

Academia Open

Vol. 10 No. 2 (2025): December

DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12921

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DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12921

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Academia Open

Vol. 10 No. 2 (2025): December
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12921

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The Phenomenon of 'Marriage Is Scary' and the Role of Premarital Guidance in Preparing the Mental and Emotional Health of Prospective Brides and Grooms

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Abstract

General Background: Contemporary societies are experiencing a growing phenomenon termed “*marriage is scary*,” reflecting increasing fear and anxiety toward marriage, particularly among Generation Z, amid rapid social, cultural, and economic change. **Specific Background:** In Indonesia, declining marriage rates and pervasive negative narratives from social media, past familial trauma, and economic uncertainty have reshaped perceptions of marriage from a sacred commitment into a source of psychological burden. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite mandatory premarital counseling policies, limited empirical analysis has examined whether existing counseling models adequately address the deep mental and emotional anxieties underlying this phenomenon. **Aims:** This study aims to analyze the roots of the “*marriage is scary*” phenomenon and evaluate the role of premarital guidance in strengthening the mental and emotional readiness of prospective brides and grooms. **Results:** Findings indicate that fear of marriage is multidimensional—spiritual, psychosocial, and economic—and that premarital counseling positively enhances emotional maturity, communication skills, and confidence, though its short duration constrains impact. **Novelty:** The study integrates fiqh perspectives with psychosocial theory to conceptualize marriage anxiety as both a spiritual and psychological issue. **Implications:** Strengthening premarital counseling through comprehensive, context-sensitive, and psychosocially informed approaches is essential for fostering resilient families and mitigating marriage-related anxiety.

Highlights:

- ♦ Psychosocial Roots of Marriage Fear: The “*marriage is scary*” phenomenon emerges from social media narratives, past trauma, economic uncertainty, and weakened spiritual orientation.
- ♦ Strategic Role of Premarital Counseling: Premarital guidance contributes to improving emotional maturity, communication skills, and psychological preparedness of prospective couples.
- ♦ Need for Program Enhancement: Counseling effectiveness requires longer duration, contextual materials, and integrated psychosocial-spiritual approaches to address deep-seated anxieties.

Keywords: Marriage Anxiety, Premarital Counseling, Mental Readiness, Generation Z, Family Resilience

Published date: 2025-12-15

Introduction

Marriage is one of the important phases in a person's life journey, which not only unites two individuals but also two cultures, backgrounds, and life expectations. Marriage also has a significant impact not only on the individuals involved but also on society at large. In the context of modern society, perceptions and practices of marriage have undergone quite significant changes. Marriage is no longer seen merely as a social obligation, but rather as an individual choice filled with psychological, economic, and emotional considerations. It is this change in perspective that has triggered the emergence of a contemporary phenomenon known as 'marriage is scary.' This phenomenon has become a dread for the younger generation, particularly for Gen Z. This phenomenon reflects the growing fear and anxiety towards marriage, influenced by various factors such as social pressure, religious demands, experiences of emotional trauma, uncertainty in commitment, the influence of social media standards, and unstable economic conditions.[1]

Excessive worry about getting married mostly affects social media users, namely young people of Generation Z. Generation Z refers to young people born between 1997 and 2012. The anxiety about getting married among young people (marriage is scary) nowadays is largely caused by exposure to social media, which often presents various household problems ending in domestic violence and divorce. In addition, other factors also contribute to the anxiety about marriage, such as trauma from a broken home, fear of failure, past traumas, and unpreparedness for the dynamics of family life. All of this results in many couples who rush into marriage experiencing significant mental and emotional uncertainty.[1] Marriage in Indonesia has declined. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of registered marriages throughout 2024 reached only around 1.48 million events, down 6.3% from the previous year and marking the lowest figure in the last decade. Thus, in 2024, this represents the lowest recorded marriage rate in Indonesia in the past ten years, with a total of around 1.48 million officially registered marriage events.[2]

Given this reality, the government created regulations regarding the implementation of premarital counseling. The law on premarital guidance has actually existed since 2009 in Article 48 of Law No. 52 of 2009 on Population Development and Family Development, which states, 'The state is responsible for fostering family resilience, including through premarital education, and serves as the initial legal basis for the need for guidance for prospective brides and grooms as part of family development.' [3]. Certainly, the success of this guidance, which covers all aspects of the curriculum, requires the coordination and collaboration of all parties. In 2017, the Ministry of Religious Affairs began implementing a memorandum of understanding with BKKBN aimed at improving family quality through Marriage Guidance, involving the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) as the executor of the guidance, and introducing a registration system for prospective brides and grooms to attend training.[4] Changes and modifications have continuously been made to perfect the premarital counseling system by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Finally, at the end of July 2024, the Directorate General (Ditjen) of the Islamic Community Guidance (Bimas) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs made Premarital Counseling (Bimwin) mandatory as a requirement for prospective brides and grooms to get married, as stated in the Circular Letter of the Director General of Bimas Islam No. 2 of 2024 concerning Premarital Counseling for Prospective Brides and Grooms.[5]

In Article 5 of the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 30 of 2024, it is also stated likewise. That prospective brides and grooms are required to attend marriage counseling. The marriage counseling referred to is guidance on planning, knowledge, and skills for managing family life, healthy reproduction, as well as the dynamics of marriage and family, and the prospective bride and groom will be given a certificate as proof of having completed the marriage counseling.[6] The Marriage Guidance Implementation Flow consists of 3 methods, namely face-to-face, self-guided, and virtual methods. Face-to-face guidance sessions only last for 2 days with 5 sessions totaling 10 hours of lessons. Virtual guidance can be conducted as agreed upon, with a maximum duration of up to 5 days. Meanwhile, the most flexible option is the self-guided method, as it can be carried out on working days and can be done either as a couple or individually. All three methods still use 10 hours of lessons. In reality, with such a marriage guidance flow, in addition to the fact that people who suffer from 'marriage is scary' are extremely and overly emotional, the question arises whether marriage guidance that is only conducted for 10 hours of lessons is sufficient to eliminate trauma or excessive anxiety about getting married.

Therefore, research on the effectiveness of optimizing marriage counseling in preparing couples mentally and emotionally to face the phenomenon of 'marriage is scary' becomes highly relevant and urgent. This study is expected to provide a critical overview of the extent to which pre-marital counseling has been able to address the psychological and emotional needs of prospective couples, as well as offer strategic recommendations for the development of more adaptive, contextual, and impactful counseling programs in building resilient Indonesian families in the modern era. Contextual studies in this area are important to understand how the 'marriage is scary' phenomenon is experienced by prospective brides and grooms in the Kunir District of Lumajang Regency, as well as the role of pre-marital counseling in preparing their mental and emotional health, based on recorded data showing that 40 percent of couples in the Kunir District are affected by this phenomenon. Thus, this study aims to examine the phenomenon in depth and provide recommendations that can strengthen the premarital counseling program at the Kunir District Office in Lumajang Regency, so that prospective brides and grooms can enter marriage with optimal readiness and the risk of mental disorders can be minimized.

Method

The method used in this study employs a qualitative approach with a combined method, namely normative and empirical. The normative approach is used to examine marriage legislation and Islamic legal principles. Meanwhile, the empirical approach is used to observe how these are implemented at the Kunir District Office of Religious Affairs in Lumajang Regency. The main data sources in this study are the data from the Kunir District Office of Religious Affairs in Lumajang Regency through interviews with religious counselors and other relevant parties.

Results and Discussion

A. The History of the Emergence of the 'Marriage is Scary' Phenomenon

This phenomenon is caused by the dynamics of social history, changes in value structures, and cultural transformations that have occurred gradually since the modern era. The phenomenon of 'fearful marriage' is more than just an individual emotional response. This symptom emerges as a result of the long process of secularization of the institution of marriage and shifts in perspectives on gender relations that took place in the West after the 19th century. It then spread throughout the world through the flows of cultural globalization. These historical changes were reinforced by the second wave of feminism in the 1960s–1980s, which critically deconstructed the family institution as a patriarchal tool that constrained women's freedom.[7] After the previous generation of feminism, this discourse encouraged them to delay or even reject marriage; this resulted in collective concerns about long-term relationships. Its impact has become increasingly visible in the twenty-first century, marked by a rise in cohabitation, delayed marriages, and fears of divorce syndrome in urban societies worldwide.

This phenomenon then took root psychosocially in the awareness of young people, including in the Muslim world, through social media, films, and popular literature that propagated a negative image of marriage: full of conflict, emotionally tormenting, and restrictive of freedom.[8] Fear of marriage eventually ceases to be rational, instead becoming internalized anxiety perpetuated by dominant narratives and collective traumatic experiences. In the context of contemporary Muslims, this phenomenon is increasingly developing as the role of family and religious institutions in guiding the younger generation weakens. As noted by Dr. Haifaa Younis, fear of marriage is a reflection of a society that has lost its spiritual compass and has replaced divine principles with human insecurity.[9] Thus, the history of the emergence of 'marriage is scary' is a reflection of cultural and spiritual disorientation caused by modernity, which strips away the transcendental meaning of the institution of marriage.

B. The 'Marriage is Scary' Phenomenon from a Fiqh Perspective

Specifically, the phenomenon of "Marriage is Scary" is not directly explained in classical texts because this phenomenon reflects the psycho-social anxieties of the contemporary generation towards the institution of marriage today. Contemporary scholars discuss this phenomenon and view that the fear of marriage does not emerge in a vacuum but is influenced by social constructions, collective trauma, gender role crises, and the commodification of intimate relationships in the digital age. Dr. 'Aidh al-Qarni emphasizes that fear of marriage often stems from distortion (*tasywih*) of the sacred meaning of marriage in Islam, which is propagated through modern media and negative narratives about household life in modern urban society.[10]

Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz al-Jibrin in several of his fatwas also indicated that excessive worry about marriage, whether in the form of fear of failure, fear of unhappiness, or fear of being unable to bear responsibilities, stems from weak reliance on God (*tawakkal*) and spiritual unpreparedness in understanding the meaning of marriage (*zawaj*) as an act of worship and a strong covenant (*mitsaqan ghalizān*). He stated that such fears need to be addressed through psychological education (*tarbiyah nafsiyyah*) and strengthening of spirituality, emphasizing that the courage to marry is part of having good expectations of Allah and confidence in His help.[11] Fear of marriage can also be associated with *al-khawf al-mawjudi* (existential fear), which is the fear of losing personal freedom, lifestyle changes, and long-term commitments. This needs to be addressed through an educational approach based on the *maqasid al-shari'ah*, which positions marriage as a means of perfecting religion and strengthening inner peace, rather than as an emotional trap or a psychological burden.[12] The phenomenon of delaying marriage without a clear excuse, especially for reasons of career, the comfort of living alone, or fear of household conflict. It states that such an attitude indicates weak trust in God and a failure to integrate spiritual and social aspects in life.[13] In this framework, 'marriage is scary' is not merely a psychological phenomenon, but an epistemological and spiritual problem rooted in society's distance from moderate Islamic values that are a mercy to all worlds.

C. The Phenomenon of 'Marriage is Scary' : A Psychosocial Perspective (Terror Management Theory)

From a psychosocial perspective (Terror Management Theory), this phenomenon arises from a complex interplay between individual psychological aspects and the socio-cultural changes occurring in today's society. Terror Management Theory (TMT) is a psychological framework that explains how human awareness of inevitable death generates profound existential anxiety, and how this anxiety is subsequently managed through certain psychological mechanisms. TMT was first developed by Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon in the late 1980s and has been extensively studied for more than three decades up to the present. This theory assumes that the awareness of mortal death is a primary source of deep and distinctive anxiety in the human experience.

In the context of the "marriage is scary" phenomenon or fear of marriage, TMT views close relationships, including marital commitment, as serving as one of the main mechanisms for reducing such existential anxiety. Intimate relationships can create a sense of security and strengthen this self-buffering system by connecting individuals to greater meaning and symbolic continuity through social bonds and reproduction. Empirical research by Victor Florian, Mario Mikulincer, and Gilad Hirschberger shows that awareness of mortality (mortality salience) increases the intensity of romantic commitment, which serves to reduce death-related anxiety.[14] To manage this anxiety, individuals unconsciously rely on two main systems: the first is cultural beliefs or worldview that provide meaning and order to life, and the second is the attainment of

self-esteem by adhering to the value standards within that worldview. These two systems function as psychological 'buffers' that allow individuals to experience resilience against the fear of death and provide them with a sense of symbolic or literal continuity of existence.[15]

This phenomenon is particularly prominent among Gen Z and millennials, who tend to be more open about discussing their anxieties and doubts about marriage, especially on digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram.[16]. Data shows that the fear of marriage experienced by the millennial generation in Indonesia is largely influenced by past trauma, economic instability, and the influence of social media that shapes the idealization of marriage. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows a significant decline in the number of marriages in Indonesia, from around 1.7 million in previous years to 1,577,255 in 2023, a decrease of about 128,000 compared to 2022, with a decrease of 28.63% over the last 10 years. This decline mainly occurred on the island of Java, which is the largest population center.[17] Here are the psychosocial factors that can influence the emergence of 'marriage is scary':

D. The Influence and Negative Narratives of Social Media

Research shows that about 83.2% of young people are influenced by 'Marriage is Scary' content on social media, with 27.3% feeling highly influenced and 32.5% fairly influenced in their views on marriage.[18] The content that often appears consists of real-life stories or testimonials about domestic violence, infidelity, injustice in relationships, as well as viral marriage failures that gain wide attention. The spread of such content makes many social media users, especially the younger generation, feel afraid and hesitant to get married.[19] As Gerbner stated in his cultivation theory, long-term exposure to media can shape an individual's perception of reality, including negative perceptions of the institution of marriage[20]. According to Nettleton, modern society tends to have a tendency toward 'moral panic' over issues that touch on the uncertainty of one's personal future, including marriage.[21] So in this context, the negative and unbalanced narrative from social media about marriage becomes fuel for collective fear, which eventually develops into '*marriage is scary*.'

E. Economic Factors and Uncertainty About the Future

Uncertainty about the future of the economy is also a factor that intensifies fears about marriage. In various situations, marriage, which should be a step toward a more stable life, is instead seen as an additional burden that could potentially worsen a person's economic instability. As a result, many individuals, especially from the millennial and Gen Z generations, feel hesitant or even afraid to enter into marriage. Today's young generation lives in an economically challenging environment, such as inflation, global economic crises, and rapidly changing labor markets. They face the risk of job loss or unstable income, making it difficult to plan for their family's future with certainty. [22] In addition, the difficulty of accessing decent job opportunities, the high cost of education and healthcare, the rising property prices that are disproportionate to income, as well as changes in the global economic pattern such as the emergence of the gig economy and short-term employment contracts, make many Gen Z live in a fluctuating and uncertain economic situation. In fact, delaying or avoiding marriage due to economic factors and future uncertainty has wide social and economic impacts. A decline in marriage rates can disrupt demographic balance, lower birth rates, and reduce the number of productive individuals. This has the potential to slow economic growth and threaten social stability in the future.[23]

F. Trauma and Bad Experiences in the Past

The trauma and experiences referred to, for example, come from family experiences, such as parental divorce, domestic violence, or prolonged family conflict, which can leave deep psychological scars. Individuals who grow up in a disharmonious family environment often internalize the fear that marriage is something fraught with the risk of failure and suffering. This can cause anxiety and uncertainty in building marital commitment in the future. The effects of divorce on children show that children from divorced families are more likely to experience emotional disorders, interpersonal relationship problems, and fear of commitment in long-term relationships compared to children from intact families.[24]

Especially coming from a family with violence or unhealthy relational dynamics also carries a high risk of experiencing deeply rooted psychological trauma. According to Judith L. Herman, complex trauma resulting from domestic violence can lead to attachment disorders and extreme fear of intimate relationships.[25] In this context, marriage is no longer seen as a place of shelter and affection, but as a space that is potentially prone to new wounds and hesitation to get married. The psychosocial impact caused by the 'Marriage is Scary' phenomenon is a fear of marriage that can trigger stress, anxiety, and even depression both before and after marriage, a tendency to have difficulties in building trust and healthy communication with a partner, as well as social pressure, which can worsen their mental health.[26] This phenomenon therefore requires a multidisciplinary approach, ranging from education, psychological interventions, to social policy changes in order to create a healthier and more realistic space for viewing marriage in the modern era.

G. Psychological and Emotional Readiness in Marriage

Psychological and emotional readiness is a crucial foundation for the sustainability and harmony of a marriage. Various scientific literature emphasizes that marriage is not merely the union of two individuals physically and legally, but also the merging of two complex mental and emotional worlds. Psychological readiness can be understood as mental maturity that enables a person to provide adaptive responses to the challenges and dynamics of married life. This includes inner readiness, willingness, and the individual's ability to face the realities of marriage realistically.[27] In the context of marriage, both types of readiness are very important because the marital relationship heavily depends on emotional stability, healthy communication, and the ability to resolve conflicts constructively. [28] Here are the components of

psychological and emotional preparedness:

1. Emotional Maturity Emotional maturity is the result of development that allows a person to respond healthily to stress or problems [29]. High emotional intelligence is highly positively correlated with marriage readiness. Individuals with good emotional intelligence are able to manage their emotions, understand their partner's emotions, and respond to conflicts constructively. Emotional maturity also includes the ability to identify one's own and the partner's emotional needs, as well as provide appropriate emotional support.[30].
2. Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills Certainly, marriage is not free from conflict. Psychological readiness involves the ability to understand conflict patterns and master strategies to deal with them effectively. Approaches such as solution-focused premarital counseling can help couples change their perspective on conflict and develop more adaptive problem-solving strategies.[31] Couples who can manage conflicts constructively are more likely to maintain a long-term marriage[28].
3. Independence and a Strong Sense of Self Individuals who have a strong sense of self and healthy independence tend to be more ready for marriage. They do not lose themselves in the relationship but rather bring their whole self into the partnership. According to Erikson, the early adulthood stage requires a person to resolve the crisis of 'intimacy vs isolation,' which is the ability to form intimate relationships after having a solid sense of self. Without a mature identity, a person is vulnerable to losing themselves in the relationship [32].

From the components mentioned above, it can be understood that psychological and emotional readiness is a key pillar in building a successful and harmonious marriage. It is not just about financial preparation or the wedding party, but a long-term investment in an individual's capacity to face challenges, manage emotions, communicate effectively, and understand relationship dynamics.

H. Effectiveness of Pre-Marriage Counseling

Premarital guidance is a program organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which was previously known as the prospective bride and groom course (suscatin) since 2017. Premarital guidance is an educational and coaching process provided to prospective couples to improve their mental, emotional, social readiness, as well as practical knowledge related to married life.[33] Premarital guidance is carried out with the long-term goal of strengthening family resilience, preventing divorce and domestic violence, as well as supporting reproductive health. Scientifically, this program has been shown to improve couples' communication skills, although results for long-term happiness still need improvement through more comprehensive methods and continuous evaluation. Various scientific studies indicate that premarital interventions and education focusing on the development of psychological and emotional maturity are crucial to ensure individuals enter marriage with a strong foundation, thereby achieving family happiness and resilience. Premarital guidance has been effectively implemented since August 2024 following the issuance of the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance Circular No. 2/2024. Although premarital guidance is not explicitly mentioned in the law, this guidance is based on Law Number 1 of 1974 and the Circular of the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance.

1. Implementation Flow of Pre-Marriage Counseling

Based on the contents of the Director General of Islamic Guidance Regulation No. 379 of 2018, premarital counseling can be carried out at the local Office of Religious Affairs according to the domicile of the prospective bride and groom. The implementation procedure is as follows [34]:

- a. Registration for prospective brides and grooms must be done no later than 10 working days before the wedding ceremony. At the time of registration, the KUA officer will request the necessary documents (ID card, family card, recommendation letter from the neighborhood/RT-RW, and recommendation letter from the village/kelurahan), and ask whether the prospective bride and groom have attended pre-marital counseling. If not, they will be directed to follow the counseling according to the available schedule. Before the pre-marital counseling is conducted, a pre-test material will be given at registration.
- b. Implementation of Guidance Premarital guidance will be conducted for 16 classroom hours (JPL), usually over two consecutive days or with a one-day interval. This guidance will be led by at least 2 speakers, namely the head of the KUA and a religious counselor. The number of participants attending the guidance should not exceed 50 people or 25 couples, with methods used including lectures, dialogue, discussions, Q&A, and case studies. There is also self-guided guidance if the prospective bride or groom is unable to attend. This premarital guidance will be conducted for 4 hours at the KUA and participants will receive a self-reading book published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. For self-guided counseling, it can involve 2 advisors from elements such as BP4 counselors (Agency for Consultation, Guidance, and Marriage Preservation), religious officials, scholars, psychologists, or education practitioners. Then, the reproductive health session is conducted individually at the health center, and the quality generation session is carried out individually by the PLKB (Family Planning Field Officers). Participants in self-guided counseling do not receive a certificate but receive a statement letter from the KUA.
- c. Premarital Guidance Materials The materials presented during premarital guidance include the purpose and function of marriage, the rights and obligations of husband and wife, reproductive health and nutrition for prospective brides and grooms, family health and healthy lifestyle, family harmony, child education and upbringing, conflict management, communication, finances, and roles in marriage, and the laws regulating marriage.

- d. Premarital Guidance Evaluation At the end of the session, participants fill out an understanding evaluation sheet and a satisfaction survey, then the staff will record attendance, understanding, and participant dynamics, but a simple assessment of marriage readiness by the facilitator can also be conducted (optional). Then, after being declared to have completed all sessions thoroughly, participants receive a Premarital Guidance Certificate and can proceed with the process of registering and printing the marriage certificate.

2. Positive Impacts of Premarital Counseling.

The implementation of pre-marriage counseling activities will certainly bring about several positive values for the prospective bride and groom, including the following [33]:

- a. Improving the mental and emotional readiness of prospective spouses, so they are more mature in facing the challenges of married life.
- b. Strengthening communication and understanding between partners, which is an important foundation in building family harmony.
- c. Enhancing knowledge about conflict management, gender roles, and family financial management, which are often sources of problems in marriage.
- d. Increasing self-confidence and social readiness in living a married life.

3. Improving the Effectiveness of Pre-Marital Counseling

Although the positive impact is clearly visible to the prospective bride and groom, this premarital counseling must also be improved to be more effective in its implementation. The improvements in effectiveness that need to be carried out are as follows [35]:

- a. Development of comprehensive and contextual materials, covering current issues such as digital financial management, gender roles, and mental health.
- b. Intensive training for mentors to be able to use participatory learning methods and information technology.
- c. Improvement of facilities and infrastructure, including dedicated rooms and audiovisual media to support the learning process.
- d. Flexible scheduling and sufficient duration so that participants can absorb the material well.
- e. Continuous monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the long-term impact of guidance on marriage quality.
- f. Increased socialization and the obligation to attend guidance so that prospects of marriage can participate more effectively.

I. Premarital Guidance at Kunir Lumajang Religious Affairs Office Facing the 'Marriage Is Scary' Phenomenon

1. Social and Psychological Construction of Prospective Brides and Grooms towards Marriage (The 'Marriage is Scary' Phenomenon) The social and psychological construction of prospective brides and grooms in Kunir District, Lumajang Regency, towards marriage is often shaped by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social experiences passed down through generations. In this context, marriage is not merely a legal transaction or social ritual, but a sacred institution that upholds the values of honor and responsibility within the extended family. However, there is a 'marriage is scary' phenomenon that reflects the deep fear of prospective brides and grooms regarding the risks and challenges of marriage, including fear of marital failure, divorce, and the inability to fulfill the ideal roles of husband and wife. This fear is a product of a combination of social experiences that create high expectations, social pressure, and the psychological uncertainty of prospective brides and grooms in facing long-term commitments fully. Psychologically, this fear causes anxiety in the prospective bride or groom, which can affect their mental readiness leading up to the wedding.

2. Psychosocial Factors Causing Mental and Emotional Unreadiness in Prospective Brides and Grooms Mental and emotional unpreparedness in prospective brides and grooms approaching marriage is influenced by various psychosocial factors, including social pressure, lack of knowledge and experience regarding married life, as well as the influence of family and social environment. Social pressure from family and community expectations regarding the success of the marriage can cause stress and anxiety. A lack of guidance in understanding rights, obligations, and the psychological dynamics of married life contributes to the inability to manage conflicts and roles within the marriage. Additionally, past personal experiences, such as relationship trauma or instability in the family of origin, can also be factors that hinder mental readiness. This unpreparedness often manifests in the form of emotional instability, fear of failure, and an inability to handle household responsibilities in a psychologically healthy way. Intervention Strategies to Enhance the Impact of Premarital Counseling As a result of interviews with local religious counselor M. Maftuhan, to strengthen the emotional resilience and psychological readiness of prospective brides and grooms, premarital counseling interventions need to be designed comprehensively and

contextually. The implemented intervention strategies include: Strengthening psychosocial-based premarital counseling that integrates cognitive and emotional approaches, such as training in stress management, effective communication, and conflict resolution. Improving the quality of counseling materials and methods to be not only normative but also applicable, using case studies and simulations of real household problems to reduce anxiety and enhance constructive understanding. Involving family and community as social support in the counseling process to strengthen the social network that supports mental readiness. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of counseling by systematically measuring changes in mental preparedness and emotional resilience of prospective brides and grooms.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of "marriage is scary" reflects cultural and spiritual disorientation arising from modernity, which strips away the transcendental meaning of the institution of marriage, particularly felt by Generation Z. This phenomenon is not merely an individual psychological fear but also an epistemological and spiritual problem rooted in the weak integration of spiritual and social aspects in modern society. The main causes include negative social media narratives about marital failure, past trauma, economic pressure, as well as existential anxiety explained within the framework of Terror Management Theory. This phenomenon impacts the postponement of marriage without clear reasons and results in mental and emotional uncertainty for prospective brides and grooms. In the context of psychological and emotional readiness, this journal emphasizes that emotional maturity, communication and conflict resolution skills, and a strong self-identity are important foundations for a successful marriage. This readiness includes the ability to manage emotions and conflicts constructively, as well as bringing one's whole self into the marriage relationship.

Premarital guidance organized by the government, using various implementation methods such as face-to-face, self-directed, and virtual formats, has been proven to positively contribute to improving the mental, emotional, and social preparedness of prospective brides and grooms. However, the limited duration and content of the guidance remain a challenge, necessitating the development of more comprehensive and contextual materials, more intensive counselor training, and continuous evaluation to ensure long-term impact. Specifically, in Kunir District, Lumajang Regency, the phenomenon of "marriage is scary" is observed in 40% of prospective brides and grooms, making the role of premarital guidance very important to reduce anxiety and optimally prepare their mental and emotional state. An effective intervention strategy should involve a psychosocial approach that integrates mental and emotional strengthening, improvement of the quality of materials and guidance methods, family and community involvement, as well as a continuous monitoring system.

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