

Household Conflict Mediation in Contemporary Islamic Family Law at KUA Medan Tembung, Indonesia

Muhammad Arbi^{1*}, Bagus Ramadi²

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. E-mail: muhammad201221001@uinsu.ac.id

² Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. E-mail: bagusramadi@uinsu.ac.id

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the factors contributing to household conflicts, conflict resolution models from the perspective of Islamic family law, and mediation practices implemented at the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama/KUA) of Medan Tembung. This qualitative study employs an empirical legal approach using case study and conceptual approaches. Primary data were obtained through interviews with the Head of KUA Medan Tembung, religious counselors, and religious leaders, supplemented by supporting interviews at KUA Medan Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan. Secondary data were obtained from relevant literature and scholarly articles. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings indicate that economic factors are the primary cause of household conflicts, followed by infidelity, imbalanced lifestyles, and low levels of communication and religious education among couples. Conflict resolution is conducted through mediation based on the principle of *islah*, emphasizing deliberation and religious guidance. The mediation model at KUA Medan Tembung has distinctive characteristics, including separate mediation sessions for the parties and home visits as a flexible approach adapted to community conditions. The mediation success rate is estimated at approximately 50%. The study concludes that KUA plays a strategic role in preventing divorce and strengthening family resilience through systematic, flexible, and context-sensitive mediation. Academically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic family law scholarship by demonstrating an *islah*-based mediation model that integrates religious guidance with adaptive services responsive to community needs.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Family Resilience, Household Conflict, Islamic Mediation, Religious Guidance

1. Introduction

Household conflict is an important issue in contemporary family life because unresolved marital disputes can weaken family relationships and increase the risk of separation and divorce.¹ Economic pressure, infidelity, differences in lifestyle,² poor communication, and limited religious understanding can create persistent tensions between spouses.³ These problems are particularly significant in communities where families face financial constraints and limited access to professional counseling services.⁴ In this context, the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama/KUA) has an important social function because it is not only responsible for marriage administration but also provides religious guidance and family counseling.⁵ hKUA institutions can therefore become an accessible first point of assistance for couples

¹ Rosdalina Bukido et al., "The Resilience of Blind Families in Building a Sakinah Family: Adaptive Strategies and the Role of Islamic Values," *Nurani* 25, no. 2 (2025): 399–425, <https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v25i2.27276>.

² Erie Hariyanto et al., "Sakinah Family Empowerment by Optimizing the Role of BP4 and Parents Mental Revolution Perspective," *Samarah* 5, no. 2 (2021): 619–47, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v5i2.10965>.

³ Andi Yaqub, Iswandi, and Jabal Nur, "Reconstruction of the Sakinah Family Criteria During the Covid-19 Period," *Al-Ahkam* 31, no. 1 (2021): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2021.31.1.7807>.

⁴ Moh. Ghaffar Amrullah and Malik Ibrahim, "Sakinah Family Establishment in the Modern Era from the Perspectives of Hamka and Quraish Shihab," *Al-Mazaahib* 9, no. 2 (2021): 185–206, <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-mazaahib.v9i2.2388>.

⁵ Fariba Alaem et al., "Investigating the Effect of Group Counseling on Family Stress and Anxiety of Primiparous Mothers During Delivery," *BioPsychoSocial Medicine* 13, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13030-019-0148-1>.

experiencing marital difficulties.⁶ Mediation is particularly relevant because it provides opportunities for spouses to communicate,⁷ identify sources of disagreement, and seek reconciliation without immediately pursuing divorce.⁸ From the perspective of Islamic family law,⁹ reconciliation is closely associated with the principle of *islah*,¹⁰ which emphasizes restoring harmonious relationships through deliberation and constructive intervention.¹¹ Examining how this principle is implemented in local KUA services is therefore important for understanding community-based approaches to preventing marital dissolution.¹²

Previous studies have examined household conflict and mediation from various perspectives, including Islamic family law, family counseling, communication, and institutional dispute resolution. Much of the literature emphasizes the importance of mediation in reducing marital tensions and encouraging reconciliation between spouses.¹³ Other studies have focused on the causes of household conflict, particularly economic difficulties, infidelity, communication problems, and differences in religious understanding. Research concerning KUA institutions has also highlighted their role in premarital education, religious counseling, and divorce prevention.¹⁴ However, several gaps remain. Existing studies tend to discuss mediation primarily as a general normative mechanism without sufficiently examining how mediation is actually practiced by KUA personnel in specific communities. Limited attention has also been given to the flexibility of mediation procedures,¹⁵ particularly the use of separate sessions and home visits for couples who face difficulties attending institutional mediation.¹⁶ Furthermore, comparative evidence concerning mediation practices across neighboring KUA institutions remains limited. These gaps indicate the need for empirical research that connects Islamic family law principles with the concrete practices of community-based mediation.¹⁷ A more detailed examination can reveal how institutional actors adapt mediation strategies to the social conditions and needs of families.

The limitations of previous research provide a basis for positioning this study within empirical Islamic family law scholarship. Rather than treating *islah* only as a normative concept, this study examines how reconciliation is operationalized through mediation practices at KUA Medan Tembung. The study also considers the perspectives of religious counselors, institutional leaders, and religious figures to identify how household conflicts are understood and addressed in practice.¹⁸ The comparison with KUA Medan

⁶ Mariel Anson and Noorfarah Merali, "Latino Immigrant Parents' Experiences Raising Young Children in the Absence of Extended Family Networks in Canada: Implications for Counselling," *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2018): 408–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2017.1324760>.

⁷ Naskur Bilalu, Wira Purwadi, and Syahrul Mubarak Subaitan, "The Role of Mastūra Da'wah in Forming A Sakinah Family in the Jama'ah Tabligh of Manado City," *Al-Adalah* 19, no. 2 (2022): 401–18, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v19i2.11268>.

⁸ Tanza Dona Pertiwi et al., "Building Family Financial Well-Being: An Analysis of the Role of Sakinah Finance on Behaviour, Financial Literacy, and Financial Experience in Coastal and Urban Areas in Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic Finance and Sustainable Development* 17, no. 2 (2025): 84–106, <https://doi.org/10.55188/ijifsd.v17i2.1103>.

⁹ Erica Tobe, Barbara D Ames, and Marsha Carolan, "Looking Back: The Experiences of Four Midwest Families After Receiving Foreclosure Counseling Services," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 37, no. 3 (2016): 383–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-016-9495-2>.

¹⁰ Nicole Noble and Loretta Bradley, "Counseling Twins: A Family Counseling Issue," *Family Journal* 27, no. 3 (2019): 325–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480719852989>.

¹¹ Putri Apria Ningish, Murniati Mukhlisin, and Jumni Nelli, *Family Financial Management in Realizing Sakinah Family, Wealth Management and Investment in Islamic Settings: Opportunities and Challenges* (Springer Nature, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-3686-9_10.

¹² Lucy Blake, Becca Bland, and Susan Imrie, "The Counseling Experiences of Individuals Who Are Estranged From a Family Member," *Family Relations* 69, no. 4 (2020): 820–31, <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12385>.

¹³ Miftahus Sholehudin, "The Contextualization of The Sakinah Family Concept: The Struggle for Family Law Ideas in The Interpretation of The Qur'an; [Kontekstualisasi Konsep Keluarga Sakinah: Pergulatan Pemikiran Hukum Keluarga Dalam Tafsir Salaf]," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 12, no. 2 (2020): 201–13, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v12i2.8790>.

¹⁴ Imron Rosyadi et al., "Realizing Post-Disaster Sakinah Families: Analysis of the Resilience of Semeru Eruption Survivors' Families at the Relocation Sites from the Maqāsid Al-Sharī'ah Perspective," *El-Usrah* 7, no. 2 (2024): 878–902, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i2.22560>.

¹⁵ Hawa' Hidayatul Hikmiyah, "Efforts to Form Sakinah Families for User Clients Drug Rehabilitation Houses in East Java," *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 2, no. 2 (2023): 137–46, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17388649>.

¹⁶ Iim Fahimah and Zaenal, "Maslahah and Sakinah Family Review of Marriage Through Marriage Dispensation in Central Lampung Regency," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani* 9, no. 1 (2022): 66–80, <https://doi.org/10.29300/mzn.v9i1.2860>.

¹⁷ Y Yuzaidi et al., "Reconstructing the Concept of Sakinah Family in the Qur'an: A Maqāsidī Tafsir Analysis of Contemporary Muslim Family Dynamics," *Mawaddah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 3, no. 2 (2025): 730–58, <https://doi.org/10.52496/mjhki.v3i2.114>.

¹⁸ Berlia Sukmawati and Mu'Ammar Khadafi, "Family Achievements That Are Sakinah, Mawaddah, Warahmah," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 1, no. 2 (2022): 243–56, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v1i2.6212>.

Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan provides additional contextual evidence for identifying similarities and differences in the causes of household conflict and approaches to mediation. Particular attention is given to the use of separate mediation sessions and home visits,¹⁹ which represent adaptive forms of service delivery. This positioning is important because mediation effectiveness cannot be understood solely from formal procedures; it must also be examined through interpersonal communication, religious guidance, institutional flexibility, and community circumstances.²⁰ By combining an empirical legal perspective with Islamic family law concepts, the study seeks to explain the relationship between normative principles and institutional practices. The research consequently moves beyond general discussions of mediation by investigating how locally adapted practices contribute to reconciliation and family resilience.

This study addresses the question of how household conflicts are caused and resolved through mediation at KUA Medan Tembung and how its mediation practices reflect the principles of Islamic family law. It specifically examines the dominant factors underlying household conflicts, the mechanisms used by KUA personnel to facilitate reconciliation, and the distinctive characteristics of mediation practices compared with KUA Medan Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan. The study argues that effective household mediation requires more than formal dispute resolution procedures because family conflicts are embedded in economic, relational, communicative, and religious circumstances. Accordingly, mediation based on *islah*, deliberation, religious guidance, and flexible service delivery may provide a more responsive mechanism for preventing divorce and strengthening family resilience. The study further argues that institutional adaptability, including separate mediation sessions and home visits, can improve access to mediation for couples experiencing practical or social barriers. Through these arguments, the research aims to contribute empirical evidence to Islamic family law scholarship concerning the role of KUA in household conflict resolution. It also seeks to provide a basis for strengthening community-based mediation practices and developing more contextual, accessible, and sustainable family counseling services.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative method within an empirical legal research framework to examine the practice of resolving household conflicts through mediation at the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama/KUA) of Medan Tembung. The study applied a case approach to examine the actual implementation of household conflict mediation at KUA Medan Tembung and a conceptual approach to analyze the relevant concepts of mediation and conflict resolution in Islamic family law. The primary data consisted of information obtained from five purposively selected informants who were considered to have direct knowledge and relevant experience concerning household conflict resolution. The informants comprised Yusman Kaya Siregar, Head of KUA Medan Tembung; Dahrin, a religious counselor at KUA Medan Tembung; Syaiful Akhyar, a religious counselor at KUA Medan Denai; Amin, a religious counselor at KUA Medan Perjuangan; and Sahmal Nasution, a religious leader with knowledge and experience concerning household conflict resolution. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly articles, journals, books, and other relevant literature addressing mediation, Islamic family law, and household conflict resolution.

Data were collected through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted at KUA Medan Tembung to examine the setting, procedures, interactions, and practical implementation of mediation in household conflict cases. Interviews were conducted by the researchers with the five selected informants using guiding questions concerning the causes of household conflict, mediation procedures, resolution strategies, religious guidance, and the outcomes of mediation. Interviews were recorded with the informants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to facilitate systematic analysis. Documentation was used to complement observational and interview data, particularly through relevant institutional records and interview recordings. The collected data were

¹⁹ Faizal and Khairullah, "Community Empowerment in Strengthening the Sakinah Family: The Strategic Role of KUA in Bandar Lampung City, Indonesia," *Samarah* 9, no. 2 (2025): 1264–83, <https://doi.org/10.22373/xhfje51>.

²⁰ Faizal and Khairullah.

analyzed qualitatively using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña analytical framework, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, organizing, and simplifying information relevant to the research objectives. The condensed data were then displayed through systematic descriptive narratives and thematic categorization to identify recurring patterns in mediation practices. Conclusions were developed through continuous interpretation and verification by comparing information across observations, interviews, and documentation. Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from informants occupying different institutional and social positions, thereby reducing the possibility of relying on a single perspective.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Multidimensional Causes of Household Conflict

Household conflicts at KUA Medan Tembung are primarily associated with economic difficulties that affect the ability of couples to meet household needs and manage financial responsibilities. Interviews with the Head of KUA, religious counselors, and religious figures indicate that financial problems frequently become the initial source of disagreement between spouses. Limited income, increasing household expenses, and differences in financial priorities can create tension when couples lack effective mechanisms for discussing and managing economic responsibilities. Economic difficulties may also become interconnected with other sources of conflict, particularly when one spouse considers the financial contribution of the other insufficient. The data from KUA Medan Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan indicate a similar pattern, with economic problems also identified as a major factor contributing to household disputes. This consistency across the three KUA locations suggests that household financial conditions constitute an important contextual factor in marital stability. Nevertheless, economic problems do not independently explain every conflict. Their effects are often intensified by interpersonal and behavioral factors that influence how couples respond to financial pressure and negotiate household responsibilities.

Infidelity represents another important manifestation of household conflict identified through the interviews. The presence of an affair can undermine trust, create emotional distance, and make communication between spouses increasingly difficult. In several cases, conflict is intensified when spouses are unable to restore trust after the disclosure of infidelity. Differences in lifestyle also contribute to disputes, particularly when couples have different expectations regarding consumption, social activities, household priorities, or standards of living. These differences can become more problematic when accompanied by economic limitations because one spouse may perceive the other's lifestyle as excessive or inappropriate. Poor communication further increases the intensity of these conflicts. Couples who have difficulty expressing dissatisfaction, negotiating differences, or listening to each other may allow relatively minor disagreements to develop into persistent disputes. Limited religious understanding and insufficient family education also influence the way spouses respond to conflict. Without adequate understanding of marital responsibilities, mutual respect, patience, and reconciliation, couples may experience greater difficulty managing disagreements constructively.

The interaction of these factors demonstrates that household conflict at KUA Medan Tembung takes multiple forms rather than emerging from a single source. Financial pressure may trigger disagreement, while infidelity, lifestyle differences, communication problems, and limited religious understanding can intensify or prolong the dispute.²¹ The consequences include emotional tension,²² deterioration of

²¹ Ahmad Fauzan and Hadi Amroni, "The Concept of Sakinah Family in the Contemporary Muslim Generation," *Al-Adalah* 17, no. 1 (2020): 51–70, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v17i1.6458>.

²² Nastangin and Muhammad Chairul Huda, "The Role of Career Women in Creating a Sakinah Family: From Mubādalāh (Mutuality) Perspective," *Al-Adalah* 19, no. 1 (2022): 123–40, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v19i1.11579>.

communication, reduced mutual trust,²³ and increasing consideration of separation or divorce.²⁴ These circumstances demonstrate the importance of identifying the underlying causes before mediation begins. Religious counselors and KUA officials therefore need to understand whether a dispute is primarily economic, relational, behavioral, or related to religious understanding. Such identification allows the mediation process to address the specific circumstances of each couple rather than applying a uniform approach. The comparative evidence from Medan Denai and Medan Perjuangan further indicates that although the dominant economic factor is shared across locations, the combination and intensity of secondary factors vary between families. Household conflict should consequently be approached as a multidimensional social and family-law issue requiring individualized intervention.

3.2. Adaptive *Islah* Mediation for Household Conflict Resolution

Mediation at KUA Medan Tembung is conducted through a persuasive approach that emphasizes reconciliation and the preservation of marital relationships. The process is primarily facilitated by the Head of KUA and religious counselors, who encourage spouses to communicate their concerns and consider possible solutions through deliberation. The principle of *islah* provides an important religious foundation for the process by directing the parties toward reconciliation rather than immediately pursuing separation. Mediation may begin with communication between spouses and can involve family members or other trusted parties when their participation is considered necessary. The mediators provide religious guidance concerning marital responsibilities, mutual respect, patience, and the importance of maintaining family relationships.²⁵ The approach is therefore not limited to resolving the immediate dispute but also seeks to strengthen the couple's understanding of their responsibilities within marriage. This model demonstrates that KUA mediation combines institutional intervention with religious counseling and interpersonal communication.²⁶ The process is consequently positioned as a preventive mechanism intended to reduce the possibility that household disagreements will develop into divorce.²⁷

KUA Medan Tembung also demonstrates institutional flexibility through separate mediation sessions and home visits. Separate sessions allow mediators to communicate with spouses individually, particularly when direct communication between the parties has become difficult or emotionally sensitive. This arrangement provides each spouse with an opportunity to explain personal concerns without immediate confrontation. The information obtained individually can subsequently assist the mediator in identifying the central issues and determining an appropriate reconciliation strategy. Home visits represent another adaptive practice for couples who experience difficulties attending mediation at the KUA office. Through direct visits to the couple's residence, mediators can provide services in an environment that may be more accessible and comfortable for the parties. These practices distinguish KUA Medan Tembung from the comparison locations, where mediation generally follows more conventional institutional arrangements. The flexibility observed at Medan Tembung demonstrates that mediation procedures can be adjusted according to the social, personal, and practical circumstances of couples while retaining the fundamental principles of Islamic family law.

The institutional implications of this mediation pattern are significant for family resilience and divorce prevention. The estimated success rate of approximately 50% indicates that mediation can provide a meaningful opportunity for couples to restore communication and reconsider separation. However, the

²³ Ali Maskur et al., "Strategies for Choosing Investments in Urban Family Financial Management towards of a Sakinah Family in Semarang City," *Jurnal Pengabdian Hukum Indonesia* 8, no. 2 (2025): 659–72, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jphi.v8i2.20627>.

²⁴ Hasri Harun et al., "The Development of Sakinah Family Framework Based on ICT Technology: A Community Survey in Selangor," *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research* 26, no. 2 (2021): 347–59, <https://doi.org/10.33102/jfatwa.vol26no2.420>.

²⁵ Susan F Branco, JaeRan Kim, and Grace Newton, "The Adoptee Consciousness Model: Integration with Family Counseling Theory and Practice," *Family Journal* 33, no. 2 (2025): 230–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807241290244>.

²⁶ Corrine R Sackett, Alyssa M Jenkins, and Laura E Gambrel, "Photovoice as Counseling Intervention and Research Method: One Family's Experience of Barriers to Implementing Mindfulness Skills," *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation* 14, no. 2 (2023): 89–107, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21501378.2023.2206952>.

²⁷ Muqi Guo et al., "The Effect of Family Planning Counseling on Incident Pregnancy in Nepal," *Studies in Family Planning* 53, no. 2 (2022): 315–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sifp.12197>.

proportion also demonstrates that mediation does not guarantee reconciliation in every case.²⁸ Its effectiveness depends on the willingness of spouses to participate, the severity of the conflict,²⁹ the ability of mediators to identify underlying problems,³⁰ and the availability of continued assistance after mediation. The use of separate sessions and home visits expands access to mediation and allows KUA services to respond to circumstances that may prevent couples from participating in conventional office-based procedures.³¹ These practices consequently strengthen the position of KUA as a family guidance institution rather than merely an administrative marriage institution. Sustainable effectiveness, however, requires better case documentation, systematic monitoring,³² and post-mediation follow-up. Strengthening these components would enable KUA to evaluate mediation outcomes more accurately and develop services that are more responsive to the changing needs of families.

3.3. Islah-Based Mediation for Strengthening Family Resilience

Household conflict at KUA Medan Tembung is shaped mainly by economic difficulties, followed by infidelity, lifestyle differences, poor communication, and limited religious understanding. Economic pressure appears consistently across KUA Medan Tembung, Medan Denai, and Medan Perjuangan, although the combination of secondary factors varies among families. The mediation process responds to these conditions through *islah*-based reconciliation, deliberation, religious guidance, and persuasive communication. Two practices distinguish KUA Medan Tembung: separate mediation sessions and home visits for couples who experience difficulties attending the office. These practices demonstrate that household mediation is not limited to a formal meeting between two spouses and a mediator. Instead, it involves identifying the causes of conflict, understanding the circumstances of each party, and selecting an intervention that corresponds to the specific situation. The approximately 50% estimated success rate further indicates that mediation has preventive potential while remaining subject to the willingness and circumstances of the parties.³³ Collectively, these data position KUA as an important community-based institution for family counseling, reconciliation, and divorce prevention within the framework of Islamic family law.³⁴

The prominence of economic problems can be explained by their direct relationship with household stability and marital interaction.³⁵ Financial limitations may create pressure over daily necessities,³⁶ division of responsibilities, and expectations concerning the contribution of each spouse. When couples lack effective communication,³⁷ financial disagreements can develop into accusations,³⁸ resentment, and

²⁸ Marianne El-Khoury et al., "Counseling Women and Couples on Family Planning: A Randomized Study in Jordan," *Studies in Family Planning* 47, no. 3 (2016): 222–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sifp.69>.

²⁹ Kathy Lee, Jamie English, and Venieca Kusek, "Supporting Individuals and Families Impacted by Dementia in Counseling: Case Report," *Journal of Patient Experience* 9 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/23743735211069826>.

³⁰ Patricia Mawusi Amos et al., "Challenges and Strengths of Ghanaian Families in Contemporary Society: A Counselling Perspective," *Family Journal*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807251348213>.

³¹ Sarah McDonald et al., "Resourcing Their Own Aspirations: First-In-Family Young People and DIY Career Counselling," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 72, no. 2 (2024): 235–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2023.2279571>.

³² Manal Othman Al-Smadi, Suhaila Mahmoud Banat, and Wafa' Younes Sarhan, "Family Climate and Its Relationship to Psychological Resilience Among Counseling Students in Jordan," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 29, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2024.2331819>.

³³ Matthew S Mutchler, "Family Counseling With High-Conflict Separated Parents: Challenges and Strategies," *Family Journal* 25, no. 4 (2017): 368–75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480717731346>.

³⁴ Amy E Williams, Olivia L Weinzatl, and B L Varga, "Examination of Family Counseling Coursework and Scope of Practice for Professional Mental Health Counselors," *Family Journal* 29, no. 1 (2021): 10–16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480720978536>.

³⁵ Elahe Arezi, Azam Maleki, and Elham Jafari, "Investigating the Influence of Family-Oriented Counselling on Breastfeeding Continuity in Mothers Experiencing Distractions: A Randomized Controlled Trial," *Heliyon* 10, no. 9 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e30687>.

³⁶ Anselm U Anibueze et al., "Impact of Counselling Visual Multimedia on the Use of Family Planning Methods among Displaced Nigerian Families," *Health Promotion International* 37, no. 3 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daac060>.

³⁷ Luciana E Hebert et al., "Variation in Pregnancy Options Counseling and Referrals, And Reported Proximity to Abortion Services, Among Publicly Funded Family Planning Facilities," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 48, no. 2 (2016): 65–71, <https://doi.org/10.1363/48e8816>.

³⁸ Chloe Lancaster, Elin Ovrebo, and Stephanie Zuckerman, "Adoption Counselors' Perspectives of Counseling Postadoptive Families," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 95, no. 4 (2017): 412–22, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12156>.

repeated disputes.³⁹ Infidelity can further weaken the relationship by damaging trust,⁴⁰ while lifestyle differences may create competing expectations regarding household priorities.⁴¹ Limited religious understanding can intensify these conditions when couples lack sufficient knowledge concerning mutual obligations,⁴² ethical conduct,⁴³ patience,⁴⁴ and reconciliation in marriage.⁴⁵ The interaction between these factors explains why household disputes cannot be addressed effectively through a single intervention. Mediation must consider both the visible dispute and the circumstances that sustain it. The *islah* approach provides a relevant framework because it encourages reconciliation while allowing mediators to explore the causes of disagreement.⁴⁶ Religious guidance can therefore complement communication-based intervention by helping couples reconsider their responsibilities and develop a more constructive understanding of marital relationships.⁴⁷

The consequences of these circumstances extend beyond temporary disagreement and can affect communication, emotional attachment, mutual trust, and the continuity of marriage. Separate mediation sessions may reduce confrontation by allowing each spouse to communicate concerns privately and openly.⁴⁸ This practice can assist mediators in identifying sensitive issues that may not emerge during joint discussions.⁴⁹ Home visits produce another important effect by reducing practical barriers to accessing KUA services and enabling mediation to take place within the couple's social environment. Such flexibility is particularly relevant when couples are unable or unwilling to attend formal institutional meetings.⁵⁰ From the perspective of Islamic family law,⁵¹ these practices operationalize *islah* as a practical mechanism for restoring relationships rather than leaving it solely as a normative principle. Nevertheless,⁵² the estimated 50% success rate demonstrates that mediation has boundaries.⁵³ Some conflicts may involve severe relational damage or circumstances that cannot be resolved through

³⁹ Verena Ehrbar et al., "Managing Cancer as a Family Disease - Feasibility, Satisfaction and Family Functioning after Short-Time Counselling for Families with Parental Cancer," *Family Journal* 30, no. 2 (2022): 200–208, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807211052484>.

⁴⁰ Rachel Zmora et al., "Transitioning to Long-Term Care: Family Caregiver Experiences of Dementia, Communities, and Counseling," *Journal of Aging and Health* 33, no. 1–2 (2021): 133–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264320963588>.

⁴¹ Mahesh Chandra Puri et al., "Does Family Planning Counseling Reduce Unmet Need for Modern Contraception Among Postpartum Women: Evidence From a Stepped-Wedge Cluster Randomized Trial in Nepal," *PLoS ONE* 16, no. 3 March (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249106>.

⁴² Wanda Boyer, "Cultural Auditing to Enhance Reflective Counselling Practices with Indigenous Families," *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 50, no. 3 (2022): 151–61, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12245>.

⁴³ Meerambika Mahapatro and Sudhir P Singh, "Coping Strategies of Women Survivors of Domestic Violence Residing with an Abusive Partner After Filing a Complaint with the Family Counseling Center in Alwar, India," *Journal of Community Psychology* 48, no. 3 (2020): 818–33, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22297>.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Odachi Onogwu et al., "Using Social Media-Based Drama Therapy and Family Counselling to Treat Symptoms of Postpartum Depression among Women," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 44, no. 3 (2023): 368–78, <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1550>.

⁴⁵ Lee A Teufel-Prida et al., "Technology-Assisted Counselling for Couples and Families," *Family Journal* 26, no. 2 (2018): 134–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480718770152>.

⁴⁶ Marjan Khajehi, "Prevalence and Risk Factors of Relationship Dissatisfaction in Women During the First Year After Childbirth: Implications for Family and Relationship Counseling," *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 42, no. 6 (2016): 484–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2015.1069433>.

⁴⁷ Lynda Skinner and Loyola McLean, "The Conversational Model and Child and Family Counselling: Treating Chronic Complex Trauma in a Systemic Framework," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 38, no. 2 (2017): 211–20, <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1214>.

⁴⁸ Helen P Koo, Ellen K Wilson, and Alexandra M Minnis, "A Computerized Family Planning Counseling Aid: A Pilot Study Evaluation of Smart Choices," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 49, no. 1 (2017): 45–53, <https://doi.org/10.1363/psrh.12016>.

⁴⁹ Bedilu Alamirre Ejigu et al., "Trend and Determinants of Quality of Family Planning Counseling in Ethiopia: Evidence From Repeated PMA Cross-Sectional Surveys, 2014–2019," *PLoS ONE* 17, no. 5 May (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0267944>.

⁵⁰ Jessica Lloyd-Hazlett, Eleni Maria Honderich, and Karena J Heyward, "Fa-MI-Ly: Experiential Techniques to Integrate Motivational Interviewing and Family Counseling," *The Family Journal* 24, no. 1 (2016): 31–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480715615666>.

⁵¹ Nathan C D Perron, "The Four Cs of Parenting: Applying Key Counseling Concepts for Raising Healthy Children Across Countries, Cultures, and Families," *Family Journal* 26, no. 1 (2018): 48–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480717753014>.

⁵² Merlin L Willcox et al., "Couples' Decision-Making on Postpartum Family Planning and Antenatal Counselling in Uganda: A Qualitative Study," *PLoS ONE* 16, no. 5 May (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251190>.

⁵³ Megan Scott, Jennifer Watermeyer, and Tina-Marie Wessels, "We Are Just Not Sure What That Means or If It's Relevant': Uncertainty When Gathering Family History Information in South African Prenatal Genetic Counseling Consultations," *Social Science and Medicine* 342 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116555>.

reconciliation alone.⁵⁴ Therefore, mediation should be accompanied by appropriate follow-up,⁵⁵ religious counseling, and family support to increase the sustainability of any agreement reached during the process.⁵⁶

Compared with previous studies that generally emphasize economic problems, infidelity, communication difficulties,⁵⁷ and religious factors as causes of household conflict,⁵⁸ this study provides a more specific account of how these factors are addressed through local KUA mediation.⁵⁹ Previous research commonly presents mediation as a mechanism for communication, reconciliation, and divorce prevention, while less attention is often given to how mediators adapt procedures to the practical circumstances of individual families.⁶⁰ The practice of separate mediation sessions and home visits at KUA Medan Tembung provides an institutional dimension that expands conventional understandings of Islamic family mediation. The comparison with KUA Medan Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan also shows that similar economic pressures can occur across different locations while institutional responses may vary according to local practices and initiatives.⁶¹ This distinction strengthens the argument that effective family mediation requires contextual adaptation rather than rigid procedural uniformity.⁶² The study consequently extends existing discussions by connecting the normative concept of *islah* with concrete, community-based practices that emphasize accessibility, flexibility, and individualized intervention.⁶³

Several measures can strengthen the conceptual and institutional development of KUA mediation. First, *islah* should be formulated as an operational mediation framework that incorporates reconciliation, communication, religious counseling, identification of conflict causes,⁶⁴ and post-mediation assistance. Second, KUA should establish systematic documentation covering the causes of disputes,⁶⁵ mediation procedures, agreements reached,⁶⁶ and subsequent family conditions.⁶⁷ Such documentation would provide a stronger basis for evaluating the approximately 50% success rate and identifying factors associated with successful reconciliation. Third, religious counselors should receive continuous training in family counseling, communication,⁶⁸ conflict management, and gender-sensitive mediation. Separate

⁵⁴ Philia Issari and Christina Tsaliki, "Stories of Family Caregivers of People With Dementia in Greece: Implications for Counselling," *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling* 19, no. 3 (2017): 290–306, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642537.2017.1348378>.

⁵⁵ Caroline Amour et al., "Missed Opportunity for Family Planning Counselling Along the Continuum of Care in Arusha Region, Tanzania," *PLoS ONE* 16, no. 7 July (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0250988>.

⁵⁶ Barbara Segatto and Giusy Lombardi, "Family Counselling Service Professionals' Attitudes Towards Same-Sex Parenting: A Qualitative Research in Northeast Italy," *Journal of Family Studies* 28, no. 4 (2022): 1287–1302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2020.1819377>.

⁵⁷ Åsa Källström and Sara Thunberg, "'Like an Equal, Somehow' – What Young People Exposed to Family Violence Value in Counseling," *Journal of Family Violence* 34, no. 6 (2019): 553–63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-018-00032-0>.

⁵⁸ Alys Wyn Griffiths et al., "Relational Counselling as a Psychosocial Intervention for Dementia: Qualitative Evidence from People Living with Dementia and Family Members," *Dementia* 20, no. 6 (2021): 2091–2108, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301220984912>.

⁵⁹ Marilyn Crawshaw and Ken Daniels, "Revisiting the Use of 'Counselling' as a Means of Preparing Prospective Parents to Meet the Emerging Psychosocial Needs of Families That Have Used Gamete Donation," *Families, Relationships and Societies* 8, no. 3 (2019): 395–409, <https://doi.org/10.1332/204674318X15313158773308>.

⁶⁰ Yoonjoung Choi, "Estimates of Side Effects Counseling in Family Planning Using Three Data Sources: Implications for Monitoring and Survey Design," *Studies in Family Planning* 49, no. 1 (2018): 23–39, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sifp.12044>.

⁶¹ Abiola Dipeolu et al., "A Concept Map of Campers' Perceptions of Camp Experience: Implications for the Practice of Family Counseling," *Family Journal* 24, no. 2 (2016): 182–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480716628566>.

⁶² Kelsey Holt et al., "Development and Validation of the Client-Reported Quality of Contraceptive Counseling Scale to Measure Quality and Fulfillment of Rights in Family Planning Programs," *Studies in Family Planning* 50, no. 2 (2019): 137–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sifp.12092>.

⁶³ Theresa Clement et al., "Exploring the Impact of a Digital Counseling Tool on Family Caregivers: An Initial Program Theory Based on Realist Methodology," *Health and Social Care in the Community* 2023 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/9961758>.

⁶⁴ Mariama S Tounkara et al., "A Mixed-Methods Study of Factors Influencing Postpartum Intrauterine Device Uptake After Family Planning Counseling Among Women in Kigali, Rwanda," *PLoS ONE* 17, no. 11 November (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0276193>.

⁶⁵ Glenn W Lambie et al., "The Assessment of Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling Competencies: A Measure to Support Preparation Programs," *Family Journal* 31, no. 2 (2023): 198–204, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807221125894>.

⁶⁶ Lisa S Callegari et al., "Understanding Women Veterans' Family Planning Counseling Experiences and Preferences to Inform Patient-Centered Care," *Women's Health Issues* 29, no. 3 (2019): 283–89, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.whi.2019.03.002>.

⁶⁷ Tara Darmody et al., "Stuttering, Family History, and Counselling: A Contemporary Database," *Journal of Fluency Disorders* 73 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfludis.2022.105925>.

⁶⁸ Paulina Acosta, "Early Discontinuation of Counselling by Survivors of Family Violence in Papua New Guinea," *Intervention* 17, no. 1 (2019): 109–13, https://doi.org/10.4103/INTV.INTV_65_18.

sessions and home visits should be retained as adaptive mechanisms but implemented through clear ethical and procedural guidelines. KUA should also strengthen premarital education, marriage guidance, and religious family education as preventive measures. Future studies should involve more KUA institutions and include couples who have directly experienced mediation. Longitudinal research would also be useful for assessing whether reconciliation achieved through mediation remains sustainable over time and for developing a comprehensive evidence-based model of Islamic family mediation.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that household conflict resolution at KUA Medan Tembung is grounded primarily in the Islamic principle of *islah*, which emphasizes reconciliation, deliberation, and the preservation of marital harmony. Conflict resolution is conducted gradually through communication and deliberation between spouses, followed by the involvement of family members or other third parties when necessary, and mediation facilitated by KUA personnel. Economic difficulties were identified as the most dominant factor contributing to household conflict, followed by infidelity, unbalanced lifestyles, poor communication, and limited religious understanding and family education. Comparative information from KUA Medan Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan indicates that economic factors also constitute a major source of household conflict in these areas. Mediation at KUA Medan Tembung is conducted by the Head of KUA and religious counselors through persuasive approaches and Islamic values. Its distinctive practices include separate sessions for spouses and home visits for couples who experience difficulties attending mediation at the office. The estimated mediation success rate of approximately 50% indicates its potential as a preventive mechanism for reducing divorce.

The study contributes to Islamic family law scholarship by demonstrating that mediation at the KUA level can function beyond administrative marriage services and serve as a community-based mechanism for strengthening family resilience. The mediation model identified at KUA Medan Tembung integrates *islah*, religious guidance, deliberation, and flexible service delivery. The use of separate sessions allows mediators to understand the perspectives of each spouse more carefully, while home visits provide an adaptive mechanism for couples facing practical or social barriers to attending mediation at the KUA office. These practices illustrate how Islamic family law principles can be translated into context-sensitive institutional services. Conceptually, the study strengthens the understanding of *islah* as a practical framework for preventing marital dissolution rather than merely a normative principle. Methodologically, the comparison with KUA Medan Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan provides contextual evidence regarding similarities in conflict factors while highlighting differences in mediation practices. The findings therefore support the development of more responsive family mediation services within Islamic family institutions.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research involved only five informants and focused primarily on KUA Medan Tembung, with KUA Medan Denai and KUA Medan Perjuangan serving as supporting comparative sites. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all KUA institutions or communities in Indonesia. Second, the estimated mediation success rate of approximately 50% requires stronger documentation and systematic statistical recording to establish its accuracy and consistency. Third, the study primarily examined the perspectives of institutional actors and religious figures rather than couples who directly experienced mediation. Future research should therefore involve a larger number of KUA institutions and include mediated couples as primary participants. Further studies could also employ longitudinal designs to examine whether mediation produces sustainable improvements in marital relationships after the mediation process. In addition, future research should develop standardized documentation, monitoring, and post-mediation evaluation systems to assess mediation outcomes more systematically. Such research could contribute to developing a comprehensive and evidence-based Islamic family mediation model.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

Muhammad Arbi contributed to the conception, research design, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript. Bagus Ramadi contributed to the research design, critical revision, and final approval of the manuscript. Both authors contributed equally to the manuscript and approved the final version.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. No publicly archived datasets were used or generated during the current research.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Additional Information

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to muhammad201221001@uinsu.ac.id

ORCID

Muhammad Arbi  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5606-1972>

Bagus Ramadi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8126-4558>

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