



Interpersonal Communication and the Application of Religious Values in Building Family Resilience in Mandailing Natal

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ABSTRACT

In today's era of disruption, technology poses a challenge for families in maintaining effective communication, which is crucial for family well-being. Effective communication significantly impacts relationships, particularly within families. This study aims to explore how interpersonal communication, centered on religious values, shapes family resilience. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method, utilizing interview data collection, observations, and document studies. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive techniques. The findings revealed a rise in divorce rates and increased fragility of family values within the Mandailing Natal community. The pervasive influence of information technology has created barriers to interpersonal communication among families, leading to unfiltered exposure to information. Consequently, the community faces challenges in applying these values effectively. Moreover, negative impacts and strained relationships within families have worsened as a result.

Keywords : *Interpersonal communication; family resilience; religious values.*

INTRODUCTION

Among the necessities of the family is the need for communication. Good communication will have a positive impact on a relationship, especially in a family. Since interpersonal communication can be utilized as a control mechanism in any activity that all family members engage in, it is a skill that needs to be carefully developed (Setiawan & Hasanah, 2022). The formation of a family is an agreement, and there is the same perception by two people who will be bound by marriage. It is valid in the eyes of the law and is an act of worship from a religious perspective, having family members who were born alone. A family consisting of a father, mother, and children not only fulfills physical needs but also psychological needs,

Received: April 2024. **Accepted:** May 2024. **Published:** June 2024.

such as religious values, love, and attention (Basyir, et. al., 1994; Sari & Herawati, 2017). Family is the first place where everyone will express their feelings and desires. Family is often the main goal at the end of every activity. It is the feeling of comfort and security that keeps the family in the same corridor.

Families will be able to collaborate to create share objectives if they are aware of their place and role within the family system. The family, as the smallest organization that develops in social society, has a large impact on religious life, society, and even the state (Supriyanto, et. al., 2017). The family has the function of suppressing the activities of its members, as well as having a strategic role in making development a success with a wider scope. A decent and devout family will be reunited on the last day, according to Islam, a faith that controls every aspects of its adherent's lives, from rising to bed time. This belief motivates Muslim to build a family that full of positive values and mutual support for goodness.

The role of a family is increasingly important as the main control amidst the growing onslaught of information technology. Because the presence of technology has a negative impact as well as a positive impact on family resilience (Marlina, Hatta, & Lubis, 2020). The positive impact of technological developments can make it easier to obtain information and facilitate communication activities, but it is not uncommon for the negative effects of technological developments to cause fractures in family relationships. This is a result of family members being preoccupied with their devices, which limits communication within the family, particularly interpersonal communication (Astuti 2020; Sukarno, 2021).

Based on the problems found in Mandailing Natal Regency in the period 2018 to 2021, divorce cases were found to have reached 1934 cases. According to information from the Chairman of the Mandailing Natal Regency Religious Court, divorce cases were dominated by those aged 20-39 years, up to 79.31 %. He also explained that several divorce cases occurred due to poor communication and lack of mental preparation for running a household, especially in this era where there are many challenges faced by a family.

Furthermore, a number of previous studies found that character development is crucial, especially for the digital generation. The application of Islamic values and communication principles shows the beneficial and reciprocal relationship between these to factors in shaping the character of the digital generation. Then character development in the digital native

generation through the application of Islamic communication principles plays a role in forming family resilience (Marlina et al., 2023). Sri Sedyaningsih, Rachman, and Rusli (2013) also stated in their research results that the communication model is the most suitable for disseminating the concepts of a prosperous family.

In addition, Ali and Aziz (2022), in their research argued that communication is an important element in maintaining relationship, including in married life. Poor communication within the family will lead to divisions, disputes and conflicts which can lead to divorce. However, well-developed communication between family members will create a harmonious family, thereby avoiding disputes and arguments. Santika and Aziz (2022) also stated the same thing that interpersonal communication plays an important role in forming a *sakinah*, *mawaddah* and *warahma* family. Good communication and trust in each other even in long distance situations can maintain family resilience. Mutmainah et al. (2023) in their research stated that providing education, strengthening community groups and strengthening institutions are also important things to do in strengthening family resilience.

Based on the several research above, it can be concluded that communication is an important element that must be well established and practiced in a family. Similar to several of these studies, researchers raised the same theme regarding communication in building family resilience. Novelty in this research specifically examines interpersonal communication and the application of religious values in forming family resilience in the era of disruption.

This research applies qualitative approach and collecting data through field research. The purpose of the approach is to understand every human behavior and the meaning contained in each behavior, which is difficult to measure with numbers. The approach emphasizes the process of in-depth interaction between the researcher with the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, the ability of the research team as a key instrument greatly influences the success of the research (Asrori and Rusman 2021).

Data collection in this research was obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation (Raco, 2020). The informants in this research were the Ministry of Religion of Mandailing Natal Regency in the field of Islamic Guidance, which oversees the BP4 sector, the Marriage Preservation Advisory Board, religious courts, facilitators who have taken technical guidance from the Ministry of Religion, heads of KUA, traditional

leaders, Diskominfo, and BPS.

The selected participants were interviewed regarding the research questions that had been previously determined by the research team. The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner; the research team determined general questions and then listened to information informally from the participants. The study team conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) after gathering data from each participant in order to boost the team's trust in the earlier data. It was required to conduct a FGD by inviting the main participants in person to supplement the data we had already gathered because we were unable to meet them at the initial interview due to extremely busy activities. The second method of gathering data for this study is non-participant observation, which is used to watch how BP4 activities are implemented independently at the KUA office in the Mandailing Natal district.

Researchers observed and documented the steps involved in implementing BPS activities, including the materials presented, the interactions that occurred between resource persons and participants during the counseling, the number of participants, and the enthusiasm of participants in participating in the entire series of activities presented to prospective brides and grooms (catin) to build a resilient family after they got married. Documentation in order to gather evidence that, in addition to observations and interviews, supports the data collected. A portion of the information gathered from documentation comes from looking through archives and images of relevant Ministry of Religion and Religious Court events.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The smallest unit that precedes the establishment of a state is the family, which is made up of the building blocks of fathers, mothers, and children. Interpersonal communication is essential for family communication; if a message is not shared, an attitude or message that is not used will result (Rexady, Lestari, & Prayudi, 2023; Aliyudin & Rustandi, 2023). This makes their presence in a communication activity essential for conveying ideas that will help create strong family values.

Muslim family resilience serves as crucial indicator of family dynamic in Indonesia. This is because the number of Muslims in Indonesia is more than 70% of the total population of Indonesia. Family resilience, rooted in effective interpersonal communication aimed at applying religious values,

positively impacts every family member. Interpersonal communication is prominently formalized through activities focused on imparting religious values, particularly evident during the marriage process. The Ministry of Religion plays a pivotal role in this endeavor, notably through the BP4 Movement aimed at counseling, guiding, preserving marriages. This nationwide initiative holds promise for advancing family upbringing within Indonesian communities.

Interpersonal Communication in Forming Family Resilience

Mandailing Natal, which is located at the edge of the border of North Sumatra and West Sumatra, is a society that adheres to traditional agriculture, carries out routine religious activities, but still maintains and pays attention to the cultural values that they have adhered to from generation to generation. Mandailing Natal is also known as the Serambi Mecca of North Sumatra. This is because there are many Islamic boarding schools in Mandailing Natal Regency. Apart from that, there is a traditional Islamic boarding school that maintains the existence of the Yellow Book (*Kitab Turash*) in its teaching and learning activities, with the number of students reaching almost 20,000, some of whom come from all over Indonesia and some even from abroad.

However, the aforementioned conditions do not guarantee that families in a religious and cultural society will invariably possess strong resilience; diverse viewpoints and challenges exist within these families as well. "Divorce is a right that every person has; if they don't feel comfortable, then the couple is allowed to ask for separation, and divorce is not something that is forbidden by Allah". It is true that God never forbids divorce, but divorce will have a complex impact on both the couple and the immediate family members. Children will feel inferior when divorce occurs between their parents; feelings of sadness, depression, and other psychological disorders will make children feel safer being alone ([Gerungan, 2002](#)); this will make children tend to become introverted and less likely to develop.

Based on data obtained from the Religious Court in Panyabungan, every year the number of divorces, especially contested divorces, has increased. This is, of course, a big question for everyone. It turns out that a society that upholds religion and is even called the veranda of Mecca in North Sumatra, has relatively high divorce rate. In this case, the number of divorces has increased every year recorded from 2018 to 2021.

Table 1. Divorce Data for 2018-2021 Panyabungan Religious Court

No	Year	Cerai Talak	Cerai Gugat	Amount
1	2018	146	297	443
2	2019	142	315	457
3	2020	185	308	493
4	2021	176	365	541
Amount		649	1285	1934

Source: Documents of the Religious Court of Mandailing Natal Regency

Further data shows that Mandailing Natal Regency has a very high number of divorce cases. Compiled from one of the online news sites that conducted an interview with the Chairman of the Panyabungan Religious Court, Hasanuddin S. Ag, through Nurlaini's public relations officer, M. Siregar, S.HI, stated that in 2020 the divorce rate in Mandailing Natal experienced a significant increase compared to previous years. Starting from January to December 2020, there were 755 divorce cases, including 523 divorces with details of 323 contested divorces filed by wives and 200 talak divorces submitted by husbands. In addition, there are 251 cases of divorce petitions, including marriage dispensation, meaning requests for marriage for reasons of being underage, then inheritance. This means that people who have agreed on the inheritance only need to determine it; there are 4 cases for determining the heirs; there are 4 cases for divorce; there are 3 cases for joint property; and there is 1 case for a simple lawsuit from Sharia Bank.

In the case of a contested divorce, it is the wife or woman who submits the application for separation. This shows a shift in culture and understanding of society. Based on the results of interviews with the informants, this phenomenon happens because there is an increasing awareness among women when they are treated unfairly by their husband. The learned it through watching television and from the information they obtain from internet-based media. "Instead of always being treated harshly and inhumanely, it would be better for me to choose to separate from my husband; even Ustadzah Nining can't bear to be married. Even though their economy is good, they ask to be separated, let alone me." Although many sides of women suffer many losses in various matters related to the presence of the descridiction side of women (Silfia & Kurniawan, 2022; Kussanti, 2022). The influence of spectacle and information from the

media makes women choose to file for divorce rather than remain in a marriage.

This divorce case has a real impact on family. Because of this, interpersonal communication activities are not running as they should. Communication between family members is hindered by many factors. In this study, the primary contributing factor is the diminished interpersonal communication resulting from the pervasive influence of technology. This influence has supplanted traditional communication practices within families, which were previously carried out effectively before the advent of modern technology. As families grow more accustomed to sophisticated technology, their resilience becomes imbalanced and increasingly fragile. Furthermore, there is a lot of values from outside culture, which is actually very far from the religious values that are appropriate in the Mandailing Natal community. The technology makes family members increasingly distant, and the cultivation of religious values is no longer an obligation or necessity, even though Mandailing Natal is known as the veranda of the Mecca of North Sumatra and the land of Islamic students (Marlina, 2022).

This can be destroyed by a lack of good interpersonal communication, thereby reducing awareness of the importance of applying religious values to each family member. The level of resilience of a family is also shown by the attitudes of individuals in society, especially those who have religious understanding and knowledge. By having good resilience and knowledge, they will survive changes in structure, function, and even advances and sophistication in information technology (Jadidah, 2021; Savitri & Ramadhana, 2022). Your religious attitude and knowledge can be an attitude of understanding and correcting any mistakes or shortcomings in your partner or yourself, as well as an extraordinary onslaught of information.

Interpersonal communication theories can explain the complex social and family dynamics in the Mandailing Natal community. Based on the interpersonal communication theory of Altman and Taylor, we can understand that although the Mandailing Natal community is very religious and cultured, the increasing divorce rate indicates a problem in achieving deep interaction between couples. The increasing use of technology can hinder this process by reducing the time for deep face-to-face interaction (Cahyono, 2016). The Equity Theory proposed by Walster, Walster, and Berscheid, suggests that many couples, especially wives, feel dissatisfied because of the imbalance in roles and contributions in marriage. This

dissatisfaction, which is reinforced by the awareness gained through the media, drives them to choose divorce as a solution (Thariq, 2018).

George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism Theory underlines the importance of symbols and meaning in interpersonal communication (Suheri, 2018; Aliyudin & Rustandi, 2023). In Mandailing Natal, the symbolic meaning of marriage is beginning to change due to the influence of the media. Women who previously might have accepted poor treatment as a social norm now see it as a violation of their rights, leading to an increase in divorce cases. From the standpoint of Thibaut and Kelley's Social Exchange Theory, we can see that the decision to divorce is the result of an individual's rational calculation of the advantages and disadvantages of continuing the marriage. Media information about individual rights in marriage reinforces perceptions of the disadvantages and advantages, leading more women to seek divorce (DeVito 2016; Griffin, et. al., 2019). Jesse Delia's Constructivism Theory helps understand how individuals use cognitive schemas to make sense of their social world. Exposure to media and technology changes the way individuals in Mandailing Natal construct their social reality, especially in the context of marriage. These changes in cognitive schemas lead to more conflict and decisions to divorce, as individuals feel that their relationships are not meeting the new expectations they have learned from the media (Budyatna 2015; Kusmiati & Pratiwi, 2023).

Overall, interpersonal communication theories help identify how cultural factors, technology, media, and interpersonal dynamics interact and influence individual decisions in Mandailing Natal. The increasing divorce rate in this religious society suggests that effective interpersonal communication, the influence of technology, and changes in social construction play an important role in family dynamics and interpersonal relationships, as well as in family resilience.

Application of Religious Values in Forming Family Resilience

The family is an embodiment of a person's sincerity in achieving the pleasure of the Creator. Apart from that, the family is also a forum for creating young generations who will replace the old as leaders and an element that will be able to support all development activities. There should be concrete steps in preparing who and how will become successors. Increasingly developing technology also plays a role and contributes to the growth and development of knowledge in society

(Hermianto & Winarno, 2012). Technology is developing so fast that no one can stop its growth and development.

Mandailing Natal Regency is also a region that has been impacted by the increasingly rapid development of technology. Children today are very familiar with their gadgets. This phenomenon started with the presence of COVID-19, which made all students and educators feel their enthusiasm for carrying out teaching and learning activities recede. Activities were carried out online, an effort promoted by the government to reduce the growth rate of the COVID-19 virus at that time.

During COVID-19, all face-to-face activities were minimized, including teaching and learning activities. With this, whether people liked it or not, or whether they were ready or not, they were ready to be confronted and forced to become familiar with the sophisticated technology at that time. Children also carry out their learning activities using applications that have been mutually agreed upon when teaching and learning activities take place. After carrying out teaching and learning activities, there will be a lot of time for children and their gadgets to become more familiar, and children will be able to freely access whatever they want.

Starting from fashion trends, films, and even social media, these activities contribute to a child's growing familiarity with gadgets. It is essential for parents to provide supervision, not just to monitor their children's activities, but also to act as filters for guiding their behavior. "It's a bit difficult for me to limit children from using their cellphones; the reason is that they have to do their homework, but there is a time limit for them not to hold the cellphone anymore; after Maghrib prayers, they can't hold the cellphone. That's my effort." Activities involving increasingly advanced information technology necessitate external filters to protect children from its potential negative influences.

There are several functions of a family described in the Koran to filter out all forms of values that are not in accordance with religion and culture. The functions of the family are as follows (Kadri, 2016): First, Protect family members from doing negative things. This is found in Qs At-Thamrin verse 6, where it is explained that a family must look after each other and remind each other not to do self-harming acts that will be punished by hell later. b. Become the best solution and place to share stories. Second, In the Koran Surah Ar-Rum, a family was created to provide peace of mind for its residents as well as all family members. If a problem occurs, then the family is the best harbor to get it. Third, Educate

in the Koran, Allah explains very clearly that a family is an effort to educate, not only in terms of knowledge but also in terms of divinity, ethics, and morals. We find this discussion a lot in Surah Alukman. Fourth, Social cohesion as a social relationship in society with a wider scope, each family member will be given lessons and knowledge about activities and social relationships that start with the family. Children will be taught to greet and return someone's greeting, how to socialize, and how to treat friends who are older or younger than themselves. Fifth Building a civilization the family is also a miniature in creating an existing civilization; the values instilled have a positive impact on development in terms of cultural, social, economic, or even political development.

There are five essential functions that families must fulfill to instill religious values and foster resilience. According to [Birowo \(2023\)](#) one crucial function is increasing literacy in the family. Additionally, there is a phenomenon of deviation presented on social media that can be consumed by the public ([Raturahmi, et al., 2023](#)). Strengthening family resilience also involves promoting constructive discussions among family members, as emphasized by [Afifi and Nuryana Kurniawan \(2021\)](#). This approach aligns with Quranic teachings, guiding Muslims to avoid misinformation and hoaxes that could undermine family unity and values.

Muslim families in Mandailing Natal can be used as an indicator of family resilience among the people of Mandailing Natal Regency in particular and Indonesia in general, considering that Islam is the majority religion in this area. Apart from the majority being Muslim, the culture in Mandailing Natal Regency also makes religion the basis of culture and social relations that are built amidst society. Culture is also a strong hold; of course, the culture in Mandailing Natal is also influenced by very strong Islamic values, the obedience of the Natal Mandailing community in respecting the elderly, as well as decision-making that always involves the Dalihanatolu, such as Hatobangon. Or traditional leaders and religious scholars who are always references in the midst of existing social and cultural life.

The application of religious values in forming family resilience has a very effective impact; religious knowledge has a much more significant impact than aspects of formal education. When someone has adequate religious knowledge, their religious social life will tend to be more maintained and have positive values. "From a young age, children are taught to participate in reciting the MDTA Koran, when we used to recite

the Arabic Koran. "Speaking politely to parents, praying, and fasting is mandatory for us to be a little strict with our children if we want to be safe and have someone to pray for later." Teaching religious values and introducing positive culture is an effort that we can make in building family resilience in an era of disruption like today.

There are several notes that we need to underline when we do not apply religious and cultural values in a family. We often encounter the treatment and incidents of bears in families that do not have religious and cultural values in the family they build, namely: Lack of respect and trust towards partner, domestic violence, lack of Communication Between Couples, my affair has no children, in-laws/other people who intervene, differences in parenting patterns, and economy (Lubis, 2018a; Lubis, 2019b; Enjang & Rustandi, 2022).

The point above can be emphasized by building cultural awareness and applying religious values in a family. The family will gain its spirit and make a positive contribution later to the sustainability of development in society. Besides that, it can also be a relay in completing community development and religion later.

From the data obtained, a high level of education is not a guarantee that there will be family resilience. There are also many cases of divorce committed by people who have an education. In addition to education, there is also the maturity factor in terms of age, which has been one of the causes of divorce. There are those who find their partner cheating on them and not providing support. There are even those who get married only as a savior for their middle status in society and end up in divorce.

Table 2. Background on the age of divorce in the Panyabungan Religious Courts in 2018-2021

Age	Amount	Percentage
20 ynder years	27	1,3%
20-29 years	863	44,6%
30-39 years	682	35,25%
40-49 years	237	12,25%
Over 49 years old	125	6,48%
Amount	1934	100%

Source: Documents of the Religious Court of Mandailing Natal Regency

The data above shows that the divorce rate occurs mostly at young and productive ages, around 20–29 years. With age still unstable, the need

to strengthen religious values is the solution taken to reduce this number. Through the BP4 activities, it shows a maximum effort but has not yet shown satisfactory results. Divorce actions are also still occurring among the community in the Mandailing Natal district.

CONCLUSION

In this era of disruption, effective communication stands as a cornerstone for maintaining a household, especially interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication is essential because it helps control and coordinate all activities among family members. Therefore, it must be cultivated properly. To form a family that is Sakinah, Mawaddah, and Warahmah and resilient in the current era of disruption, it is essential to instill good religious values. This involves not only understanding these values but also implementing them in ways that support one another within the family. Family resilience can be achieved through emotional closeness among family members. It is crucial to foster human character within the family, emphasizing honesty and respect for one another. By paying attention to and fortifying themselves with good religious values, family members can maintain resilience and achieve a family that embodies Sakinah, Mawaddah, and Warahmah.

The implications of this study are: First, with good interpersonal communication and the application of religious values, families will be better able to face the challenges and changes that come in this era of disruption. They will be more solid and resilient in facing various problems. Second, the emotional closeness that is built from effective communication and joint activities will create a harmonious atmosphere in the family. Conflicts can be minimized and resolved better. Third, with the consistent application of religious values, families will be able to achieve their goals of becoming a sakinah (calm), mawaddah (full of love), and rahmah (full of affection) family. Fourth, good communication and understanding of religious values will increase the sense of mutual support and understanding between family members. This will create a positive and constructive environment in the family.

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