

Prediction of Potential Regret in Marriage Conflict: Reviewed from Qur'anic Psychology and Family Therapy

Fithri Choirunnisa Siregar*, Esli Zuraidah Siregar

Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan, Indonesia

fithrich@uinsyahada.ac.id*

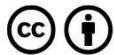
Submitted:
2025-12-15

Published:
2026-01-14

Keywords:
Family Therapy, Marital Conflict, Qur'anic Psychology, Regret,

Copyright holder:
© Author/s (2026)

This article is under:



How to cite:
Siregar, F. C., & Siregar, E. Z. (2026). Prediction of Potential Regret in Marriage Conflict: Reviewed from Qur'anic Psychology and Family Therapy. *Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 8(1).
<https://doi.org/10.51214/002026081717000>

Published by:
Kuras Institute

E-ISSN:
2656-1050

ABSTRACT: Marriage in Islam is highly encouraged as an act of worship to Allah SWT and as the fulfillment of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. As a lifelong commitment, marriage can be a source of happiness as well as prolonged psychological stress due to inevitable marital conflicts. Although many conflicts are minor and, they often lead to regret when handled unwisely. Such regret may reflect a genuine desire to preserve the sanctity of marriage, yet it can become destructive when emotional immaturity prevents healthy conflict resolution. This study adopts a qualitative conceptual approach by integrating two perspectives: Qur'anic Psychology as an Islamic framework for understanding marital psychological dynamics, and Applied Psychology through Family Therapy as a practical strategy for managing marital conflict. The findings indicate that marital regret can serve as a constructive signal when approached through Qur'anic psychological principles, encouraging self-awareness, emotional regulation, and spiritual reflection. Family Therapy complements this perspective by offering structured techniques that promote effective communication, emotional maturity, and mutual understanding between spouses. The integration of Qur'anic Psychology and Family Therapy highlights that marital conflict is not merely a relational issue but a divine test that requires both spiritual consciousness and psychological skills. Constructive conflict resolution grounded in Islamic values and supported by applied psychological methods can strengthen marital harmony and sustain the sacred bond of marriage.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a sacred physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman, established to form a harmonious and prosperous family grounded in faith in the One Almighty God (Fahmi, 2021). In Islam, marriage is not merely a ceremonial contract but a lifelong commitment that unites two individuals with distinct personalities into a shared journey of responsibility, emotional support, and moral development. This sacred bond is intended to foster tranquility (*sakinah*), affection (*mawaddah*), and compassion (*rahmah*), as emphasized in Islamic teachings and prayers of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (Erik, 2025).

Despite its idealized spiritual foundation, marriage inevitably involves challenges, particularly interpersonal conflicts between spouses (Marlia et al., 2024). These conflicts arise from differences in values, expectations, emotional responses, and problem-solving styles (Mawaddah et al., 2024). While conflict is a natural and even potentially enriching aspect of marital relationships, its impact depends largely on how it is managed. Poorly handled conflicts may disrupt marital harmony,

generate psychological distress, and in severe cases, lead to separation or divorce (Septiani, 2021). One common psychological consequence of unresolved marital conflict is regret, which often emerges after emotional tension subsides and individuals begin to reflect on their actions

One common psychological consequence of unresolved marital conflict is regret, which often emerges after emotional tension subsides and individuals begin to reflect on their actions (Wardana & Ananda, 2024). However, when conflicts are resolved destructively due to low emotional maturity, regret can intensify relational damage and hinder reconciliation (Mubarok & Hidayati, 2022). This condition highlights the need for effective conflict resolution strategies that address both emotional regulation and deeper psychological-spiritual dimensions within marriage (Yusuf, 2021). Existing studies on marital conflict in Islamic contexts tend to emphasize normative religious guidance or legal frameworks, while psychological interventions often operate independently of Islamic spiritual values (Syobah et al., 2023). This indicates a research gap in integrative approaches that combine Qur'anic Psychology-focused on understanding the human soul (nafs) and repentance (islah) with Applied Psychology, particularly Family Therapy, which offers structured, evidence-based techniques for relational repair (Kasih & Satiti, 2020).

Therefore, this study is urgent and significant as it seeks to bridge this gap by integrating Qur'anic Psychology and Family Therapy as a comprehensive scientific approach to understanding marital conflict and regret. Such integration is expected to provide a more holistic framework for conflict resolution that is both spiritually grounded and psychologically effective, contributing to the sustainability of marital harmony in contemporary Muslim families.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a narrative review design, which is a purpose-built literature-based method used to identify, summarize, and critically analyze relevant scholarly works in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon. The narrative review approach was selected because the aim of this study is not to measure variables empirically, but to integrate and interpret theoretical perspectives and empirical findings related to marital conflict, regret, and conflict resolution. Specifically, this design allows for an in-depth exploration of two complementary frameworks Qur'anic Psychology and Family Therapy within the context of marital conflict, enabling the development of an integrative analytical perspective.

Unit of Analysis / Sources of Data

As a literature-based study, this research does not involve human respondents. Instead, the units of analysis consist of scholarly literature relevant to the topic. The data sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, review articles, academic books, and authoritative publications in the fields of psychology, Islamic studies, and family counseling. Additional contextual insights were drawn from reputable reports and news sources discussing marital conflict phenomena, where relevant. The literature selected for analysis was published within the period 2010–2025 to ensure conceptual relevance and contemporary applicability.

Research Instruments

In narrative review studies, the primary research instrument is the systematic search and documentation protocol. Literature was collected using academic search engines, primarily Google Scholar, with predefined keywords to ensure consistency and relevance. The keywords used in this study include regret, marital conflict, Qur'anic psychology, and family therapy (Yam, 2024). These keywords were applied individually and in combination to capture a broad yet focused range of sources. Inclusion criteria consisted of relevance to marital conflict, psychological or spiritual

dimensions of regret, and conflict resolution strategies, while sources lacking theoretical or empirical grounding were excluded.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through a structured literature search process. Relevant publications were first identified based on title and abstract screening. Selected sources were then reviewed in full to assess their theoretical contribution, methodological rigor, and relevance to the research focus. The collected literature was organized thematically according to its alignment with Qur'anic Psychology, Family Therapy, marital conflict dynamics, and the concept of regret. This procedure enabled the researchers to systematically map key concepts, theories, and findings across disciplines.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using thematic and comparative analysis. The reviewed literature was analyzed to identify recurring themes, conceptual patterns, and theoretical intersections between Qur'anic Psychology and Family Therapy. Concepts related to regret, emotional maturity, conflict dynamics, repentance (*taubah*), self-reform (*islah*), communication patterns, and relational repair were compared and synthesized. The analysis focused on how these perspectives complement each other in explaining marital conflict and proposing constructive resolution strategies. The findings were then interpreted to develop an integrative framework that is both psychologically grounded and spiritually informed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Regret

Regret is commonly defined as a negative emotional and cognitive response arising from the evaluation of past actions or decisions that are perceived as mistakes or as having produced unfavorable outcomes (Abdallahman & Darwish, 2024). The term originates from the word regret, which refers to feelings of deep disappointment, loss, and psychological discomfort resulting from one's own choices or behaviors (Budjanovcanin & Woodrow, 2022). In psychological and moral contexts, regret is closely related to remorse and repentance, involving strong feelings of moral guilt that may motivate behavioral change and efforts toward self-correction or redemption (Choi, 2022). This definition positions regret not merely as an emotional reaction, but as a reflective process that integrates emotion, cognition, and moral awareness.

Within decision theory, regret has been widely discussed as a key explanatory concept for deviations from purely rational decision-making. The concepts of regret aversion and anticipated regret describe how individuals' expectations of future regret influence choices made under uncertainty (Nyoman et al., 2026). Empirical findings show that when individuals make decisions without complete information, they often experience regret upon realizing that alternative choices could have yielded better outcomes. In this framework, regret is operationalized as the discrepancy between the actual outcome of a chosen option and the optimal outcome that could have been achieved (Varma et al., 2023). This perspective highlights regret as a cognitive evaluation process that shapes future decision-making behavior.

Psychological studies further characterize regret as an unpleasant cognitive-emotional state that individuals are motivated to regulate, suppress, or avoid. Regret typically emerges through counterfactual thinking, in which individuals compare real outcomes with imagined alternatives that are perceived as more desirable. This comparison process explains why regret is often accompanied by thoughts such as "if only" or wishes to return to the past and change previous decisions. Interview findings from marital counselors and family therapists reinforce this view,

indicating that individuals in marital conflict frequently express regret after emotional arousal subsides, particularly when reflecting on words spoken or actions taken impulsively during disputes. According to interviewees, regret commonly emerges not from the conflict itself, but from the realization that the conflict was handled in a manner inconsistent with personal values or relational commitments.

Although regret is often associated with negative psychological consequences, contemporary research emphasizes that regret does not inevitably lead to maladaptive outcomes. Empirical studies demonstrate that individuals with higher levels of self-compassion are better able to manage regret constructively, showing greater emotional resilience and mental well-being. Such individuals tend to accept mistakes without excessive self-punishment and use regret as a learning mechanism to guide future behavior. This finding is supported by interview data, in which practitioners observed that clients who possess emotional awareness and self-compassion are more likely to transform regret into motivation for relational repair, rather than allowing it to escalate into guilt or resentment.

Research on the antecedents of regret has identified several influential factors. Studies indicate that regret is shaped by responsibility attribution, temporal perspective, justification of decisions, and social influence. Landman's "actor effect" explains that regret tends to be more intense when outcomes are attributed to one's own actions rather than external circumstances. Similarly, Ritov and Baron found that individuals experience stronger regret when losses result from actions perceived as personally responsible (Ritov & Baron, 1995). However, longitudinal studies by Gilovich and Medvec demonstrate that while actions may generate stronger short-term regret, long-term regret is more frequently associated with inaction or missed opportunities. Interview participants echoed this finding, noting that many married individuals report long-term regret not for confronting conflict, but for failing to communicate, seek help, or address problems early in the relationship.

Further studies suggest that regret is mitigated when decisions are influenced by external recommendations or supported by clear justifications. Zeelenberg's research indicates that individuals are less likely to experience regret when decisions are guided by trusted advice, while Inman and Zeelenberg highlight the protective role of justification in reducing regret intensity. Interview data align with these findings, as counselors reported that couples who seek mediation or counseling early tend to experience less enduring regret, as shared responsibility and guided decision-making reduce self-blame. Regret is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional discomfort, cognitive evaluation, moral awareness, and motivational potential. Both the reviewed literature and interview insights converge on the conclusion that regret should not be understood solely as a negative outcome, but as a psychologically and morally significant signal. When appropriately processed, regret can function as a catalyst for self-reflection, emotional maturity, and constructive change, particularly within the context of marital relationships.

Aspects Psychological Regret

According to this research the psychological experience of regret can be differentiated into several interrelated aspects, namely feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and motivational goals (Bossuyt et al., 2014). These aspects reflect the multidimensional nature of regret as an emotional response that involves affective, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral components. Building on this conceptual framework, the researcher further developed the construct of regret into ten specific items that operationalize these five aspects (Yan et al., 2023).

The first aspect, response feelings, consists of two items: feeling a sinking sensation and feeling that one should have known better. The second aspect, response thoughts, includes thinking about the mistake that was made and reflecting on lost opportunities. The third aspect, response action tendencies, is characterized by the tendency to blame oneself (such as feeling the

urge to “kick oneself”) and the inclination to correct the mistake. The fourth aspect, response actions, involves engaging in different behaviors or attempting to change the situation. Finally, the fifth aspect, response motivational goals, encompasses the desire to undo the event and the wish to obtain a second chance.

From these five aspects and ten items, it can be observed that regret is predominantly characterized by cognitive processes rather than purely affective reactions. This finding is consistent with the research of (Camille et al., 2004) which demonstrates that the cognitive mechanisms underlying regret are closely related to counterfactual thinking. According to their study, counterfactual thinking is primarily associated with the function of the orbitofrontal cortex in the human brain. Through experimental comparisons between individuals with normal neurological functioning and patients with damage to the orbitofrontal cortex, (Camille et al., 2004) found that healthy individuals were able to generate counterfactual thoughts with ease, whereas patients with orbitofrontal cortex impairment experienced significant difficulties. These findings led to the conclusion that the orbitofrontal cortex plays a crucial role in counterfactual thinking, which in turn significantly influences the emergence and experience of regret.

Spiritual Aspects of Regret in Islam

In the Islamic view, regret related with someone who has make a mistake or sin, and then realize his mistake. Regret involves the process of thinking and feeling that in term time certain He realize, remember return things that have been happened, analyzed factor causes and impacts after experience awareness post commit sin, when that's it experiences regret. However, regret is not something that ends badly, because regret can give rise to better behavior to improve previous behavior.

In the Islamic context, regret is included as one aspect of repentance that is accepted by Allah SWT. People who repent must moreover formerly experience feeling regret, because without regret so repentance just something lies. Aspect's repentance includes: First, leave the sin that Once done. Second, experiencing regret strong. Third, be determined for no do it again. Conditions most important in repentance is regret. Rasulullah SAW once said that the essence of repentance is regret. Then the steps first for repentance is confess that himself has do mistakes and regrets deeds.

In Islam, regret not only just a feeling of guilt, but also can become door going to repentance and change extraordinary life usual. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) frequently spoke about regret in various hadiths, such as expressing love for a lover. He said that his followers should never be late in realizing their mistakes and emphasized that true regret is the path to sincere repentance.

Urgency Prediction Potential Regret Before Make decisions

Prediction potential regret depends on two assumptions base about mental health humans and the decision-making process decision they: First, that part big individual is very easy experience feeling regret or happy. Second, that individual capable ponder feeling certain when make decision in an unavoidable situation sure. (Hoffman et al., 2014) Belief that will regret something future decisions Because choice moment this no solely rooted in reasoning logical; belief This in a way significant shaped by anticipation emotional. Anticipation This push individual for better avoid regret than take time long enough to evaluate in a way objective potential risks and benefits from decision which will take.

Reluctance For be in a situation regret is also believed as human mechanisms use for avoid dissonance cognitive. Dissonance cognitive is theory developed by American psychologist Leon Festinger, refers to the way individual try avoid absence the comfort that arises when there is inconsistency between decisions taken and how the result. With try predict How feeling We about

future results from decision We moment this, reluctance to regret can help We avoid potential dissonance cognitive.

In addition, research conducted by Daniel Gilbert et al. found that people often exaggerate future regrets that show that most individual not enough prone to regret than possible they believe. This is findings interesting for remember when consider decisions where the potential regret influence preference we. With realize that We Possible exaggerate feeling regret in the future, we can avoid buy “insurance emotional”the real No We need.

Avoidance regret and AI intersect in several interesting ways along AI systems are increasingly involved in the process of taking decisions where regret and avoidance often play a role. Minimize regret is the strategy used in learning machine for optimize taking decision with Study from past mistakes. Concept This originates from learning reinforcement and theory games and especially relevant when something algorithm operating in an unsafe environment.

In AI terms, regret measure gap between results action taken by a person algorithm (or agent) and results the best possible can take after (regret = optimal reward-reward actual). Minimization regret aim For reduce difference This along time along system Study from knowledge and experience , individual will skilled in produce better decisions and results effective (Siebert et al., 2021).

Marriage Conflict

Conflict Theory: Interpersonal Conflict Model

Conflict is an inherent and unavoidable phenomenon in human interaction, including in relationships that are perceived as harmonious or ideal. Even within close and committed relationships, conflict tends to emerge and may intensify as relational bonds deepen. Conflict constitutes an inseparable part of human life problems and may function either destructively or constructively, depending on how individuals manage and resolve it. Thus, conflict should not be understood solely as a negative occurrence, but rather as a dynamic process that can contribute to relational growth when handled effectively.

Within the context of marriage, happiness is widely regarded as the primary goal and expectation of marital union. However, achieving marital happiness is not a simple endeavor. Marital satisfaction can only be attained when both spouses maintain high-quality interactions and foster a positive marital climate. In practice, expectations held prior to marriage often differ from post-marital realities. Marriage demands significant lifestyle adjustments, including role transformation, responsibility sharing, and continuous self-adjustment between spouses. These changes require the ability to negotiate differences and resolve problems without generating new conflicts. Failure to meet these demands frequently leads to marital disputes, prolonged conflict, and, in some cases, divorce.

Conflicts in the form of disagreements, arguments, and disputes within marital life are often inevitable and must be confronted and resolved constructively. This inevitability stems from the union of two distinct individuals, each bringing unique belief systems shaped by diverse cultural backgrounds, family values, and life experiences. Consequently, spouses are required to engage in mutual understanding and adaptation to establish a new shared belief system within the family unit. This adjustment process often generates tension, which may be further exacerbated by additional life changes such as economic conditions, daily routines, and social activities.

Previous studies reinforce the normality of marital conflict. McGonagle et al. and Sears et al. (as cited in Dewi & Basti, 2008) assert that conflict is a common and expected aspect of married life. This claim is supported by Gurin et al. (as cited in Sears et al., 2008”) whose research indicates that conflict is a recurring feature in marital relationships. Their findings reveal that 45% of married individuals reported the persistent presence of problems in daily marital life, while 32% of couples described their marriages as very happy despite experiencing conflicts at certain times. These

findings suggest that marital happiness does not eliminate conflict, but rather coexists with it. As marital life becomes increasingly complex, couples are required to actively mobilize emotional, cognitive, and communicative resources to manage emerging challenges. Unresolved conflicts may disrupt marital harmony and weaken spousal relationships.

Sadarjoen further explains that marital conflict commonly arises from several interrelated sources, including unavoidable personality differences, unmet expectations, emotional sensitivity, intimacy issues, cumulative unresolved problems, competition within marriage, and changes across the marital life cycle. Marriage unites individuals who inherently possess diverse experiences, needs, and value systems. These differences become particularly salient when couples are confronted with problems requiring joint interpretation and decision-making. When spouses are unable to reach mutual understanding or unconditionally accept differences, these variations may serve as triggers for conflict escalation.

To complement these theoretical perspectives, interview findings further illustrate the lived experiences of married couples in managing conflict. One interview participant stated,

"...At the beginning of our marriage, we often argued because we had different expectations about roles at home. Over time, we realized that conflict was unavoidable, but communication helped us understand each other better..."

Another participant emphasized the importance of emotional regulation, noting,

"...Conflicts usually arise when emotions are not controlled. When we learned to calm ourselves before discussing problems, the conflicts became easier to resolve..." These interview insights confirm that marital conflict is not merely a structural condition but is deeply influenced by communication patterns, emotional maturity, and adaptive coping strategies.

Overall, both theoretical and empirical evidence indicate that marital conflict is a natural component of married life. The critical determinant of marital quality lies not in the absence of conflict, but in couples' capacity to manage differences constructively, communicate effectively, and develop adaptive strategies that transform conflict into an opportunity for personal and relational growth.

Discussion

Perspective Psychology Quran look at that wedding is a bond holy as one of the signs the greatness of Allah SWT who has function psychological in a way deep in life human. Psychology Quran emphasizes the formation of family based on the principles of the Koran for reach balance soul, peace emotional and harmony. The main goal wedding in Islam, it becomes very relevant with aspect the psychology in question in the concept of *Sakinah*, *Mawaddah* and *Warahmah* (QS. Ar Rum:21).

The Qur'anic Psychological Perspective on Marriage

From the perspective of Qur'anic psychology, marriage is understood as a sacred bond (*mītsāqan ghalīẓan*) and one of the signs of the greatness of Allah SWT that carries profound psychological functions in human life. The Qur'an positions marriage not merely as a social or biological institution, but as a divinely ordained system designed to foster psychological balance, emotional tranquility, and spiritual harmony. Qur'anic psychology emphasizes the formation of family life based on Qur'anic principles to achieve inner peace, emotional stability, and harmonious interpersonal relationships. This objective aligns closely with the Islamic concept of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*, as articulated in QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:21.

Sakinah, Mawaddah, wa Rahmah as Foundations of Marital Psychology

The concept of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* reflects the ideal psychological foundation of an Islamic family. Family tranquility begins with the union of two individuals who meet, commit, and unite in a marital bond grounded in faith and piety, with the aim of attaining happiness in both worldly life and the hereafter. This framework emphasizes the importance of harmony between husband and wife in fulfilling their respective roles, guided by love (*mawaddah*) and compassion (*rahmah*). These principles serve as the primary keys to achieving marital peace and long-term family well-being.

Within this framework, the ideal family is one that creates a supportive environment promoting physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Such success is achieved through harmonious cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility between spouses. The marital bond is therefore regarded as a strong and enduring covenant that is not easily dissolved, even in the face of trials and challenges. This is explicitly affirmed in the Qur'an:

“...How could you take it back while you have already been intimating with one another, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?...” (QS. An-Nisā' [4]:21)

The Psychological Meaning of Sakinah

The term *sakinah* has been adopted into the Indonesian language to mean peace, serenity, tranquility, and happiness. Etymologically, *sakinah* derives from the Arabic root *sakana–yaskunu–sukūnan* (سكن), which conveys meanings such as calmness, stillness, and dwelling. In the Qur'an, *sakinah* refers to a state of inner tranquility bestowed by Allah SWT upon believers, as stated in QS. Al-Fath [48]:4:

“...It is He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers so that their faith may increase along with their faith...” (QS. Al-Fath [48]:4)

Psychologically, *sakinah* represents emotional stability and inner peace that enable spouses to feel secure, accepted, and comforted within the marital relationship.

Mawaddah: Love, Affection, and Commitment

Mawaddah linguistically originates from the root *wadda–yawaddu*, meaning love, affection, and a deep desire for closeness. Terminologically, *mawaddah* refers to expansive love characterized by emotional openness, mutual understanding, self-restraint, and the willingness to adapt and negotiate differences. It involves emotional maturity, the ability to manage negative impulses, and sustained affection between spouses.

The Qur'an highlights *mawaddah* as a central element of marital life in QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:21, where love and compassion are described as divine signs. According to Al-Asfahani, *mawaddah* encompasses both love and desire (*tamannī*), indicating a strong emotional drive to realize and maintain the beloved relationship. In the marital context, *mawaddah* motivates commitment and unity, transforming affection into concrete marital bonds. Some scholars have also interpreted *mawaddah* as encompassing physical intimacy (*mu'āsharah*), reflecting the holistic nature of marital love.

The term *mawaddah* also appears in a broader sense of affectionate care, as in QS. Ash-Shūrā [42]:23, where it refers to love within kinship relations. In this context, *mawaddah* signifies the maintenance of familial ties and compassionate relationships, as reinforced by prophetic traditions emphasizing the importance of preserving kinship bonds.

Rahmah: Compassion and Enduring Mercy

Rahmah derives from the root *raḥima–yarḥamu*, meaning compassion, tenderness, and mercy. Psychologically, *rahmah* reflects deep empathy and moral sensitivity toward others,

particularly in times of weakness or hardship. Unlike emotional love, *rahmah* is more enduring and remains present even when affection fluctuates. It is sustained by the awareness that no individual is perfect and that each spouse possesses both strengths and shortcomings.

According to Al-Asfahani, *rahmah* drives individuals to perform acts of kindness and self-sacrifice for the sake of others. This form of compassion is exemplified in the patience and sacrifice of a mother toward her child. In marital life, *rahmah* allows spouses to remain caring and supportive despite challenges, thereby preserving relational stability.

While love and compassion are innate human traits, Islamic teachings emphasize that all forms of mercy ultimately originate from Allah SWT. Human kindness, affection, and generosity are manifestations of divine mercy bestowed upon creation. This is reinforced in prophetic traditions stating that those who do not show compassion to others will not receive Allah's mercy. Thus, *rahmah* in marriage reflects not only human empathy but also divine grace operating within the family system.

From the perspective of Qur'anic psychology, marriage serves as a divine institution designed to cultivate psychological well-being through *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. These interconnected concepts form the emotional, cognitive, and moral foundations of marital life, enabling spouses to achieve inner peace, emotional security, and enduring harmony. Therefore, marriage is not merely a contractual relationship but a sacred psychological and spiritual framework through which human beings realize tranquility, love, and compassion under the guidance of divine mercy.

Nafs al-Lawwāmah: The Regretful Soul as a Bridge Between Qur'anic Values and Psychological Theory

The Qur'an extensively addresses the phenomenon of regret, although systematic theories of regret within the field of mental health have been more extensively developed in Western scholarship. One of the most explicit Qur'anic references to regret is found in QS. Al-Qiyāmah [75]:2, where Allah swears by *an-nafs al-lawwāmah* (the self-reproaching or regretful soul). This verse highlights regret as an intrinsic psychological and moral mechanism within the human self, functioning as an internal evaluator of behavior and moral accountability.

Beyond QS. Al-Qiyāmah, the Qur'an presents several narrative illustrations of regret. QS. Al-A'rāf [7]:23 portrays the expression of regret by Prophet Adam and Hawwa after their transgression. Similarly, QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:31 narrates Qabil's remorse following the murder of his brother, Habil. Another vivid depiction appears in QS. Al-Furqān [25]:27, which describes the regret of an oppressor on the Day of Judgment, lamenting, "If only I had taken the way with the Messenger." These Qur'anic accounts demonstrate that regret is not merely an emotional reaction but also a moral and spiritual awakening. Despite the abundance of Qur'anic data on regret, Islamic scholarship that systematically formulates a theory of regret remains relatively limited, especially when compared to Western psychological literature.

In contrast, regret theory has been extensively developed in Western academic discourse. The modern formulation of regret theory originated with American economists Graham Loomes and Robert Sugden, who introduced Regret Theory: An Alternative Theory of Rational Choice Under Uncertainty in 1982. This theory emerged as a development of Prospect Theory proposed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, whose contributions to decision-making psychology were internationally recognized with the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002. Within Western thought, regret theory is primarily applied to economic and decision-making contexts involving uncertainty, risk, and suboptimal outcomes.

Prospect Theory offers a critical psychological approach to understanding economic decision-making; however, it does not explicitly address the emotional consequences of decision outcomes. Individuals may experience satisfaction when outcomes align with expectations, but they may also

experience regret when outcomes diverge from anticipated results. Regret arises particularly when individuals perceive that a different choice could have led to a better outcome. This emotional response is closely linked to counterfactual thinking mental simulations of alternative possibilities that contrast with actual events. The intensity of regret is influenced by the degree of perceived responsibility for the decision made.

From an Islamic perspective, no comprehensive theoretical framework explicitly links Qur'anic teachings on regret with Western regret theory as formulated by Loomes and Sugden. However, QS. Al-Qiyāmah [75]:1–2 is frequently cited as a foundational reference in discussions of regret within Islamic psychology. In this framework, regret is classified as a negative emotion, closely associated with sadness (*ḥuzn*). Najati explains sadness as an emotional state arising from awareness of wrongdoing, leading individuals to reproach themselves and engage in wishful counterfactual reflection “if only I had not done it” (Pereboom, 2021).

Interestingly, Najati's conceptualization of sadness closely parallels the Western psychological understanding of regret, despite being derived solely from Qur'anic sources without reference to Western theories. In Western psychology, regret is classified as a negative emotion within Plutchik's model of eight basic emotions and is closely aligned with sadness (Arofatuazzahro, 2017). Schouborg further argues that regret lies on a continuum with sadness, with sadness generally representing a more intense emotional state. Najati's description of self-reproach and counterfactual longing aligns with the Western notion of regret commonly expressed as “what might have been.”

Regret and the Development of Family Therapy

The relevance of regret extends beyond individual psychology into the domain of family and marital relationships. The historical development of family therapy originated in Europe and the United States. In early 20th-century Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria, hundreds of marriages and family counseling centers emerged around 1932. These centers provided guidance on marriage, family planning, and domestic issues, reflecting a growing societal acceptance that marital and family problems could be addressed through professional assistance rather than regarded as *taboo*.

This movement declined during the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany. Subsequently, the development of family counseling and therapy flourished in the United States, particularly from the 1960s onward. Unlike the European model, which was practitioner-driven and largely initiated by medical professionals, the American approach was more theoretically oriented and rooted in established psychological frameworks. In the United States, the term family therapy became more prevalent than family counseling, mostly due to the influence of psychiatric practitioners.

A significant milestone occurred in 1957 during the annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatry Association (AOA), where Bowen identified the emergence of family therapy as a distinct national movement. This period marked increased awareness among pioneers regarding the need for specialized professional competence in family intervention. Jackson later founded the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto, emphasizing the study of communication patterns within families. In collaboration with Ackerman, Jackson published *Family Process* in 1981, the first academic journal dedicated to family therapy theory, practice, and research. These developments underscore the importance of understanding emotional processes such as regret within family systems, particularly in marital conflict resolution.

The concept of *nafs al-lawwāmah* provides a vital bridge between Qur'anic values and contemporary psychological understandings of regret. While, Western theories conceptualize regret primarily within decision-making and cognitive frameworks, the Qur'an situates regret within a broader moral, emotional, and spiritual context. Integrating these perspectives offers a more holistic understanding of regret, particularly in family and marital dynamics, where emotional awareness and moral reflection play crucial roles in psychological healing and relational harmony.

Structural Family Therapy (Salvador Minuchin)

Structural Family Therapy is a counseling and therapeutic approach that focuses on the organization and structure of the family system, including roles, hierarchies, boundaries, and interaction patterns among family members. This approach was developed by Salvador Minuchin and his colleagues in the 1970s. Minuchin posited that families possess identifiable structures that shape and regulate interactions among their members. When these structures are dysfunctional, family problems are more likely to emerge. Therefore, Structural Family Therapy emphasizes restructuring family interactions to promote healthier functioning and problem resolution.

From this perspective, family difficulties are not viewed as the result of individual pathology alone, but rather as manifestations of a maladaptive family structure. By modifying the structural organization of the family, therapists aim to improve relational dynamics and restore balance within the family system.

Main Concepts of Structural Family Therapy

The first key concept is family structure, which refers to the organized patterns of relationships within the family, including rules, roles, and hierarchies that govern interactions among members. A healthy family structure allows the family to function effectively, adapt to change, and address challenges constructively.

The second concept is boundaries, which define the emotional and relational limits between family members and subsystems (such as parents, children, or siblings). Structural Family Therapy examines whether boundaries are overly rigid or overly diffuse. Healthy boundaries are clear yet flexible, allowing closeness without loss of individual autonomy. Respecting boundaries is essential, as each family member has personal limits that must be acknowledged.

The third concept is hierarchy, which concerns the distribution of authority and responsibility within the family. A clear and functional hierarchy particularly one that maintains parental leadership over children supports stability and harmony. Disrupted or unclear hierarchies can lead to role confusion, weakened authority, and strained relationships within the family.

The fourth concept involves alliances and coalitions, which refer to patterns of cooperation or alignment among family members. Therapists analyze these patterns to ensure that alliances support family cohesion rather than contribute to conflict, such as when unhealthy coalitions form across generation boundaries.

Objectives of Structural Family Therapy

The primary goal of Structural Family Therapy is to help families recognize and modify ineffective structural patterns in order to enhance relational quality and resolve problems. Specifically, this approach aims to establish a balanced family structure in which each member has clear roles, rights, and responsibilities. It also seeks to improve unhealthy communication patterns, whether overly one-sided (such as authoritarian advice-giving) or ineffective problem-solving interactions, so that families can engage in constructive dialogue.

Additionally, Structural Family Therapy assists families in identifying and resolving internal conflicts collaboratively, thereby preventing unresolved issues from generating new problems. Another important objective is to address relational imbalances, such as over-parenting, enmeshment, or sibling rivalry, particularly in families with children.

Counseling Techniques in Structural Family Therapy

Several techniques are commonly employed in Structural Family Therapy. One such technique is family structure mapping, in which the counselor creates a visual representation of family relationships and interaction patterns to better understand relational dynamics. This mapping helps both the therapist and the family identify problematic structures.

Another technique involves the use of effective and purposeful language, whereby the counselor guides family members to communicate more clearly, respectfully, and constructively in addressing conflicts. Finally, the therapist works with the family to develop clear and functional boundaries, helping members establish appropriate limits that enhance relational quality while maintaining individual autonomy.

Bowenian Family Therapy and Strategic Family Therapy

Bowenian Family Therapy, also known as Family Systems Theory, was developed by Murray Bowen, and is grounded in the view that the family operates as an emotional system. This theory aims to provide practitioners and individuals working with families a comprehensive framework for understanding complex family behaviors by examining the interrelationships among family members as parts of an interconnected whole. Bowen emphasized that individual behavior cannot be fully understood in isolation from the family system, as the functioning of each member both influences and is influenced by the system. Central to this perspective is the need for systemic stability and balance within the family, as well as the identification of recurring behavioral patterns that emerge across generations.

According to Bowen, problems experienced by individual family members often reflect dysfunctions within the family system itself. A family is considered dysfunctional when it fails to perform its primary functions in a healthy and adaptive manner, such as maintaining emotional well-being, providing economic and psychological security, and creating a safe and supportive environment. These dysfunctions frequently arise because family members are unable to differentiate themselves from entrenched roles, emotional expectations, and relational pressures within the family. Bowen highlighted the dynamic tension between togetherness forces, which promote emotional closeness, dependence, and individuality forces, which encourage autonomy and self-definition. When this balance is disrupted, psychological distress and relational conflict may intensify.

Family therapy, from Bowen's perspective, serves as an intervention method to understand individual problems by situating them within broader family interaction patterns. Therapy can involve multiple family members and does not necessarily require the presence of external individuals beyond the therapist. The therapist facilitates adaptive change by helping family members become more aware of emotional processes, particularly during periods of relational tension or crisis. Goldenberg notes that family therapy often begins with attention to a single symptomatic family member. However, therapeutic focus quickly expands to identify dysfunctional communication patterns and emotional processes within the family system. Through this process, all family members are encouraged to engage in self-reflection regarding their roles in the emergence and maintenance of family problems.

Strategic Family Therapy, while distinct from Bowenian theory, complements systemic approaches by emphasizing structured, goal-oriented interventions aimed at changing specific interaction patterns. Interventions in Strategic Family Therapy are typically brief and directive, often conducted over approximately six sessions, with the primary goal of improving communication and disrupting maladaptive behavioral cycles within the family (Utami, 2017). Therapist's design specific strategies or tasks to help families alter problematic behaviors, thereby facilitating functional change within the system.

Implications

The application of Bowenian and Strategic Family Therapy has several important implications for family counseling and mental health practice. First, these approaches shift the focus from individual pathology to relational dynamics, allowing therapists to address root causes of psychological distress embedded within family systems. Second, they provide practical frameworks

for understanding how intergenerational patterns, emotional reactivity, and communication styles influence mental health outcomes. Third, these models are particularly useful in marital and family conflict contexts, as they promote emotional regulation, improved differentiation of self, and more adaptive communication strategies. Finally, in culturally collectivist societies, such as those influenced by strong family and kinship values, these systemic approaches are especially relevant because they align with communal orientations toward relationships and shared responsibility.

Limitations

Despite their strengths, Bowenian and Strategic Family Therapy also present several limitations. One limitation of Bowenian Family Therapy is its strong cognitive and insight-oriented focus, which may be less effective for clients who require more immediate behavioral interventions or emotional support. Additionally, the concept of differentiation of self may be challenging to apply in cultures where interdependence and family cohesion are highly valued, potentially creating tension between therapeutic goals and cultural norms.

Strategic Family Therapy, while efficient and goal-directed, may oversimplify complex emotional issues by prioritizing behavioral change over deeper emotional processing. Its directive nature may also be perceived as intrusive or authoritarian by some families, potentially reducing client autonomy and long-term internalization of change. Furthermore, the brief duration of strategic interventions may limit their effectiveness in cases involving chronic, deeply entrenched family dysfunctions.

CONCLUSION

Conflict to marriage that does manage or no completed with good, tends to be the main cause of disharmony in husband-and-wife relationships. Although conflict is reasonable in every connection emotional, especially in terms of marriage is the longest worship, the way a husband wife understand problems and emergence of regrets is an important signal that there is still a desire to maintain the sacred bond for longer so that later they can respond and manage conflict and can determine long-term mental health of the marriage. Through the psychology of the Quran as a basis for understanding, the mental condition of two marriage people can be understood, and psychology applied through the Family Therapy method is one way to understanding Islamic values and developing a resolution strategy problem in something ongoing marriage experience exam from Allah SWT.

REFERENCES

- Abdallahman, M., & Darwish, N. A. (2024). Mediating role of regret feelings in the relationship between consumer expectations, emotions and willingness to buy. *Rajagiri Management Journal*, 18(4), 323–336. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ramj-12-2023-0329>
- Bossuyt, E., Moors, A., & De Houwer, J. (2014). Exploring the Relations between Regret, Self-agency, and the Tendency to Repair Using Experimental Methods and Structural Equation Modeling. *Psychological Record*, 64(4), 841–857. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40732-014-0065-4>
- Budjanovcanin, A., & Woodrow, C. (2022). Regretting your occupation constructively: A qualitative study of career choice and occupational regret. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 136(May), 103743. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2022.103743>
- Camille, N., Coricelli, G., Sallet, J., Pradat-Diehl, P., Duhamel, J. R., & Sirigu, A. (2004). The involvement of the orbitofrontal cortex in the experience of regret. *Science*, 304(5674), 1167–1170.
- Choi, H. (2022). Feeling One Thing and Doing Another: How Expressions of Guilt and Shame Influence Hypocrisy Judgment. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(12). <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12120504>

- Dewi, E. M. P., & Basti, B. (2008). Konflik perkawinan dan model penyelesaian konflik pada pasangan suami istri. *Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi Gunadarma*, 2(1), 98377.
- Fahmi, N. (2021). Tinjauan Perspektif Fikih Terhadap Pelaksanaan Mahar Dalam Pernikahan. *Familia: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga*, 2(1), 88–103.
- Hoffman, A. S., Llewellyn-Thomas, H. A., Tosteson, A. N. A., O'Connor, A. M., Volk, R. J., Tomek, I. M., Andrews, S. B., & Bartels, S. J. (2014). Launching a virtual decision lab: development and field-testing of a web-based patient decision support research platform. *BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making*, 14(1), 112.
- Kasih, N. C., & Satiti, N. L. U. (2020). *Manajemen konflik interpersonal suami istri dalam mengatasi konflik finansial*. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.
- Marlia, A., Syaharani, D., Sari, N., Amelia, N. R., Badarudin, A. M., Armando, A., & Sari, A. K. (2024). Telaah Ayat Al-Quran Surah Al-Kautsar. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Akademik*, 1(3), 585–589.
- Mawaddah, U., Riyani, W. I., Kumala, R., & Fawaid. (2024). Isu - Isu Psikologi Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer. *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, 6(11), 951–952., 6.
- Mubarak, A., & Hidayati, T. W. (2022). Pencatatan Pernikahan Di Indonesia Ditinjau Dari Maqashid Syariah Jasser Auda. *Adhki: Journal of Islamic Family Law*, 4(2), 157–170.
- Nyoman, N., Cahyani, A., & Yunita, P. I. (2026). The Influence of Regret Aversion and Risk Tolerance on Cryptocurrency Investment Decisions : The Mediating Role of Risk Perception and the Moderating Effect of Income Perception (A Case Study on Generation Z in Bali). *Jurnal Manajemen Motivasi*, 22, 821–831.
- Pereboom, D. (2021). *Wrongdoing and the moral emotions*. Oxford University Press.
- Ritov, I., & Baron, J. (1995). Outcome Knowledge, Regret, and Omission Bias. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 64(2), 119–127.
- Septiani, R. (2021). Analisis Hukum Menghadiri Walimatul Ursy Saat Pandemi Covid 19. *Journal Of Islamic And Law Studies*, 5(1), 28–42.
- Siebert, J. U., Kunz, R. E., & Rolf, P. (2021). Effects of decision training on individuals' decision-making proactivity. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 294(1), 264–282. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2021.01.010>
- Syobah, S. N., Nugraha, A. B., Juwita, R., Kamsiah, K., & Lawang, K. A. (2023). Keefektifan komunikasi interpersonal dalam menyelesaikan konflik suami istri. *Jurnal Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 7(1), 118–129.
- Varma, M. M., Chowdhury, A., & Yu, R. (2023). The road not taken: Common and distinct neural correlates of regret and relief. *NeuroImage*, 283(October), 120413. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2023.120413>
- Wardana, W., & Ananda, F. (2024). Hukum Pernikahan Dalam Perspektif Di Dunia Islam. *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research*, 4(1), 4472–4487.
- Yam, J. H. (2024). Kajian penelitian: Tinjauan literatur sebagai metode penelitian. *Jurnal Empire*, 4(1), 61–70.
- Yan, H., Yang, Y., Lei, X., Ye, Q., Huang, W., & Gao, C. (2023). Regret Theory and Fuzzy-DEMATEL-Based Model for Construction Program Manager Selection in China. *Buildings*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings13040838>
- Yusuf, K. M. (2021). *Psikologi Qurani*. Amzah (Bumi Aksara).