, especially in urban areas, it is a challenge to explore the causal factors as well as what can be done to minimize divorce.

If we look at the interview results, the motives for getting married because they did not study premarital education and postmarital counseling are very diverse, but if concluded, on average it is unpreparedness in driving the ship of the household which often does not run smoothly and straight. And when this happens, most are reluctant to do postmarital counseling for various reasons. In fact, premarital education and postmarital counseling are one unit that must be attempted for the sake of stronger family resilience. The methods that can be used by professionals or experts in conducting premarital education and postmarital counseling are very diverse, adjusted to the needs of the subject itself, the time or duration of counseling is also adjusted to the needs, not always the same for each individual.

Suggestions and The hope of this research is to suppress divorce without a cause that is beneficial for the sake of creating resilience and welfare of families that are increasingly strong and prosperous at the national and global levels. Therefore, it is hoped that this research can be a trigger to continue to develop knowledge and practice it in everyday life according to the profession in each life so that each individual takes part in minimizing the increasing divorce.

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