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Forgiveness Therapy To Maintain Family Resistance In Muslim Communities In Tanjungkarang Jati Kudus Village

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Abstract

Divorce in Indonesia has increased from year to year. Based on data from the BKKBN National Population and Family Planning Agency, there will be 580,000 divorces in 2021 and in 2015 the number of divorces will not reach 400,000. This phenomenon shows that modern humans lack the spiritual intelligence that is used to maintain family resilience. One of the spiritually intelligent attitudes is to have a forgiving attitude. This study explores forgiveness as Islamic psychotherapy in maintaining family resilience in the community in Tanjungkarang Village, Jati District, Kudus Regency. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The research data was obtained from interviews, observations and documentation with 5 informants. The data validity test was carried out by triangulation, namely source triangulation, time triangulation, and technical triangulation. The results of this study indicate that in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the people of Tanjungkarang Village were able to go through difficulties after difficulties in a wise way. Armed with religiosity which is reflected in strong faith, they are able to control the emotions of sadness and anger that are raging. Spiritual intelligence is manifested in the behavior of forgiving partners or other family members. This forgiveness therapy is a way out in maintaining family resilience, so as to create a harmonious family atmosphere, communicate openly with each other and finally find solutions to problems that befall the family.

Keywords: therapy, forgiveness, family resilience

Introduction

Marriage is a great agreement between husband and wife. So that they are separated only by death, even by Allah they will be reunited in the afterlife after the

resurrection (QS. Yasin [36]: 5G) and even all family members join too (QS. Ar-ra'd [13]: 23). Therefore, in a marriage between husband and wife there must be mutuality, both must love and respect each other so that a sakinah, mawaddah, and warahmah family life will be established (QS. Rum [30]: 21).

In family life, husband and wife must jointly maintain the integrity of their family so that no divorce occurs. Divorce in fiqh is known as thalak or khuluk. Thalak is divorce initiated by the husband, whereas khuluk is divorce initiated by the wife (Ali, 2006, p. 73) . Based on data from the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), the divorce rate in Indonesia has increased from year to year. The data states that in 2021 there were 580,000 and in 2015 the divorce rate did not reach 400,000 (BeritaSatu.com, 2023) .

According to the Religious Courts, the factors causing the increase in the divorce rate in Indonesia are: quarrels and disputes, leaving a partner, committing domestic violence, drunkenness, an apostasy, being sentenced to prison, gambling, polygamy, adultery, forced marriage, disability, madat and others (liputanG.com, 2023) . In Sukabumi, divorce data obtained from the Religious Courts stated that there were 1029 cases in 2021 and an increase of 2 percent to 1065 cases in 2022. Apart from economic factors, the causes of divorce are also affairs (Republika.co.id, 2023) . Meanwhile, according to Ramadhani and Krsnani's study, divorce has a negative impact on children, both physically and psychologically. Thus, before divorce needs to be considered carefully (Ramadhani & Krisnani, 2019) .

In family life, divorce is not wanted by every couple. Family life is inseparable from conflict, but the commitment between husband and wife is bound by very strong ropes so that it is hoped that a harmonious family will emerge. Before carrying out the marriage, the prospective husband and wife should understand each other's background. Both certainly have advantages and disadvantages. This deficiency is then perfected together so that it becomes a field of worship. Therefore, it is necessary to provide pre-marital family guidance with the hope that each prospective husband and wife will have enough provisions to build a family so that a family that is Sakinah mawaddah warahmah will be realized as stated in (QS. al-Rum [30]: 21). Such a marriage is certainly highly coveted by every couple.

Husband and wife in building a family must be together and committed to maintaining the integrity of their family. Every time there are conflicts and problems, they must be resolved in a good way and with a clear heart so that one cannot put forward one's ego. When a conflict occurs, social support is needed to resolve it from extended family, close friends and professionals. For this reason, one of the efforts to help married couples resolve conflicts is family counseling. In order

to maintain the integrity of the family, family counseling needs to be done considering the problems in the family are very complex. Family problems are individual problems of family members that have an influence on the family which eventually becomes a common problem in the family.

Family counseling or Family Counseling is an effort of assistance given to individuals as family members through the family system by improving family communication so that the potential is developed as much as possible and problems can be overcome by a willingness to help family members based on willingness and love for family (Willis, 2013). According to Walsh in 2016 that the family's ability to solve various problems in the family is a source of resilience in the family. The ability of each family member will shape how much resilience the family has in facing family problems in the future. So family resilience is an active process carried out by the family in looking to the future, meeting needs and growth (Ulfiah, 2021) .

In an Islamic perspective, the purpose of counseling is to help each individual to re-aware of his existence as a creature of Allah who must follow His provisions and instructions so that a happy life will be achieved both in this world and in the hereafter. Thus, the purpose of Islamic family counseling is to assist counselees in solving problems related to marriage. The method is by helping the counselee understand the nature of the purpose of marriage in Islamic teachings, helping the counselee to prevent problems from arising in family life, helping the counselee solve problems related to marriage and family life, and assisting the counselee in maintaining a marital and family situation so that good and develop to be much better based on Islamic teachings (El-Fiah, 2016) .

Islamic family counseling is counseling that is sourced from the values of Islamic teachings and the practice is called Islamic psychotherapy, in which the counselee is assisted to return to the values of Islamic teachings which have been exemplified by the Prophet . In the opinion of Rajab et al that Islamic psychotherapy is a directed service from a therapist to clients who are facing problems in order to be able to live their lives well with happiness in this world and the hereafter (Rajab, 2019, p. 4).

Islamic psychotherapy as an Islamic family counseling practice is embodied in the treasures of Islamic scholarship, namely Sufism. Sufism as a science that discusses the purification of the soul. Sufism is an inner part of Islamic teachings whose role is to provide solutions and therapy for life's problems that befall humans by drawing closer to Allah so that spiritual intelligence appears (Hasan, 2019) . Counselees can be helped to solve problems, by applying the teachings of Sufism, such as patience, sincerity, qana'ah, forgiveness and so on.

Forgiveness is considered one of the counseling Islamic psychotherapy in solving family problems. Forgiveness in a psychological perspective was introduced by Lewis Smedes in 1984 in his book entitled "Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve". The therapy movement in the form of forgiveness is beneficial for mental health and individual well-being. He also argues that forgiveness is a remedy for anger, lack of hope, depression and trauma in the process of family therapy (Worthington, 2005, p. 1).

Studies on forgiveness have been carried out by various experts, such as Kusprayogi and Nashori in their research showing that there is a positive relationship between humility and forgiveness in Indonesian Islamic University students in Yogyakarta of $r = 0.508$ and $p < 0.05$ with the effective contribution of humility to forgiveness. by 25.8% (Kusprayogi & Nashori, 2016). Utami's study shows that there is a relationship between interpersonal trust and forgiveness in friendship relations among students at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang at $r = 0.591$; $p = 0.000$; $p < 0.001$. Pratiwi's study shows that forgiveness therapy increases subjective well-being in wives who experience domestic violence from their husbands (Pratiwi, 2022). Pusvitasari and Jayanti's study shows that the relationship between forgiveness and happiness for the elderly at the Yogyakarta Wreda Center is $r = 0.533$ with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$) (Pusvitasari & Jayanti, 2020).

Some of the studies above show that forgiveness psychotherapy is considered capable of overcoming disharmony in intrapersonal relationships. Forgiveness therapy is also used by families in the Tanjungkarang village community. In the midst of the Covid pandemic 2 years ago it had a bad influence on family life. There was a family conflict at that time, but the people of Tanjungkarang Village, who incidentally mostly work as lentog sellers, were able to overcome family conflicts, because they still adhere to Islamic values. One of the efforts made is by communicating with spouses and family members by forgiving each other, so that they are able to maintain family resilience.

Based on the explanation above, this research is to examine further the effect of forgiveness in maintaining family resilience in Tanjungkarang Village, Jati District, Kudus Regency. The aims of this research are, first; why do forgiveness therapy in maintaining family resilience, second ; What is the atmosphere of family life after Forgiveness psychotherapy is done.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how families maintain family resilience within the community of Tanjungkarang

Village, Jati District, Kudus Regency. A phenomenological approach was adopted to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of participants regarding family resilience.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation involving five informants who were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research objectives. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data validity was established through triangulation, including source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation.

Result

Reasons for Practicing Forgiveness to Maintain Family Resilience

The findings revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the economic conditions of families in Tanjungkarang Village, Jati District, Kudus Regency. Most participants experienced declining household income due to reduced business activities and limited employment opportunities. These conditions frequently triggered emotional tension and conflict between family members. Nevertheless, rather than allowing these conflicts to escalate, the participants chose forgiveness as an effort to preserve family harmony and maintain family resilience.

Five informants participated in this study. They represented different occupations and age groups but shared similar experiences regarding the challenges faced during the pandemic.

Table 1. Characteristics of Informants

Informant	Age	Gender	Occupation
SL	58	Female	Lentog seller
MR	54	Male	Self-employed
MH	40	Female	Teacher
SD	48	Female	Lentog seller
MK	30	Female	Market snack seller

The interview findings showed that forgiveness emerged after participants attempted to regulate their emotions through strengthening their faith, calming themselves, and communicating openly with their spouses.

One informant explained:

"Life became very difficult during the pandemic. My snack business almost stopped because wedding receptions were cancelled. Sometimes I became angry with my husband because of our financial situation. However, my parents advised me to calm my heart, strengthen my faith, communicate well with my husband, and forgive each other. After that, I could think more clearly and finally we found a solution."

The statement indicates that forgiveness was not an immediate reaction but rather a process of emotional regulation. Participants first experienced disappointment, anger, and frustration before gradually accepting the situation and restoring communication within the family.

Another participant described similar experiences during the pandemic:

"Selling lentog became very difficult. Sometimes the business capital was gone, while my husband also had no construction work. I was often upset because our expenses kept increasing. However, I tried to be patient and forgive my husband because he was not entirely responsible for the situation. After organizing my feelings and praying, I believed that Allah would provide a solution."

This finding illustrates that participants perceived economic hardship as a shared challenge instead of blaming one another. Consequently, forgiveness became an important strategy to reduce interpersonal conflict and maintain emotional stability within the household.

Several participants also emphasized that forgiveness was closely related to religious belief. They explained that faith encouraged them to remain patient, control anger, and avoid prolonged conflict with their spouses. Instead of focusing on each other's mistakes, they preferred to understand the difficult circumstances faced by every family member.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that forgiveness was practiced as an adaptive response to family conflict during periods of economic hardship. Participants viewed forgiveness as a way to rebuild communication, reduce emotional tension, and strengthen family relationships. These experiences indicate that forgiveness became one of the practical strategies used by families to maintain resilience amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family Atmosphere after Practicing Forgiveness

The second finding concerns the changes in family relationships after forgiveness had been practiced. All participants reported positive changes in the

emotional climate of their families. Forgiveness encouraged more open communication, reduced conflicts, and enabled family members to cooperate in solving daily problems.

One participant explained:

"As the head of the family, I understand my wife's character. During the pandemic, she often complained because of financial difficulties. Instead of responding with anger, I tried to explain our situation calmly. I also apologized because I could not fully provide for the family during that difficult time. After we forgave each other, we began discussing alternative businesses together."

The interview demonstrates that forgiveness encouraged mutual understanding between spouses. Rather than continuing arguments, couples became more willing to communicate and search for practical solutions to improve their family's economic condition.

Another participant expressed similar experiences:

"Everyone experienced difficulties selling food during the pandemic. I was often angry because we had no money. Later I realized that blaming my husband would not solve anything. I chose to forgive him and used our savings to meet daily needs while waiting for the situation to improve."

Forgiveness also influenced relationships between parents and children. One participant explained that economic stress initially caused emotional reactions toward her child, but she later recognized the importance of communicating with empathy.

She stated:

"When my child asked for school supplies, I became angry because we had financial problems. Afterwards, I realized that my child did not understand our economic situation. I apologized and explained everything calmly. Finally, my child understood our condition."

These findings suggest that forgiveness was not limited to marital relationships but also strengthened interactions between parents and children. Open communication enabled family members to understand one another's difficulties and reduced emotional tension within the household.

Across all interviews, participants consistently described forgiveness as creating a calmer family atmosphere. After forgiving each other, they reported feeling emotionally relieved, more optimistic, and better prepared to face financial challenges together. Family members became more cooperative in making decisions, discussing household problems, and supporting one another during difficult circumstances.

Overall, the findings indicate that forgiveness contributed to the development of a harmonious family environment characterized by mutual understanding, emotional stability, open communication, and collaborative problem-solving. These conditions enabled families to maintain resilience despite experiencing prolonged economic and social challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

Forgiveness as Islamic Psychotherapy for Maintaining Family Resilience

The first finding of this study indicates that forgiveness serves as an adaptive strategy for maintaining family resilience during periods of crisis. Participants experienced significant economic hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic, including declining household income, business losses, and unemployment. These conditions often triggered emotional distress and conflict between spouses. Nevertheless, rather than allowing conflict to escalate, participants consciously chose forgiveness after regulating their emotions through prayer, strengthening their faith, and engaging in open communication. Forgiveness enabled them to reduce anger, restore emotional stability, and collaboratively seek solutions to family problems.

From a psychological perspective, these findings are consistent with the concept of forgiveness proposed by Enright, who defines forgiveness as a conscious process through which individuals overcome resentment, release negative emotions, and restore damaged interpersonal relationships. Rather than denying painful experiences, forgiveness allows individuals to reinterpret conflict constructively and promotes psychological healing. Likewise, Worthington argues that forgiveness reduces anger, depression, anxiety, and chronic stress while enhancing emotional well-being. The participants in this study similarly described experiencing emotional relief after forgiving their spouses, suggesting that forgiveness functions as an effective coping strategy during family crises.

The present findings also demonstrate that forgiveness among Muslim families cannot be separated from religious values. Participants repeatedly emphasized that faith encouraged them to remain patient, restrain anger, and sincerely accept difficult circumstances. This indicates that forgiveness operates not merely as an emotional response but as a form of Islamic psychotherapy that integrates psychological adjustment with spiritual awareness.

Within the framework of Islamic psychotherapy, forgiveness reflects the concept of tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul). According to Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, psychological well-being originates from a healthy heart characterized by faith, sincerity, patience, and trust in Allah, whereas hatred, envy, arrogance, and uncontrolled anger represent spiritual illnesses that damage both individual well-being and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, emotional healing begins with cleansing the heart from destructive emotions before replacing them with virtuous character.

This process corresponds with the stages of Islamic psychotherapy proposed by Adz-Dzaky, namely takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli. During takhalli, individuals eliminate negative emotions such as anger, resentment, and excessive ego. In the tahalli stage, these emotions are replaced with patience, gratitude, sincerity, and forgiveness. Finally, tajalli represents spiritual maturity, in which individuals surrender to Allah's will and develop wisdom in responding to life's challenges. The experiences of the participants illustrate these stages, as they first struggled emotionally before gradually strengthening their faith and eventually forgiving their spouses.

The findings are also supported by the Qur'an. Allah says:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ وَالْعَفَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

"Those who spend in prosperity and adversity, who restrain anger, and who pardon people. And Allah loves the doers of good." (Qur'an 3:134)

This verse demonstrates that forgiveness is preceded by emotional regulation. Individuals are encouraged first to restrain their anger, then forgive others, and finally continue performing acts of kindness. The participants in this study reflected this sequence by controlling their emotions before restoring communication with their spouses and jointly solving family problems.

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"Fear Allah wherever you are. Follow a bad deed with a good deed, and it will erase it. Treat people with good character." (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi)

This hadith reinforces the idea that forgiveness is an active moral behavior rather than passive acceptance. It encourages Muslims to transform conflict into opportunities for reconciliation through patience, empathy, and good conduct. Such values were consistently reflected in the participants' narratives.

The present findings are also supported by previous empirical studies. Mohases (2019) argues that forgiveness restores interpersonal relationships by reducing resentment and emotional suffering. Komariyah et al. (2020) found that forgiveness significantly contributes to family harmony, while Pratiwi (2022) reported that forgiveness therapy improves subjective well-being among wives experiencing domestic violence. Likewise, Pusvitasari and Jayanti (2020) demonstrated a positive relationship between forgiveness and happiness among older adults. Collectively, these studies support the present finding that forgiveness functions as an effective psychological and spiritual resource for maintaining family resilience.

Overall, this study suggests that forgiveness is not merely an interpersonal virtue but also an Islamic psychotherapeutic intervention that integrates emotional regulation, spiritual purification, and constructive communication. Through this integration, Muslim families are able to maintain resilience despite experiencing prolonged economic and social adversity.

Forgiveness and the Reconstruction of Family Relationships

The second finding demonstrates that forgiveness transformed the emotional climate of family relationships. After practicing forgiveness, participants reported calmer emotions, more open communication, greater mutual understanding, and stronger cooperation in solving household problems. Forgiveness not only reduced marital conflict but also improved relationships between parents and children. Participants explained that after apologizing and forgiving one another, family members became more willing to discuss financial difficulties, share responsibilities, and seek collective solutions instead of blaming each other.

These findings are consistent with Walsh's Family Resilience Framework, which identifies three fundamental domains of resilient families: shared belief systems, organizational processes, and communication systems. Among the participants, shared religious beliefs encouraged optimism and patience, while effective communication enabled spouses to negotiate family problems constructively. Consequently, forgiveness strengthened family resilience by improving communication and reinforcing mutual support during periods of crisis.

The findings also support Patterson's Family Resilience Theory, which conceptualizes resilience as a dynamic process of adaptation rather than a fixed family characteristic. Families in this study continuously adjusted to changing economic circumstances by strengthening emotional bonds, reorganizing family roles, and developing new strategies for earning income. Rather than allowing financial hardship to damage family relationships, participants adapted through forgiveness, cooperation, and mutual understanding.

From an Islamic perspective, these findings reflect the principle of *mubādalāh* proposed by Kodir. Marriage is founded upon mutuality, consultation (*shūrā*), and mutual acceptance (*tarāḍin minhumā*), where both husband and wife are equally responsible for creating harmony within the family. The willingness of participants to apologize, forgive one another, and jointly make household decisions illustrates the practical implementation of these principles. Forgiveness therefore becomes a reciprocal process that strengthens trust and reinforces marital commitment.

The findings further correspond to Quraish Shihab's explanation of family resilience through the realization of family functions, particularly the religious, affective, protective, and educational functions. The participants' ability to communicate openly, support one another emotionally, and educate their children about family circumstances demonstrates that forgiveness contributes to the effective functioning of the family. When these functions operate harmoniously, families become better equipped to withstand external pressures without losing their internal cohesion.

The transformation of family relationships observed in this study is also supported by several Qur'anic teachings. Allah states:

"And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy." (Qur'an 30:21)

This verse emphasizes that the primary purpose of marriage is to establish *sakinah* (tranquility), *mawaddah* (affection), and *rahmah* (mercy). The participants' experiences indicate that forgiveness nurtured these values by restoring emotional closeness and encouraging mutual compassion despite severe economic hardship.

Likewise, Allah commands believers to restrain anger and forgive others:

الَّذِينَ يَنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ وَالْعَفَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

"Those who restrain anger and pardon people. And Allah loves the doers of good." (Qur'an 3:134)

This verse reinforces the importance of emotional regulation as the foundation of healthy interpersonal relationships. The participants consistently demonstrated this principle by replacing anger with forgiveness before engaging in constructive dialogue.

Another relevant Qur'anic principle is found in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:187):

"They are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them."

The metaphor of clothing symbolizes mutual protection, comfort, dignity, and support between husband and wife. The participants embodied this principle by protecting one another emotionally during financial hardship rather than assigning blame for circumstances beyond their control.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also emphasized the importance of kindness within the family:

"The best of you are those who are best to their families, and I am the best among you to my family." (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi)

This hadith highlights that excellence in Islam begins with good treatment toward one's family members. The participants demonstrated this value through empathy, patience, forgiveness, and collaborative problem-solving, all of which strengthened family relationships during difficult times.

The present findings are consistent with previous empirical studies. Fincham, Hall, and Beach (2006) reported that forgiveness enhances marital quality by increasing trust, commitment, and relationship satisfaction. Utami (2015) also found a significant positive relationship between interpersonal trust and forgiveness, indicating that stronger trust facilitates reconciliation. Furthermore, Setyawan (2021) demonstrated that forgiveness positively predicts resilience, suggesting that individuals who forgive are better able to adapt to stressful situations. These studies reinforce the present findings that forgiveness reconstructs family relationships by fostering emotional security, trust, and collaborative adaptation.

Taken together, the findings indicate that forgiveness reconstructs family relationships by strengthening communication, rebuilding trust, encouraging empathy, and promoting collaborative problem-solving. Rather than functioning solely as a religious obligation, forgiveness becomes a dynamic relational process through which Muslim families preserve harmony and resilience. Consequently,

forgiveness may be regarded as one of the essential mechanisms for sustaining healthy family relationships within the framework of Islamic family counseling.

Conclusion

This study found that the role of religiosity possessed by individuals is the cause of the emergence of attitudes and behaviors for forgiving a partner's mistakes or making peace in a difficult situation. By forgiving each family member trying to maintain family resilience. However, this study still has many weaknesses, for example the lack of informants with various age backgrounds, socio-economic factors, education and experience in life. Research on Islamic psychotherapy continues to be developed so as to be able to answer the challenge that the concept of Islamic psychotherapy can be empiricized. Research on Islamic psychotherapy needs to be carried out in various layers of society so that its benefits can be widely felt, so that concept stability will be achieved. For future research, it is hoped that it can prove other Islamic psychotherapy concepts, such as qana'ah behavior, sincerity, patience and so on, because there are still many Islamic psychotherapy concepts contained in the Qur'an and Hadith which require empirical evidence.

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