

## MEASURES IN CREATING A HARMONIOUS FAMILY AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS OF *BICARA SAKINAH* IN PERAK

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**Abstract:** *The family is a social institution that is able to protect its members by adopting certain measures in creating a harmonious (sakinah) family according to Islam in order to attain happiness. However, due to the weakness in understanding the concept of a harmonious family, and in practicing the measures of its creation, has caused the family institution to face problems in its everyday life. This study aims to present the measures in creating a harmonious family according to Islam. The design of this study involves qualitative and field study. Data collection is made using the questionnaire instrument distributed to 177 respondents who participated in Bicara Sakinah (Talk on Harmony/Harmonious Family), organized by the Malaysian Consultative Council of Muslim Women (MPWIM), Malaysian Islamic Da'wah Foundation (YADIM) in Perak. The data are analyzed descriptively using the SPSS computer software. The findings show that the respondents practise or adopt measures in creating a harmonious family, such as by obeying the commands of Allah SWT (174), by supplicating to Allah, by guiding the family members in performing their roles well (172), by demonstrating good behaviour to be emulated by others (170), and by looking for halal (lawful) sustenance (175). The above findings show that the creation of a harmonious family according to Islam can be carried out by the respondents. However, some of the measures have received too little attention, and therefore needs to be acted upon. Family members are urged to join talks or functions related to Islamic family matters more frequently so that the objective of a harmonious family according to Islam is achieved and the measures towards the creation of a harmonious family can be further strengthened.*

**Keyword:** *Family, Sakinah (Harmonious), Measures.*

### INTRODUCTION

The lives of humans in small social groups are built based on the family unit, where the husband and wife have a legitimate relationship through the bond of marriage. The goal of a marriage, or having a family is to attain happiness and

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tranquility in life. According to Islam, a happy and tranquil family is a harmonious (*sakinah*) family. A harmonious (*sakinah*) family is a family that fulfills its life with the aspects of faith, devotion and noble behaviour or character in their entirety. It also fulfills its life with the psychological and social needs, which can be emulated by the surrounding community (Abdul Qadir Djaelani 1995 :7; Indrani and Sagara, 2015; Azhar, 2015). A harmonious (*sakinah*) family is built based on a legitimate marriage, with the ability to fulfill the spiritual and material wishes in a balanced way, is compatible, and full of the atmosphere of love and affection between the family members and the surrounding communities. It is also capable of practicing, appreciating, internalizing and increasing the values of faith, devotion and the noble behaviour or character of its family members. A happy family according to the Western perspective is,

“Family quality of life is conditions where the family’s needs are met, family members enjoy their life together as a family, and family members have the chance to do things that are important to them”

(Denise J. Poston and Ann P. Turnbull: 2004)

The quest for a harmonious (*sakinah*) family must be undertaken by the leader of every family, as well as the other family members, that is by having the familial life values that are based on the Quran and the Sunnah. Next, they would need to consistently practise the aspects mentioned above in order to attain happiness and tranquility. Sayyid Qutb argued that the need for a harmonious (*sakinah*) family is the natural requirement of the human nature, which calls for both husband and wife to play their roles, and to distribute their responsibilities fairly, in ensuring that the individual will remain intact in the family unit, community and the nation.

In the context of family life in Malaysia at present, there are still family members who are not ready to accept the responsibilities in their families, and those who do not fully understand their roles in the families, resulting in conflicts and fights between them. Ultimately, all these would have negative effects on the family members, and lead to divorce and family turmoil. Some couples have complained of having no understanding, tolerance, and compromise with each other, and have lost the sense of respect towards each other (Muhammad Hafizuddin: 2003). The development of good and noble values in the family is getting lost due to their sense of selfishness, which results in fights and lack of courtesy between them. As a result of this situation, the understanding about the harmonious family goals need to be done, and further strengthened by the family members. Noble values in family life such as love, affection, mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation must be practiced. Apart from that, the implementation of religious practices in Muslim families must be carried out as a guide in maintaining relationship, attaining happiness and in strengthening the family institution on the right track.

Strong family relationship will strengthen the social ties within the social institution (Hammudah 'Abd al-'Ati: 2008). The question is whether the family members are aware of the measures in establishing the harmonious family in achieving the goals of a marriage according to Islam? Therefore, this paper describes the measures in establishing a harmonious family according to Islam, as a guide to the Muslim families in retaining the position of the family institution in the system of human life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Islamic familial system started since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and it is a system that provides happiness to the Muslim families since it is based on the Quran and Sunnah. When family members perform their duties in accordance with the Islamic values, the household will become peaceful, where there will be peaceful relationship between the family members, and this relationship will become stronger and more harmonious (Ishak Mohd. Rejab: 1996)<sup>1</sup>.

The foundation of happiness in human lives begins from the self (individual) and the family itself by possessing peacefulness, solid relationship, and by showing love and affection towards each other. According to Islam, a happy family is a harmonious family. It is based on noble intentions and good deeds that are practiced by the married couple<sup>2</sup>.

Al-Farabi describes that a happy life contains the values of humanity and good behaviour, because all those practices function in attaining happiness. The sign of happiness in a family can be seen when its members have good souls, performing their duties and responsibilities, fulfilling their religious obligations perfectly, abstaining from major sins, and abandoning prohibited things<sup>3</sup>.

According to Mahmud Saedon Awang Othman (1943: 23), the foundation of a happy family is by having correct intentions, devotion to Allah the Almighty, *al-mawaddah*, *al-rahmah*, *al-muasyarah bi al-makruf*, being trustworthy, as well as being responsible. Married couples must build their marriage with the intention of worshipping Allah, and in seeking His pleasure. Through this, both worldly and eternal happiness could be achieved since the marriage is established based on the correct intentions.

### Allah the Almighty Said

“And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him alone (abstaining from ascribing partners to Him), and perform *As-Salat* (*Iqamat-as-Salat*) and give *Zakat*: and that is the right religion.” (Surah al-Bayyinah 98:5) (<http://www.noblequran.com/translation/>).

A family must also be based on the devotion to Allah the Almighty that is by the spouse fulfilling the trust and responsibilities towards his/her partner and the offspring. The married couple will strive to uphold goodness and to abandon abominable actions as a sign of their obedience and love towards Allah the Almighty.

#### **Allah the Almighty Said**

“O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both. He created many men and women. And fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you.” (Surah al-Nisa’ 4:1). (<http://www.noblequran.com/translation/>)

A harmonious family is founded on the feelings of reciprocal love and affection, as well as in giving and receiving. It is also based on *al-rahmah*, which is tolerance, mutual understanding, and also helping each other in the name of charity, which would all contribute towards maintaining the harmony of the household.

#### **Allah the Almighty said**

“And among His signs is that, He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for the people who reflect.” (Surah al-Ruum 30:21). (<http://www.noblequran.com/translation/>)

The last foundation is good discussion (*al-Mua'syarah bi al makruf*), which is socializing and coexisting in good faith and benevolence, in seeking the pleasure of Allah the Almighty. In other words, a married life that steers away from abuse, maltreatment and cruelty.

#### **Allah the Almighty said**

“O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will, and you should not treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the *Mahr* you have given them, unless they commit open illegal sexual intercourse. And live with them honourably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of good.” (Surah an-Nisa’ 4:19)”. (<http://www.noblequran.com/translation/>)

Therefore, every married Muslim individual need to make the foundations discussed above as their guide in establishing the harmonious family, which is a happy family.

A lot of researches have been carried out on the issue of marital or domestic conflict. Among them, in 2014 for example, a study conducted by Mohd. Al-Amin Mat Daud on the causes of divorce at the Federal Territory Islamic Affairs Department shows that couples have not given proper explanation in the event of disputes (41.4%), marriage based on wealth and not mutual love (68.3%), and husbands acting without considering the feelings and dignity of their wives (53.7%). In Perak, a total of 2223 people had filed for a divorce (<http://kaunseling.syarie.blogspot.my/2012>).

This is more than enough to show the worrisome situation of married couples being unable to find happiness in their marriage. For this, the family institution needs to pay serious attention in maintaining the goals of a marriage and to follow the measures in establishing a harmonious family. Sulaiman Endut (2001)<sup>4</sup> has suggested several measures in establishing a harmonious family, which includes the husband fulfilling his duty as the head of the family. This covers the husband's duties in managing the affairs of both this life and the hereafter, providing the family with sustenance from *halal* livelihood, being neither stingy nor extravagant, helping his wife in doing house chores, protecting the wife, providing the family members with religious education, and also being fair. The wife, on the other hand, must obey the husband as long as the husband himself obeys the commands of Allah SWT and His Messenger, maintain her self-respect, respect her husband and the husband's family, protect the husband's properties, to take care of and educate their children, and to help the husband.

In addition, both spouses must perform their shared responsibilities, for example in providing the children's education, managing the overall development of the family, food preparation, internal and external cleanliness, to be patient, to overcome obstacles together, and to avoid quarrels and fights. All of these measures, in terms of responsibility and trust are very important for the purpose of attaining a happy family. The fact is that Islam makes family ties between its members as a form of trust and responsibility. Family members who obediently shoulder their responsibilities are able to create peace and tranquility in their lives.<sup>5</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses document analysis and is based on field study. The field study was conducted to identify and to intensively search about the current background status, as well as the surrounding interaction of a social unit, whether it involves the individual, group, institution, or the community (Sidek: 2002)<sup>6</sup>. Data collection is made using the questionnaire, which was distributed to 177 participants of the *Bicara Keluarga Sakinah* (Talk on Harmonious Family) in Perak, organized by the

Islamic Da'wah Foundation Malaysia. This method was chosen because questionnaire is the easiest way of obtaining information (Cates: 1985)<sup>7</sup>. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, using the SPSS computer software based on frequency and percentage, and presented in the form of tables. Descriptive statistics is a mathematical technique to process, organize, analyze, and summarize quantitative data. The aim is to describe the findings of the questionnaire in the form of tables, using frequency and percentage. The Alpha Cronbach value for the questionnaire items in each section is between 0.71-0.90, which shows a strong relationship (Chua Yan Piaw : 2006)<sup>8</sup>.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Background of Respondents

Majority of the respondents are between the ages of 30 to 39 (36.2%), followed by 19 to 29 years old (22.6%), 40 to 49 years old (15.3%), and 50 to 59 years old (23.7%). However, the remaining 4 of the respondents have not indicated their ages. As for their education level, majority of the respondents possess the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) (54.2%), followed by a diploma (37%), First/Bachelor's Degree (24%), Master's Degree (24%) and Malaysian Higher Certificate of Education (STPM) (13%).

This shows that majority of the respondents are among those educated from the lower to the higher levels. Next, as for their employment status, majority of them work in the government sector (81.4%), followed by those working in the private sector (16.4%), and those who are self-employed (1.1%). One respondent is still a student. Therefore, majority of the respondents have a job. As for their marital status, majority are wives (69.5%), husbands (27.7%), widows (2.3%), and finally widowers (0.6%). Therefore, majority of the respondents are women who are wives. From the aspect of having children, 55.9% of the respondents have between 0 to 2 children, another 38.4% have between 3 to 5 children, 9% have between 6 to 8 children, while 0.6% have between 9 to 11 children. Overall, these data suggest that the respondents have a small number of child dependents.

As for their marriage duration, 46.9% have been married between 1 to 10 years, the marriage duration of another 21.5% is between 11 to 20 years, 18.1% have been married between 21 to 30 years, and finally 9% have been married between 31 to 40 years. However, 15 of the respondents have not stated the duration of their marriage. This indicates that more respondents have been married between 1 to 10 years. This is the stage of marriage where many are still young couples, and thus have the potential to further strengthen their family institutions.

## MEASURES IN BUILDING A HARMONIOUS FAMILY

A harmonious family must be undertaken by each married respondent. Among the measures to be performed are as stated in the table below:

**Table 1**  
**Religious Obligations**

<i>Item</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
1. To adhere to the command of Allah SWT to get married	1 (0.6%)	2 (1.1%)	48 (27.2%)	126 (71.2%)
2. Performing <i>solat istikharah</i> to get married	1 (0.6%)	15 (8.5%)	71 (40.1%)	90 (50.8%)
3. To make supplication to Allah asking for His help	- (0.6%)	1 (17.5%)	31 (81.9)	145 (81.9%)
4. To readily accept the spouse as determined by Allah	- (0.6%)	1 (17.5%)	31 (81.9)	145 (81.9%)
5. To call upon family members to obey the commands of Allah SWT	- -	3 (1.7%)	44 (24.9)	130 (73.4%)
6. To deter family members from committing things that are forbidden by Allah SWT	2 (1.1%)	2 (1.1%)	48 (27.1)	125 (70.6%)

Source: 2016 Questionnaire.

Table 1 shows the measures in building a harmonious family from the aspect of religious obligations, as practised by the respondents. Majority of the respondents started the measures in establishing the harmonious family by first supplicating to Allah SWT so that they are helped in their choices and in the selection for the most suitable life partner (81.9%). Next is by accepting the life partner as determined or chosen by Allah because they are confident that the chosen partner is the best for them in their lives (81.9%).

To be happy, the respondents would obey the command of Allah the Almighty, that is by having a lawful wedlock (71.2%). A legitimate marriage is the only proof that the religious demands of a Muslim has been fulfilled, and this completes his/her religion in the quest for happiness. The respondents would also call upon his/her family members, consisting of the spouse and the children, to obey the commands of Allah in their traverse of family life in accordance with the right religious foundation, which is accepted by Him (73.4%).

In addition, the respondents would also deter their family members from committing forbidden or prohibited things in order to evade the harm and damages caused by these things to the family relationship (70.6%). Couples perform religious obligations in order to demonstrate their obedience to The Creator, which would result in the presence of harmony in the family.

**Table 2**  
**Communication**

<i>Item</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
1. To use kind words when interacting with family members	1 (0.6%)	11 (6.2%)	70 (39.5%)	95 (53.7%)
2. To tell the truth when with family members	1 (0.6%)	11 (6.2%)	70 (39.5%)	95 (53.7%)
3. To be honest in solving problems	1 (0.6%)	11 (6.2%)	67 (37.9%)	98 (55.4%)
4. To have discussions with family members	1 (0.6%)	2 (1.1%)	75 (42.4%)	99 (55.9%)
5. To utter romantic words to the spouse	1 (0.6%)	4 (2.3%)	92 (51.9%)	80 (45.2%)
6. To forgive family members for their mistakes/wrong doings	1 (0.6%)	9 (5.1%)	78 (44.1%)	89 (50.3%)

*Source:* 2016 Questionnaire.

Table 2 shows the communication pattern in the family in strengthening the ties between the husband, wife and the children. One of the elements being focused by the respondents in their communication is to have discussions with the family members, where 42.4% agreed, and another 55.9% strongly agreed. Discussions with the family members provide the space for them to voice out and share their views or opinion with the family, and thus help them to make the best decisions in family life. 37.9% of the respondents agreed that they would be honest in solving problems so that no truth is hidden.

The other 55.4% have strongly agreed on this matter. Next, 39.5% agreed that they would use kind words when interacting with the family members, while the other 53.7% have strongly agreed to this. Kind words would have a good or positive effect on the feelings of the family members, as well as warding off strife. Hence, 44.1% of them agreed that they would forgive their family members for their mistakes or wrong doings, while 50.3% have strongly agreed on doing so. Giving forgiveness to family members is better in demonstrating openness and in accepting a reconciliation, to re-unite, and to continue with beneficial practices. Respondents who agreed to utter romantic words to their spouse were 51.9%, while those who strongly agreed were 45.2%.

The uttering of romantic words is capable of creating intimacy and affection in relationships, as well as symbolising romance. All positive communication aspects would influence the behaviour and actions of the family members in their interaction with each other. This in turn would help them in building the harmonious family (Siti Fatimah Abdul Rahman : 1999)<sup>9</sup>.



**Table 3**  
**Behaviour**

<i>Item</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
1. To perform self-reflection in improving the fulfillment of their responsibilities	1 (0.6%)	4 (2.3%)	60 (33.9%)	112 (63.3%)
2. To show good behaviour to the family members	1 (0.6%)	5 (2.8%)	69 (39.0%)	101 (57.1%)
3. To take care of the family members' welfare	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	38 (21.5%)	137 (77.4%)
4. To provide <i>halal</i> sustenance to the family	-	2 (1.1%)	45 (25.4%)	130 (73.4%)
5. To show kindness towards the family members	-	2 (1.1%)	66 (37.3%)	109 (61.6%)
6. To practise noble values towards the family members	-	5 (2.9%)	72 (40.7%)	100 (56.5%)

Source: 2016 Questionnaire

Table 3 shows the behaviour practised by the respondents towards their family members. Majority of the respondents agreed to take care of the family members' welfare, with 21.5% agreeing to do so, while another 77.4% strongly agreed. Family welfare includes taking care of their health, safety, as well as education, that is by helping out the family since their rights as a member of the family needs to be fulfilled. Infact, their souls would be more peaceful and calm. This is followed by the respondents agreeing to seek for *halal* (lawful) sustenance (25.4%), while strongly agreed (73.4%). According to Islam, *halal* sustenance helps to shape for the development of good physical and spiritual growth, and motivates the family members to adorn themselves with praiseworthy attributes. 33.9% of the respondents also agreed that self-reflection helps them in improving the fulfillment of their responsibilities, while another 63.3% have strongly agreed. Self-reflection includes elements such as the reflection on their responsibilities towards their families, by showing repentance towards their mistakes or wrong doings, by not repeating the mistakes, and by improving themselves in creating a better family life based on the teachings of the religion, the couples accepting each other's rights, and being ready to complement each other. In terms of being kind towards the family members, 37.3% agreed to doing so, while another 61.6% strongly agreed. Kindness towards the family members can be performed through various ways, such as by providing assistance if the family members are in trouble or difficulties, or in providing help to ensure that they are in a state of peacefulness. The kindness offered will guarantee for the safeguarding of their dignity and honour (Mahmood Zuhdi Abdul Majid 2000:230).<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

A harmonious family is important in the lives of humans so that the family system, the rules and also noble values could be maintained. This in turn would help to influence the lives of the people to move towards a harmonious and peaceful life. Due to the challenges of globalization and the obstacles surrounding present day life, it has affected the changes in an individual, whether good or bad. However, family members need to realize the purpose of a marriage, and that the goal of starting a family is to attain happiness both in this world and the hereafter. The quest for happiness in the family must be undertaken by all family members, by following several aspects of the beneficial measures, some of them being religious obligations, communication and behaviour. The establishment of the guide based on the measures in creating a harmonious family could strengthen both the family institution and the society, headed towards a safe, peaceful and harmonious country.

### Notes

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