



Strengthening Community-Based Islamic Premarital Guidance Through Participatory Action Research at KUA Sewon

Irsyadunnas¹, Muhsin², Lukyta Putri Amanda Ramadhan³, Muhammad Hadhar Ilman⁴
¹²³⁴UIN Sunan Kalijaga

9th International Da'wah Conference

Shaping the Future of Da'wah:
Addressing Inequality, Advancing
Inclusive Societies, and Driving
Sustainable Development

irsyadunnas@uin-suka.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Premarital guidance; participatory action research; Islamic counseling; collaborative learning; divorce prevention.

ABSTRACT

This study addresses the persistently high divorce rate in Indonesia, which reflects inadequate preparedness among prospective couples for marital life. Premarital guidance (*Bimbingan Perkawinan*) delivered by Religious Affairs Offices (*Kantor Urusan Agama*) is intended as a preventive intervention; however, its implementation often remains constrained by conventional instructional methods, low participant engagement, and the absence of systematic evaluation. This study aims to strengthen premarital guidance services at KUA Sewon, Bantul, through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach involving KUA leaders, religious counselors, academics, and prospective couples. The research was conducted in two PAR cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through pretest–posttest questionnaires, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using paired-samples t-tests and thematic analysis supported by NVivo. The findings reveal a statistically significant improvement in participants' knowledge, with an average gain score of 19 points ($t(29) = -17.998, p < .001$). Collaborative strategies, including digital flipbook-based learning, group discussions, simulations, and role plays, effectively enhanced participants' understanding, active involvement, and satisfaction. Despite limitations related to time allocation, this study confirms that PAR-based premarital guidance improves service quality and offers a contextually relevant, community-based preventive approach to strengthening marital readiness and reducing divorce risk.

Introduction

Divorce remains a persistent social problem in Indonesia, with national data indicating a steady increase in divorce rates over recent years. Various factors contribute to marital dissolution, including economic hardship, ineffective communication, infidelity, and domestic violence. These conditions reflect not only relational problems within marriage but also inadequate preparedness of couples prior to entering marital life. Empirical studies consistently show that insufficient premarital readiness significantly increases the risk of early marital conflict and divorce.

In response to this challenge, premarital guidance (*Bimbingan Perkawinan* / *Binwin*) has been institutionalized as a mandatory service for prospective couples registered at Religious Affairs Offices (*Kantor Urusan Agama*/KUA) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This policy is intended to equip prospective spouses with essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to marital roles, communication, conflict management, and reproductive health. From the perspective of Islamic counseling, premarital guidance

functions as a preventive intervention (*al-wiqāyah*) aimed at fostering *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* family life.

Despite its strategic importance, the practical implementation of premarital guidance across many KUA offices remains suboptimal. Sessions are often dominated by lecture-based methods, with limited opportunities for participant interaction and experiential learning. In addition, the absence of structured learning materials and systematic evaluation mechanisms reduces the effectiveness of the program. These challenges were also identified in the implementation of premarital guidance at KUA Sewon, Bantul Regency, where routine sessions were conducted but participant engagement and learning outcomes remained limited.

Contemporary research suggests that participatory and collaborative approaches in premarital education are more effective in enhancing learning outcomes and long-term marital stability. Participatory Action Research (PAR), in particular, offers a framework that emphasizes stakeholder involvement, contextual relevance, and continuous reflection. By engaging counselors, academics, institutional leaders, and prospective couples as co-participants, PAR enables the development of context-sensitive strategies that respond directly to local needs and constraints.

Therefore, this study aims to strengthen premarital guidance services at KUA Sewon through a Participatory Action Research approach. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) identify the strengths and limitations of existing premarital guidance practices; (2) develop collaborative strategies based on community participation and Islamic counseling principles; and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in improving prospective couples' knowledge, engagement, and satisfaction with premarital guidance services.

Literature Review

Premarital guidance has long been recognized as a crucial preventive intervention in strengthening marital readiness and reducing the risk of divorce. From the perspective of family counseling, premarital programs aim to equip prospective couples with realistic expectations, effective communication skills, conflict management strategies, and emotional preparedness. Within the Islamic counseling framework, premarital guidance also emphasizes the internalization of religious values, mutual responsibilities between spouses, and the moral foundations of family life in accordance with the principles of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*.

Previous studies in the Indonesian context indicate that premarital guidance provided by KUA plays a significant role in shaping couples' understanding of marital roles and responsibilities. Research by Hadijah et al. (2023) shows that structured premarital counseling helps prospective spouses reinterpret the meaning of marriage

and align shared values before entering married life. Similarly, Rmd et al. (2022) emphasize the urgency of premarital guidance in response to rising early marriage rates and marital instability, highlighting its function as an early preventive measure.

International research further supports the effectiveness of premarital education. Carroll and Doherty (2003) report that participatory premarital programs can reduce the likelihood of divorce by up to 30% during the early years of marriage. More recent studies demonstrate that premarital interventions focusing on attachment, communication, and interpersonal awareness significantly improve marital stability and emotional expressiveness among couples (Golpour et al., 2025). These findings underscore the importance of interactive and experiential learning approaches rather than purely didactic methods.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been widely applied in educational, health, and community-based interventions to improve program relevance and effectiveness. PAR emphasizes collaboration among stakeholders, collective problem identification, and cyclical processes of action and reflection (Kemmis et al., 2013). In counseling and educational settings, PAR has been shown to enhance participant ownership, increase engagement, and foster sustainable program improvement. Studies applying PAR in reproductive health and educational services demonstrate improvements in service quality, participant satisfaction, and learning outcomes (Badar & Karsiwan, 2021).

In addition to methodological approaches, the use of digital learning media has gained increasing attention in premarital education. Digital materials, such as flipbook-based modules, support independent learning and allow participants to access content before and after face-to-face sessions. Research by Kencana Sari and Widianto Atmojo (2021) indicates that digital flipbooks enhance learner autonomy, comprehension, and engagement, particularly when combined with interactive learning strategies. Integrating digital media within premarital guidance aligns with adult learning principles and addresses time constraints commonly encountered in institutional settings.

Based on the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that effective premarital guidance requires participatory methods, collaborative stakeholder involvement, and supportive learning media. However, empirical studies examining the integration of PAR, Islamic counseling principles, and digital learning strategies in the context of

KUA-based premarital guidance remain limited. This study addresses this gap by implementing and evaluating a PAR-based collaborative model to strengthen premarital guidance services at KUA Sewon.

Methods

This study employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design based on the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of cyclical stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. PAR was selected because it allows active collaboration between researchers and stakeholders in diagnosing problems, implementing interventions, and evaluating outcomes within real-world settings. This approach is particularly suitable for strengthening premarital guidance services, as it emphasizes contextual relevance, collective learning, and continuous improvement.

The research was conducted at the Religious Affairs Office (Kantor Urusan Agama/KUA) of Sewon District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. The study took place from June to August 2025 and involved two complete PAR cycles. Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in premarital guidance services and consisted of one head of KUA, five religious counselors, four academics with expertise in Islamic counseling and family studies, and sixteen pairs of prospective couples who were registered for premarital guidance during the research period.

Data collection employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were obtained through pretest and posttest questionnaires designed to measure changes in participants' knowledge related to marital readiness, communication, family dynamics, and reproductive health. Qualitative data were collected through participant observation to capture levels of engagement, interaction, and learning dynamics during the sessions, as well as through semi-structured interviews with prospective couples and facilitators to explore their experiences and perceptions of the program. Documentation, including activity records and visual materials, was used to support data triangulation.

Data analysis was conducted using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using paired-samples t-tests with the assistance of JASP software to determine statistically significant differences in knowledge scores. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo software, allowing for systematic coding, categorization, and interpretation of recurring themes related to participant engagement, satisfaction, and perceived effectiveness of the premarital guidance strategies.

Results

The implementation of premarital guidance using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach at KUA Sewon was carried out through two iterative cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. During the planning stage, coordination meetings were conducted with KUA Sewon officials and research partners to identify key issues and design the intervention strategy.

Figure 1. Coordination meeting with KUA Sewon officials and research partners



The results of the study are presented by integrating quantitative findings from pretest–posttest measurements and qualitative findings from observations and interviews.

Results of PAR Cycle 1

The first cycle focused on strengthening the content and delivery of premarital guidance by involving professional facilitators and introducing interactive methods. Premarital guidance sessions were conducted in a single-day format and covered three core themes: Islamic family values (*sakinah* family), reproductive health, and family dynamics.

Figure 2. Premarital guidance session at KUA Sewon (PAR Cycle 1) 10 June 2025



The sessions employed a combination of interactive lectures, group discussions, and role-play activities.

Figure 3. Group discussion, simulation, and role-play activities during Cycle 1



Observational data indicated that participants perceived the material as relevant and beneficial, particularly the reproductive health component delivered by external health professionals. However, participant engagement during discussions was uneven, with many participants remaining passive, especially during lecture-dominated segments. Interviews revealed that while participants appreciated the presence of professional facilitators, they felt that the session duration was insufficient and that learning materials were limited to digital files without structured modules. In addition, evaluation was conducted informally, without standardized instruments to measure learning outcomes.

Reflection on the first cycle identified key limitations, including limited time allocation, lack of systematic evaluation, and insufficient learning media to support independent study. These findings informed the design of improvements implemented in the second cycle.

Results of PAR Cycle 2

The second cycle emphasized the optimization of collaborative strategies based on the reflections from the first cycle. Reflection and re-planning were conducted through focus group discussions involving all research stakeholders.

Figure 4. Focus group discussion during the reflection stage of PAR 17 June 2025



Key improvements included the use of digital flipbook learning materials provided to participants prior to the sessions, the application of structured group discussions and simulations, and the implementation of systematic pretest and posttest evaluations.

Observational findings showed a marked increase in participant engagement during the second cycle.

Figure 5. Premarital guidance session at KUA Sewon (PAR Cycle 2) 24 June 2025



Most participants actively contributed to discussions, asked questions, and participated in simulation activities.

Figure 6. Interactive discussion and simulation activities during Cycle 2



Interview data further indicated that the availability of flipbook materials helped participants prepare in advance and facilitated deeper understanding during face-to-face sessions.

Quantitative Results

Quantitative analysis revealed a significant improvement in participants' knowledge following the implementation of the PAR-based collaborative strategies. The statistical results of the paired-samples t-test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Paired Samples T-Test Results of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p
Pretes	- Postes	-17.998	29	< .001

The mean pretest score was 44.97 (SD = 5.35), while the mean posttest score increased to 64.67, representing an average gain of 19 points. The paired-samples *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ($t(29) = -17.998, p < .001$), indicating that the intervention was effective in enhancing participants' understanding of premarital guidance content.

Qualitative Results

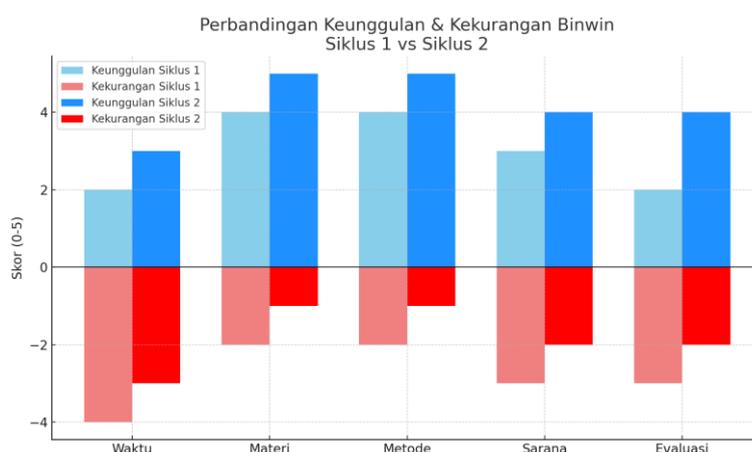
Thematic analysis of interview and observational data identified several dominant themes. First, participants reported increased satisfaction with the learning process due to interactive methods and collaborative activities. Second, the use of digital flipbooks was perceived as highly beneficial for independent learning and revision. Third, systematic evaluation through pretest and posttest enhanced participants' awareness of their learning progress. Despite these positive outcomes, participants consistently noted that limited session duration remained a challenge, restricting deeper exploration of certain topics.

Overall, the results demonstrate that PAR-based premarital guidance significantly improved knowledge outcomes, participant engagement, and perceived service quality, particularly when collaborative strategies and supportive learning media were employed.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the application of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach significantly enhanced the effectiveness of premarital guidance services at KUA Sewon. A comparative analysis between the first and second PAR cycles illustrates improvements in participant engagement and service quality.

Figure 7. Comparison of qualitative findings between PAR Cycle 1 and Cycle 2



The integration of collaborative strategies, stakeholder involvement, and reflective cycles contributed to measurable improvements in participants' knowledge, engagement, and satisfaction. These results affirm the value of PAR as an appropriate methodological framework for strengthening Islamic counseling services in community-based institutional settings.

The significant increase in participants' knowledge, as evidenced by the pretest–posttest results, demonstrates that participatory and interactive learning strategies are more effective than conventional lecture-based approaches. The use of group discussions, simulations, and role plays aligns with adult learning principles, which emphasize active participation, experiential learning, and relevance to learners' real-life contexts. This finding supports previous research indicating that participatory premarital education improves communication skills, conflict management, and marital readiness among couples.

The incorporation of digital flipbook materials emerged as a key factor in enhancing learning effectiveness. Providing access to learning materials prior to face-to-face sessions allowed participants to build foundational understanding and engage more meaningfully during discussions. This approach addresses common challenges related to limited instructional time and supports independent learning, consistent with studies highlighting the effectiveness of digital learning media in adult education contexts.

From an Islamic counseling perspective, the collaborative PAR model facilitated the internalization of religious values by positioning prospective couples as active participants rather than passive recipients of information. This participatory dynamic supports the preventive function of Islamic counseling (*al-wiqāyah*), which emphasizes early intervention to reduce future marital vulnerability. The involvement of multiple stakeholders—religious counselors, academics, health professionals, and KUA leaders—also strengthened the contextual relevance and credibility of the guidance provided.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified persistent challenges related to time allocation. Participants consistently reported that the duration of premarital guidance sessions was insufficient for in-depth discussion of complex marital issues. This limitation suggests the need for more flexible delivery models, such as blended or modular learning formats, to complement face-to-face sessions and enhance learning continuity.

Overall, the findings corroborate existing literature emphasizing the effectiveness of participatory, collaborative, and technology-supported approaches in premarital guidance. By integrating PAR with Islamic counseling principles and digital learning strategies, this study contributes a practical and adaptable model for improving premarital guidance services within KUA institutions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that premarital guidance strengthened through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach effectively improves the quality of *Bimbingan Perkawinan* (Binwin) services at KUA Sewon. The findings show a significant increase in prospective couples' knowledge, accompanied by higher levels of engagement and satisfaction. Collaborative strategies, including interactive discussions, simulations, role plays, and digital flipbook materials, fostered active learning and enhanced participants' readiness for marital life. Stakeholder collaboration among counselors, academics, and KUA officials ensured contextual relevance and practical applicability of the program. Although limited time allocation remains a challenge, the PAR-based model offers a viable and adaptable framework for strengthening premarital guidance as a preventive Islamic counseling intervention to enhance marital readiness and family resilience.

Author's declaration

Authors' contributions and responsibilities

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. All authors were actively involved in the implementation of the research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the results. Each author contributed intellectually to the development of the manuscript and approved the final version for submission. The contribution of each author here, or mark the following column.

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study.

The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results.

The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. Down the research funding, if any.

Availability of data and materials

✓ All data generated or analyzed during this study are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

Competing interests

✓ The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Additional information

No additional information is reported for this study.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Religious Affairs Office (Kantor Urusan Agama) of Sewon District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, for granting permission and providing full support for the implementation of this research. Appreciation is also extended to the religious counselors, academics, health professionals, and prospective couples who actively participated in all stages of the study. Their cooperation and engagement were invaluable to the successful completion of this research.

References

- Amran, Y., Fasya, T. N., & Salamah, H. (2025). Factors Associated With Premarital Screening Intention Among Young Adults With Higher Education in Indonesia: A Cross Sectional Study. *Journal of Preventive Medicine and Public Health = Yebang Uihakhoe Chi*, 58(3), 307–316. <https://doi.org/10.3961/jpmp.24.589>
- Arjiansa, R. R., & Sitabri, T. (2023). Pengukuran Tingkat Kemudahan Pegawai Terhadap Penggunaan Layanan Aplikasi SIMRS Menggunakan Metode System Usability Scale (SUS) Pada Rumah Sakit Umum Daerah Sekayu. *Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary on Social and Technology*, Vol.1(2), 115-120. <https://doi.org/10.31004/ijmst.v1i2.132>
- Asadpour, E., Sharei, A., & Salmani, A. (2025). Premarital intervention based on attachment and differentiation improves communication and conflict management in Iranian couples. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-15051-3>
- Badar, D. S., & Karsiwan, W. (2021). Survey Kepuasan Mahasiswa Atas Layanan Manajemen Pendidikan di STKIP Muhammadiyah Bogor Tahun 2020. *Jurnal Education FKIP UNMA*, Vol.7(1), 182–188. <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v7i1.910>
- Febriani, Y., Mahmudi, M. A., Sundari, C., & Saleh, A. R. (2022). PELATIHAN KOMITE PEMBELAJARAN BAGI SEKOLAH PENGGERAK DI PROVINSI RIAU. SELAPARANG: *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Berkemajuan*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.31764/jpmb.v6i4.10737>
- Golpour, A., Reyhani, K., & Hoseinkhani, A. (2025). The Effectiveness of Premarital Education Using the Interpersonal Awareness and Choice Method on Marital Stability and Emotional Expressiveness. *Sobhaninia et al. Applied Family Therapy Journal*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.aftj.4013>
- Hadijah, Afrinaldi, Charles, & Santosa, B. (2023). Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Pranikah bagi Pengantin oleh Penyuluh Fungsional di KUA Kecamatan Aur Birugo Tigo Baleh Kota

- Bukittinggi. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, Vol.7(1), 3294-3300. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v7i1.5714>
- Kemenag, B. H. (2024, Maret 26). *Mulai Akhir Juli 2024, Bimas Islam Wajibkan Calon Pengantin Ikut Bimbingan Perkawinan*. Kementerian Agama RI. Retrieved September 4, 2025, from <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/mulai-akhir-juli-2024-bimas-islam-wajibkan-calon-pengantin-ikut-bimbingan-perkawinan-wR00p>
- Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2013). *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research*. Springer Nature Singapore.
- Kencana Sari, F. F., & Widiyanto Atmojo, I. R. (2021). Analisis Kebutuhan Bahan Ajar Digital Berbasis Flipbook untuk Memberdayakan Keterampilan Abad 21 Peserta Didik pada Pembelajaran IPA Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, Vol. 5(6), 6079–6085. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v5i6.1715>
- Manna, N. S., Doriza, S., & Oktaviani, M. (2021). Cerai Gugat: Telaah Penyebab Perceraian Pada Keluarga di Indonesia. *Jurnal AL-AZHAR INDONESIA SERI HUMANIORA*, Vol. 6(1), 11-21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36722/sh.v6i1.443>
- Ramdani, R., A, N., & P, R. (2020). Strategi Kolaboratif Dalam Manajemen Pelayanan Bimbingan dan Konseling di Sekolah. *Educational Guidance and Counseling Development Journal*, 3(1), 1-7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/egcdj.v3i1.9398>
- Ramz, F., Ashtarian, H., & Moradinazar, M. (2025). Needs Assessment in Premarital Education: A Narrative Review of Iranian Studies from 2007 to 2023. *Health Rep Technol*, 11(1), 2–7. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5812/jhrt-153616>
- Rmd, S. M., Wahyudi, H. F., Jannah, S., & Qibtiyah, L. (2022). Urgensi Bimbingan Pra Nikah dalam Membentuk Keluarga Sakinah Mawaddah dan Warrahmah di Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) Pragan. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, Vol. 3(2), 107-118. <https://doi.org/10.28944/hudanlinnaas.v3i2.829>
- Sabara, S. (2018). Tingkat Kepuasan Masyarakat Terhadap Pelayanan Pernikahan oleh KUA di Kawasan Timur Indonesia. *Jurnal Administrasi Publik*, Vol. 14(2), 109-118. <https://doi.org/10.52316/jap.v14i2.3>
- Sari, R. A., Aswar, N. F., & Aslam, A. P. (2023). Pengaruh Kualitas Layanan dan Kepercayaan Terhadap Kepuasan Nasabah Pada PT. Bank Sulselbar. *Jurnal Manajemen*, Vol. 2(2), 119. <https://doi.org/10.26858/jm.v2i2.42329>
- Statistika, B. P. (2025, Februari 14). *Jumlah Perceraian Menurut Provinsi dan Faktor Penyebab Perceraian*. Jumlah Perceraian Menurut Provinsi dan Faktor Penyebab Perceraian (perkara), 2024 - Tabel Statistik - Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia. Retrieved September 4, 2025, from <https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3/YVdoUIIwVmlTM2h4YzFoVlpsWkViRXhqTlZwRFVUMDkjMw==/jumlah-perceraian-menurut-provinsi-dan-faktor-penyebab-perceraian-perkara-2024.html?year=2024>
- Suryadharma, M., uintina Ashtiti, A. N., Susanto Putro, A. N., Rukmana, A. Y., & Mesra, R. (2023). Strategi Kolaboratif dalam Mendorong Inovasi Bisnis di Industri Kreatif: Kajian Kualitatif pada Perusahaan Desain Grafis. *Sanskara Manajemen dan Bisnis*, Vol. 1(3), 172-181. <https://doi.org/10.58812/smb.v1i03.221>
- O., & Ekin, Y. (2018). Reflections of Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage on religious stores in Mugla-Turkey. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 6(3), 18–29.