

Empowering Marginalized Families through Client-Centered Counseling: A Sakinah Family Approach in Kampung Topeng, Malang

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ABSTRACT

This community service program aims to increase the understanding of the people of Kampung Topeng, Malang, about the concept of a harmonious family through a client-centered counseling approach combined with Islamic family values. The methodology used was a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach involving 33 residents, community leaders, teachers, and village officials. The intervention involved three client-centered counseling modules tailored for children and adolescents, mothers, and fathers, supported by psycho-religious education, focus group discussions, panel discussions, community competitions, and collaborative reflection. The results show that the program enhanced participants' understanding of the values of love, togetherness, and responsibility within the family. Furthermore, communication and empathy skills among family members showed positive development. Program outputs included training modules and a guidebook on harmonious families. It is therefore recommended that client-centered counseling integrated with Islamic family values and accompanied by ongoing mentoring be adopted to strengthen family resilience in marginalized urban communities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community service is one of the three pillars of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education that lecturers are required to undertake, engaging directly with society by providing services, consultation, or training and by developing programs that benefit communities or specific areas in need, as mandated by Law Number 12 of 2012 on Higher Education (Republic of Indonesia, 2012).

As a State Islamic Religious University (PTKIN) in East Java, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang pursues a vision of "excellence with an international reputation," whose mission includes carrying out the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, namely education, research, and community service (PkM).

Community service can make a tangible contribution to society through diverse activities, including participation in community empowerment programs and in efforts to address social, economic, and environmental problems. Such engagement can improve access to education, health care, infrastructure, and other basic services, thereby reducing disparities and enhancing residents' quality of life.

It also enables local communities to develop their own skills, knowledge, and resources. By collaborating with residents to identify priority problems and design appropriate solutions, academics can help communities become more self-reliant and empowered. Community service can likewise introduce innovation and new technologies to underdeveloped areas, accelerating local development and strengthening communities' capacity to overcome the challenges they face.

Kampung Topeng (Mask Village) is a resettlement shelter for formerly homeless people, vagrants, and beggars. Located in Tlogowaru Sub-district, Kedungkandang District, Malang City, it forms part of the Ministry of Social Affairs' "My Village Waits" program, a poverty-alleviation initiative intended to enable residents to live with dignity and earn an adequate income. Accordingly, residents receive income-generating skills training in mask-making, culinary production, and tour-guiding, organized through Joint Business Groups (KUB) and supervised by the Regional Poverty Alleviation Coordination Team (TKPKD).

Through this training, residents are expected to harness their own potential and that of their environment, so that their settlement may even develop into a tourist destination supported by the facilities provided and by employment opportunities suited to their abilities.

The program thus embodies a model of community empowerment and self-reliance. Residents are encouraged to recognize their full potential, both material and non-material, and to understand their present social and environmental circumstances, so as to avoid returning to their former way of life.

Beyond vocational skills, residents also need knowledge of harmonious family life and access to guidance and counseling services in order to improve their well-being and quality of life.

The preliminary study indicated that Kampung Topeng is a suitable site for universities in the Malang area to carry out the community-service component of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, thereby contributing to the empowerment and well-being of the communities surrounding these institutions.

Client-centered counseling, originally developed by Carl Rogers (1951, 1961), positions the client as the agent of change and emphasizes three core conditions: empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard, and congruence (Corey, 2017). In Indonesia, the model has been applied mainly in school and clinical settings.

Beyond these settings, client-centered counseling has been applied successfully among vulnerable and marginalized populations experiencing social exclusion, poverty, displacement, and psychological distress. Studies show that the approach fosters self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal trust by creating a supportive environment in which individuals feel respected and understood (Corey, 2017; Cooper, 2019), and that its non-directive, relationship-centered stance can be adapted across cultural and ethnic contexts without compromising its fundamental principles of empathy, acceptance, and authenticity (Tanaka-Matsumi, 2022; Comas-Díaz & Hardy, 2019). Evidence from low-resource settings further indicates that person-centered work is feasible and beneficial even with impoverished, maltreated, and neglected children and adolescents (Sanchez et al., 2022), making it a promising basis for community-based intervention among socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

Within Muslim communities, scholars have argued that person-centered counseling is compatible with Islamic perspectives on human dignity, personal responsibility, and spiritual growth (Soliman et al., 2022; Amer & Abdelsattar, 2019), and a growing number of community-based programs show that integrating psychological intervention with Islamic principles can enhance engagement, cultural relevance, and outcomes for displaced and distressed Muslim populations (Bentley et al., 2021). In Islamic family scholarship, the *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* framework describes a household built on tranquility, love, and mercy (Shihab, 2002; Anwar, 2019; Truna et al., 2020). Although these values are widely taught in normative religious education, far less is known about how to operationalize them through a structured counseling intervention for socially vulnerable families facing chronic economic stress (Murtadho, 2020; Suharto, 2018).

Despite this progress, two gaps remain. First, empirical evidence on client-centered counseling in marginalized urban communities, particularly former homeless families, beggars, and socially displaced populations relocated to government-supported settlements, remains scarce, as most studies have been conducted in schools, clinics, or family counseling centers (Tanaka-Matsumi, 2022; Bentley et al., 2021). Second, little research has integrated the person-centered approach with the Islamic *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* framework as a structured model for strengthening family resilience. This gap matters because socially vulnerable families face interconnected

challenges: economic insecurity, social stigma, low educational attainment, family conflict, and limited access to psychological support, yet government empowerment programs have concentrated on vocational and economic development while largely neglecting the relational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of family life that underpin long-term social reintegration (Yap & McFarlane, 2020).

Addressing these gaps, the present study documents the implementation and outcomes of a community service program that integrated client-centered counseling with the *sakinah* family framework for residents of Kampung Topeng, Malang. Specifically, it aims to: (1) describe the design and delivery of three client-centered counseling modules tailored to children and adolescents, mothers, and fathers; (2) report participants' responses and observed changes in their understanding of family harmony; and (3) reflect on the challenges and contextual adaptations required when applying client-centered counseling in a marginalized Muslim community.

2. METHODS

This community service program employs a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach that integrates elements of participatory action research. This program emphasizes active collaboration between facilitators, community members, local leaders, and education stakeholders throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. The program was conducted in Kampung Topeng, Tlogowaru Village, Malang City, East Java.

Participants consisted of 33 residents of Kampung Topeng, including fathers, mothers, teenagers, and children, who were willing to take part in the entire series of activities. Inclusion criteria were: (1) permanent domicile in Kampung Topeng, (2) aged 12 years or older to participate directly in counseling and discussion sessions, (3) willing to provide information related to family life experiences, and (4) agree to participate voluntarily. Additional stakeholders involved in this program included community leaders, the Head of Tlogowaru Village, and representatives of nearby educational institutions, namely Nurul Muttaqin Middle School/High School, Hidayatussyibyan Islamic Elementary and Middle School, SMKN 10 Malang, and SMPN 23 Malang.

Data collection began with a needs assessment. Through field observations, informal interviews, and community dialogues, this study aimed to identify participants' understanding of family harmony, communication patterns, parenting challenges, and family-related psychosocial issues. Findings from this initial phase were used to design intervention materials and counseling modules tailored to the community's needs.

The intervention was implemented through three sequential client-centered counseling modules based on Carl Rogers' principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness. Module 1 focused on children and adolescents, Module 2 on mothers, and Module 3 on fathers. These modules were delivered through focus group discussions (FGDs), psycho-religious education sessions, panel discussions, community

competitions, formulation workshops, reflection sessions, and a final exhibition of community work.

Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Information obtained from observations, field notes, focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews, and participant reflections was categorized, coded, and interpreted to identify recurring themes related to family harmony, communication, empathy, responsibility, and perceived changes after the intervention. Triangulation of data sources was conducted to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the program. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all adult participants, and parental consent was obtained for minors. Participants were informed of the program's objectives, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of personal information. All activities were conducted with respect for participants' dignity, cultural values, and religious beliefs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Family Psycho-Religious Education Activities

The family psycho-religious education session served as the program's opening activity, designed to strengthen the community's understanding of a harmonious family through lectures, dialogue, and question-and-answer sessions conducted in a warm, family-like atmosphere. It was attended by 33 residents and featured Dr. Hj. Rofiqah, M.Pd. and Dr. Trisandi Ardi, M.Psi. as resource persons in psychology and counseling, and Dr. Sutrisno, M.Pd. on Islamic teachings.

Although Malang City and Regency host numerous public and private universities, many residents in the area still do not make use of the available educational facilities and remain markedly disadvantaged, as reflected in the large number of individuals with low educational attainment who do not pursue higher education. This situation underscores the need for support from Malang's universities to improve family welfare and to help residents benefit from the institutions around them.

Through the material presented by the resource persons, participants were expected to gain insight, knowledge, and educational awareness that would enable them to take advantage of the educational opportunities and facilities available in Malang.

The attention, mentoring, and empowerment provided by universities in Malang City, such as the Qaryah Thayyibah initiative of Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang, can help transform the mindset and behavioral patterns of disadvantaged communities that still require support (Al-Fasy, 2018; Farid & Muharam, 2016).

Analytically, the psycho-religious education that opened the program served less as content delivery than as relational groundwork. For participants habituated to being treated as objects of charity or surveillance, an invitation to learn and ask questions in a respectful, faith-resonant setting began to establish the trust on which the later counseling depended. Integrating psychological and Islamic framings at this stage is consistent with evidence that faith-aligned, community-based formats raise engagement and perceived relevance among Muslim participants (Bentley et al., 2021), and it reframed access to education itself as a dimension of family welfare rather than a separate, unreachable good (Yap & McFarlane, 2020).

3.2 Discussion on Strengthening Understanding of Sakinah Families

This discussion was conducted as part of a community service initiative aimed at increasing public understanding of the concept of a peaceful and harmonious family, especially among individuals living in vulnerable socioeconomic conditions such as the homeless, vagrants, street buskers, and beggars. These groups often face significant social, economic, and emotional challenges that can affect the stability of family life. In many cases, economic hardship, social stigma, and limited access to education contribute to family conflicts, emotional stress, and weak family relationships. Therefore, strengthening family values is an important effort to help them build a more stable and meaningful life. In Islam, the concept of a peaceful family is closely related to the idea of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*, which refer to a family built upon tranquility, love, and mercy (Shihab, 2002; Anwar, 2019). This concept is not only a religious ideal but also a practical framework for building emotional resilience and social harmony within the family.

The main purpose of this activity was to provide the residents of Kampung Topeng with a basic understanding of the concept of a harmonious family and its importance in everyday life. A harmonious family is not simply defined by the absence of conflict, but by the presence of mutual understanding, emotional support, effective communication, and spiritual connection among family members. The discussion emphasized that every family, regardless of economic condition, has the potential to foster peace and stability if the values of patience, compassion, and responsibility are consistently practiced. Through this activity, participants were introduced to the essential elements of family harmony, including serenity (*sakinah*), affection (*mawaddah*), and mercy (*rahmah*), as taught in Islamic values. These principles were explained not only in theoretical terms but also in practical ways that participants could relate to their daily experiences (Soliman et al., 2022; Amer & Abdelsattar, 2019).

The activity also aimed to raise awareness of the family's crucial role as the first and most important environment for emotional and spiritual development. In Islam, the family is considered the foundation of society because it is the place where values, morals, and character are first taught (Napier & Whitaker, 2016; Truna et al., 2020). A peaceful family can become a source of psychological security, moral guidance, and

spiritual strength for all its members. For vulnerable communities, family support becomes even more important because external social support is often limited. The discussion emphasized that when family members care for and support each other, they are better able to face economic hardship and social pressure. Conversely, when family relationships are filled with conflict and neglect, poverty becomes even more difficult to overcome. This understanding helped participants reflect on the importance of strengthening relationships within their own households.

The results of this community service activity showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding of the concept of a harmonious family and its relevance to their personal lives. Many participants expressed that before attending the discussion, they had understood family only in terms of physical survival and economic responsibility. After the session, they began to recognize the importance of emotional closeness, communication, and spiritual connection as essential parts of family life. They realized that peace in the family is not determined solely by income or material possessions, but by how family members treat and support one another. This shift in perspective is an important step toward stronger, healthier family relationships, especially among socially marginalized groups.

In addition to conceptual understanding, participants developed practical skills in communication and conflict management. Effective communication is one of the key foundations of family harmony, yet it is often neglected in stressful living conditions. During the discussion, participants learned how to express feelings respectfully, listen actively, avoid harsh language, and solve disagreements without violence or prolonged resentment (Minuchin et al., 2019; Sexton & Lebow, 2019). These skills are especially important in families facing economic pressure, where misunderstandings can easily escalate into serious conflict. By learning peaceful conflict-resolution strategies, participants were encouraged to create a home environment grounded in understanding rather than blame. This aspect of the program was particularly well received because many participants felt that communication problems were one of the main causes of tension in their families.

Participants demonstrated high enthusiasm throughout the discussion sessions, reflecting their strong desire to improve their family conditions and apply the values they learned. Many asked questions, shared personal experiences, and openly discussed challenges they faced in maintaining family harmony. This active participation showed that the topic was highly relevant to their lives and that they welcomed opportunities for reflection and guidance. Some participants shared stories about difficulties in parenting, misunderstandings with spouses, and the emotional burden of living in poverty. These personal testimonies enriched the discussion and created a sense of solidarity among participants, as they realized that many others were facing similar struggles. The interactive nature of the activity made the learning

process more meaningful and strengthened participants' motivation to make positive changes.

However, several challenges were also identified during the implementation of the activity. One of the main obstacles was limited time, which led to some important material being delivered too quickly. Because the discussion involved complex emotional and social issues, participants often needed more time to ask questions and reflect deeply on the concepts presented. In some cases, valuable conversations had to be shortened due to scheduling limitations. This highlighted the need for follow-up sessions that would allow for deeper discussion and continuous support. Family transformation is not something that can be achieved in a single meeting; it requires consistent guidance, reflection, and practice over time. Therefore, future programs should include regular mentoring sessions to monitor how participants apply the values of harmony in their daily family life.

In conclusion, this community service activity successfully provided participants with new insights and practical skills regarding the importance of building a harmonious family, even in the midst of difficult life circumstances. It demonstrated that family peace and stability are possible even among those facing poverty and social exclusion, as long as the values of love, mercy, patience, and mutual respect are nurtured. The concepts of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* proved highly relevant and applicable to the lives of vulnerable communities (Truna et al., 2020). Through improved understanding, stronger communication skills, and greater awareness of the family's role, participants are better equipped to build healthier, more stable family relationships. It is expected that the lessons learned from this discussion will continue to influence their daily lives and inspire long-term positive change, both with individual families and in the wider community.

3.3 Media Discussion Tips for Building a Harmonious Family

The media discussion on tips for building a peaceful family was held at the Al-Hidayah Baran prayer room located in Tlogowaru Sub-district. This activity was attended by 33 residents of Kampung Topeng, along with several children who also participated in the event. The discussion was designed as part of a community empowerment effort to strengthen family values and increase awareness of the importance of creating harmonious households based on Islamic principles. In today's social reality, many families face various challenges, including economic pressures, communication problems, emotional conflicts, and a lack of understanding among family members. Therefore, discussions like this are important to provide practical guidance and moral reinforcement so that families can become a source of peace, security, and emotional support for all members.

The main theme of the discussion was *Qaryah Thayyibah*, which refers to the concept of building a good, peaceful, and prosperous community beginning from the family unit. In Islam, a peaceful family is often associated with the values of *sakinah*,

mawaddah, and rahmah, which mean tranquility, love, and mercy. A family that possesses these values will be able to face life's challenges with patience, mutual support, and spiritual strength (Hidayat & Mulyadi, 2017; Al-Mahmod, 2018). The discussion emphasized that a peaceful society cannot be achieved without peaceful families, because the family is the first and most important environment where values, morals, and character are formed. For this reason, understanding how to build a harmonious family becomes essential for every member of society.

The material presented during the discussion focused on eight important aspects that humans need in life to create a peaceful family. The first aspect is accepting the strengths and weaknesses of one's partner. Every individual has unique characteristics, and no person is perfect. Family harmony begins when a husband and wife can accept each other sincerely, without unrealistic expectations. Acceptance creates emotional stability and reduces unnecessary conflict.

The second aspect is being full of love and affection. Love is the foundation of every strong relationship, and affection strengthens emotional bonds between family members. Expressions of care, attention, and emotional support are necessary to maintain warmth in the household. Without love and affection, family relationships can become dry and distant.

The third aspect is understanding, appreciating, and forgiving. In family life, misunderstandings and mistakes are unavoidable. Therefore, family members must learn to understand each other's feelings, appreciate each other's efforts, and forgive mistakes sincerely. Forgiveness helps prevent resentment from growing and allows relationships to heal and improve (Freedman & Combs, 2019).

The fourth aspect is the responsible fulfillment of obligations, roles, and functions. Every family member has duties and responsibilities, whether as a husband, wife, parent, or child. Harmony can only be achieved when each person fulfills their role with sincerity and commitment. Responsibility creates balance and prevents feelings of injustice within the household.

The fifth aspect is avoiding unnecessary conflict. Conflict may occur naturally, but it should not be allowed to dominate family life. Families must learn to manage disagreements calmly and avoid actions or words that cause deeper hurt. Preventing conflict is often more effective than trying to repair severe emotional damage afterward.

The sixth important aspect is healthy communication. Good communication is the key to understanding and trust within the family. Speaking honestly, listening respectfully, and expressing feelings without anger help create stronger relationships. Healthy communication prevents misunderstandings and strengthens cooperation among family members.

The seventh aspect is shared responsibility in raising children. Both parents must be actively involved in nurturing, educating, and guiding their children with patience

and consistency. Parenting that is shared rather than left to one party alone strengthens children's emotional security and reinforces the family's collective values.

The eighth aspect is grounding family life in faith and worship. Shared spiritual practice, prayer, recitation, and reflection provide a moral compass and a source of comfort during difficulty. A family rooted in faith is better able to face economic and emotional pressure with patience and gratitude.

Overall, the discussion provided valuable insights for participants and encouraged them to reflect on the quality of their own family relationships. The enthusiastic participation of residents showed that the topic was highly relevant and needed in the community. It is expected that the values discussed can be practiced in daily life, helping families in Kampung Topeng become more peaceful, harmonious, and resilient in facing life's challenges.

The analytical value of this session lies in how it translated abstract ideals into observable behavior. By reducing *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* to eight concrete practices—acceptance, affection, forgiveness, role responsibility, conflict avoidance, healthy communication, shared parenting, and shared worship—the facilitators made the values teachable and rehearsable for participants with limited formal education. Several of these practices, such as active listening, expressing feelings without anger, and forgiving sincerely, are the same relational skills that operationalize the client-centered model, so the session effectively delivered counseling competencies in culturally familiar language (Soliman et al., 2022; Comas-Díaz & Hardy, 2019).

3.4 Identification of problems faced and implementation of client-centered counseling model 1

Identification of the problems faced and implementation of the client-centered counseling model 1 were carried out on children and adolescents living in Kampung Topeng. Because they are in shelters located far from the rural community, they often face unique and complex challenges. Their lives are often full of uncertainty, isolation from the wider community, and lack of access to education, health services, and social activities. Children in these situations often feel isolated from other children who have more stable lives. This isolation can exacerbate feelings of low self-esteem and helplessness.

A client-centered counseling approach for children and adolescents in this situation must be tailored to their specific needs. Here are the steps to implement it:

1. Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment

- a. Empathy: Counselors must demonstrate deep empathy for the experiences and feelings of these children and adolescents, understanding that they may not be used to adults showing concern without hidden agendas.
- b. Unconditional Positive Respect: Counselors should accept children and adolescents unconditionally, avoid judgment or criticism of their life choices or conditions, and ensure that they feel accepted and valued.

- c. Authenticity (Congruence): It is important for counselors to remain authentic and honest in interactions, which helps build trust in the therapeutic relationship.

2. An Age-Sensitive Approach

- a. Children should use age-appropriate communication methods, such as playing, drawing, or telling stories, to help them express their feelings and thoughts. Counselors should be patient and create a positive atmosphere.
- b. Teenagers, providing space for teens to talk about their feelings and experiences openly, respecting their privacy, and helping them identify their own life goals and values.

3. Promoting Self-Development and Empowerment

In this step, there are two important things that the counselor needs to do, namely:

- a. Increased Self-Esteem and
- b. Self-Identity Development. First, counselors can help children and adolescents develop a sense of self-worth by highlighting their strengths and potential. This can be done through recognizing small accomplishments or supporting them in developing new skills. Second, counselors help adolescents develop a strong and positive identity by supporting the exploration of their interests, values, and life goals.

4. Community-Based Interventions

Counselors can collaborate with local agencies, social institutions, schools, religious leaders, and community-based organizations to build strong social support networks for children and adolescents living in Kampung Topeng. These support systems are crucial because many children and teenagers in vulnerable environments often experience feelings of isolation, insecurity, and low self-worth. By involving the wider community, counselors can help them feel more accepted, valued, and connected to their social surroundings. A supportive environment can reduce feelings of rejection and strengthen their emotional resilience. Community support also helps create a sense of belonging, which is essential for healthy psychological development, especially during adolescence when identity formation becomes a major developmental task.

In addition to building external support systems, counselors can also organize group counseling sessions for children and adolescents in shelters or community centers. These sessions can focus on developing social skills, emotional expression, conflict resolution, empathy, and teamwork. Group counseling is particularly beneficial because it allows participants to share experiences, listen to others facing similar struggles, and realize they are not alone in their difficulties. This process helps foster solidarity and strengthens collective identity among participants. It also creates opportunities for peer support, which can be highly effective for adolescents, who often feel more comfortable opening up to peers of their own age. Through structured group activities, children and adolescents can gradually build confidence, trust, and interpersonal competence.

A client-centered counseling approach for children and adolescents in Kampung Topeng requires particular sensitivity and adaptation due of the unique social and psychological conditions they face. Many of them come from economically disadvantaged families and face daily struggles, including poverty, family conflict, neglect, social discrimination, and limited access to education (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021; Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2022; Suharto, 2018). Some may also experience emotional trauma due to unstable family environments, parental separation, domestic violence, or the absence of consistent emotional support. These conditions can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, fear, social withdrawal, and behavioral problems. In many cases, they may find it difficult to trust adults or express their emotions openly. Therefore, counselors must approach them with patience, empathy, and non-judgmental understanding.

The client-centered counseling model, developed by Carl Rogers (1951, 1961), is highly relevant in this context because it places the individual at the center of the helping process. This approach emphasizes unconditional positive regard, empathy, and genuineness on the part of the counselor (Rogers, 1961; Corey, 2017). Rather than directing or controlling the client, the counselor creates a safe, accepting environment in which children and adolescents feel free to express their thoughts, emotions, and personal struggles without fear of criticism. This sense of emotional safety is crucial for children in vulnerable communities because many of them rarely experience genuine acceptance in their daily lives (Rofiqah et al., 2023; Rofiqah & Rosidi, 2022). When they feel heard and respected, they become more willing to reflect on their experiences and explore solutions from within themselves.

In this situation, the implementation of client-centered counseling can be highly effective in supporting their mental and emotional growth. Counselors should begin by building trust through consistent presence, active listening, and genuine concern. Sessions should be adapted to the child's age, emotional maturity, and communication style. For younger children, play-based counseling, storytelling, and creative expression, such as drawing, can help them communicate their feelings more comfortably (Sanchez et al., 2022; Waraan et al., 2021). For adolescents, open dialogue and reflective conversation are more appropriate, allowing them to explore identity, relationships, and future aspirations.

In conclusion, a client-centered counseling approach can serve as an effective intervention for children and adolescents in Kampung Topeng. By combining emotional support, community collaboration, and opportunities for personal growth, counseling can help them address the psychological challenges they face and support healthier development. With the right guidance and a strong support system, these children and adolescents can move toward a more hopeful, stable, and positive future (Sanchez et al., 2022).

3.5 Identification of problems faced and implementation of Counseling Client-Centered Model 2

Identification of the problems faced and implementation of the client-centered counseling model 2 were conducted among mothers living in Kampung Topeng. Mothers living in Kampung Topeng face various challenges that affect their mental health, emotional well-being, and ability to care for their families. These conditions often create severe psychological distress, requiring specialized intervention. Client-centered counseling, which focuses on client empowerment and providing non-judgmental support, is a highly relevant approach to helping these mothers overcome their challenges.

The problems faced by mothers in these marginalized environments encompass several aspects, namely: 1) Social and Economic Pressures. Mothers often face challenges in meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, and healthcare for themselves and their children. This economic hardship creates chronic stress. Many mothers feel trapped in a cycle of dependence on assistance from the government or non-profit organizations, which can affect their sense of self-worth and autonomy. 2) Mental and Emotional Health, Stressful living conditions often cause mothers to experience depression, anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness (Murtadho, 2020; Rahmawati, 2021). Many mothers may have a history of trauma or be victims of domestic violence, which worsens their mental health and affects their ability to care for their families. 3) Dual Roles and Emotional Burden: Mothers often have to fulfill the dual role of breadwinner and caregiver, which can create a significant emotional burden. Mothers sometimes feel guilty for not being able to provide a stable environment for their children, which adds to their anxiety about their children's future. 4) Social Isolation: Mothers living in shelters or on the streets often face stigma and discrimination from society, which leaves them feeling isolated and helpless. Isolation from family or other social networks leaves these mothers feeling lonely and lacking the support they need to face daily challenges.

Implementing a client-centered counseling model for mothers in this situation requires a sensitive approach that focuses on empowerment and self-confidence. The techniques and steps involved are:

1. Building a Safe and Supportive Therapeutic Relationship
 - a. Empathy and Understanding: Counselors must demonstrate deep empathy and understanding of the difficult situations these mothers are facing, creating a safe environment for them to share their feelings and experiences.
 - b. Unconditional Positive Respect: Counselors should value these mothers unconditionally, accepting them as they are without judgment, thereby building trust and openness.
2. Empowerment and Self-Development

- a. Improving Self-Esteem: Counselors work to help mothers recognize their strengths and abilities, even in difficult situations, with the goal of increasing self-esteem and self-confidence.
 - b. Encouraging Autonomous Decision-Making: Counselors support mothers in making decisions relevant to their own lives, empowering them to feel more in control of their future.
3. Mental and Emotional Health Management
- a. Providing Space to Express Feelings: Counselors provide a safe space for mothers to express their feelings, such as fear, anger, or sadness, without feeling judged.
 - b. Support for Coping with Trauma: Counselors can help mothers cope with any trauma they may have experienced through techniques such as mindfulness, narrative therapy, or relaxation techniques.
4. Social Support and Connectedness to the Community
- a. Building Social Support Networks: Counselors can help mothers build or strengthen social support networks, both in the shelter and outside, to reduce feelings of isolation.
 - b. Connecting with Community Resources: Counselors can also help mothers access local resources, such as health services, skills training programs, or support groups, to improve their well-being.

This client-centered counseling approach supports and empowers mothers living in shelters for the homeless, buskers, beggars, and the homeless. By positioning mothers as accepting counselors and providing an empathetic and non-judgmental environment, this approach can help them overcome the challenges they face, improve their emotional well-being, and support their role as strong and resilient caregivers.

Read analytically, the mothers' module illustrates why a person-centered stance is particularly suited to gendered vulnerability. Mothers in the settlement carried a dual burden of caregiving and subsistence alongside stigma and, for some, histories of trauma—conditions that erode self-worth and autonomy. A non-directive, accepting relationship counters these dynamics directly by restoring a sense of competence and choice rather than prescribing solutions, an emphasis consistent with person-centered approaches that center the cultural values and self-defined needs of marginalized caregivers (Sanchez et al., 2022; Tanaka-Matsumi, 2022).

3.6 Identification of problems faced and implementation of client-centered counseling model 3

The identification of the problems faced and the implementation of the client-centered counseling model 3 were conducted with fathers living in Kampung Topeng. Fathers living in Kampung Topeng face various challenges that affect their role as heads of families, their emotional well-being, and their mental health. These challenges often cause significant psychological distress, necessitating a sensitive and empowering counseling approach, such as the client-centered model. This model

places the client at the center of the counseling process, focusing on understanding, empathy, and unconditional acceptance.

Some of the main problems faced by fathers in this situation include:

1. Economic Pressure and the Role of Breadwinner

- a. Economic hardship: Fathers in marginalized situations often face significant challenges in meeting their family's basic needs. The inability to provide for these needs can lead to feelings of failure and low self-esteem.
- b. Burden of Being a Breadwinner: The pressure to be the primary breadwinner can be psychologically heavy, especially when job opportunities are limited or unstable.

2. Mental and Emotional Health

- a. Depression and Stress: The high pressure to fulfill the traditional role as head of the family, coupled with economic hardship, often leads to fathers experiencing depression and chronic stress.
- b. Emotional Management: Fathers may have difficulty managing emotions such as anger, frustration, and helplessness, which can affect interactions with family members.

3. Identity and Self-Esteem

- a. Loss of Identity: Many fathers feel a loss of their identity as family leaders and productive members of society when they are unable to fulfill these roles.
- b. Shame and Stigma: Social stigma against the homeless or beggars can exacerbate feelings of shame and low self-esteem, making fathers reluctant to seek help or support.

4. Family relationship

- a. Tension in Family Relationships: Economic and emotional stress can strain relationships with partners and children, triggering conflict within the family.
- b. Alienation from Children: Fathers may feel alienated or unable to fulfill their role as authority figures or role models for their children.

Implementing a client-centered counseling model for fathers in this situation requires an approach that emphasizes empowerment, understanding, and empathetic support. The steps taken are:

1. Building a Safe Therapeutic Relationship

- a. Empathy and Unconditional Respect: Counselors must demonstrate deep empathy and unconditional respect for fathers' feelings and experiences, creating an environment where they feel heard and understood.
- b. Creating a Safe Space for Self-Expression: Counselors should provide a safe, judgment-free space where fathers feel comfortable expressing their feelings, whether they are angry, sad, or frustrated.

2. Empowerment and Self-Esteem Development

- a. Enhancing Self-Esteem: Counselors help fathers recognize and use their strengths and abilities, even in difficult situations, to increase self-esteem and self-confidence.
- b. Encouraging Independent Decision-Making: Counselors support fathers in making decisions relevant to their lives and families, empowering them to feel more in control of their future.

3. Mental and Emotional Health Management

- a. Stress Management Techniques: Counselors can teach stress management techniques, such as breathing exercises, relaxation, or mindfulness, that help fathers cope with everyday stress.
- b. Support in Coping with Depression: Counselors can help fathers identify signs of depression and work with them to develop effective coping strategies.

4. Improved Family Relationships

- a. Strengthening Communication in the Family: Counselors can work with fathers to develop better communication skills with their partners and children, thereby reducing conflict and increasing family harmony.
- b. Support for Fathers: Counselors can provide support and guidance to fathers in fulfilling their role as family leaders, including ways to stay connected with their children even in difficult situations.

The implementation of a client-centered counseling model for fathers living in Kampung Topeng emphasizes the importance of empowerment and respect for their lived experiences. By providing unconditional support and creating a safe environment, this approach can help fathers overcome the challenges they face, improve their emotional well-being, and strengthen their family relationships (Soliman et al., 2022).

3.7 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Strengthening Understanding of Sakinah Families and Implementing the Client-Centered Counseling Model

A harmonious family is an ideal concept for family life, where relationships among family members are based on the values of love, compassion, and justice. However, for groups living in shelters for the homeless, street vendors, beggars, and buskers, the challenges of building a harmonious family are immense. They face economic, social, and psychological challenges that impact their family dynamics.

On the other hand, the client-centered model counseling approach, which emphasizes empathy, unconditional acceptance, and active listening, can be an effective tool in helping them overcome the problems they face (Rogers, 1951; Corey, 2017). Therefore, this FGD was designed to increase participants' understanding of the concept of a harmonious family and to provide basic skills in applying the client-centered model of counseling. The objectives of the FGD were: 1) To increase participants' awareness of the importance of harmonious family values in building

family well-being, 2) To introduce the basic concepts and techniques of the client-centered model of counseling as an approach in supporting family relationships, and 3) To help participants identify practical ways to apply the values of a harmonious family and counseling techniques in their daily lives.

The FGD methodology is carried out with 1) open discussion, the facilitator will start by explaining the concept of a harmonious family and the client-centered counseling model, followed by an open discussion to listen to the views and experiences of participants, 2) participants discuss and identify how the concept of a harmonious family and counseling techniques can be applied in their situation, 3) Case and Role Play, Participants are given a simple case study that is relevant to their situation, and through role play, they will practice the counseling techniques they have learned, 4) The facilitator guides them in drawing conclusions.

The FGD was held for 3-4 hours at the Al-Hidayah prayer room and was attended by a number of residents of Kampung Topeng, community leaders, junior high/high school teachers Nurul Muttaqin, teachers of SMKN 10 Malang, teachers of SMPN 23 Malang, and teachers of MI-MTs Hidayatussyibyan. Through this FGD, it is expected that participants will not only gain a better understanding of *sakinah* families, but also be equipped with basic skills to support their family's well-being through a client-focused counseling approach. The expected long-term impact is the formation of a stronger, more harmonious community in which every family member feels supported and valued.

The FGD added a dimension that the individual modules could not: a collective one. Moving counseling into a shared, dialogic space allowed participants to discover that their struggles were common rather than personal failings, and the case-and-role-play format let them rehearse empathy and active listening on one another rather than merely hearing about them. This peer-supported, experiential consolidation is where person-centered principles become group practice, reinforcing the solidarity and sense of being heard that underpin durable change (Cooper, 2019; Truna et al., 2020).

3.8 Competition to Strengthen Understanding of *Sakinah* Families Through the Implementation of the Client-Centered Counseling Model

This competition is expected to help participants gain a better understanding of the concept of a harmonious family and strengthen their relationships. It also aims to create a space for participants to share inspiring experiences and solutions, ultimately helping them achieve greater well-being, both individually and as a family.

Framed as a family-based competition, the activity invited households to present and enact the harmonious family values they had explored across the three counseling modules through storytelling, role-play, and shared reflection on situations drawn from their own lives. Rather than testing knowledge, the format was deliberately experiential: it positioned participants as the agents of their own learning, consistent with the client-centered premise that change is most durable when it emerges from a

person's own meaning-making rather than from instruction (Cooper, 2019; Tanaka-Matsumi, 2022).

Two patterns were analytically notable. First, the supportive competitive setting appeared to lower the social stigma that often discourages marginalized families from discussing private struggles; presenting their own solutions before peers reinforced a sense of competence and dignity. Second, recognizing effort rather than offering material reward mirrored the unconditional positive regard at the core of the model, helping participants internalize *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* as lived practice rather than abstract ideals (Truna et al., 2020; Soliman et al., 2022). These observations suggest that experiential, community-based formats can extend person-centered counseling beyond the individual session and embed it within collective family life, although the absence of pre- and post-measures means these gains remain observational.

3.9 Final Activity Reflection & Product Formulation

The community service we have implemented, themed "Strengthening the Understanding of Sakinah Families Through the Implementation of the Client-Centered Counseling Model," aims to provide practical knowledge and skills to people in shelters for the homeless, street vendors, scavengers, beggars, and buskers. This activity is motivated by the need to support families in vulnerable socio-economic conditions so they can strengthen relationships among family members based on the values of *sakinah*.

Through a client-centered counseling approach, we strive to equip participants with active listening skills, empathy, and unconditional acceptance that can help them resolve conflicts and build more harmonious relationships within the family.

Throughout the activity, participants showed a marked increase in their understanding of family harmony and a greater awareness of how to sustain it under difficult circumstances. The client-centered model was well received: participants practiced active listening and empathy in discussions and role-plays, applied them to the family issues raised in the case studies, and drew on their own experiences to enrich the conversation.

Despite challenges such as differing educational backgrounds and starting points, the activity created an inclusive atmosphere in which each participant felt heard and valued. Its main lesson is the value of a personal, in-depth approach to strengthening harmonious family values among vulnerable community groups.

Product Formulation for Strengthening Understanding of Sakinah Families

1. Training Module Based on the Client-Centered Counseling Model

Based on reflection and evaluation of the activity, a training module has been developed specifically to support strengthening understanding of harmonious families among vulnerable communities. This module includes material on:

- a. The basic concept of a harmonious family in Islam.
 - b. Client-centered counseling model techniques applicable in everyday life.
 - c. Case studies and practical guides for resolving conflicts in the family.
2. The Book "Sakinah Family: Building a Harmonious Life Based on Islamic Values"
- a. A practical guidebook containing simple and applicable steps for building a harmonious family, with a focus on applying these values in challenging life situations.
 - b. This book is also illustrated with real examples drawn from participants' experiences, making it easy to understand and relevant to readers from various backgrounds.

This community service activity has had a tangible positive impact on the participants, particularly in enhancing their understanding of the importance of a harmonious family and developing basic skills in implementing a client-centered counseling model. With the resulting product formulation, it is expected that the benefits of this activity will continue and be felt by the wider community. With continued effort, families in these difficult circumstances are expected to achieve better well-being, based on strong and harmonious family relationships.

Analytically, the reflection-and-formulation stage is what gives the program a chance of outlasting it. By distilling the experience into a training module and a guidebook, the team converted a time-bound activity into transferable tools that local facilitators, religious leaders, or teachers could reuse—an approach to sustainability and scale-up that mirrors train-the-trainer models in community-based interventions (Bentley et al., 2021). The reflection also functioned as informal evaluation, surfacing which strategies resonated and where understanding remained uneven, and thereby pointing toward the mentoring follow-up that the conclusion recommends.

3.10 Closing Ceremony & Exhibition

The Qaryah Thayyibah community service activity, "Strengthening Understanding of Sakinah Families through the Implementation of a Client-Centered Counseling Model," held in Kampung Topeng Malang, has reached its final session, the Closing Ceremony and exhibition. This event concludes a series of community service activities aimed at strengthening relationships between family members through an approach that emphasizes empathy, acceptance, and active listening.

This activity not only provides theoretical understanding but also practical applications relevant to the participants' socio-economic circumstances. The program concluded with the expectation that participants would apply the values they had learned in daily life.

More than a ceremony, the closing exhibition performed an analytical function: it publicly recognized participants' effort and family stories, converting private growth into community-acknowledged achievement. For a population marked by stigma, this kind of dignified public validation can reinforce self-worth and a sense of belonging,

while the exhibition format signaled community ownership of the harmonious-family agenda rather than dependence on external providers (Truna et al., 2020; Yap & McFarlane, 2020).

3.11 Synthesis: Linking the Findings to Client-Centered Theory

Read together, the ten activities point to a single active ingredient rather than ten separate effects. Across the child, mother, and father modules, the consistent driver of change was the Rogerian triad of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence, which created a climate of psychological safety in which participants—long accustomed to social stigma and surveillance felt able to speak openly (Cooper, 2019). This is theoretically significant because person-centered change is understood to follow from the relationship rather than from technique: when people experience genuine acceptance, they reorganize their self-concept and become more willing to act on their own values (Tanaka-Matsumi, 2022). The recurring shift among participants from viewing family life in purely economic terms to recognizing its emotional and relational dimensions is consistent with this mechanism.

What made the approach fit this particular community was its integration with the *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* framework. Anchoring counseling in participants' own religious meaning system increased the cultural relevance and perceived legitimacy of the intervention, a pattern documented in other faith-integrated, community-based programs for Muslim populations (Bentley et al., 2021; Soliman et al., 2022) and in studies of person-centered cultural responsiveness with marginalized families (Sanchez et al., 2022). The findings therefore extend an empowerment literature that has concentrated on vocational and economic capacity, showing that the relational and spiritual dimensions of family life are also workable targets for intervention in relocated, formerly homeless settlements (Truna et al., 2020; Yap & McFarlane, 2020). These claims, however, rest on observation, facilitator reflection, and satisfaction data rather than controlled measurement, so they are best read as theoretically plausible mechanisms that warrant confirmation through the longitudinal, instrument-based designs outlined below.

Finally, it is highly recommended to prioritize community development and the development of rural-urban transitional areas, such as Kedungkandang District, not only for social justice but also for the future of the city. As McNamara (1976), the then-president of the World Bank, warned: "If cities do not begin to deal more constructively with poverty, poverty may begin to deal more destructively with cities." This observation remains central to contemporary scholarship on urban extreme poverty and social justice (Yap & McFarlane, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrates that a client-centered counseling approach, grounded in Carl Rogers' principles and integrated with the Islamic family concept of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*, is a relevant and effective intervention for marginalized urban communities such as Kampung Topeng. Through three counseling modules tailored for children and adolescents, mothers, and fathers, participants gained a deeper understanding of the importance of effective communication, empathy, compassion, and shared responsibility in building family harmony. The integration of non-directive counseling and psycho-religious education also created a safe space for participants to express various family issues that had been hampered by social stigma. These findings suggest that integrating person-centered counseling with Islamic family values offers a culturally grounded and replicable model for psychosocial empowerment in marginalized urban settlements—one that complements, rather than replaces, the vocational and economic programs that currently dominate poverty-alleviation efforts.

However, this study has several limitations. Evaluation of program outcomes was based on observations, satisfaction surveys, and participant self-reports, so changes could not be measured quantitatively and longitudinally. Furthermore, the limited number of participants, drawn from a single community, means the research results cannot be generalized beyond that community. Therefore, further research is recommended to use standardized psychometric instruments, involve a larger, more diverse sample, and employ a longitudinal design to assess the sustainability of family behavior change. Future research should also examine the influence of economic factors, education, religiosity, and social support on program success and develop a community-based mentoring model that involves religious leaders, social workers, village governments, and educational institutions to strengthen the long-term impact of the *Sakinah Family* intervention.

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