

Marriage Problems and Resolution Strategies: a Case Study of Married Couples With Under Ten Years of Marriage In 2024

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is a social institution that often faces various challenges, particularly among couples with less than ten years of marital experience. This study aims to identify the common problems faced by husbands and wives in the early years of marriage and to explore the strategies used to resolve them. The research method employed was a case study with a qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews and observations with several couples who had been married for 1–10 years. The findings indicate that the most frequent problems include ineffective communication, differences in parenting styles, financial management issues, as well as role and expectation adjustments within the household. Effective resolution strategies involve improving communication skills, conflict management, strengthening emotional support, and participation in marriage counseling. This study recommends the importance of premarital education and continuous guidance for young couples to minimize the risk of conflict and enhance the quality of marital relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

The first ten years of marriage are a critical period in the formation of the foundation of the household (Chen & Chen, 2014). Married couples face a variety of challenges, including character adjustment, financial management, and new roles as parents (Lammers et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2019). If not handled appropriately, these problems can trigger conflicts that impact family stability (Johnson et al., 2020; Byrne et al., 2021). Based on a BKKBN survey (2023), around 40% of divorces occur in couples with a marriage duration under 10 years, with the main causes being poor communication, financial problems, and differences in family values (Stewart & Fazio, 2022; Jaffe et al., 2021). This study was conducted to analyze marriage problems and their solution strategies through case studies on couples married under ten years (Fletcher et al., 2020; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2019).

Marriage is a bond between a man and a woman who have stepped into adulthood or are considered to have grown up in a sacred bond (Marlina, 2013). It is considered sacred because, in marriage, the relationship between a man and a woman becomes religiously valid (Dariyo, in Marlina, 2013).

Marriage is the starting point of family life, and the goals set in marriage will have an impact on the overall marital life (Manap, Kassim, Hoesni, Nen, Idris, & Ghazali, 2013). Law Number 52 of 2009 concerning Population Development and Family Development, Article 1, states that the development of population and family development is a planned effort to realize balanced population growth and improve the quality of the population in all dimensions. This article certainly encourages us to pay attention to the quality of marriage and the harmony built within it.

A notable limitation in existing literature on early marital challenges relates to the tendency of prior studies to adopt broad quantitative methods without delving into nuanced, context-specific experiences of young couples in their first decade of marriage (Williams et al., 2020; Grant et al., 2019). For instance, Dew's (2020) comprehensive review of 36 studies published in the *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* highlights topics such as money management and household division of labor, predominantly using nationally representative data but lacking a qualitative lens that could capture personal adjustment and emotional dynamics in early marriages (Gottman et al., 2021; Amato & Previti, 2019). Similarly, Wheeler and Kerpelman (2016) investigated how disagreements over money, time together, and sex evolve during early marriage and found that such conflicts adversely affect marital satisfaction and stability, but their study remains largely quantitative and does not explore how couples actively navigate or resolve these challenges (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2019; Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

By contrast, the current research employs a qualitative case-study approach, exploring lived experiences of couples married between 1 and 10 years, thereby providing depth to the understanding of communication breakdowns, parenting style conflicts, financial management, and role expectations in early marital life. This design allows us to observe not only the problems themselves but also the coping and resolution strategies employed by couples—something noticeably absent in Dew's and Wheeler & Kerpelman's work.

The study's objective is to identify common marital challenges and effective resolution strategies among young couples through in-depth qualitative analysis; its significance lies in informing the development of premarital education and ongoing support interventions tailored to early-stage marriages, ultimately aiming to reduce conflict, improve communication and financial cooperation, and strengthen marital stability in those formative years.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach to identify marriage problems and their solution strategies in married couples with a marriage duration of less than ten years. The study was conducted in Bungursari District, West Java. The participants consisted of 15 married couples who had been married for less than 10 years, selected by purposive sampling. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model (data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing). To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and methods was applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Results

Based on the analysis of data that has been carried out on respondents who have a marriage age under ten years old, four main categories of problems faced by young couples in building a harmonious household were found. These findings provide a comprehensive overview of the complex dynamics that occur in the early stages of married life.

Communication issues are the biggest challenge faced by 73% of respondents, showing that the interpersonal aspect is a crucial foundation in a successful marriage. Differences in communication styles between couples are often a source of ongoing misunderstandings, where one party tends to use a direct approach while the other party values indirect communication more. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the lack of quality time spent together due to the demands of work and social activities, thus creating a progressive emotional distance between couples. The inability to express emotional needs effectively and the tendency to avoid conflict actually worsen the quality of communication in relationships.

Financial problems occupy the second position with a prevalence of 60%, reflecting the economic reality faced by the millennial generation in building a household life. The income instability experienced by most young couples, especially during the transition period of career or starting a business, creates significant psychological pressure on the stability of the marriage. Lack of financial literacy and family financial management skills results in unstructured financial decision-making. Differences in priorities in household financial allocation, such as conflicts between long-term investment needs versus short-term consumption satisfaction, often trigger protracted arguments.

Differences in parenting styles were experienced by 45% of respondents who already had children, showing the complexity of the role of parents in the context of young marriage. Disagreements in the approach to child discipline reflect the differences in parenting backgrounds that each partner received in childhood. This conflict often involves extended family, especially parents and in-laws, who have different views on the ideal parenting method. The pressure of social expectations regarding modern versus traditional parenting standards adds to the psychological burden for young couples who are still in the process of learning to become parents.

Role and career adaptation issues affect 30% of respondents, especially those who face challenges in balancing professional aspirations with domestic responsibilities. An unclear or unequal division of household roles often creates dissatisfaction, especially when traditional gender expectations conflict with the realities of modern life in which both partners have careers. Work-life balance conflicts become increasingly complex when job demands require high mobility or inflexible working hours.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm and expand the understanding of early-stage marriage dynamics that has been presented in the international literature. The dominance of communication issues as a major challenge is in line with the findings of Johnson et al. (2022) who emphasized that assertive communication skills are a strong predictor of long-term marital satisfaction. These results are also consistent with the attachment theory developed by Bowlby, in which communication patterns in marriage reflect attachment styles formed from childhood.

The high prevalence of financial problems in this study reflects the socio-economic conditions of the millennial generation who face different economic challenges from previous generations. This phenomenon is in line with longitudinal research conducted by Martinez &

Thompson (2021) which shows that financial stress in the early years of marriage has a cumulative effect on relationship stability. These findings show the need for preventive interventions in the form of special financial literacy programs for young couples.

The settlement strategies identified in this study demonstrate a holistic approach that combines individual, interpersonal, and systemic aspects. Assertive communication as the main strategy involves not only learning communication techniques, but also the development of emotional intelligence and self-regulation skills. An effective communication training program should include practical components such as active listening, empathetic responding, and conflict resolution skills that can be applied in everyday household situations.

Shared financial management as a second strategy requires a systematic and sustainable approach. The implementation of this strategy involves not only budgeting and financial planning, but also the development of financial transparency and the development of shared financial goals. Research shows that couples who have clear and measurable financial goals have higher levels of marital satisfaction.

Marriage counseling as a professional intervention shows significant effectiveness, especially when done in the early stages of conflict emergence. Evidence-based therapeutic approaches such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and the Gottman Method have been shown to be effective in addressing communication issues and improving emotional intimacy. However, accessibility and social stigma towards counseling are still the main barriers to the implementation of this strategy.

Increased social support through the involvement of extended family and community reflects the importance of ecological systems in supporting successful marriages. However, this strategy requires a careful approach to avoid over-involvement that can interfere with the couple's autonomy. Structured community support programs, such as support groups for young couples, can provide effective peer support.

Parental role education is becoming increasingly relevant given the trend of young marriages and the rapid transition to the parenting phase. A comprehensive parenting education program must include not only aspects of child development, but also the impact of child presence on marital dynamics and strategies to maintain intimacy as a couple in the midst of parenting roles.

Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study have significant implications for the development of intervention programs and policies that support marriage stability. The high prevalence of communication problems indicates the need to integrate interpersonal skills education in marriage preparation programs. Similarly, the findings on financial issues show the urgency of developing financial literacy programs specific to young couples.

The implementation of the settlement strategy that has been identified requires commitment and consistency from both parties, as well as support from a conducive social environment. The success of the intervention also depends on timing, where early intervention shows higher effectiveness compared to interventions carried out after the problem has become chronic.

Further research is recommended to explore the mediator and moderator variables that affect the effectiveness of each settlement strategy, as well as develop a risk prediction model that can be used for an early warning system in marriage counseling programs.

CONCLUSION

Couples married for less than ten years commonly face challenges related to communication, financial management, and differences in parenting styles. Effective resolution strategies identified include assertive communication, joint financial management, marriage counseling, and parenting education. To help reduce domestic conflicts during this critical early stage of marriage, it is recommended that premarital education programs and family counseling services be implemented at the community level. Future research could explore the long-term impact of such interventions on marital stability and examine how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of these strategies across diverse populations.

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