



ISLAMIC-BASED MEDIATION FOR STRENGTHENING FAMILY RESILIENCE: A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND MOTHER-IN-LAW CONFLICT

Awaliya Safithri*, Qoidul Khoir**✉, M. Syafiqil Umam***, Mohammad Riski****, Muhammad Ali Zainur Ridho*****

*Institut KH Yazid Karimullah, Indonesia
E-mail: awaliya.s@stisnq.ac.id

**Institut KH Yazid Karimullah, Indonesia
E-mail: qoidul.khoir@stisnq.ac.id

***International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan
E-mail: msyafiqilumam27@gmail.com

****Institut KH Yazid Karimullah, Indonesia
E-mail: mohammad.riski@student.stisnq.ac.id

*****Institut KH Yazid Karimullah, Indonesia
E-mail: m.ali.zainur.r@student.stisnq.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the role of Islamic-based mediation in strengthening family resilience within Muslim communities, particularly in conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. Such conflicts represent a significant social issue that not only affects household harmony but also influences broader community stability. This research aims to analyze mediation practices and formulate a community-oriented mediation model grounded in Islamic family law principles. Using a qualitative multi-site case study approach, the research involved eight Muslim families experiencing in-law conflicts, as well as mediators including religious leaders and institutional actors. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that conflicts are primarily triggered by parental interference, differences in values and parenting practices, and economic tensions. Effective mediation is characterized by the integration of Islamic values such as musyawarah (deliberation), ishlah (reconciliation), and justice; the balancing of power relations; and the establishment of clear agreements regarding roles and communication. These mediation practices

✉ Corresponding author:

Email Address: qoidul.khoir@stisnq.ac.id

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contribute not only to conflict resolution but also to strengthening family resilience in psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. This study proposes an Islamic relational mediation model that positions mediation as a community-based strategy for reinforcing social cohesion and family resilience. The findings highlight the importance of culturally grounded mediation in supporting sustainable community development within Muslim societies.

Keywords: Islamic Mediation; Family Resilience; Community Development; In-Law Conflict; Muslim Families.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran mediasi berbasis nilai-nilai Islam dalam memperkuat ketahanan keluarga dalam masyarakat Muslim, khususnya pada konflik antara menantu perempuan dan ibu mertua. Konflik ini merupakan persoalan sosial yang tidak hanya berdampak pada keharmonisan rumah tangga, tetapi juga memengaruhi stabilitas sosial dalam komunitas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis praktik mediasi serta merumuskan model mediasi berbasis komunitas dalam perspektif hukum keluarga Islam. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus multi-situs yang melibatkan delapan keluarga Muslim yang mengalami konflik menantu–mertua, serta mediator dari unsur tokoh agama dan lembaga terkait. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi dokumen, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konflik dipicu oleh campur tangan orang tua, perbedaan nilai dan pola asuh, serta ketegangan ekonomi. Mediasi yang efektif ditandai dengan integrasi nilai-nilai Islam seperti musyawarah, islah, dan keadilan; pengelolaan relasi kuasa yang lebih seimbang; serta pembentukan kesepakatan yang jelas terkait peran dan pola komunikasi. Praktik mediasi ini tidak hanya menyelesaikan konflik, tetapi juga memperkuat ketahanan keluarga dalam dimensi psikologis, sosial, dan spiritual. Penelitian ini mengusulkan model mediasi relasional Islami sebagai strategi berbasis komunitas dalam memperkuat kohesi sosial dan ketahanan keluarga. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya mediasi yang berakar pada nilai budaya dan agama dalam mendukung pembangunan masyarakat yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Mediasi Islam; Ketahanan Keluarga; Pengembangan Masyarakat; Konflik Menantu–Mertua; Keluarga Muslim.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law is a form of extended family tension that frequently contributes to household disharmony but is rarely documented formally in legal or institutional records. In the Indonesian Muslim family context, such conflicts may significantly weaken family resilience and, in certain cases, escalate into marital breakdown or divorce.¹ At the normative level, Islamic family law strongly emphasizes the importance of harmonious family relations and encourages reconciliation (*ishlah*) and mediation as mechanisms for resolving family disputes. Various regulatory frameworks, including Supreme Court Regulation No. 1 of 2016 concerning mediation procedures and institutional initiatives such as the Marriage Advisory, Guidance, and Preservation Agency (BP4), also promote mediation as a preferred dispute resolution mechanism in family conflicts.² However, in social practice, conflicts within extended family relations particularly between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law—are often addressed informally, sporadically, or even ignored, without a systematic mediation framework grounded in Islamic legal principles.

This situation reveals a critical tension between the normative emphasis on mediation in Islamic family law and its limited conceptual application to extended family conflicts.³ Most mediation mechanisms in Indonesian family law practice are designed primarily for disputes between spouses, while conflicts involving other family actors remain under-theorized. As a result, relational tensions between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law frequently persist in forms such as emotional alienation, communication breakdown, or verbal conflict, all of which may undermine the broader resilience of the family system. These conditions suggest that existing mediation frameworks have not fully addressed the structural dynamics of extended family relationships, particularly those shaped by power asymmetry, patriarchal cultural norms, and intergenerational expectations.⁴

From a broader scholarly perspective, international studies on family conflict highlight that tensions within extended families often arise from overlapping authority structures, generational value differences, and contested roles in childcare or household decision-making.⁵ Research in family sociology and conflict resolution studies indicates that mediation in extended family contexts requires a relational approach that addresses not only interpersonal disagreements but also structural power dynamics and cultural norms that shape family interactions. Scholars of family mediation have also emphasized the importance of restorative dialogue and relational restructuring in resolving conflicts

¹Qori Annisa et al., “Exploring Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law Conflicts in Contemporary Family Structures,” *USRATY: Journal of Islamic Family Law* 2, no. 2 (2024): 175–87.

²M. Isnaini et al., “The Metafunction of Divorce Mediation Regulations in the Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2016 as Stated in the Public Information Text,” in *Economic Sustainability and Social Equality in the Technological Era* (Routledge, 2024), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/oa-edit/10.1201/9781003534495-34/metafunction-divorce-mediation-regulations-supreme-court-regulation-number-1-2016-stated-public-information-text-isnaini-setya-yuwana-sudikan-dianita-indawati-suhartono>.

³Zeeshan Ashraf, “Family Conflict Resolution in Islamic Law: Prophetic Methods and Contemporary Applications,” Available at SSRN 5217675, 2024, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5217675.

⁴Tharindu C. Dodanwala et al., “The Mediating Role of Work–Family Conflict on Role Overload and Job Stress Linkage,” *Built Environment Project and Asset Management* 12, no. 6 (2022): 924–39.

⁵Bob Simpson, *Changing Families: An Ethnographic Approach to Divorce and Separation* (Routledge, 2020), <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781003136033&type=googlepdf>.

involving multiple family actors rather than only dyadic disputes between spouses. Nevertheless, such perspectives have rarely been integrated into studies of Islamic family law or applied to the specific context of daughter-in-law–mother-in-law relationships within Muslim families.

Several previous studies provide important empirical insights but also reveal significant conceptual limitations. Research conducted by Bakir and Hafidz examined the concept of *kafaah* (marital compatibility) as a strategy for strengthening family resilience and reducing parental or in-law interference in children's households. Their findings indicate that incompatibility in values and social expectations may increase the vulnerability of marital relationships to external intervention.⁶ However, this study primarily conceptualizes conflict as a consequence of mismatched marital compatibility and does not develop a mediation-based framework for managing relational tensions once conflicts emerge within extended family structures.

Similarly, Asminatun's research on family harmony among daughters-in-law living with their mothers-in-law demonstrates that emotional maturity and self-adjustment significantly influence relationship quality. The study highlights the importance of psychological factors, particularly emotional regulation and adaptive coping strategies, in maintaining harmonious interactions.⁷ Nevertheless, the analytical focus remains on the individual capacity of the daughter-in-law rather than on systemic mechanisms for conflict management within the broader family structure. Consequently, mediation is not conceptualized as an institutional or relational process capable of restructuring power relations and communication patterns within extended families.

Another study conducted by Rahma explores social conflicts experienced by daughters-in-law living with their in-laws. The research identifies several primary sources of conflict, including parental interference in household affairs, differences in lifestyle and parenting approaches, and the dominance of the mother-in-law within the family hierarchy.⁸ While these findings confirm the structural nature of tension in daughter-in-law–mother-in-law relationships, the proposed conflict resolution strategies remain largely descriptive, focusing on improved communication or personal adaptation without situating these strategies within a structured mediation framework or linking them to the normative principles of Islamic family law.

In contrast, research conducted by Kurniawan and Miaz focuses on the effectiveness of mediation in family disputes within Religious Courts and related institutions. Their findings demonstrate that mediation is formally recognized as a dispute resolution mechanism within Indonesian family law and judicial regulations, yet its implementation often faces practical challenges such as limited participation by disputing parties, procedural constraints, and the heavy workload of judge-mediators.⁹ More importantly, this

⁶Insiyah Abdul Bakir and Maida Hafidz, "Konsep Kafa'ah Sebagai Upaya Membangun Ketahanan Keluarga Dalam Membentengi Campur Tangan Orang Tua/Mertua," *Al'Adalah: Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 2 (2022): 204–32.

⁷Trian Asminatun et al., "Keharmonisan Keluarga Pada Wanita Yang Tinggal Di Rumah Mertua: Bagaimana Peran Kematangan Emosi Dan Penyesuaian Diri?," *INNER: Journal of Psychological Research* 3, no. 3 (2023): 419–26.

⁸Milda Rahmah et al., "Konflik Sosial Menantu Yang Tinggal Serumah Dengan Mertua (Studi Kasus Di Desa Lempang Kecamatan Tanete Riaja Kabupaten Barru)," *Equilibrium Jurnal Pendidikan* 7, no. 2 (2019).

⁹Ahmad Kurniawan and Hasnuldi Miaz, "Peran Mediasi Dalam Penyelesaian Perkara Keluarga Di Pengadilan Agama," *Sakato Law Journal* 3, no. 1 (2025): 13–28.

body of research tends to conceptualize mediation primarily as a procedural step within divorce litigation rather than as a transformative process aimed at strengthening family resilience. Consequently, the role of mediation in addressing conflicts involving extended family members such as daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law remains largely unexplored.

Taken together, these studies highlight three significant conceptual gaps in the existing literature. First, research on daughter-in-law–mother-in-law relationships primarily emphasizes psychological and sociological explanations of interpersonal conflict but lacks a structured mediation perspective. Second, studies on mediation within Islamic family law tend to focus on legal procedures in marital disputes rather than on relational mediation within extended family systems. Third, conceptual discussions of family resilience in Islamic scholarship rarely connect resilience indicators such as emotional stability, social cohesion, and spiritual well-being with mediation processes as mechanisms for restoring family relationships during conflict.

Therefore, the present research seeks to bridge these fragmented bodies of scholarship by integrating three analytical domains: sociological studies of daughter-in-law–mother-in-law conflict, legal studies of mediation within Islamic family law, and conceptual frameworks of family resilience in Muslim societies. By focusing specifically on how mediation is designed and practiced in resolving daughter-in-law–mother-in-law conflicts, this study aims to develop a conceptual model of family mediation oriented toward the reconstruction of family resilience. This approach positions mediation not merely as a procedural tool for dispute settlement but as a relational mechanism that restructures communication patterns, balances power relations, and reinforces the normative values of harmony and justice emphasized in Islamic family law.

Based on this theoretical and empirical gap, the study addresses four main research questions. First, what are the characteristics and underlying dynamics of daughter-in-law–mother-in-law conflicts that influence family resilience in contemporary Indonesian Muslim families? Second, how is family mediation conceptualized and practiced within the framework of Islamic family law when the conflict involves extended family members rather than only spouses? Third, to what extent can mediation conducted by formal mediators such as BP4 officers, religious leaders, and legal authorities, as well as informal mediators within the family enhance family resilience across psychological, social, and relational dimensions? Finally, what conceptual mediation model can be formulated to strengthen family resilience in daughter-in-law–mother-in-law conflicts in a manner consistent with Islamic legal principles and the socio-cultural realities of Muslim families?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on mediation in resolving family conflicts has developed significantly within the broader framework of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Mediation is widely recognized as a cooperative mechanism that prioritizes dialog, mutual understanding, and voluntary agreement between disputing parties outside formal litigation processes. In family disputes, mediation plays an especially important role because the primary objective is not merely legal settlement but also the preservation and restoration of social and emotional relationships among family members.¹⁰ Empirical studies indicate

¹⁰Yaser Alashqar, “The Comparative View: Mediation, Negotiation and Arbitration,” in *Reconciliation, Conflict Transformation, and Peace Studies*, ed. Iyad Muhsen Al-Dajani and Martin Leiner (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-47839-0_7.

that mediation often produces more sustainable outcomes compared to adversarial dispute resolution, particularly when the mediation process incorporates cultural values, social norms, and relational sensitivities present within the family structure.¹¹ These characteristics make mediation particularly relevant for addressing conflicts that involve complex interpersonal relationships within extended families.

To analyze the broader implications of mediation within family conflicts, this study places family resilience theory as its central analytical lens. Family resilience refers to the capacity of a family system to adapt, maintain stability, and recover from internal or external pressures while preserving its core relational functions. In sociological and psychological scholarship, family resilience is commonly understood as involving multiple dimensions, including emotional stability, effective communication, role balance, and social support within the family unit. Within the context of Islamic family life, these dimensions are also closely associated with values such as harmony (*sakinah*), compassion (*mawaddah wa rahmah*), and collective responsibility in maintaining family cohesion. Consequently, mediation can be understood not only as a conflict resolution mechanism but also as a process that potentially strengthens the adaptive capacity of families when relational tensions emerge.¹²

Supporting this central perspective, family systems theory provides an important conceptual framework for understanding how conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law influence the stability of the broader family structure. Family systems theory views the family as an interconnected relational system in which tensions between two members may affect the functioning of the entire family network.¹³ Conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law therefore cannot be understood solely as interpersonal disputes but must also be analyzed in relation to structural dynamics such as authority distribution, role expectations, and generational hierarchies within extended families. Within this framework, mediation serves as an intervention mechanism capable of restoring relational balance by facilitating communication, clarifying roles, and rebuilding trust among family members.

Another relevant supporting perspective is boundary theory, which explains how family conflicts may arise when relational boundaries between family subsystems are unclear or contested.¹⁴ In extended family structures, particularly those shaped by collectivist cultural norms, the boundaries between marital relationships and parental authority often overlap. Such ambiguity may allow excessive intervention by in-laws in the household affairs of married couples, which in turn becomes a source of tension between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. From this perspective, mediation can function as a mechanism for renegotiating relational boundaries and clarifying family roles in a manner that protects both marital autonomy and intergenerational respect.

¹¹Fany Kambu et al., "Restorative Approach in Family Conflict Resolution through ADR Process," *Journal of Law Justice (JLJ)* 3, no. 3 (2025): 250–62.

¹²Nema Widiyanti and Mumu Fahmudin, "Family Guidance for Sakinah: Building Family Harmony Through Islamic Values," *Khazanah Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 3 (2024): 194–200.

¹³Joyce Baptist and Raeann R. Hamon, "Family Systems Theory," in *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methodologies*, ed. Kari Adamsons et al. (Springer International Publishing, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92002-9_14.

¹⁴Famiglini Matilda, "Family System Theory and the Destructive Impact of Family Conflict" (PhD Thesis, 2023), <https://gmwpublic.studenttheses.ub.rug.nl/2775/>.

Within the normative framework of Islamic law, mediation also receives strong legitimacy through the concepts of *sulh* (reconciliation) and *tahkim* (arbitrated mediation). These concepts emphasize peaceful dispute resolution through dialog, fairness, and mutual agreement facilitated by a neutral third party. Islamic family law encourages conflict resolution mechanisms that prioritize social harmony and the preservation of family integrity. Consequently, mediation is not only a procedural tool but also a value-based process rooted in Islamic ethical principles such as justice (*'adl*), mutual consultation (*musyawarah*), and reconciliation (*ishlah*). These principles align closely with the objectives of family resilience by promoting cooperative solutions that maintain relational stability within the family structure.¹⁵

Empirical research on mediation within the Indonesian legal context further demonstrates its practical significance. Studies on mediation in religious courts indicate that mediation can reduce conflict escalation and increase the likelihood of peaceful settlement when mediators are able to create a neutral environment that encourages open communication between disputing parties. However, most of these studies primarily focus on disputes between husbands and wives in divorce proceedings. As a result, mediation has been conceptualized largely as a procedural step in marital litigation rather than as a relational intervention capable of addressing tensions involving extended family members.

This literature review therefore highlights an important conceptual gap. While existing scholarship has examined mediation mechanisms, family resilience, and interpersonal dynamics within extended families, these perspectives are rarely integrated within a unified analytical framework. In particular, the role of mediation in strengthening family resilience during conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law remains insufficiently explored. By positioning family resilience as the central analytical lens and situating mediation, family systems theory, boundary theory, and Islamic legal concepts as supporting frameworks, this study seeks to develop a more coherent conceptual approach for understanding how mediation can reconstruct relational stability within extended Muslim family structures.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a multi-site case study approach to examine the role of mediation in strengthening family resilience in conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research aims to explore the processes, meanings, and relational dynamics that emerge in family conflicts and mediation practices rather than to statistically measure relationships between variables.¹⁶ The multi-site case study design allows the researcher to investigate similar conflict situations across different institutional and social contexts, enabling comparison of mediation practices and their impacts on family resilience in various settings.¹⁷ Through this design, the study captures variations in mediation mechanisms

¹⁵Achmad Alfian Kurniawan, "Mediasi Sebagai Solusi Alternatif Konflik Keluarga Perspektif Hukum Islam dan Hukum Progresif," *Al-Rasikh: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 11, no. 2 (2022): 117-32.

¹⁶Valerija Barada, "Sarah J. Tracy, Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact," *Revija Za Sociologiju* 43, no. 1 (2013): 99-101.

¹⁷S. C. Hunter et al., "Experiences of Using the I-PARIHS Framework: A Co-Designed Case Study of Four Multi-Site Implementation Projects," *BMC Health Services Research* 20, no. 1 (2020): 573, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-05354-8>.

while identifying recurring patterns that characterize the resolution of daughter-in-law-mother-in-law conflicts.

The unit of analysis in this research consists of families experiencing conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law who have undergone or are currently undergoing mediation processes, as well as mediators involved in resolving such conflicts. The study was conducted in the Bondowoso region of East Java, Indonesia, where extended family living arrangements remain common and mediation practices are frequently conducted through both formal and informal institutions. The research sites include the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), the Religious Court, family counselling institutions, and community-based mediation environments involving religious leaders or respected community figures.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on criteria relevant to the research objectives.¹⁸ The participants included daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law who had experienced significant relational conflict, spouses positioned between the two parties, and mediators involved in the mediation process. Mediators consisted of both formal mediators, such as KUA officials, mediator judges in Religious Courts, and family counsellors, as well as informal mediators, including religious leaders and community figures. In total, the study involved eight families experiencing daughter-in-law-mother-in-law conflicts and six mediators, resulting in a diverse range of perspectives on mediation practices. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached, meaning that additional interviews no longer generated new substantive information.

Fieldwork was conducted over a four-month period from May to August 2025. Data were collected through three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis.¹⁹ Semi-structured in-depth interviews constituted the primary data source and were conducted with all participants to explore their experiences of conflict, the escalation process, the mediation stages, and perceived changes in family relationships after mediation. Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, was conducted with the participants' consent, audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Interview questions addressed themes such as the sources of conflict, patterns of communication between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, the roles of mediators, the strategies used during mediation, and the perceived effects of mediation on family cohesion and well-being.

Observation was used to complement interview data by capturing interaction patterns and relational dynamics within family or mediation settings. When access was granted, the researcher conducted non-participant observation during mediation sessions or family interactions to observe communication styles, emotional expressions, and negotiation processes between parties. These observations were systematically documented in field notes.²⁰ In addition, document analysis was conducted to review relevant legal and

¹⁸Steve Campbell et al., "Purposive Sampling: Complex or Simple? Research Case Examples," *Journal of Research in Nursing* 25, no. 8 (2020): 652–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>.

¹⁹Diana Romero et al., "Methodologic Approach to Sampling and Field-Based Data Collection for a Large-Scale in-Depth Interview Study: The Social Position and Family Formation (SPAFF) Project," *PloS One* 14, no. 1 (2019): e0210776.

²⁰Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen, "Observations and Field Notes: Recording Lived Experiences," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* (Routledge, 2019), <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/chapters/edit/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780367824471-29&type=chapterpdf>.

institutional documents, including mediation guidelines within the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), Religious Court mediation procedures, and other regulatory frameworks related to mediation in Islamic family law.

Data analysis followed an interactive thematic analysis process involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.²¹ First, during the data reduction stage, interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were carefully reviewed to identify segments relevant to the research focus. These segments were then coded using open coding to identify key categories related to conflict sources, mediation processes, relational dynamics, and indicators of family resilience. In the second stage, axial coding was applied to connect related categories and identify broader thematic patterns such as power relations between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, mediation strategies employed by mediators, and changes in family interaction after mediation. The data were then organized into thematic narratives and analytical matrices that facilitated comparison across cases.

The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying findings by identifying recurring patterns across the cases and developing a conceptual understanding of how mediation contributes to strengthening family resilience in extended family conflicts. To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, the study employed several verification strategies, including source triangulation (comparing accounts from daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law, spouses, and mediators), method triangulation (interviews, observations, and document analysis), and member checking, in which several participants were invited to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpreted findings.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent before participating in interviews or observations. The researcher explained the research objectives, procedures, and potential implications of the study to ensure voluntary participation. To protect confidentiality, the identities of participants were anonymized through the use of initials or pseudonyms. Particular care was also taken to maintain sensitivity to the psychological and emotional conditions of participants, given that family conflict represents a sensitive and potentially distressing topic. By applying rigorous methodological procedures and ethical safeguards, this study aims to provide a credible and in-depth understanding of the role of mediation in strengthening family resilience within daughter-in-law–mother-in-law conflicts in Muslim families.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings show that conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law in the families studied generally revolve around three central issues: interference by the mother-in-law in household decision-making, differences in parenting practices and religious values, and economic tensions related to perceived inequality in financial contributions. Among the eight families examined as primary cases, six lived in the same household as their in-laws, while two lived in separate houses within a distance of less than 100 meters. Families living together reported conflicts occurring approximately two to three times per month, while families living separately experienced less frequent conflict but higher escalation when disagreements occurred.

²¹Brent Wolff et al., “Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data,” *The CDC Field Epidemiology Manual*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2019, 213–28.

Interview data indicate that the perceived loss of autonomy is a key source of emotional tension for daughters-in-law. One participant described that decisions regarding child-rearing were expected to pass through the approval of her mother-in-law, creating the perception that her authority as a mother was diminished. Conversely, several mothers-in-law expressed concerns that their advice was ignored, interpreting this as disrespect for parental experience. Observational data further reveal indirect communication patterns such as prolonged silence, avoidance of shared spaces, and tense facial expressions during daily interactions. These patterns reflect a decline in emotional warmth and communication quality, which are commonly associated with weakening family resilience.

Field findings also demonstrate that mediation interventions emerged in several forms, including informal mediation within the family and formal mediation facilitated by institutions such as religious leaders, the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), or the Religious Court. In five cases, mediation was initially conducted informally, most commonly with the husband acting as an intermediary between his mother and his wife. In two cases, the father-in-law assumed a mediating role by organizing a family deliberation meeting in which each party was given an opportunity to express grievances. Observations of one such meeting revealed a mediation structure that implicitly followed several stages: clarification of the meeting's purpose, sequential expression of complaints, moral reflection grounded in religious teachings, and finally the formulation of a mutual commitment to reduce interference and improve communication. This pattern reflects the practical application of the Islamic principles of *ishlah* (reconciliation) and *musyawarah* (deliberation) within family conflict resolution.²²

However, mediation outcomes varied significantly across the cases. Six of the eight families experienced substantial improvement in family resilience, while two families demonstrated only temporary conflict reduction without meaningful relational change. This variation reveals important differences in the structure and implementation of mediation processes. In cases where mediation successfully strengthened family resilience, several common characteristics were observed. First, mediators addressed the underlying power imbalance between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law by clarifying relational roles and boundaries. Second, mediation produced concrete agreements, such as limiting parental intervention in household decisions or establishing separate living arrangements for a certain period. Third, mediators actively incorporated Islamic ethical principles, including justice (*'adl*), mutual respect, and the protection of family dignity (*hifz al-'irdh*), which helped both parties reinterpret the conflict as a shared moral responsibility rather than a personal rivalry²³. As a result, these families reported measurable improvements in several resilience indicators: the frequency of conflict decreased significantly, communication became more open, and family members reported feeling more emotionally secure.

For example, follow-up interviews with daughters-in-law indicated that they began to feel more respected once clear agreements were established regarding parenting decisions and household authority. Similarly, several mothers-in-law acknowledged that mediation helped them understand the importance of allowing the younger couple greater autonomy

²²Zulkarnaini Umar et al., *Mediation as an Alternative for Resolving Family Conflicts in the View of Progressiven Law and Islamic Law*, 2024, <https://repository.uir.ac.id/id/eprint/24202>.

²³Shouket Allie, *Exploring the Concept of Conciliation (Sulh) as a Method of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Islamic Law*, 2020, <https://uwcscholar.uwc.ac.za/items/e90d2f30-5cac-41ed-aadc-0d63526e01d5>.

in managing their household. These findings align with Froma Walsh's family resilience framework, which emphasizes shared belief systems, flexible organizational structures, and open communication as core components of resilient families. In contrast, mediation outcomes were less successful in the two cases where mediation was conducted primarily as a formal procedural step rather than a relational intervention. In these cases, mediation focused on temporarily stopping the dispute without addressing deeper relational tensions or negotiating clear role boundaries. As a result, patterns of dominance by the mother-in-law and emotional withdrawal by the daughter-in-law persisted even after the mediation session. One participant explained that while the mediator encouraged both parties to "remain patient," no concrete agreement was reached regarding parenting authority or living arrangements. Consequently, the same issues resurfaced within a short period of time.

These contrasting outcomes highlight several key factors that influence the success or failure of mediation in strengthening family resilience. Successful mediation tends to occur when mediators actively manage relational power dynamics, encourage open communication, and facilitate practical agreements that clarify boundaries between marital and parental roles. In contrast, mediation becomes ineffective when it is limited to symbolic reconciliation without addressing structural issues such as authority distribution, communication patterns, and living arrangements. From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce insights from family systems theory and boundary theory, which emphasize that healthy family functioning depends on the existence of clear relational boundaries between subsystems such as spouses and parents. When these boundaries are blurred, excessive parental involvement may create enmeshment that undermines marital autonomy. Mediation therefore plays a crucial role in redefining these boundaries while maintaining respect for intergenerational relationships.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of the husband's role as a relational gatekeeper within the family system. When husbands acted as fair intermediaries who balanced respect for parents with support for their spouses, family resilience tended to improve significantly. This role corresponds with the concept of *qawwam* in Islamic family law, which positions the husband not only as a provider but also as a protector responsible for maintaining harmony and justice within the family structure.²⁴ Building on these empirical insights, this study proposes a conceptual framework that can be described as an Islamic Relational Mediation Model for Extended Family Conflict. This model conceptualizes mediation not merely as a dispute resolution procedure but as a relational process consisting of three interconnected components.

First, mediation must facilitate relational clarification, in which roles, expectations, and authority boundaries between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law are openly negotiated. Second, mediation must promote ethical reframing, where Islamic values such as justice, compassion, and family dignity are used to reinterpret conflict as a shared moral responsibility rather than a competition for authority. Third, mediation must produce practical restructuring, including concrete agreements regarding communication patterns, role distribution, and living arrangements. When these three components operate together, mediation can transform family conflict into a constructive process that strengthens the adaptive capacity of the family system. In this sense, mediation functions not only as a

²⁴Omaima Abou-Bakr, "Islam and The Sakinah Family: The Urgency of Realizing an Equitable Family Law," *Raden Intan: Proceedings on Family and Humanity* 1, no. 1 (2024): 448-57.

conflict management tool but also as a mechanism for rebuilding the belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes that constitute the foundation of family resilience.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that mediation designed as a relational and value-based intervention has the potential to transform daughter-in-law–mother-in-law conflicts into opportunities for strengthening family resilience. The empirical evidence from eight family cases suggests that mediation is most effective when it integrates Islamic family law principles, actively manages power dynamics, and produces clear agreements regarding relational boundaries.²⁵ Under these conditions, indicators of family resilience including communication quality, emotional security, and relational stability—show significant improvement across physical, social, and psychological dimensions.

Table 1. Analytical Synthesis of Mediation Mechanisms and Family Resilience Outcomes.

Analytical Dimension	Empirical Evidence from Cases	Mediating Mechanism	Power and Role Boundary Dynamics	Family Resilience Outcome	Theoretical Interpretation
Conflict Triggers	Interference of mothers-in-law in parenting and household decisions; differences in parenting values; perceived economic unfairness.	Initial informal discussion or complaint articulation.	Mothers-in-law tend to dominate decision making, reducing daughters-in-law’s perceived autonomy.	Increased emotional tension and communication breakdown.	Consistent with Family Systems Theory, where role ambiguity and value differences create systemic tension.
Communication Patterns	Silent treatment, avoidance of shared spaces, indirect communication, tense expressions.	Mediation encourages structured dialog and complaint articulation.	Power asymmetry becomes visible during mediated conversations.	Gradual restoration of dialog and emotional openness.	Supports Family Resilience Theory, emphasizing open communication as a resilience indicator.
Forms of Mediation	Informal mediation by husbands or fathers-in-law; formal mediation by religious leaders, KUA officers, or Religious Court mediators.	Mediation stages: clarification of issues, dialog facilitation, religious reflection, and formulation of agreements.	Mediators attempt to rebalance relational authority between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.	Improved understanding of roles and responsibilities.	Reflects ADR principles integrated with Islamic concepts of <i>sulh</i> and <i>musyawarah</i> .
Role Boundary Negotiation	Agreements regarding parenting authority,	Negotiated role clarification during	Clearer boundaries between marital	Reduced interference and more balanced	Reinforces Boundary Theory, which stresses the

²⁵Samia Bano and Lisa Webley, “Family Mediators and Family Mediation: When Norms Collide,” *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2023): 162–77.

	communication rules, and sometimes temporary separate living arrangements.	mediation sessions.	autonomy and parental involvement.	family relationships.	importance of clear family subsystem boundaries.
Mediation Outcomes	6 of 8 families experienced sustained improvement; 2 experienced only temporary conflict reduction.	Effective mediation produced concrete agreements and follow-up commitments.	Successful cases managed power dynamics; unsuccessful cases left dominance patterns unchanged.	Successful cases: reduced conflict frequency, improved communication, stronger emotional security.	Aligns with Froma Walsh's Family Resilience Model: shared values, flexible structures, and open communication strengthen resilience.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law in Muslim families are primarily triggered by excessive parental interference in household affairs, differences in values and parenting styles, and tensions over financial support and role division. These dynamics blur role boundaries and reinforce unequal power relations within extended family structures, often leading to communication breakdowns, psychological stress, and marital instability that weaken overall family resilience. The findings highlight that mediation plays a critical role in transforming such conflicts into opportunities for strengthening family relationships.

When mediation integrates the principles of Islamic family law—consultation (*shūrā*), reconciliation (*ṣulḥ*), justice, and the protection of family dignity—and results in clear agreements on role boundaries, communication patterns, and living arrangements, family resilience tends to improve significantly. Theoretically, this study links mediation mechanisms, power relations, and boundary negotiation to the development of family resilience in Muslim extended families. Practically, it underscores the importance of structured and culturally grounded mediation practices. However, the study is limited to a specific socio-cultural context; therefore, future research should expand comparative and mixed-method approaches to examine the long-term effectiveness of mediation across diverse family settings.

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