



Review

Marriage Counseling and Prospective Mothers Attitudes toward Mental Health

Andi Tenri Padauleng*¹, Yessy Kurniati²

^{1,2} Department of Public Health, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author (Address): tenriandi33@gmail.com (JL.Komp Hasanuddin, Kabupaten Gowa, 92114, Sulawesi Selatan)

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is a crucial aspect of marriage and pregnancy that is often overlooked in premarital counseling. This study aims to examine the role of marriage counseling in shaping prospective mothers' positive attitudes towards mental health. Through a literature review of ten relevant research articles, it was found that premarital counseling is effective in enhancing mental readiness, reducing anxiety, and fostering prospective mothers' understanding of mental health, marital communication, and preparation for pregnancy. Counseling interventions, whether face-to-face, online, or through technology-based approaches, have been proven to strengthen prospective mothers' readiness for marriage and parenthood. However, long-term effectiveness depends on participants' active involvement and environmental support. Therefore, innovative, interactive, and sustainable counseling programs are necessary to maximize their impact

1. Introduction

Mental health is an integral part of individual well-being, influencing not only a person's quality of life but also significantly impacting social relationships and family life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), mental health is a condition in which individuals are able to manage life's pressures, realize their potential, work productively, and contribute positively to society. Mental health serves not only as a foundation for emotional balance but is also recognized as a human right that supports personal development, community progress, and socio-economic advancement.

One area of life that is profoundly affected by mental health is marriage. Entering married life requires mature emotional and psychological readiness from both parties. According to Adyani et al. (2023), readiness for marriage includes the ability to build healthy relationships, fulfill roles as

partners, and manage various emotional, social, and physical demands, including the readiness to become parents. Mental readiness, particularly for prospective mothers, is crucial to enable them to face the various changes and challenges that arise in family life, during pregnancy, and throughout child-rearing.

Unfortunately, current premarital counseling tends to focus more on biological and reproductive aspects, while mental health issues receive less attention. In fact, WHO (2023) reports that approximately 280 million people worldwide suffer from depression, with women having a 50% higher risk compared to men. More than 10% of pregnant women and new mothers experience depression, which, if left untreated, can lead to serious consequences, including suicide. In Indonesia, the prevalence of depression is also high, especially among women. KOMNAS PEREMPUAN (2023) reports that 6% of adult women experience depression, higher than the 4% observed in men. Additionally, more than 10% of pregnant and postpartum women suffer from depression, posing risks to both maternal and child health. Therefore, mental health must receive attention starting from the premarital stage to ensure that prospective mothers have optimal psychological preparedness.

Pregnant women are a group highly vulnerable to various mental disorders such as anxiety, stress, and depression, which not only affect the mother's psychological well-being but also directly influence fetal health and the child's development in the future. Dwi (2023) explains that excessive anxiety during pregnancy can trigger more severe mental disorders such as antenatal depression or even postpartum depression. If not properly addressed, these issues can harm the mother-child relationship, lower parenting quality, and increase health complication risks. Therefore, the premarital period is a critical time to provide education and early interventions to ensure that prospective mothers possess adequate emotional, psychological, and social readiness (Putri Jessica Amanda et al., 2024). With sufficient preparation, prospective mothers are expected to be able to manage the pressures and challenges that come with changing roles and responsibilities, thus experiencing pregnancy with greater calm, confidence, and mental balance, free from excessive pressures that might endanger their health or family well-being.

Research by Rahmanda & Mulyati (2023) demonstrates that premarital counseling significantly contributes to fostering positive attitudes among prospective mothers towards maintaining mental health and preparing for a healthy pregnancy. Premarital counseling does not solely focus on physical and biological aspects but also addresses psychological and emotional issues that are often overlooked. Through structured counseling tailored to individual needs, prospective brides can improve their understanding of various factors affecting mental health, such as stress, anxiety, and social pressures. The knowledge gained through counseling helps them recognize their own mental conditions, understand the risks of mental disorders such as antenatal and postpartum depression, and learn about early prevention and management strategies. Therefore, premarital counseling provides a strong foundation to ensure prospective mothers are not only physically prepared but also mentally and emotionally equipped to embrace their new roles as wives and mothers.

This is in line with other studies showing that the benefits of premarital counseling are not merely short-term but also have long-term impacts on family life and the mental health of prospective mothers. Setyaningtyas et al. (2023) emphasize that the mental readiness gained through counseling enables prospective mothers to better manage their emotions, communicate with their

partners, and make crucial decisions concerning their own health and that of their families. With a strong mindset, prospective mothers can face the challenges of marriage and pregnancy without excessive stress. Hence, this study aims to clarify the essential role of marriage counseling in helping prospective mothers develop positive attitudes towards mental health, ensuring they are well-prepared to lead a healthy, happy, and balanced married life.

2. Method

This study employed the Traditional Literature Review method, which is a narrative literature review conducted by analyzing previous research findings relevant to the topic. Scientific articles were collected from the PubMed and Google Scholar databases using keywords aligned with the focus of the study. The initial search yielded 963 articles from PubMed and 100 articles from Google Scholar. The screening process was carried out in several stages to ensure the relevance and suitability of the articles to the research topic. The first stage involved selecting articles that matched the main focus of the study. The next stage applied inclusion criteria, namely: research articles involving female participants (prospective brides or pregnant women) related to premarital counseling, mental readiness, mental health, anxiety, or marital communication. The exclusion criteria specified were: non-research articles, non-full-text articles, studies focused solely on physical health, studies not centered on women, or studies with weak methodologies. Articles that passed this stage were further screened through title and abstract reviews, and a final full-text assessment was conducted to ensure the articles' eligibility for inclusion in the review. Through this process, 10 articles were identified as the most relevant and comprehensive in addressing the topic under study.

3. Results & Discussion

Through the literature search process that has been conducted, a number of articles were identified as relevant to the focus of this study. The selection of articles was carried out meticulously by considering the alignment of the topics with the objectives of the literature review, ensuring that only articles meeting the established criteria were selected for further analysis and synthesized in the following table:

Table 1. *Description of Research Data*

Study	Objective	Materials and Methods	Results
(Garg et al., 2022)	To identify the relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and unintended pregnancy among women in India.	The participants in this study were 3,646 married pregnant women with the analytical method using logistic regression analysis.	Approximately 12% of women who were victims of intimate partner violence experienced unintended pregnancies due to a lack of control over reproductive decisions. Marriage counseling can help improve communication, enhance understanding of reproductive rights, and prevent violence, thereby empowering women and reducing the risk of unintended pregnancies.
(Mishra et al., 2022)	To explore the influence of intimate partner violence during the perinatal period on postpartum contraceptive areas of Ethiopia,	The participants in this study were women who had given birth in rural areas of Ethiopia, with the analysis within the first year after childbirth.	The study found that 62% of women began using modern contraception within the first year after childbirth.

Study	Objective	Materials and Methods	Results
	use among women in Southern Ethiopia.	method using multilevel Weibull regression.	However, women who experienced intimate partner violence tended to delay contraceptive use, increasing the risk of unintended pregnancies and maternal-child health issues. These findings are important for marriage counseling to help couples learn healthy communication, prevent violence, and understand the importance of family planning.
(Iordachescu et al., 2021)	To assess the impact of infertility on couples' emotions and the role of social support in alleviating this burden.	The participants in this study were 76 infertile couples undergoing treatment at a reproductive clinic in Romania, with the average age of the women being 34.25 years. The method used was a non-experimental, descriptive, correlational design with cross-sectional analysis.	The study found that women are more vulnerable to experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression due to infertility, which can affect marital harmony. Social support and marriage counseling help couples cope with this pressure, strengthen communication, and prevent conflict and emotional disturbances.
(Kholifah et al., 2023)	This study explores the mental readiness of prospective brides and grooms in Kediri Regency, focusing on the influence of mental preparedness on marital stability and divorce prevention. This topic is relevant in marriage counseling because mental readiness is essential for creating a healthy and harmonious relationship.	The participants of this study were mid-level adolescents who are prospective brides and grooms. Data were collected through observations and interviews to understand their experiences and preparations leading up to marriage.	The study shows that good mental readiness helps maintain marital stability. Mentally prepared couples are better able to face conflicts and challenges. Marriage counseling plays an important role in enhancing this readiness to prevent divorce and strengthen the relationship. Therefore, counselors need to place greater emphasis on the importance of mental readiness for prospective brides and grooms in order to preserve the quality of future marriages.
(Rofiq et al., 2022)	This study analyzes the effectiveness of group dynamics-based marriage counseling combined with systematic desensitization techniques in reducing anxiety levels before, during, and after the intervention among prospective brides and grooms at the Besuki Situbondo Religious Affairs Office (KUA).	The research involved two male and two female prospective brides and grooms, employing a single-subject A-B-A design to observe changes before, during, and after the intervention.	The findings indicate that the systematic desensitization technique within counseling effectively reduces anxiety in prospective brides and grooms. Prior to counseling, many participants experienced significant anxiety; however, following the intervention, they were better able to manage their anxiety. These results underscore the importance of marriage counseling in emotionally preparing prospective couples for married life.
(Rr. Murtini et al., 2023)	This study examines the effect of online counseling on improving the knowledge and attitudes of prospective brides regarding pregnancy preparation, which is crucial for maternal and infant health as well as family resilience.	This quasi-experimental study involved 46 prospective brides divided into an online counseling group and a control group without pregnancy preparation, using a pre-test and post-test design.	The results demonstrated that online counseling significantly increased the participants' knowledge about pregnancy preparation (mean increase = 17.93; $p < 0.05$). The counseling effectively helped prospective brides become better prepared for pregnancy and their future roles as parents.
(Mulyani & Karmeli, 2022)	This study aims to understand and explain the application of Gestalt	The participant in this study was a 28-year-old woman from Bogor.	Gestalt counseling, particularly through the empty chair technique,

Study	Objective	Materials and Methods	Results
	counseling in addressing anxiety experienced by individuals prior to marriage.	Data were collected through counseling sessions utilizing Gestalt approach to help participant directly explore and comprehend her experiences and emotions.	was effective in reducing premarital anxiety and enhancing the individual's mental readiness to face married life.
(Putri Jessica Amanda et al., 2024)	This study examines the implementation of Premarital Guidance at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) and the understanding of prospective brides and grooms regarding its content, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors in the Baiturrahman District, Banda Aceh.	The research involved 11 respondents from the KUA of couples in Banda Aceh City, employing a qualitative descriptive method.	Premarital guidance assists prospective couples in understanding the responsibilities of married life and enhances their mental readiness.
(Devianti & Rahima, 2021)	Understanding the implementation of premarital counseling is considered crucial for preparing couples before entering into marriage.	Prospective brides and grooms are generally studied through library research to gather information and data from various relevant sources.	The delivery of premarital counseling services through various effective methods plays a significant role in preparing couples to build a harmonious family characterized by <i>sakinah</i> (peace), <i>mawaddah</i> (love), and <i>rahmah</i> (mercy).
(Lathiffah Nurul, 2020)	This study aims to examine the effect of premarital therapeutic communication counseling on individuals' readiness to enter marriage.	The research involved 24 prospective brides and grooms aged 18–24 years, using a quasi-experimental design.	Premarital therapeutic communication counseling significantly improved readiness for marriage ($p = 0.007$), whereas the control group showed no significant increase ($p = 0.474$).

This study reviews various forms of interventions related to marriage counseling and mental health of prospective mothers, derived from several literature articles. The interventions examined include: (1) counseling to prevent domestic violence and enhance reproductive decision-making control; (2) psychological support for infertile couples to reduce stress and anxiety; (3) improvement of mental readiness of prospective brides and grooms through premarital guidance, group dynamics-based counseling, and systematic desensitization techniques; and (4) utilization of online counseling and therapeutic communication to enhance preparedness for pregnancy and parenting roles.

Some interventions also highlight the importance of premarital guidance at the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) in building prospective couples' understanding of married life and the factors influencing its implementation. Additionally, the Gestalt counseling approach has been identified as an effective method for reducing pre-marriage anxiety. Overall, the interventions reviewed can be categorized into two main approaches: educational approaches through counseling and institutional guidance such as those provided at the KUA, and technology-based or interactive digital media interventions that are widely accessible to support mental readiness and health of prospective mothers in facing married life and motherhood roles.

The study by Annisa et al. (Annisa et al., 2023) demonstrated that counseling for prospective brides and grooms significantly increased mothers' compliance with antenatal check-ups. This finding supports the current review, particularly in the context of the effectiveness of premarital

counseling interventions in shaping positive attitudes of prospective mothers toward mental and physical health during pregnancy. These results align with the present review's emphasis that premarital counseling not only provides education about physical readiness but also helps raise awareness among prospective mothers about the importance of maintaining mental health, adhering to antenatal care, and preparing for parenting roles.

In general, the findings indicate that premarital counseling greatly assists prospective mothers in preparing themselves mentally and emotionally for married life and pregnancy. Through counseling, prospective mothers gain a better understanding of the importance of maintaining mental health, including managing emotions, communicating effectively with their partners, and making appropriate decisions regarding reproductive health. Furthermore, counseling encourages prospective mothers to seek help when facing difficulties and to maintain psychological balance. This results in increased self-confidence, readiness for pregnancy, and compliance with health examinations, all of which are crucial for the well-being of both mother and child.

However, the benefits of counseling often do not last if participants are not actively engaged in the process. Positive outcomes can only be achieved if prospective mothers genuinely participate and apply what they have learned in their daily lives. Therefore, counseling programs need to be designed in a more engaging, interactive manner, and tailored to individual needs. Equally important is the strengthening of support from family, partners, and the surrounding environment to ensure that the counseling outcomes are sustainable in the long term.

The study by (Almigo & Aprilliani, 2022) showed that therapeutic communication counseling before marriage significantly improves the mental readiness of prospective couples. The effectiveness of this counseling increases when programs are culturally sensitive, actively involve participants, and are conducted continuously. When program developers, counselors, and prospective couples collaborate throughout the process, the outcomes become more targeted and aligned with their needs. In Indonesia, these findings provide a basis for developing premarital counseling programs that utilize digital technology, social media, or online platforms. Such programs not only deliver necessary information but also help prospective couples develop positive attitudes, learn effective communication skills, and prepare mentally to face various challenges in married life. Thus, they are better equipped to build healthy and enduring marital relationships.

4. Conclusion

Premarital counseling plays a crucial role in shaping positive attitudes of prospective mothers toward mental health and preparing them to face marriage and pregnancy. Through appropriate counseling, prospective mothers can enhance their mental readiness, manage anxiety, strengthen communication with their partners, and understand the importance of maintaining mental health during pregnancy and parenting roles.

Various counseling approaches whether face-to-face, online, or technology-based have proven effective in increasing knowledge and fostering positive attitudes among prospective couples. However, long-term effectiveness largely depends on active participant engagement and support from partners, family, and the social environment.

Therefore, premarital counseling programs need to be designed to be engaging, interactive, sustainable, and culturally contextualized to ensure prospective mothers develop strong psychological readiness, are able to face marital challenges, and contribute to building healthy and prosperous families.

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