

THE EROSION OF *AL-MAWADDAH* AND *AR-RAHMAH* VALUES IN MUSLIM MARRIAGES: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ANALYSIS OF MARITAL DYNAMICS IN LOMBOK

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The Erosion of Al-Mawaddah and Ar-Rahmah Values in Muslim Marriages: A Socio-Religious Analysis of Marital Dynamics in Lombok Licensed Under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of marital relationships within the Muslim community of Lombok, where high religiosity does not necessarily correspond to the achievement of the noble purposes of marriage. The high divorce rate is taken as evidence of difficulties in realizing the values of *al-mawaddah* (love) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion) within marital life. Employing a descriptive-analytic approach, the research integrates social exchange theory and a socio-religious framework, supported by empirical data on divorce rates. The findings indicate that the erosion of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* values stems from a paradigm shift—from a marriage model grounded in mutual rights and obligations to one emphasizing individual freedom. This shift leads to emotional imbalance, communication breakdown, rising expectations and transformations in social values. From an Islamic perspective, marriage is not merely a transactional contract but a sacred covenant (*mitsaqan ghalidzan*) imbued with religious meaning. *Al-mawaddah* generates deep emotional attachment, while *ar-rahmah* nurtures endurance, patience, and sacrifice, thereby reinforcing marital harmony. The study contributes to understanding social changes within the marital institution in Lombok and underscores the significance of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* as essential principles in sustaining marital stability and preventing divorce.

Keywords: Marriage Relationship; Muslim Family; Marital Values; Islamic Marriage; Socio-Religious Perspective

A. Introduction

Islam, from a philosophical perspective views marriage not merely as an ordinary contract, but as a sacred covenant (*mitsaqan ghalidzan*) carrying profound spiritual and moral implications. Marriage in Islam aims to establish a household characterized by *Sakinah* (tranquility), *al-mawaddah* (love) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion)

(Tim Penulis, 1991). There are two values-*al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah*-constitute the moral foundation of harmonious family, nurturing affection, patience, and sacrifice between spouses (Shihab, 2007).

Marriage aims to create a household filled with *sakinah* (peace), *mawaddah* (love), and *Rahmah* (compassion) (Tim Penulis, 1991). The values of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* are foundation for building (Dahlan, 2024) a harmonious family. *Al mawaddah* refers to passionate love, while *ar-rahmah* means compassion that leads sacrifice and care (Andriani & Zaini, 2022). These two values should ideally be the pillars of marriage, creating a peaceful and loving home (Ghazali, 2019).

Marriage is part of Allah's divine plan (*sunnatullah*) to bring balance to human life-biologically, socially, and spiritually (Ibrahim, 2023). It is not only a worldly activity but also a form of worship (Yalçın, 2020). Worship in Islam includes not only rituals but also social actions done with sincere intentions. This idea fits with the human need for social interaction and togetherness in life.

Marriage also teaches justice and equality between husband and wife. Islam does not allow one-sided or oppressive marriage practices. In the Qur'an, surah al-Baqarah: 187, Allah describe the relationship between husband and wife as one of mutual support: "*They are garments for you, and you are garments for them.*" This metaphor shows that spouses should protect, complete, and support each other. It teaches that marriage should be based on justice, love, and mutual respect for each partner's rights (Madjid, 2000). However, despite this noble conception, the contemporary social reality often fails to reflect these ideals, particularly in Muslim communities experiencing rapid social change.

Although philosophically, marriage is viewed as a strong covenant that must be preserved until the end of life, sociologically, the sanctity of marriage in the reality of society undergoes dynamics, shifts, and even decline. Many marriages end in divorce shortly after they begin, due to weak commitment and a lack of understanding about family life (Usman et al., 2024). The fragility of the institution of marriage can be observed in the community of Lombok, marked by a rising divorce rate. The powerful currents of modernization and globalization have changed the way people perceive marriage (Sari et al., 2021). Society now tends to prioritize individual freedom over long-term commitment. Social norms that once stigmatized divorce have become more relaxed, and divorce is now seen as a common phenomenon. The shift toward a more individualistic social structure causes couples to focus more on personal interests rather than maintaining household harmony.

Based on data collected from the Selong Religious Court, the findings are quite striking: from 2016 to 2024, there were a total of 9.249 divorce cases. The majority of these were initiated by wives (*cerai gugat*), accounting for 7.552 cases, while divorces initiated by husbands (*cerai talak*) totaled only 1.697 cases (Mahkamah Agung RI, 2025).

Based on data from the Selong Religious Court, the number of divorce case verdicts between 2016 and 2024 shows a fluctuating yet generally increasing trend. In 2016, there were 1,153 divorce cases, and this number rose steadily to 1,448 in 2019, marking the highest point within the period. Although there was a slight decline in 2020 and 2022, the figures remained relatively high, hovering around 1,400 cases per year. By 2024, the number reached 1,411, indicating that divorce continues to be a significant social issue in the region. These patterns suggest that despite some yearly variations, the overall rate of divorce has remained consistently elevated over the past decade.

The data on the factors causing divorce further highlights the underlying social and personal challenges faced by couples. The most common causes were the

abandonment of a spouse (556 cases) and frequent disputes or quarrels (544 cases), together accounting for the vast majority of divorces. Other contributing factors, such as drug addiction, domestic violence, and unauthorized polygamy, were recorded in much smaller numbers. Economic problems, apostasy, alcohol abuse, and gambling were the least reported causes, each with fewer than three cases. This distribution indicates that emotional and relational instability, rather than external factors like finances or substance abuse, plays the most dominant role in marital breakdowns in Selong.

Lombok has long been known as the “Island of a Thousand Mosques,” reflecting the strong religious tradition embedded in the daily lives of its people. Islamic values are deeply ingrained in various aspects of life, including marriage. Sound religious education, a robust Islamic culture, and the presence of religious institutions such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) should, in principle, serve as key factors in strengthening household resilience. However, in contrast to this expectation, the divorce rate in Lombok continues to rise.

This phenomenon presents a social paradox: a community widely regarded as devout is, paradoxically, experiencing increasing marital fragility. This growing number of divorces reveals a paradoxical situation: a highly religious society is simultaneously facing the erosion of the very values — *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* — that should uphold marital harmony.

This study introduces a novel approach by integrating social exchange theory and socio-religious analysis to interpret the paradox of religiosity and rising divorce. Conceptually, it reframes *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* as living social values influenced by contemporary social transformations. Empirically, it provides recent data illustrating how shifting paradigms of rights, duties, and personal freedom affect marital stability.

Previous studies on divorce in Muslim societies have largely focused on economic instability (Surjanti & S, 2023) or the legal-normative complexity within Islamic family law frameworks (Nafisah et al., 2024) or the gendered-psychological dynamics of marital breakdown (Bainon et al., 2024; Lestari, 2024). Others highlight cultural practices impacting marriage such as *merariq* among the Sasak people of Lombok — a form of elopement deeply rooted in local tradition that intersects with customary and religious norms (Erwinsya et al., 2020; Fitriyanti, 2023; Zuhdi, 2012). However, limited research has explored the erosion of socio-religious values that underpin marriage, particularly *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah*. This gap becomes critical in understanding how modernization and individualism reshape the meaning of marriage in a highly religious society like Lombok.

Philosophically, through its embedded values-process the potential to strongly influence and guide marital life. More specifically, Islam offers a comprehensive framework for a healthy, harmonious, and fulfilling marriage. It outlines ideal characteristics of conjugal life and guides the process of selecting a spouse to the management of family life (Ad-Darmaky, t.t.).

Sociologically, the people of Lombok possess rich matrimonial traditions, one of which is the *merariq* practice, a form of elopement rooted in the cultural custom of the Sasak ethnic group. Originally, this tradition was based on mutual family consent and upheld cultural norms of propriety. However, over time, its meaning and practice have shifted. It is not uncommon today for *merariq* to occur without familial approval, sometimes leading to social conflict and eventual divorce (Erwinsya et al., 2020; Fairiza & Widyatama, 2024).

Normatively, Islam emphasizes that marriage must be founded upon a strong

commitment between husband and wife to love, respect, and uphold each other's rights and responsibilities (Al-'Aqqad, 2014). In the context of national law, Indonesia's Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019 also states that marriage aims to form a happy and enduring family, grounded in religious values. Nevertheless, in practice, various deviations persist-such also as early marriage, high divorce rates, and an erosion in the understanding of familial responsibilities (Kementerian Agama RI, 2021).

The use of philosophical, sociological, and normative analyses-when connected to the lived realities of family life in Lombok-reveals a clear gap between the sacred and noble goals of marriage and the increasing rate of divorce in the region. In Islamic thought, marriage is considered a sacred and honorable institution (*das sollen*); however, in social reality (*das sein*), this sanctity has undergone significant shifts, as evidenced by rising number of divorces among Lombok's population.

This paper focuses on examining the phenomenon of decline of *al-mawaddah* (deep affectionate love) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion) within the structure of marriage in Lombok, from a socio-religious perspective. Employing these two analytical approaches is crucial to understanding the social dynamics that influence the essence of marriage within the community, and formulating contextually relevant solutions rooted in Islamic values and local cultural traditions, so that marriage can remain a sacred and resilient institution.

The findings of this study are expected to provide academic contributions to the discourse on social change in the institution of marriage, as well as to offer policy recommendations for relevant institutions in addressing the high divorce rates and strengthening family resilience within Lombok society

B. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design within a socio-religious framework. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how religious and social values interact within marital life, particularly regarding the decline of *al-mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion). The socio-religious framework integrates sociological interpretation of social behavior with Islamic normative teachings, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Afad et al., 2025; Musthafa et al., 2025).

The unit of analysis in this study is the phenomenon of marital dissolution within the Muslim community of Lombok, viewed through both social and religious dimensions. The analysis focuses on how modernization, individualism, and changing social norms contribute to the erosion of Islamic marital values (Abdullah et al., 2022; Sulfinadia et al., 2025).

The study uses documentary and field data collected through:

1. Official records from the *Selong Religious Court* on divorce cases between 2016 and 2024, totaling 9,249 verdicts.
2. Semi-structured interviews with key informants, including ten religious leaders (*ulama*), six court officials, and eight divorced individuals.
3. Literature and secondary sources – such as academic journals, Islamic legal texts, and sociological works on family and marriage.

A purposive and criterion-based sampling strategy was applied. Divorce cases were selected if they were finalized and directly involved Muslim couples in Lombok. Cases related to annulment or inheritance disputes were excluded. Interview informants were chosen based on their direct involvement in marital counseling, dispute resolution, or divorce cases (Nasir, 2020).

Data collection combined document analysis and field interviews. The court data

were accessed with official permission and anonymized before analysis. All interview participants gave informed consent and were assured confidentiality. Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Islamic Studies Research Ethics Committee.

The chosen socio-religious approach aligns closely with the qualitative descriptive design, as it allows for a nuanced interpretation of how Islamic moral values interact with social behavior. The integration of sociological theory (social exchange theory) and Islamic normative ethics ensures that both empirical and spiritual dimensions of marriage are adequately addressed (Orb et al., 2001; Pietilä et al., 2020).

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

The Decline of *al-Mawaddah* and *ar-Rahmah* Values in the Marriage Structure of Lombok

The values of *al-Mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion) serve as fundamental pillars in the structure of Muslim families, including within the Sasak community of Lombok. However, there are growing indications that these values are experiencing a decline or degradation in several aspects of Sasak family life. By identifying the underlying causes and consequences of this value decline, as well as implementing appropriate preservation efforts, it is hoped that *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* can continue to serve as strong foundations of family structures.

Modernization and globalization have significantly influenced the mindset and lifestyle of Sasak people. Traditional norms and values are increasingly being replaced by new values that are not always aligned with principles of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah*. Data from the Selong Religious Court indicates that between 2016 and 2024, there were 9,249 divorce cases filed—7,552 initiated by wives (*cerai gugat*) and 1,697 by husbands (*cerai talak*) (Mahkamah Agung RI, 2025). In Sasak society, marriage is often shaped by social stratification. This study finds that marriages between noblewomen and non-noble men do not necessarily result in negative outcomes for achieving the goals of a harmonious, affectionate, and compassionate family (*sakinah, mawaddah, wa Rahmah*). However, class differences can present challenges in realizing these values (Azhari & Qalyubi, 2023; YUSDANI et al., 2025).

From the perspective of George Homans' social exchange theory, the decline of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* values in marriage stems from an imbalance in social exchange, rising individual expectations in relationships, and a decrease in positive household interactions. Marital relationships are increasingly perceived as transactions involving rewards and costs. Individuals are inclined to maintain a relationship only if the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. When affection and compassion diminish, spouses may begin to feel that the emotional or practical costs of the relationship surpass its benefits, potentially leading to conflict or divorce. A marriage that becomes overly transactional-focused more on individual gains than on emotional and spiritual values tends to deteriorate more quickly.

Within the framework of social exchange theory, divorce can be viewed as a rational choice made in pursuit of more emotionally or socially rewarding conditions. As affection declines and couples perceive marriage as offering more "costs" than "benefits," they are more likely to separate. In modern society, the rising prominence of individuals who believe they can achieve greater happiness outside of marriage, emotional bonds may fade, increasing the likelihood of divorce (Mo, 2016; Parker et al., 2022).

To counter this trend, couples need to shift their perspectives on marriage, reinvest in the values of affection and compassion, and strive to maintain a balanced relationship. Ensuring mutual appreciation and emotionally supported, they are more likely to remain committed to their relationship (Hak et al., 2022; YUSDANI et al., 2023).

Modernization has shifted the perception of marriage from a sacred, value-based commitment to one that is increasingly pragmatic and individualistic. Today, couples often prioritize individual rights over shared responsibilities within the household. The traditional social contract—once rooted in a balance of rights and obligations—is now more frequently interpreted in terms of personal freedom, which undermines the value of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* in family life. Furthermore, shifts in social structure have disrupted traditional gender roles, challenging the husband's role as provider and the wife's role as household manager. Imbalances in adapting to these evolving roles can create conflict, diminish household harmony, and erode the affection and compassion between spouses (Hak et al., 2022; Karna et al., 2023; Li, 2025).

Islam views marriage not merely as a social contract based on profit and loss or a transactional agreement, but as a sacred covenant (*mithaqan ghalizan*) bound by spiritual and religious values. In contrast, modern marriage often emphasizes legal-formal and economic aspects over spiritual dimensions. When Islamic values such as patience (*sabr*), contentment (*qanaah*), and gratitude (*shukr*) are no longer prioritized, marital conflicts become more difficult to resolve, and the values of *al-mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion) tend to diminish. An excessive focus on financial status and a consumerist lifestyle may replace affection and sacrifice within the marital relationship. Loyalty and commitment between spouses may erode under the pressure of increasing economic demands and rising social expectations (Azhari et al., 2025; Syafi'i et al., 2023).

This argument aligns with data on the causes of divorce, which show that the most common reason is one spouse abandoning the other (556 cases), followed by continuous conflict and dispute (544 cases), drug addiction (5 cases), domestic violence (5 cases), unauthorized polygamy (3 cases), economic problem (2 cases), apostasy (2 cases), alcohol abuse (1 case), and gambling (1 case) (Mahkamah Agung RI, 2025).

The traditional and ideal concept of the Muslim family has increasingly shifted, especially when contrasted with modern interpretations of family as an economic unit. In this latter view, marriage is often perceived as an individualistic bond, devoid of love and emotional attachment. Furthermore, this concept promotes an idea of equality between spouses while simultaneously preserving patriarchal ownership, where the husband is seen to have proprietary rights over his wife. It may even reflect a double standard in sexual norms—expecting fidelity from the wife, granting sexual freedom to the husband. In contrast, the traditional Islamic model of marriage is rooted in ancient family history and stands in opposition to this individualistic interpretation. Love and affection are central to marriage and are based on mutual respect and equality (Al-Uqaili, 2017).

A husband does not “own” his wife as he would other property. This model upholds shared sexual norms (purity and chastity for both spouses), as well as a democratic ethos as described by Anthony Giddens, which includes equality, mutual respect, autonomy, communication-based decision-making, and negotiation and dialogue (Giddens & Giddens, 1999).

Marriage is one of the most significant decisions for young individuals and their families in all societies, as it serves as a means to achieve instinctual, psychological, and social fulfillment. It marks the beginning of family formation and procreation. Through marriage, individuals transition from solitude to a life of companionship the very least,

a life of cooperation, shared responsibilities, and mutual commitment to rights and obligations (Donati, t.t.). For men especially, marriage provides the foundation for emotional development, connecting them to duties and responsibilities that would not exist outside the marital framework. In this regard, the rise of social disengagement and emotional helplessness is among the most destructive demographic trends, driving many urgent societal issues symbolized by the term “crime” (Reiss et al., 2022).

The Qur’an emphasizes this foundational view of marriage in several verses: “And among His signs is this: He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Surely in these are signs for those who reflect.” (Qur’an, Ar-Rum 30:21), “O Adam! Dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat thereof as you both wish; but do not approach this tree, lest you become among the wrongdoers.” (Qur’an, al A’raf 7:19), “And how could you take it back after you have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?” (Qur’an, An-Nisa 4:21).

Marriage is an ancient institution, one that traces its origins to Paradise itself, even before Adam was placed on earth. It has since become a consistent social and religious practice that humanity has never abandoned. Marriage fulfills a fundamental physical-the proper channeling of sexual instinct-and serves the purpose of preserving the human species. Beyond its biological and social functions, marriage is an act of devotion through which a muslim draws closer to God.

The primary purpose of marriage is procreation. The secondary purpose is the preservation of chastity (*hifz al-far*), as articulated in Islamic jurisprudence, or the fulfillment of sexual needs, as defined in modern scientific terminology. The marital bond originates from a sacred covenant (*mithaqan ghalizan*) that legitimizes the physical relationship between a man and woman. The essence of marriages such as *mut’ah*, *musayyar*, *shighar* (exchange marriages) (Qal’aji & Qunaibi, 1988), and *muhallal* are considered invalid. This affirms the sanctity and elevated status of marriage in Islamic thought.

Marriage consists of three essential elements: the husband, the wife, and the marital relationship. Each of these components play a vital role in the structure of marriage. However, this study emphasizes not merely the individual roles of husband and wife, but the relationship that binds them together. More specially, it focus on the couple’s perceptions of their marital relationship-the importance they place on the relationship itself and the values that shape its substance and meaning. These shared value underpin the quality and levity of the marital bond (Agustian et al., 2023).

It is neither feasible nor appropriate for Muslim societies to adopt the foundations of contemporary Western marital relationships, which are often based on materialistic values, as evaluative criteria for choosing or maintaining a spouse. In many western models, the marital relationship has become objectified, no longer grounded in affection and compassion but in each partner’s ability to provide material benefits. This shift has led to imbalances in marital dynamics, frequently culminating in separation and divorce. This discourse aims to reassert the importance of value-based marital relationships. The most essential objectives of marriage are *al-mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion). God has ordained that affection and compassion should be present between spouse, and on this foundation, marital life must be built.

From the husband’s perspective, cohabitation with his wife does not merely involve providing adequate food, drink, and adornment. Likewise, the wife’s role is not limited to responding to her husband’s call or preparing his lunch and dinner. Rather, marriage is a mutual emotional commitment-an expression that flows from one

heart to another, driven by love, compassion, and a shared belief in their collective responsibilities. These responsibilities include managing household affairs, raising children, and fostering an environment where both material and spiritual well-being are nurtured and enjoyed by all members of the family (Asmuni & Adikara, 2024).

2. Discussion

Family Resilience: A Social Exchange Theory Perspective

Social exchange theory has emerged as one of the most prominent theoretical trends in contemporary sociology, particularly because its core concepts are well suited to explaining various social phenomena-especially those related to marital relationships. The theory is grounded in the basic premise that individuals in social interactions aim to maximize rewards and minimize costs in order to achieve the most beneficial outcomes. Social behavior, in this view, results from interactive exchange processes through which individuals assess the benefits and costs of maintaining social relationships. When the perceived costs of a relationship outweigh its rewards, individuals tend to withdraw from that relationship. The theory further asserts that people continuously evaluate whether a relationship is worthwhile (Khalid, 2022).

One of the most influential figures in the development of social exchange theory is George Caspar Homans, whose key contribution was to clarify the fundamental elements of social behavior. These include activity-activities between people driven by motivation; and emotion-the internal state of the actor, which can be inferred through vocal tone, facial expressions, or body movements. The exchange process itself is characterized by adaption, compatibility, and relationships by offering others what they desire, in exchange for what they themselves expect to receive. This process includes both rewards and punishments as forms of social regulation (Sufyanto, 2024).

Social exchange theory also touches on fundamental questions regarding the nature of human beings, the nature of society, and the mechanism through which society operates. Concerning human nature, the theory posits that individuals act logically and rationally; each person sets specific goals and chooses the most efficient means to achieve them. Furthermore, individuals take into account the presence-or even control- their goal-attainment process. This orientation gives rise to the foundational logic of exchange relationships, where behavior becomes social in nature. Social behavior often takes the form of exchange because individuals exist in a social environment where resources-tangible or intangible-are distributed unevenly. As a result, people exchange goods for value, labor for money, or emotions for mutual support (Ahmad et al., 2023; Sufyanto, 2024).

At its core, social exchange theory asserts that individuals interact because they derive social rewards from such interactions, including those within marriage. Individuals are inclined to maintain their social relationships as long as the perceived benefits outweigh the associated costs.

Costs refer to various considerations or negative factors such as hard work, fatigue, or anything an individual seeks to avoid. Rewards refer to anything an individual is willing to give or received in exchange. Profit is defined as the outcome of subtracting costs from rewards. Social exchange is not limited to the exchange of money or goods, but also includes the exchange of social support, emotions, security, and influence (Khalid, 2022).

In the context of marriage, social exchange theory emphasizes that a husband and wife will remain in the marital relationship as long as they perceive that the benefits outweigh the associated costs. When one partner feels that the emotional or

material gains derived from the relationship are less than what they have to sacrifice, they may begin to consider ending the relationship. For example, a wife who is frequently left alone without legitimate reason by her husband may feel neglected, which can lead to divorce. Likewise, a wife who experiences constant conflict, arguments, or domestic violence may ultimately choose to separate if she perceives that living independently would be better than continuing to suffer within the marriage.

Social exchange theory provides a framework that views marriage as a reciprocal exchange process. Partners are likely to remain in the relationship as long as they perceive it as more beneficial than any available alternatives. However, when analyzing marriage through the lens of religious and cultural values in Lombok, the decision to maintain a marriage is not always based on a rational calculation of profit and loss. Therefore, to better understand the dynamics of marriage, this theory must be integrated with a socio-religious perspective that highlights the values of loyalty, sacrifice, and responsibility within the marital bond.

Repositioning the Values of *al-Mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* for the Preservation of Marriage in Lombok Society.

The people of Lombok, particularly the Sasak ethnic group-indigenous to the island-are widely known for their deeply religious lifestyle. The majority of Sasak people adhere to Islam, which plays a central role in their everyday lives (Budiwanti & Eidhamar, 2024; R. M. Sari et al., 2024). Despite the region's high level of religiosity, divorce rates in Lombok remain significant. In 2024 alone, West Lombok recorded 1.519 divorce cases (Wirahadi, t.t.). Central Lombok reported a staggering 71.411 cases (Mahkamah Agung RI, 2025), while total divorce cases across Lombok reached 1.120 in the same year (Khairurrizki, 2024).

Religious values have a strong influence in shaping social relationships, including those within marriage. Religion functions not only as a belief system, but also as a framework that shapes norms, ethics, and patterns of family interaction. In marital life, religion serves as a moral and ethical compass that guides spousal relationships, teaching values of responsibility, loyalty, sacrifice, and balance in the rights and obligations between husband and wife.

The affection that arises from the values of *al-mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion) help couples navigate differences and conflicts more wisely. With mutual respect and understanding, couples are more likely to resolve issues through effective communication rather than resorting to divorce (Arfaizar et al., 2023). These values play a critical role in maintaining the continuity and resilience of marital structures. When deep affection and sincere compassion are present, couples are better equipped to face the inevitable challenges of family life. The application of these values not only contributes to marital harmony, but also fosters a stable and prosperous family environment. Therefore, it is essential for every couple to understand and internalize these values as fundamental pillars of the household.

The English writer Jude once remarked that modern civilization lacks a balance between power and morality. Morality has fallen far behind scientific advancement: the natural sciences have given us extraordinary power, but we wield it with the minds of children and beasts. Decadence, he argues, stems from humanity's failure to grasp its true place in the universe and its denial of the realm of values, including goodness, truth, and beauty (As-Surjani, t.t.). Similarly, Alexis Carrel observed that in modern cities, moral exemplars are seldom found, even though moral beauty surpasses both science and art as the foundation of civilization (As-Surjani, t.t.).

In essence, ethical principles and moral values can be most fully realized within Islamic civilization. This is because knowledge of values and morality in Islam is not merely the product of centuries of intellectual development, but a divine revelation inspired by the Almighty and enacted by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), forming the foundation of Islamic law for over fifteen centuries. A truly virtuous human being is one whose thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are shaped by spiritual values (An-Najjar, 1996).

At the societal level, Islamic values—particularly within the context of marriage—serve several vital functions (Ḥamīd & Malūḥ, 1997):

- a. Maintaining social cohesion, by articulating noble ideals and principles, with marriage serving as a crucial component of societal structure.
- b. Cultural unification, whereby religion serves as a cohesion cultural force; since marriage is embedded within the cultural of society, it must be framed by the values that shape that culture.
- c. Protecting society from moral and social ills, including divorce, marital breakdown, and the disintegration of family ties.
- d. Defining the character and identity of society, and consequently, shaping the personality and identity of individuals within the marital relationship.

The values of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* serve as the foundational pillars in strengthening the institution of marriage. *Al-mawaddah* brings forth a deep, romantic affection, while *ar-rahmah* contributes to resilience, patience, and sacrifice within marital life.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr stated that *al-mawaddah* refers to *al-maḥabbah* (love), and *ar-rahmah* refers to *ar-raʿfah* (compassion). A man may remain with his wife in marriage either out of love or mercy—seeking progeny, for instance. God has placed *al-mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (mercy) between spouses as key factors in the permanence of their relationship. These values maintain the strength and cohesion of the family and help eliminate any threat to its stability and continuity. One form of this mercy is not only refraining from harming the wife but also preemptively protecting her from harm and treating her with gentleness. Such interaction reflects a core social principle in Muslim communities: *at-tadāfuʿ* (mutual protection) (Kasir, 1998).

Al-Suddī explained that *al-mawaddah* is *maḥabbah* (love), while *ar-rahmah* is *shafaqah* (tender care). Early exegetes like Imam al-Rāzī noted: “Some have said, ‘Affection pertains to one’s own needs, while mercy pertains to the needs of others.’ For instance, one may love their child, but if they see their enemy hungry and in pain, they might take food from their child to feed the enemy—not out of love, but from *rahmah* (compassion) (Al-Bayyanuni, 2013).”

Mawaddah is primary and leads to *rahmah*. A wife, for instance, may lose her sexual desire due to age or illness, yet the husband continues his role with love and compassion. This emotional-spiritual bond often transcends all other human relationships. This is clearly reflected in Islamic rulings related to inheritance, maintenance, emotional support, and a wife confiding her deepest concerns to her husband.

According to Ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-mawaddah* represents a great bond that encompasses friendship and kinship, while *ar-rahmah* signifies paternal and fraternal compassion. Therefore, a bond that combines both—designed by God—is by nature at the pinnacle of perfection (ʿĀsyūr, 1984).

A man who lawfully meets a woman understands the meaning of living together, the inclination toward her, and the psychological comfort her presence brings. Thus,

the meeting place between man and woman is called *sakan* and *miskānah*, signifying tranquility and peace. Within this space, the soul finds repose; the husband is comforted and finds rest from the burdens of life. God instills between them affection, mercy, and deep compassion—not derived merely from instinct or physical contact, but from a merging of souls and a spiritual unity built on purpose and shared values. As the Qur'an says: "*They are garments for you, and you are garments for them*" (Qur'an 2:187).

Al-Zuhaylī, in *Tafsīr al-Munīr*, also elaborated on God's words: "And He placed between you affection and mercy." He interprets affection (*mawaddah*) as love, and mercy (*rahmah*) as compassion. These qualities are designed so spouses can support one another in shouldering life's burdens. Their bond is grounded in the firmest foundation and the most perfect system, providing a home, comfort, and tranquility. A man may marry a woman for love, for compassion, for children, for provision, or for companionship. All of these reflect the deep emotional dimensions God placed between the sexes (Az-Zuhaili, 1991).

Sayyid Qutb noted that humans are naturally aware of their feelings for the opposite sex; their nerves and emotions are consumed by this relationship. Yet they often forget the divine hand that created their partners from their own selves, planted in their hearts these powerful emotions, and made the relationship a source of spiritual and physical stability. This connection becomes a refuge for the soul, a balm for the heart and body, a source of livelihood, peace, and emotional clarity.

The Qur'anic language evokes this bond in a deeply moving manner, as if capturing an image from the depths of the soul: "*That you may dwell in tranquility with them... and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who reflect.*" (Qur'an 30:21). Those who reflect perceive the wisdom of the Creator in designing both genders with inherent compatibility—psychologically, emotionally, and physically. They find in each other not only satisfaction, but also comfort, peace, stability, and ultimately, the creation of new life through their union (Quthub, 2003).

When separation occurs—whether due to travel, livelihood, or death—the psychological impact can be profound, often more painful than death itself. Parting, especially when motivated by external obligations or internal disputes, weighs heavily on the soul. This is especially true when love, compassion, and children are involved. The disruption not only affects the couple but risks destabilizing the children's well-being and the emotional structure of the family. The pain of parting due to family conflicts is particularly intense when deep affection and shared offspring are involved.

Shaykh Muṭawallī al-Sha'rāwī explained that if these three stages—affection, mercy, and tranquility—are contemplated deeply, it becomes evident that each spouse brings the other comfort, satisfaction, and fulfillment. When these feelings are shaken and emotional distance arises, love and mercy play their vital roles in sustaining the marriage. If one spouse can no longer meet their obligations, mercy emerges—mercy for weakness, illness, and limitations. In this way, the marital journey continues, unshaken by the storms of life (As-Sya'rawi, t.t.).

When reflecting on these three levels (i.e., companionship, affection, and mercy), living together as husband and wife is a factor that creates feelings of comfort and a sense of fulfillment in meeting one's needs. If this level is shaken and one party becomes alienated from the other or decides to leave—often the main factor leading to divorce—then living together becomes impossible, and the wisest course is separation. In this context, Allah has prescribed divorce as a solution for such cases. However, our Lord has made it the least desirable option, so that it should only be taken as a last resort.

The Qur'an articulates this point with precision, distinguishing between what men need specifically and what both spouses commonly share. The concept of "companionship" is specific to men, as the Qur'an says: *"That you may dwell in tranquility with her."* As for *al-mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (mercy), the Qur'an presents these as mutual needs for both spouses based on their innate nature, stating: *"And He placed between you affection and mercy."*

The concept of *affection and mercy* in the relationship between husband and wife can be summarized in the following points:

Al-mawaddah (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (mercy) are inherently shared between spouses; a human relationship cannot be imagined to be based on only one of them unilaterally. During health and youth, love and affection between spouses are manifested. In old age and physical weakness, mercy is manifested—because the frailty that comes with aging requires compassion and care from one's partner. Mercy thus becomes a vital assurance that a person receives proper treatment and care, especially from a partner whose affection was sincere during their youth.

The stronger the affection during times of health and youth, the stronger the mercy will be in times of aging and weakness. Mercy is a profound gateway into love, or the two are complementary aspects of the same truth, with their fruits appearing in times of distress, vulnerability, and need. On one hand, affection is a virtue, while mercy is justice. Affection is the upper boundary, and mercy is the lower. If a couple—or one of them—cannot fully enjoy the "virtue" of the relationship, then at the very least, it must be built on "justice," namely, mercy (*kasasibah*).

To maintain family sustainability, the high divorce rate in Indonesia signals that household resilience must become a national concern. The state should not be limited to regulating the legality of marriage; it must also be involved in preserving its integrity. Divorce often creates a new class of impoverished people. Its first victims are the wife and then the children. Therefore, the state must not only officiate marriage but also safeguard its continuity. It is logical then that proposals and evaluations have emerged suggesting that the time has come for the Marriage Law to emphasize the importance of marriage preservation—as a form of family protection and a long-term national investment. Based on this, it is proposed that Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage be revised by adding a special chapter regarding marriage preservation (Kemenag, t.t.).

To support the urgency of preserving marriage and family resilience in Indonesia, this paper suggests that in addition to the state's role in amending the law to preserve family unity, it must also be understood that family development is a cultural, religious, and social concept. Therefore, the relationship and position of family preservation in relation to culture, religion, family law, and social dynamics are complementary (Djawas et al., 2022). In this context, the values of *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah*, which form the foundation of the desired family resilience and sustainability, must be fully integrated starting from the pre-marriage phase, during marriage, and continuing through post-marital family life.

The diagram illustrates the reasoning behind building family resilience by integrating various perspectives and values. It shows that perspectives such as human rights and gender, family law, family culture, and religious ethics contribute to shaping Family Fiqh, which is grounded in Islamic treasures. This foundation is enriched by the values of *al-Mawaddah* and *ar-Rahmah* (love and compassion), guiding the development of strong and harmonious family principles. When applied within the Indonesian context and aligned with contemporary developments, these elements collectively foster and strengthen family resilience.

D. Conclusion

The high divorce rate in Lombok reveals a decline in family resilience and a transformation in the values of *al-mawaddah* (affection) and *ar-rahmah* (compassion) within marriage. The study concludes that this phenomenon is rooted in shifting perceptions of marital bonds—from sacred relationships based on mutual rights and responsibilities to individualized, transactional partnerships affected by poor communication and changing social norms. Religion, which ideally functions as a moral and emotional compass, has become increasingly detached from daily family practices. Therefore, revitalizing *mawaddah* and *rahmah* as lived values is essential to restore balance between emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions of marriage.

This study acknowledges several limitations. It focuses exclusively on the Sasak community in Lombok, limiting the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, the qualitative design relies on participants' narratives, which may carry subjective interpretations. Future research could employ comparative or mixed-method approaches to explore how *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* operate in different cultural, socio-economic, or interfaith family contexts. Such broader perspectives would enhance theoretical understanding and provide stronger empirical support for policies on family resilience in diverse settings.

Theoretically, this research contributes to Islamic family studies by positioning *mawaddah* and *rahmah* as emotional-spiritual foundations that sustain marital harmony. Practically, it offers insights for premarital education, marital counseling, and family development programs that incorporate these values into communication and conflict-resolution frameworks. On a policy level, collaboration among government institutions, religious leaders, and community organizations is crucial to design initiatives that strengthen families and reduce divorce rates. Ultimately, integrating *al-mawaddah* and *ar-rahmah* into daily family life offers a path toward enduring love, mutual respect, and the restoration of family resilience amid modern social changes.

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