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THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC COUNSELING GUIDANCE FOR PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Domestic violence remains a persistent problem in Indonesia, producing long-term physical, psychological, social, and spiritual harm for victims, families, and communities. Although Islamic counseling has been proposed as a rehabilitative and preventive approach, field-based evidence on its application to domestic violence perpetrators remains limited. This study aims to explore how Islamic counseling rehabilitates domestic violence perpetrators and strengthens family resilience. Using a qualitative case study design, the research examined two perpetrator cases through in-depth interviews with counselors and mentors, direct observation of counseling sessions and community activities, and analysis of program documentation. The data were analyzed descriptively through data reduction, narrative presentation, and thematic synthesis. The findings indicate that perpetrators' violent behavior was associated with poor emotion regulation, maladaptive learned responses, early or forced marital transitions, patriarchal norms, and limited communication skills. The counseling process integrated behavioral methods, including modeling, reinforcement, emotion-regulation training, social-skills training, and cognitive behavioral therapy techniques, with Islamic spiritual practices such as *muhasabah*, *istighfar*, and *dhikr* to foster self-awareness, cognitive restructuring, repentance, and intrinsic motivation for behavioral change. The intervention also involved family mentoring, community

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support groups, and religious leaders, enabling perpetrators to practice new relational skills while supporting normative shifts against violence. Critical program components included a modular medium- to long-term design, measurable targets, follow-up monitoring, counselor competence in clinical–religious integration, and victim-safety safeguards. Participants, including child witnesses, reported improved emotional stability, renewed religious engagement, and observable reductions in aggressive behavior; however, the findings are limited by the small sample size and local context. The study concludes that the systematic integration of behavioral and cognitive behavioral techniques with Islamic spiritual frameworks offers a promising approach for rehabilitating domestic violence perpetrators and rebuilding family resilience in Indonesian settings. This study contributes to Islamic counseling, family resilience, and domestic violence intervention literature by providing field-based insights into a culturally and religiously grounded perpetrator rehabilitation model, while larger-scale controlled studies are needed to test generalizability and refine intervention modules.

Keywords: Domestic Violence; Islamic Counseling; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; Perpetrator Rehabilitation; Family Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) remains a persistent social problem in Indonesian society. Domestic violence not only causes physical impacts but also impacts psychological, spiritual, and social relationships within the family. According to a 2024 report by the National Commission on Violence Against Women, the high number of domestic violence cases indicates that this issue requires serious attention through various approaches, including religious ones. Islamic guidance and counseling are presented as preventive and curative efforts that not only focus on changing the perpetrator's behavior but also on instilling religious values, moral responsibility, spiritual awareness, and an understanding of family rights and obligations, as outlined in Islamic teachings. Through this approach, individuals are expected to build healthy communication skills, manage emotions, and foster harmonious family relationships, thereby minimizing violent behavior and strengthening family resilience (Ulfa & Algifahmy, 2025).

Islamic counseling practices can be implemented through various techniques, such as individual counseling, providing advice based on the Quran and Hadith, self-reflection, and strengthening emotional and behavioral control. This approach is considered relevant

because acts of domestic violence are often influenced by poor emotional management skills, a lack of preparedness to face domestic conflict, weak communication between partners, and a limited understanding of rights and obligations within the family. Furthermore, disharmony in relationships, negative prejudice, and the inability to resolve conflicts healthily can also trigger domestic violence. Through appropriate Islamic counseling interventions, perpetrators are guided to build self-awareness, correct maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors, and foster a sense of responsibility, empathy, and family harmony in accordance with Islamic values, thereby enabling healthier, more harmonious household relationships (Fadhli, 2020).

Perpetrators of domestic violence fundamentally require not only social or legal sanctions but also psychological and spiritual support to understand the roots of their aggressive behavior. Islamic counseling provides support that integrates psychological aspects with Islamic values, such as self-reflection, repentance, emotional control, and moral development. Through this approach, perpetrators are expected to recognize their mistakes, improve their interpersonal relationships, and establish healthier family interaction patterns (Fitriyanti et al., 2024).

Several related studies show that Islamic counseling plays a strategic role in dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence. Research by EkoAtmojo et al. (2024) found that Islamic psychological counseling through correcting the understanding of Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 successfully reduced the frequency of perpetrator violence from hitting, swearing, to threats, to awareness to stop, apologize, and be more compassionate towards children. Rhahmadani (2023) at KUA Bangun Purba revealed that counselors act as facilitators and motivators who guide so that divorce does not occur due to domestic violence. Shofa (2020) at JPPA Kudus showed that Islamic counseling strengthens the psychological condition of victims while preventing physical violence by prioritizing mental health through closeness to Allah. Suteja and Muzaki (2019) in Cirebon, family counseling conducted by counselors plays a very important role in preventing and taking curative action to resolve domestic violence. Research conducted at the Indonesia Women's Center YHI-KOWANI Yogyakarta by Sofiyanti (2023) found that Islamic counseling with a spiritual approach grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah helped clients overcome problems and return to their natural state. Finally, research conducted by Haryati et al. (2022) found that counselors focused on changing the victim's mindset, reducing trauma, and drawing closer to Allah SWT through worship based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. These six studies consistently demonstrate that

Islamic counseling is effective in transforming behavior for both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

Therefore, the role of Islamic counseling for perpetrators of domestic violence is crucial in behavioral rehabilitation and character reshaping. Islamic counseling aims not only to resolve immediate conflicts but also to foster long-term awareness, enabling perpetrators to live family lives in accordance with Islamic teachings that uphold compassion, justice, and responsibility (Subhi & Sunyoto, 2025). Thus, Islamic counseling can be an effective alternative approach to addressing domestic violence issues, particularly for families in Indonesia.

METHODS

This qualitative research uses a case study design to explore the role of Islamic counseling for two perpetrators of domestic violence (DV) or *Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga* (KDRT). The primary focus is on mapping the counseling process, the dynamics of the subjects' behavioral changes, and the integration of Islamic principles into counseling practices in the field. Using a descriptive approach, this study aims to provide a systematic, factual overview of the service's effectiveness in addressing the psychological and spiritual aspects of the research subjects (Nasution, 2023; Rukin, 2019).

Data was collected through a combination of in-depth interviews with counselors and mentors, direct observation of service interactions, and documentation studies from relevant archives (Rahardjo, 2007; Sugiyono, 2017). All information obtained was then processed using descriptive analysis procedures, including data reduction, narrative presentation, and conclusion drawing. This process was carried out to ensure that the phenomena under study could be understood in depth, accurately, and comprehensively, reflecting the realities of the research location.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Victims of Violence Who Must Be Given Treatment

YN is a 12-year-old girl. For several years, she has often witnessed her parents hitting and yelling at each other at home. She often feels afraid and sometimes cries alone in her

room. Because of this, she has difficulty sleeping, is easily startled by loud noises, and has been struggling with school tests because she has difficulty concentrating.

She also feels distant from her religion due to her confusion and sadness. She rarely prays and feels like no one listens to her concerns. She also wants Islamic guidance and counseling to learn how to manage her fears, improve her worship, and learn how to communicate with her family to create a more peaceful atmosphere at home. She is willing to participate in various counseling and other positive activities.

Meanwhile, DP is a 9-year-old boy. He once witnessed his parents hitting and screaming at each other at home. He felt very sad and often felt dizzy when he remembered it. He was afraid that the fight would happen again, he would tremble and sometimes wouldn't eat. When his parents fought, he often hid and prayed for it to stop. He really wanted to learn how to feel safe and calm again, like the children around him, to express his sadness healthily, and to participate in religious strengthening activities such as reciting prayers, dhikr, and telling calming religious stories.

A glimpse into the lives of the two children who were victims of domestic violence (*Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga*/KDRT) above reveals that Islamic counseling services aimed at them are the best solution and can have a profound impact. This intervention addresses not only cognitive and behavioral aspects but also the subjects' spiritual foundations. To comprehensively describe these dynamics, this section is divided into three main sub-themes:

Characteristics of Deviant Behavior of Domestic Violence Perpetrators and Barriers to Self-Adjustment

The emergence of aggressive or violent behavior in the domestic environment generally stems from an individual's inability to control emotional outbursts, express needs assertively, and healthily resolve household issues. This inability often stems from limited emotional regulation and communication skills, making small conflicts easily escalate into arguments. In this context, aggressive behavior emerges as a maladaptive strategy to cope with feelings of helplessness or failure in managing stress, rather than a constructive solution.

From a sociological perspective, one of the main triggers of vulnerability in marital relationships is a lack of mental readiness and being too young when starting a household—conditions often found in early marriages or one-sided arranged marriages. Individuals who are forced or who are not psychologically mature enough to assume marital responsibilities face significant adaptation difficulties. They lack negotiation skills, conflict management, and

role understanding, making them vulnerable to domestic stressors that trigger violence (Fadhli, 2020). Structural factors such as family pressure, patriarchal norms, and limited education also exacerbate this vulnerability.

Failure to adapt can lead to a buildup of negative prejudice, breakdowns in communication between partners, and destructive outbursts of anger. Temperamental behavior, combined with the habit of bottling up problems without seeking solutions, creates a cycle of frustration that can explode at any time into various forms of violence—physical, psychological, or economic neglect. Therefore, the initial stages of Islamic counseling for perpetrators of domestic violence, as in the case of YN and DP, must focus on dismantling cognitive distortions and building self-awareness, so that subjects can recognize the roots of their destructive behavior and begin to learn emotional regulation skills, assertive communication, and solutions based on religious values that support behavioral change.

The Combination of Behavioral Techniques and Islamic Spiritual Values in Reconstructing Behavior

As a curative-rehabilitative recovery tool, the implementation of Islamic counseling in the field integrates the principles of behavior modification with the reinforcement of religious values. The behavioral approach is appropriate because it emphasizes a concrete analysis of how individuals think, respond emotionally, and act under stress or conflict. From this counseling perspective, the tendency to commit violence is understood as maladaptive behavior formed through a learning process—for example, the influence of a rigid patriarchal culture, family norms, or exposure to past violence—so that, just as behavior is acquired through learning, it can also be changed through relearning.

In a targeted personal counseling session, the counselor applies measurable and practical behavioral techniques. Modeling techniques, or behavioral role models, are used to demonstrate healthy husband-wife interaction patterns grounded in good faith and noble morals, so that clients can learn concrete examples to emulate (Utomo, 2025). Reinforcement or positive appreciation is applied when clients demonstrate progress—for example, by reducing aggressive impulses or using polite verbal communication—to strengthen adaptive behavior. Additionally, social skills and emotion regulation training are provided to equip clients with concrete strategies for managing conflict triggers, such as relaxation exercises, breathing techniques, assertiveness, and structured problem-solving.

These behavior modification techniques become more effective when internalized through a consistent Islamic spiritual approach. Here, counseling emphasizes more than just behavioral changes to avoid social or legal sanctions, but also directs clients toward *muhasabah* (self-reflection), sincere repentance, and an understanding of religious ethics regarding family rights (Munawaroh & Ichsan, 2024). This spiritual process helps connect daily actions with moral responsibilities before God, so that the motivation for change comes from inner awareness rather than merely from outward obedience.

Inner awareness developed through a combination of behavioral learning and spiritual empowerment is the primary driver of lasting change. When perpetrators understand that harming family members is an act of injustice, a violation of trust, and contrary to Islamic values, efforts to replace old habits with patterns of interaction filled with respect and compassion are more likely to be sustainable. Therefore, Islamic counseling intervention plans should include ongoing evaluation, family support, and follow-up programs to ensure sustainable behavior change and support holistic family recovery (Almashyra, 2025).

Restructuring Domestic Resilience with an Islamic and Equality Perspective

Islamic counseling services are not intended merely to resolve momentary disputes, but rather to guide the family toward a harmonious, loving, and compassionate vision. This approach prioritizes the reconstruction of family relationships as a long-term goal: not just eliminating the symptoms of violence, but building a foundation of values, attitudes, and skills that enable the household to thrive in peace, compassion, and mutual respect. With a holistic, recovery-oriented approach, interventions focus on behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects to ensure comprehensive, sustainable changes (Frost et al., 2017).

One core strategy is in-depth education about the rights and obligations of couples from an Islamic perspective, emphasizing justice and equality, as well as a firm rejection of all forms of violence. This material clarifies that family responsibilities do not allow for demeaning domination, but rather emphasize trust, shared responsibility, and respect for the dignity of each member. By analyzing textual and contextual sources—including interpretations of the principle of *mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf*—counseling helps couples understand that functional equality within the family aligns with, rather than contradicts, Islamic values (Fazlurrahman, 2024).

In practice, counselors equip couples with healthy communication skills and practical Islamic mechanisms for conflict resolution. Techniques taught include *qaulan kariman* (good manners) and *qaulan ma'rufan* (good manners)—polite, non-offensive, and solution-focused ways of speaking—as well as assertiveness training, active listening, and transparent role-setting. Scenario exercises, role-plays, and structured homework help couples practice these skills in real-life situations, gradually replacing old interaction patterns with more equal and constructive ones.

The mentoring program provides a safe space for perpetrators of domestic violence to rediscover their religious nature and repair emotional bonds with their wives and children. Through self-reflection, spiritual strengthening, and interventions that combine positive reinforcement and family counseling, perpetrators are encouraged to internalize the values of compassion and responsibility—not simply out of fear of punishment, but out of inner awareness (Bailey, 2024). Continued support, extended family involvement when appropriate, and post-intervention monitoring are necessary to strengthen family resilience, prevent recurrence of violence, and reduce the risk of divorce in a way that respects the principle of protecting and resolving the well-being of all family members.

Synergy of Community-Based Counseling and the Involvement of Religious Leaders

Rehabilitation efforts for perpetrators of domestic violence will not be optimal if they rely solely on formal meetings in the counseling room; interventions need to be expanded to broader social settings so that behavioral changes become evident in everyday life. Individual meetings are crucial for exploring the root causes of problems and providing emotional regulation techniques. Still, without a supportive social context, these new skills are often difficult to practice and maintain. Therefore, interventions must be designed as a series of ongoing activities that connect counseling sessions with real-life practices within the family and community (Duncan & Goddard, 2017).

One key element is establishing community-based support groups that provide a safe space for perpetrators to share experiences, receive feedback, and practice social skills within a peer group. Such groups also allow for the collective application of positive reinforcement, for example, recognition of behavioral changes or anger management achievements, and the careful development of joint action plans that involve the victim's family. With peer support

mechanisms and ongoing monitoring, the risk of relapse can be minimized by the availability of a social network (Ichsan, 2026) that reminds and enforces nonviolent norms.

The involvement of local religious leaders with an anti-violence perspective strengthens the spiritual and normative dimensions of rehabilitation. Religious leaders can provide spiritual guidance, explain Islamic values that reject violence, and act as credible mediators in changing narratives of violence legitimacy that may develop within the community (Koch, 2015). The combination of professional counseling, group support, and religious reinforcement from local authorities creates a mutually reinforcing ecosystem of interventions: counseling builds personal skills, the community provides social practices and controls, and religious leaders affirm the ethical foundations that make change more meaningful and lasting.

Systematic Stress Management Through Islamic Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Eradicating entrenched aggressive behavior requires systematic, multi-layered, and measurable interventions. Behavioral counseling is best designed as a medium- to long-term program that includes an initial assessment, specific behavioral targets, structured training, and periodic evaluations. Without a clear framework (e.g., indicators of change, session frequency, and monitoring mechanisms), therapeutic efforts are vulnerable to stalling when life stressors resurface, thus maintaining a high risk of relapse.

Technically, an emotion regulation program for perpetrators of domestic violence needs to integrate techniques from cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which has been proven effective in restructuring cognitive distortions and maladaptive response patterns. CBT interventions can include trigger identification, recording emotions and automatic thoughts, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving exercises, and gradual exposure to triggering situations in a safe context (Freeman & McDonald, 2025). Practical exercises (such as role-plays, homework assignments, and evidence-based coping strategies) strengthen the transfer of skills from sessions to everyday life.

Program effectiveness is enhanced when CBT is combined with relevant Islamic spiritual wisdom, such as *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *istighfar* (religious prayer), and Islamic relaxation techniques (guided breathing with prayers or short dhikr). This combination provides two pathways to change: a cognitive-behavioral pathway that restructures thought patterns and responses, and a spiritual pathway that provides moral meaning, calms the mind, and increases intrinsic motivation to change. Recent research from Fitriyanti et al. (2024)

shows that combining clinical interventions and religious practices can reduce anxiety levels and improve impulse control in perpetrators, significantly reducing the frequency of aggressive outbursts.

For effective implementation, the program must include counselor training in clinical-religious integration, professional supervision, and family and community engagement as a context for practice. Intervention modules should be structured modularly (e.g., an emotion regulation module, a cognitive restructuring module, a spiritual practice module, and a relapse prevention module) with pre-post measurement tools and periodic follow-up (3–6 months). Furthermore, ethical considerations and victim protection must be maintained: interventions with perpetrators must be balanced with monitoring of victim safety, referrals to protective services, and open cross-sectoral coordination so that rehabilitation does not compromise family safety.

Optimizing Pre-Marital Education Programs as a Preventive Measure

Strengthening premarital education at institutions such as the Religious Affairs Office (KUA) or the BP4 (Regional Office of Religious Affairs and the Religious Affairs Supervisory Agency) is a strategic preventive measure because many cases of domestic violence are rooted in emotional immaturity and low readiness for marriage, including early marriage. Comprehensive premarital courses should include modules on conflict management based on Islamic values (e.g., the principle of mutual benefit (*mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf*), the principles of mutual communication (*qaulan kariman*), and the concept of *amanah* (trust) so that prospective couples understand that household responsibilities require mutual respect, not domination. By understanding these values before marriage, the potential for the emergence of cultural legitimacy that justifies violence can be minimized early on.

In addition to values and communication, premarital education should include practical skills for managing financial and social stressors, which often trigger marital conflict. Simple training on family financial planning, fair role-sharing, and coping strategies for external pressures (e.g., pressure from extended family, social stigma, or financial burden) helps prospective couples develop adaptive habits before problems escalate (Giles, 2024). This approach is relevant for preventing minor conflicts from escalating into aggressive patterns. When couples are trained to resolve disputes cooperatively and manage sources of stress, the risk of violence is significantly reduced.

The connection to both child victims of domestic violence is important to emphasize: premarital prevention not only protects adult couples but also represents a direct investment in the child's future safety and well-being. Children who grow up in families that are emotionally and practically prepared are more likely to avoid exposure to violence and developmental trauma, thus minimizing their need for Islamic guidance and counseling services (Khayati, 2025). Therefore, premarital programs should be part of a broader child protection strategy, combined with community child protection outreach and early referral mechanisms for signs of risk within new families.

CONCLUSION

Islamic counseling makes a significant contribution to the rehabilitation of domestic violence (DV) perpetrators by combining behavior modification techniques and strengthening Islamic spiritual values. This approach, which integrates emotional regulation training, assertive communication skills, role-modeling, and cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT) enriched with spiritual practices (muhasabah, istighfar, dhikr), can reduce aggressive impulses and encourage the internalization of moral responsibility. The intervention, designed as a medium- to long-term, modular program with pre- and post-measurements and follow-up, demonstrates the potential for sustainable behavior change when supported by professional supervision, family involvement, community support groups, and local religious leaders. The findings also emphasize the importance of the preventive dimension: strengthening premarital education that includes Islamic values-based conflict management, family financial planning, and psychosocial preparedness has the potential to reduce the risk of new patterns of domestic violence emerging, while protecting child development. Practically, policy recommendations include developing an integrated intervention module (emotional regulation, CBT, and spiritual practices), counselor training in clinical-religious integration, victim monitoring mechanisms, and cross-sectoral collaboration among counseling services, religious institutions, and child protection agencies. Research limitations (including the small sample size and local context) limit the generalizability of the results. Therefore, more detailed research with representative samples and robust effectiveness trials is recommended to test the generalizability of the program's effects.

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