Long-Distance Marriage in the Era of Digital Transformation: Challenges and Strategies for Family Resilience from the Perspective of Islamic Law

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Abstract

Long-Distance Marriage (LDM) is a marital arrangement in which spouses live geographically apart for a certain period due to employment, education, economic circumstances, or other demands. This situation presents challenges in maintaining communication, fulfilling emotional needs, managing household finances, raising children, and ensuring the fulfillment of marital rights and obligations. In the era of digital transformation, communication technologies provide opportunities for couples to maintain emotional connections and coordinate family responsibilities despite physical separation. However, digital communication alone does not necessarily guarantee family harmony or resilience. This article aims to examine the challenges of long-distance marriage, the role of digital technology in maintaining marital relationships, and strategies for strengthening family resilience from the perspective of Islamic family law. This study is designed as empirical legal research using a qualitative approach. Primary data are planned to be collected through interviews and observations involving couples who experience long-distance marriage, while secondary data will be obtained from scholarly books, journal articles, legislation, and Islamic family law literature. At this stage, fieldwork has not yet been conducted; therefore, the discussion provides a preliminary analytical framework rather than empirical findings. The analysis is expected to examine how the fulfillment of marital rights and obligations, mutual understanding, communication, financial responsibility, and religious values contribute to family resilience. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding long-distance marriage not merely as physical separation but as a family relationship that requires continuous negotiation, responsibility, and commitment to achieve a harmonious household in accordance with Islamic principles.

Keywords: long-distance marriage, family resilience, digital transformation, islamic family law

Introduction

Marriage in Islam is not merely a legal relationship between a man and a woman but also a commitment to build a family based on affection, responsibility, and mutual support. Through marriage, spouses are expected to create a household that provides tranquility, love, and compassion. These values are commonly expressed through the concept of sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah, which serves as an important ideal in Muslim family life. Nevertheless, the development of modern society has changed the circumstances in which families maintain their

relationships. Employment opportunities, educational pursuits, economic demands, and professional mobility may require husbands and wives to live in different locations for a certain period. This situation is commonly referred to as long-distance marriage (LDM). Although physical separation may be necessary to support family welfare, it can create challenges in maintaining emotional intimacy, coordinating household responsibilities, and ensuring the continuity of family relationships. Long-distance marriage is not automatically an indication of marital failure. Some couples may maintain stable relationships despite geographical separation. However, the distance requires spouses to develop appropriate strategies to maintain trust, communicate their needs, manage conflict, and fulfill their respective responsibilities. When these matters are not adequately addressed, physical separation may intensify misunderstandings, emotional distance, jealousy, and difficulties in family decision-making.

Digital transformation has introduced new possibilities for managing these challenges. Smartphones, instant messaging applications, video calls, and other communication platforms allow spouses to communicate more frequently and participate in certain aspects of family life despite living apart. Digital communication can help couples exchange information, discuss household matters, provide emotional support, and maintain a sense of togetherness. Research published in the Journal of Family Sciences found a positive relationship between WhatsApp communication and positive resilience behavior among individuals experiencing long-distance marriage. The same study also identified spirituality as a factor associated with couple resilience. However, the availability of communication technology does not necessarily resolve every problem in a long-distance marriage. The quality of communication, honesty, mutual trust, emotional sensitivity, and the willingness to fulfill responsibilities remain important. Digital communication may become ineffective when conversations are dominated by suspicion, when spouses fail to communicate openly, or when technology is used without considering the emotional needs of the other partner.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, the situation raises important questions concerning the rights and obligations of husbands and wives. Physical separation does not automatically eliminate marital responsibilities. The relationship must still be evaluated in light of the principles of responsibility, justice, mutual respect, and good treatment between spouses. Therefore, long-distance marriage needs to be understood not only as a social or psychological phenomenon but also as an issue relevant to the implementation of Islamic family law in contemporary society. Previous studies have examined long-distance marriage from different perspectives. Hidayat and Arisman discuss interpersonal communication, conflict management, and family resilience in commuter marriages through a systematic literature review. Their discussion emphasizes communication, trust, social support, and periodic face-to-face meetings as factors that may help couples maintain marital stability. Another study examines strategies for maintaining harmonious long-distance families and relates those strategies to the development of Islamic family law in Indonesia. Its analysis highlights commitment, effective communication, economic fulfillment, spiritual improvement, and mutual understanding.

These studies provide an important foundation for understanding long-distance marriage. Nevertheless, further examination is needed to connect the lived experiences of couples, digital communication practices, the fulfillment of marital rights and obligations, and family resilience within an integrated Islamic family law framework. This connection is particularly relevant because family resilience cannot be assessed solely through the frequency of communication or the economic benefits of living apart. It also requires consideration of how couples manage

responsibilities, make decisions, maintain emotional relationships, and address family needs in accordance with Islamic principles.

The novelty intended by this study lies in its attempt to examine long-distance marriage through the relationship between digital transformation, family resilience, and the normative framework of Islamic family law. Digital technology is not treated merely as a communication tool but as part of the contemporary environment in which marital responsibilities are negotiated and family relationships are maintained.

Based on this background, this article addresses three research questions. First, what challenges arise in the practice of long-distance marriage in the era of digital transformation? Second, how does digital technology contribute to maintaining communication and family resilience? Third, how can Islamic family law principles guide strategies for strengthening family resilience among couples experiencing long-distance marriage?

This study aims to analyze the challenges of long-distance marriage, examine the role of digital technology in maintaining family relationships, and formulate a preliminary framework for strengthening family resilience based on Islamic family law principles.

Methods

This study is designed as empirical legal research using a qualitative approach. Empirical legal research is relevant because the study seeks to examine the relationship between Islamic family law principles and the actual experiences of couples who live separately for a certain period. The primary data are planned to be obtained through interviews and observations involving couples who experience long-distance marriage. The interviews are intended to explore the reasons for geographical separation, communication patterns, emotional challenges, household financial management, child-rearing responsibilities, decision-making practices, and the fulfillment of marital rights and obligations. Observation, where feasible and appropriate, will be used to complement the interview data and understand relevant aspects of the participants' family practices.

Secondary data will consist of scholarly books, academic journal articles, legislation concerning marriage, and relevant literature on Islamic family law, family resilience, and digital communication. These sources will provide the normative and conceptual framework for interpreting the experiences of the research participants. The data will be analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. The analysis will involve organizing the data, identifying recurring themes, interpreting participants' experiences, and relating the findings to relevant legal principles. Particular attention will be given to marital responsibilities, mutual respect, good treatment between spouses, family decision-making, and the ideal of sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah.

At the current stage, the fieldwork has not been conducted. Accordingly, this article does not present interview quotations, observational findings, or conclusions attributed to research participants. The following discussion constitutes a preliminary literature-based analysis that will need to be refined after primary data have been collected.

Results and Discussion

The Practice of Long-Distance Marriage in Contemporary Society

Long-distance marriage refers to a marital situation in which spouses maintain their marital relationship while living in different geographical locations for a certain period. The

separation may occur because of employment, education, economic needs, professional assignments, or other family circumstances.

In contemporary society, geographical separation may become a strategy for improving family welfare. One spouse may work in another city to obtain a better income, while the other remains at home to manage household responsibilities or care for children. In other circumstances, the separation may result from educational opportunities or professional assignments that cannot easily be declined. Although such arrangements may offer economic or professional benefits, they also require adjustments in the organization of family life. Spouses must determine how they will communicate, distribute responsibilities, manage expenses, arrange visits, and make important decisions. The distance may also limit opportunities for direct interaction and immediate assistance when family problems arise. Previous research on long-distance marriage in Indonesia has identified employment, economic circumstances, and education as important reasons for geographical separation. Research on family resilience has also emphasized communication, social support, and psychological well-being as relevant factors in maintaining family relationships.

These findings provide a basis for examining long-distance marriage as a family arrangement that requires adaptation rather than as a relationship that necessarily lacks harmony. Its success depends on the ability of spouses to manage the consequences of separation while maintaining their commitment to the marriage. From the perspective of Islamic family law, the main issue is not simply whether spouses live in the same house. The more important question is how they maintain the marital relationship and fulfill their respective responsibilities under the circumstances they face. Geographical separation should therefore be examined alongside the quality of the relationship, the fulfillment of family needs, and the protection of the rights of each spouse and child.

Communication and Emotional Challenges

Communication is one of the central aspects of maintaining a long-distance marriage. When spouses live together, communication may take place through daily conversations, shared activities, and direct observation of one another's circumstances. In a long-distance marriage, these opportunities may be limited and must be replaced, at least partially, by communication through digital platforms. Digital communication enables spouses to exchange information, discuss family matters, share experiences, and provide emotional support. Nevertheless, the frequency of communication does not always reflect its quality. A couple may communicate several times a day but still experience emotional distance if their conversations lack openness, empathy, and meaningful discussion. Misunderstandings may arise when messages are interpreted differently, when responses are delayed, or when one spouse expects more attention than the other can provide. Differences in work schedules and daily routines may also create unequal communication opportunities. If these differences are not discussed, they may generate suspicion or dissatisfaction.

Therefore, communication in a long-distance marriage needs to involve more than exchanging information. It should provide space for spouses to express concerns, discuss expectations, resolve disagreements, and understand each other's circumstances. Honesty and consistency are also important because trust becomes particularly significant when spouses cannot directly observe one another's daily activities.Research on communication and

spirituality in long-distance marriage indicates that digital communication and spiritual experiences are associated with couple resilience. However, such findings do not mean that technology alone determines the success of a marriage. Rather, technology can support resilience when it is accompanied by commitment and constructive relationship practices. Within an Islamic family framework, communication can be connected to the principle of mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf, which emphasizes treating one's spouse properly and respectfully. This principle supports communication that avoids humiliation, threats, manipulation, and unnecessary accusations. It also encourages spouses to discuss problems in a manner that protects dignity and promotes mutual understanding.

Consequently, communication strategies for long-distance couples should include agreed-upon communication schedules, openness about relevant activities, respectful conflict resolution, and opportunities for meaningful conversations. These practices should be adapted to the needs and circumstances of each couple rather than imposed through a single standard.

Financial Management, Child-Rearing, and Marital Responsibilities

Financial management is an important dimension of family resilience in long-distance marriage. Geographical separation may increase household expenses because the couple must maintain living arrangements in different locations. Transportation, accommodation, communication, and child-related expenses may place additional demands on family finances. The couple therefore needs to establish a clear understanding of income, household expenditure, savings, emergency funds, and the financial needs of children. Financial transparency can reduce misunderstandings and help both spouses participate in decisions concerning family welfare.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, financial responsibilities must be examined in relation to the applicable principles and legal provisions governing marital obligations. The Indonesian Marriage Law recognizes rights and obligations between husbands and wives, while the Compilation of Islamic Law provides further provisions concerning family life and marital responsibilities. These frameworks should be considered when assessing whether financial arrangements are consistent with the obligations of the spouses.

However, financial provision alone does not represent the entire meaning of family responsibility. Emotional support, participation in family decision-making, and attention to the welfare of children also matter. A spouse who provides financial support may still need to remain actively involved in family life through communication, planning, and emotional engagement. Child-rearing may become more complicated when parents live in different locations. The spouse who remains with the children may carry a greater share of daily caregiving, educational supervision, and household management. This arrangement can create additional burdens if the responsibilities are not discussed and supported by the other spouse.

Although physical distance may limit direct participation in daily childcare, the spouse who lives elsewhere can still contribute through regular communication with the children, participation in educational decisions, emotional support, and coordination with the caregiving parent. The specific arrangements should consider the children's ages, needs, safety, and emotional well-being. From an Islamic family law perspective, the interests and welfare of children must remain an important consideration in family decision-making. Long-distance marriage should not result in the neglect of parental responsibilities. Instead, spouses need to

develop an arrangement that allows both parents to remain responsible for the children's development to the extent possible under their circumstances.

Thus, the assessment of family resilience should include financial adequacy, the distribution of responsibilities, emotional support, and the protection of children's welfare. These aspects need to be examined empirically in order to understand how couples implement them in their daily lives.

Digital Transformation and Family Resilience

Digital transformation has changed the ways in which family members maintain relationships across geographical distance. Smartphones, messaging applications, video calls, and digital payment services can help couples communicate, coordinate financial matters, and participate in important family decisions. The benefits of digital technology include easier access to communication, opportunities for more frequent interaction, and the ability to share aspects of daily life. Video calls, for example, may allow spouses to see each other's expressions and provide a form of interaction that text messages cannot fully reproduce.

Nevertheless, digital technology also has limitations. A stable internet connection, sufficient time, access to devices, and digital literacy may not be equally available to every couple. In addition, excessive monitoring, demands for immediate responses, or the misuse of private information may create new conflicts rather than strengthen trust. Digital communication should therefore be understood as a means of supporting relationships rather than as a substitute for all forms of direct interaction. Couples still need to plan face-to-face meetings when feasible, discuss long-term family goals, and establish boundaries concerning the use of digital devices.

Family resilience can be understood as the capacity of a family to adapt to challenges, maintain essential functions, and continue pursuing family well-being despite difficult circumstances. In long-distance marriage, this capacity involves the ability to manage separation without abandoning communication, responsibility, trust, and emotional support. A study of family resilience in long-distance marriage in Indonesia identifies communication, support from extended family and the surrounding community, psychological well-being, and conflict management as relevant factors. These factors indicate that resilience is not solely an individual achievement. It may also depend on the resources available to the family and the quality of relationships within its wider social environment.

Digital technology can support family resilience when it facilitates constructive communication and shared responsibility. However, its contribution depends on how spouses use it. Technology is more likely to be beneficial when communication is respectful, information is shared responsibly, and digital interaction forms part of a broader commitment to maintaining the marriage.

Long-Distance Marriage from the Perspective of Islamic Family Law

Islamic family law provides a framework for understanding marriage as a relationship that entails rights, obligations, and responsibilities. Accordingly, long-distance marriage should be examined not only in terms of the physical separation between spouses but also in terms of how they maintain their relationship and fulfill their responsibilities. The Indonesian Marriage Law, as amended by Law No. 16 of 2019, provides the national statutory framework for marriage. The law establishes the legal foundation for marital relationships, while relevant

provisions concerning the rights and obligations of spouses remain important in evaluating family life. The Compilation of Islamic Law is also relevant to the examination of marital rights and obligations within the Indonesian Muslim family law context. In applying these legal frameworks, attention should be given to the specific circumstances of each couple and to the distinction between temporary geographical separation and the neglect of marital responsibilities.

Living apart does not, by itself, establish that a spouse has failed to fulfill all marital obligations. At the same time, the reason for separation cannot automatically justify neglecting the other spouse or children. The relevant question is whether the couple has made reasonable arrangements to fulfill their responsibilities, maintain communication, provide appropriate support, and address family needs. The principle of mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf is particularly relevant because it emphasizes proper and respectful treatment between spouses. In a long-distance marriage, this principle can inform how spouses communicate, manage disagreements, protect each other's dignity, and negotiate responsibilities. The principle of mutual responsibility is also important. Family welfare should not be understood exclusively as the responsibility of one spouse. Although particular legal duties may be assigned differently within Islamic family law, maintaining a healthy family relationship requires cooperation, communication, and consideration of each other's circumstances.

In addition, the ideal of sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah offers a normative direction for family resilience. Sakinah refers to tranquility, mawaddah to love or affection, and rahmah to compassion. These values are not achieved solely by living under the same roof; they also require the cultivation of trust, care, responsibility, and respect. The legal analysis of long-distance marriage must therefore distinguish between the validity of the marital relationship, the fulfillment of specific legal obligations, and the broader quality of family life. These are related but not identical questions. Empirical research is needed to understand how couples interpret and implement these principles in their actual circumstances.

Strategies for Strengthening Family Resilience

Based on the preliminary literature-based analysis, several strategies may be examined in developing family resilience among long-distance couples. First, spouses need to establish clear and realistic communication practices. These may include mutually agreed communication schedules, opportunities to discuss emotional concerns, and a shared understanding of the limits imposed by work or other responsibilities. Second, couples should strengthen trust through honesty and consistency. Trust does not require the removal of all personal privacy; rather, it involves responsible behavior, appropriate transparency, and the avoidance of conduct that undermines the marital relationship. Third, financial management should be planned jointly. Both spouses need to understand the family's financial situation, discuss priorities, and agree on procedures for handling regular expenses, savings, and emergencies. Fourth, family responsibilities, including child-rearing, should be discussed and distributed according to the circumstances and capacities of each spouse. Physical distance may affect the form of participation, but it should not automatically eliminate responsibility. Fifth, spouses can strengthen their spiritual relationship through worship, mutual encouragement, and shared efforts to maintain religious values in family life. Spirituality should function as a source of support and reflection rather than as a reason to silence legitimate concerns or tolerate neglect. Sixth, couples should establish plans for visits and future living arrangements whenever

possible. A shared understanding of the duration of separation, the purpose of the arrangement, and the family's long-term goals may help reduce uncertainty.

Finally, the use of digital technology should be balanced with emotional needs and healthy boundaries. Couples need to determine which communication practices are helpful, how to protect personal information, and how to prevent digital interactions from becoming a source of excessive control or conflict. These strategies are preliminary analytical propositions, not findings from interviews conducted by the author. Their relevance and practical implementation must be examined through field research involving couples who experience long-distance marriage.

Conclusion

Long-distance marriage in the era of digital transformation presents challenges related to communication, emotional intimacy, financial management, child-rearing, and the fulfillment of marital rights and obligations. Geographical separation does not automatically indicate the failure of a marriage, but it requires couples to adapt their communication patterns, coordinate family responsibilities, and maintain mutual trust and commitment. Digital technology provides opportunities for spouses to maintain communication and participate in family life despite physical distance. However, technology cannot replace the need for honesty, emotional support, shared responsibility, and constructive conflict management. Its contribution to family resilience depends on how it is used within the relationship.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, long-distance marriage needs to be evaluated through the fulfillment of marital responsibilities, the principle of mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf, and the protection of family welfare. The ideal of sakinah, mawaddah, wa rahmah can provide a normative foundation for developing a harmonious family relationship despite geographical separation. Because fieldwork has not yet been conducted, these conclusions represent a preliminary conceptual synthesis rather than final empirical findings. Further research is required to examine the experiences of couples, the use of digital communication, and the actual implementation of marital rights and obligations in long-distance marriages.

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