



Da'wah Management by the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) in Divorce Prevention

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Abstract

The high divorce rate in Medang Deras District, Batu Bara Regency, necessitates an active role for the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in family guidance. This study aims to describe the KUA's dakwah (religious outreach) management in efforts to prevent divorce and to identify opportunities and challenges in fostering marital relationships. A qualitative field research approach was employed. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving the Head of the KUA, religious extension officers, and couples participating in marriage guidance sessions. The results indicate that the KUA's (dakwah) management is implemented through planning, organizing, executing, and evaluating functions within marriage guidance, religious outreach, and family counseling programs, utilizing persuasive and educational approaches. Program implementation is supported by institutional policies, the role of religious extension officers, and the use of media; however, challenges persist, including economic issues, the KUA's limited authority in handling divorce cases, and the lack of readiness among some couples for married life.

INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a social phenomenon that continues to rise across various regions in Indonesia. This situation affects not only the married couple but also has broad implications for family stability, child development, and the social fabric of the community. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the number of divorce cases in the country reached 438,168 in 2025 an increase of approximately 11 percent compared to the 394,608 cases recorded in 2024. Persistent disputes and arguments remain the primary drivers, followed by economic factors. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has responded to this trend by expanding the availability of post-marriage service facilitators at Offices of Religious Affairs (KUA) nationwide, although, to date, only about half of the total 5,917 KUA offices have such facilitators in place.

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(BPS, 2025) This situation indicates that marriage requires not only administrative readiness but also mature emotional, social, and religious preparedness (Ibrahim, 2025).

In Islamic teachings, marriage is understood not merely as an outward bond between a man and a woman, but as a sacred union aimed at establishing a family that is peaceful, filled with affection, and blessed by Allah SWT. This is explained in the words of Allah SWT in Surah Ar-Rūm, verse 21:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا فِي ۖ إِنَّ وَرَحْمَةً مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ وَجَعَلَ إِلَيْهَا لِتَسْكُنُوا أَرْوَاجًا أَنْفُسُكُمْ مِنْ لَكُمْ خَلَقَ أَنْ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ
بِتَفَكُّرُونَ لِقَوْمٍ

It means: “And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.” (QS. Ar-Rūm [30]: 21)

This verse indicates that the primary purpose of marriage is to foster tranquility, affection, and mercy within domestic life. Therefore, every couple needs to be thoroughly prepared mentally, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. A lack of readiness for married life often triggers conflicts that lead to divorce. This situation highlights the vital importance of pre- and post-marital guidance as a means of preventing divorce.

The Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), a government agency under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, plays a crucial role in fostering religious life, particularly regarding marriage and the family. The KUA's function extends beyond the mere registration of marriages; it also encompasses providing guidance, counseling, and education to the public on cultivating a household characterized by *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (affection), and *rahmah* (mercy). The marriage guidance programs conducted by the KUA serve as a key instrument for equipping prospective couples with an understanding of married life, thereby helping to minimize the potential for future conflict. (Indonesia, 2023).

Islam also teaches that domestic conflicts should not be immediately resolved through divorce; instead, efforts should first be made to achieve reconciliation and a wise resolution. This is explained in Surah An-Nisa, verse 35:

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

Meaning: “And if you fear a dispute between the two, then send an arbitrator from the man's family and an arbitrator from the woman's family. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will surely grant success to the husband and wife. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing and All-Aware.” (QS. An-Nisā’ [4]: 35).

The verse underscores the importance of reconciliation efforts in resolving marital conflicts. Divorce should be a last resort when all attempts at reconciliation have been exhausted. In this context, the existence of institutions capable of providing guidance, counseling, and support to married couples is crucial. One such institution playing a strategic role in this regard is the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA).

The KUA's role in divorce prevention is realized through various programs, such as pre-marital guidance, family counseling, and collaboration with various stakeholders. These programs demonstrate that divorce prevention is addressed proactively, starting even before the marriage takes place. Success depends heavily on the management and guidance strategies implemented by the KUA (Damanik, 2026). Efforts to prevent divorce require synergy among the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), local governments, and the community. Collaboration between the KUA and other institutions such as religious courts demonstrates a more comprehensive

approach, fostering the hope that an integrated, effective, and sustainable family guidance system will be established (Ibrahim, 2025). The *dakwah* (religious outreach) approach adopted by the KUA serves as a crucial strategy for addressing various family issues. Through well-planned outreach, the KUA not only conveys religious values but also fosters public awareness regarding the preservation of family unity. (Kurniawan, Harahap, & Hsb, 2026).

Effective dakwah management is key to the success of family guidance programs at the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs). Through structured planning, implementation, and evaluation, dakwah activities can operate more effectively, thereby enhancing the quality of guidance provided to the community (Kurniawan et al., 2026). Rising divorce rates highlight the importance of strengthening family guidance services provided by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). Through pre- and post-marital guidance, the KUA is expected to assist couples in building family resilience and managing domestic conflicts more effectively (Nafila & Cholil, 2026).

Strengthening the role of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in divorce prevention also requires enhancing the competence of marriage registrars (*penghulu*) and religious extension officers. Skills in communication, an understanding of family psychology, and mastery of religious subject matter must be continuously developed to ensure that family guidance services become more professional and aligned with community needs (Arif, 2025). The role of the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) is also being optimized through the use of digital media such as social media to convey religious messages and expand the reach of family guidance initiatives. The use of engaging and accessible media is expected to boost public participation and strengthen the KUA's role in navigating technological advancements and social dynamics (Kurniawan et al., 2026).

The various issues arising in domestic life demonstrate that preventing divorce requires a holistic and sustainable approach. As a religious institution, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) holds a strategic position in contributing to these efforts. The implementation of effective dakwah (religious outreach) management is expected to enhance the quality of family guidance and reduce divorce rates within the community. Previous research has addressed the KUA's role in general marriage guidance, the function of dakwah management across various religious institutions, and the use of digital media to convey religious messages to the public (Kurniawan et al., 2026). Other studies also highlight the factors causing divorce from economic and social perspectives (Ibrahim, 2025). Nevertheless, research specifically analyzing the implementation of dakwah (religious outreach) management functions by the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) at the sub-district level while simultaneously identifying the opportunities and challenges regarding family guidance in the area remains limited, particularly in the context of Medang Deras Sub-district, Batu Bara Regency. This study aims to bridge that gap by providing a concrete overview of KUA dakwah management practices at the sub-district level, a subject that has hitherto been examined primarily from a normative perspective or at the regency/city scale.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach involving field research to gain an in-depth understanding of the KUA's dakwah (religious outreach) management regarding divorce prevention, yielding descriptive data on the actual conditions, perspectives, and experiences of the informants. The research was conducted at the KUA of Medang Deras District, Batu Bara Regency, taking into account the social dynamics surrounding divorce in the area and the KUA's active role in family guidance. Research subjects comprising the Head of the KUA, religious extension officers, and couples who had participated in family guidance programs were selected

via purposive sampling based on their direct involvement, relevant knowledge or experience, and willingness to be interviewed; data collection ceased once data saturation was reached. Data were derived from both primary sources (in-depth interviews) and secondary sources (official documents, activity reports, and relevant literature) to ensure a comprehensive overview. Data collection techniques included observing KUA guidance activities, conducting in-depth interviews regarding dakwah management strategies and challenges, and gathering documentation such as archives and activity photographs; a combination of these methods was used to enhance the accuracy and completeness of the data.



Figure 1. Interview

The data analysis technique employs an interactive analysis model comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data are analyzed in stages aligned with the research focus and presented descriptively to facilitate the interpretation of results.



Figure 2. Graph of Marriage Events

The validity of the data in this study was tested using triangulation techniques specifically, by comparing data obtained from various sources and methods. Source triangulation involved comparing accounts from the Head of the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), religious extension officers, and couples who had participated in family guidance or counseling programs to identify consistencies or discrepancies in perspectives between the program organizers and the recipients. Method triangulation involved comparing interview findings with the results of observations and available documentation. This step was taken to ensure that the data obtained were truly valid and reliable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Planning of KUA Da'wah Programs for Divorce Prevention.

Planning is the initial stage in da'wah management that determines the direction and strategy of a program. In an effort to prevent divorce, the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) develops various family guidance programs designed to equip prospective brides and grooms with knowledge and understanding regarding married life. Effective planning is expected to prevent conflict and preserve family integrity. (Yusuf, 2023).



Figure 3. Research at the Medang Deras Office of Religious Affairs.

Based on interviews with the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), the planning of dakwah (religious outreach) programs aimed at preventing divorce focuses on educating prospective brides and grooms before they enter married life. The KUA emphasizes the importance of the couple being prepared to understand their respective responsibilities as husband and wife. The primary objective of this planning is to enable couples to maintain marital harmony throughout their lives. Knowledge regarding family life is considered an essential foundation for navigating the various domestic challenges that may arise in the future (Fadilah, 2021). This is also confirmed by the marriage guidance schedule managed by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), which shows that every prospective couple is systematically registered to attend guidance sessions prior to the marriage ceremony. A couple who participated in the program noted that the scheduling helped them prepare for marriage, although the sessions sometimes took place too close to the ceremony itself, leaving insufficient time to fully absorb the material (Romadhoni, 2024).

The planning of dakwah (religious outreach) programs at the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) includes the scheduling of marriage guidance sessions for prospective brides and grooms. Through a series of meetings, participants receive instruction on the rights and obligations of spouses, marriage procedures, religious values, and the responsibilities involved in building a harmonious family. This program demonstrates that pre-marital guidance is conducted in a structured and sustainable manner. By providing marriage guidance, the KUA's program planning aims to equip prospective couples with an understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as the necessary mental, emotional, and spiritual readiness. The program highlights the KUA's active role in preparing couples to build harmonious families and in preventing divorce (Aziz, 2017).

Organizing the KUA's Da'wah Program for Divorce Prevention.

Organizing is a function of da'wah (religious outreach) management that governs the distribution of tasks, responsibilities, and collaboration in program implementation. Through effective organization, each party has a clearly defined role, enabling the family guidance program at the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) to operate effectively and in a coordinated manner. Interview results indicate that organizing the dakwah program aimed at divorce prevention involves various personnel within the Office of Religious Affairs, including penghulu (marriage officials), religious extension officers, and KUA staff (Faqih, 2001). Each component has its own specific role in providing services and guidance to the community, particularly to prospective brides and grooms. Cooperation among the staff is a crucial factor in ensuring the success of the marriage guidance program conducted by the KUA (Arif, 2025).

The division of tasks in organizing dakwah (religious outreach) programs is aligned with the service areas within the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs). Specific sections are responsible for marriage registration, mosque-related services, the management of zakat (alms) and waqf (religious endowments), and other religious activities. This task allocation ensures that every dakwah activity has a clearly designated person in charge, corresponding to their respective functions and roles. Such clarity regarding task distribution serves as a crucial foundation for the smooth implementation of dakwah programs within the KUA. This division of duties was also evident during the researcher's observations of the guidance sessions where penghulu (marriage officials) and religious extension officers took turns assuming roles based on the material being presented as well as through the KUA organizational structure outlined in the institutional profile document (Amin, 2009).

The organization of dakwah (religious outreach) programs at the KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) is carried out through collaboration among marriage registrars, religious extension officers, and KUA staff in providing marriage guidance. A clear division of tasks enables comprehensive guidance for prospective brides and grooms, covering religious, social, and moral aspects. Overall, this coordinated organization serves as a crucial factor in the success of the KUA's dakwah programs in their efforts to prevent divorce (Hasibuan, 2016).

Implementation (Actuating) of the KUA Da'wah Program in Preventing Divorce

Actuating is the stage in dakwah (religious outreach) management that involves translating planned activities into concrete actions in the field. The implementation of dakwah programs aimed at divorce prevention at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) is carried out through various guidance activities for prospective brides and grooms as well as the general public. These activities aim to foster an understanding of married life and instill religious values as a foundation for building a harmonious family. The execution of these dakwah programs plays a crucial role in realizing the objectives established during the planning phase (Hidayah, 2020).

The KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) implements its dakwah (religious outreach) program aimed at preventing divorce through the following activities: 1. Conducting marriage guidance for prospective brides and grooms. The KUA carries out marriage guidance as a primary program for couples prior to the marriage ceremony. This activity aims to equip prospective partners with knowledge regarding married life. Observations indicate that the guidance process is interactive; one participant noted that the activity helped them understand household responsibilities, although the time allocated was felt to be limited. 2. Presenting material on the rights and obligations of husbands and wives. The guidance material covers the rights and obligations of spouses to foster mutual understanding and respect. This understanding is expected to reduce the potential for conflict and maintain family

harmony. 3. Providing religious instruction for married life. The KUA also offers religious guidance covering the Pillars of Islam, the Pillars of Faith, worship procedures, and daily prayers. These religious values are intended to serve as a guide for building a harmonious family. 4. Employing dakwah methods to deliver material. Material is presented through lectures, Q&A sessions, and combined methods to facilitate easier understanding and encourage active interaction among participants during the activity. 5. Conducting community outreach on divorce prevention. In addition to pre-marital guidance, the KUA conducts community outreach regarding the importance of pre-marital readiness including mental, financial, and spiritual preparedness as well as the risks associated with early marriage. This activity serves as a preventive measure to raise public awareness about building high-quality families.

Evaluation and Divorce Prevention Efforts by the KUA

Evaluation is a stage in dakwah (religious outreach) management aimed at assessing the success of program implementation and determining the extent to which activities have achieved established goals. In the context of divorce prevention at the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), evaluation involves not only assessing marriage guidance activities but also monitoring community conditions and providing counsel to married couples. Evaluation plays a crucial role in ensuring that the implemented dakwah programs positively impact family resilience and reduce the likelihood of divorce.

The KUA carries out evaluation and divorce prevention efforts through the following steps: 1. Providing counsel and guidance to married couples. The KUA offers advice and guidance to couples experiencing domestic conflict so that issues can be resolved without leading to divorce. This guidance aims to strengthen the marital relationship and maintain family harmony. 2. Referring couples in conflict to the Religious Court. If divorce is unavoidable, the KUA directs couples to resolve the matter through the Religious Court in accordance with applicable regulations. In this capacity, the KUA acts as an institution that provides guidance and preventive measures prior to the commencement of legal proceedings. 3. Educating the public on the importance of pre-marital readiness. The KUA conducts community outreach regarding the importance of mental, financial, and spiritual readiness before marriage. This education aims to raise public awareness, ensuring people are better prepared to build a family and reducing the risk of divorce. 4. Instilling a culture of mutual forgiveness in married life. During family guidance sessions, the KUA emphasizes the importance of communication, emotional control, and mutual forgiveness to maintain domestic harmony and prevent prolonged conflict. 5. Raising awareness about the dangers of early marriage. The KUA also disseminates information regarding the risks associated with early marriage and the importance of age maturity and readiness for family life. These activities form part of a preventive strategy to lower divorce rates through educational and religious approaches (Munir & Ilaihi, 2006).

Da'wah Management by the Medang Deras District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) in Divorce Prevention

Research findings indicate that the dakwah (religious outreach/guidance) management at the Medang Deras District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) has implemented management functions comprising planning, organizing, execution, and evaluation. Through pre-marital counseling, clear task allocation, the delivery of educational religious guidance, and support for couples experiencing conflict, the KUA goes beyond mere administrative duties to play an active role in strengthening family resilience and preventing divorce. These findings align with Kurniawan et al. (2026), who assert that a managerial approach to religious outreach ensures programs have a clear direction and address community needs as evidenced by the direct link between planning (scheduling pre-marital counseling) and execution (five types of

activities consistent with the planned curriculum) at the Medang Deras KUA. The findings also reinforce Damanik's (2026) view that the effectiveness of divorce prevention programs relies heavily on the quality of management and strategies employed by the KUA; this is demonstrated by how the evaluation process in Medang Deras leads to ongoing support for couples already facing conflict a form of continuity that proves management is not merely an administrative formality (Nafila & Cholil, 2026).

Nevertheless, there are distinctive features that set these findings apart from those previous studies. Kurniawan et al. (2026) and Arif et al. (2025) discuss dakwah (religious outreach) management and the competence of KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) personnel in general terms, without demonstrating how the four management functions (POAC) interlock within a preventive-curative cycle. In the Medang Deras case, evaluation results specifically the monitoring of couples in conflict (the evaluating function) serve as input for designing subsequent community outreach materials (the planning function); thus, the four management functions form a continuous feedback loop rather than operating in a linear, one-way fashion. This preventive-curative cycle pattern constitutes the specific contribution of this study, aligning with the spirit of QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:21, which emphasizes domestic tranquility, and QS. An-Nisā' [4]:35, which underscores the importance of seeking reconciliation prior to separation.

Opportunities for Nurturing the Husband-Wife Relationship

This study identifies several opportunities to support the fostering of marital life in Medang Deras District. First, there is strong institutional support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs through mandatory marriage guidance policies for prospective couples, ensuring they are well-prepared before marriage. Second, the availability of human resources specifically marriage registrars (*penghulu*) and religious extension officers can be optimized to expand the reach of these guidance efforts. Third, there are opportunities to utilize digital media and social media to disseminate messages regarding family-oriented religious guidance in a broader and more engaging manner, particularly to the younger generation. Fourth, the community's willingness to collaborate with the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) on guidance activities demonstrates the potential to strengthen synergy among religious institutions, local government, and the community in building harmonious families ("Strategi dakwah KUA dalam bimbingan perkawinan pra nikah sebagai upaya pengurangan angka perceraian," 2025).

Challenges in Nurturing the Husband-Wife Relationship

In addition to opportunities, this study identifies five interconnected challenges in fostering marital life in Medang Deras District. First, unstable economic conditions and limited income frequently trigger domestic stress and arguments factors most commonly cited in counseling cases handled by the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). Second, many couples marry without an adequate understanding of communication and conflict management, as time constraints during pre-marital counseling prevent the material from being fully absorbed. Third, ego and poor emotional control hinder constructive conflict resolution, indicating that KUA guidance needs to address emotional management rather than focusing solely on cognitive knowledge. Fourth, the KUA's limited authority since legal divorce proceedings fall entirely under the jurisdiction of the Religious Court restricts its role to providing advice and guidance before a couple decides to divorce; consequently, its effectiveness hinges on the couple's willingness to seek consultation early on. Fifth, the gap between administrative readiness and the couple's mental-emotional preparedness lies at the root of various conflicts subsequently addressed by the KUA (Rohman, 2020).

These five challenges reinforce one another: economic pressures exacerbate conflicts stemming from a lack of understanding and emotional control, while the limited authority of the KUA restricts the scope for intervention once a conflict escalates. This situation underscores that preventing divorce requires couples to be prepared prior to marriage, rather than relying solely on the role of the KUA.

CONCLUSION

The dakwah (religious outreach) management of the Medang Deras District Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) regarding divorce prevention has been implemented through the functions of planning, organizing, execution, and evaluation. These programs are realized through marriage guidance, religious counseling, religious nurturing, and the provision of advice to couples and the community as an effort to build family resilience. Research findings indicate that the KUA plays an active role not only in marriage administration services but also in providing preventive and educational family guidance.

Program implementation is supported by Ministry of Religious Affairs policies, the availability of marriage registrars (*penghulu*) and religious counselors, the use of digital media, and community participation. However, implementation still faces various obstacles, such as economic issues, couples' limited understanding of domestic life, ego and emotional factors, the KUA's limited authority regarding divorce cases, and the lack of readiness among prospective couples for married life. Therefore, sustained cooperation among the KUA, families, the community, and relevant agencies is required to enhance the effectiveness of divorce prevention efforts. This study is limited to the Medang Deras District KUA; thus, the results cannot be generalized to other regions. Future research is advised to involve more KUA offices or conduct comparative studies to obtain a broader perspective on the application of dakwah management in divorce prevention.

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