

Implementation of Prospective Bride and Groom Courses in North Balantak District, Banggai Regency

Jarudin Jarudin¹, Hilal Malarangan², Gasim Yamani³, & Hamiyuddin Hamiyuddin⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Department of Islamic Family Law, Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu

ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of prospective bride and groom courses in Balantak Utara District, Banggai Regency, focusing on efforts to improve household quality through pre-marital counseling. The high number of divorce cases and the large number of unregistered marriages, as well as the low public awareness of Islamic teachings and the fulfillment of basic needs, indicate the need for prospective bride and groom courses as a means to improve family conditions in this area. The study used a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The results showed that implementing prospective bride and groom courses in Balantak Utara District consisted of three stages: guidance at the KUA, health guidance at the Community Health Center, and further guidance by education practitioners and counselors. However, the implementation of pre-marital guidance at the KUA was not optimal, with shortcomings in delivering material on harmonious family relationships and preparation for a quality generation. Meanwhile, guidance at the Community Health Center has been implemented quite well regarding reproductive health and healthy lifestyles, but further guidance has not been fully implemented. This study suggests the need to improve facilities and infrastructure as well as competent teaching staff to support the achievement of a harmonious family in Balantak Utara District.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Keywords:

Implementation of courses, bride and groom courses, and pre-marital education.

1. Introduction

Divorce cases in Banggai Regency are revealed at an average of 1.6 cases per day. In addition, many families in the community do not yet have a marriage certificate, most of which are caused by unregistered marriages. Another influencing factor is the inability of the Assistant Marriage Registration Officer (P3N) in the village in the past, as well as the low awareness of heads of families regarding the implementation of Islamic teachings such as the five daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, reading the Qur'an, and avoiding alcoholic beverages. In addition, many women do not cover their aurat. This condition reflects the low quality of household harmony towards an ideal sakinah family.

In the 2019 North Balantak District Development book, it is stated that there are 176 heads of families who have not been able to meet primary needs such as clothing, food, and shelter properly. This problem shows the need to increase the role of prospective bride and groom courses as an effort to foster families. Cases of prospective brides and grooms are expected to improve the quality of the household that will be built and support the realization of a sakinah family, both in the household and social community.

Indicators of pre-sakinah families include invalid marriages according to the Marriage Law, low levels of education, unfulfilled basic needs, both spiritual and material, and lack of

awareness of religious law (Nobles & Bittenheim, 2008). In the case of prospective brides and grooms, can the condition of pre-sakinah families be improved to be harmonious and sakinah families? Are prospective bride and groom courses able to be an effective medium in conveying marriage procedures and procedures clearly and simply, providing an understanding of religion as a foundation for building a family, improving personal character and mentality, and providing knowledge about reproductive health, clean living patterns, and family health?

The results of the pre-research show that the implementation of prospective bride and groom cases in North Balantak District has not been optimal according to the applicable Director General's Decree. Prospective bride and groom case activities are only carried out during marriage registration, with a duration of around two hours (Farnam, Pakgohar, & Mir-mohammadali, 2011). The material presented is limited to marriage procedures, understanding religion, and counseling and family health checks at the local health center. Other important materials, such as building harmonious relationships in the family, meeting family needs, and preparing a quality generation, have not been provided. This is due to limited facilities and infrastructure, as well as the lack of competent speakers in their respective fields.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the bride and groom course

The pre-marital course aims to provide guidance and counseling on marriage (Trainer, 1979), emphasizing that marriage is prescribed in Islam to ensure the birth of legitimate offspring and to establish lawful households. Marriage also aspires to create a happy family in this world and the hereafter, underpinned by love, compassion, and divine blessings. Islam advocates for marriages to be lifelong commitments founded on sincere care to nurture affection and mutual love.

Furthermore, the guidance in the pre-marital course highlights that married individuals hold a more respected and esteemed status than those who remain single (Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981). The educational materials in the pre-marital course focus on imparting a fundamental understanding of Islamic teachings on the principles of marriage, ensuring that

young individuals approaching marriage have adequate knowledge and insight. Experts' perspectives on marriage include:

1. Marriage is a contract (akad) that legitimizes sexual relations.
2. Marriage serves as a safeguard against biological urges, and thus Islamic law encourages its practice.
3. In religious terms, marriage, or nikah, is a contractual agreement binding a man and a woman, allowing lawful relations between them and fostering a household characterized by love and tranquility.

The above explanations are expected to clarify for pre-marital course participants, young individuals preparing for marriage, or those who have experienced failed marriages that marriage is a noble act. It brings joy and vitality to human life and serves as a means to sustain the human population on Earth.

2.2 Legal basis for implementing courses for prospective brides

The organization and implementation of priority activities of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) through the Marriage Advisory, Development, and Preservation Agency (BP4) and accredited institutions are carried out continuously in order to improve and direct the quality of prospective brides and grooms, both male and female. The legal basis for the implementation of this activity includes:

- a. Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage;
- b. Law Number 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence;
- c. Regulation of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 342 of 2018 concerning Marriage Guidance;
- d. Regulation of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance, Ministry of Religion Number Dj.II/491 of 2009 concerning Courses for Prospective Brides and Grooms.

Prospective brides and grooms who have registered at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) and obtained registration are entitled to participate in marriage guidance based on the schedule set by the sub-district KUA organizer. The implementation of pre-marital marriage guidance is prioritized for prospective brides and grooms who have been officially registered at the sub-district KUA. In this activity, participants not only gain knowledge from credible sources but

also obtain the book *Foundation for a Sakinah Family*, an independent reading material for prospective brides and grooms compiled by the Ministry of Religion concerning the pre-marital guidance module. The implementation of pre-marital guidance for teenagers of marriageable age and prospective brides and grooms can be carried out in groups, pairs, or individually.

The types of pre-marital marriage guidance for teenagers of marriageable age and prospective brides and grooms are divided into two categories, namely:

1. Face-to-face Guidance

Pre-marital marriage guidance for teenagers of marriageable age and prospective brides and grooms is conducted face-to-face for two consecutive days or with a one-day break. Before the marriage contract is held, participants are required to register with the organizer and take a pre-test. The materials presented in this guidance include:

- a. Pre-marital marriage guidance policy
- b. Expectations and learning contracts
- c. Preparing a harmonious family
- d. Building relationships within the family
- e. Meeting family needs
- f. Maintaining reproductive health
- g. Preparing a quality generation
- h. Reflection, evaluation, and post-test.

2. Self-Guidance

Independent marriage guidance is only carried out at the KUA with typology D1 and D2, with the following provisions:

- a. Guidance participants receive independent reading books published by the Ministry of Religion.
- b. When registering their marriage intentions at the sub-district KUA, prospective brides and grooms receive pre-marital marriage guidance that includes the basics of marriage, building a harmonious family, and laws and regulations related to family issues.
- c. Prospective brides and grooms are required to visit the health center to get guidance related to reproductive health, clean and healthy lifestyles, and family health. This is proven by the health center's certificate of family health guidance.
- d. Prospective brides and grooms receive advice and guidance from various elements, namely:
 - a) BP4 Counselor

- b) Penghulu
- c) Islamic Religious Counselor
- d) Cleric
- e) Psychologist
- f) Education practitioner

3. Methodology

This study uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research, the use of theory is only a guide so that the research focus is in accordance with the facts in the field (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016). The data was collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis at the research site (Rusli, Hasyim, & Nurdin, 2021; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022). The object of this research is the Implementation of Pre-Marriage Courses in North Balantak District, Banggai Regency.

The interviews involved four Pre-Marriage Course participants and ten local figures who are familiar with the implementation of the Pre-Marriage Course in the district. We also interviewed five figures from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The results of the transcripts were consulted with the participants to obtain their consent (Nurdin, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2022). The data analysis technique used a deductive thinking technique, which can be interpreted as a research procedure that produces deductive data from the interviews and field notes. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis from Strauss and Corbin (1998). The analysis started with open, axial, and selective coding. The final result of the data analysis is themes found from the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 *Bridal Prospective Course Implementation Process*

Providing knowledge and life skills to prospective brides and grooms, young people of marriageable age, or young couples who are about to get married aims to provide an understanding of aspects related to household life, family relationships, problem-solving, fulfillment of household needs, social interaction, and the rights and obligations of husband and wife. John McLeod in A.K. Anwar stated that following guidance allows someone to gain new

understanding, skills, and strategies, which will help them better deal with similar problems in the future.

Regarding the implementation of courses for prospective brides and grooms organized by the Ministry of Religion at the Regency/City level, the District Religious Affairs Office (KUA), and other accredited institutions, it can be seen that this activity can be carried out clearly. The Head of the Administration Sub-Division of the Ministry of Religion of Banggai Regency, who also serves as the Chairperson of the Supervisory Board for Prospective Brides and Grooms Course Organizers at the Regency/City level, explained that the regulation states that in addition to the Regency/City Ministry of Religion and the District KUA, other institutions that have accreditation can also organize pre-marital courses or marriage guidance. However, until now, the Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs has not provided space for other organizers besides the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the sub-district KUA, on the grounds that all aspects of the organization, including resource persons, modules, experts, and organizing personnel, can still be controlled internally.

Based on this, it can be concluded that as long as the Regency/City Ministry of Religious Affairs and the sub-district KUA are able to organize marriage guidance activities well, then these activities remain under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. However, with the rapid development of science and technology, as well as advances in educational software, it is possible that other accredited institutions can participate in organizing guidance for young people of marriageable age. In addition, related to the model and type of guidance and treatment given to prospective bride and groom course participants, it is important to ensure that the facilities, space, and treatment provided can be evenly distributed throughout the sub-district.

In reality, the role of the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in providing education on understanding and religious knowledge to rural communities is very relevant to their religious needs. Before the ratification of the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 379 of 2018 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Marriage Guidance, BP4 at the sub-district level had a significant role as an organizer of guidance for

prospective brides and grooms who were about to get married. BP4 is influential in providing religious advice on household problems, how to overcome conflicts in the household, tips for maintaining and building a husband-wife life, and other family problems, including building household integrity and improving the household economy.

However, after the decree was enacted, BP4's room to move became limited and more focused on its role as a household consultant and expert in organizing marriage guidance by the sub-district KUA. The decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 379 of 2018 provides new opportunities for the head of KUA and the registrar as managers and organizers of implementing courses for prospective brides and grooms. This decision allows them to provide marriage guidance for young people of marriageable age, especially prospective brides and grooms who are about to get married, regarding services and consultations related to household problems and the development of a quality generation that will become the foundation of national and state life. In the context of marriage guidance for young people of marriageable age, the BP4 institution at the sub-district level is no longer the only dominant institution but only functions as a provider of expert counselors and family and household consultants.

One of the challenges faced in organizing courses for prospective brides and grooms is the limited supporting facilities in several sub-districts, such as in North Balantak District. Marriage guidance for prospective bride and groom course participants can be carried out with two learning models: face-to-face guidance and independent guidance. However, in this study, the researcher will only describe the guidance of prospective bride and groom courses with an independent guidance model that is more in accordance with the typology of the KUA in North Balantak District, namely the D1 typology.

4.2 Opportunities and Obstacles in Implementing Prospective Bride and Groom Courses

a. Opportunity

The union of two different people, namely men and women, as a combination of

masculinity and femininity in a marriage, is the first step in building a family life that is driven by sacred power and based on religious rules. The main goal is to form a *sakinah* family, where husband and wife have the same understanding of each other's rights and obligations. If these rights and obligations are ignored or exchanged, serious problems will arise that can trigger the breakup of the marriage bond. Therefore, the role of the Ministry of Religion is very important in determining the obligation to organize marriage guidance through courses for prospective brides and grooms at each KUA for all typologies. This course aims to guide couples towards forming an ideal family: a happy, *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, *wa rahmah* family.

b. Obstacle

It is undeniable that every program implementation will definitely face obstacles in its implementation stage, even though thorough and professional planning has been prepared in advance. This also applies in the implementation of marriage guidance through courses for prospective brides and grooms held at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) of North Balantak District. Some of the obstacles, challenges, and constraints faced in its implementation include the readiness of prospective brides and grooms, a limited number of speakers, limited facilities and infrastructure, and funding issues.

As conveyed by the informant, many programs have been implemented by the government to improve community welfare, including: direct cash assistance (BLT) program given to the community or heads of families every month amounting to 300,000 rupiah, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The government also distributes village budget assistance through cash transferred to villages. In addition, there is the Family Hope (PKH) program, non-cash food assistance (BPNT) from the central government, and the Cash Social Assistance (BST) program, the amount of assistance of which is equivalent to that provided by the village government.

Therefore, the implications of implementing this prospective bride and groom course activity as a structured series built and planned carefully, professionally, and innovatively for the development of Indonesian families and households free from poverty,

ignorance, malnutrition, hunger, stunting, and malnutrition. The main implication expected from the implementation of marriage guidance is the increase in the standard of living of the pre-*sakinah* community towards *sakinah* I and *sakinah* II considering the living conditions of the community in the North Balantak sub-district with various provisions and requirements are not yet worthy of holding the predicate of *sakinah* III or *Sakinah* III plus families.

4.3 Perspective of the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 379 of 2018 concerning the form of the implementation process for prospective bride and groom courses

In the review of the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 379 of 2018 concerning the implementation of pre-marital guidance activities for young people of marriageable age who are about to get married, there are still delays in various aspects. Based on the results of the study, the implementation of pre-marital guidance or courses for prospective brides and grooms at the KUA of North Balantak District has not been running optimally, with several shortcomings that need to be fixed. Expertise and innovation are needed to implement these regulations.

One of the main obstacles is the very limited number of employees at the Religious Affairs Office, which causes the registrar to serve as head of the KUA and hold sole power in the area of North Balantak District. This condition causes stagnation and delays in implementing tasks and functions, including religious services and management of integrated religious administration data in the online information system. The implementation of independent follow-up guidance has also not been carried out properly, because many resource persons do not have the appropriate expertise, and there has been no good consolidation with existing resource persons.

In fact, so far the implementation of pre-marital guidance at the KUA of North Balantak District has only used the independent guidance method. Although this does not violate the mechanism for organizing activities, the time allocated for guidance is very limited, only 1-2 hours of the total time that should be 6 hours of lessons. In addition, the procurement of

independent reading books published by the Ministry of Religion has not been given to prospective brides and grooms due to limited book stocks. The book is very important, considering that the North Balantak District area still has limited access to information and quality household development services. The implementation of pre-marital guidance at the North Balantak District Health Center, according to researchers, is almost perfect. All the mechanisms expected by the regulation of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 379 of 2018 have been implemented well, even health services have started since teenagers were still in high school or equivalent. The only obstacle that exists is related to evidence of the implementation of guidance, where researchers only found a certificate stating that the prospective bride and groom had undergone the first tetanus toxoid vaccination. However, the letter did not state that the prospective bride was pure, clean, and not pregnant. Pregnancy checks for prospective brides are very important, because this is also related to religious understanding of sharia, where sex outside of marriage is prohibited. In this regulation, Community Health Centers are required to issue a certificate of family health guidance for prospective brides and grooms who have received pre-marital family health guidance.

The implementation of advanced pre-marital guidance outside the KUA of North Balantak District, which involves BP4 counselors, religious scholars, psychologists, and education practitioners, has never been carried out until now. As a result, important materials such as building relationships within the family, meeting family needs, and preparing a quality generation have not been conveyed to prospective brides and grooms by qualified resource persons. Prospective brides and grooms who are going to get married, as the hope of the family in the future, with the strength and quality they have, are expected to become pillars of national development and help determine the steps of sustainable national development, both in terms of material, mental, social character, and culture.

However, this guidance has been missing from the beginning, namely during the marriage registration process at the local KUA. The KUA, registrars, and counselors should be more active

in developing their abilities and working together with related parties to ensure that this guidance runs, in order to realize a dignified, noble, independent, and prosperous nation. So far, the KUA of North Balantak District has not carried out marriage course or guidance activities involving BP4 counselors, because BP4 in this district has not been formed. In addition, there are no experts such as religious scholars and psychologists in the area. For this reason, the KUA can work together with schools in the North Balantak District area, such as junior high schools and senior high schools, to empower religious teachers and guidance and counseling (BK) teachers as resource persons in marriage guidance. The availability of experts in their respective fields is highly expected by the community, in order to foster and maintain harmonious household bonds. The North Balantak District KUA has made various coaching efforts, such as increasing awareness of prospective brides and grooms through guidance at the KUA, in mosques, and coaching at the bride's home during the marriage ceremony. The formation of the BP4 sub-district and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) at the North Balantak sub-district level has not been realized in the formulation and deliberation at the sub-district level. The presence and formation of these two institutions are very important, as providers of resource persons with mature knowledge and experience. However, the enthusiasm and seriousness of KUA employees in guiding prospective brides and grooms to always prepare themselves to sail the ship of household remains undiminished.

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1. Massive Socialization

Conducting wider socialization to the community, not only among pre-marital teenagers, but also to couples who have been married for a long time. This aims to increase their awareness of the importance of attention to teenagers as the next generation of newly formed households. In addition, parents can be empowered as passive resource persons in fostering young households, sharing experiences and providing direction to newlyweds.

2. Participation of Sub-district Officials and Religious Leaders

Sub-district officials and religious leaders should be embraced to participate in the socialization and fostering of marriageable-age teenagers. The role of parents as role models must also be involved in this activity to

strengthen religious and social values in fostering harmonious households. In general, there needs to be collaboration between the community, religious leaders, and the government to foster families in North Balantak District.

3. Kafa'ah (Suitability and Sincerity)

With sincerity and existing abilities, resource persons can make their role a source of inspiration and motivation in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of fostering religion, households, and marriage. Resource persons must make the most of this opportunity with an open heart, accepting the interest and seriousness of teenagers and the community who want to get guidance and information about the happiness of marriage.

These steps are expected to reduce inequality and improve the quality of guidance for pre-marital marriage in the North Balantak District. The supervision and Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) at the North Balantak District level have not been realized in the formulation and deliberation at the district level. The presence and formation of these two institutions are very important, as providers of resource persons with mature knowledge and experience. However, the enthusiasm and seriousness of KUA employees in guiding prospective brides and grooms to always prepare themselves to sail the ship of households remains undiminished.

5 Conclusion

The implementation of marriage guidance in Balantak Utara District, Banggai Regency, is carried out through prospective bride and groom courses at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) which are divided into three stages. The first stage, guidance at the KUA, is carried out after the prospective bride and groom have inputted data and documents and fulfilled other requirements to the Simkah Web operator, which is then continued with printing the marriage registration. The second stage, guidance at the Health Center, includes counseling on reproductive health, clean and healthy lifestyles, and family health. At this stage, the Health Center will conduct a health check on prospective brides and grooms, such as measuring blood pressure, checking hemoglobin levels, and evaluating general physical conditions. In addition, counseling is provided

on balanced nutrition, pregnancy, risks for young mothers and those who give birth frequently, as well as counseling on family planning programs and tetanus toxoid vaccination. The third stage, continued guidance, is carried out by providing recommendations to prospective brides and grooms to receive further guidance from BP4 counselor education practitioners, clerics, Islamic religious instructors, and psychologists.

Based on the Review of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Decree Number 379 of 2018, the implementation of the prospective bride and groom course at the KUA of North Balantak District has not been running optimally and there are still many shortcomings. Meanwhile, the implementation of pre-marital guidance at the North Balantak Health Center has almost reached perfection, although there still needs to be improvements related to evidence of family health guidance certificates. The implementation of advanced pre-marital guidance has not been in accordance with expectations.

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