

Divorce Trends among the Malay Community in Perlis, Malaysia over a Ten Year Period (2006 ~ 2015)

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i4/2805>

Published Date: 19 April 2017

Abstract

Various domestic conflicts cause spouses to choose divorce as their last resort. The divorce rate of the Malay community in Malaysia increases from day to day. The State of Perlis is not exempt from the same problem where the divorce rate has increased over time, particularly among the Malay community. By using a qualitative method, this study aims to identify the trends and factors that increase the divorce rate among the Malays in Perlis within a ten year period between 2006 to 2015. Data were collected through interviews and document analysis from 30 divorce files in the Perlis Religious Affairs Department (JAIPs). The findings show three main factors that contribute to divorce, namely; no understanding, being irresponsible, and having unscrupulous partners. This study suggests a number of programmes be implemented by the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to strengthen the awareness and responsibility of the husband to ensure that the divorce rate can be reduced among the Perlis Malay community.

Keywords: Divorce Trend, Divorce Rate, Perlis Malay Community, Perlis Religious Affairs Department (JAIPs).

Introduction

The issue of divorce continues to be one of the main topics of the media and researchers. A search using the ISI Web of Science bibliographic database in August 2009 revealed a total of 1,980 articles published in the Social Science journal, listing divorce as one of the main topics (Amato, 2010). Given that the happiness and welfare of the family institution is important, Islam has set the rules, laws and statutes such as encouragement to marry, stipulating the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife as well as children's rights and the rights of

parents (Muhammad & Jasmi, 2006). Divorce is a lawful thing that is most hated by Allah S.W.T. The Prophet S.A.W said:

*"One thing that is lawful which is hated by Allah is divorce"
(Narrated by Bukhari).*

Divorce is a social problem that involves the family institution and has become a universal phenomenon. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM) revealed that a total of 47,779 divorce cases were reported in 2012 and only 1,062 cases involved non-Muslim couples while the remaining 98 per cent of divorce cases involved Malay Muslim couples. A total of 38,035 couples went through divorce from January to August in 2015 (Syariah Judiciary Department).

This shows that the average number of divorce cases among the local Malay community in the country amounted up to 156 couples daily. The divorce trend in society has increasingly challenged the integrity of the institution of marriage and the family institution. This directly or indirectly, to some extent, will affect the quality of the relationship between husband and wife (Abd. Manaf, 2006).

Table 1 shows the statistics of the increase in the divorce rate in Perlis among the Malay community from 2006 to 2015. The number of divorce cases increased from year to year although there was a decrease in the number of some cases in 2011 and 2012.

Table 1: Number of Divorces Among Malays in Perlis over 10 years

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of Couples Divorced	326	346	458	502	523	512	476	513	548	696

Source: Religious Affairs Department of Perlis (JAIPs), 2016

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The divorce case in Perlis is alarming as it has been increasing over the years. The number of divorces in 2015 showed the highest divorce rate of 696 divorced couples reported as compared to the previous year's total of 548 couples (JAIPs). This is worrying because the total population of the state is only 246,000 people and the total Malay population is 210,000 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2015). Thus, this phenomenon threatens the well-being of the Perlis Malay community.

Nowadays, most divorced couples are those who filed divorce during their first marriage and most of the divorces occurred in the early first five years of marriage (National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN), 2014). The first five years of marriage is a critical period, challenging and should be given more attention by the couples because they are still adjusting to married life. Divorce among young couples is also caused by some external factors which exert pressure on the husband and wife. If the couple does not have a strong religious belief and faith, it will be so easy for them to be brought to the brink of divorce.

If no measures are taken by the authorities in strengthening the value of religion to a marriage or family, divorce is likely to be protracted. Thus, the responsible party plays an important role in controlling the alarming increase of divorce rate. This issue cannot be underestimated because the statistics released by LPPKN shows the number of couples filing for divorce has increased over the last three years with a total of 29, 253 in 2012, rising up to 29, 583 couples in 2013 and 33, 842 couples in 2014 (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim), 2016).

Generally, divorce has occurred due to lack of religious values within a marriage. In Perlis, there are divorce cases that occur even after 11 years or decades of married life. They failed to maintain the marriage and end up filing for divorce due to a lack of religious values.

Literature Review

A study by Farzanegan and Gholipour (2014), summed up the trend of divorce in Iran as being dominated by economic factors. Most couples who divorced in Iran did so due to the soaring price of real estate or the costly price of their residence resulting in low life satisfaction. They ended up not being able to achieve mutual understanding resulting in the end of their married life. Statistics provided by the National Organisation of Iran explained that the number of divorced couples registered in Iran reaches sixteen cases per hour. In addition, most divorced couples are young couple who are thirty years or younger. Unemployment among husbands also affects the economic resources of the family.

Divorce in America between the years of 2008 and 2011 was caused by the economic recession. This put pressure on couples as well as brought an impact to their marital relations. The other factors of divorce are job loss, home foreclosure, declining wages, poverty, the emphasised displacement of labour reform and besides unemployment (Cohen, 2014).

In England and Wales, the age when getting marriage is strongly associated with the risk of divorce. For women who marry at a young age, they are more likely to risk marriage dissolution. Those who were married at a young age are less careful in choosing a partner, causing disagreement after marriage and bringing emotional fragility. This is due to a lack of maturity and stability of the woman's socio-economic standing. The increase in the divorce rate also resulted from women who married at a later age. Women who have stable careers, stable economy and are highly educated also tend to file for divorce. The more successful the woman, the higher her expectations from her spouse. And if her spouse does not achieve such a standard after the wedding, could risk divorce (Lampard, 2013).

In addition, couples who lack skills in controlling their emotions also contribute to risk dissolution of a marriage. According to Paola and Gioia (2014) women who are impatient are most likely to end up with an unsuccessful marriage. Besides that, they also stated that patience is the main key to a happy and successful marriage. Impatience will affect the quality of a marriage particularly if both spouses lack patience. The study, conducted in Italy, also shows the probability for individuals with a high source of income and living in cities to be divorced at a rate higher than those who live in the southern part of the country. Furthermore, the dissolution of marriage is also likely when a woman holds the status as head of their household rather than men.

The divorce trend in Japan, on the other hand, is due to the differences in education between married couples. The education gap between spouses is one of the main causes of divorce in Japan. Raymo, Fukuda and Iwasawa (2013) argued that the percentage of couples who were divorced are higher for women who have low educational background. This is because, women with less education had to deal with fewer career opportunities causing them to be economically pressured. They usually rely on their husbands for their livelihood. Amato (2010) agreed saying that educational factors do greatly affect divorce. Individuals who have a college degree and are highly educated are more likely to have stable marriages than those with lower education. However, there are also cases where highly educated women divorced, but the percentage is low. This applies to women who have a higher education but do not rank high in their careers and have limited resources to contribute to the family (Raymo, Fukuda & Iwasawa, 2013).

Divorce is often the case in a second marriage after a failed first marriage. Such woman or man does not learn from their first marriage and did not improve their household contacts. Couples who do not want to improve their flaws, weaknesses and shortcomings in the first marriage will face the same risk of having a divorce (Whitton et al., 2013). Hosegood, McGrath and Moultrie (2009), summed up the trend of marriage in rural Kwazulu South Africa where the locals are influenced by the policy of apartheid and labour migration between the year of 2000 and 2006. Marriage between the South Africans is seen as unsuccessful because not many are able to achieve happiness in the marriage they built. There was so much instability in the marriage they built. This is closely related to the social and political structures that often afflict people of South Africa, either directly or indirectly. The increasing number of South African women workers, cause them not to rely on the help or support of their husbands in providing the needs of their lives and children. This is clearly a negative impact on a marriage because the husband and wife role itself changed (Hosegood et al., 2009).

In Malaysia, the divorce rate is rising day by day. Factors that bring the increase of divorce cases are the individuals or the couples themselves. According to Chlen and Sarif (2008), in accordance with the laws of Malaysia, divorce is applicable to couples who have committed adultery, behave and act in an uncivilised manner, do violence towards their spouses, disturb and make things difficult for their spouses or exes when they file for a divorce.

Furthermore, a study was conducted by Chlen and Sarif (2008) and they found out that the multiracial Malaysian community often goes through divorce due to three reasons. These include change of religion, no more love, and emotional problems. Besides that, there are also other problem factors such as communication breakdown, problem with the in laws, sexual intercourse problems, drug addiction problems, workplace conflicts, early marriage, health problems and many more.

Objectives Of The Study

This study aims to determine the divorce trend of the local Malay community in Perlis over the last ten years (2006 to 2015) and to identify the factors that increase the divorce rates.

Methodology

This study used qualitative methods and analysed data from the divorce files within the period of 10 years from 2006 to 2015. The analysis was confirmed by the results of interviews with two respondents, a counsellor (R1) from National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) and an officer of the Perlis Religious Affairs Department (JAIPs) as R2.

Findings And Discussion

Table 2: Demographic of Divorced Couples 2006-2015

	Wife
	Husband

No	Year	Divorced Age	Spouses'	Years Marriage	of	Party Filed Divorce
1	2006	30s	30s	10 years and above		Wife
2	2007	30s	30s	10 years and below		Wife
3	2008	20s	30s	10 years and below		Wife
4	2009	20s	40s	10 years and above		Wife
5	2010	20s	30s	10 years and below		Wife
6	2011	20s	40s	10 years and below		Wife
7	2012	20s	20s	10 years and below		Husband
8	2013	20s	30s	10 years and below		Wife
9	2014	30s	30s	10 years and below		Wife
10	2015	20s	20s	10 years and below		Wife

Table 2 reports that couples in the 20's show the highest rate of divorce cases over the period of ten years. The husbands are more likely to get divorce in their 30s than in the 20s or 40s. This indicates that early marriage can end up in divorce due to immaturity of the married couples. Other relevant factors include lack of religious beliefs and faith, lack of skills to manage households, unemployment and being financially unstable. Besides, most young generations lack communication due to work and social media (eg: too busy being online) that lead to divorce. In terms of years of marriage, it can be seen that most cases involve couples who have been married less than ten years. The numbers of those who got married less than ten years and filed for divorce are found to be higher than the couples who have been married for more than ten years. This is probably due to the lack of cooperation and tolerance between both spouses who are still unfamiliar with their other half.

Ten years of marriage is the onset phase of life as husband and wife. In this phase, both of the spouses have to be strong to face obstacles and tests. Often in the early phase of marriage, the husband and wife will always be reckless and emotionally unstable due to immaturity (young) or lack of experience in dealing with domestic problems. The small and trivial problems have to be dealt with like a grown up and settled in a calm way. Most of the divorce cases that were filed over the past ten years are filed by the wives. It is often the case, as seen through the divorce factors, which clearly shows that husbands often become the main reason for the divorce.

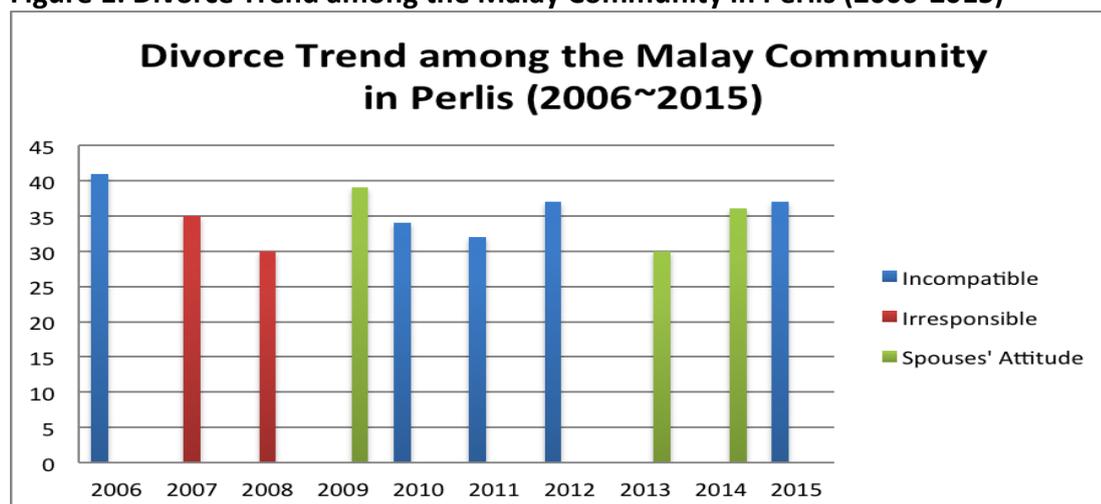
"....."The divorce rate in Perlis within the Malay community from January 2016 to April 2016 amounted to 272 registered couples. On average, a total of three couples get divorced every day. This illustrates that the problem of divorce is getting worse in the state of Perlis. These statistics do not include couples who applied for a divorce in which the amount is higher" (R2, JAIPs Officer).

Document Analysis of 30 Files (2006-2015)

Based on Figure 1, the most dominant factor and trend of divorce from 2006 to 2015 is the factor of incompatibility. Document analysis on 30 divorce files indicates that the percentage of this factor has been dominant for five years, namely; 2006 (41%) 2010 (34%) 2011 (32%), 2012 (37%) and 2015 (37%).

The second factor that contributes to divorce cases is the behavior or attitude of the couples themselves with the highest percentage being 2009 which was 39% followed by 30% in 2013 and 2014 with 36%. Unscrupulous couples become the third highest factor in divorce trends in the Malay community of Perlis. This can be seen in 2007, where it accounted for 35% and 30% in 2008.

Figure 1: Divorce Trend among the Malay Community in Perlis (2006-2015)



Divorce Trend among the Malay Community in Perlis (2006-2015)

One of the main factors leads to divorce among the Malay community in Perlis from 2006 to 2015 is due to a lack of understanding. This is supported by the data obtained from

the document analysis of 30 divorce files in which the highest factor of divorce trend from 2006 to 2015 was due to a lack of understanding. Here is an interview conducted with respondent, the counselor from LPPKN, R1:

“.....the increased number of divorce cases among the Malay community in Perlis, if we take a look at it, because LPPKN had done the Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey, last year, which is undertaken once every 10 years. In the results obtained from that research study we identified a few factors that contributed to the increase of divorce cases, in the Malay community, they made up the majority, or in general Malaysia. It doesn't matter in which state, most cases are the same. The factor that increases the divorce cases is due to the most dominant factor which is incompatibility. This means both husband and wives have no more feelings towards each other anymore. In general, most people would call it; there is no more room for consultation....” (R1)

The couples who got divorced due to incompatibility (no mutual understanding) had gone through chronic relationships where both husband and wife decided to file a divorce paper. The decision is made by both as there is no more reconciliation that could be achieved when living together. R1 stated that the incompatibility factor in this context refers to the mutual feelings of both couples towards each other. In other words, both of them are no longer in love with each other and are phlegmatic towards each other.

The Increased Divorce Rate among the Malay Community in Perlis

The Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) implemented the the Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey (KPKM-5) in 2014, where the study was made over a period of 10 years.

The results found that the divorce cases, in general, are increasing and if these cases are closely observed most divorce cases happened in a period of less than five years of marriage. Those who were divorced during their first year of marriage usually come from those who were in the first marriage and ended up filing divorce forms. This statement was supported by the results obtained from KPKM-5 in 2014 stating that the percentage of women who experienced divorce is higher than the men which, is 37.3% compared to 35.4%, respectively.

Spouses' Moral Values and Attitudes

According to R1, the factors contributing to the increasing rate of divorce among the Malay community in Perlis is due to the individuals themselves. To which extent the husband and wife practice and apply their roles and responsibilities towards their spouse and marriage depends on them. Many divorce cases are due to infidelity from the husband or the wife. This is when and where both couples need to realise the importance of having good a attitude and manners towards their other half.

“.....the second highest is due to infidelity among couples, but in Perlis, this includes polygamy as well, but I am not quite sure about the data available at the Religious Affairs Department. But since it is easy for one to apply for polygamy here in Perlis, many divorce cases are due to polygamy. In other words, the husband is cheating

on his first wife because she does not know about it, and the husband and the second wife got married without the permission from the first wife. The first wife does not know about it and thus when she finds out, she files for divorce from her husband. And it happens. Most of the divorce cases in Perlis are due to that factor..." (R1)

There are cases where the first wife filed a divorce paper to her husband because he practiced polygamy without the permission from the first wife, causing the first wife to file for divorce. This happens because the husband's attitude is dishonest. Furthermore, there are also divorce cases where the women were treated unfairly in a polygamous marriage. The husband for example, seldom comes home or they choose not to go home to their first wife at all. This is supported by an observation made where it was found that most husbands who practice polygamy often neglect their responsibilities to provide for physical and conjugal needs of their wives. In other words, they are unable to provide and maintain the family, and also deal with both wives on the basis of justice and fairness.

RI further mentioned that the number of clients, on average, who came for the counseling sessions to get advice for their domestic problems, is the wives. Normally, the wives were the only ones who tried to save their marriage, trying to find a solution or the best solution to every problem in their marriage or household.

However, there is no doubt that there are also cases where the wives are the cause of divorce. There are cases where the wives often went 'outstation' with another man for business reasons every weekend, thus neglecting their responsibilities to care for their husbands and children. The wives should know their limit when befriending other men because it would cause a scandalous slander and tarnish the husbands' dignity.

The husbands' bad attitude and manners such as drug abuse, addicted to ketum leaves, gambling, drinking, playing lottery and others obviously harm their health and bring bad impacts to their spouses.

"...The husbands' attitude and manner themselves, who love to get involve in drug abuse and addicted to ketum leaves, most of them are working, a few are not, so it's not a matter of working or not...those who do not work, they are addicted to ketum juice. Those who do not work, money is an issue, so they usually ask money from their wives....those who sometimes work and sometimes not, when they're stressed, with no money in their pockets, their money is only enough to eat, they will opt for the ketum leaves. There are some who even steal their wives' jewellery and pawn them at the pawn shop for money when they are involved in that illegal business...they became irrational...husbands like these, usually they do not want to let go of their wives because their wives are their personal banker....husbands who are addicted to drugs and ketum leaves...usually the wives are the ones who are filing the divorce papers for the dissolution of marriage..." (R2).

There are also cases where a husband is so desperate to steal his wife's jewellery for money and buy illegal drugs. Furthermore, there are also some who even borrow money from loan sharks because they are out of money and are debt ridden in order to get their hands on

the illegal drugs. It is undeniable that there are a few couples who do not know how to manage their finances and face financial difficulties, for example, lavishly spending their money; as well as husbands do not have any savings which eventually leads to divorce. Another issue that contribute to divorce is hot tempered husbands which made wives lost their respect on them:

“..hot tempered husbands, husbands who treat wives as their punching bags, it’s always the wives who came to us and consult for advice. The hot tempered ones, some only tortured their wives emotionally, some even have the heart to hit their wives, make them their punching bags. Those are the worst. But both are bad because they can emotionally torture their wives, although it is not visible from the outside, the physical torture however, we can see it with our eyes, but those who were emotionally tortured, they are hurt as well. Last time there was a woman who came up to us and told us that she just got back from the therapist due to depression, she looked depressed, for so many years, affecting her work, she quites her job, she was a government servant but ended up unemployed due to depression caused by her own husband...” (R2)

However, divorce cases do not simply happen from one side of the party, there are also other reasons that bring about divorce, such as the wives’ own attitude and manner. It is undeniable that the wives have this attitude of complaining and bragging about their married life or household to outsiders such as neighbours. In this context, the neighbours bring dishonour to their husbands’ good name. This is unacceptable because a wife is expected to honour her husband’s good name and hide her husband’s flaws from anyone including family members.

In addition, the attitude of the wives who often go out without their husbands’ permission and knowledge is also one of the main reasons leading to divorce. Although the world has evolved and developed, wives often see it as a trivial matter, but the truth is it is not as trivial as they thought. This is because it is encourageable for wives to seek for their husbands’ permission before going out. This is crucial because when one tells her husband of her whereabouts, it can avoid misunderstanding, suspicion and distrust from the husband which will then eventually affect their marriage.

Moreover, it is also important that the couples know how to communicate with each other. Communication skills are needed because communication is not just about freedom of speech, but it is also important that the couples know how to manage the communication atmosphere so that it feels wonderful and blissful. There are many divorce cases filed due to the bad attitude of the married couples in communicating with each other. The wives particularly, often humiliate their husbands and scold them in public. There are also some husbands who say negative things to their wives and tarnish their wives’ and their wives’ family’s name which mentally and psychologically affects the wives themselves. When respondent R2 was interviewed, he said:

“.....poor communication skills are also one of the reasons that bring about divorce. It is not restricted to the husband alone, but the wife is the same. They often fought, it is always the reason that makes them fight, and this is due to their own attitude.

You will never have to experience one if the other one ignores it. Most of them fight because they loved it, which means if there's any situation that can cause fighting, they will choose fighting, they create such an atmosphere...for example, either the husband or wife is too attached to their gadgets, 24/7 texting and spending time with their mobile phones, and then the other one advises her but the wife does not care or maybe the wife advises him but he ignores it....that is one of the reasons why...." (R2)

Irresponsible Spouses

Spouses who are mostly found to be irresponsible are the husbands. Islam has clearly outlined the responsibilities of a husband, which is to provide for the sustenance of his wife and children. Here is an interview conducted with respondent R2:

"...Then, there are also cases because of responsibility like for example firstly, the husband tends to neglect his responsibility, meaning the husband is home but he does nothing, he does not provide her with adequate food, a comfortable home, suitable clothes and other basic amenities of life....he spent less time with the family, or he left home for good, without coming back home. There are also some wives who are irresponsible, they run away from home, they leave of the house and never come back, they followed their family and they do not want to go back home to their husbands..." (R2)

Today, there are many wives who have taken the responsibility to provide for the sustenance of their husbands. The wives are also the ones who have been managing their households and children. There are cases of neglecting responsibility where the husbands are put in jail or prison for few years or either the husband or wife have disappeared without any news for several years. There are also some wives who neglect their responsibilities as a wife who is to maintain and take care of her husband, be obedient to his words as long as it does not violate the Islamic laws. There are also divorce cases filed due to their spouses' attitude where they are too overly attached to the online world and social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp and WeChat.

Polygamy is also one of the reasons of divorce because the wife believes that her husband treats her unfairly and often neglects her physical and spiritual sustenance. There are men who practice polygamy but neglect the sustenance of their wife and children. They neglect their responsibility to provide food on the table for them, care for them and leave them unattended without coming home. These acts of neglect should be avoided if the husband wants to practice polygamy, he needs to be able to provide and maintain the family, and also deal with both on the basis of justice and fairness. If he is unable to be fair, it is forbidden for him to practice polygamy because it will only bring disaster and misery to his wife and children. Allah S.W.T said:

".....then marry women of your liking, two, three, four, but if you worry that you will not be equitable (between them) then (marry) only one..." (Surah An-Nisa': 3).

Lack of Religious Knowledge

According to the JAIPs Officer, among the factors that contribute to the increased number of divorces among the Malay community in Perlis are due a lack of religious knowledge where the husband and wife do not practice Islam in their married life. As Malay Muslims, this is unacceptable and should not be put aside. In fact if they practice Islam in their daily lives, their marriage will not be at stake and they will live as a happy couple. There are some role models for them to follow in living their married life together. Allah S.W.T said:

"Surely there is for you the best example in the Messenger of God, for whoever seeks the pleasure of God and the Last Day, and remembers God often." (Surah Al-Ahzab: 21).

There are also cases where the divorced wives were deceived by their husbands before marriage. Before marriage, the husband told the wife that he is a university graduate with a secure career but it all changed after they got married, after she found out that the husband only studied up to standard four and does not have a permanent job. There are some cases where women themselves file for the dissolution of marriage because they were too surprised by their husbands' change of behavior before and after marriage. According to one wife, before marriage, the husband was very caring and patient person and respected her unconditionally. However, when they got married, he turned into a hot tempered monster, always asking for money, beating her if she chose not to give him her money and her husband also neglected his responsibilities as a Muslim. This is due to a lack of religious belief and knowledge which makes the husband or the wife take their responsibilities for granted.

Family Interference

Family members meddling in one's marriage affairs have also negatively affected the relationship between the spouses. R2, said:

".....those who got divorced because their family interfered, we have such cases too but not too many cases. The family became the reason for the divorce. The mother or father in-laws, the sister or brother in-laws became the uninvited judges for the couples' problems, fanned the fire of discord, pointing fingers and pointing out the other person's mistakes, ordering their son to divorce his wife. Or, there are also some who kept backbiting about the spouses about this and that..." (R2)

There are also divorce cases due to unplanned marriage, where spouses got married without loving one another. In fact according to one wife, she got married because her father forced her to do so out of wanting to see her married.

How Government Overcomes Divorce Matter

According to Chlen and Sarif (2008), the government has now introduced education before marriage, which is carried out with the help of NGOs and other associations.

JAKIM and the State Religious Affairs Department (JAIN) also cooperate and contribute their efforts in controlling the divorce rate among the Muslim community which keeps increasing over time. This effort is implemented through a marriage module divided into six marital phases which include (a) phase one to five years, (b) phase six to ten years, (c) phase

eleven to twenty years and (d) phase twenty one years and above (JAKIM, 2016). It aims to create a sakinah, mawaddah and rahmah (in other words: a happy, affectionate and compassionate) married life, thus helping to control the divorce rate among the Muslim community in this country.

Divorce should be controlled and given appropriate attention by all parties, be they married couples, the public, the government or the NGOs who have the power to play their role in controlling the divorce rate. Allah S.W.T has created men and women as company for one another, so that they can procreate and live in peace and tranquility according to the commandments of Allah and the directions of His Messenger. The Quran says:

"And among His signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts. Undoubtedly in these are signs for those who reflect." [Surah Ar-Rum:21]

Marriage is a matter of nature and is encouraged in Islam. Islam considers marriage as one of the most virtuous and approved institutions. It is an act pleasing to Allah because it is in accordance with His commandments that husband and wife should love and help each other to continue the human race as well as rear and nurse their children to become true servants of Allah S.W.T like His Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. When a man and woman are able to get married, they are encouraged to get married and not delay it. The Prophet Muhammad S.A.W said:

"O you young men! Whoever is able to marry should marry, for that will help him to lower his gaze and guard his modesty."
(Narrated by: Bukhari & Muslim.)

However, divorce has recently become a trend to the married couples who are in conflict or have problems in their marriage. The married couples often thought that divorce is the only way that could solve their problems and conflicts. However, the impact of divorce brings more negative effects on the individual couples than positive. Besides that, it is also found that divorce brings negative impacts on the couples as well as their children. For example, social problems among teenagers are mainly caused by divorced parents or problematic families. Moreover, it is also found that the quality of life of these divorced couples is also low. This is probably due to an emotional breakdown of the couples after they were divorced. They suffer depression, sadness, humiliation and many others. Allah S.W.T stated in Surah An-Nahl verse 72:

"And God has given you wives of your own kind, and has given you from your wives, sons and grandsons, and made provision of good things for you. Is it then you believe in vanities, and are ungrateful for God's blessing?" (Surah An-Nahl:72).

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study summarises the trends of divorce among the Malay community in Perlis. The three main factors contributing to divorce such as a lack of understanding, a lack of manners between husband and wife and a lack of religious knowledge. This is supported from the data obtained from the divorce files retrieved from the Religious Affairs Department of Perlis (JAIPs).

There are many programmes implemented by the government to help married couples to enhance their religious knowledge. However, the response is not favorable to the organiser because both husband and wife prefer to go on vacation rather than attend religious conferences although these conferences can help increase the couples' knowledge about marriage, help them reflect on their individual selves and be grateful for all the blessings bestowed by Allah (S.W.T.). The couples should not make vacation a priority because going on a vacation can only ease the mind temporarily.

Most couples believe that going on a vacation can make their problems melt away and ease their minds. However, such a perception is clearly inaccurate because in building a harmonious and happy family, both husband and wife have to be wise in balancing their religious and worldly interests, and both must help meet their physical and spiritual needs as well as many others. One cannot simply strive for either one purpose in life because a happy marriage begins with Allah S.W.T.'s blessings. Divorce can be avoided if both husband and wife obey the commands of Allah S.W.T and keep themselves away from His restrictions.

In addition, the husband and wife should always consult with each other through heart to heart discussions about their marriage. It is important for both couples to realise that life after marriage is different from when they were single. If before marriage, they could make decisions individually, after marriage it is different because they have to consult with each other before making any decisions except for matters that do not need the wife's approval. The husband, on the other hand, should not take things for granted while the wife should always ask for her husband's permission in anything that she is doing. Both husband and wife should care more and show more empathy towards their spouse and practices the way the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) lived his life with his wives and made him as a role model. This is crucial in order to avoid promiscuous and cheating spouses.

The implementation of module such as *Keluarga Sakinah (Happy Family)* Module, which is implementing in the state of Johore will inform the public about the attributes of a good Muslim and how to built happy marriage and family. Among the good Muslim's characteristic that should be emphasised is piety, for instance, one should not practice doing something that is *syubhah* (things that are neither *Halal* 'permissible' nor *Haram* 'not permissible'). In other words, they need to abstain themselves from doing something that is forbidden to Muslims such as drinking alcohol, premarital relationships and staring or looking directly at the opposite gender.

All agencies under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development or other related parties should organise more programmes specifically for the husbands to empowering their role. Many divorce cases are caused by the men themselves. Data gathered from JAIPs confirmed that in most cases, the wives will be the one who came to file for the dissolution of marriage because they could no longer stand their husbands' attitudes.

The seriousness of the divorce problem among the Malay community in Perlis is shown through the increase in number of divorce cases happening daily. If this problem continues, it will destroy the betterment of human development.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to RMIC UniSZA and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Terengganu, Malaysia.

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