



STRATEGIES OF THE HEAD OF THE MEDAN PERJUANGAN SUBDISTRICT OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS IN GUIDING ENGAGED COUPLES

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Abstract

This study examines the strategies used by the Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict Office of Religious Affairs to guide prospective brides and grooms. It identifies the methods and approaches applied, as well as factors that enable or hinder implementation, with the aim of enhancing couples' readiness to build families characterized by *sakinah, mawaddah, and warahmah*. The research uses a qualitative, descriptive design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving the Head of the KUA, marriage officiants, and prospective couples in the marriage counseling program. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Findings show that the guidance strategy at the KUA of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict is structured and adaptive, delivered through the Marriage Guidance Program (*Bimwin*), and integrates religious, legal, health, psychological, and social components. Training methods include lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, mock marriage ceremonies, and individual counseling tailored to participants. Supporting factors include clear regulations, cross-sectoral cooperation, available facilities and infrastructure, and the competence of marriage officiants and instructors. Obstacles include participants' limited time, varying educational backgrounds, and the perception among some that premarital counseling is merely an administrative formality. Overall, these counseling strategies have positively impacted the mental, emotional, and spiritual readiness of prospective couples and have contributed to strengthening family resilience in urban areas.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an institution that holds a fundamental place in human life because it serves as a means of forming families, the smallest social units in society. The quality of families formed through marriage serves as the primary foundation for the realization of a harmonious, stable, and sustainable social life. In the context of Indonesian society, which holds religious and cultural values in high regard, marriage is not only understood as a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman, but is also viewed as a form of worship and a covenant between the bride and groom, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects, as well as adequate knowledge—elements that are crucial and cannot be overlooked in the effort to create a family characterized by *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *warahmah* (Febrianti et al., 2025; Lubis & Muktaruddin, 2023).

Marriage plays a strategic role in shaping an ideal social order. In addition to serving as a noble means of organizing family life and continuing the family line, marriage also plays a role in expanding social networks between individuals and among groups in society. Through the bonds of marriage, processes of getting to know one another, cooperation, and mutual assistance are established, which ultimately contribute to strengthening social cohesion. Nevertheless, achieving happiness in married life is no easy feat, given that marriage unites two individuals with differing backgrounds in character, culture, customs, and lifestyles. Therefore, thorough preparation and a strong commitment from both parties are necessary to be able to respect, appreciate, and love one another, and to build trust as the foundation for a harmonious and sustainable family.

From an Islamic perspective, marriage is viewed as a sacred, noble, and sacred institution, and is part of a servant's devotion to Allah SWT. Marriage should not be entered into lightly or without seriousness, as bonds built without a foundation of thorough preparation tend to be fragile and easily shaken when faced with complex household dynamics (Prayogi & Jauhari, 2021). Therefore, premarital preparation is a crucial aspect in maintaining the continuity and resilience of a household.

As time goes by, married couples face increasingly complex challenges. Various problems frequently arise, including rising divorce rates, emotional immaturity, weak communication patterns within the household, a lack of

understanding of the rights and obligations of husband and wife, as well as economic pressures and the influence of modern lifestyles. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs shows that the majority of divorce cases are triggered by internal family issues, particularly communication conflicts and a lack of mental preparedness among couples for married life (Sularno et al., 2020). This condition further emphasizes that guidance for prospective brides and grooms is an urgent and strategic need as a preventive measure to equip couples with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to be able to face the realities and dynamics of married life in a more mature and responsible manner.

The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is a government agency under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia that plays a strategic role in administering marriage affairs and providing family guidance. Pursuant to Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 517 of 2001, the KUA is responsible for marriage and divorce services, providing guidance on harmonious family life, and conducting religious outreach activities for the community. Therefore, the KUA functions not only as an administrative institution for marriage registration but also as a guidance and educational institution aimed at improving the quality of family life.

The Marriage Guidance Program (Bimwin) organized by the KUA serves as a key instrument in preparing prospective couples. Through this program, prospective couples are equipped with an understanding of religious values, communication skills within the household, conflict management skills, knowledge regarding reproductive health, and skills in managing family finances. With this preparation, it is hoped that prospective couples will be better prepared to build a harmonious and sustainable family life (Adiyasa et al., 2020).

Theoretically, this study draws on organizational strategy theory, theories regarding the role of religious institutions, concepts of guidance and capacity building for prospective brides and grooms, and the Islamic perspective on marriage as its primary analytical framework. Organizational strategy theory is used to examine how the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) designs, implements, and evaluates strategies for guiding prospective brides and grooms in a systematic, planned, and sustainable manner. Mintzberg (1994) argues that strategy is not merely understood as a plan, but also encompasses patterns of action, positions,

perspectives, and specific maneuvers or tactics (ploys) reflected in the consistency of an organization's behavior (Mintzberg, 1994).

In the context of the KUA, the pre-marital counseling strategy is not only outlined in the form of policies, technical guidelines, or Marriage Guidance (Bimwin) modules but is also implemented in actual practice on the ground. This is reflected in the counseling patterns employed, the communication approaches used by counselors, the selection and organization of counseling materials, and the learning methods applied throughout the counseling process. This approach enables a more comprehensive analysis of the pre-marital counseling strategies implemented by the KUA (Simbolon & Saragih, 2022; Zainuddin et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Wheelen and Hunger (2012) view strategy as a managerial process comprising three main stages: strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. The strategy formulation stage involves setting organizational goals, analyzing the internal and external environments, and determining the most appropriate strategic alternatives. In the context of premarital counseling, this stage relates to the KUA's ability to understand the characteristics of the community it serves, the educational level of the prospective couples, social dynamics in urban areas, and the various challenges couples typically face in married life (Wheelen, T.L., & Hunger, 2012).

The strategy implementation stage involves the execution of the Marriage Guidance (Bimwin) program, which includes providing competent human resources, managing training materials, scheduling activities, and selecting appropriate methods. Meanwhile, strategy evaluation is conducted to assess the effectiveness of implementation as a basis for continuous program improvement and development. This framework is used to analyze the extent to which the KUA of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict applies the three stages of the strategy in the guidance of prospective couples.

Social and cultural conditions also play a significant role in determining the direction and form of the formulated development strategy. Kumar (2005) also emphasized that public organizations, in carrying out their service functions, need to consider various external factors, such as evolving social norms, cultural values held by the community, education levels, and lifestyle patterns that influence social

behavior (Kumar et al., 2005). Consideration of these factors is a prerequisite for designing strategies that align with the realities of the community being served.

This perspective aligns with the characteristics of Medan Perjuangan District as an urban area with a high level of social heterogeneity. The diversity of cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds in the community requires the KUA (Religious Affairs Office) to implement development strategies that are adaptive, communicative, and sensitive to social change. Furthermore, development strategies must be responsive to current developments, including the influence of digital media, changing family interaction patterns, and the dynamics of marital relationships in the context of modern life, so that the development provided remains relevant and effective. In addition to the strategic and institutional framework, this study also utilizes the perspective of marriage in Islam as a normative and ethical basis in analyzing the development process for prospective brides and grooms. In Islamic teachings, marriage is understood as a sacred and sublime bond (*'aqdun muqaddas*) and as part of worship to Allah SWT. The primary purpose of marriage is to achieve a peaceful life (*sakinah*), foster love (*mawaddah*), and foster compassion (*rahmah*), as affirmed in Surah Ar-Rum, verse 21.

Al-Ghazali (2025) in **Ihya' Ulum al-Din** emphasizes that marriage serves strategic functions, including as a means of preserving one's dignity, controlling sexual urges, and fostering a Muslim's sense of social and moral responsibility (Al-Ghazali, 2025). This perspective indicates that marriage is not merely a personal matter but also possesses broad spiritual and social dimensions. Therefore, premarital counseling should be directed toward instilling a comprehensive religious understanding, so that couples enter married life with mature spiritual awareness, strong moral commitment, and readiness to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in accordance with Islamic values.

Previous studies have shown that the implementation of premarital counseling, when designed and carried out systematically and with careful planning, can enhance couples' readiness to build a family life. (Azhari et al., 2020) revealed that counseling utilizing diverse methods—such as lectures, discussions, simulations, and premarital counseling—contributes to enhancing prospective spouses' understanding of conflict management as well as the rights and obligations

of husbands and wives. Other studies also emphasize the importance of applying counseling strategies and methods tailored to the needs and characteristics of participants (Altschuld, 2010), as well as the need for public institutions to play an active role in responding to the evolving social dynamics of modern society (Kumar et al., 2005). Nevertheless, most of these studies remain general and normative in nature and have not specifically examined strategies for guiding prospective brides and grooms in the context of urban areas, which possess more complex social characteristics and challenges.

Based on this research gap, this study offers a novel contribution by focusing on the pre-marital counseling strategies implemented by the Religious Affairs Office of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict. Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict is an urban area characterized by high levels of social, cultural, and economic heterogeneity, as well as relatively intense community mobility. These characteristics require the Religious Affairs Office of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict to implement adaptive and innovative strategies for the guidance of prospective brides and grooms so that the guidance is not merely administrative but capable of addressing the real needs of prospective brides and grooms. Therefore, based on this background, this study aims to examine the pre-marital counseling strategies implemented by the Religious Affairs Office of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict, the methods used, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation, in order to assess the effectiveness of the counseling in enhancing couples' readiness to build a family characterized by *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*.

The purpose of this article is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the strategies implemented by the Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict Office of Religious Affairs in providing guidance to prospective brides and grooms, to identify the methods and approaches used, and to uncover the various factors that act as enablers or barriers to their implementation. Through this study, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of pre-marital counseling strategies, particularly in enhancing couples' readiness to build a harmonious, loving, and compassionate family life.

The academic benefits of this research are expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in the fields of Islamic family law and religious service management, particularly regarding pre-marital counseling strategies implemented

by the Office of Religious Affairs. The findings of this study are also expected to enrich the body of scientific literature and serve as a reference for future researchers studying similar topics.

B. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena that occur naturally without intervention. This approach was chosen because it allows for the exploration of processes, social interactions, religious values, and interpersonal communication practices in the guidance of prospective brides and grooms. The descriptive qualitative method focuses on describing phenomena based on participants' perceptions to obtain a rich and meaningful contextual understanding. Descriptive research allows researchers to systematically and factually describe the counseling strategies, methods used, and factors supporting and hindering program implementation in the field without manipulating existing variables (Asipi et al., 2022).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation to allow for triangulation of sources and methods, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. Data analysis utilized Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, and proceeded cyclically and concurrently with data collection. Data validity was ensured through the application of source and method triangulation so that each finding could be confirmed from various perspectives and academically justified (Abdalla et al., 2018).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

KUA Strategies for Counseling Prospective Couples

Interviews with the Head of the KUA revealed that the KUA of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict has a strategic role in counseling prospective couples prior to their wedding. Every prospective couple who has registered their marriage must participate in the Pre-Marital Guidance Program (Bimwin) to receive counseling. For ten working days prior to the wedding ceremony, pre-marital counseling is conducted effectively. Although various strategies are employed, self-directed counseling is the primary choice because it is more flexible and better suited to the busy schedules and high mobility of the local community.

The Head of the KUA emphasized that the KUA of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict does not merely handle the administrative registration of marriages but also functions as an institution that helps people improve their family lives. Data indicates that over the past year, the KUA has served an average of forty to fifty engaged couples each month, with a participation rate in premarital counseling reaching 95%.

The guidance process begins with marriage registration, during which the prospective bride and groom are screened to ensure that all their documents are complete and valid. At this stage, KUA officials verify proof of residence, a letter of recommendation from the local village office, health certificates, and other documents required by regulation. Once it is confirmed that there are no obstacles to the marriage, the KUA sends an official notification letter to the prospective bride and groom to attend premarital counseling. The notification letter includes the schedule, location, and duration of the session. Participants are required to attend the session to obtain a marriage certificate. One of the objectives of this policy is to ensure that the prospective couple strictly follows the established instructions. Additionally, this policy serves to monitor the success rate of marriage preparations.

Interviews with the head of the religious affairs office indicate that the counseling approach is also tailored to the characteristics of the prospective spouses. Couples marrying under the age of 21 receive guidance with a special emphasis on mental and financial readiness as well as parental responsibility. Meanwhile, the material for couples marrying at a mature age or in a second marriage focuses more on conflict resolution, effective communication, and integrating into the family. These differentiated methods demonstrate that the KUA employs a flexible and responsive counseling approach to meet the specific needs of participants.

Methods and Formats of Counseling Activities

At the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict, premarital counseling is typically conducted in the form of seminars combined with techniques such as lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and simulations. Materials are delivered unidirectionally using this method, which allows for active interaction between the presenter and participants. Guidance activities last 4 to 6 hours per day, with time allocated proportionally to each subject. In the morning session, material on fiqh and marriage regulations is discussed; in the afternoon session, health issues are discussed; and in the evening session, spiritual material and *ijab qabul* simulations are discussed.

Additionally, the KUA conducts pre-marriage tests to determine the initial level of understanding among prospective grooms and brides. This allows the material to be tailored to the participants' socio-cultural and educational backgrounds. The pre-marriage assessment consists of a written questionnaire comprising up to 25 multiple-choice questions and short essays on the rights and obligations of spouses, reproductive health, and marriage. The results of the pre-marriage test indicate that, on average, prospective brides and grooms still have limited basic understanding, with an average score of 55 to 65 out of 100. Presenters can use this data to tailor the depth and delivery methods of the material.

As the primary facilitator in providing guidance, the marriage officiant is responsible for offering fiqh and spiritual guidance, as well as helping the engaged couple address economic, psychological, or family relationship issues. These private consultations take place before or after the standard counseling session. This provides an opportunity for the engaged couple to discuss issues or concerns they may feel uncomfortable addressing in an open forum. Interview results indicate that some prospective couples use this counseling service to discuss sensitive issues, such as financial disparities within the family, concerns about fertility, or conflicts with extended family members regarding wedding preparations.

Observations of the coaching process show that discussion and question-and-answer techniques create an interactive and conducive atmosphere. Both male and female prospective brides and grooms actively ask questions, share experiences, and interact with other participants. As seen in the dynamics of the discussion, the collective coaching method not only conveys information but also facilitates social learning and the exchange of opinions among participants. Some participants even noted that the questions and experiences of others from different backgrounds provided them with new insights.

Factors Supporting and Hindering Counseling

Research findings indicate that several factors facilitate the counseling process for prospective couples. These include clear regulations, cooperation among KUA officials, religious leaders, health centers, and PLKBs, as well as the availability of organized counseling materials. With Ministerial Regulation (PMA) No. 30 of 2024, the KUA has a strong legal basis to mandate premarital counseling. This regulation also provides clear operational guidelines regarding implementation procedures, content, and the duration of counseling. The Head of the KUA stated that this regulation is highly effective in ensuring consistency in the delivery of counseling across all regions.

Additionally, cross-sectoral collaboration with community health centers and PLKBs is a unique strength in enhancing the perspective and depth of the counseling materials. While PLKBs provide practical experience in family planning and child care programs, health workers from community health centers bring a medical perspective grounded in scientific evidence. This synergy results in comprehensive and in-depth counseling. The enthusiasm of some of the prospective couples is also a crucial factor in the smooth implementation of the activities. Observations indicate that approximately 70% of participants followed the training attentively, participated in discussions, and responded positively to the provided materials.

The availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure—such as presentation equipment, comfortable meeting rooms, printed training modules, and meals for participants—is another contributing factor. In addition, the KUA has developed standard training modules that include summaries of the material, references to verses from the Qur'an and Hadith, and illustrations to aid understanding. Each participant receives these modules as reading material and a reference to take home.

However, there are several obstacles; the most prominent ones are the time constraints faced by prospective grooms and brides due to busy work schedules, low attendance rates, and differences in educational backgrounds that affect their ability to absorb the material. Interview results indicate that approximately 20–25% of prospective brides and grooms struggle to align the training schedule with their work schedules, particularly those working in the private sector with long or inflexible work hours. The KUA faces additional administrative burdens as some prospective couples are forced to request self-guided counseling or special schedules outside of regular working hours.

Delivering the material also poses a challenge due to differences in educational backgrounds. Those with lower levels of education require a simpler, more repetitive approach, while engaged couples with higher education tend to grasp the material more quickly and actively participate in discussions. Rozi acknowledges that balancing these differing comprehension needs within a single counseling session requires strong pedagogical skills.

One obstacle faced is the belief that some people in the community still view premarital counseling as merely an administrative task, rather than a substantial need. This perspective is reflected in the lack of seriousness among some participants who attend only to fulfill requirements and have no desire to truly learn. To address this issue, the KUA employs an administrative enforcement approach by linking the completion of counseling to the issuance of the marriage certificate, as well as a persuasive approach by speaking personally to individuals about the importance and benefits of counseling for the families

who will receive it. At the beginning of the session, the minister strives to create a more relaxed atmosphere by sharing testimonials from couples who have undergone counseling and experienced its benefits.

This study found that the pre-marital counseling strategy at the KUA of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict aligns with Mintzberg's (1994) theory of organizational strategy, particularly the concepts of strategy as a pattern and as a perspective. Within Mintzberg's framework, strategy does not always manifest consistently or repetitively in day-to-day organizational practice. Strategy as a pattern indicates that the consistency of organizational behavior over time—whether planned or emerging organically—is a tangible manifestation of an institution's strategic direction. Meanwhile, strategy as a perspective reflects the collective worldview, core values, and ideological orientation that serve as a compass for all organizational actions (Mintzberg, 1994).

Pre-marital counseling at the KUA in Medan Perjuangan is not merely viewed as an administrative task; rather, it is carried out as a continuous pattern of action integrated into the KUA's service system, aimed at fostering better family quality. This pattern of continuity indicates that the implemented strategy has become institutionalized in organizational practice and is part of a structured routine of religious public services. Within the framework of this pattern, the consistent implementation of counseling year after year reflects a strong institutional commitment to maintaining the program's continuity, while also demonstrating that premarital counseling has transformed from a mere procedure become a deeply rooted organizational culture. Meanwhile, from a strategic perspective, this strategy demonstrates a clear and firm value orientation, namely fostering a family characterized by *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *warahmah* as a primary goal that is transcendent in nature and not merely administrative in scope.

This value orientation has a very strong normative foundation in the Qur'an. Allah SWT states in Surah Ar-Rum, verse 21:

"And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may find tranquility in them; and He has placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reflect." (QS. Ar-Rum: 21)

This verse is not merely a theological statement about the nature of marriage; rather, it contains a strategic blueprint for the goals that must be achieved within a marital bond. The three key concepts of *sakinah* (inner peace), *mawaddah* (passionate love), and *rahmah* (tender compassion) serve as indicators of strategic success that must be realized through systematic planning, guidance, and support. By making these values the foundation of the

organizational perspective, the KUA does not merely carry out state functions but also undertakes a transformative and sustainable Islamic mission.

Furthermore, the existence of organizational control mechanisms, such as verifying participants' attendance and the direct link between participation in guidance programs and the issuance of marriage certificates, indicates that the implemented strategy possesses a strong regulatory dimension to ensure that the objectives of the guidance program are achieved optimally (Mintzberg, 1994). This mechanism represents a control strategy that guarantees the commitment of prospective spouses to the counseling process in a formal and measurable manner. However, upon critical examination, this control mechanism also has the potential to foster a tendency toward mere formal compliance, where participants go through the counseling process merely for the sake of it. Therefore, a communication strategy capable of fostering intrinsic awareness among prospective brides and grooms needs to be developed in parallel with existing regulatory mechanisms, so that extrinsic compliance can be transformed into internal and sustainable motivation for participation.

According to the strategic framework of Wheelen and Hunger (2012), the strategy for guiding prospective brides and grooms at the KUA in Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict has covered the stages of formulation, implementation, and evaluation, although the depth and effectiveness still vary at each stage. Wheelen and Hunger's framework essentially conceptualizes strategic management as a dynamically cycling process, encompassing environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and evaluation and control (Wheelen, T.L., & Hunger, 2012). Each stage is interconnected and influences one another, so that weaknesses in one stage will impact the effectiveness of the next stage.

In the formulation stage, the establishment of counseling objectives explicitly aimed at reducing divorce rates and improving the readiness of prospective spouses demonstrates a clear and measurable strategic direction. This objective serves as the foundation for the design of the Marriage Counseling (Bimwin) program, which was developed to provide a comprehensive understanding of married life from various perspectives. However, strategically, this framework still faces limitations in terms of comprehensive, evidence-based needs analysis. The formulated strategies tend to be general in nature and are not yet fully grounded in a mapping of the actual conditions of prospective couples, encompassing the psychological, social, and cultural aspects of their lives (Ardiansyah et al., 2022).

In the context of strategic management, weaknesses at this formulation stage have the potential to reduce the program's accuracy in targeting its objectives, as strategies not grounded in specific needs tend to be less effective in addressing the challenges faced by participants (Wheelen, T.L., & Hunger, 2012). Ideally, the formulation stage should be supplemented with a comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities,

Threats) analysis of the institutional conditions of the KUA and the socio-demographic profiles of prospective brides and grooms in the Medan Perjuangan area, so that the designed program is truly responsive to real needs on the ground.

During the implementation phase, the guidance strategy is carried out through the Bimwin program, which employs a variety of learning methods and involves cross-sectoral participation, such as health workers and family counselors. This demonstrates that the strategy is integrative and collaborative, as it combines various multidisciplinary approaches in an effort to achieve the guidance objectives in a holistic manner. This approach reflects an awareness that family issues are not merely religious in nature but are also closely intertwined with aspects of reproductive health, interpersonal psychology, and complex social dynamics. Thus, the implementation strategy can be considered sufficiently comprehensive and responsive to the complex needs of prospective couples in the modern era.

Furthermore, the personalized approach taken by the officiant through individual consultations demonstrates a genuine effort to address the specific needs of each participant in a more in-depth and contextual manner. This strategy reflects the application of the concepts of capacity building and human resource development, which emphasize the processes of empowerment, mentoring, and the continuous strengthening of the competencies of prospective couples.

Nevertheless, research findings indicate that the strategy evaluation phase remains a major weakness and a critical point in the overall capacity-building process. Evaluations tend to be simplistic, sporadic, and not yet based on performance metrics that can be measured systematically and comprehensively. The success indicators currently used are still limited to quantitative aspects such as the number of participants and attendance rates, without addressing more substantial qualitative dimensions such as changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills following the training. This indicates that the strategic management cycle is not yet functioning fully and integrally, due to the absence of an adequate feedback mechanism to assess program success and implement continuous improvements.

From a strategic perspective, evaluation is a crucial component as it serves as the foundation for future strategic decision-making. The absence of comprehensive data-driven evaluation makes it difficult to measure the long-term impact of the counseling, particularly regarding the reduction in divorce rates, the improvement in the quality of spousal communication, and the enhancement of overall family resilience. Therefore, the development of a more comprehensive and standardized evaluation system is necessary, such as the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), post-training satisfaction and

knowledge surveys, as well as ongoing (longitudinal) monitoring of married couples over a specific period of time.

The research findings also indicate that the KUA of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict has significantly evolved into an institution that not only serves as a formal legal registrar of marriages but also actively provides non-formal education and social assistance to the community. This institutional transformation represents a fundamental strategic shift from a bureaucratic-administrative orientation toward a humanistic and transformative public service orientation. This expansion of functions and roles aligns with the perspective of Kumar et al., who emphasize that public institutions must be able to adapt to the dynamics and social needs of a society that is constantly evolving (Kumar et al., 2005).

In this context, the development strategy implemented reflects a swift and appropriate response to social change, particularly in addressing the complexities of urban life characterized by high mobility, economic pressures, and the erosion of traditional values. The approach used is no longer purely bureaucratic but also emphasizes humanistic aspects through direct, empathetic, and participatory interaction with the community. This indicates that the strategy implemented is not only oriented toward organizational efficiency in the narrow sense but also toward the effectiveness of public services capable of substantively touching and transforming the living conditions of the community (Musa et al., 2025).

This is in line with the values contained in Surah Ar-Rum, verse 21, which affirms that marriage aims to foster peace, love, and affection between spouses as a sign of divine greatness. An explanation of this verse indicates that the success of a marriage is not determined solely by formal administrative aspects, but also by emotional, spiritual, and social readiness that must be cultivated long before the marriage contract is exchanged. Therefore, an effective counseling strategy must be able to internalize these values through an approach that is not only theoretical and normative but also practical, reflective, and contextual, in line with the realities faced by the prospective couple (Dalimunthe et al., 2024; Taufiqurrahman et al., 2025).

The findings of this study also support the view that premarital counseling is an effective and proven preventive method in reducing the potential for domestic conflict and divorce, as stated by (Azhari et al., 2020). In the context of organizational strategy, this indicates that the guidance of prospective spouses serves a highly important and strategic preventive function in maintaining the broader social stability of society. From a strategic management perspective, this preventive approach is far more socially and economically efficient than curative divorce intervention, given the social costs of divorce, which include the psychological impact on children, The disintegration of social networks and the burden

on the state in handling family law cases far exceed the investment required for high-quality premarital counseling programs (Lailatus Safitri et al., 2025 ; Ismail et al., 2019).

By equipping couples with knowledge, communication skills, and an understanding of Islamic values before marriage, counseling programs can help them face the various challenges and turbulence of married life with greater readiness and wisdom. Therefore, counseling strategies should not only focus on resolving existing problems (problem solving) but, more importantly, on preventing problems early on (problem prevention) by strengthening the capacity and character of prospective spouses (Yusnita et al., 2024).

Overall, this study shows that the guidance strategy for prospective brides and grooms at the Medan Perjuangan District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is a dynamic combination of regulatory, adaptive, and collaborative approaches. The regulatory strategy is evident in the existence of regulations that oblige participants to participate in guidance as a prerequisite for issuing marriage documents. The adaptive strategy is reflected in the adjustment of guidance programs and methods to the ever-changing conditions, needs, and social dynamics of urban communities. Meanwhile, the collaborative strategy is evident in the involvement of various cross-sectoral parties in implementing comprehensive guidance. The combination of these three strategic approaches demonstrates that the strategy implemented is quite comprehensive and multidimensional, although it still requires significant strengthening in several aspects, particularly in the data-based evaluation stage and the development of more innovative and participatory learning methods (Ardiansyah et al., 2022; Rokhianto & Arifin, 2023).

Therefore, this study found that an effective method for guiding prospective brides and grooms requires three mutually supporting strategic pillars: first, clear and consistent regulations as a legal and institutional framework; second, guidance methods that are flexible, innovative, and responsive to the specific needs of prospective brides and grooms; and third, the active role of religious institutions strengthened by synergistic and well-coordinated cross-sectoral collaboration. These three pillars become increasingly critical and non-negotiable in the context of urban communities such as Medan Perjuangan District, which has complex, heterogeneous, and constantly changing social dynamics (Muslihati et al., 2024; Al-kautsar, 2025).

Thus, the results of this study not only provide a meaningful theoretical contribution in the development of organizational strategy studies in public religious institutions, especially in showing the relevance of Mintzberg's (1994) and Wheelen & Hunger's (2012) theories in the context of religious institutions with a normative-Islamic value dimension, but also provide concrete practical implications in efforts to strengthen the strategy for fostering prospective brides and grooms at the KUA to be more

responsive, effective, accountable, and sustainable in facing the social challenges that continue to develop in this modern era.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the pre-marital counseling strategy at the Religious Affairs Office of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict has been implemented in a planned and systematic manner in accordance with applicable regulations through the Marriage Guidance Program (Bimwin). The guidance is not merely viewed as an administrative requirement but as an institutional strategy to prevent divorce and strengthen family resilience, as evidenced by clear guidance objectives, integration into marriage services, and the emphasis on the presence of prospective couples as part of the strategic framework.

The pre-marital counseling strategy at the KUA of Medan Perjuangan Subdistrict reflects an adaptive approach tailored to the characteristics of an urban community. This is evident in the use of diverse methods, comprehensive counseling materials, and support from cross-sectoral collaboration. Despite facing challenges such as participants' time constraints and varying educational backgrounds, the KUA managed these through a persuasive approach and by strengthening administrative aspects. Overall, this counseling has a positive impact on enhancing the mental, emotional, and spiritual readiness of prospective brides and grooms, while simultaneously strengthening the KUA's role in supporting the realization of harmonious, loving, and compassionate families in urban settings.

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