

# Premarital Training as a Preventive Strategy for Divorce in Kapanewon Ngemplak

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**Abstract** Marriage guidance is a program initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to equip engaged couples with the knowledge and skills needed to build and maintain a harmonious and sustainable family life. However, despite the many programs designed to prepare couples for marriage, divorce rates have continued to increase over the past ten years. Collaboration between academic institutions and the government, represented in this context by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama), plays a vital role in nation-building efforts through the implementation of premarital preparation programs. The KUA has consistently facilitated this program as a preventive measure to address the increasing divorce rate. The premarital course is designed to (1) encourage community involvement in supporting the formation of *sakinah* (harmonious) families, (2) raise awareness of the importance of adequate preparation before marriage, and (3) integrate psychological and Islamic economic perspectives into marriage readiness initiatives. The program used several methods, including (1) structured discussions during training sessions, (2) interviews, and (3) analysis and evaluation of field data and training outcomes. The findings indicate that the government's role in Kapanewon Ngemplak has been effectively carried out in collaboration with local university academics. This initiative received positive responses for contributing to better-prepared marriages. Nevertheless, maintaining family harmony remains a challenge, because efforts to build family resilience must continue beyond the wedding ceremony. Premarital training was conducted not only to prevent divorce but, more importantly, to address and prevent conflicts before they lead to divorce.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is experiencing an alarming social problem characterized by an increase in divorce over the past several years. In 2019, there were 480,618 divorce cases, representing an 18% increase from the previous year. Divorce data from Religious Courts throughout Indonesia in 2022 recorded 516,344 cases, consisting of 127,986 divorce applications and 388,358 contested divorce cases (Ditjen Badilag, 2022).

Divorce in Indonesia is a phenomenon regulated by the state. This regulation is intended to ensure proper legal force and legal certainty. Such legality is useful for both parties in securing their rights, including rights related to property, child custody, and other matters. Over the past 10

years, the divorce rate in Indonesia has fluctuated. From 2013 to 2023, the highest increase in divorce occurred in 2022, with 516,334 divorce cases. Meanwhile, the lowest number was recorded in 2020, with 291,677 divorce cases (Annur, 2023).

Moreover, divorce in Indonesia increased by 5% during the COVID-19 pandemic, partly because some Indonesians experienced economic hardship (Fauziah et al., 2020). Factors contributing to divorce during the pandemic included domestic conflicts and disputes caused by quarrels, as well as economic problems resulting from the sudden dismissal of many workers, which made family finances unstable (Ramadhani & Nurwati, 2021).

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It is also important to consider the fact that, although divorce in Indonesia is legally required to proceed through the courts, many men still pursue divorce outside the legal system because they recognize the authority of Islamic scholars and classical Islamic law over state regulations. In contrast, women tend to rely on the courts to clarify their marital status and secure their rights after divorce (Nurlaelawati, 2013).

Based on this condition, the author sees the need for government efforts, in this case by the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, together with its lower-level officials, such as penghulu (marriage registrars), religious supervisors, scholars, and kiai (Islamic religious leaders). In addition, the roles of community leaders, families, and universities are also necessary to prevent the increasing divorce rate in Indonesia (Hidayati, 2021). Although the Ministry of Religious Affairs has made efforts in several parts of Indonesia to implement premarital education by adhering to the principle of public service, the professional principle cannot be fully implemented because it conflicts with the funding structure of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Fatkhudin, 2019). Therefore, the author also sees the need for collaborative efforts from academics at local universities to support premarital education in the community.

The results of the study by Sururie et al. (2023) concluded that strengthening the resilience of Muslim families in Indonesia to prevent the increasing divorce rate must be pursued through a comprehensive approach from upstream to downstream. This strategy involves integrated efforts, beginning with the internalization of core marital education values within the family, the provision of premarital education by formal institutions such as the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama), ensuring that both spouses are well informed about conflict

resolution methods, and revitalizing the divorce case examination process in religious courts. In line with this view, Abu Rokhmad, Director General of Islamic Public Guidance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, noted that factors causing divorce include continuous disputes, economic problems, domestic violence, and communication crises. “One divorce case can be caused by several factors at once. This shows the need for a multidimensional guidance approach” (Kemenag, 2025).

An interesting aspect to explore regarding divorce cases in the city of Yogyakarta is that, although the highest number of divorces in 2022 occurred in East Java, Yogyakarta presents its own unique dynamics. Based on surveys conducted by two institutions, namely the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama) and the Religious Court of Sleman, divorce was found to be influenced by multiple factors, including economic, social, and cultural aspects. Among these factors, economic factors were identified as the primary cause. Economic instability affects a couple’s ability to maintain harmony in their relationship. Issues such as domestic violence, infidelity, and neglect are also commonly cited as reasons for divorce.

## 2. METHOD

This community service activity was carried out from March 1 to July 30, 2024. The activities were implemented through collaboration between Universitas Islam Indonesia and the KUA at Kapanewon (subdistrict) Ngemplak, and consisted of several stages, as follows.

### 2.1 Mapping the key problems underlying divorce

Data were collected through observation and interviews from March to June 2024. Observations were carried out at



Figure 1 . Implementation stages of community service activities

the Ngemplak Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama) to examine the issues faced by the community, particularly the main causes of divorce and the efforts made by the KUA in fulfilling its role in society. Interviews were conducted with religious counselors and residents of Kapanewon Ngemplak to gather data on the primary causes of divorce.

## 2.2 Premarital training

Premarital training was held on March 18, 2024, as a collaborative effort between the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama) and Universitas Islam Indonesia. The program focused on providing knowledge in the fields of psychology and economics and involved 15 engaged couples.

## 2.3 Evaluation and analysis

After mapping the problems, organizing premarital training, and evaluating the implementation, the community service team proceeded to write a book that was expected to benefit the wider public from June to July 2024.

The community service activities were carried out through the following stages. Based on the [Figure 1](#) that were carried out, the enthusiasm of the government program organizers, in this case the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama), received a positive response because the program provided not only health and religious counseling but also additional knowledge, including psychology and economics, delivered by academics from a local university. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach that focused on the implementation and perceived benefits of the program. The program's effectiveness was illustrated through participants' responses during its implementation.

# 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

## 3.1 Main factor causing divorce in Kapanewon Ngemplak

Based on interviews conducted with the Office of Religious Affairs of Kapanewon Ngemplak [KUA Ngemplak \(2021\)](#), various factors were found to contribute to divorce cases. These included 5 cases caused by economic problems, 6 cases related to social media use, 6 cases stemming from poor communication between husband and wife, 4 cases involving long-distance relationships, 4 cases related to a lack of understanding in managing household life, and 4 cases caused by domestic violence. These cases represent the many problematic causes of divorce found in the community.

Based on the interview findings, the primary causes of divorce in Kapanewon Ngemplak were identified as six key factors, which are systematically described below through individual case study narratives.

### 3.1.1 Economic problems as a primary cause of divorce

Economic factors are among the main determinants in household dynamics that often lead to divorce. Field

data indicated that Respondent A experienced household conflict because her spouse was unable to meet the family's basic needs, which forced her to take out loans secretly and triggered disputes that ended in divorce. Similarly, Respondent B experienced financial collapse because of her spouse's online gambling addiction, which not only disrupted economic stability but also undermined her sense of security. In an extreme case, Respondent C disclosed that her spouse coerced her into exploitation to repay family debts. Meanwhile, Respondent D resorted to theft because of unbearable financial pressure.

These cases reflect the critical role of financial readiness in maintaining household harmony. Financial unpreparedness, poor financial management, and weak partnership in economic decision-making contribute to psychological pressure and emotional strain in marital relationships. Therefore, strengthening financial literacy and ensuring economic preparedness before marriage are essential preventive measures for establishing a stable and sustainable family. Similarly, the dissertation study by [Ventura \(2025\)](#) examined the impact of economic stress on marital satisfaction using a correlational design involving 80 urban married participants in the United States. The results showed that financial stress, such as unemployment, debt, and poor money management, negatively affected marital satisfaction, whereas social support, money management skills, and demographic diversity played significant mediating roles.

### 3.1.2 Infidelity through social media and social interactions

Infidelity is a significant contributing factor to divorce and is increasingly influenced by technological advances and social media platforms. A study by [Djalaluddin et al. \(2023\)](#) found that the misuse of social media can contribute to divorce. Respondent E reported that her spouse developed an emotionally intimate relationship with another individual whom he met through social media. What began as a casual interaction developed into a relationship that jeopardized the marriage. Meanwhile, Respondent F experienced infidelity in a workplace context, where emotional proximity and perceived attention became the basis for extramarital involvement. Respondent G revealed that her partner maintained a five-year virtual relationship, whereas Respondent H discovered that her spouse was involved in a physical affair with someone he had met online. These cases indicate that infidelity often stems from weakened communication and diminished emotional intimacy within marriage. Therefore, couples need to maintain emotional connection and establish healthy boundaries in social media interactions as a strategic effort to preserve the longevity of marriage.

### 3.1.3 Dysfunctional communication in marital relations

Communication serves as a fundamental pillar in cultivating a healthy and enduring marital relationship. Field observations revealed several instances of communication breakdown, both verbally and emotionally.

For example, Respondent I and her spouse were unable to discuss issues related to sexual intimacy, which led to persistent marital tension. Respondent J reported conflict arising from her spouse's financial secrecy, which ultimately resulted in a breakdown of trust and divorce. Similarly, Respondents K and L described limited communication because of demanding work schedules, which weakened their emotional connection. In addition, Respondent M highlighted a mismatch in communication styles, with one spouse preferring directness and the other relying on subtle cues, resulting in frequent misunderstandings. These cases underscore the need for interpersonal communication skills within the household, including openness, empathy, and mutual support. Effective communication not only resolves conflicts but also fosters trust and emotional closeness between spouses. According to the study by Juliansyahzen et al. (2024), divorces initiated by wives within Yogyakarta's Muslim middle class reflect an effort to negotiate roles within marriage. The findings showed that dissatisfaction with self-expression, gender roles, and decision-making principles, rather than purely economic issues, were the main reasons for divorce.

### 3.1.4 Domestic violence as an indicator of marital fragility

Domestic Violence (DV) represents a severe violation of marital values and is one of the most critical underlying causes of divorce. According to Respondent N, physical abuse was perpetrated by her spouse as a form of emotional release caused by unemployment and economic stress. Respondent O reported ongoing verbal abuse that degraded her dignity. Many victims of DV experience physical injuries, psychological distress, and long-term trauma but refrain from reporting the abuse because of social stigma, fear, or financial dependence. DV not only endangers individual safety but also disrupts the emotional equilibrium of the family and negatively affects children's development. These realities indicate that domestic violence signals relational dysfunction and poor conflict management in marriage. A study by Windani et al. (2024) emphasized the need for improvements in the legal system to protect victims and prevent violence in the home. In addition, preventive efforts through premarital education, family counseling, and assertive legal enforcement are imperative to reduce the prevalence of DV and establish marriage as a safe and emotionally healthy space.

### 3.1.5 Long-distance marriage and trust issues

Marital relationships that span geographical distances, or long-distance marriages, are highly susceptible to emotional conflict and trust issues. Respondent P experienced marital breakdown after suspecting her spouse, who had moved to another city, of engaging in inappropriate online interactions. Her attempt at assertive communication was met with defensiveness, which ultimately led to divorce. Similarly, Respondent Q and her spouse experienced relationship deterioration because of a lack of quality time, conflicting life priorities, and declining communication intensity. In a more severe case, Respondent R was

abandoned after her spouse, a migrant worker, severed all contact for years. These instances emphasize that long-distance marriage requires specific strategies to maintain emotional stability and reinforce commitment. Trust, consistent communication, and a clear long-term plan for reunification are critical components for sustaining the integrity of a marital relationship. Without these efforts, such relationships are vulnerable to gradual disintegration. As stated in the study by Aprilia et al. (2024), the higher the level of trust, the stronger the marital commitment among couples in long-distance relationships. Therefore, long-distance couples must strengthen their commitment by increasing trust, including predictability in their partner's behavior.

### 3.1.6 Lack of understanding of marital roles and concepts

A limited understanding of roles, rights, and responsibilities within the institution of marriage often triggers conflict and leads to divorce. Respondent S canceled her wedding plans because of her fiancé's domineering attitude and unwillingness to compromise during the planning process. Respondent T experienced ongoing disputes caused by her spouse's unilateral financial decisions, which led to feelings of exclusion and devaluation. Meanwhile, Respondents U and V reported psychological pressure caused by the loss of autonomy in their marriages due to unbalanced power dynamics following arranged marriages. These cases illustrate that marriages built without mutual vision and shared values are prone to conflict. Therefore, prospective couples need to undergo comprehensive premarital preparation covering religious, psychological, and sociocultural aspects to avoid conceptual misunderstandings in married life. Premarital education, open dialogue, and support from qualified professionals are key to achieving harmonious and sustainable family life.

## 3.2 Premarital training

The premarital training, themed *Membangun Keluarga Madani* (Building a Madani Family), was conducted at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama) of Kapanewon Ngemplak in collaboration with Universitas Islam Indonesia. The training focused on providing material on conflict management within the household and understanding the concept of a *sakinah* (harmonious) family as taught in Islamic teachings. In addition, a training session introduced participants to household financial management.

Figure 2 shows the premarital training activities, in which two topics were considered essential as foundational knowledge for engaged couples preparing for married life. The mental and economic readiness of the couples could be reflected in their understanding of conflict management and financial management within the household.

### 3.2.1 Understanding of the concept of a *sakinah* family and conflict resolution

The training introduced the concept of a *sakinah*



**Figure 2.** Implementation stages of community service activities

(harmonious) family as taught in Islam. This concept not only emphasizes tranquility and peace within the household but also highlights spiritual values, responsibility, and cooperation between husband and wife in building a strong and blessed family. In addition, one of the main focuses of the training was conflict management within the household. This material aimed to help engaged couples understand potential conflicts that may arise in married life and strategies for resolving them in a healthy and constructive manner. Participants were encouraged to recognize effective communication patterns, understand differences in their partner's character, and build empathy and mutual understanding as the foundation of a harmonious relationship.

One of the most important points emphasized during premarital counseling was that conflict in marriage is often unavoidable. However, certain traits can worsen the situation and deepen the divide between partners. These include selfishness, blaming others, a sense of superiority, and being judgmental. Selfishness, for instance, occurs when someone prioritizes their own needs above everything else. In a marriage, a husband who constantly demands to be served without considering his wife's condition can create tension. Second, blaming others refers to the tendency to avoid self-reflection and assign fault instead. For example, when an argument arises, the wife may immediately blame the husband without trying to understand the root of the problem together. Third, a superiority complex involves feeling that one is always right and dismissing the partner's input. For instance, one spouse may consistently insist that their ideas or decisions are better and ignore suggestions from the other spouse. Finally, being judgmental means forming negative opinions about a partner without understanding the context. For example, a husband may accuse his wife of being lazy because the house is messy, without realizing that she is unwell (Hasan et al., 2023).

If left unaddressed, these four traits can escalate conflicts and damage the relationship. Therefore, it is important to prioritize empathy, self-reflection, and healthy communication when dealing with differences. Avoiding these negative behaviors not only helps reduce conflict but also strengthens the bond within the relationship.

### 3.2.2 Family financial management

Premarital training on family financial management focused on how to plan finances with the goal of building a prosperous family. This goal can be achieved through effective, efficient, and meaningful financial management. The purposes of managing family finances include realizing dreams, avoiding wasteful spending, avoiding debt or online loans, and ultimately creating a harmonious household.

The first step in managing family finances is assessing the family's financial health. One essential skill for engaged couples is the ability to distinguish between needs and wants. It is crucial to define both current and future needs. Current needs are short-term necessities, such as household expenses, food, clothing, and children's education. Future needs include long-term goals, such as children's higher education, fulfilling religious obligations such as Hajj, and preparing for retirement.

The second step is creating a monthly financial planning guide. This plan should allocate up to 50% for routine expenses, 10% for savings, a maximum of 30% for debt repayments, and no more than 10% for entertainment or leisure. It is also important to prepare early for future financial goals by listing them clearly so that the family's financial health remains stable and well maintained.

### 3.3 Evaluation and analysis

In the pursuit of strengthening family resilience to achieve the ideal values of harmony and well-being, a comprehensive approach is essential. This approach must encompass a range of strategic measures to prevent and address conflicts within the household. Preventive interventions are necessary to mitigate potential issues before they escalate, whereas curative efforts are used to resolve existing problems. Furthermore, rehabilitative actions serve as restorative measures following crises that disrupt family dynamics.

Based on the community engagement activities conducted, the implementing team sought to formulate three key strategies for preventing divorce. The preventive strategy was carried out through premarital education programs designed to enhance couples' readiness by promoting an understanding of family psychology, with the goal of reducing the likelihood of prolonged marital conflict (Hasan et al., 2023). In addition, financial literacy sessions were provided to equip participants with essential skills in household financial planning, thereby minimizing the risk of economic disputes within the family unit.

In evaluating the program's implementation, participants' feedback indicated that this activity enhanced their readiness for marriage. This was particularly evident in relation to the focus on family psychology, especially the relationship between husband and wife, as well as preparation for household financial management. Observations during the training revealed that participants were enthusiastic in asking questions related to the material, demonstrating a high level of curiosity. Premarital training aims to equip couples with essential financial management

skills and help them address common financial issues that can lead to divorce (Aprilia & Tehupuring, 2023).

Figure 3 shows the results of collaborative efforts between the KUA and Universitas Islam Indonesia to provide preventive measures in the form of literacy education about divorce. This effort can also be considered a curative strategy through the development of a book intended to serve as a public literacy resource on the sociology of divorce and its broader societal implications. It is recommended that the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama) institutionalize counseling services supported by professional psychologists to provide targeted interventions for families experiencing conflict. As Usman (2021) showed, some communities in Yogyakarta, particularly in Bantul, perceive divorce as a common issue



Figure 3. Collaborative program through family education and often view it as the best isolation to marital problems. Among the contributing factors to divorce in Bantul are economic challenges, educational background, consumerist lifestyles, and shifting societal perceptions of divorce.

Lastly, the rehabilitative strategy is considered a critical component when divorce or severe conflict has already occurred. Mediation efforts should be facilitated by authorized institutions to mitigate the long-term consequences of divorce Arfaizar et al. (2022), especially for children, who are often the most vulnerable and may experience enduring psychological effects. Such interventions are necessary to prevent the emergence of subsequent social and emotional problems in post-divorce family contexts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that the government’s role in Kapanewon Ngemplak was carried out through a collaborative approach with academics from a local university. The program received positive responses, particularly in enhancing the preparedness of engaged couples for married life. Nevertheless, maintaining family harmony remains a significant challenge, because family resilience is not limited to the wedding ceremony but is an ongoing process.

It is recommended that the function of the Office

of Religious Affairs (KUA/Kantor Urusan Agama) be strengthened in delivering preventive, curative, and rehabilitative services. Divorce in society should be understood as the culmination of unresolved conflict. Accordingly, strategic efforts are required, such as integrating psychologists as collaborative partners in the provision of postmarital counseling services. Therefore, premarital education not only aims to prevent divorce but, more importantly, helps prevent ongoing conflict from escalating into divorce.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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