

## **MARRIAGE EDUCATION PRACTICES AT RECONCILIATION SCHOOLS**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores community-based marital education practices implemented by the Reconciliation School (SR), an initiative designed to help individuals heal emotional wounds caused by dysfunctional family systems. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The SR program adopts therapeutic frameworks developed by John Bradshaw and Virginia Satir, emphasizing family systems theory, inner child healing, and identity reconstruction. Data analysis was conducted using thematic coding and triangulation to ensure validity. Findings reveal significant improvements in participants' interpersonal relationships and self-perception after completing the program. Participants reported enhanced emotional awareness, improved communication skills, and greater resilience in managing family dynamics. These results underscore the potential of community-based marriage education as a strategic alternative for strengthening family systems in Indonesia, particularly amid rising divorce rates, which currently range between 15–20 percent annually. Furthermore, SR's hybrid model—integrating psychotherapy principles, adult learning theory, and spiritual reflection—creates a safe and transformative space for personal growth without requiring formal clinical intervention. The study recommends scaling similar programs through policy support and cross-sector collaboration to broaden accessibility. Ultimately, community-based family education offers a preventive approach to mitigating family dysfunction and its social consequences, fostering healthier relationships and sustainable family well-being.

Keywords: community-based learning, dysfunctional families, family education, marriage therapy

### **Praktik Pendidikan Pernikahan di Sekolah Rekonsiliasi**

#### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji praktik pendidikan perkawinan berbasis komunitas yang dilaksanakan oleh Sekolah Rekonsiliasi (SR), sebuah inisiatif yang bertujuan membantu individu memulihkan luka emosional akibat keluarga disfungsi. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Program SR mengadopsi metode terapeutik dari John Bradshaw dan Virginia Satir yang menekankan pemahaman sistem keluarga, penyembuhan luka batin, serta penguatan identitas diri. Analisis data dilakukan melalui pengkodean tematik dan triangulasi untuk menjamin validitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya perubahan positif pada hubungan interpersonal dan persepsi diri peserta setelah mengikuti program. Peserta melaporkan peningkatan kesadaran diri, kemampuan mengelola emosi, serta keterampilan membangun komunikasi yang sehat dalam keluarga. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pendidikan perkawinan berbasis komunitas dapat menjadi alternatif strategis untuk memperkuat sistem keluarga di Indonesia, khususnya di tengah meningkatnya angka perceraian yang mencapai 15–20 persen per tahun. Selain itu, model SR yang mengintegrasikan pendekatan psikoterapi, pembelajaran orang dewasa, dan refleksi spiritual menunjukkan efektivitas dalam menciptakan ruang aman bagi proses transformasi personal. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pengembangan program serupa dengan dukungan kebijakan dan kolaborasi lintas sektor agar dapat menjangkau lebih banyak masyarakat. Dengan demikian, pendidikan keluarga berbasis komunitas berpotensi menjadi solusi preventif terhadap disfungsi keluarga dan dampak sosial yang ditimbulkannya.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran berbasis komunitas, keluarga disfungsi, pendidikan keluarga, terapi pernikahan

## INTRODUCTION

To this day, some people still believe that the most effective solution to juvenile delinquency is early marriage. This belief is even promoted on social media, where movements advocate for early marriage—though the term itself is often left vague, with no clear age definition provided.

There are several reasons behind this encouragement of early marriage, the most common being fear of premarital sex or economic hardship. In the former case, the idea is that instead of engaging in frequent unsupervised interactions that might lead to unwanted pregnancy and "sinful behavior," marriage is seen as the lesser evil (Nisa, 2020). In the latter, early marriage is prevalent among children from families that are economically and intellectually disadvantaged (Wahhaj, 2022). However, such marriages are inappropriate and should not be practiced, as they contradict the *maqashid al-nikah* (the purposes of marriage), which include building a family based on tranquility (*sakinah*), love (*mawaddah*), and compassion (*rahmah*) (Musfiroh, 2016).

Perceiving marriage as a solution to delinquency and poverty reflects a glorification of marriage (Hadiyansyah, 2018). In truth, many socially troubled youths are products of dysfunctional marriages. This implies that they are not merely the problem but victims of a flawed family system created by their parents. Therefore, the real issue lies not in the behavior of these children but in the chaotic family systems from which they emerge.

The failure to recognize the true nature of this issue causes children to suffer doubly: first, they grow up in dysfunctional families; second, they are labeled as problems needing to be fixed. Marriage will never be a solution if used merely as a diversion tactic. For instance, a middle school girl perceived to be overly friendly with boys may be forced into marriage to prevent perceived moral decline. This is a form of scapegoating, as the root problems often lie in parental neglect, violence, lack of role models, and emotional support (Hadiyansyah, 2019).

People tend to seek instant solutions rather than engage in difficult, ongoing processes. It is thus unsurprising that some parents prefer sending their troubled children to the Religious Affairs Office (*Kantor Urusan Agama*) rather than to an educational or counseling institution, as the former is quicker and less costly. Similarly, rather than reflecting on and improving their own marriage, parents often pass responsibility for their children to a future spouse. This behavior is not unique to Indonesia (Tampubolon, 2021), but is also found in other developing countries (Scott et al., 2021). Boys may also be married off early in the hope that they will become financially independent sooner (Edmeades et al., 2022).

What can we expect of a child who has never witnessed a healthy, functional marriage nor received any formal education on family life? Most likely, their marriage will resemble the flawed one they observed at home. These children may repeat the same mistakes, perpetuating a generational cycle. According to the Council of Foreign Relations, Indonesia ranks seventh globally in terms of absolute numbers of child marriages and second highest in Southeast Asia after Cambodia (Lubis et al., 2021).

A study conducted by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2016 found that 94.72% of women aged 20 to 24 had been married, yet only 4.38% of those who married under the age of 18 continued their education. Low educational attainment, which is often linked to economic hardship, remains a critical issue for many nations.

We must acknowledge that our current marriage systems require significant reform. In many communities, marriage is mythologized as inherently bringing fortune, happiness, and sexual satisfaction, leading to the belief that the earlier one marries, the better (Wantu et al., 2021). BPS data from 2015 show that while there were 1.9 million marriages, 347,000 divorces occurred that same year. Furthermore, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Research

and Development Center for Religious Life, between 2010–2014, about 15% of two million marriages ended in divorce, 70% of which were initiated by wives.

These statistics raise a fundamental question: if marriage is so sacred and fulfilling, why do so many end in divorce? Do those who remain married stay because they are truly happy, or because they feel trapped? Is happiness shared by both partners or sustained by exploiting the other? Some couples may require specific coping mechanisms to manage the stress of marriage (Sutarjo et al., 2016).

We must be more honest in confronting the realities of our marriage systems. Pre-marital and family education remains underdeveloped, despite the fact that many emotional and mental disorders are rooted in family dysfunction (Mina, 2019). These may include depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, or emotional conditions such as immaturity, poor communication skills, anxiety, narcissism, and perfectionism.

American researcher Christian Midelfort (1957) long ago concluded that all mental illnesses originate in the family. In family psychiatry, the family is not merely a healing resource but is often seen as part of the pathology itself. Each family member is part of an interconnected system; when one suffers, the cause is often systemic rather than individual.

There is a common pattern in families that foster emotional and mental disorders: two individuals enter marriage carrying unresolved issues from their families of origin. Yet, society tends to focus only on the most visibly "troubled" individuals—such as a child labeled "delinquent", instead of examining the relational dynamics of their parents or how parent-child interactions have contributed to the problem (Tilden et al., 2020).

Children often feel trapped in their family systems, with little to no escape. Emotionally, they are bound to dysfunction, and are usually the only ones sent to therapy or counseling. However, such conditions can only be fully understood by examining the emotional systems constructed within the family.

John Bradshaw (1996) emphasized that an individual's life is largely shaped by parental influence. What a child sees and feels is deeply tied to the caregiver's emotional expressions. Thomas Verny (1988) argued that as early as six months in utero, a fetus begins developing emotionally and absorbs its mother's emotional state. The mental and emotional well-being of the mother during this phase significantly affects the fetus. Paternal emotional involvement also matters: a father's support for the mother and unborn child significantly contributes to pregnancy outcomes.

Such deep emotional interconnection implies that when one family member appears troubled, healing must involve the entire family system. This highlights the need for educational units where individuals can learn about marriage and family life through structured and evidence-based methods. These learning platforms need not be formal institutions—they can be community-based initiatives, which often serve as effective support systems.

John and Linda Friel (1988) are among those who advocate for community-based marriage and family education. They argue that communities can be reliable sources of accurate information and support. One well-known example is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Bob Smith in Ohio. This organization, which maintains member anonymity, has become a global refuge for individuals from dysfunctional families suffering from addiction, employing a widely respected 12-step method (Kelly et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, such communities are still limited. However, one notable initiative is the *Sekolah Rekonsiliasi* (School of Reconciliation), which runs a marriage school as one of its programs. Community, based marriage education like this is important to study, especially because it is accessible to people with limited financial resources. Therefore, this study will focus on how these community-based marriage courses are conducted and the teaching methods they employ.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using the case study method to explore the implementation of marital education courses at the Reconciliation School (SR) and their impact on participants. The case study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, answering the “how” and “why” questions that underpin this research. Specifically, an explanatory case study was adopted, as the research aimed to explain the dynamics and outcomes of the “Sekolah Pasangan” (Couple School) program within the SR community.

Three primary techniques were utilized:

1. Direct Observation – Researchers observed the learning sessions to capture interaction patterns, emotional dynamics, and instructional strategies.
2. In-depth Interviews – Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including the SR Director, the President of Initiatives of Change Indonesia, and four program participants (two from Bandung and two from Jakarta). These interviews provided rich, narrative data on participants’ experiences and perceived changes.
3. Document Analysis – Printed and digital materials, including training modules, reading texts, and organizational archives, were reviewed to understand the curriculum structure and pedagogical framework.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring relevance to the research objectives. All interviews were conducted face-to-face to enhance rapport and data accuracy. The analysis followed a systematic process involving thematic coding, where recurring patterns and themes were identified across data sources. To ensure credibility and validity, triangulation was applied by cross-verifying findings from observations, interviews, and documents. The analytic steps included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, consistent with qualitative research standards.

This methodological approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how SR’s educational design—integrating therapeutic principles, adult learning theory, and spiritual reflection—facilitates personal transformation and relational improvement among participants. By combining multiple data sources and rigorous validation techniques, the study provides nuanced insights into the effectiveness of community-based marital education as a psychosocial intervention.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Idea Behind the Reconciliation School (SR)

The conceptual foundation of the Reconciliation School (SR) was initiated in 2012 by Initiatives of Change (IofC) Indonesia as a strategic response to the increasing psychosocial challenges associated with dysfunctional family systems. Empirical evidence suggests that unresolved emotional wounds and poor family functioning significantly contribute to marital instability and intergenerational transmission of trauma (Fishbane, 2019). Recognizing these dynamics, IofC sought to establish a transformative learning environment grounded in therapeutic principles and culturally adaptive educational strategies.

To operationalize this vision, IofC collaborated with Ren Jou Liu, founder of the EQ Center in Taiwan, whose expertise in emotional intelligence training has shaped family education programs across Asia for over three decades. Emotional intelligence and self-awareness are widely acknowledged as critical components of healthy relational functioning and resilience (Jabeen et al., 2024)). For scalability and contextual relevance, EQ recommended Akasha Learning Center Malaysia, led by Nandor Lim, which introduced the Inner Growth Companionship Program (IGCP) to Indonesia. IGCP emphasizes inner child healing, narrative identity reconstruction, and emotional literacy, aligning with contemporary trauma-informed frameworks that prioritize safety, empathy, and resilience (Yian & Yong, 2022).

The IGCP training focuses on personal transformation through structured modules that encourage participants to confront unresolved childhood experiences, cultivate emotional honesty, and develop coping strategies—skills essential for building healthy marital and family relationships. Following a series of domestic and international trainings, SR was formally established in December 2016 as the Indonesian adaptation of IGCP. The first generation of SR alumni remains actively engaged, contributing to program development across multiple cities, including Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Magelang, Boyolali, and Flores.

Institutionally, SR operates as a semi-autonomous entity under IofC Indonesia and currently offers three flagship programs, the most prominent being Sekolah Pasangan (Couple School). This program targets diverse participants—singles seeking pre-marital education, engaged couples preparing for marriage, married couples aiming to strengthen their relationship, and individuals recovering from divorce. Sessions are conducted in Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta, reflecting SR's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity.

SR's pedagogical design integrates therapeutic dialogue, experiential learning, and spiritual reflection, creating a hybrid model that bridges Western psychological theories with Indonesian socio-cultural realities. This approach resonates with global scholarship on transformative learning, which emphasizes critical reflection and community support as catalysts for deep personal change (Eschenbacher, 2020). Moreover, SR addresses a critical gap in Indonesia's mental health landscape, where access to affordable counseling remains limited, by providing a safe, interfaith space for emotional exploration and relational growth.

By combining evidence-based therapeutic principles with community-driven engagement, SR exemplifies an innovative model for psychosocial education. Its framework aligns with recent calls for multicultural and context-sensitive interventions that empower individuals to reconstruct meaning and foster resilience in family systems (Giordano et al., 2021). As divorce rates in Indonesia continue to rise—currently estimated at 15–20% annually (Biometrika et al., 2022)—initiatives like SR represent a strategic response to strengthen family well-being and mitigate the long-term social consequences of marital breakdown.

### **Practices of the Couple School**

Since its inception in early 2017, the Reconciliation School (SR) team has consistently organized the Couple School (Sepasang) program twice annually—typically at the beginning and middle of the year. This structured initiative is designed to provide participants with a comprehensive and transformative learning experience through a minimum of 12 face-to-face sessions, each lasting approximately two hours. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the program demonstrated adaptability by transitioning to an online format, ensuring continuity of learning despite mobility restrictions. Under normal circumstances, sessions are conducted weekly with a scheduled break once a month, allowing participants sufficient time for reflection and application of concepts. Consequently, the entire program is completed within an estimated four-month period, which reflects a balance between intensity and sustainability in adult learning contexts.

A distinctive feature of Sepasang is its small-group format, with each class limited to a maximum of six participants. This deliberate restriction is grounded in the program's therapeutic orientation, which prioritizes emotional intimacy, confidentiality, and psychological safety—elements widely recognized in trauma-informed and experiential learning frameworks (Rosenwald & Baird, 2020). According to Nenden Vinna Mutiara Ulfa, one of the lead facilitators, the intimate setting fosters trust among participants, enabling them to engage in deep emotional sharing—a process essential for identifying personal and relational challenges, expressing vulnerabilities, and ultimately achieving reconciliation. "We must make participants comfortable with each other first because in our sessions, participants need to express what they feel. The process involves identifying the problem, expressing it, and then achieving reconciliation. So we can't have a large number, unless it's a seminar," explained Nenden.

The program also reflects a commitment to religious inclusivity and cultural sensitivity, operating as an interfaith community open to individuals from diverse backgrounds. A minimum age requirement of 21 years is enforced, based on the assumption that participants at this stage possess the cognitive maturity and autonomy necessary for informed decision-making. As Nenden emphasized, “Although our method sources are Western, they do not conflict with Islamic teachings or any other religion. The point is that we want to learn together how to build a healthy family based on each person’s faith.” This approach resonates with global scholarship on multicultural education and transformative learning, which underscores the importance of integrating spiritual and cultural dimensions into psychosocial interventions (Taufiqurrachman & Fauzi, 2023).

The curriculum design of Sepsasang is primarily derived from John Bradshaw’s seminal work *On The Family*, which offers a systemic perspective on family dynamics and emotional healing. Bradshaw’s theoretical contributions, combined with experiential practices from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), inform the program’s emphasis on sharing sessions and reflective exercises—hallmarks of Initiatives of Change (IofC) pedagogy. Bradshaw himself was a former alcoholic who successfully recovered after two years in AA, and his insights into family systems and emotional recovery have become foundational in therapeutic education. As Nur Hayati, President of IofC Indonesia, noted, “Sharing and quiet time sessions are IofC’s hallmark programs, which are also practiced in AA. IofC and its sub-organizations, including SR and Sepsasang, offer space for people to express what they cannot say elsewhere.”

The integration of these frameworks underscores Sepsasang’s hybrid nature, blending psychological theory, therapeutic dialogue, and spiritual reflection within a culturally contextualized learning environment. The curriculum comprises 12 thematic modules addressing critical aspects of family life, including:

1. Crisis in the Modern Family
2. Family as a System
3. Profile and Characteristics of Dysfunctional Families
4. Children as the Window to the Family
5. Dependency as a Sign of Family Failure
6. Roadmap to Building a New Family
7. Spiritual Awakening as a Path to Identity Formation
8. Sexuality in Marriage
9. Financial Planning in the Family
10. Marriage Agreements
11. Genogram Presentation
12. Reflective Essay on Learning Outcomes

Topics I through VII are based on Bradshaw’s *On The Family*, with point-based summaries prepared in both English and Indonesian to accommodate linguistic preferences. Reading aloud is a mandatory component of these sessions, as SR believes that the most profound insights emerge from personal engagement rather than external advice. This practice fosters self-reflection and empowers participants to internalize key concepts. As Nenden emphasized, “By reading aloud, participants don’t feel like they are being lectured. Also, this is a signature aspect of SR’s marriage course.”

Topics VIII to X—covering sexuality, financial planning, and marriage agreements—are discussion-based and not accompanied by reading texts. These topics address contemporary challenges in marital life and draw upon diverse sources, including real-life experiences shared by participants. Each two-hour session follows a structured agenda (see Table 1), combining quiet time, guided reading, reflective dialogue, and open discussion, thereby ensuring a balance between cognitive learning and emotional processing.

Table 1 Summary of a 2-Hour Pair Meeting

Workshop Agenda	Duration (Minutes)	Notes
1. Greeting Participants	10	Facilitators ask about each participant's latest updates
2. Quiet Time Input and Sharing	20	Facilitators provide one or more questions. Participants have 5 minutes to write their answers, then share them in the forum.
3. Reading	30	Except sessions VIII–XII, participants read module texts. Each reads a paragraph aloud, continuing in turns.
4. Reflecting on the Reading	30	Facilitators ask questions related to the reading, and participants respond in turn.
5. Q&A and Closing	30	Facilitators give time for participants to ask questions and share anything.

This pedagogical approach positions *Sepasang* as more than a conventional marriage course; it is a transformative educational model that integrates therapeutic principles, adult learning theory, and spiritual reflection. By fostering emotional literacy, relational competence, and resilience, *Sepasang* contributes to the broader goal of strengthening family systems in Indonesia—a critical need given the rising divorce rates and associated social challenges.

### Participant Impressions

Overall, participants reported significant psychological and relational benefits after attending SR sessions. Many expressed that the program enabled them to develop a deeper understanding of themselves, which in turn improved their ability to relate to others—particularly family members and partners. This aligns with research on transformative learning and self-awareness, which emphasizes that personal insight is a prerequisite for relational competence (Jaakkola et al., 2022).

#### Case 1: Ulya Arifah (23)

Ulya, a wife and mother of a toddler, described a profound shift in her self-perception and emotional resilience. Previously, she often felt scapegoated within her family of origin, which contributed to persistent fear and insecurity. Through SR's inner child work, Ulya reframed fear as a constructive signal rather than a debilitating force: "I see myself now as I should be. I'm trying to make peace with fear. Fear, which has always been in my life, I now see as a gift from God. When I meet my inner child, I hug her and say, 'don't be afraid, trust that everything will be okay'". Her narrative illustrates reparenting processes described in trauma-informed therapy, where individuals offer themselves the nurturing and validation, they lacked during childhood (Edwards & Edwards, 2022). Ulya emphasized personal responsibility and gratitude toward her husband and daughter, signaling a transition from victimhood to agency—a hallmark of transformative learning.

#### Case 2: Samroh Fida (27)

Samroh, a single woman from East Java, highlighted the cessation of habitual comparison as her most significant change: "I choose to enjoy life without comparing myself to others. We are all unique in our own ways. Comparisons are meaningless."

Her reflections underscore the development of self-compassion and authenticity, which research links to improved psychological well-being and reduced anxiety (Hall et al., 2013). Samroh also articulated a deeper acceptance of previously rejected aspects of herself, demonstrating emotional integration: "When fear meets love, love transforms fear. I must create the gifts in my life by showing others who I truly am."

Case 3: Rina Hutriana (32)

Rina, a single woman from Solo, reported a shift in her interpersonal perspective, moving from judgment to empathy: “After the training, the first thing I did was apologize to my father because I had compared him to my friends’ dads. I realized that was hurtful.” Her experience reflects intergenerational reconciliation, a process recognized in family systems therapy as critical for breaking cycles of blame and fostering emotional differentiation (Lyu & Lu, 2022). Rina’s metaphor— “I feel like a glass cup that’s clearer now”—illustrates the purification narrative often associated with spiritual growth and identity reconstruction.

Case 4: Dinnie Hijri Firdausi (29)

Dinnie admitted to previously being indifferent, bossy, and harsh, but SR helped her uncover the root causes of these behaviors: “I realized something was wrong in me. SR training helped me learn how to care for myself and love my inner child to become a whole adult.” Her emphasis on commitment—“The more we keep our commitments, the more our inner child trusts us”—aligns with theories of self-regulation and trust-building, which are foundational for adult psychological development (Grimmer, 2022).

### Analytical Insights

These narratives collectively demonstrate SR’s effectiveness in facilitating emotional literacy, self-compassion, and relational empathy—outcomes strongly correlated with resilience and well-being (Moxley & Garrison, 2023). The recurring theme of inner child healing reflects Bradshaw’s (1996) concept of reparenting, while participants’ emphasis on responsibility and gratitude aligns with transformative learning theory, which posits that critical reflection and perspective transformation lead to enduring behavioral change (Thompson, 2022).

Moreover, the integration of spiritual metaphors (e.g., “gift from God,” “purification”) suggests that SR’s approach resonates with participants’ cultural and religious frameworks, reinforcing its contextual adaptability. This is particularly significant in Indonesia, where family education programs must navigate diverse belief systems while addressing psychosocial challenges such as rising divorce rates and intergenerational trauma.

### Understanding the Inner Child

The concept of the “inner child,” frequently referenced by SR participants, originates from Jungian psychology, introduced by Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961). This theoretical tradition encompasses related constructs such as the *inner parent* and *inner adult*, which together describe the internalized voices and roles that influence human behavior and emotional regulation. Prominent psychologists—including Eric Berne, Alice Miller, and John Bradshaw—have popularized this metaphor to explain how early experiences shape adult personality, coping mechanisms, and relational patterns (Bando & Yokoyama, 2018).

In essence, the inner child represents the pre-pubertal self, molded by formative childhood experiences. Whether those experiences were characterized by joy, curiosity, neglect, or trauma, they leave enduring imprints on emotional development. Neuroscientific research supports this notion, noting that by age six, the human brain remains in a slow-processing state, rendering children highly impressionable and vulnerable to environmental influences (Tottenham, 2024). Consequently, unresolved childhood wounds often manifest in adulthood as anxiety, perfectionism, or relational dysfunction—issues that SR seeks to address through structured inner child work.

The transformative potential of this approach is evident in participant narratives. For instance, Dinnie Hijri Firdausi (29) expressed a desire not only to heal herself but also to help her mother rediscover joy and forgive her father following years of estrangement. Her reflections underscore the intergenerational dimension of healing, a theme widely discussed in family systems therapy (Lyu & Lu, 2022).

Similarly, Miftahul Huda (36)—the only male participant—reported profound insights into family roles and emotional expression. As a father to a five-year-old son, Huda articulated a shift from emotional suppression to openness: “I’ve accepted my past. I now understand my fears better. I’ve learned how to express emotions and feelings to strengthen myself, my family, friends, and community. Family issues are now my main interest.”

His engagement with the genogram exercise proved particularly impactful. Initially reluctant to disclose family background, Huda later recognized its value in tracing relational patterns and ancestral influences: “I was uncomfortable showing emotions in public, but I learned that feelings are a gift from God. The genogram helped me understand my roots through my parents and ancestors and how to build strong relationships with them.”

This experience reflects the therapeutic principle that mapping family systems fosters identity coherence and relational empathy (Jaakkola et al., 2022). Huda also noted improvements in self-confidence and public speaking, illustrating the program’s broader psychosocial benefits: “I used to be nervous speaking in public. Now I tell myself before speaking, ‘I appreciate and love how you speak; I won’t compare you to anyone.’ I feel more at ease now, ready to let people know who I am and what my family is like. I enjoy it—without fear or comparisons.” His narrative exemplifies self-affirmation and cognitive reframing, strategies associated with resilience and adaptive functioning (Parcha, 2023). Notably, Huda completed a master’s degree at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) Bandung, suggesting that SR’s impact extended beyond emotional healing to professional confidence and social engagement.

### **Analytical Perspective**

The emphasis on inner child work within SR aligns with contemporary trauma-informed frameworks, which advocate for emotional attunement, narrative reconstruction, and self-compassion as foundations for psychological well-being (Brähler, 2023). By integrating genogram analysis and reflective dialogue, SR operationalizes systemic family theory while accommodating cultural and spiritual dimensions—a critical factor for program relevance in Indonesia’s diverse sociocultural landscape.

### **Challenges Faced**

Interviews with key informants, including Nenden Vinna Mutiara Ulfa and Nur Hayati, revealed several structural and operational challenges that the Reconciliation School (SR) continues to face. These challenges highlight the tension between SR’s transformative mission and the practical constraints of sustaining a volunteer-driven psychosocial education program.

#### **1. Lack of Trainers and Capacity Building**

One of the most pressing issues is the limited availability of certified trainers, most of whom are concentrated in Jakarta and Bandung. This geographic clustering creates significant barriers to outreach, particularly for communities in remote areas where demand for family education is high. The reliance on volunteerism, while commendable for its ethos of altruism, introduces logistical and financial constraints. As Nenden explained: “We want to hold a ‘training of trainers’ for SR program alumni, especially since the last one was in 2016. But we’ve faced funding issues for bringing in trainers.”

Although several alumni have expressed interest in participating in such capacity-building initiatives, SR remains dependent on its international networks in Malaysia and Taiwan for advanced training. Trainers from these countries also serve on a voluntary basis; however, hosting them requires substantial financial resources for travel and accommodation. “They’re coming from far away, so we must prepare thoroughly. So far, we only have around 13 certified counselors,” Nenden added.

This shortage of trainers not only limits program scalability but also raises concerns about sustainability and quality assurance. Literature on organizational development

emphasizes that periodic skill renewal and internal leadership pipelines are essential for resilience in community-based programs (Ceptureanu et al., 2018) Without systematic capacity-building, SR risks overburdening its existing trainers and constraining its ability to meet growing demand.

### **Analytical Perspective**

The challenge of trainer scarcity reflects broader structural issues common to volunteer-based psychosocial initiatives. While volunteerism fosters community ownership and reduces operational costs, it often lacks the institutional stability required for long-term impact. This dilemma underscores the need for hybrid funding models, strategic partnerships, and policy support to institutionalize family education programs within national frameworks. Furthermore, gender imbalance among trainers—only two male facilitators, one of whom passed away—suggests the necessity of targeted recruitment strategies to ensure diversity and inclusivity in program delivery.

### **CONCLUSION**

Indonesia faces a rising divorce rate of 12–15% annually, alongside many marriages marked by chronic conflict and emotional neglect, threatening family stability and national development. This study highlights the Reconciliation School (SR) as an effective community-based family education model that fosters emotional literacy, empathy, and conflict management through therapeutic dialogue and experiential learning. While SR shows promising results, challenges such as limited trained facilitators, reliance on volunteers, and funding constraints hinder scalability. Strengthening institutional capacity, engaging underrepresented groups, and promoting cross-sector collaboration are essential to replicate and integrate SR's approach into national frameworks, ensuring sustainable family well-being.

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