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Skills for "Marriage of a Lifetime": An Examination of Muslim Marriage Preparation Handbooks in Singapore, 1974 to 2018

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Abstract: High divorce rates in Muslim marriages continue to be a concern for Malay community leaders and policy makers in Singapore. Since 1969, Malay community organisations here have offered marriage preparation courses to reduce the incidence of divorce. Today, a range of such pre-marriage courses continue to be provided by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Muslim organisations and private educational groups that are involved in marriage counselling and consultation. In this article, I examine the handbooks that have accompanied courses sponsored by the Ministry. Their content spells out the skills needed to realise a "marriage of a lifetime". Whilst prescriptions have responded to societal changes, a closer scrutiny of instructions in these manuals unfolds notions of the 'ideal' Muslim husband and wife that continue to stress men as providers and women as primary caregivers. Prioritising communication skills of the individual, as these manuals do, does little to change household gender inequalities in the long run.

Keywords: marriage; intimacy; gender; Islam; Southeast Asia

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1. Introduction

In her ethnology on Malay kinship and marriage in Singapore, Judith Djamour (1959) noted the high rates of divorce among the community. She found that Malay couples emphasised marital happiness built upon emotional and sexual satisfaction (p. 140). Hence, while they hoped that their marriage would last forever, they were also prepared that it could end up in divorce.

Djamour illustrated that, before the 1950s, for every 100 Malay marriages, there were 50 divorces (p. 117). Reasons for divorce, noted by Djamour, included childlessness, personal incompatibility and conflict over issues such as place of residence after marriage (pp. 118–23). This high rate of divorce could also be due to the Muslim Personal Law itself which made it quite easy to take effect, as well as re-marriage to occur soon after (pp. 132–33). The presence of the extended family to provide economic and childcare support was also a contributing factor for easier divorces.

Upon its establishment in November 1958, the Singapore Syariah Court set out to regulate the administration of Muslim divorces.[1] The Muslim divorce rate initially began to drop in the 1960s, only to rise again by 1975. Since then, accounts and statistics on Muslim marriages in the country have reflected an increase in divorce rates (Saw 1992; Dommaraju and Jones 2011). The rise in Muslim divorce rates since the mid-1970s reached its peak in 2003 (Yeung and Hu 2018). Even more recent data from 2019 show a rise in the number of Muslim divorce cases, suggesting that this trend is not abating (Department of Statistics 2020).

The family is of great importance to the Singapore government. This is expressed in terms of the crucial role that family plays in the nation's economic growth and development:

> "The family is an important institution. It brings fulfilment to our lives and is our anchor in this fast-paced, ever-changing environment.

> Families serve as an important pillar of support for the nation. At the individual level, families are the primary source of emotional, social and financial support. At the national level, they contribute to social stability and national cohesiveness as they help develop socially responsible individuals and deepen the bond Singaporeans have with our country".[2]

These statements explain why the government is concerned with any sign of unwanted change pertaining to the family (Teo 2010). Of significance too is the falling birth rate that has drawn attention since the 1990s (Jones 2012). These and the concurrent trends of postponement of marriage and high divorce rates have only aggravated official anxieties.

2. Materials and Method

Singapore's population comprises of three major ethnic groups; the Chinese forming the majority, followed by the Malays and the Indians. In 2020, the total population of Singapore was 5.69 million (Department of Statistics 2021). Malays compose 13.5 per cent (ibid.). Singapore continues to be diverse in terms of religions including Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, Hindhuism and Islam. The census statistics show 15% of the population professes Islam as their religion (ibid.). The majority of Malays is Muslims, and forms an important political and cultural minority for the government. There were some features of the Malay population which had been the source of concern for the state. One of which was the overall lower socio-economic standing of the community vis-à-vis the other three major 'officially designated' ethnic groups in Singapore, namely the Chinese, Indians and those categorized as 'Others'. The other was the socio-cultural distinctiveness of Malays, when it came to matters such as earlier marriage, and relatively higher divorce rates, as compared to the other ethnic groups, as discussed above.

I am interested in those who are concerned with the high divorce numbers of the Singapore Malay community. More specifically, my attention is directed at a particular response of Malay community leaders and policymakers in the country. My focus is on Muslim marriage preparation courses that are offered by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and, in particular, the guidebooks that it utilises for this. I explore how Muslim marriage handbooks are fashioned by the state to impart values and instructions for Muslim marriages to remain intact and to last a lifetime. The four handbooks I examine will span at least four decades, from the early 1970s to the present period. These are:

a. The 1970s: Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga (Brief Manual on Marriage).
b. 1990s to mid-2000s: Jalur Hidayah: Persiapan Berumahtangga (Guidance Path: Preparation for Marriage).
c. 2008–2013: Bersama Mu ... Kini dan Selamanya (Together with You ... Now and Forever).
d. From 2014 till the present: Cinta Abadi ... Marriage of a Lifetime.

Although there are many studies on marriage education programmes, especially in the US, studies on the content of marriage preparation manuals are rather limited. In her book, *Proposing Prosperity? Marriage Education Policy and Inequality in America*, Jennifer Randles (2017) studied the ground and in-depth implementation of American marriage education programmes. Through interviews, the observation of and participation in marriage education classes, as well as analyses of the programmes' curricula, she shows how these emphasise a certain way of thinking about marriage, and the need to acquire skills in communicating, parenting, and managing money. The elaboration of "relationship skills" that marriage educators are taught is very useful in the analysis of Muslim marriage preparation handbooks in Singapore, particularly the emphasis on an individual's competencies in communication and the regulation of emotions (pp. 34–48).

Maznah Mohamad's illustration of the Malaysian government's intervention to perfect the Muslim family through marriage education provides a significant perspective to this study. Similar to Singapore, with a rising occurrence of marital breakdown, pre-marriage courses are mandatory in Malaysia, whereby a certificate of participation is required for marriage registration (Maznah 2020, p. 190). As she posits, the rationale of "teaching"

and "learning" comes from the perception of the family as "a fragile institution" (ibid., p. 203). As such, it needs to be propped up and guided by religious precepts. In scrutinising the curriculum content of Muslim marriage manuals, Maznah provides clear examples of how these—supported by verses from the Qur'an or hadith—spell out ideal moral conduct, as well as the gendered marital responsibilities expected of men and women (ibid., pp. 212–14).

The prominent presence of religion in marriage education manuals is not peculiar to Islam. The case study by Novis-Deutsch and Engelberg (2012) of Jewish Orthodox marriage guidebooks in Israel provides a useful insight into the construction of "the idealization of a religious marriage" within the context of "Western ideals of romantic love". Using a grounded theory of content analysis of thirty guidebooks written in Hebrew, the researchers identified five "marriage theologies"—marriage commandment, secret of the Jewish home, and the home as a holy site, self-repair and cosmic repair (p. 16). The term "marriage theologies" is interesting in that it connotes "the idea that God is described as being involved in the couple's relationship and that the envisioned wishes and needs of God become part of the idealization of a religious marriage" (ibid., p. 15). In another study, Novis-Deutsch (2020) compared evangelical Protestant and Jewish ultra-Orthodox marital guidebooks. She found that regardless of faith, such writers used similar marriage theologies (pp. 198–200). Of interest is how the making of religious marital meaning in these guidebooks facilitates their respective readers to "improve" and "repair" their marriages while acknowledging that marital conflict is "a troubling reality" (p. 191).

Underlying these pre-marriage courses is the idea that one can acquire a set of skills and conduct. The emphasis on individual "relationship skills" as referred to by Randles (2017), however, can have other implications on marital power dynamics. As she elaborates, the focus on "skilled" communication of an individual ignores "social, economic and political factors that can affect partners' relative bargaining position within marriage" (Randles 2016, p. 259). The study by Randles and Avishai (2018) further argues that, by emphasising the individual's commitment, and communication and conflict-resolution skills, "structural issues are translated into individual deficiencies" (p. 21).

This article builds on the literature above by examining four handbooks that have accompanied the MSF's Muslim marriage preparation courses in Singapore. One of the handbooks is solely in the Malay language, while the remaining three were published in both Malay and English. Nevertheless, I was able to obtain only one of the bilingual handbooks—the other two were available in Malay alone. These were framed to prepare couples intending to get married, with what to expect of married life. They also outlined communication skills to ensure happy and strong families. I am interested in the necessity for couples to devote time and effort to practise these skills to ensure "a lifelong, happy marriage" as described by Randles (2017, p. 35). Certainly, this emphasis on an individual's interpersonal skills echoes the "relationship skills" promoted through the marriage relational education programmes in the United States of America.

Beyond details of how to realise a strong and resilient marriage, the content of these handbooks indicates what the Singapore state and society expects of marriage and family. Though their prescriptions may have responded to societal change, a closer look at the instructions in the handbooks unfolds notions of the 'ideal' Muslim husband and wife that continue to stress men as providers and women as primary caregivers. I argue that the approach of emphasising individual communication skills upholds such stereotypes and does little to change unequal gender relations in the household.

I begin by looking at the infrastructure set up by the Singapore government to handle the above concerns around the perceived need for stability and harmony in marriages. A brief background of Malay marriage preparation courses in Singapore follows. I then provide an analysis of the curriculum content of the four marriage preparation handbooks. I end with some concluding remarks.

3. Strengthening Marriages through Marriage Preparation Courses

Marriage preparation programmes are not unique to Singapore. Other countries have offered the same but with different structures and content. Bailey (1987) points out that, from the 1930s until the mid-1960s, the American "marriage education movement" were prominent enough in the US such that some 1200 American colleges offered fully accredited courses on marriage. These courses were justified by a belief that "scientific knowledge could improve courtship and marriage" (p. 715). In Australia, funding for marriage and relationship education activities also goes back to the 1960s, such that today, there is a diverse range of such programmes in the country (Parker 2005). Elsewhere in Germany, the EPL—Ein Partnerschaftliches Lernprogramm (A Couple Learning Programme)—saw its beginning in the early 1990s. Adapting a US marital education programme, EPL focuses on communication training for potential married couples or couples who have been married for up to two years (Hahlweg et al. 1998). As in Singapore, these three examples share a similar social awareness of the role of marriage in society.

That marriage preparation programmes in the US are highly supported by its government is apparent from the review of literature. Since 2000, governmental efforts have been in three areas: incentives or requirements for premarital education or counselling prior to marriage; modification of tax or economic assistance policies to support marriage; and educational programmes on relationships and marriage to adolescents and youth (e.g., in high schools) (Brotherson and Duncan 2004). Randles and Avishai (2018) show how the US government has devoted generous financial support for marriage and relationship education programmes that teach the skills and attitudes associated with sustaining long-term marriages.

The above examples foreshadow the Singapore government's interest in investing in marriage preparation courses. The influence of the US in this regard can be seen in the content of the handbooks that accompany MSF-backed marriage preparation courses, as shown below.

In October 2002, the Singapore government responded to the perceived decline in the family unit by reconstituting the Public Education Committee under the Ministry of Community Development and Sports as FamilyMatters! Singapore (FM!S). This body's terms of reference included reinforcing the "family as an institution by positioning family wellness and unity as important life goals" (FamilyMatters! Singapore 2002, p. 29). Its aim was to realise "the vision of building strong and stable families in Singapore" (ibid., p. 4). Within its first year, FM!S engaged public education activities such as commissioning television productions of drama and documentary on themes pertaining to dating and matching, marriage and fertility. It also collaborated with the National Museum Singapore in a year-long exhibition titled "I Do, I Do" showcasing marriage rituals and practices of the different ethnic groups in Singapore with the aim to promote and celebrate marriage. The government's pro-marriage and pro-natal message was very clear in all these public education initiatives.

The National Family Council (NFC), established in May 2006, shared the same mission as FM!S and sought to address "problems that threaten[ed] the state of [the] Singapore family", namely decreasing birth rates and high divorce rates (Yap 2006a). It maintained the discourse on the importance of the family for the society and economy of Singapore (ibid.). Interestingly, it also began to direct the state's attention towards preparing couples for marriage (Yap 2006b). Statements such as "marriage is [a] lifetime commitment" and the need for families to be "strong and resilient" reinforced the message that divorce is undesirable. These responses were similar to that prevalent in the US in the early 2000s, amidst the trend of rising divorce and low marriage rates. There, the rhetoric of fortifying marriage by revitalising marriage education had been made by academic, private, public and religious communities in the US (Brotherson and Duncan 2004).

The NFC made a concerted effort to encourage couples to attend marriage preparation programmes that were largely conducted by religious institutions including churches and mosques, as well as community voluntary welfare organisations. A Ministry of Community

Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) survey on marriage preparation in 2006 found that while 91 per cent of "soon-to-wed couples agreed that marriage preparation [was] important", only 28 per cent actually enrolled in the programme. This prompted the government into playing a more active role (Ho 2007).

In 2010, MCYS came up with a marriage preparation course, which was run by community partners (Sim 2010). The Minister, then Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, explained that the pilot programme, which included topics such as finances, values and expectations, was "aimed at strengthening marriages" (ibid.). The government also gave rebates to encourage more couples to attend these courses (Tan 2011). Reports from the MSF and voluntary welfare organisations in 2014 showed increasing numbers of couples signing up for "secular marriage preparation classes" (Goy 2014). This was likely the grounds for MSF to launch its marriage preparation programmes.

Coinciding with the International Year of the Family, the NFC was renamed Families for Life (FFL) in February 2014. Conceived as a "people-sector" council, its vision was "to build strong and resilient families".[3] Over the years, FFL has organised events, provided resources through its website towards its vision, and conducted online polls. One online poll in 2015 showed couples responding favourably to questions about the importance of marriage preparation programmes as well as the need to make such programmes compulsory (Families for Life 2015).

Its seriousness in advancing a marriage preparation programme to "curb divorce mentality" can be seen in the new course MSF launched in May 2015. Called PREP, Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme, this MSF course was based on research in the US and focused on communication and conflict resolution skills (Kok 2016). MSF continues to offer PREP today highlighting that it is evidence-based.[4] Working with voluntary welfare organisations to run the 12-h course, MSF provides couples who have completed PREP with a SGD140 rebate for the course fee of SGD420. MSF also supports Marriage Preparation Programmes (MPPs), which are conducted by approved social services agencies. The Ministry gives a SGD70 rebate to participants of these MPPs.

Marriage preparation courses are only compulsory for anyone intending to marry at the age of 21 years and below. There is, however, very strong encouragement for couples to attend such a programme. Aside from MSF, the Registry of Marriages and FFL also emphasise this to couples wanting to get married. The message is similar: "A good marriage needs a good foundation, and it takes commitment, effort and skill".[5] This foundation can be achieved through marriage preparation courses.

4. Malay Marriage Preparation Courses

Marriages and divorces in Singapore are either under the Women's Charter for non-Muslims or under the Administration of Muslim Law for Muslims. Divorce rates for marriages registered under the Administration of Muslim Law Act are consistently higher than those under the Women's Charter. It is no wonder that high divorce rates in Muslim marriages continue to be a concern by Malay community leaders and policy makers in Singapore.

The earliest Malay marriage preparation courses were initiated within the community (I use the term Malay for the marriage preparation courses to indicate the Malay community initiative. The courses were offered only in the Malay language by Malay community organizations. It was only when the MCYS began to administer marriage preparation courses in 1998 that the course was offered in both the Malay and English languages for Muslims in general). A prominent figure who mooted the idea of getting couples ready for marriage was Ustaz Haji Abu Bakar Hashim, then *kadi* (judge) of the Singapore Syariah Court. In the course of solemnising Muslim marriages, as well as counselling married couples and settling marriage disputes in the Syariah Court, he would have been well aware of the high numbers of divorces in Malay marriages. Answering his call for community organisations to offer courses for couples wanting to marry, PERDAUS (Persatuan Pelajar-Pelajar Ugama Dewasa Singapura or Singapore Adult Religious Students Association), a

voluntary welfare organisation, was the first to do so via its Marriage Guidance Course (Kursus Bimbingan Rumahtangga) in June 1969.

Reports in a local Malay newspaper, Berita Harian, showed that PERDAUS used mosques, *madrasah* (religious schools) or community centres as venues for these courses, which ran from 4 to 18 weeks. Fees were minimal at SGD3 per participant, inclusive of a registration fee, and certificates upon completing the course. Members of the Syariah Court, including Ustaz Haji Abu Bakar, served as core speakers but guest speakers from different fields—religious teachers, community leaders, lawyers, doctors and specialists—were also involved.

Topics included household economics, marriage according to Islamic law, responsibilities as husbands and wives, and parental responsibilities towards children. Sometimes, newspapers would feature the contents of these talks in full, for example, one delivered by Ustaz Haji Abu Bakar on the impact of divorce on the individual, children and community (A. Rani 1972). New topics were included to address contemporary issues. For instance, in 1973, family planning according to Islam was added in the course while in 1974, a speaker from the Singapore Anti-Narcotic Association was invited to speak on the impact of drug consumption on one's self and marriage.

The presence of officials from MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura or Islamic Religious Council of Singapore) and the government could be read as their endorsement of this community effort to reduce divorces. This included those like Haji Ismail Abdul Aziz, then President of MUIS, who stressed that divorce was to be avoided, and Sha'ari Tadin, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Culture, who launched the marriage guidance 1970 course. In his speech, latter expressed his belief that the divorce rate could be reduced when couples were better prepared for marriage.

There was clearly a conviction at the official and community levels that the marriage guidance course would decrease divorce cases. In 1970, MUIS considered a proposal by the Syariah Court to publish a booklet on marriage preparation. This idea was supported by two community organisations, PERDAUS and Jam'iyah. Representatives from both groups impressed upon the importance of preparing couples for marriage and how the booklet was an "appropriate and good" move to reduce divorces. Over the next few years, the course was offered at many other locations beyond the city centre (Sulaiman 1974). MUIS and the Syariah Court worked closely to expand the reach of the marriage guidance course by PERDAUS.

Whilst MUIS expressed intentions to organise its own marriage preparation course in early 1975, this did not transpire and PERDAUS continued to be the only community organisation that offered such a programme throughout the 1970s. A reported growth in Muslim divorce rates in early 1980 fuelled another round of concern amongst Malay community leaders. This led to mosques and other Malay community organisations to offer such a marriage preparation course.

At the same time, attention also began to be directed at the quality and effectiveness of courses provided by other community organisations. Given the importance placed on marriage preparation courses to bring down divorce rates, the Syariah Court's proposal to examine their effectiveness was welcomed. In their subsequent review, the Syariah Court and Registry of Muslim Marriages (ROMM) recommended that these courses be improved and updated in terms of topics offered as well as in the delivery of lectures.

The 1990s marked a major shift in how the Singapore government approached marriage preparation courses in the country. First an overhaul within MUIS saw the creation of its Family Development Department (FDD), tasked to review again existing courses. In 1998, a committee under the FDD was formed to evaluate and prepare a new marriage guidance course curriculum. While there had always been government support for the PERDAUS marriage guidance courses, the formation of the FDD was a major step by the government, through MUIS, to oversee and administer such initiatives for the Malay community.

Already concerned with overall trends involving the family institution, the growing number of divorce cases, which were more pronounced among Muslims, compelled the government to increase efforts to strengthen Malay marriages. The MUIS marriage preparation course, which came with a brand-new curriculum, was called Jalur Hidayah: Persiapan Rumah Tangga (Guided Path: Marriage Preparation). This ran from 1998 to 2007 before being replaced by Bersama Mu (Together with You), a course offered by MCYS from 2008 to 2013. Since 2014, MSF oversees the Marriage Preparation Programme (MPP) for Muslims; renamed Cinta Abadi (Eternal Love).

The Cinta Abadi Marriage Preparation Programme is delivered by MSF-appointed providers. There are currently 11 providers[6] including APKIM Resources, which was founded by Ustaz Abu Bakar Hashim in 1993 and is a long-time partner.[7] Cinta Abadi is offered to couples who are intending to get married. It is conducted in both English and Malay over two days. The fee for the Cinta Abadi ranges from SGD 200 to SGD 260. In its explanation of the programme, the MSF website states:

"[The] Cinta Abadi ... Marriage of a Lifetime marriage preparation programme sets the stage for soon-to-wed couples to learn and discover more about themselves and their partners. Through a variety of interactive activities, you will think through issues in a marriage and learn about effective communication and managing expectations and challenges in marriage."[8]

Muslim marriage preparation courses in Singapore were not made compulsory, although this idea was floated as early as in the mid-1970s (A. Ghani 1975). Likewise, the authorities contemplated withholding marriage certificates from couples who did not complete a marriage preparation course. None of this materialized. However, with the admendments of the Administration of Muslim Law Act in 2017, these courses were mandated for minor couples intending to marry and anyone below the age of 21. This ruling took effect from 1 October 2018.[9]

Aside from the government-supported Cinta Abadi programme, there remain many other marriage preparation courses, including those provided by Muslim organisations and private educational groups that are involved in marriage counselling and consultation. The range of these courses can be read as a demand from the community, and their preference for courses that are not necessarily backed by the government.

5. Marriage Preparation Handbooks for Muslims, 1974–2018

As mentioned, this study focuses on the four handbooks that accompany the MSF-sponsored marriage preparation courses. Their publication coincided with concurrent concerns about broader socio-economic changes within Singaporean society, including the growing number of women entering the labour force and the trend of dual income families.[9] Each handbook reflects prevailing views on the causes of divorce at the time they were produced.

Risman's (2004) idea of gender as social structure is useful in analysing the texts of the handbooks. According to Risman (2004) gender is embedded in the individual, interactional and institutional dimensions. In the institutional dimension, identifying the practices and regulations in distinguishing sex category is imperative.

a. The 1970s: Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga (Brief Manual on Marriage)

This 30-page manual was published by MUIS in 1974. The content reflected the courses conducted by PERDAUS. It was authored by Ustaz Haji Abu Bakar Hashim from the Syariah Court and Haji Osman Jantan from MUIS, both of whom, as already noted, were staunch proponents of marriage preparation courses. It was the first official manual and was written only in the Malay language.

Its short, the chapters cover the importance of marriage, minimum age of marriage, underage marriages, marriage solemnisation and ceremony, and divorce. It also includes advice on choice of partners and recommended behaviours in a marital relationship. Presumably, these topics were derived from the marriage preparation courses run by PER-

DAUS. The chapters read like a religious lecture in the mosque. Interspersed with Qur'anic verses are reminders of how, although divorce is allowed (halal), it is not encouraged in Islam (p. 23), and that marital conflicts need to be resolved by seeking assistance and advice (p. 25). The manual ends with a sermon on marriage—that it is condoned in Islam, with reminders about the responsibilities of husbands and wives, and the rewards of being cognisant of what Allah encourages.

b. 1990s to mid-2000: Jalur Hidayah: Persiapan Berumahtangga (Guidance Path: Preparation for Marriage)

Another publication by MUIS, Jalur Hidayah, was used as a marriage preparation course handbook from 1998 to 2007. Written in both Malay and English, this was a stark contrast to the previous manual in terms of its appearance and substance. To begin, it was 231 pages long, printed in colour and on thick paper. Its heaviness may have sent soon-to-wed couples a symbolic message about the heavy responsibility that marriage entailed.

The introductory chapter provides a background to the new handbook, which emerged with the formation of the Marriage Guidance Review Committee in May 1998 (p. 11). Members of this Committee were representatives from community organisations and mosques, as well as religious teachers. They appointed six writers; one of whom was Haji Abu Bakar Hashim. There were also messages from the then Minister for Muslim Affairs, Abdullah Tarmugi, and a foreword by Maarof Salleh, then the President of MUIS.

The context in which this handbook was published is important. Three decades of marriage preparation courses organised by PERDAUS and mosques did not see a decrease in Muslim divorce rates. The Family Development Division was set up in MUIS. That religion would underlie efforts to strengthen the Muslim family was, therefore, not surprising. With the setting up of the Family Development Division in MUIS, efforts to strengthen the Muslim family were more visibly infused with religious messaging. Jalur Hidayah was conceived not only as a handbook to prepare couples to enter marriage but also the medium by which MUIS could promote its Visi Kelurga Islam (Vision of a Muslim family), one where family members upheld the following values: *taqwa* (cognisant of Allah), *tanggungjawab* (responsibility), *amanah* (trust), *quwwah* (strength), wawasan (vision) and *akhlak mulia* (noble morals).

Content-wise, Jalur Hidayah deals with topics ranging from rights and responsibilities to effective communication skills and managing family finances, as well as sex and family planning. Its style of writing is didactic, and it spells out the precepts of marriage, and the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives. All guidance given is accompanied by verses from the Qur'an. In this sense, Jalur Hidayah comes close to the Muslim pre-marriage course manuals in Malaysia, described by Maznah (2020).

Additionally, this handbook contains exercises (written and verbal) for couples to carry out. Its bibliography references regional and global Islamic sources, as well as American materials on marriage and communication skills.

c. 2008–2013: Bersama Mu ... Kini dan Selamanya (Together with You ... Now and Forever; henceforth, Bersama Mu)

Published by MCYS with ROMM and MUIS, the third handbook was put together by two counsellors from the Social Services Training Institute (now National Council of Social Services). Other individuals from mosques, a non-Muslim community service organisation, and representatives from Muslim marriage preparation courses provided advisory comments. Used for marriage preparation courses from 2008 to 2013, Bersama Mu was written in both Malay and English.

A 68-page, spiral-bound publication, its drastically reduced size is noticeable. It is very different from its predecessors not only in appearance, but also in how it is written. The preface by MCYS recognises that marriage begins with love and happiness, and conveys the message that continuous commitment, knowledge and skills are needed to form a "harmonious marriage" (rumah tangga berharmoni).

Its five chapters have catchy titles: Love is like the spinning wheel; Love is sharing and relationship; The first touch . . . sex and family planning; Money . . . take control; Marriage expenditure. The appendixes include suggestions of what to do to keep the romance going (pp. 62–65), links on family planning and parenting (pp. 66–67), and numbers of helplines (p. 68). As a handbook for the Bersama Mu marriage preparation course, it includes written as well as interactive exercises for couples. Each exercise ends with a section called "Couples Talk" that requires them to list the steps that they would take in relation to the topic of a particular chapter.

Religion remained the premise for instructional advice. For instance, verses from the Qur'an are used to define and justify the guidelines. Nevertheless, differences from the Jalur Hidayah handbook are also detectable. The vision of the Muslim family, based on religious precepts has been replaced by goals of marriage expressed in Arabic—*sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (love), and *rahmah* (compassion). Even though Qur'anic verses are cited to support the three goals, there is also an emphasis on communication skills pertaining to responsibilities, sex, financial planning and relations with in-laws with the intent of resolving conflicts.

Bersama Mu was written when the dominant national discourse was one that promoted marriage preparation courses to strengthen families. The NFC, then, was a key actor and had stressed the importance of attending these courses. This was also the time when MCYS announced the rolling out of a pilot secular marriage preparation course. An organisational restructuring within MCYS saw it taking charge of matters pertaining to family, including Bersama Mu. Not surprisingly, there was some realignment of the curriculum, where topics on finances, values and expectations were emphasised.

d. From 2014 till the present: Cinta Abadi . . . Marriage of a Lifetime (henceforth Cinta Abadi)

This 94-paged handbook, which comes with an additional booklet of supplementary notes, has been used in marriage preparation courses since 2014. Its curriculum was developed by the MSF in consultation with ROMM, the Syariah Court, MUIS and Yayasan MENDAKI (Council for the Development of Singapore Malay/Muslim Community). Its Advisory Panel included representatives from the Syariah Court and the ROMM.

The chapters in Cinta Abadi cover areas of sharing values and vision, roles and responsibilities, building a collaborative and consultative marriage, managing finances, sex and intimacy as well as building healthy and supportive relationships with in-laws. Each chapter includes a section called "Pearls of Wisdom" that has verses from the Qur'an and stories from the *hadith*; another, called "Let's Reflect"; and one more called "Marriage Toolkits". References on communication skills from the US are a new inclusion. What stands out is how this handbook cites research and specialists alongside quotations from the Qur'an and *hadith* to support the points it makes.

There is also a return to the notion of a "successful marriage" that was present in Jalur Hidayah (p. 10). This is measured using the indicators of *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (love) and *rahmah* (compassion) that were introduced in the previous handbook but given elaboration and emphasis in Cinta Abadi (pp. 11–13). The emphasis on having communication skills to show love and express apology runs throughout the handbook.

Cinta Abadi was formulated by officials convinced that marriage preparation courses were the answer to curb increasing divorce rates. However, its underlying rationale for a "marriage of a lifetime" was different. This was the belief that one could acquire skills for this to happen.

The following subsections are a discussion of the curriculum content of the manuals. It highlights both modifications made to the curriculum in response to societal changes and the constant theme of gendered roles in all the manuals. In addition, the required skills to ensure a long-lasting marriage will be closely examined.

5.1. Changing with Times—Visually and Thematically

The covers and layout design of these four handbooks are visually striking and reflect changing printing techniques and design formats; from black and white for Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga to coloured for the other three, and obvious differences in the quality of paper selected.

In a similar manner to Nigerian marriage advice booklets between 1962 and 2009 (Renne 2018), the visuals of the four handbook covers provide a perspective of Malay life. Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga has a picture of the marriage dais with chairs ready, recognisable as the stage for a Malay couple about to wed; Jalur Hidayah has a framed photo of a couple dressed in the traditional Malay costume; Bersama Mu's shows only the hands of the bride and groom, where the former's henna fingers signify that the couple is Malay; and Cinta Abadi has a pair of wedding rings and a couple by the beach, the bride dressed in a Western-influenced white gown with crowned veil and the groom in the suit—a salient move away from the use of traditional Malay identifiers.

More importantly, these handbooks reflect changes in society as seen in the themes that were central at the time they were written. The predominant view during the 1970s for the cause of divorce during Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga was early marriage. Couples were said to be unprepared due to their immaturity and lack of financial stability. Instructional advice about the acceptable age for marriage, i.e., 18 for women and 20 for men were clearly spelt out (p. 9). Choosing the 'right' partner was also seen to be crucial, hence advice of what characteristics to look out.

With MUIS at the helm of government-sponsored marriage preparation courses by the 1990s, Jalur Hidayah became a vehicle to present the kind of Muslim marriage and family it desired. In a time period, when Muslim divorce rates had risen dramatically, the handbook was premised on the view that newly married couples were "kumpulan rapuh" (fragile team) and, therefore, needed guidance to adjust to their marriage. This marriage preparation course and handbook was thus imagined as a "pemangkin" (catalyst) to give birth to a "Muslim family" that would be "successful" (berjaya) "in this life and the hereafter" (p. 12). This idealisation of Muslim marriage in the context of rapid change and development is very similar to the idealisation of religious marriages that Novis-Deutsch and Engelberg (2012) found in Jewish marriage guidebooks.

By the first decade of the 2000s, when MCYS took over Singapore's marriage preparation courses the handbooks drew from US experience and materials for its pilot programme. Unsurprisingly, elements of US marriage education curriculum ended up in Bersama Mu. Most noticeable are the reminders that romance and intimacy are possible without sex (p. 45), and suggestions of ways to "keep the fire of love burning" (*semarakkan api cinta*) (pp. 62–65). Parallel notions in US marriage and relationship education of "love, passion and intimacy play a central role in maintaining marital commitments" (Randles and Avishai 2018, p. 30) are found in Bersama Mu. Different, however, is the latter's vision of Muslim marriage as bringing tranquility (*sakinah*) through love (*mawaddah*) and compassion (*rahmah*), being encapsulated in verses from the Qur'an. The fashioning of Muslim marriage in this manner echoes the findings of Novis-Deutsch and Engelberg's study of Orthodox Jewish marriage guidebooks, which "transform the idea of mundane prosaic love into a form of sacred love" (2012, p. 23).

Both Bersama Mu and Cinta Abadi were formulated during the time period where Muslim divorce rates began to decline (Yeung and Hu 2018, p. 19). While the curriculum of Cinta Abadi, first published in 2014, is very similar to Bersama Mu before it, the former is distinguishable by its emphasis on an individual's skills in communicating love, handling conflict, and commitment to a "marriage of a lifetime". This emphasis on individual competencies resonates with the US marriage education curriculum that Randles cites in her study (2017). The "relationship skills" promoted in the curricula of American marriage education programmes focus on having "interpersonal communication" competencies to ensure "happy marriages" (Randles and Avishai 2018, pp. 32–33). The curriculum content

of Cinta Abadi also includes techniques of communication in a Muslim marriage, such as compassion (*rahmah*), and following the ways of the Prophet (p. 34).

Those writing the handbooks were clearly cognisant of societal change, including that related to women's participation in the labour force. Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga deemed it acceptable for women, during the 1970s to be employed in offices, schools and factories in circumstances where a husband's income was insufficient.[10] This advice reflected existing social expectations that husbands had to grant wives permission to work and wives who worked had to behave with decorum and dress 'properly'.[11] Likewise, in Jalur Hidayah, women's employment was seen as a means to supplement the household income (p. 74).

In Bersama Mu, there appears to be more acceptance of women participating in the labour force within the context of rapid development and change in Singapore by the 2000s (p. 27). Husbands were advised to assist in housework, but this was accompanied with a stipulation that they must also clarify their expectations of their wives and, thereby, formulate how both would work together in this matter.[12] In contrast, by the second decade of the 2000s, a full section in Cinta Abadi was dedicated to the context where women work and contribute to the household income. It recognised that "traditional guidelines" that "the husband ha[d] to be the sole breadwinner" may not be applicable anymore (p. 49). However, similar to Bersama Mu, it recommended that husbands and wives "cooperate to bring home enough money" and "help each other on running the household together" (p. 49) with the additional prescription for them to "consult and collaborate" (ibid.).

These examples demonstrate how the content of the four handbooks were modified in response to societal changes over time, accompanied by a shift in the kinds of marriage that were deemed desirable. As the most current handbook, Cinta Abadi, espouses, a "successful marriage" is measured by the presence of tranquillity, love and compassion, achievable through learning skills drawn from secular and religious sources combined.

The emphasis on love, sex, intimacy and communication skills echoes elements of companionate marriage characterized by affection and team work rather than duty and obligation (Hirsch and Wardlow 2006). The literature shows, among others, trends in the pursuit of individual happiness in 18th Century England (Haris and Jones 2015) and the shift from agrarian to industrialised economy in America (Amato 2012), as well as an urban middle class phenomena in India (Gilbertson 2014), to explain the emergence of the companionate model of marriage as the ideal. In the Singapore case, the active role of the government in promoting such a marriage as the state's ideal is apparent.

5.2. Perpetual Gendered Roles and Responsibilities

Unlike their outward appearance that changed with each handbook, men and women's roles and responsibilities as husbands and wives remained a constant theme. The division of men as providers and women as caregivers was taken for granted and clearly reinforced, albeit in varying ways. The expectation that men would provide for their wife and children was often expressed as a religious instruction, namely through *nafkah* (financial support), which entailed "seeing to the basic needs of the household members—food, housing and clothing" (Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga, p. 20).

Stereotypical gender roles were similarly expressed in Jalur Hidayah (pp. 73–74). Women were told that, as caregivers, they were "to ensure that [their] husband feels rested at home" (Pedoman Ringkas Berumahtangga, p. 15) or that "wives [were] responsible for taking care of the household and raising the children" (Bersama Mu, p. 27). A firmer expression of this is seen in Jalur Hidayah, which referred to the "duty" (kewajipan) of wives to serve (melayani) their husbands (p. 76). Such husband–wife responsibilities are stated in similar ways in Cinta Abadi—a husband is to fulfil his wife's physical needs and a wife is to manage the house and children's education (p. 27). In addition, the man is the leader (*khalifah*) of a household and, in turn, a wife is to obey and be faithful to her husband (Jalur Hidayah, p. 72, Bersama Mu, p. 26). Islamic precepts were used to reinforce and stress appropriate behaviours for men (as providers) and women (as caregivers).

As shown above, this gendered division of labour was later modified to reflect societal changes after women began to enter the labour market in droves. This can be seen especially in Cinta Abadi. Compared to the explicitly patriarchal stance of earlier handbooks, the government's most recent marriage preparation manual refers to husbands and wives as leaders in family:

> "Islam holds both husbands and wives accountable on how they lead and manage the marriage and family. Differences in roles do not mean inferiority or superiority of one over the other. It is about complementing each other (p. 27)".[13]

Despite recognising both as leaders, the idea that men and women have different, but complementary, roles is emphasized. This is still problematic as it perpetuates differences in gender roles and gender stereotypes and reproduces socially conditioned distinctions about what they can and cannot do.

Such gender differentiation in manuals for Muslims—expanded in terms of the *akhlak* (moral conduct) of husbands and wives—also feature in pre-marriage courses in Malaysia (Maznah 2020, p. 211). The use of verses from the Qur'an or *hadith* is very apparent in their manuals. As pointed out by Maznah, Malaysia's Muslim education programmes are "religion-centric and promote particular Islamic values, rules and doctrines ... " (p. 206).

Novis-Deutsch (2020) and Novis-Deutsch and Engelberg (2012) had similar findings in their studies of Orthodox Jewish marriage guidebooks. They show that these religious marital manuals advocated a gendered division of labour and an "unapologetic stance of gender essentialism" that mandated male headship (Novis-Deutsch 2020, p. 197). To explain the latter's prevalence, Novis-Deutsch (2020) shows that marriage theologies in the Orthodox Jewish guidebooks are an important way of "thinking about God and God's relation to humans, in a manner that pertains to and is expressed through marriage and couple relationship" (p. 195).

One such marriage theology, which she calls "The Baseline: God wants us to marry", is also present in Muslim marriage preparation handbooks:

> "O men! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single being and out of it created its mate; and out of the two spread many men and women. Fear Allah in Whose name you lead for rights, and heed the ties of kinship. Surely, Allah is ever watchful over you. (Surah An-Nisa, 1:1)" (Bersama Mu, p. 8)

> "O young people! Whoever among you who can marry, should marry ... (*hadith* narrated by Al-Bukhari)" (Cinta Abadi, p. 8)

These quotations are an exemplar of Allah's wishes for all to marry and procreate. They provide the answer to why one marries, i.e., to fulfil Allah's commandment. Marriage as *ibadah* (an act of worship), which is stated in the Muslim marriage preparation handbooks, accentuates this obligation. What follows from this marriage theology is Allah's recognition of "the contributions and sacrifices of husbands and wives" and "the promised rewards" (Cinta Abadi, p. 10). Similar to how Novis-Deutsch and Engelberg (2012) posit that gender essentialism is "part of God's path" (p. 16), the maintenance of men's roles as providers and women's as caregivers is also believed to fulfil Allah's wishes. The attachment of notions such as *ibadah* to marriage explains the unchanging gendered roles and responsibilities found in Muslim marriage preparation handbooks.

5.3. The Skills That Matter: Spousal Communication and Financial Planning

In the following section, a more in-depth examination of the current MMP handbook, Cinta Abadi, is discussed. Fulfilling Allah's wishes to marry and procreate entails a serious commitment. To stress this, the manual not only includes the statement "choosing to commit to the relationship, choosing to work on the relationship", but also attaches quotations from the *hadith* as a reminder that partners have good and bad traits (Cinta Abadi, p. 88). Furthermore, as *ibadah*, this rhetoric of commitment becomes the justification for being prepared and equipped for marriage.

Calls for concerted efforts to ensure that marriages stay ‘intact’ are based on a belief that the institution is fragile. Thus, throughout the four periodic handbooks, there is a common running thread to remind couples that “a happy marriage requires effort”, specifically *usaha* (effort) and *ikhtiar* (initiative), from both partners. To this end, spousal communication skills and financial planning are highly encouraged. Since these skills can be taught and learnt, the handbooks incorporate related techniques and tips. Significantly, these are from secular sources—the US-based texts, specifically, as I will illustrate—and their inclusion is rationalised by interweaving these with verses from the Qur’an and *hadith*.

5.3.1. Spousal Communication Skills

Cinta Abadi poses “knowing [one’s] partner” as crucial in a marriage. It encourages couples to explore each other’s values, beliefs, ideas and views, and tells them that sharing common values and vision will bring their marriage and family to the path of success (p. 18). Stressing the importance of sharing thoughts and feelings, the “culture of *syura* or consensus-based decision making” is set as the mark of good spousal communication practice. A quote from the Qur’an establishes that “ . . . both decide . . . by mutual consent, and after due consultation” (p. 14).

The communication skill to be acquired here relies heavily on the writings of the American relationship counsellor, Gary Chapman. Couples are introduced to Chapman’s idea of “love languages” (p. 31). They are given the link to visit and discover how to fulfil the love language for their respective partners. Couples are also taught to navigate challenges in their marriage and that conflicts are normal and unavoidable; more importantly, they can be resolved. They learn about expressing regret. They are encouraged to go beyond each other’s shortcomings as well as avoiding past mistakes in their quest towards ihsan (excellence) in the marriage (p. 86).

In the context of communicating one another’s sexual needs, the guiding approach in Cinta Abadi is “the spirit of mawaddah wa rahmah”, i.e., love and compassion (p. 60). Verses from the hadith are cited to support the prescription for foreplay in sex as well as to ensure that the sexual desires of both the husband and wife are to be fulfilled (pp. 62–63).

It is worth noting that, in Cinta Abadi, differences are recognised and are to be celebrated. For instance, as shown above, women’s and men’s sexual needs are recognised. There is also acknowledgement that women value social relations as a support system, while men value the same as an opportunity to engage in activities to de-stress (p. 78). It advises both to communicate instead of keeping feelings of discomfort (p. 33), since discussion between partners is a way to “keep in tune with each other’s needs” (p. 65).

It is apparent that the curriculum on communication skills in Cinta Abadi is a hybrid of Islamically sanctioned values and conduct, as well as elements from secular sources. The core goal is of promoting long-term marital commitment. These teach couples techniques of “skilled love”, the kind of love that is “durable”, “competent” and “controlled” (Randles 2017, p. 26). The logic is that having competency in relationship skills that emphasise “empathy, affective awareness, interpersonal negotiation” accompanied with “emotional effort, cooperation and compromise”, can help ensure that marriages survive (ibid., p. 30). Likewise, Randles and Avishai (2018) found that the US government-approved Happy Marriage Initiative emphasised strategies on “how partners should speak and listen” and “how to continuously (re)create feelings of romantic action” (p. 30). That these skills are in line with Islam makes them sanctified and appealing.

5.3.2. Skills in Financial Planning

Unique to the content of Muslim marriage preparation handbooks in Singapore was the component on financial planning skills. Skills to manage household expenditure were already part of the Jalur Hidayah and Bersama Mu curriculum. In Cinta Abadi, this was given more space. The revised and expanded framework on money matters in Cinta Abadi showed not only which monthly budgets need prioritising, but also highlights that asset

building involves monthly savings. Elizabeth Warren's saving formula is cited (p. 47). At the same time, verses from the Qur'an and the hadith are used as reminders to avoid being greedy, to spend accordingly and to avoid being in debt (pp. 52–53). Tips on how to build wealth include the ability to differentiate "wants" and "needs", and making a savings plan easy, achievable and consistent were included (p. 48). Sensitive to the increasing significance of economic matters in marriage, consulting and keeping partners in the loop on household finances is upheld in Cinta Abadi as a "great potential for couple bonding" (p. 50).

5.4. Competency in Individual Communication Skills and Household Inequalities

Cinta Abadi's strong focus on individual communication skills places the onus on a couple to acquire skills to understand and resolve any differences between them, build on reciprocal strengths, and help each other to improve and overcome any weaknesses. Emphasising these competencies alone, however, confines conflict in marital relations to interpersonal problems to be managed by partners. On the other hand, the curriculum content is silent on the sharing of household work, a potential conflict area in a marriage. Given the trend of rising dual income households, the division of labour at home will likely remain a challenge. In my study of Malay dual income households, looking into how couples organise tasks at home, I show that there is inequality in the household division of work; women see to the bulk of daily childcare tasks, as well as household work (Suriani 2011). Given this, the question of how egalitarian gender values may be incorporated in teaching spousal communication skills is critical.

In the Cinta Abadi handbook, men and women are upheld as leaders, but within prescribed gender roles and responsibilities. Its recommendations for partners to work together and empathise with each other's unique preferences and strengths can sometimes result in mutual decisions that perpetuate an unequal division of household work. The 'ideal' that men are providers and women are primary caregivers remains. Furthermore, the marriage theology in Cinta Abadi, which propagates marriage as a commandment and underscores gender differentiation, may reinforce gender inequalities. Cultivating the practice of making decisions only after mutual consultations and conducting discussions with compassion and mercy are good practices. Whether or not the final decision reached through this approach will lead to an equal sharing of household chores is, however, questionable, as studies on Malay dual-income households have shown (Suriani 2011; Suriani and Maznah 2018).

6. Concluding Remarks

Given rising divorce rates and the decreasing number of marriages and low birth rates, the Singapore government has been especially keen to keep families together and strong. This article has demonstrated what it has done to ensure this. Besides establishing official entities to pay more attention to the family unit, it has supported marriage preparation programmes; both financially and administratively. On the latter, Muslim marriage preparation handbooks whose various versions, produced over several decades, have been one of them.

The 'ideal' that the government seeks is the family that is long-lasting over generations, where members fulfil their roles and tend to the needs of others in the family. The most current Muslim marriage preparation programme and handbook, Cinta Abadi, is therefore fitting in its name and purpose. It has been used to promote what the government desires in a successful Muslim "marriage of a lifetime", one that is imbued with tranquillity (*sakinah*) and sustained by love (*mawaddah*) and compassion (*rahmah*). The curriculum of Cinta Abadi upholds and prescribes the path to achieving such a marriage.

For decades, Muslim pre-marriage courses and guidebooks did not yield the success desired, i.e., over the years, divorce rates did not fall for this community. The latest handbook thus took a different approach—one that emphasises communication skills, which are attentive to the different views, values and needs of a married couple. Not

only did this incorporate techniques and tips from acclaimed marriage counsellors and researchers from elsewhere, but it also juxtaposes these techniques with quotations from the Qur'an and *hadith* to provide religious justification for each of the steps in the path towards this "marriage of a lifetime".

To acquire competency in these skills requires commitment, effort and initiative from each partner. The work entails a change in expectations in marriage, attitudes towards partners, and abilities to communicate and resolve conflict. Ultimately, the responsibility for holding a marriage together lies in the capacity and will of the individuals within the marriage. The broader structural context of relationships, such as power inequality, dominance and discrepancy, is not likely be addressed through these handbooks. Avoiding these realities may also be costly for long-lasting marriages.

Moreover, the techniques and tips for these spousal communication skills to encourage "consultative and collaborative relationships", requires partners to work together and empathise with each other's unique preferences and strengths. Such a strategy does not necessarily ensure that household responsibilities within the domestic sphere are equally shared between partners. The 'ideal' that men as providers and women as the primary caregivers continues, supported by a marriage theology that propagates gender role differentiation.

No doubt, men's non-involvement in "historically feminine roles" (Friedman 2015)[14] and women bearing the brunt of household work will remain unless there is an overhaul of how marriage preparation courses and handbooks such as Cinta Abadi are conceptualised. An egalitarian relationship may be the path for a long-lasting marriage, but this will require, at minimum, a curriculum that promotes prescriptions that address the unequal gender relations in marriage.

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Notes

1. Muslim divorces in Singapore henceforth are granted by the Syariah Court in accordance with the Muslim Ordinance 1957 and, since 1966, the Administration of Muslim Law Act (Saw 1992, p. 30).
2. https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Strong-and-Stable-Families/Pages/default.aspx (accessed on 4 March 2021).
3. https://familiesforlife.sg/about-ffl/Pages/default.aspx (accessed on 5 March 2021).
4. https://www.msf.gov.sg/Policies/Marriages/Preparing-for-Marriage/Pages/default.aspx#PREP (accessed on 4 March 2021).
5. https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Marriages/Preparing-for-Marriage/Pages/default.aspx (accessed on 12 March 2021).
6. https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Marriages/Preparing-for-Marriage/cinta-abadi/Pages/List-of-Cinta-Abadi-Operators.aspx (accessed on 12 March 2021).
7. http://apkim.sg/subpage.asp?id=A008_10 (accessed on 25 February 2021).
8. https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Marriages/Preparing-for-Marriage/cinta-abadi/Pages/About-Cinta-Abadi.aspx (accessed on 12 March 2021).
9. See Suriani and Maznah (2018) for a discussion on Malay women in dual-income households and how they balance employed work and perform their roles as women, wives and mothers.

[10] Upon independence in 1965, the Singapore government embarked on its industrialization journey. Women were encouraged to participate in the labour force. Rapid industrialization in the 1970s saw women mostly in the labour-intensive manufacturing industries, as well as the commerce and trade sector. Although Malay female labour force participation is lower than the other ethnic groups, it has nevertheless been steadily increasing since the 1970s (Suriani 2011).

[11] "Disamping itu isteri haruslah: tahu menjaga kehormatan diri dalam bergaul di luar rumah, harus dengan seizing suami, berbakaian yang sopan" (p. 22).

[12] "Oleh itu, suami perlu memperjelaskan apa yang mereka harapkan dari isteri mereka dan membentuk cara bekerjasama mereka tersendiri" (p. 27).

[13] The prevalence of the idea of compatibility and complementarity between spouses in Malay marriages have been noted in anthropological studies on Malays (Djamour 1959; Firth 1966; Wazir 1992).

[14] Hochschild (1989) describes the "stalled revolution" in the 1980s in which, even though women are in the labour force and contribute to the household income, men do not do the same in relation to household work. Friedman suggests that to "unstall" the gender revolution, men must be encouraged to move into "feminine" roles (2015, p. 145).

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