

MARRIAGE READINESS EDUCATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: ANALYSIS OF SELF-PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage, declining marriage rates, and lack of readiness for marital life remain pressing social issues in Indonesia. These challenges are influenced by legal changes, socio-economic pressures, and limited access to marriage education. This study aims to analyze the level of self-preparation for marriage and family life among undergraduate students in the Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) Program at UPI Tasikmalaya Campus. Employing a descriptive quantitative survey design, data were collected from 221 students across three cohorts using the Developmental Task Inventory (ITP). The results, processed with the ATP application, show that students' readiness for marriage and family life remains at the individuality development stage, with mean scores between 6.50 and 6.61—below the overall developmental average. The lowest indicator was found in the aspect of self-preparation for marriage, highlighting specific gaps in practical understanding and readiness. The findings suggest that students require targeted guidance and counseling services focusing on emotional, financial, and communication skills to enhance their marriage readiness. This study concludes that comprehensive premarital education and counseling interventions in higher education settings are essential for fostering mature, well-prepared individuals capable of building harmonious families. The results are beneficial for educators, counselors, and policymakers in designing effective marriage readiness programs. Future research is recommended to explore intervention models and the impact of marriage education on marital outcomes.

Keywords: Adulthood, Counseling, Education, Marriage Readiness, Student Development.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a ritual that legally binds a marriage between a woman and a man both in terms of religion and law. Marriage in Indonesia itself has different characteristics depending on religion, customs and ethnicity. The purpose of marriage itself is to maintain offspring. Marriage is also possible for couples who are entitled to marry, because it can reduce sin in the form of adultery and protect them from all acts prohibited by religion (Anisanigtyas & Astuti, 2011). Marriage is an important thing in Indonesia and must be considered a lot when getting married. This is evidenced by the existence of laws and regulations regarding marriage. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 1974 regulates marriage in Indonesia. This law contains 14 provisions on marriage, including the basis of marriage, requirements for marriage, marriage contract, rights and obligations of husband and wife, child status, guardianship and others. Marriage in Indonesia is not only legalized by the government and the laws and regulations that have been set, but marriage in Indonesia is also regulated by all religions. For example, in Islam, marriage is an act of worship and sunnah to perfect one half of the religion and follow the rules of Allah SWT. In Islam, the command to marry is found in the Al-Quran, Surah An-Nissa verse 22, Surah An-Nur verse 32 and several other hadiths. In general, marriage can be carried out if the man and woman have reached puberty or reached adulthood and are able to carry out individual tasks in the household. In Indonesia, the age of marriage applies to men and women who have reached the age of 19. This is stated in Article 7 paragraph 1 of the 1974 Marriage Law. However, there is a fact that many individuals marry before the age of 19, which is quite common for Indonesian society. Before the enactment of the new regulations regarding the Marriage Law with an age limit of 19 years, children of school age could immediately get married, but now due to changes related to the regulations on the age limit for marriage, this is no longer permitted. Therefore, adolescents under the age of 19 who want to get married, both men and women, must submit a marriage

certificate to the local religious court (Munib & Huda, 2023). Meanwhile, the family is the smallest unit in society which is called because a marriage has occurred. The family consists of the head of the family and other family members who accept each other's strengths and weaknesses. The family can also be called the smallest social unit that provides a foundation for adolescent development. In this case, schools also play a very important role in the growth and development of adolescent personalities, as well as the formation of good and bad structures in the family and surrounding community. The family is also considered the first social relationship in community life. A harmonious family can be achieved if there is a balanced relationship pattern between men and women in family life (Hidayatullah, 2017).

According to American statistics (Anisaningtyas & Astuti, 2011), as many as 34.6% of women aged 20 to 24 years and 21.4% of men of the same age get married while in college, while most of the younger generation are or have completed their education to university and hope to immediately enter the next career. Currently, getting married while in college is becoming a trend among the younger generation. Although there are still people who think it is strange to see students who decide to get married while still in college. However, for some people, getting married while still in college will reduce the risk and reduce parents' concerns if their children are included in the 20% of teenagers who have free sex. In Indonesia itself, Indonesia is currently experiencing several problems in marriage such as early marriage, declining marriage rates and unpreparedness in facing the world of marriage. Based on BPS data, marriages in 2021 were 1,742,049, in 2022 it dropped to 1,705,348, in 2023 it dropped to 1,577,255 and in 2024 the number of marriages continued to decline. This figure could decline due to economic factors (Zaini, 2024).

The Public Relations of the Ponorogo Regency Religious Court stated that many individuals are applying for marriage certificates. In 2020, the number of children who married underage was 241 children, but the number of underage marriages increased in 2021 due to changes in the marriage law policy which sets the age limit at 19 years. The average cause of early marriage is due to pregnancy outside of marriage that occurs from the age of 15 to 18 years (Wakano, 2022). West Java itself in 2022 was ranked 3rd for the highest number of child marriages and Tasikmalaya was ranked 1st with the highest number of marriages in West Java with 537 cases. This can happen due to matchmaking, love, pregnancy, low education and environmental factors (Costa, 2023). Marriage is of course related to the developmental tasks of individuals, especially the younger generation entering early adulthood. The younger generation may think more about preparing for marriage and looking for information about marriage, but sources of information about preparing for marriage are still very limited to access. Based on research conducted by Sari & Sunarti (2013) on readiness for marriage, almost all male students (96.8%) and female students (92.3%) feel unready to get married in the near future, with the most common reasons being lack of preparation and not having a job (31.9%). The second reason is not being emotionally and mentally ready and not having a bachelor's degree (16.7%). The few students who are ready to get married are because they are mentally ready, highly educated, able to handle household chores, their parents allow them to get married young and they already have a prospective partner. Other studies conducted by Tsania, Sunarti & Krisnatuti (2015) and Sari & Sunarti (2013) revealed that the level of readiness for marriage of students is in the low category, especially in the financial and intellectual aspects. This financial factor is related to the increasing cost of living and education. Indonesian people, both men and women, often work to support their family's financial life, because family finances are one aspect in preparing for family life. Financial preparation is very important to meet family needs (Putriani, Dharnis & Ahmad, 2019). Individuals who are old enough to marry should prepare themselves before getting married to ensure a happy marriage and avoid divorce. Both men and women must prepare many things before getting married, not only understanding themselves and their partners but must begin to understand religious and social life, because marriage is not just living together, but also living in society. In this regard, self-readiness for marriage also needs to be measured.

METHOD

This study used a survey design with a descriptive quantitative method (Cresswell & Guetterman, 2019; Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2023). The study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to 221 respondents from the S1 PGSD Study Program, UPI Tasikmalaya Campus, batch 2021 (63 people), 2022 (92 people) and 2023 (66 people). The Developmental Task Inventory (ITP) was used as a data collection

instrument. ITP was developed by Kartadinata et al. (2003) to determine individual task achievements. After being collected, the existing data was entered into the Developmental Task Analysis (ATP) application version 3.5.0 to process the data obtained. ATP provides an understanding of the individual through an analysis of the level of development so that it is expected that they can develop optimally. This inventory consists of 77 statement items containing aspects of a. religious life foundation; b. ethical behavior foundation; c. emotional maturity; d. intellectual maturity; e. awareness of responsibility; f. social role as a man or woman; g. self-acceptance and its development; h. independence of economic behavior, i. career insight and preparation; j. maturity of peer relationships; and k. self-preparation for marriage and family life. From the results of data collection, the results of processing from the aspect of self-preparation for marriage and family life are taken and then the data is presented and interpreted descriptively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained is processed using the application. Table 1 shows the results of the group tendencies processed by the ATP application.

Table 1. Student Group Data Profile

No	Description	2021	2022	2023
1	Average consistency	7,51	7,78	7,14
2	Average Level of Development (11 Aspects)	6,72	6,71	6,80
3	Level of development of aspects of self-preparation for marriage and family life	6,55	6,50	6,61

The consistency value of the results of the Development Task Analysis (ATP) processing ranges from 7.14 to 7.78, which means that the respondent's consistency is in the good category, indicating that the respondent is serious about working on it and the answers chosen can be accounted for. The average level of development is in the range of 6.71 to 6.80, which means that the student's level of development is at the individuality level. This level of individuality means that the individual already has a sense of tolerance, emotional awareness, recognizes differences between individuals, distinguishes between his own life and that of others, and recognizes the complexity of himself.

The level of development of the aspect of self-preparation for marriage and family life in the 2021-2023 class ranges from 6.50 to 6.61, which is at the individuality level. The magnitude of this aspect figure is below the average value of the level of development, so special attention is needed and it also needs to be followed up with the provision of guidance and counseling services. In addition to participating in learning at the college level, students also need to prepare themselves for marriage and family life to avoid negative things that might happen in the family life stage.

From table 1 it can be seen that the level of development in the aspect of self-preparation for marriage and family life has different numbers but is still in the same category. This needs to be the focus of lecturers or campus supervisors to improve this aspect because it is an important aspect. In addition, the application also provides an overview of the lowest items that can be used as identification material. Table 2 shows a review of the lowest items related to the aspect of self-preparation for marriage and family life.

Table 2. Lowest point

No	Aspect	Level of development		
		2021	2022	2023
1	self-preparation for marriage and family life (point 11-4)	4,86	4,52	4,71

From the table above, it can be seen that this aspect is included in the lowest item with a range of 4.52-4.86. This lowest item is not the main focus but is a reference for service providers to prioritize the services to be provided. The application also provides recommendations for many materials that are divided into several service focuses based on aspects as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Material Based on Question Domain

No	Point 11-1	Point 11-2	Point 11-3	Point 11-4	Point 11-5	Point 11-6
1	Maintaining boundaries in relationships with the opposite sex before getting married	Marriage can protect oneself from adultery	Rights and obligations of husband and wife	Respecting differences of opinion in the family	Marriage is not just carrying out human nature	Carefulness in choosing a life partner/partner
2	Understanding that marriage is the only way to achieve harmony in family life	Understanding the role of children in the family	Equal position of husband and wife	Role of husband and wife decision making	Living together in a family needs to be maintained by husband and wife	Marriage is good for physical and spiritual health
3	Normal boundaries between men and women in social interactions	Readiness to enter marriage	Dependence of husband and wife in marriage	awareness of the role of parents in educating children	Understanding small household debates as normal	Men and women have equal rights in marriage
4	Knowing the benefits of marriage	Marriage elevates human dignity	Equal rights and obligations between husband and wife	Understanding differences of opinion between husband and wife	Marriage is not just channeling human instincts	Reasons for postponing marriage

In preparing for marriage and family life, guidance and counseling services play a crucial role as companions for individuals or couples who want to start a life commitment together (Mafruhah et al, 2024; Marsudi, Zakirman & Musdalifah, 2024). Through this service, individuals are helped to understand various important aspects of marriage, from emotional management, healthy communication, to joint financial planning. Marriage is not just an emotional bond, but also involves responsibilities and skills that must be mastered so that couples are able to manage relationship dynamics and build a harmonious family. Guidance and counseling help individuals explore their personal hopes and values for marriage, while providing space to discuss concerns that may arise. With the support of professional counselors, couples not only gain knowledge, but also practical skills to deal with conflict, share roles, and form effective communication patterns. This equips them with more mature readiness, so that they can live a more stable married life and support each other in building a happy family. This service activity can be carried out by professional counselors at the individual's place of study such as campus or other formal institutions such as the office of religious affairs (KUA) (Lubis et al., 2024).

Guidance and counseling services are carried out so that individuals can develop optimally and in this aspect can develop to an independent level in the aspect of Preparing for marriage and family life. This level of independence is characterized by individuals who have a view of life as a whole, tend to be realistic, objective towards themselves and others, care about abstract concepts such as social justice, are able to integrate conflicting values, are tolerant of ambiguity, care about self-fulfillment, respect the independence of others, are aware of interdependence with others and are able to express feelings with confidence and joy (Loevinger, 1969; Westenberg, Blasi & Cohn, 2013; Loevinger, 2014).

Readiness for marriage includes the ability to understand oneself, be aware of personal goals and expectations in relationships, and have good communication skills. This process of knowing and understanding oneself plays a role in helping individuals to know what they are looking for in a partner and how they want to build their family life. The inability to understand oneself is often the root of problems in marriage, such as the inability to handle conflicts or differences of opinion that arise. Emotional readiness is one of the fundamental aspects in marriage preparation. Individuals who are emotionally ready tend to be better able to manage stress, both in interpersonal relationships and in facing the challenges of family life (Nahda, 2024; Purba & Kusumiati, 2024). They also have high empathy, tolerance, and flexibility in dealing with the dynamics of marriage. Without emotional readiness, individuals may easily get caught up in prolonged conflict, misunderstandings, or dissatisfaction with the relationship. In the context of family life, emotional readiness also includes the ability to care for children and foster healthy bonds with them. Parents who are able to control their emotions well are more likely to provide positive parenting and support their children's emotional development. Therefore, young adults who want to prepare themselves for marriage and family need to focus on emotional development in order to face the various dynamics that exist. In relation to emotional factors, individual marriages can experience anxiety about marriage.

When viewed from the gender, women have higher levels of anxiety than men in this case (Fadhillah & Afdal, 2024). In addition to emotional readiness, the financial aspect is also very important in preparing for marriage (Keldal & Yildirim, 2022). Having financial stability helps couples face basic needs and shared economic responsibilities. Early adults who have good financial planning tend to be better prepared to face the role as head or supporter of the family. Wise financial management includes not only income but also long-term financial planning, such as savings, investments, and emergency funds.

Without proper financial preparation, married life can be hampered by economic problems which are often the main trigger for conflict in the family. Therefore, individuals who are ready to get married must have sufficient understanding of financial management, including sharing financial responsibilities with their partners. Furthermore, marriage requires mental readiness to carry out commitments and face all changes that come over time in the family (Munib, Sukmana & Soedarwo, 2024). This includes the ability to continue to support each other, especially when facing major challenges or changes, such as having children, changing careers, or moving house. Individuals who are mentally ready for marriage have the ability to think rationally and have strong mental resilience, so they do not give up easily when faced with obstacles in married life. Kesiapan mental juga berkaitan erat dengan harapan realistis terhadap pernikahan.

Ideally, couples entering marriage have realistic expectations of their relationship, recognizing that conflict, differences, and challenges are common. These realistic expectations are important to prevent disappointment or excessive frustration when reality does not match expectations. Effective communication is a vital skill in a marriage relationship (Amin et al., 2024). The ability to communicate well allows individuals to convey their needs, feelings, and expectations clearly without causing misunderstandings. In the context of family life, communication also plays an important role in managing relationships with children and other family members. Young adults who have good communication skills tend to be more successful in building healthy relationships, both with their partners and children.

Healthy communication involves not only the ability to speak, but also to listen. Active listening helps create an environment where partners feel heard and valued. In this way, couples can resolve problems and work through differences constructively, without causing tension or prolonged conflict. In preparing for marriage and family life, individuals also need to pay attention to social and cultural aspects. The social environment and cultural values provide important guidelines for how marriage and family should be run. By understanding these values, individuals can adjust their expectations and behaviors in carrying out their roles as partners and parents. However, individuals also need to have critical thinking about some values or traditions that may no longer be relevant to modern situations. Awareness and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences or views of the extended family can help individuals adapt and maintain harmony in marital relationships. Currently, marriage education and premarital counseling are becoming increasingly popular to help couples prepare themselves (Dewi, 2024). In this education, couples are given an understanding of responsibility, communication, conflict management, and financial management in marriage. Premarital counseling also often functions as a space to get to know prospective partners better

and identify potential problems early on. Through education and counseling, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of marriage and have better guidance for living family life. Premarital counseling can help reduce divorce rates, because couples who have a deep understanding of their roles and responsibilities tend to be better able to manage their relationships well

CONCLUSION

Preparing for marriage and family life is an important developmental task in early adulthood. This readiness includes various aspects, ranging from emotional, financial, mental, to communication skills. Through thorough preparation, individuals will be better prepared to face the complex challenges of marriage and family life. For many people, premarital counseling and marriage education are effective ways to prepare themselves, provide a better understanding of roles in marriage, and build a solid and harmonious foundation for relationships. With the right understanding and preparation, marriage can be a life journey that provides happiness, emotional support, and well-being for individuals and the families they form.

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