SUSS Research Forum

Executive Summary

DREAM, DARE, DO.

Beyond the Wedding: Evaluating Pre-Marriage Mentoring and Early Marital Life in Singapore

The The SUSS Research Forum held on 20 October 2026 featured a presentation by A/P Razwana Begum and Dr Sheryl Chua, moderated by A/P Hu Shu. Drawing on their research, the speakers shared insights on marriage preparation and the marital journey in Singapore.

To begin, A/P Begum highlighted the growing importance of supporting couples in the early stages of marriage, particularly in Singapore's evolving demographic landscape, where declining marriage and fertility rates have become areas of concern.

She shared an overview of existing marriage and divorce support mechanisms in Singapore, before examining how pre-marital programmes contribute to the government's broader family-strengthening efforts. By encouraging couples to discuss potential challenges before they arise, these programmes help build marital satisfaction and connect couples with sources of support available.

The speakers broke down three key research questions from their study: (1) How do couples define a 'good' marriage, (2) What are the short-term outcomes of the pre-marriage mentoring programmes for couples, and (3) How do couples navigate marital challenges across different seasons of marriage.

A/P Begum explained that the project was primarily a research-focused programme evaluation aimed at assessing the effectiveness of marriage support initiatives. The main study evaluated the effectiveness of two marriage support programmes, Bersamamu and Journey with You (JoY), examining key touchpoints across participants' experiences and outcomes. It explored factors associated with marital satisfaction and relationship functioning, while identifying opportunities to strengthen programme delivery and support services.

Speakers

A/P Razwana Begum
(Head, Masters of Global Security and Strategy Programme, School of Humanities and Behavioural Sciences)

Dr Sheryl Chua
(Head, Public Safety and Security Programme, School of Humanities and Behavioural Sciences)

Moderator

A/P Hu Shu
(Head, Sociology Programme School of Humanities and Behavioural Sciences)

Reported by

Sim Hui Wen, Vera

Date

3rd November 2026

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In addition, the team conducted an extension study to gain a broader understanding of marriage readiness and lived experiences. Unlike the main programme evaluation, this study examined how well pre-marriage preparation equips couples for the realities of married life. It further explored marital expectations and attitudes towards marriage, capturing perspectives from a wider range of individuals, including singles and non-programme attendees. This study serves as a catalyst for developing further insights for a future longitudinal study on marriages.

In closing, Dr Chua emphasised that while pre-marital preparation cannot anticipate every challenge couples may face, it establishes a valuable foundation for couples to surface key issues early, fosters meaningful conversations, and equips couples to navigate different seasons of marriage.

The Q&A discussion explored different determining factors and barriers that shape marital decisions. Dr Chua also shared that "idealistic distortion" may deter couples from seeking mentoring, as they often view their relationships more favourably and perceive support services as necessary only for those facing challenges.

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