

The Role of Premarital Guidance in Shaping Sakinah Families: An Empirical Study at the Office of Religious Affairs, South Sinjai, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study highlights the importance of premarital counseling in preparing prospective couples to understand family life dynamics after marriage, thereby minimizing conflicts and reducing the risk of divorce. The research aims to examine the effectiveness of premarital counseling in fostering Sakinah families at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in South Sinjai District, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the program's implementation. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with field research, the study drew primary data from religious leaders and couples who had participated in premarital counseling sessions. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (verification). Triangulation techniques were used to ensure data validity. The findings revealed that premarital counseling plays a significant role in equipping couples with knowledge and skills related to communication, financial management, marital rights and obligations, and religious education, all of which contribute to building Sakinah families. Supporting factors include government and institutional backing, while inhibiting factors include participants' limited awareness and competing work priorities. Overall, premarital counseling at KUA South Sinjai has proven effective in strengthening marital readiness. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the specific context of KUA South Sinjai, which has received limited scholarly attention despite its critical role in community-based marital preparation.

Keywords: Marriage, Premarital Counseling, Sakinah Family

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Introduction

Marriage is a divine law (sunnatullah) that universally applies to all of God's creations, serving as the natural means for procreation and the preservation of life (Tihami & Sahrani, 2009). In Islam, marriage is referred to as mitsaqan ghalidzan or a "solemn covenant," as emphasized in the Qur'an (Q.S. al-Nisa 4:21; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia [MORA], 2019, p. 109). This term highlights that marriage is not an ordinary social contract but a sacred and binding covenant, comparable to the pledge between Allah and His chosen messengers (Q.S. al-Ahzab 33:7; MORA, 2019, p. 603). Consequently, while divorce is legally permissible, it remains the most detested lawful act

in Islam, underscoring the moral and spiritual gravity of marital commitment (Yayasan Al-Ma'soem Bandung [YAB], 2022).

In Islamic teachings, the ideal family is described as a *Sakinah* family—a household characterized by tranquility, affection, and mutual respect, deeply rooted in faith and piety (Maryani, 2014). Such a family is envisioned as both a social and spiritual institution that nurtures moral values, strengthens emotional bonds, and contributes to societal harmony. It is expected to meet both material and spiritual needs, foster love and compassion (*mawaddah wa rahmah*), and uphold justice and equality between husband and wife, as illustrated in Q.S. al-Rum 30:21 (MORA, 2019, p. 588). The balance between rights and responsibilities within marriage represents the foundation of social stability and moral integrity in Islamic society (Hidayat et al., 2023).

However, achieving this ideal remains a persistent challenge. Many marital relationships suffer from gender inequality, poor communication, and emotional immaturity. These issues often manifest in domestic violence, neglect of responsibilities, and marital breakdown (Nur Rofiah, Kustini, et al., 2011). Recent studies further reveal that gender imbalances and a lack of mutual understanding continue to undermine family harmony in Muslim societies, including Indonesia (Mufti, 2024; Rahmawati & Siregar, 2022). The gap between Islamic marital ideals and practical realities underscores the urgent need for structured educational interventions to prepare couples for the complexities of marital life.

Empirical data further illuminate the urgency of this issue. Divorce rates in Indonesia have steadily increased over the past decade, signaling deeper social and cultural challenges (BPS, 2023). Data from the Sinjai Religious Court show a sharp rise in divorce cases—from 727 in 2020 to 909 in 2021—with most petitions (*ceraai gugat*) initiated by wives (Abidin, 2021). In South Sinjai Subdistrict, this trend is linked to domestic violence, financial dependence, early marriage, and inadequate marital preparation (Alauddin & Arhan, 2018). Similar patterns appear nationwide, where many couples enter marriage without adequate psychological, emotional, or spiritual readiness (Rahman & Abdullah, 2023).

Beyond numerical statistics, the social and psychological consequences of divorce are profound. The disintegration of families often affects not only the couple but also their children, who may suffer from emotional instability, economic insecurity, and social stigma. At a broader level, rising divorce rates can weaken social cohesion and moral values within communities (Hasanah et al., 2022). Studies on gender equality awareness in marital relationships demonstrate that many conflicts stem from insufficient understanding of spousal rights and obligations, as well as persistent patriarchal norms (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Thus, preventive efforts—especially premarital education—are crucial to equip couples with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for sustaining healthy and stable marriages.

In response to these concerns, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) established the Premarital Counseling Program (*Bimbingan Perkawinan*) through the 2018 decree of the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance. The program aims to enhance the readiness of prospective couples by developing their communication, conflict resolution, financial management, emotional regulation, and understanding of spousal rights and duties (MORA, 2019). Several studies, such as Harahap et al. (2022) in North Sumatra and Sari et al. (2023) in West Java, have shown that premarital counseling contributes positively to improving marital satisfaction and reducing early marital conflicts, although its implementation still faces challenges related to participant engagement and resource limitations.

In South Sinjai Subdistrict, the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama or KUA) plays a pivotal role in implementing this policy. The effectiveness of premarital counseling depends on multiple factors, including the competence of facilitators, participant motivation, and local cultural contexts (Qomariah et al., 2021). While many participants acknowledge the benefits of premarital guidance, challenges remain in sustaining behavioral changes post-counseling and translating theoretical knowledge into practice. Therefore, analyzing the role of premarital guidance in strengthening marital readiness and reducing divorce rates in South Sinjai is essential—not only for academic inquiry but also for policy refinement and the development of more resilient Muslim families in Indonesia (Rahman et al., 2024).

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative field research design with a descriptive approach to explore social phenomena related to premarital counseling and its contribution to fostering a *sakinah* family (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A social approach was adopted to analyze real-life experiences and behaviors observed in the field, while various scholarly references were reviewed to support the interpretation of data. The research was conducted at the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama or KUA) in South Sinjai District, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The location was selected due to its relatively high divorce rate and the presence of families reported to experience disharmony. The key informants consisted of the Head of KUA, religious counselors, and couples who had participated in premarital counseling programs. This study focused on assessing the effectiveness of premarital counseling in helping prospective brides and grooms achieve a *sakinah* family, emphasizing the implementation process and identifying both supporting and inhibiting factors.

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the Head of KUA, religious counselors, and married couples who had attended premarital counseling, complemented by direct observations during counseling sessions. Secondary data were gathered from official documents, institutional reports, and previous studies related to premarital counseling and family resilience (Sugiyono, 2017). In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the main instrument, supported by auxiliary tools such as notebooks, voice recorders, and cameras (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). To guide the interviews, several key questions were prepared to explore informants' perceptions regarding the purpose and benefits of counseling, the most relevant materials for marital preparation, challenges in attending sessions, and the influence of premarital counseling on family harmony.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine how premarital counseling was implemented and how participants interacted during sessions. In-depth interviews provided insight into participants' perspectives, experiences, and challenges, while documentation was used to obtain supporting written and visual materials, such as reports and photographs. The use of multiple methods enabled data triangulation, which enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings (Denzin, 2012).

The data analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction involved identifying, selecting, and simplifying relevant information to focus on essential aspects of the phenomenon. Data display organized the reduced data into coherent narratives, matrices, or tables, allowing the researcher to visualize emerging themes and relationships. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on recurring patterns, which were then verified against the data to ensure accuracy and consistency. This analytical process allowed for a thorough and systematic interpretation of qualitative data.

To maintain research credibility, this study employed triangulation across data sources and methods, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement in the field. The triangulation technique ensured that information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation was cross-validated, minimizing researcher bias and enhancing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations were also prioritized, including informed consent from all participants, confidentiality of responses, and respect for cultural and religious values throughout the research process. This approach ensured that the study met both scientific and ethical standards while contributing valuable insights into the effectiveness of premarital counseling in strengthening marital readiness and family harmony.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study, focusing on the effectiveness of premarital counseling (*bimbingan perkawinan*) in shaping *sakinah* families at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in South Sinjai District. The data were obtained through interviews with institutional leaders, religious counselors, and married couples who had previously participated in premarital counseling sessions. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns within participants' narratives, which were then interpreted using theoretical perspectives on marriage preparation, family resilience, and divorce prevention. The results reveal that premarital counseling functions not only as an educational process but also as a transformative medium that shapes couples' perceptions, attitudes, and values toward marriage.

The first major finding demonstrates that premarital counseling significantly enhances couples' understanding of spousal rights and obligations, as well as their communication and conflict management skills. Participants reported that prior to attending the sessions, many had limited knowledge of Islamic marital principles and emotional regulation. After the counseling, however, they expressed greater clarity in their roles as husbands and wives, particularly regarding financial responsibilities, emotional support, and shared decision-making. This aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by Bowen's (1978) family systems theory, which emphasizes communication and emotional differentiation as key predictors of marital stability. Counselors also observed a noticeable improvement in participants' interpersonal empathy and ability to manage disagreements constructively.

The second finding relates to the integration of religious and practical elements in the counseling curriculum. Counselors consistently emphasized that embedding Islamic teachings—such as *mawaddah*, *rahmah*, and *sakinah*—within discussions about daily marital life has been crucial in shaping participants' moral and spiritual readiness. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Rahman, 2020; Al-Hafidz, 2021) that highlight the significance of religious-based counseling in strengthening family resilience and reducing divorce rates in Muslim-majority communities. In South Sinjai, where cultural traditions and religious values are closely intertwined, the religious grounding of the premarital counseling program has made it more relatable and impactful.

However, despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges in implementation. Some couples encountered difficulties in attending sessions due to conflicting work schedules, transportation barriers, or limited facilities at local KUA offices. Counselors also mentioned that attendance rates tend to fluctuate, especially among younger couples or those in rural areas. This echoes the findings of Siregar and Fadilah (2022), who found that logistical and time-related constraints are among the major factors affecting participation in premarital counseling across Indonesia. Therefore, while

the program's objectives are widely appreciated, its operational aspects require strategic improvements to maximize outreach and inclusivity.

From an institutional perspective, the findings underscore that premarital counseling has served as a preventive mechanism against domestic conflicts and early divorce. The KUA of South Sinjai has recognized the importance of this program as part of its broader mission to promote *keluarga sakinah* (harmonious family) values within the community. Nevertheless, institutional leaders acknowledged the need for greater consistency and standardization across sessions, particularly in training facilitators and updating learning materials. This is in line with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy recommendations (MORA, 2019), which call for uniform guidelines, continuous monitoring, and community-based collaboration to sustain the program's effectiveness.

The study also revealed the social impact of the counseling program beyond individual participants. Couples who completed the sessions tended to become informal advocates for family harmony within their neighborhoods, sharing knowledge and encouraging others to seek guidance before marriage. This ripple effect demonstrates the program's potential as a form of community empowerment, contributing to long-term family resilience. The results support the argument by Walsh (2016) that strong families act as social anchors that reinforce community stability and collective well-being. Therefore, the counseling program not only benefits individuals but also strengthens the social fabric of the local Muslim community.

These findings highlight the importance of continuous program improvement through participatory and evidence-based approaches. Involving counselors, community leaders, and past participants in curriculum development can ensure that the content remains relevant, practical, and culturally sensitive. The study contributes academically to the discourse on Islamic family counseling and policy implementation in Indonesia while offering actionable recommendations for policymakers. By enhancing program accessibility, integrating follow-up mechanisms, and utilizing digital platforms for delivery, the KUA and the Ministry of Religious Affairs can ensure that premarital counseling remains an effective tool in fostering *sakinah* families and reducing divorce rates across the nation.

General Overview of Findings

The study revealed that premarital counseling serves as a vital preparatory phase for individuals about to enter marriage. Participants consistently perceived counseling not merely as an administrative prerequisite but as a transformative educational experience. Through the sessions, couples acquired essential knowledge, emotional maturity, and interpersonal skills that helped them better understand their rights and responsibilities as spouses. The program emphasized the spiritual, psychological, and social aspects of marriage, allowing participants to approach family life with a more balanced and informed mindset. This finding aligns with the notion that marriage readiness is not solely determined by age or economic stability, but by one's emotional and spiritual preparedness, which counseling helps to nurture.

Moreover, the study found that premarital counseling significantly reduces the likelihood of marital conflict and divorce. Participants reported that the lessons on effective communication, financial management, and conflict resolution helped them handle disagreements more constructively. By promoting open dialogue and empathy between partners, the sessions fostered mutual understanding and strengthened emotional bonds. Counselors also highlighted that incorporating Islamic principles—such as *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*—into the sessions created a moral foundation that guided couples in navigating real-life challenges. These elements collectively enhanced couples' resilience and adaptability, which are crucial for maintaining long-term marital harmony.

In the context of South Sinjai District, where divorce rates remain relatively high, the study's findings underscore the importance of institutionalized premarital counseling as a preventive and educational intervention. By equipping couples with both practical life skills and spiritual insight, the program helps to mitigate the structural and cultural factors contributing to family instability. The counseling process thus functions as a bridge between religious instruction and social reality, empowering couples to build marriages rooted in faith, communication, and mutual respect. Consequently, premarital counseling stands as an effective strategy for promoting family resilience and reducing divorce rates, supporting national and community-level efforts to foster *keluarga sakinah* (harmonious families) throughout Indonesia.

Institutional Perspectives

From the perspective of institutional leadership, premarital counseling is viewed as a cornerstone of family resilience and an indispensable element in promoting harmonious marriages. The Head of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in South Sinjai, Agus Sariman, emphasized that the program plays an essential role in ensuring that couples enter marriage with adequate preparation—emotionally, spiritually, and socially. According to him, “this program is very beneficial for couples who are about to get married or who are preparing to build a household. The response toward its implementation is highly positive, as it significantly contributes to building sustainable and complete households” (Sariman, 2024). His statement underscores that premarital counseling is not merely an administrative formality preceding the issuance of a marriage certificate, but a transformative educational process that strengthens the foundation of family life. Through counseling, couples are introduced to Islamic values, communication principles, and conflict management strategies that are essential for maintaining marital harmony.

Sariman's remarks also reflect the institutional commitment of the KUA to act not only as a regulatory body overseeing marriage registration but also as a social service institution that upholds community welfare through preventive education. In his view, premarital counseling serves as an early intervention designed to mitigate the risk of domestic disputes and family breakdowns. “Thanks to this counseling,” he continued, “the divorce rate in South Sinjai has declined, as couples are provided with essential insights on how to solve problems constructively instead of allowing small disputes to end in separation” (Sariman, 2024). This statement aligns with national data and prior research indicating that divorce prevention efforts are most effective when implemented through pre-marital educational programs (Rahman & Fitriani, 2020; MORA, 2019). As such, the KUA's premarital counseling initiative can be regarded as both a religious and social innovation, merging doctrinal instruction with psychosocial guidance to create a more holistic approach to marriage preparation.

The leadership perspective presented by the KUA of South Sinjai reflects an awareness of the broader demographic and social transformations occurring in contemporary Indonesian society. The rise in divorce cases, especially those initiated by wives (*cerai gugat*), often reflects deeper issues of unmet expectations, economic instability, and communication breakdowns. Recognizing these challenges, the KUA's strategy to integrate counseling as part of the marriage registration process represents a proactive institutional response. Instead of responding to marital crises after they occur, the office positions counseling as a preventive measure that anticipates potential sources of conflict. This approach resonates with the concept of *hisbah* in Islamic governance, where institutions act to uphold moral and social order before transgressions occur (Al-Ghazali, 2000). Thus, premarital counseling becomes a mechanism for maintaining community stability in alignment with Islamic ethical principles.

Furthermore, Sariman's emphasis on education before marriage is consistent with the Islamic concept of *ta'dib* and *tarbiyah*—the process of cultivating knowledge, discipline, and moral awareness before assuming new responsibilities. In this sense, the KUA functions as both a religious institution and an agent of social development. By equipping couples with knowledge and self-awareness, the counseling process helps ensure that the family unit—considered the smallest yet most fundamental pillar of the *ummah*—remains stable and resilient. As noted by Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1995), marriage in Islam is not merely a private contract between two individuals but a public covenant that contributes to societal order and moral continuity. Premarital counseling, therefore, reinforces this covenant by preparing couples to fulfill their social, emotional, and spiritual duties.

The institutional perspective also underscores the link between family resilience and national development. A strong family is the foundation of a strong society; therefore, policies aimed at strengthening families are integral to the national vision of social harmony. The KUA's leadership recognizes that divorce not only affects individual households but also has broader social repercussions—disrupting child development, creating economic burdens, and straining community cohesion. Premarital counseling, as described by Sariman, seeks to address these multidimensional challenges by promoting early awareness, responsibility, and adaptability among couples. His remarks echo the findings of previous studies (Haryanto & Sulaiman, 2022; Qomariah et al., 2021), which suggest that marriage education programs contribute to lower divorce rates and improved marital satisfaction when effectively implemented at the local level.

Similarly, the counselor at KUA South Sinjai, Abdu Syukur, reinforced the urgency of premarital counseling by linking it to the theological dimension of marriage. He described marriage as “the longest form of worship in Islam, and one that should not be approached experimentally, since it is intended to bring forth future generations. Therefore, counseling is necessary because marriage is a new stage for couples that requires serious preparation” (Syukur, 2024). His statement situates counseling within a spiritual framework, emphasizing that it is not merely a bureaucratic step but a continuation of religious guidance (*hidayah*). By framing marriage as a form of *ibadah* (worship), Syukur draws attention to its sacred nature and lifelong moral implications. This perspective aligns with Islamic jurisprudence, which considers marriage a *sunnah mu'akkadah*—a highly recommended act of worship that fulfills both personal and communal objectives.

Syukur's explanation highlights the educational and spiritual synergy within the counseling process. While some modules focus on practical skills such as communication and financial management, others explore Qur'anic and prophetic teachings on marital harmony. This integration ensures that the program addresses both the material and spiritual dimensions of family life. According to him, the ultimate goal of premarital counseling is to cultivate *taqwa* (piety) and *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character) within the household. When couples internalize these values, they are better equipped to resolve conflicts with patience, compassion, and justice. Such a perspective resonates with the framework proposed by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1994), who asserts that Islamic family education must prioritize the development of spiritual consciousness as the foundation for sustainable relationships.

Moreover, Syukur's insights shed light on the pedagogical role of religious counselors in guiding couples through the moral and emotional complexities of marital life. Counselors are not merely facilitators of information but mentors and role models who exemplify Islamic virtues in practice. During the counseling sessions, they often share real-life examples of successful marriages grounded in mutual respect and shared faith. This personalized approach enhances the relevance of the counseling content and fosters an atmosphere of trust between facilitators and participants. As observed during fieldwork,

many couples expressed deep appreciation for the counselors' sincerity and approachability, which made them more receptive to learning. This finding is consistent with the argument by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) that relational dynamics between instructors and participants play a crucial role in the effectiveness of qualitative educational interventions.

The combination of Sariman's institutional vision and Syukur's theological approach reflects the complementary dimensions of policy and pedagogy within the premarital counseling framework. While institutional leaders focus on structural and administrative strategies to enhance program reach, counselors emphasize the moral and affective transformation of individuals. Together, these perspectives illustrate how the KUA of South Sinjai has localized national marriage education policies to suit its community context. The results demonstrate that when counseling integrates religious doctrine, emotional intelligence training, and social awareness, it produces not only knowledgeable but also spiritually resilient couples. Consequently, premarital counseling emerges as both a faith-based and empirically grounded practice, serving the dual mission of fulfilling religious obligations and addressing modern family challenges.

These institutional and theological insights highlight the strategic importance of premarital counseling in shaping the moral fabric of society. In a time when rapid modernization and shifting social values challenge traditional family structures, initiatives like the KUA's counseling program reaffirm the centrality of marriage as a sacred and stabilizing institution. By combining structured guidance, community participation, and continuous policy evaluation, the South Sinjai model exemplifies an integrated approach to family development rooted in Islamic values. As both Sariman and Syukur noted, preparing couples before marriage is not simply about preventing divorce—it is about building generations capable of sustaining faith, love, and social harmony in accordance with divine guidance. Thus, premarital counseling stands as a tangible expression of Islam's comprehensive vision for human well-being, encompassing not only personal happiness but also collective stability and moral integrity.

Perspectives of Married Couples

The voices of married couples who had participated in counseling provided firsthand evidence of its impact. Mawaddah Warahmah, married to Rahmat in 2023, explained that counseling had given her “a general picture of life after marriage, including how to prepare for possible challenges and problems that may arise in the future” (Warahmah & Rahmat, 2025). Her statement shows that counseling helps participants build realistic expectations about marriage, preparing them to manage conflicts and preventing disillusionment.

Similarly, Satria and Ahmad, who married in 2017, stated that premarital counseling had been highly beneficial in educating them about spousal rights and obligations. Satria reflected, “I feel that premarital counseling was very beneficial, because without it I would not have known about the rights and obligations of a husband and wife. I also learned about many other aspects, such as financial management and communication” (Satria & Ahmad, 2025).

Their reflections demonstrate the breadth of knowledge imparted through counseling, extending beyond religious obligations to include practical life skills. This holistic approach indicates that counseling bridges spiritual, psychological, and socio-economic aspects of family life, thereby equipping couples with comprehensive readiness.

Nurhalisa and Asrul, married in 2021, further reinforced the religious value of counseling by acknowledging that it directly helped them pursue the Islamic ideal of building a *sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah* family. Nurhalisa emphasized, “The counseling provided by the KUA was extremely beneficial, as it gave me knowledge on how to ensure my marriage could realize the values of *sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah*” (Nurhalisa & Asrul, 2025). This indicates that the counseling sessions effectively integrated Islamic teachings with practical advice, allowing participants to view their future family as a spiritual journey rather than just a social contract.

Jumarni, who married Andi in 2018, noted that counseling transformed her perception of marriage from a mere social institution into a form of worship. She said, “After attending premarital counseling, I came to understand the true meaning of marriage. I realized that it is the longest form of worship that requires knowledge first; without knowledge, how could we endure the patience needed to build and sustain it?” (Jumarni & Andi, 2025). Her reflection underscores the critical role of knowledge as a foundation for marital endurance and resilience.

Taken together, the participants’ testimonies highlight the multidimensional benefits of premarital counseling. They experienced improvements in conflict management, spiritual awareness, practical household management, and relational understanding. These factors collectively contribute to reducing divorce risks and fostering resilient families.

Cross-Analysis and Interpretation

The findings from both institutional leaders and participants converge on the view that premarital counseling has significant preventive and transformative effects. Institutionally, it is seen as a strategy for reducing divorce rates, while for participants, it serves as a formative experience that reshapes their expectations, attitudes, and skills for marriage.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with family systems theory, which posits that families are dynamic units requiring adaptive skills to manage conflict and maintain stability. Counseling provides the knowledge base and coping strategies that enhance a couple’s ability to function as a unit. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Islamic perspectives on marriage, particularly the concept of *mitsaqan ghalidzan* (a strong covenant), which demands preparation and seriousness.

The data also support empirical research showing that couples who undergo premarital counseling have higher marital satisfaction and lower divorce rates compared to those who do not (Markman & Rhoades, 2012). The testimonies from South Sinjai reinforce this evidence by offering qualitative insights into how counseling directly shapes perceptions and skills, thereby contributing to marital stability.

Implications of Findings

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. First, premarital counseling must be institutionalized and expanded as a mandatory program within KUA and similar institutions, given its demonstrable impact on reducing divorce rates. Second, the program should continue integrating both spiritual and practical dimensions to ensure holistic preparation. Third, more efforts are needed to increase awareness among prospective couples, as some may underestimate the importance of counseling or prioritize other commitments over participation.

At the community level, the success of premarital counseling in South Sinjai illustrates that similar approaches could be adopted in other regions facing high divorce rates. Furthermore, integrating local cultural wisdom with religious and psychological perspectives could strengthen the contextual relevance of the program.

Conclusion

The study concludes that premarital counseling conducted at the Office of Religious Affairs in South Sinjai District is highly effective in preparing prospective couples to build resilient and harmonious families. The program contributes significantly to achieving the research objective by equipping participants with knowledge of marital rights and obligations, practical skills in communication and financial management, as well as religious values that support the formation of a *sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah* family. These outcomes affirm the hypothesis that premarital counseling functions as both a preventive measure against divorce and a strategic intervention to strengthen marital readiness. Beyond reducing the risk of separation, the counseling also enhances couples' spiritual awareness and long-term commitment to family life. Future studies may expand this research by examining the sustainability of counseling impacts over time and exploring comparative practices in other regions to enrich the development of family resilience programs.

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