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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF COUPLE COMMUNICATION WITH PREMARITAL GUIDANCE: PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH IN PASAR KLIWON SUBDISTRICT

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ABSTRACT
Effective communication is an essential foundation in the marriage relationship, and premarital guidance can help couples prepare for communication challenges that may arise after marriage. This study aims to analyze how premarital guidance can improve the quality of couples' communication from a psychological perspective in Pasar Kliwon Subdistrict. This research used a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with couples who had attended premarital guidance in Pasar Kliwon Subdistrict. Data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through interviews and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using a psychological approach. The results showed that premarital guidance positively affects the quality of couples' communication. Couples who attended premarital counselling were better able to manage conflict, listen actively, express emotions, understand each other's perspectives, and develop empathy, and were able to increase trust and security in their relationship. This study provides important insights into the importance of premarital counselling in preparing couples for better communication after marriage. This research can be used as a basis for developing more effective premarital guidance programs in the future.

Keywords: communication; couple; premarital guidance; psychological approach; self-adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is one of the main pillars of a harmonious marriage. Couples who communicate effectively tend to have more stable, happier relationships. However, many couples struggle to communicate, especially after marriage. Pre-marital counselling is one way to prepare couples to face communication challenges that may arise after marriage.

This study offers new insights into how premarital counselling can improve the quality of communication between couples from a psychological perspective. By adopting a psychological approach, this study will identify effective communication strategies and techniques taught in premarital counselling and analyze their impact on increasing empathy, trust, and security in the couple's relationship.

The main argument in this study is that premarital counselling has excellent potential to improve the quality of communication between couples from a psychological perspective. By providing training in communication skills, understanding of roles and responsibilities in marriage, and conflict-resolution techniques, premarital counselling can help couples understand and manage their emotions, build empathy and trust in their relationship, and prepare for marriage. This research is crucial because it will present specific empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of premarital counselling in strengthening the psychological aspects of couple communication. This area has not been explored in depth in previous studies.

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Premarital counselling, particularly regarding the concept of communication between couples, has attracted the attention of several previous researchers, including. Fahmi et al. (2024), who specifically discussed the communication strategies counsellors use during the premarital counselling process. Another study by Ramadan and Ramdani (2022) Had a similar focus but delved deeper into the issue of readiness for marriage, both religiously and psychologically. Meanwhile, Sidiq et al. (2024) Discussed communication strategies in Islamic community counselling during premarital counselling in the Garut area. This study differs from the above studies because it focuses on the internal psychological mechanisms that change in couples following counselling. The researchers do not merely examine what is taught but how these teachings are internalized and influence the psychological dynamics of communication within the relationship.

This study aims to analyze how premarital guidance can improve the quality of couples' communication from a psychological perspective in Pasar Kliwon Subdistrict. To deepen this analysis, the study will integrate various aspects. The researcher will use theories of effective and ineffective couple communication to understand interpersonal dynamics and explain the impact of attachment styles on communication. From a psychological perspective, the study will examine the communicators' and the message's psychological factors in shaping communication quality. The analysis will also investigate how premarital counselling can help couples identify and transform destructive communication patterns into more constructive ones.

This study offers a novel contribution by shifting the focus of premarital counselling research from program content and communication strategies to the internal psychological mechanisms that shape couples' communication quality after counselling, particularly empathy, trust, emotional regulation, and mutual understanding.

METHOD

This research is classified as qualitative field research with a psychological approach. The data were obtained from interviews, premarital guidance manuals, and articles related to premarital guidance, communication, and psychological perspectives. Interviews were conducted with five couples who participated in premarital guidance and counselors at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA), Pasar Kliwon. The respondents' age range was 23-33 years. The researcher selected these five couples because in this study, the researcher used purposive sampling, where the couples who became informants were those who met the criteria set by the researcher, including married couples living in Pasar Kliwon, married couples who registered to marry at Religious Affairs Office *(KUA)* Pasar Kliwon, and married couples who participated in premarital counseling at Pasar Kliwon. Therefore, of the data obtained, only these five couples met the researcher's criteria within one period. This study examines the quality of communication between couples after they have attended premarital guidance. In other words, it can be stated whether premarital guidance really has an impact on improving the quality of communication between couples to prevent communication errors that can lead to divorce or not. The documents sought are data on the quality of communication of couples who participated in premarital guidance. This document is very important because without it, the researcher cannot determine whether couples' communication quality improves after participating in this premarital guidance. With this document, the researcher can analyze the existing data with a psychological perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Premarital Guidance

Premarital guidance is an effort to provide direction and additional material related to married life that they will live in the future. Premarital guidance is initiated by guidance for the Muslim community and assisted in its implementation by the Religious Affairs Office *(KUA)* of each subdistrict. The counsellor or resource person for premarital guidance must already have experience, understanding, and certification in premarital guidance, as the purpose of this guidance is to develop potential and increase knowledge of household life to foster a

harmonious and prosperous household, thereby achieving the purpose of marriage. The legal basis of premarital guidance is stated in Article II, Paragraph 2 of The Regulation of The Director General of Islamic Public Guidance of The Ministry of Religion Number DJ. II/542 of 2013 concerning Guidelines for Organizing Prospective Bride Courses (Premarital Guidance). Premarital course (premarital guidance) is the provision of knowledge, understanding, skills, and awareness to adolescents of marriageable age and prospective brides about household and family life.

Please note that premarital guidance is a practice involving a professional, such as a health department, Family Planning Field Instructor, religious leader, psychologist, or economic leader, who can provide appropriate guidance and support to couples preparing to marry.

In Pasar Kliwon Subdistrict, there are five resource persons for premarital counselling: the health department, the family planning field instructor, religious leaders, a psychologist, and economic leaders. Premarital guidance is usually held 3-4 times a year, depending on how many prospective brides and grooms attend. The training is 7 hours per day and spans two consecutive days. Premarital guidance is delivered through two methods: lectures and question-and-answer sessions. The lecture method is used to convey the material properly. The question-and-answer method is used to determine the extent of acceptance and understanding among the participants. So, it is not only the mentor who is active in the premarital course, but the bride-to-be as well. The Religious Affairs Office *(KUA)* and guidance for the Muslim community hope that by holding premarital guidance with extraordinary speakers and materials, the divorce rate in Surakarta, especially the Pasar Kliwon area, can be reduced.

B. Couple Communication

With the communication skills they have gained from this premarital guidance, the couples feel they communicate better with each other than before. The following is also an example of ineffective communication:

a) Not being honest or open. If one partner holds information or lies when communicating, it can destroy trust and complicate the situation.
b) Lack of active listening. Not giving their partner full attention when they are talking, such as looking away or being preoccupied with something else, can imply a lack of interest and hinder understanding.
c) Lack of empathy. Not paying attention to or ignoring your partner's feelings and perspectives can make them feel unappreciated or not understood.
d) Uncontrollable emotions. Speaking with high emotions, such as anger or frustration, can hinder good communication.
e) Impatience. Showing impatience or stopping the conversation before it is over can hinder problem-solving and deepen misunderstandings.

By avoiding some of these behaviors and always striving to improve practical communication skills, couples can build stronger, better relationships and support those around them. There are several statements related to the effects of communication for couples who participated in premarital counselling:

1) "*During the premarital counselling yesterday, it was mentioned that communication is the foundation for a good relationship. Besides that, the way of interacting before and after marriage is also different; we need to be able to adjust more. Premarital guidance is also invaluable in understanding each other's expectations. The effect is that with premarital guidance that explains about interaction and communication, we can apply good, effective communication in our lives*."

Figure 1: First informant.



Source: Researcher's Collection, 2023.

2) *"There are so many lessons learned about communication after marriage, the main key to interacting with each other is by trusting each other, avoiding miscommunication, and understanding each other's expectations. With the understanding gained during the premarital guidance at that time, we will be explained, and then we will observe and apply it in our daily lives."*

Figure 2 Second informant.



Source: Researcher's Collection, 2023.

3) *"I have learnt many things, especially about communication, and of course, communication from before and after marriage is quite different. By following premarital guidance, you can understand each other, because in terms of communication, the most important point is mutual trust."*

Figure 3: Third informant.



Source: Researcher's Collection, 2023.

4) *"There is definitely, even a lot that I can learn. And my opinion is that ethics and communication are very different after marriage. Premarital guidance is invaluable for this process, especially because with this premarital guidance, it can help us more."*

Figure 4 Fourth informant.



Source: Researcher's Collection, 2023.

5) *"The most important lesson I learnt was how to interact well, be polite, and certainly more polite to my husband. We have to be able to both lower our egos. After attending premarital guidance yesterday, my husband and I have become better able to understand each other than before. Maybe for now there is no yes, because we have ordinary communication every day."*

Figure 5 informant.



Source: Researcher's Collection, 2023.

C. The Relationship Between Psychological Perspectives and Couple Communication

Communication that aims to be accepted and understood by the communicant is the lowest point in the process of delivering messages; even so, this stage is not easy to achieve. In the dictionary of behavioral science, the definition of communication from the perspective of psychology is as follows:

1) Communication is the delivery of energy changes from one place to another, such as the nervous system or the delivery of sound waves.
2) Communication is the sending or receiving of signals or messages by an organism.
3) Communication is a message that is conveyed.
4) Communication is the process by which one system influences another through the organization of signals.
5) Communication is the influence of one area of the persona on another through changes in one location, causing corresponding changes in the other area.
6) Communication is the patient's message to the therapist in psychotherapy.

The word communication is used to describe a process, a message, an influence, or, specifically, a patient message in psychotherapy. In the scope of communication psychology, the emphasis is on the communicator as an individual with distinct characteristics. Traits indicate relatively stable patterns in how a person thinks, feels, and behaves across situations. Traits are often used to predict behavior. The scope of communication psychology emphasizes communicators as individual beings with distinct characteristics. Traits indicate relatively stable patterns in how a person thinks, feels, and behaves across situations. Traits are often used to predict behavior.

In the communicator, psychology provides the communicator's human characteristics as well as internal and external factors that influence their communication behavior. When the message reaches the communicator, psychology examines the process of receiving the message and analyzes the internal and external factors that influence their communication behavior. By the time the message reaches the communicator, psychology examines the reception process, analyzing the personal and situational factors that influence it and explaining the various styles of communicators, whether alone or in groups.

DISCUSSION

Premarital guidance involves efforts to help couples preparing to marry prepare emotionally, psychologically, and socially. (Iqbal, 2019). Therefore, premarital guidance is a briefing and direction to prospective brides who will form a new family. (Jannah & Halim, 2022). According to Syubandono in Mutia et al. (2023)Premarital guidance is a social service process that provides advisory guidance and assistance to prospective husband and wife before marriage, so that they may achieve well-being and happiness in marriage and family life. The ultimate goal is to provide couples with the resources and tools they need to build a healthy and happy marriage. (Astuti, 2019). Couples are also taught skills in navigating conflict and building trust in the relationship. (Simanjuntak, 2013).

In this discussion of communication, the participants stated that there were many impacts that they had after attending premarital counselling, whether it was in the way of interaction, communication ethics, how to apply it in domestic life, and be more able to understand each other, and some impacts that are no less important in everyday life. (Fauziah et al., 2020). In Turistiati (2019), the examples of effective communication that have been applied in daily life are:

a) Speaking honestly and openly. Couples build mutual trust and understanding, and always strive not to hide information or lie in communication.
b) Active listening. They always try to give their full attention when one of their partners is speaking and respond accordingly.
c) Empathy. Empathizing with others' feelings and perspectives can help build relationships and resolve conflicts more effectively.
d) Keeping emotions in check. Emotions can affect communication if one party is feeling emotionally heightened, so allow time to calm down before continuing the conversation.
e) Think before you speak. Couples can think before they speak, especially in sensitive or essential situations.
f) Be patient. This allows your partner time to express their thoughts and feelings without interrupting them.
g) Mutual respect. Being able to respect your partner's opinions and feelings, even if you disagree with them. And avoid criticizing or blaming directly.

Communicator psychology and message psychology play an essential role in this aspect, among others:

1. Communicator Psychology (Jannah, 2022).

a) Credibility

When the communicator delivers the message, the communicator will see who they are. Many factors make people stick around to listen and absorb the message delivered by the communicator. For example, communicators will believe more when a doctor explains health than when a mathematician explains it.

b) Attractions

Humans tend to view others by their physical attractiveness, in this case, the communicator. Physical attraction makes the communicator more appealing and increases persuasive power, thereby building effective communication. In addition, the similarity between communicators and communicants is a key to effective communication. This is because similarities can facilitate message reception, help build a familiar premise, and increase communication. The communicator's interest builds respect and trust.

c) Power

Power means the ability to make others submit to it. It can impose an individual's will on their interlocutor because the individual has a valuable resource. The power factor is usually used by communicators who want to fulfil their self-satisfaction or support their self-esteem. Communication with power may be effective, but only at the lowest level.

2. Message Psychology (Hadiono & Ahmadi, 2021).

Language is a force that can move people to do things. So, it is essential to understand the message conveyed and communicate more effectively. Basically, it takes an ordinary meaning to achieve understanding in effective communication. In exploring the psychology of communication, it is necessary to understand that linguistic (language) and paralinguistic (nonverbal) messages can convey meaning. Paralinguistic messages are nonverbal cues conveyed through the way a message is delivered, including tone, voice quality, volume, rhythm, and speed. A verbal message can mean different things depending on how it is delivered.

Humans as communicators can be studied through a psychological approach to create effective communication. There are four characteristics of the psychological approach to communication. (Ivana & Kurniawati, 2023):

1) Sensory reception of stimuli.
2) Internal mediation of stimuli.
3) Prediction of responses.
4) Reinforcement of responses.

According to the psychological definition of communication, it has a comprehensive meaning, encompassing the transmission of energy, sound waves, signals between places, and systems or organisms. (Ahmad & Arifin, 2021). In this context, a person's behavior is determined by a combination of their traits and the factors present at that time. (Jannah et al., 2023). In this case, a person's behavior is determined by a combination of their traits and current factors. (Putri, 2019).

In this discussion, the data from the research on premarital guidance and couples' communication quality have been analyzed by comparing this study's results with previous research. This study shows that premarital guidance has a significant positive impact on the quality of couples' communication, consistent with previous studies that emphasize its importance in preparing couples to address communication challenges in marriage. For example, research by Muhammad Fahmi and his colleagues showed that communication strategies taught in premarital coaching can increase trust and empathy between couples, findings that were also observed in this study. Thus, the psychological perspective provides comprehensive guidance and strategies to improve the quality of their relationship.

However, this article has limitations, including a small sample size and a research focus confined to the Pasar Kliwon Subdistrict. This may affect the generalization of research results to a broader population.

CONCLUSION

Based on data from interviews with couples who participated in premarital counselling and an analysis of relevant literature, it was found that premarital counselling has a significant positive impact on couples' communication. Couples who participate in premarital counselling are better able to manage conflicts, listen actively, and express their emotions clearly. Additionally, this counselling helps couples understand each other's perspectives, thereby enhancing empathy, trust, and security in their relationship.

It can also be concluded that before participating in premarital counselling, the participants did not know the purpose of effective communication, the importance of communication in a relationship, how to apply it in daily life after marriage, how to understand

each other's expectations, how to lower their egos, and much more. However, after participating in premarital counselling, many changes occurred, including improved interaction and communication skills, how to apply them in family life, greater politeness and courtesy in speech, better understanding of each other, and several other changes.

Thus, the practical implications of this study suggest that structured premarital communication interventions can be a vital component in improving the quality of couples' relationships. Policy recommendations include integrating premarital counselling programs into religious, educational, and community institutions, developing counselling curricula that cover cultural, academic, and other contextual factors, and training counsellors and facilitators to improve their competencies. The contribution of this study to the development of knowledge includes enriching the literature on couple communication, encouraging the development of adaptive premarital counselling models for various cultural and social contexts, and providing an empirical basis for practitioners and policymakers to design more effective intervention programs. Therefore, recommendations for future research include conducting studies with larger, more diverse samples, considering other factors that may influence couple communication, such as cultural and educational backgrounds, and exploring the effectiveness of premarital counselling across different contexts to develop more comprehensive counselling programs.

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