

WOMEN'S STRATEGIES IN LONG-DISTANCE MARRIAGE: COMMUNICATION AND PARENTING

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ABSTRACT

Long Distance Marriage (LDM) is increasingly common in the era of globalization but poses complex challenges for couples. This study explores women's adaptive strategies, focusing on communication and parenting dynamics in the context of LDM families. Using a qualitative case study approach with seven families in Gunung Pelindung District, East Lampung, this study uncovers collaborative strategies for maintaining family harmony. The research findings show that women develop innovative approaches to maintaining emotional bonds with their spouse and children, including regular communication scheduling, flexible role allocation, self-care, community support, creatively educating children, and using technology to stay connected. It can be concluded that the success of long-distance marriages relies on effective communication, mutual support, and a shared adaptive strategy. Implications of the study include a deeper understanding of contemporary family dynamics in the context of global mobility.

Keywords: *woman, communication strategies, long-distance marriage.*

ABSTRAK

Fenomena Pernikahan Jarak Jauh (Long Distance Marriage/LDM) semakin umum di era globalisasi, namun menimbulkan tantangan kompleks bagi pasangan. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi strategi adaptif perempuan, dengan fokus khusus pada dinamika komunikasi dan pengasuhan dalam konteks keluarga yang terpisah secara geografis. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan tujuh keluarga di Kecamatan Gunung Pelindung, Lampung Timur, penelitian ini mengungkap strategi kolaboratif dalam mempertahankan keharmonisan keluarga.

Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan pernikahan jarak jauh bergantung pada komunikasi efektif, dukungan mutual, dan strategi adaptasi bersama. Pasangan mengembangkan pendekatan inovatif dalam menjaga ikatan emosional, termasuk penjadwalan komunikasi berkala, pembagian peran yang fleksibel, dan penggunaan teknologi untuk tetap terhubung. Implikasi penelitian mencakup pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang dinamika keluarga kontemporer dalam konteks mobilitas global.

Kata kunci: *perempuan, strategi komunikasi, long distance marriage*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of "long-distance marriage" is now an inevitable reality for many couples around the world, including in Indonesia (Rismayanti et al., 2022). Work, education, or economic demands often force one partner, especially the husband, to work or live in another city or even country. The condition of husbands and wives in a long-distance marriage (LDM) creates a void in the roles that should be performed by husbands and wives, like couples living in the same house (Subhan, 2022). In this context, women's roles as wives and mothers become more complex and challenging.

Long-distance marriage (LDM) is undoubtedly a challenge in maintaining family harmony. Some cases show that due to LDM many couples whose families are not harmonious lead to divorce due to LDM (Borelli et al., 2015). In addition, some research results also prove that couples who undergo LDM experience a lot of role conflicts (Wakhidah et al., 2020), loneliness, social and emotional changes in children (Yan-Li et al., 2015). psychological stress and other mental disorders (Craft & Garcia, 2016).

Besides the husband as head of the family, women also have an important role in maintaining family harmony (Anisah et al., 2023). Women must be able to deal with the complexities of maintaining a strong emotional connection with their spouse despite the distance while also assuming primary responsibility for the education and well-being of their children.

Some cases show that families who have LDM experience disharmony (Rismayanti et al., 2022). Interestingly, this general finding is not factual for some LDM families in Gunung Pelindung Sub-district, East Lampung Regency. Women in LDM face challenges and problems that tend to be different from other families, given that LDM is the biggest trigger for divorce in East Lampung. However, these women have various strategies for maintaining family harmony. Their strategies can be successful because they have the support of their husbands.

Several previous studies have attempted to examine the problems of couples with LDM. However, the study is still limited to the wife as the object of research who goes to work abroad (Anggraini, 2023), study about LDM impact (Wakhidah et al., 2020), Coping stress in women who have LDM (Iswandari Winta & Nugraheni, 2019), using the technology for communication (Samonte, 2019), as well as reviewing family resilience strategy with aspects of Islamic law related to LDM (Rismayanti et al., 2022)(Subhan, 2022).

No research explicitly examines women's strategies during LDM in maintaining family harmony and parenting when left by their husbands to work or study at a distance. Further research on this issue would provide valuable insights for psychologists, educators, policymakers, and the broader community on women's challenges in balancing the harmony of long-distance marriage and nurturing their children.

This research fills a gap with a specific focus on women's adaptive strategies, with close attention to how women and their families work together to overcome geographical and emotional challenges in LDM. This study examines women in seven families undergoing LDM because their husbands work and study abroad in Gunung Pelindung District, East Lampung Regency. It uses a psychological approach and is studied based on the perspective of Islamic law. The importance of this research lies not only in its potential to improve the quality of life of women and their families in the context of globalization but also in its ability to pave the way for further, more comprehensive research on the dynamics of LDM and its impact on future generations. Therefore, this study examines women's strategies for communication and parenting during LDM.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative case study approach (Creswell, 2015). The research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, focusing on women whose husbands were left behind to work and study far away for a long time. This technique obtained seven women from seven families undergoing LDM in Gunung Pelindung Sub-district, East Lampung. Three families were from Way Mili village, and four were from Pelindung Jaya village. The author presents the informants in the form of codes: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 women in five families have husbands who work as Indonesian Workers, A6 women in the sixth family have husbands who work as sailors, and A7 women in the seventh family have husbands who are studying abroad.

Furthermore, the data were collected using direct interviews by phone and WhatsApp with the wives undergoing LDM as the primary method, and supporting methods were used using non-participant observation. The data obtained were then analyzed using Milles and Hubberman's analytical techniques, including data collection, display, and conclusion. Additionally, researchers used multiple validity procedures, namely data triangulation and member checking, to test the validity of the data found (Creswell & Crswell, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Long-Distance Marriage in Islamic Law Perspective

A long-distance marriage occurs when a husband and wife do not live together for various reasons. They may be separated by long distances, such as between islands or countries, making it challenging to meet as often as they would like. These infrequent physical meetings are due to the long distances and expensive travel costs. As a result, opportunities to get together with family are limited (Subhan, 2022).

Long-distance marriage in the perspective of Islamic law for married couples is *jaiz* /permissible, because in Islam the husband has an obligation to provide for his wife. In the Qur'an, Surah Annisa verse 34:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ

Meaning: The men are the leaders of the women because Allah has preferred some of them (men) over others (women) and because they (men) have spent some of their wealth. Therefore, virtuous women obey Allah and care for themselves without their husbands because Allah has cared for them.

This verse shows the husband's responsibility to protect and fulfill his wife's needs, including in the context of LDM. LDM is permissible by fulfilling several terms and conditions stipulated in the Qur'an and hadith, namely: 1) done without coercion from any party, 2) During LDM, physical sustenance and emotional sustenance from the husband to the wife should be continuously provided, 3) If the husband cannot provide physical sustenance but the wife is pleased, it is permissible, 4) during LDM, husband and wife must take care of themselves with Islamic law, 5) If the wife asks for long-distance marriage for reasons of study or work or because she wants to stay at her parents' house, while the husband is not allowed, then the wife is sinful (Subhan, 2022).

However, if the above conditions can be met, it does not mean long-distance marriage is forever permissible. There may be situations where long-distance marriage must be ended, such as the emergence of harm in the marriage, which is one of the strong reasons for ending it. This is based on a hadith:

إِنَّ لِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِنَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِأَهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، فَأَعْطِ كُلَّ ذِي حَقٍّ حَقَّهُ

“Verily with your Rabb, there is a right that you must fulfill, and with yourself, there is a right that you must fulfill, and with your family, there is a right that you must fulfill, so give each part its due”(HR. Bukhari).

This hadith encourages Muslims to lead a balanced life incorporating worship, self-care, and attention to family. Following Islamic teachings, such a balance will lead to a healthy and happy life. There are several reasons why this balance is important. Firstly, it ensures the fulfillment of spiritual obligations without neglecting other aspects of life. Secondly, it helps maintain the physical and mental health necessary for worship and other activities. Thirdly, it promotes harmonious family relationships, Islam's basic unit of society. By adhering to this principle, a Muslim is expected to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter, thus creating a meaningful life following religious guidance.

In conclusion, long-distance marriage in Islam is allowed by fulfilling the terms and conditions set. Couples must understand each other, communicate well, and protect themselves from fitnah to maintain household harmony in the context of LDM.

Women's Adaptive Strategy in Maintaining Family Harmony in Long Distance Marriage

Communication Strategy

A harmonious family is a household adorned with tranquility, serenity, love, affection, offspring, affection, sacrifice, complementarity, perfection, mutual help, and cooperation (Sainul, 2018). A harmonious family is a family that can create a harmonious situation between its members based on love and can manage life with balance so that there is a sense of serenity or tranquility in it.

The concept of family harmony encompasses the idea of peaceful and balanced relationships among family members (Trask, 2014). Family harmony is essential for the well-being and stability of the family unit. In addition, family harmony also plays an important role in child development and upbringing. This concept emphasizes the importance of open communication, mutual respect, and shared responsibility within the family (Rinawati et al., 2019). Based on the results of the interview with A1 and A3:

"I believe a harmonious family supports each other and works together. It all starts with good communication. So communication is crucial for us in a long-distance relationship." (Direct Interview, 18 June 2024).

"We always try to communicate every day, even if it is just small things. I think this is what keeps our family compact and harmonious. In our family, we try to talk openly. It helps us understand each other and avoid conflicts". (17 June 2024).

Research data shows that Harmonious families prioritize cooperation and pay attention to the division of tasks within the family. They also place great importance on effective communication between family members (Ruswinarsih & Apriati, 2021). Seeks to establish active and effective communication within the family. Communication is indispensable so there is cooperation within the family (Ruswinarsih & Apriati, 2021).

Communication is crucial in maintaining family harmony as the foundation for healthy relationships and conflict resolution. Effective communication strategies foster understanding, trust, and cooperation among family members, essential for a supportive home environment. The communication strategies implemented by the women in seven families in Gunung Pelindung District, East Lampung, are:

Intensive and structured communication is based on research results using interviews with informants A2:

"My husband and I agreed to communicate daily by at least sending messages. Sometimes, we communicate via phone or video call to ensure we stay connected. Scheduling communication helps us maintain family harmony. We choose a certain time, like weekends for longer chats, and weekdays only to discuss important things or updates on the children's daily lives." (Direct Interview, 17 June 2024)

The communication strategies used by the informants show a planned and structured effort to maintain family harmony despite undergoing a Long Distance Marriage. The agreement to communicate every day, even if only by text message, reflects a shared commitment to stay emotionally connected. The choice to use telephone or video calls shows an adaptation to technology as the primary means of communication, which is very relevant in long-distance relationships. The opinion of another informant supports this opinion, A4, who said:

In a long-distance relationship, scheduling communication is very important. My partner and I always set a time to talk every night, even for only 30 minutes. We use various platforms, such as video calls via Zoom or WhatsApp, depending on the situation. We often use instant messaging applications such as Telegram to share daily information because it is faster and more practical. We agree not to cut off communication immediately when there is a conflict. Usually, I give time to calm down, and then we resolve it over the phone or video while ensuring we can hear each other's views. (Direct Interview via WhatsApp, 18 June 2024)

Scheduling communication at certain times, such as weekends for longer chats and weekdays for short discussions about important matters, reflects the couple's ability to manage time efficiently. This strategy not only strengthens the couple's relationship but also ensures that the emotional and information needs of the family, especially the children, are met. The results of the interview with A5 further strengthen this data:

I have always believed that scheduled communication helps to keep a relationship healthy. My partner and I have a weekly agenda for in-depth discussions, usually on weekends. In addition, we use various platforms such as Instagram, Zoom, or WhatsApp for minor or serious chats. We also share daily activities by sending photos to each other. To resolve conflicts, we use the '24-hour approach', which takes 24 hours to reflect on an issue before discussing it directly. This helps to reduce excessive emotions. (Directly Interview via WhatsApp, 19 June 2024).

Based on the results of interviews with five couples in Gunung Pelindung District Lampung, it is known that the duration of time they undergo Long-Distance Marriage (LDM), as well as family conditions and the environment, have an impact on the different strategies of each couple, especially women who carry out their roles as mothers and wives in communication.

Data from three informants showed that the strategy used to communicate intensely and effectively using cell phones with various applications such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Facebook. The same thing was conveyed by A4 and A5, whose husbands also work as Indonesian workers abroad. Before their husbands left, they committed to continue to communicate intensely and share each other's activities or events that occur in daily life. They even made a schedule to communicate at least twice a week via calls or video calls (Direct Interview, 18 June 2024).

Communication is an important aspect of long-distance relationships. Effective communication can serve as a medium to maintain each other's trust. Communication is crucial for relationship sustenance, understanding, and satisfaction in long-distance marriages. Successful communication predicts connection, inclusion, and marital success in career-induced separations. The intensity of virtual communication plays a crucial role in enhancing commitment in long-distance marriages, indicating its significance for maintaining strong relationships despite physical distance (Sulfitri et al., 2023). A6 Has a different strategy, namely:

My husband is a sailor, so we often cannot communicate for a week or more. To overcome this, we made a pact to write down all important information in a notebook. When we finally communicate, we take the time to explain everything slowly, without emotion, so that we understand each other. (Direct Interview, 19 June 2024).

The strategy used by A6 is slightly different because her husband works as a sailor, meaning they often cannot contact each other for a week or more. Therefore, their strategy is to make an agreement to write down any important information on a note. When they can communicate, they take the time to slowly explain everything without emotion, ensuring that both parties understand each other (Interview, 19 June 2024). A7 is more structured because they even have a schedule of routines that must be followed together, such as the routine of every child going to bed and the father saying goodnight via video call, and so on (Interview, 19 June 2024).

These results are corroborated by the data from the author's observations, which show that all informants apply intense and effective communication strategies, make structured routine schedules, and understand each other while undergoing LDM.

From various interview results and strengthened by observation results, it can be concluded that communication strategies carried out by women with their partners are Scheduling regular communication, providing rules or agreements to keep the relationship close, using various digital platforms to facilitate communication according to the needs of the situation, sharing daily information to help couples stay connected even though they are far apart and planned long-distance conflict resolution methods can avoid escalation of problems.

Women's Strategies in Parenting

Based on the research results, several parenting strategies have been implemented by seven women in seven families in Pelindung Jaya and Way Mili Villages, Gunung Pelindung District, East Lampung Regency, namely: **First**, Based on an interview with A1, it was discovered that the first strategy implemented was self-care.

"It is important to take care of myself to stay strong physically and emotionally. I make time for light exercise every morning before the kids wake up. That way, I feel more refreshed and ready to face the day. The kids need me at my best, so this self-care is very important." (Direct Interview, 18 June 2024).

According to A1, the **first** strategy implemented is self-care and always finding time to rest. This is also conveyed by A2, A3, and A4, which show that women need time to rest and care for their physical health and pamper themselves so that their mental health is maintained and they can maintain family harmony when LDM. Such as going on vacation, online shopping, and sports with the community. These mothers emphasized that in order to take good care of their families, they must also take care of their own mental and emotional health (Direct Interview, 2024).

Second, Based on an interview with A6, the second strategy is Managing conflict and finances:

We try to build trust. My partner and I agree that we should always be honest about our finances and find a compromise when we have differences of opinion. When we can manage conflict and finances well, it also positively impacts the atmosphere at home. The children see that we work together, and it teaches them how to solve problems healthily."

The other six informants also expressed an opinion. All informants agree that in LDM, the ability to manage conflict and finances is very important. Conflicts that are resolved properly will positively impact family harmony and vice versa. Wives in long-distance marriages use a combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies to manage stress (Iswandari Winta & Nugraheni, 2019). Furthermore, economic stability is important for the continuity of the family and children's education. As a mother, you should have the ability to manage family finances.

Third, Focus on better understanding religious teachings and improving aspects of spirituality. A7 and A5 said:

“Our strategy is to make religion and spirituality a part of our daily life. We do not just teach theory but also try to set an example of how to live out religious values, such as being grateful, sharing, and respecting one another. We believe that children will understand more easily if they see firsthand how religion is applied. We involve them in activities that strengthen their faith, such as performing prayers together, reading the Qur’an, and sharing with those in need.”(Direct Interview, 19 June 2024)

“We try to explain the meaning of each religious ritual performed to our children so they do not just follow but truly understand its essence. We focus on building the children's spiritual awareness through discussion. We also encourage them to reflect, such as asking what they are grateful for each day before going to bed. The impact has been very positive. In addition to the children gaining a better understanding of religious values, the atmosphere at home has also become more harmonious. We feel more connected because spirituality teaches us to support and forgive each other. The children also appear calmer and more confident because they have a strong life guide.”(Direct Interview, 19 June 2024).

Based on the interview results, other informants also had the same opinion. It can be concluded that religion serves as the foundation and fortress that prevents individuals from engaging in negative behaviors such as infidelity, which can lead to divorce. A deeper understanding of religious teachings can help women develop patience, empathy, and forgiveness, which are important in maintaining a healthy marital relationship. In addition, spirituality can provide emotional and mental strength to face the challenges of a long-distance marriage.

Religious practices such as prayer, reciting the Qur'an, dhikr, and other types of worship can strengthen spiritual bonds in marriage. It is important to note that this strategy is not just about rigidly following religious rules but internalizing spiritual values that can enrich the marital relationship. As such, focusing on the spiritual aspect can help women build stronger, more meaningful marriages that are more resilient to temptations and challenges that can threaten the integrity of the household. Higher religiosity is associated with greater marital satisfaction for wives in long-distance marriages (Kuswartantia et al., 2023).

Fourth, seek community support. Based on interviews with A4 and A7, the strategy they implemented next was to seek community support:

“One of the key strategies we use is seeking community support. We believe that joining and participating in positive community activities helps us maintain family harmony and provides a healthy environment for raising children. Being part of a supportive community gives us access to shared resources, advice, and encouragement, strengthening our family unit.”(Direct Interview, 18 June 2024)

“Parenting can be challenging, and having a community to turn to for support can make a big difference. It helps reduce feelings of isolation and provides a sense of security, knowing that there are others who understand and support your journey as a parent. It’s important to seek out and participate in positive community activities to build a strong support system.” (Direct Interview, 19 June 2024).

Based on the interview results, other informants also had the same opinion. It can be concluded that Joining and participating in positive community activities will support women in maintaining family harmony and properly educating their children (Interview, 2024). **Fifth**, Educate children creatively, such as involving husbands in children's online learning classes, joining children's online classes, spending time with children, and always appreciating children's ideas and contributions, no matter how little.

These strategies demonstrate women's resilience, creativity, and extraordinary dedication in LDM situations. They maintain family harmony, educate their children, and develop resilience and new skills.

Every couple in a long-distance relationship has different motivations. In this case, they decided to undergo LDM. The working husband's role is not only as a breadwinner but also as a family protector. Despite this, the desire to live together remains in all couples, including those studied, as distance can reduce the quality of communication and negatively impact the relationship. The women emphasized the importance of improving the quality of communication, which they considered a significant factor in maintaining marital harmony during LDM (Januar & Harsari, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This research highlights women's diverse and resilient strategies in long-distance marriages (LDM) in Pelindung Jaya and Way Mili Villages to maintain family harmony. Key strategies include intensive and structured communication, utilizing technology, self-care, managing conflict and finances, focusing on religious values, seeking community

support, and creatively educating children. These women emphasize the importance of physical and mental well-being, financial stability, and spiritual growth in strengthening family bonds. Their participation in community activities provides essential emotional and social support. Through these strategies, they demonstrate resilience and creativity in overcoming the challenges of LDM, ensuring a nurturing and harmonious family environment. The findings underscore the need for policies that better support long-distance marriage families and contribute to understanding contemporary family dynamics in the context of globalization and labor mobility.

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