

## STUDENT OPINION REGRADING PRE-MARRIAGE CERTIFICATION POLICY

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**ABSTRACT:** *Parental divorce cases bring many negative effects, especially for the health quality of the children both physically and mentally. Since youth are future leaders of a nation, high rate of divorce in Indonesia gets the attention of the Indonesian government to conduct a preventive program through premarital certification. This program has gained pros and cons in the community at large and among students. Related to the pros and cons, this study aims at identifying university students' opinion on the policy of premarital certification. This study was conducted using a survey method. Data of the study were collected through questionnaire, where 100 of university students involved as the samples of the study. The analysis technique is done through a single table description analysis. The results found that the premarital certification policy conducted by the government received less positive response from students. This is indicated by 64% of respondents who expressed their disagreement with this premarital certification program. Students assume that the premarital certification program will cause extortion and violation of the rights of privacy of the community, especially related to the reproductive health of healthy couples.*

**KEYWORDS:** premarital certification, family, divorce

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### INTRODUCTION

A marriage is essentially uniting of two large families into one. Marriage is established from a joint commitment between a man and a woman to grow a harmonious and peaceful family. The context of the purpose of marriage in Islam is to build a *Sakinah, Mawaddah Wa Rahmah* family. According to Tantu (2013), Iskandar (2017) and Dewi (2019) marriage is established with the agreement of both parties based on piety to Allah SWT in the hope of being able to have children according to Islamic law in continuing the ideals of the nation. To have a *sakinah mawaddah wa rahmah* family is everyone's dream. However, to make it happen is not easy. Marriage in Indonesia also is generally done by young couples. Marriage that being held at an early age is generally influenced by several factors, including social environmental factors, poverty, parents' insight, local wisdom and social media factors (Sunaryanto, 2019).

Problems that occur in the household at the time was considered as important because in marriage there are certainly differences in character, personality, background and habits between the spouses, it will be difficult to unify the differences between the two. Thus, ripples of conflict become a matter of course, and if the couple is unable to cope with it, it will have an adverse effect on their marriage which leads to divorce. On the other hand, economic conditions are one of the factors that often cause divorce (Marzuki, 2019). Unpreparedness of each family in fostering a

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*sakinah* family can cause vulnerability that could cause a failure. The failure can be seen from the high divorce rate and other problems that come along with it.

The failure to foster a *sakinah* family not only impacts divorce between married couples, but also affects the children. Sofyan (2008) explains the results of his research that various forms of juvenile delinquency such as brawl, theft, extortion, drug abuse and others are mostly carried out by children and adolescents who grow up in broken families. Divorce will cause a negative effect on the children's quality of life, especially if their parents get conflict intensively (Sorek, 2019). In addition, the study that was conducted by Dolen, Weinberg, & Ma (2013) shows that the increase of parental divorce rate in Netherlands causes the increase of child-help seeking numbers. It means that, the children of the parents who got divorce may get serious problems after their parents were separated. Many children whose parents got divorce live with their grandparents (Žilinčíková & Kreidl, 2018). Parents-offspring relationship also may be in trouble after the parents got divorce (Apostolou, Chari, Lefkides, Theophanous, & Khalil, 2019). Therefore, parental divorce raises the risk of mental disorder to the children because of lack of parental care, more emotional and physical abuse, loneliness, chronic stress, attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety compared to those whose parents are still together (Schaan, Schulz, Schächinger, & Vögele, 2019). That condition is also supported by the result of the study that was conducted by Auersperg, Vlasak, Ponocny, & Barth (2019) who found that parental divorce influences mental health on children as its long term effect.

It is also found that the children whose parents got divorce may spend a lot of time or become addicted to internet (Domokos, Cretu, Nagy, & Mihai, 2011). Internet may bring positive impact especially on children education (Baharuddin & Dalle, 2017), but addiction to internet may lead to mental and physical health issues for adolescence, such as gaming disorder and gambling disorder (Derevensky, Hayman, & Gilbeau, 2019). The study that was conducted by Sahraee, Khosravi, and Yusefnejad (2011) also reported that internet addiction of adolescence correlates to depression and somatization. It is also supported by Chou, et al (2017) who found that internet addiction has a significant correlation to mental health problem. Similar finding also found by Lin, Hsiao, Liu, and Yen (2019) who found that internet addiction and psychiatric symptoms have bidirectional relationship. Therefore, remission on internet addiction is proven to improve psychological health (Lau, Wu, Gross, Cheng, & Lau, 2017). Not only mental health, in Africa, divorce risks child health in general (EmilySmith-Greenaway & Clark, 2017).

The involvement and participation of the media also contributed greatly to the occurrence of divorce among the society. Television media through their broadcast programs tend to show public figures or celebrities who experience conflicts in their households. In addition to television media, social media also influences so many patterns and behavior of married couples. Even the information conveyed by many social media is not sourced from the facts in the field. The information that is conveyed continuously, slowly leads to the perception that divorce is something normal that can happen in every household. When a conflict does not recur then divorce is considered as the best solution. Even though the media is as a source of information and education should be able to provide the best things for the life of the people in Indonesia.

When facing a situation like this the bride and groom need to prepare anticipation not to lose orientation to maintain the sacredness of marriage and the noble purpose of family life. The most important form of anticipation is to provide knowledge, understanding and skills to the bride and groom. In this case, the Indonesian government is trying to make a breakthrough through pre-wedding courses. This activity will provide understanding and knowledge about married life. Bustan (2017) states that these pre-marital course activities are expected to reduce the number of conflicts, divorce and domestic violence. The other marital problems that need to be solved is child marriage since child marriage increases the risk of stunting and underweight children (Paul, Chouhan, & Zaveri, 2019). In India, education interventions have proven in reducing child marriage rate and improving the productivity and gross domestic product per capita (Rasmussen, Maharaj, Sheehan, & Friedman, 2019). Similar finding also found by Paul (2019) that education can be a solution for avoiding child marriage, especially girl child marriage. In addition, the involvement of child activists also found effective in reducing child marriage (Tisdall & Cuevas-Parra, 2020). In addition, parents-child relationship quality also influences child marriage rate (Bhan, et al., 2019).

By considering the widespread marital problems, child marriage cases and divorce cases that occurred in Indonesia, this has become the basis for the government to spark a discourse on the launch of a prenuptial certificate that is valid in 2020. To get the certificate, the couple who is going to get married must undergo training on the harmonious family, family economy, to reproductive health for 3 months. Marriage certificate is a requirement in getting married. The requirements for this marriage eventually became polemic in the midst of society, including among students. Based on the existing polemic, the researchers were interested to see how students' opinions of the premarital certification policy.

## **METHOD OF STUDY**

This study was conducted through survey method using questionnaires as the tool to collect the needed data. This research was conducted at Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra. Since the subjects of the study were the university students, the number of the population was 15,673 students. The number of samples in this study was taken through Slovin sampling method with a precision level of 10%. The researchers selected 100 respondents using proportional stratified random sampling technique in 9 faculties. The variables tested in this study were related to the premarital certification policy. The data analysis technique used in this study uses description analysis through a single table analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The government policy in conducting prenuptial certification through pre-marital course activities given to couples who want to proceed to the marriage level is an attempt to minimize the high number of conflicts, divorce and domestic violence due to lack of knowledge and understanding of household life. This study has been conducted on 100 students of the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra, spread across 9 faculties with the sex characteristics of respondents consisting of 39 men and 61 women. Regarding knowledge about the implementation

of the premarital certification policy, 73% of respondents said they knew about the information, while 27% of respondents said they did not know about it.

Table 1. Gender and Knowledge of Respondents Regarding Pre-Marriage Certification Policy

Faculty	Gender					Knowledge of Pre-Marriage Certification				
	M	%	F	%	Total	Know	%	Do not Know	%	Total
Faculty of Islam Religion	3	7.7	6	9.8	9	3	4.1	6	22.2	9
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education	5	12.8	8	13.1	13	8	11.0	5	18.5	13
Faculty of Social Science and Political Science	4	10.3	5	8.2	9	7	9.6	2	7.4	9
Faculty of Agriculture	3	7.7	6	9.8	9	6	8.2	3	11.1	9
Faculty of Economics and Business	13	33.3	16	26.2	29	25	34.2	4	14.8	29
Faculty of Law	4	10.3	7	11.5	11	8	11.0	3	11.1	11
Faculty of Engineering	5	12.8	9	14.8	14	11	15.1	3	11.1	14
Faculty of Information and Communication Technology	0	0.0	1	1.6	1	1	1.4	0	0.0	1
Faculty of Medics	2	5.1	3	4.9	5	4	5.5	1	3.7	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Processed Research Results 2019

Regarding the understanding of premarital certification policy to reduce divorce rates, 30% of respondents agreed that premarital certification was carried out with the aim of obtaining information and insights about married life, so that the potential for divorce could be avoided early on. While the remaining 70% of respondents said they did not agree with the implementation of the policy because divorce occurred not because of knowledge about marriage, but indeed there was no understanding and compatibility between men and women.

Therefore, related to the prenuptial certification process is an attempt to prepare mentally and know the prospective couples who will get married, 65% of respondents stated that the pre-marital certification process will affect mental readiness in wading through married life. Whereas 35% of respondents stated that there was no relationship between mental readiness towards household life and certification carried out. Knowledge about domestic life can be obtained from those who have already married, while mentally related, every couple who has decided to go to marriage, in principle are those who are born and mentally prepared themselves.

The premarital certification process is also one of the things that is carried out is to do a health test for both couples of candidates. The implementation of the health test is also a debate in the midst of the community. The results of this study indicate that, 81% of respondents agreed to do a medical test for couples who will get married. Meanwhile 19% of respondents stated that they did not agree to the medical test because it was related to the privacy between the couple.

The results also found that there were about 77% of respondents who stated that this premarital certification activity would lead to extortion in the implementation process. Whereas 23% of

respondents stated that the costs incurred to carry out pre-marital certification were expected to be fully borne by the State as the information received by respondents.

Furthermore, related to the attitude of respondents towards the implementation of this premarital certification, 36% of respondents stated their agreement to the implementation of premarital certification in an effort to prevent divorce in marriage. While 64% of respondents said they did not agree with this activity, because it would only add to the psychological and mental burden of the couple to be married.

In general, based on data found in the field, the discourse that was delivered by the government related to premarital certification received an unfavorable response from students. Some factors that get into conflict include; (1) Premarital certification will produce the process of extortion, and (2) premarital certification is an activity that violates the privacy rights of the community.

Premarital certification is conducted through the course process that will certainly take time and money in its implementation. The long process undertaken by future bride and groom, allows for an agreement under the table to obtain a pre-marital certificate without following applicable procedures. The time given for 3 months, of course, will be a burden on future bride and groom. In addition to prospective couples must prepare funding and wedding receptions, along with the necessity of a pre-marital course. This does not yet have an impact on the meaning of the word certification. Every person who obtained a certificate must have completed something through the examination process. If future bride and groom fail to obtain a pre-marital certificate, it will certainly become an issue in the effort to build a household.

The second factor that received a negative response from respondents was related to health programs for future bride and groom. Health checks for future bride and groom is potentially violating the right of privacy for the community. Where related to the condition of reproduction, it is absolutely a right of privacy of the community. The potential for divorce in Indonesia is inseparable from the shift in people's understanding of the sacredness of a domestic relationship. Every life must find its own problems and every problem must have a solution when it is done openly and deliberation. So, not every problem should be able to be solved together in an effort to maintain the household does not end with divorce.

Gunawan and Nurwati (2019) suggested that divorce occurred because there were several factors, both unresolved problems and new problems that were born from one of the couples who were unable to maintain their household relationships. Maimun, Toha, and Arifin (2019) through their research related to the phenomenon of the high number of divorce and its causes on the island of Madura, concluded that, there are several factors that cause high divorce rates. One example is related to educational background. Although it is not the most decisive factor, but the level of education will affect the couple because couples who have higher levels of education have spiritual and emotional intelligence. Educational background will also affect access to work, where work will determine the economic condition of the family. In addition to educational background factors, normatively divorce cases occur because of economic conditions, domestic violence, infidelity and other issues.

In Japan the divorce increase rate has a correlation with the increase of women who work as regular employee and the increase of unemployment breadwinner husbands (Sakata & McKenzie, 2009). Similar finding also confirmed by the study that was conducted by Franzese & Rapp (2013) who found that the husbands who lost their job for about two years or more will have higher risk of separation. Divorce cases in Bangladesh are also reported caused mostly by socioeconomic factors (Biswas, Khan, & Kabir, 2019). Divorce laws also may increase the divorce rate, as it happens in Europe where the countries legalize divorce to the introduction of no-fault grounds and unilateral divorce (González & Viitanen, 2009). In addition, domestic violence also may make wives leave their abusive husbands (Sukeri & Man, 2017). Furthermore, sexual satisfaction is also reported to have a significant negative effect towards marital problem. It means that lower sexual satisfaction may lead to higher marital problem (Shakerian, Nazari, Masoomi, Ebrahimi, & Danai, 2014). Similar finding also found by French & Meltzer (2019), who identified that sociosexuality problem or different willingness problem to engage in sexual activity may cause marital dissatisfaction and marital dissolution. The study that was conducted by Meltzer, et al. (2017) also found that sexual satisfaction may create pair bond between a couple. Parental divorce also can be another factor that influences divorce rate since it has positive impact on children divorce and even the sibling divorce also has the same positive effect (Vuijst, Poortman, Das, & Gaalen, 2017). Moreover, social media also can be a trigger of relationship problems (Clayton, Nagurney, & Smith, 2017). A study that was conducted by Valenzuela, Halpern, & Katz (2014) found that the use of Social Network Sites (SNS) has a negative impact on marriage quality and happiness, yet has positive correlation on troubled relationship and divorce. Similar study also conducted by Saleh and Mukhtar (2015) who found that social media, Facebook, may lead the users to commit infidelity and end it in divorce. That study is also supported by Widiantari, Pawito, Utari, and Nurhaeni (2019) who found that the disclosure of marital privacy on facebook could make people do online infidelity and it eventually becomes the reason of the divorce. Since social media could lead spouse to get divorce, the penetration of smartphone is also identified to have a significant positive correlation to divorce rate in China. The study that was conducted by Zheng & Yuwei Duan (2019) also support that research study, they found that broadband internet subscription has an impact on divorce in China and the impact is higher in the areas with lower education background and the areas of higher income growth rate.

Considering the marital problems in Indonesia, the government should maximize the role of the religious affairs office and religious organizations to be able to conduct comprehensive outreach to the people who work in this field. Nasution (2019) in his research stated that the role of the Ponorogo district government in overcoming divorce of Indonesian workers from Ponorogo was through the formation of fostered villages in the counseling program for the people who were going to get married. According to the study that was conducted by Fincham & Beach (2010) premarital counseling is a common thing in the United States and now getting popular and getting more interest from couples who are going to marry. In addition, premarital counseling that is conducted in Jeddah got positive attitudes from the participants, most of them agreed that the program is important and satisfied with the program (Ibrahim, et al., 2013). In Jeddah, premarital screening program to avoid marital problems at King Abdul Aziz University for the female university students was reported successfully improved the female students understanding about

premarital screening and got positive students' response (Ibrahim, et al., 2011). In order to avoid marital problems and divorce, factors that can improve marriage satisfaction need to be taken into account. Those factors of marriage satisfaction include: interpersonal processes that operate within marriage (e.g., affect, physiology, behavioral patterning, social support, and violence); and the milieus within which marriages operate, including microcontexts (e.g., the presence of children, life stressors and transitions) and macrocontexts (e.g., economic factors, perceived mate availability) (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Programs like this according to the author are far more effective to do in an effort to reduce the potential for divorce than to conduct premarital certification.

The government which has the highest authority in Indonesia should have obliged the media to participate in improving the quality of human resources through broadcast programs that are in direct contact with the needs of the community, not just pursuing financial benefits from the broadcast program. The government through the authorized institution should also be able to oversee any media broadcast content that is able to have an unfavorable impact on the community. Media especially television becomes an alternative in socializing about the meaning of marriage and the impact of divorce. Although the government has finally stated that this premarital certification is not an obligation, it is also necessary for the government not to carry out this premarital certification program.

### **Closing**

The socio-economic conditions of the Indonesian people that have been unfavorable at present should not be a burden anymore in daily life. Premarital certification process with a design time of about 3 months, of course, will be a lot of time, energy and cost for the community. The high divorce rate that occurs in Indonesian society is mostly due to the shift in understanding that marriage and building a household are sacred activities. The journey of life which when we do not feel comfortable with anymore, can replace it with another.

The following are some conclusions that can be conveyed related to student opinion on premarital certification policy, which are:

1. The premarital certification policy conducted by the government does not get a positive response from students. This is indicated by 64% of respondents who expressed their disagreement with this premarital certification program. Students assume that the premarital certification program will lead to the potential for extortion and also violation of the rights of privacy of the community, especially related to the reproductive health of future groom and bride.
2. The high divorce rate that occurred in Indonesia is generally caused by a shift in understanding of the sacredity of a marriage. Every problem when solved openly and deliberation will certainly find a solution.
3. Although in the end the government stated that the pre-marital certification program was not an obligation, the government should not have undertaken a pre-marital certification program and should intensify the role of religious leaders in conducting counseling to the relevant community about religious studies, especially regarding understanding of marriage.
4. The government through the authorized institutions is able to oversee the content of media broadcasts that have an adverse impact on society.

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