

# The Effectiveness of Peer Counseling in Helping University Students to Build Marriage Readiness

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**Abstract.** The willingness to get married and have a family without supported by sufficient knowledge about marriage and family life can cause problems in the future. Peer counseling is one of the methods expected to prepare marriage readiness for university students. This article explained the rate of marriage readiness for university students; investigated the effectiveness of peer counseling in helping to improve the marriage readiness for university students of State Islamic University (UIN) of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin (SMH) Banten; also investigated the kind of common issues solved while conducting the process of pre-marriage peer counseling. The method was mixed one (qualitative and quantitative method). The quantitative method applied a questionnaire as the instrument to collect the data regarding the level of students' readiness to get married. While the instrument of the qualitative method was documentation and interview to collect the data of the implementation of peer counseling and kinds of the problem faced by students in their pre-marriage peer counseling. The finding of the research showed that peer counseling was effective in helping to improve the rate of marriage readiness for university students. Peer counseling was proven to be very effective in helping to increase students' marriage readiness mainly for peer counselors who had been mentally ready to get married; 2) there were ten kinds of problems in peer counseling.

**Keyword:** effectiveness, peer counseling, marriage readiness.

## INTRODUCTION

Qur'an defined marriage as *mitsaqan ghalizhan*, which means a strong engagement that is tied by the oath in the name of Allah [1]. It indicates that a husband and wife hoped that the marriage will be lasting ever after [2]. In fact, divorce is commonly found in society. The Ministry of Religion released the data of divorce in the first five years of marriage, showing that the rate of divorce in Indonesia is quite apprehensive. In 2013, the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) stated that the rate of divorce in Indonesia was at the highest level in Asia-Pacific. The fact that it increases more and more in the following years [3].

Banten province is one of the provinces contributing to a high rate of divorce cases in Indonesia. Along 2014, it was noted that divorce cases occurred in Banten is 7,831 in total. This number increased to be 8,933 cases in

2015 [4]. Surprisingly, divorce cases are mostly dominated by wives complaining to husbands. This trend happened almost in all cities in Banten. For instance, divorce cases in Tangerang regency in 2014 was 813 cases. While the divorce of wives complaining to husbands was 2,079 cases. In 2015, the number of *talaq* was 816 cases, and 2,512 cases of divorce about wife's complaint to her husband. It means that the kind of divorce had increased twice for wife complaint than *talaq*.

Surprisingly, divorce cases are dominated by the young couple. According to one of the Counseling and Law Assistance Institution, the majority of the divorce cases is the divorce of young couples who are under 20 years old. The percentage is 70% [5].

The effect of the divorce at a young age certainly is undoubtedly riskier compared to older couples. The divorced young couple will frequently face the second period of teenage. They will have another new freedom to find love relationship to raise their prestige. This can cause new problems that might be worse or even tragic.

A divorce was caused by several factors. For instance, married couples have too high expectation to their spouses [6]. Another common issue is ones that feel there is no more harmony in the relationship. Also, they face severe economic situations, and no more honesty among them [7].

On the other side, there is a *trend* in university students to get married while studying [8], [9]. The decision is considered to be better than dating that might lead to *zina* (pre-marital sex). Qur'an stated, "And do not get close to *zina*; indeed, *zina* is an act of vile ..." [10]. In fact, marriage is not merely to release biological need, but marriage also becomes a medium of maturity actualization and one's obedience towards religion. Therefore, to enter the marriage level, it is needed maturity and preparation [11]-[13] either physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Another fact shows that the majority of university students materially still rely on their parents, and that is another issue for young married students. Since it will be a burden for their parents to fulfill their daily needs. Additionally, the marriage will hinder their study, affect their score, and minimize their chance to develop their potential and self-actualization in campus organizations [8]. If the problems really happened, of course, it will harm students themselves not only as an individual but also as an asset of the country.

Many efforts that can be conducted to solve those problems above. One of the efforts in the new paradigm

of counseling service is using an approach of prevention [2]. Peer counseling is one appropriate approach to intervene to change the attitude [14]-[17] especially related to personal problems such as sexuality and marriage.

This article attempted to explain the marriage readiness level in university students; the effectiveness of peer counseling in helping to build marriage readiness for university students; and kinds of problems that are faced in pre-marriage peer counseling.

#### METHOD

The applied method in this research was a mixed method. An experimental research method is used to investigate the effect of special treatment towards others in the controlled condition [18]. Regarding the research design, the researcher implemented *Pre-Experimental Designs*. The formulation of the design used is *One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design*, that is the implementation of the experiment by giving treatment X to subjects. Before treatment, the subjects were given pre-test (01). Then, post-test was conducted, and after subject treatment (02). While the approach in this research was a descriptive method of quantitative-qualitative.

The sample of the research subject in this research are fifty students of Islamic Education (PAI) major as counselees and forty-nine students of BKI major as counselors. The researcher took the sample by *purposive sampling* that is by specific considerations, especially according to the characteristics that are needed. The research was conducted in UIN SMH Banten, located at Jendral Sudirman no. 30, Ciceri Serang Banten.

Peer counselors recruited are forty nine students who then were divided into for four groups: 1) First group, the Students do not have a Lover and Not Ready to get Married (*S NL-NRM*), 15 students; 2) Second group, the Students have a Lover but Not Ready to get Married (*S HL-NRM*), 10 students; 3) Third group, the Students have a Lover and Ready to get Married (*S HL-RM*), 9 students, and 4) Fourth group, the students do not have a Lover but Ready to get Married (*S NL-RM*), 11 students.

Peer counselees were from students of PAI major. They were 50 consisting of: 1) First group (1) was 20 students (*S NL-NRM*); 2) Second group (2) was 10 students (*S HL-NRM*); 3) Third group (3) was 10 (*S HL-RM*), and 4) Fourth group (4) was 10 (*S NL-RM*)

The instruments to collect the data were questionnaire, documentation, and interview. A questionnaire is a data collecting technique conducted by giving questions which could be in the form of written statements to the respondents [18]. The questionnaire consisted of 60 items in the form of checklist with four alternative answers like in Table 1.

Documentation is a technique of collecting the data by analyzing the written report of peer counselor after they conducted peer counseling. While interviewing, the researcher used the formula of *opened questions*. It was

aimed to make the interview run well and focus on the context of the research problem.

Table 1. Checklist with four alternative answers

Statement	Positive	Negative
Strongly agree	4	1
Agree	3	2
Less agree	2	3
Disagree	1	4

To analyze and interpret the data, the researcher referred to Table 2.

Table 2. Interpretation and Categorization of the Data

Interval	Categorization
197-240	Very good
151-196	Good
105-150	Sufficient
60-104	Less

#### RESULT

To see the effectiveness of peer counseling in helping students' marriage readiness of UIN SMH Banten, the researcher applied the analysis of simple quantitative by comparing the score of pre-test and post-test from each group. The following is the recapitulation of comparison of mean scores between pre-test and post-test at four groups of counselors and counselees.

Table 3. Recapitulation of Comparative Mean Score between Pre-Test and Post-Test at Four Groups of Counselees

Respondent Group (Counselee)	The number of Respondents	Mean score (Pre-Test)	Category	Mean score (Post-Test)	Category	Gained Score
1 ( <i>S NL-NRM</i> )	20	183.1	Good	184.5	Good	1.4
2 ( <i>S HL-NRM</i> )	10	177.9	Good	184.8	Good	6.9
3 ( <i>S HL-RM</i> )	10	188.7	Good	196.2	Good	7.5
4 ( <i>S NL-RM</i> )	10	182.5	Good	186.5	Good	4

Table 4. Recapitulation of Comparative Mean Score between Pre-Test and Post-Test at Four Groups of Counselors

Respondent Group (Counselor)	The number of Respondents	Mean score (Pre-Test)	Category	Mean score (Post-Test)	Category	Gained Score
1 ( <i>S NL-NRM</i> )	19	186.2	Good	193.9	Good	7.7
2 ( <i>S HL-NRM</i> )	10	190.2	Good	196.7	Good	19
3 ( <i>S HL-RM</i> )	9	189.0	Good	202.5	Very Good	13.5
4 ( <i>S NL-RM</i> )	11	191.1	Good	200.9	Very Good	9.8

On the table of recapitulation (3) and (4) above, it showed that counselees got minimum pre-test score 177.9 and maximum post-test score 188.7. By referring to the table (2) of Data Interpretation and Categorization, it could be concluded that level of students' marriage readiness of peer counselees is categorized as GOOD (EFFECTIVE) since the interval was 151-196. Good Category is also at peer counselor group 1 (*S NL-NRM*) and group 2 (*S HL-NRM*) with minimal pre-test score 186.2 and maximum score 191.1.

Furthermore, the result of comparative mean score from the analysis of post-test at peer counselors, it was found the minimal score 193.9 and maximal score 202.5.

It showed that there is a significant improvement at peer counselor group 3 (*S HL-RM*) and 4 (*S NL-RM*). Mean scores of post-test from both groups are 197-240 in the interval. After analyzing table 1, the result showed VERY GOOD (VERY EFFECTIVE).

By analyzing the mean scores of pre-test and post-test, it could be said that peer counseling is very effective in helping university students' marriage readiness as peer counselor who mentally is ready to get married either they have a lover or not. The increase of post-test mean scores is significant at peer counselors. This indicates that peer counseling as medium of thinking process, managing feeling and making decision [14] also as an effort to improve the emotional intelligence [20] and interpersonal skill [21] will be very effective not only for preventive effort of existing problems and also for helping to solve the students' problem related to married issues[19].

The effectiveness of peer counseling, either in preventive effort or curative, is conducted in the control of professional counselor. Since the function of peer counselor is only as a mediator in helping professional counselors through information supply about the condition, the development or individual problems of peer counselees that need counseling [14]. Peer counseling is a method/approach to solve the problems through listening effectively to support the peers [15] [16].

Along with the implementation of peer counseling, the peer counselors faced several problems from peer counselees. Generally, the researcher classified the problem into ten groups. Those are: (1) family problem or broken home parents, (2) choosing ideal as priority of marriage, (3) doubt and unready to get married couples, (4) under age feeling, (5) traumatic of physical and verbal abuse, (6) dishonest and betrayral traumatic, (7) long-distance relationship, (8) myth in society, (9) too selective behavior in choosing husband/wife candidate, (10) parents' demand to finish study.

Various problems of peer counselees related to marriage as well as the effort to improve readiness to get married for a young woman by pre-marriage counseling indicated the counseling crucial [23] to prevent the various possible problems of marriage [24].

#### CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the research are: 1) The increase of mean scores of post-test of the counselees and the counselors in all groups show this type of counseling EFFECTIVE; 2) peer counseling is proven to be VERY EFFECTIVE to assist students' marriage readiness mainly for peer counselors who mentally are ready to get married, and 3) there are ten types of problems in peer counseling.

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