

PRE-MARITAL GUIDANCE EFFORTS TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SAKINAH FAMILY CONCEPT AMONG PROSPECTIVE BRIDES AND GROOMS AT THE KUA OF PANAI HULU DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The high divorce rate in Indonesia highlights the importance of preparing prospective couples for the challenges of married life. This study aims to examine the implementation of pre-marital counseling at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Panai Hulu District and explore prospective couples' understanding of the concept of a sakinah family following their participation in the program. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Informants consisted of Islamic religious counselors and five prospective couples selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation and analyzed using an interactive data analysis model. The findings indicate that, based on the experiences and perceptions of informants, pre-marital counseling helps prospective couples develop a better understanding of the objectives of marriage, the rights and obligations of spouses, family communication, and strategies for resolving domestic conflicts. The implementation of counseling was supported by the competence of religious counselors and administrative support from the KUA. However, limited time, inadequate instructional media, and participants' reluctance to express their opinions remained challenges. The study suggests the need for more participatory and practical counseling approaches, including discussions and case studies, to better address the needs of prospective couples in preparing for a harmonious, resilient, and sustainable sakinah family.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage is both a social institution and a sacred bond aimed at establishing a harmonious, peaceful, and loving family life (Diniya et al., 2023). In Islamic teachings, marriage is not merely defined as a legitimate union between a man and a woman but is also viewed as an act of worship intended to create a family characterized by sakinah (tranquility), mawaddah (affection), and rahmah (mercy). The concept of a sakinah family describes a

household life grounded in faith, mutual respect, a sense of responsibility, and effective communication, as well as the ability to face life's various challenges together. Thus, success in building a family life does not depend solely on fulfilling administrative marriage requirements; it is also influenced by the emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual readiness of the prospective couple.

In recent years, the dynamics of modern life have presented increasingly complex challenges to family resilience. Social changes, advancements in information technology, rising economic pressures, and shifting patterns of family interaction are factors influencing the quality of household life. These conditions contribute to an increase in family conflicts, which ultimately lead to divorce. The high number of divorce cases in Indonesia demonstrates that divorce remains a serious social issue requiring attention. This condition highlights the importance of strengthening prospective couples' readiness before entering married life, particularly in relation to their ability to manage emotional, social, economic, and interpersonal challenges within the household. The high divorce rate in Indonesia indicates that some couples lack adequate readiness to handle the various issues that arise after entering married life. Conflicts triggered by poor communication, emotional unpreparedness, economic problems, and a lack of understanding regarding the rights and obligations of husbands and wives are common issues found in household life (Ramadan & Ramdani, 2022).

This phenomenon is also evident at the local level. Data from the North Sumatra Province Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicates that divorce rates in Labuhanbatu Regency have remained at a level requiring serious attention in recent years (BPS, 2024). This local condition demonstrates that the issue of divorce requires attention not only at the national level but also within specific regional contexts. In Panai Hulu District, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) has noted that the domestic issues leading to divorce generally occur among couples whose marriages are of relatively short duration. This information represents an initial indication obtained from the local context and should therefore be understood as a field-based observation rather than a general statistical conclusion. The domestic problems identified include difficulties in emotional management, weak interpersonal communication, family economic problems, and limited preparation for married life. These conditions indicate that preventive measures through pre-marital education and guidance are increasingly essential for strengthening family resilience (Pitrotussaadah, 2022).

To prevent various issues in married life, the government conducts a pre-marital guidance program administered through the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). This program is designed to equip prospective brides and grooms with the understanding, attitudes, and skills necessary to build a harmonious and sustainable family (Hasan, 2022). The material covered extends beyond legal regulations regarding marriage to include family communication, an understanding of spousal rights and obligations, conflict resolution, reproductive health, the strengthening of family resilience, and the instilling of religious values. Through this preparation, prospective couples are expected to be better prepared for married life, thereby allowing potential conflicts to be anticipated and minimized from the outset.

Previous studies have demonstrated that pre-marital guidance contributes positively to building family resilience. (Asa & Syarifuddin, 2025) found that marriage guidance plays a role in preventing divorce by enhancing couples' understanding of married life. Research by (Mas'amah, 2022) also indicates that pre-marital guidance contributes to the formation of a *sakinah* (peaceful and harmonious) family by reinforcing religious values. Meanwhile, (Ahmad et al., 2022) emphasize that the competence of religious counselors and the instructional methods used are crucial factors determining the success of pre-marital guidance programs.

However, the previous studies have primarily focused on the general role and contribution of pre-marital guidance to family resilience, divorce prevention, and the formation of a *sakinah* family. (Hadaiyatullah, 2026) emphasize the role of marriage guidance in strengthening couples' understanding of married life, while Khotijah et al. (2023) focus on the contribution of religious values to the formation of a *sakinah* family. (Maulilidia, 2026), on the other hand, highlight the importance of counselor competence and instructional methods in program implementation.

Although these studies provide important insights, they have not sufficiently explained how prospective couples experience the counseling process, interpret the materials provided, and relate their experiences to their preparation for married life.

Furthermore, the analysis of counseling methods, participants' experiences and perceptions, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing program implementation has generally not been examined in an integrated manner within a specific local KUA context. Studies identifying the factors that facilitate or hinder program implementation at the sub-district level also remain relatively limited. This issue is important because the social characteristics and local conditions of a community can influence both the implementation of pre-marital guidance and participants' engagement with the program (Almigo, 2024).

Given these circumstances, this study offers an analytical contribution by examining pre-marital counseling at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Panai Hulu District through the experiences and perspectives of Islamic religious counselors and prospective couples. Rather than focusing solely on the general outcomes of the program, this study explores how the counseling process is implemented, how prospective couples experience and understand the materials provided, and how learning methods influence their participation during the counseling process. The research not only identifies participants' perceptions regarding the contribution of pre-marital counseling to their understanding of the concept of a *sakinah* (harmonious and tranquil) family but also explores participants' experiences during the counseling, shifts in perspective following the program, and the factors that facilitate or hinder its implementation. This integrated perspective constitutes the contribution of the present study by connecting counseling practices, participant experiences, learning methods, and implementation challenges within the local KUA context. This approach is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of pre-marital counseling implementation at the local level.

Against this backdrop, the study focuses on analyzing the implementation of the pre-marital counseling program at the Office of Religious Affairs in Panai Hulu District and exploring prospective couples' experiences and perceptions regarding their understanding of the *sakinah* family concept. Furthermore, the study aims to identify the factors that support or impede the program's implementation. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for the Office of Religious Affairs to refine the program's implementation through approaches that are more interactive, contextual, and aligned with community needs. The findings are also expected to provide empirical insights for the development of more participatory and practical pre-marital counseling approaches by considering participants' experiences and the challenges encountered during program implementation. Ultimately, pre-marital counseling is expected to contribute to strengthening family resilience while serving as a preventive measure to reduce the potential for future divorce.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the research objective: to gain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of pre-marital counseling and how prospective brides and grooms interpret the concept of a *sakinah* (harmonious and peaceful) family based on their experiences and the social realities they encounter. Meanwhile, the descriptive design is used to present a complete picture of the phenomenon under study systematically, factually, and in-depth without administering interventions or altering the conditions existing in the field (Yusuf, 2020). This study does not seek to explore the essence of participants' lived experiences as in phenomenological research, but rather describes and analyzes the implementation of pre-marital counseling, participants' perceptions, and the factors supporting and hindering the program within its natural setting.

The research was conducted at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Panai Hulu District, Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra. This location was selected purposively because the KUA is the institution directly

responsible for organizing pre-marital counseling programs for prospective brides and grooms as part of the government's effort to strengthen family resilience.

Research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on the consideration that they possessed experience and information relevant to the research focus. The criteria for informants included: (1) prospective brides and grooms officially registered at the Panai Hulu District KUA; (2) individuals who had completed the entire series of pre-marital counseling activities, comprising at least two sessions; and (3) individuals willing to serve as research informants. Based on these criteria, the study involved five couples (ten individuals) as primary informants and two Islamic religious counselors as supporting informants. Data collection ceased once the information obtained showed recurring patterns (data saturation), indicating that no further significant new information was being uncovered.

Data collection in this study employed three primary techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations involved directly witnessing the conduct of pre-marital counseling at the Panai Hulu District Office of Religious Affairs to gain insight into the activity's flow, the delivery of material, interactions between counselors and prospective couples, and the dynamics that emerged during the sessions. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were used to gather in-depth information regarding the participants' experiences, views, and level of understanding concerning the concept of *keluarga sakinah* (a harmonious, tranquil family) following the counseling. Each interview was conducted face-to-face and lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. All conversations were audio-recorded with the informants' consent, and the recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure the information remained intact and accurate throughout the data analysis process. Documentation served as a supplementary data source, encompassing activity schedules, counseling materials, administrative documents, and other records related to the implementation of the pre-marital counseling program at the Panai Hulu District Office of Religious Affairs.

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary instrument (human instrument), playing a central role across all research stages from planning and data collection to analysis and the interpretation of findings. To maintain the credibility of the descriptive analysis and minimize the influence of personal assumptions, the researcher applied reflexivity by maintaining field notes and documenting observations, decisions, and reflections throughout the research process. Reflexivity in this study was used as a means of monitoring the researcher's potential influence on data collection and interpretation rather than as a phenomenological procedure. The researcher also compared interpretations with interview transcripts, observation records, and documentation to ensure that the findings remained grounded in the data provided by the informants.

Data analysis in this study follows the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, comprising three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, 2020). The data condensation stage involves selecting, organizing, simplifying, categorizing, and coding data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Following this process, the data is organized and presented in descriptive narratives and tables to facilitate a clearer understanding of patterns, inter-category relationships, and underlying meanings. The subsequent stage involves drawing conclusions, a process conducted concurrently with continuous verification through the comparison of various data sources. This step aims to ensure the research findings possess a high level of validity and are scientifically sound.

Data validity in this study is assessed through the application of source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation is achieved by confirming and comparing information obtained from different informants, specifically prospective brides and grooms and religious counselors, thereby yielding a more objective data overview. Meanwhile, technique triangulation is carried out by examining the consistency of data obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Furthermore, to enhance the credibility of the research findings, the researcher employs "member checking" with a number of informants. This process aims to confirm that the researcher's interpretations accurately represent the experiences, views, and information conveyed by the

informants during the study. These procedures were applied to strengthen the credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness of the findings while maintaining the study's descriptive qualitative orientation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aims to analyze the implementation of pre-marital counseling at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Panai Hulu District and to explore the experiences and understanding of prospective brides and grooms regarding the concept of a *sakinah* (harmonious and peaceful) family. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, three main themes were identified: (1) the implementation of pre-marital counseling; (2) changes in the prospective couples' understanding of a *sakinah* family; and (3) factors supporting and hindering the program's implementation.

Implementation of Pre-Marriage Guidance at the Panai Hulu District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA)

Research findings indicate that pre-marital guidance at the Panai Hulu District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is conducted as a preparatory program aimed at equipping prospective brides and grooms before they enter married life. The program is delivered through an educational format, with an Islamic religious counselor serving as the primary facilitator. The material covered includes Islamic marriage law, the rights and obligations of spouses, family communication, conflict management, reproductive health, and the concept of a *sakinah* (harmonious and peaceful) family.

Observations indicate that during the initial implementation phase, the guidance process was dominated by the lecture method. The facilitator served as the primary source of information, while participants tended to act merely as listeners. Interaction was relatively limited, as many participants focused on listening to the material rather than asking questions or sharing their experiences. This situation demonstrates that the one-way delivery of material did not fully foster active engagement among the prospective brides and grooms.

These findings are reinforced by the results of interviews with prospective brides and grooms. One informant stated that during the presentation of the material, they mostly listened to the facilitator's explanations and did not yet engage significantly in discussion. *"During the presentation of the material, we mostly listened to the facilitator's explanations. Typically, the facilitator would explain the material first, and we would listen. Not all participants immediately asked questions or voiced their opinions, as some still felt shy or were not yet accustomed to speaking up."*

The quote indicates that participant engagement in the lecture method remains limited. Thus, the observational findings are not based solely on the researcher's observations but are also reinforced by experiences shared directly by the participants.

However, the dynamics of learning shifted when extension workers employed discussion and case study methods. When participants were invited to discuss issues close to domestic life such as communication between husband and wife, differences of opinion, and conflict resolution they appeared more active in expressing their views, sharing experiences, and seeking alternative solutions. These findings indicate that participant engagement increases when the material is presented in the form of issues relevant to their lives.

One of the informants explained that discussing examples of household issues made the material easier to understand, as participants could relate it to situations they might face after marriage. *"When the material is explained using examples of household issues, it is easier for us to understand because we can picture how such problems might play out in our own future lives. We can also discuss and share our views on how to resolve those issues."*

The findings indicate that the learning method plays a crucial role in the delivery of pre-marital counseling. From the perspective of Andragogy Theory, Knowles (1984) explains that adult learning is closely linked to existing experience, the need to learn, and the ability to solve problems relevant to real-life situations. Consequently,

participant involvement in discussions and case studies not only renders the learning process more interactive but also affords participants the opportunity to connect new knowledge with issues they may encounter in married life.

These findings align with (Rokhaniyanto et al., 2023) view that adult learning is more meaningful when participants can connect the material to real-life experiences and issues. This alignment is evident in the study's results, which show that participants demonstrated higher levels of engagement when the guidance material was linked to actual domestic life scenarios. However, this study further emphasizes that, in the context of pre-marital guidance, problem-based learning not only enhances engagement but also serves as a means to assess the extent to which prospective couples can apply the concepts they have learned to concrete situations.

In addition to teaching methods, the use of visual media also influences participant engagement. In several activities, extension workers use presentation materials and educational videos to explain the concept of a harmonious family (Sukandar, 2023). Observations indicate that the use of these media helps capture participants' attention and makes the material more concrete. However, consistent implementation has not been possible due to limited facilities and infrastructure at the Panai Hulu District KUA. This situation demonstrates that the quality of the guidance provided is determined not only by the counselor's competence but also by the availability of learning facilities.

Prospective Brides and Grooms' Understanding of a Sakinah Family

According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, a sakinah family (a family characterized by tranquility and harmony) is built upon five key foundations: religiosity, affection (*mawaddah wa rahmah*), commitment, effective communication, and the ability to resolve conflicts wisely (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2017). This perspective aligns with the views of M. Quraish Shihab, who explains that a sakinah family is one that fosters inner peace, as it is founded on faith, affection, and shared responsibility between husband and wife (Shihab, 2007). The term sakinah itself derives from the word *sakana*, meaning calm or tranquil (Al-Misbah, 2023). Thus, a sakinah family should not be understood as one entirely free from conflict, but rather as a family capable of facing and resolving conflicts through consultation, communication, and mutual respect grounded in religious values.

This concept also aligns with the views of Zakiah Daradjat, who explains that a sakinah family is one capable of meeting the physical, spiritual, and psychological needs of all its members, thereby fostering an atmosphere of safety, tranquility, and mutual support in fulfilling family functions (Sari et al., 2026). Based on these perspectives, a sakinah family in this study is understood not merely as a household characterized by economic stability, but as a couple's ability to build a family life grounded in faith, affection, communication, responsibility, the fulfillment of rights and obligations, and constructive conflict resolution.

Interview results indicate a shift in how prospective brides and grooms understand the concept of a sakinah family (a peaceful and harmonious family) after undergoing pre-marital counseling. Prior to the counseling, some informants tended to associate the sakinah family with the ability to meet economic needs and the creation of a tranquil domestic life. One of the informants stated: *"In my opinion, a sakinah family is a peaceful family whose needs are met."*

The statement indicates that the informants' initial understanding remains relatively simple, placing greater emphasis on material conditions and domestic tranquility. This finding is significant as it reveals that some prospective brides and grooms do not yet fully link the concept of a sakinah (harmonious and peaceful) family to communication, responsibility, rights and obligations, and conflict resolution.

After undergoing pre-marital counseling, the informants' understanding broadened. Prospective brides and grooms are beginning to view the sakinah family as a family characterized by tranquility and harmony as one that not only meets economic needs but is also built upon a foundation of faith, effective communication, mutual respect, the fulfillment of rights and obligations, and the ability to resolve conflicts through consultation. This change can be reinforced by the following quote from an informant after undergoing guidance: *"A Sakinah family is one that lives*

with a sense of serenity, affection, and mutual understanding, while practicing religious teachings in daily life. Such a family is also characterized by mutual support and the care members show for one another."

These changes indicate that pre-marital guidance provides an opportunity for prospective couples to broaden their understanding of the purpose and nature of married life. This finding aligns with (Athoilah, 2026), who demonstrated that marriage guidance plays a role in strengthening couples' understanding of domestic life; the commonality lies in the enhanced understanding gained by participants following the instruction. However, this study offers more specific insights by showing that the shift in understanding extends beyond mere knowledge about marriage; it also encompasses how participants perceive the elements that constitute a harmonious family (keluarga sakinah), particularly regarding communication, responsibility, and conflict resolution.

These findings align with (Zahra et al., 2024), who demonstrated that pre-marital counseling can support the formation of a sakinah family (a family characterized by tranquility and harmony) by reinforcing religious values. In the present study, this reinforcement of religious values is evident in the participants' understanding of the sakinah family concept. However, the results indicate that the participants' understanding extends beyond the religious dimension to encompass aspects such as communication, rights and obligations, and conflict management. This suggests that the concept of a sakinah family within the context of pre-marital counseling is multidimensional in nature.

However, a more significant finding of this study is the gap between the prospective brides' and grooms' conceptual understanding and their practical readiness. Although participants were able to explain the concept of a sakinah (harmonious and peaceful) family after attending the guidance sessions, the majority still struggled when asked to describe the concrete actions required to handle domestic conflicts.

For instance, when participants were asked about the steps they would take in the event of a conflict with their partner, some informants still provided general answers such as "communicating" or "deliberating" but were unable to explain the concrete stages of how such communication or deliberation would be carried out. *"If there are differences or issues, it is best to discuss them together and try to understand each other's situation."*

These findings indicate that an increase in conceptual understanding does not automatically translate into practical readiness. Several factors may contribute to this situation. First, the limited duration of the guidance meant that the material focused more on imparting basic knowledge than on practical application exercises. Second, the prevalence of lecture-based methods in some sessions left little room for participants to practice handling conflict situations. Third, some participants lacked direct experience with domestic life, making it difficult for them to envision how to apply the concepts when facing real-world issues. Fourth, the normative nature of the material needs to be complemented by practical exercises so that participants can transform knowledge into skills.

The gap between conceptual understanding and practical readiness constitutes a key finding of this study. This finding extends the work of (Riyadohi, 2026), which emphasized the importance of couples' readiness in dealing with domestic issues. While earlier research highlighted the significance of readiness, the present study demonstrates that such readiness cannot be adequately fostered merely by imparting normative knowledge; rather, it requires learning experiences that allow participants to practice addressing issues in concrete terms.

From the perspective of andragogy theory, this situation can be explained through several principles of adult learning. First is the relevance of learning, meaning the material must be directly relevant to the participants' needs. Second is problem-centered learning, where the learning process focuses on solving real-world problems. Third is readiness to learn, as the willingness to learn increases when the material addresses immediate needs. Fourth is self-direction, meaning participants should be given the opportunity to actively engage in determining alternative solutions to problems (Knowles, 1984). Thus, the findings of this study indicate that pre-marital counseling becomes more meaningful when prospective couples do not merely receive explanations regarding the concept of a harmonious family, but are also given opportunities to discuss case studies, engage in simulations and role-playing, and formulate alternative conflict resolution strategies (Trisnawati, 2022).

Factors Supporting and Hindering the Implementation of Pre-marital Counseling

This study identifies several factors that support the implementation of pre-marital counseling. A key factor is the religious counselor's competence in delivering material in a manner that is communicative and easily understood by participants. The counselor's experience in providing guidance to the community also supports the counseling process. Additionally, administrative support from the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) and the enthusiasm of the majority of participants contribute to the program's smooth execution.

The findings regarding the competence of extension officers are reinforced by the results of interviews with religious extension officers. One officer explained that the experience gained from providing guidance to the community helps them tailor their delivery of material to the specific circumstances of the participants. *"If a difference of opinion arises, it should be resolved through discussion taking time to calm down rather than immediately getting angry or blaming your partner and then finding a solution together."*

On the other hand, this study also identified several factors hindering the implementation of pre-marital counseling. Time constraints prevented some topics from being discussed in depth. Limited learning facilities also restricted the use of more interactive media. Some participants still felt shy or lacked the confidence to share their opinions and experiences during the learning process.

The findings indicate that program obstacles stem not only from institutional aspects but also from the learning process and participant characteristics. Time and facility constraints limit the facilitators' ability to employ diverse learning methods, while participants' reluctance to express their views can reduce interaction during the guidance sessions. These conditions demonstrate that the success of pre-marital guidance results from the interplay between facilitator competence, learning methods, supporting facilities, and participant participation.

According to Prayitno (2023), counseling is a process of providing systematic assistance that enables individuals to understand themselves, make decisions, and develop their potential optimally. Meanwhile, Tohirin (2025) explains that pre-marital guidance aims to prepare couples to achieve psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual readiness before entering married life.

This perspective aligns with the findings of the present study. If the goal of the guidance is to prepare individuals for married life, the learning process cannot simply focus on the delivery of information. Participants also need to gain learning experiences that enable them to understand how to apply that knowledge in real-life situations. Therefore, limitations regarding methods, time, and facilities warrant attention, as they can influence the extent to which learning objectives are achieved.

The research findings also align with (Himmawan, 2021), who emphasize the importance of the counselor's competence and learning methods in the implementation of pre-marital guidance. However, this study indicates that the competence of extension workers alone is insufficient to ensure the practical readiness of participants. Such competence must be supported by participatory learning methods, adequate media, sufficient time, and active participant involvement. Consequently, improving the quality of the program requires a comprehensive approach, rather than focusing solely on enhancing the competence of extension workers.

Research findings indicate that pre-marital guidance at the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) in Panai Hulu District contributes to broadening prospective couples' understanding of the *sakinah* family concept. However, this contribution is more evident in terms of conceptual understanding than in practical skills for managing domestic conflict. These findings highlight a distinction between *"knowing what ought to be done"* and *"being able to explain how to do it"* within the context of married life.

These findings have significant implications for the development of pre-marital counseling programs. While content regarding the concept of a harmonious family should be retained, the delivery needs to be supplemented with methods such as problem-based learning, case studies, simulations, and role-playing. Through these methods, prospective couples have the opportunity to practice communication, decision-making, emotional management, and

conflict resolution. This approach also aligns better with adult learning principles, which emphasize experience, relevance, problem-solving, readiness to learn, and learner autonomy (Knowles, 1984).

Thus, the research findings not only demonstrate the importance of pre-marital guidance for prospective couples but also reveal that the quality of the learning process determines the extent to which such knowledge translates into practical readiness. Pre-marital guidance that is more participatory, contextual, and experience-based has the potential to better equip prospective couples to build a family characterized by tranquility, harmony, and resilience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the experiences and perceptions of the informants involved in this study, the implementation of pre-marital counseling at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Panai Hulu District provides prospective couples with an opportunity to develop a broader understanding of the concept of a *sakinah* family. The main findings indicate that participants' understanding encompasses not only material aspects of family life but also spiritual values, emotional readiness, communication, mutual rights and obligations, and conflict resolution. The implementation of the program is supported by the competence of religious counselors and institutional support from the KUA, while limited time, the predominance of lecture based methods, and limited interactive learning media remain important challenges.

The findings imply that pre-marital counseling should not focus solely on the delivery of conceptual knowledge but should also provide greater opportunities for prospective couples to engage with practical situations relevant to married life. Therefore, the use of more participatory approaches, such as discussions, case studies, simulations, and role-playing, is recommended to support the development of participants' practical understanding of communication and conflict resolution within the context of family life.

This study has several limitations. The findings are based on a relatively limited number of informants and are situated within the specific context of the Panai Hulu District KUA. Consequently, the findings should not be generalized to all prospective couples or pre-marital counseling programs in other locations. This study primarily explores informants' experiences and understanding during and following participation in pre-marital counseling and does not examine behavioral changes or the application of the knowledge after marriage. Future research may involve a broader range of participants, different KUA settings, and follow-up studies to explore how pre-marital counseling is reflected in couples' experiences after entering married life.

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