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## The Role of Pre-Marital Counselling by BP4 in Realising a Sakinah, Mawaddah, and Warahmah Family<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

The high rate of divorce in Indonesia, including in Ciomas Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, indicates weak family resilience, primarily caused by couples' lack of understanding regarding the essence and purpose of marriage. From an Islamic perspective, marriage is a sacred institution designed to form a family that embodies tranquility (sakinah), affection (mawaddah), and compassion (rahmah), commonly referred to as the SAMAWA. Therefore, implementing structured pre-marital counseling is essential. This study aims to examine the role of the Advisory Board for the Development and Preservation of Marriage (BP4) under the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of Ciomas in providing pre-marital guidance, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in preparing prospective spouses to enter a harmonious family life. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with BP4 officers, direct observation of counseling sessions, document analysis, and the distribution of pre-test and post-test questionnaires to 51 respondents (102 prospective brides and grooms). The findings show that BP4 actively delivers guidance materials encompassing psychological, social, and religious aspects. The comparison of pre-test and post-test data indicates a significant improvement in participants' readiness for marriage. However, the program still faces several challenges, including low participant attendance, limited human and material resources, and the absence of effective post-guidance follow-up. Therefore, strengthening and optimizing the implementation of pre-marital counseling is necessary to ensure BP4 can fulfill its role effectively in preventing divorce and fostering SAMAWA families.

**Keywords:** Pre-marital guidance; BP4; Sakinah Mawaddah Warahmah (SAMAWA) family.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman, recognized by religious, legal, and social norms. In Islam, the primary aim of marriage is not merely procreation, but the establishment of a family built upon tranquility, love, and compassion—known as *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* (SAMAHA). However, not all couples succeed in maintaining a stable household. The rising divorce rate serves as evidence that many people still lack a proper understanding of the meaning and purpose of marriage. Provinces such as East Java, West Java, and Central Java report the highest divorce rates, including in Bogor Regency, where, in Ciomas Subdistrict alone, 2,253 divorce cases were recorded in 2024. (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Bogor, 2023)

One of the primary root causes is the couple's unpreparedness in facing the emotional, financial, and communicative challenges of married life. (Septiyani & Muzaki, 2018). Many enter marriage without adequate understanding of the rights and duties of spouses, conflict resolution, household financial management, and spiritual values. Islam emphasizes forming a SAMAHA family as a core goal of marriage.

To address this, the Ministry of Religious Affairs formed BP4 to provide pre-marital counseling through the KUA. The counseling covers family psychology, reproductive health, couple communication, and conflict management. However, the program faces several challenges, including low participation, a lack of trained counselors, and insufficient follow-up. This study evaluates BP4's role in this context, particularly in KUA Ciomas, assessing program effectiveness and identifying obstacles to its implementation.

However, in its implementation, the counseling program still faces several challenges, including low participation from prospective brides and grooms, a shortage of competent educators, and a lack of post-counseling follow-up. These issues underscore the necessity for a comprehensive assessment of BP4's role in executing its functions effectively, particularly at the subdistrict level, such as at the KUA of Ciomas Subdistrict, Bogor Regency.

This study aims to examine the role of BP4 in conducting pre-marital counseling, assess the effectiveness of the program in preparing couples for marriage, and identify the obstacles encountered during its implementation. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of a more systematic and impactful pre-marital counseling program—one that helps reduce divorce rates and supports the realization of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* families.

## B. METHOD

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data on the role of BP4 at KUA Ciomas.

### 1. Type and Approach

The research is descriptive-analytical. Qualitative methods (interviews and observations) explore the implementation process, while quantitative methods (pre- and post-tests) assess program effectiveness.

## 2. Location and Subjects

The research was conducted at the KUA of Ciomas Subdistrict, Bogor Regency. Subjects included BP4 officers, the KUA head, and 51 engaged couples (102 individuals).

- a. of counseling sessions
  - b. Documentation (attendance, modules, activity reports)
  - c. Pre-test and post-test questionnaires
- ## 3. Instrument Data Collection Techniques
- d. Semi-structured interviews with BP4 officers and KUA personnel
  4. Direct observation

The qualitative instruments consisted of interview guidelines and observation sheets, while the quantitative instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to assess indicators of understanding of SAMAWA family values, couple communication, and knowledge of rights and responsibilities in marriage.

## 5. Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tests and a paired sample t-test to measure the differences between pre-test and post-test scores, which reflect the effectiveness of the pre-marital counseling implementation.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the research findings obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that BP4 at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of Ciomas Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, plays a significant role in implementing pre-marital counseling as an effort to establish families characterized by sakinah, mawaddah, and warahmah (SAMAWA). This role encompasses educational, preventive, and comprehensive guidance in Islamic family values. BP4 not only delivers information about marriage but also prepares prospective spouses spiritually, emotionally, and socially through materials such as the concept of marriage in Islam, the rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives, communication, conflict management, psychological readiness, and reproductive health.

This role can be analyzed through the structural functionalism approach, in which BP4 functions as a social institution that maintains societal stability by equipping couples to live married life responsibly. Besides acting as an educational agent, BP4 also fulfills a da'wah role through the principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, as stated in Surah Ali 'Imran verse 104. This is reflected in efforts to promote goodness and prevent divorce caused by the couple's lack of preparedness. BP4 not only carries out administrative duties but also plays a significant role in the social and religious development of the community.

Nevertheless, this study also identified several challenges that hinder the effectiveness of counseling implementation, including limited human resources, facilities, and infrastructure, and a lack of active participation from attendees. However, BP4's commitment to its educational and religious mission remains strong. Therefore, improving the quality and institutional support is essential so that SAMAWA values can truly be internalized in household life, especially within the Ciomas Subdistrict community. Obstacles in the Implementation of Pre-Marital Counseling at KUA Ciomas

The research findings, derived from interviews, observations, and documentation studies, show that the implementation of pre-marital counseling at KUA Ciomas still faces various complex challenges. These include technical aspects, human resources, participant engagement, and time constraints. These barriers affect the effectiveness of the counseling as a means to establish *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *warahmah* (SAMAWA) families.

From a technical standpoint, the lack of facilities and infrastructure is a significant obstacle. Small spaces, insufficient supporting media such as LCD projectors, whiteboards, and reading materials, as well as limited use of digital technology, result in a less interactive learning process. This situation creates a non-conducive and one-way learning environment, reducing the effectiveness of instilling Islamic values in marriage.

Additionally, the limited number of religious counselors is a significant concern. When participant numbers are high or when couples present specific problems, the few available counselors often become overwhelmed. Moreover, many of them lack specialized training or certification in marriage counseling, leading to approaches that are still general and theoretical, rather than addressing participants' psychological and emotional needs in depth.

Another identified challenge is the low active participation from some prospective spouses. Many attend counseling merely to fulfill administrative requirements before marriage, rather than out of awareness of the importance of Islamic family value preparation. This lack of motivation results in poor reception of the materials and values being conveyed.

This condition is contrary to the primary objective of marriage as stated in Surah Ar-Rum verse 21:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً

**Meaning:** *And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy.*

This verse emphasizes that marriage is not merely an administrative bond but a spiritual contract meant to bring about tranquility, love, and compassion. However, achieving this goal is challenging without proper readiness and a deep understanding from the couple.

Time constraints are another critical factor. Many couples have busy work schedules, making it difficult for them to attend the counseling sessions fully. Inflexible scheduling reduces the effectiveness of the counseling and hinders the achievement of its educational and spiritual goals :

Despite these challenges, the commitment of BP4 and KUA to implementing the pre-marital counseling program remains high. However, to improve its effectiveness, several strategic measures are needed, including:

1. Increasing and training professional counselors,
2. Improving the quality of facilities and infrastructure,
3. Providing flexible scheduling options, and
4. Developing online methods that participants can access flexibly.

By addressing these obstacles, pre-marital counseling at KUA Ciomas is expected to become a truly effective instrument in shaping harmonious, religious families that align with Islamic values.

To assess the effectiveness of the counseling, pre-test and post-test questionnaires were distributed to 51 respondents or 102 participants (51 couples). The average pre-test scores indicated a low initial understanding, particularly in the areas of spousal responsibilities and household conflict management. After participating in the counseling, post-test scores showed a significant increase across all indicators.

The improvement in understanding was reflected in the following indicators:

- a. Spiritual and religious aspects: increased by 28%
- b. Couple communication and conflict management: increased by 33%
- c. Understanding of spousal rights and responsibilities: increased by 31%

These results demonstrate that the pre-marital counseling conducted by BP4 has a positive impact in preparing couples for a more mature and harmonious married life.

However, to ensure BP4's role is fully optimized, synergy is needed among KUA, religious leaders, local government, and educational institutions to expand the program's reach and enhance its quality. Additionally, a policy requiring mandatory pre-marital counseling as a prerequisite for marriage registration, as applied in some other countries, should be considered.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

1. Based on the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the Advisory Board for the Development and Preservation of Marriage (BP4), under the auspices of the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of Ciomas Subdistrict, Bogor Regency, plays a significant role in providing pre-marital counseling as an effort to realize sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah (SAMAWA) families. The counseling program is implemented in a structured manner, utilizing materials that cover psychological, social, and religious aspects. The analysis results show that participants experienced a significant increase in understanding and readiness after attending the counseling sessions, as reflected in the pre-test and post-test outcomes.
2. However, the effectiveness of the counseling program remains suboptimal. This is due to various obstacles, including low participant engagement, a lack of competent human resources, limited supporting facilities, and the absence of post-counseling follow-up. This situation indicates that although BP4 has fulfilled its educational role, the long-term success of the program still depends

on strengthening its implementation system and receiving more integrated policy support.

3. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve both the quality and quantity of pre-marital counseling implementation. This includes training for counselors, allocating specific budgets, enhancing public outreach, and integrating counseling as an administrative requirement for marriage registration. By doing so, BP4 can function optimally in supporting the realization of harmonious, resilient, and sustainable families amidst the challenges of modern life.

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