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## **Exploring Family Strength: Vulnerability Factors and the Role of Spirituality in Family Resilience During COVID-19 Pandemic**

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**Intan Islamia**

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung  
intanislamia@radenintan.ac.id

**Rosleny Marliani**

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung  
roslenymarliani@uinsgd.ac.id

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### **Abstract**

*This research explores the relationship between family vulnerability, spirituality, and resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic. With a quantitative approach and cross-sectional study design, samples were taken randomly using a random sampling method, involving 189 husbands/wives willing to participate. Data collection was carried out through interviews (both online and offline) using a modified questionnaire based on the Sunarti (2021) scale to measure family resilience and family vulnerability, as well as Underwood's (2003) DSES (Daily Spiritual Experience Scale) scale to measure spirituality. The research results show that there is a significant negative relationship between family vulnerability and family resilience, while spirituality has a significant positive correlation with family resilience. In addition, family vulnerability and spirituality together contributed 17.2% to the variation in family resilience. These findings contribute to understanding family resilience in the COVID-19 era and indicate the need for further discussion in future research.*

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui adanya keterkaitan antara kerentanan keluarga dan spiritualitas dengan resiliensi keluarga setelah setahun pandemi Covid-19 berlangsung. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif, cross-sectional study. Teknik penarikan contoh dilakukan secara random sampling. Responden yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini adalah sebanyak 189 suami/istri yang bersedia. Pengambilan data dilakukan melalui wawancara (baik secara daring dan luring) menggunakan beberapa kuesioner modifikasi skala Sunarti (2021) untuk mengukur resiliensi keluarga dan kerentanan keluarga, serta skala DSES (Daily Spiritual Experience Scale) Underwood (2003). Hasil uji korelasi menunjukkan bahwa kerentanan keluarga memiliki hubungan negatif signifikan dengan resiliensi keluarga, sementara spiritualitas berkorelasi positif dengan resiliensi keluarga. Hasil penelitian ini memberikan sumbangsih pada penelitian resiliensi keluarga di masa pandemic Covid-19 dan memerlukan pembahasan lebih lanjut.

*Keywords: Family resiliency, family vulnerability, spirituality, COVID-19*

### **Introduction**

Previous research has shown how important the family is in developing individuals and society. The family is the primary and most influential institution influencing individual development (Baxter et al., 1951; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cooley, 1909 in Reiss, 1980; Berns, 1985). One research shows that family relationships and support impact higher individual resilience and well-being and how individuals can adapt positively to various stresses and adversities (Huang et al., 2018; Song et al., 2023). In the social context, based on Law No. 52 of 2009, the family is defined as the smallest social unit of society (Sunarti, 2001). In this case, the family contributes to the surrounding community.

2020 became a new history for human civilization when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. This extraordinary incident affected all humans, and individuals were no exception. As previously discussed, the family is the most dynamic immediate environment in which individuals develop, so it is essential to build strength within the family to strengthen the individual's condition. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the family was one of the institutions that felt the real impact due to the many changes and uncertainties (Gayatri & Irawaty, 2021; Boyer et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2023; Ridhwan et al., 2023).

The uncertainties experienced by families include economic problems, where people's purchasing power has decreased, and the

implementation of social restrictions, one of which has decreased the need for workers. It causes the primary breadwinner to lose his job, leading to financial insecurity. Problematic family finances cause stress for family members, parenting challenges, and stress related to routine life changes (Prime et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2023; Ridhwan et al., 2023). Results of previous research found that there has been an increase in domestic violence during the pandemic (Campbell, 2020; Humphreys et al., 2020; Pereda & Diaz-Faes, 2020; Xue et al., 2020; Zhang, 2020; Drotning et al., 2023), there is changes in risk factors and resilience (Prime et al., 2020), increasing challenges faced by families due to social distancing policies (Lopez-Serrano et al., 2023; Ares et al., 2021). Furthermore, in terms of psychology, change and uncertainty also cause high levels of mental health disorders experienced, especially in children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic (Westrupp et al., 2023). It is related to increased pressure/stress in parenting (Brown et al. ., 2020). World Bank data (2021) also states that between March and September 2020, the poverty rate increased from 9.78% to 10.19%, with an increase in the number of low-income families from 26.42 million to 27.55 million residents. The continuous impact and influence of COVID-19 result in shaky family stability. It is due to various problems that arise, such as job loss, feelings of grief due to the loss of family members, and mental health being shaken due to being required to survive during the pandemic, especially for those with lower middle-class family status (Li et al., 2023).

The concept of resilience or resilience is the ability of a family to recover after experiencing a crisis or disaster (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Sunarti, 2021; Walsh, 2021). Resilience capabilities are needed for the survival of a family and the welfare of family members (Turliuc et al., 2013; Stark et al., 2020; Khatib et al., 2023). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of family resilience becomes essential, with the hope that no matter how big the COVID-19 storm, the family will be able to face it and they can return to a state of balance (Yates & Mantler, 2023). According to previous research, several resilience-related factors include spirituality, family communication, time for family, and support networks (Patterson, 2002; Black & Lobo, 2008; Cihan & Var, 2022). Previous research found that interactions between family members are related to family well-being and resilience (Prime et al., 2021); quality of care is related to resilience (Sholeh et al., 2021); and

spirituality has a positive influence on resilience (Roberto et al., 2020).

This research focuses on a deeper understanding of family resilience by exploring the relationship between vulnerability variables and family spirituality. Vulnerability factors include things that threaten and cause instability in the family, while family spirituality is considered a factor that is a source of family strength to generate resilience. Through this research, researchers hope to contribute to understanding the process of family resilience, especially when facing the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Method**

This research uses quantitative methods and cross-sectional study. The primary location of the research was carried out in Lampung Province, and some data was taken from other locations via external media. The population in this study is intact families (husband/wife) willing to be respondents. The sampling technique was carried out by random sampling. The respondents involved in this research were 189 willing husbands/wives. Primary data was obtained through filling out questionnaires both offline and online.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from Family Statistics data in Indonesia. Data collection was carried out through interviews (both online and offline) using several modified questionnaires with permission from the owner of the Sunarti scale (2021) to measure family resilience and family vulnerability, as well as the DSES (Daily Spiritual Experience Scale) scale to measure spirituality by Underwood (2003). The research questionnaire was first tested for validity and reliability. The reliability scores from this research for each measuring instrument are the Family Resilience Scale ( $\alpha= 0.965$ ), Family Vulnerability Scale ( $\alpha= 0.801$ ), and DSES Spirituality Scale ( $\alpha= 0.967$ ). The data was then analyzed using correlation and regression analysis with the help of SPSS software.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **a. Family Characteristic**

The study's results (Table 1) show that the average age of the respondents and their partners is in the early adulthood range, which is around 37 years old. The length of marriage ranged from 0 – 41 years, with an average length of marriage of 10.9 years. Furthermore, the average number of children is 1-2 people, while the number of dependents in the family ranges from 0-9.

**Table 1.**

Distribution of respondents based on min-max, average and std scores. deviation

Categories	Min-Max	Mean $\pm$ Std Dev.
Respondent's age (years)	22 - 63	37.43 $\pm$ 9.942
Spouse's age (years)	25 - 68	37.54 $\pm$ 10.401
Length of marriage (years)	0 - 41	10.95 $\pm$ 9.545
Number of children	0 - 8	1.98 $\pm$ 1.448
Number of family dependents	0 - 9	2.81 $\pm$ 1.755

### b. Categorization of Research Variables

The research results (Table 2) show that the majority of respondents are in the medium category for the family resilience variable (70%), the low category for the family resilience variable (72%), and the medium category for the spirituality variable (75%).

**Table 2.**

Categorization of Research Variables

Variable	Categories	Percentage
Family Resilience	Low	7
	Moderate	70
	High	23
Family Vulnerability	Low	72
	Moderate	23
	High	5
Spirituality	Low	6
	Moderate	75
	High	19

### c. Correlation Test Results

The correlation test results (Table 3) show that family vulnerability has a negative-significant relationship with family resilience, while spirituality has a positive relationship with family resilience.

**Table 3.**

Results of variable correlation tests with family resilience variables

Variable	R	Sig.	Explanation
Family vulnerability & family resilience	-0,351**	0,000	Negative - significant
Spirituality and family resilience	0.318**	0.000	Positive - significant

**d. Regression Test Results**

The regression test results (Table 4) show that the family vulnerability and spirituality variables have an effect of 17.2% on the family resilience variable.

**Table 4.**  
Regression test results

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.425 <sup>a</sup>	.180	.172	19.671

a. Predictors: (Constant), TOTAL SPIRITUALITAS, TOTAL KERENTANAN

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15851.200	2	7925.600	20.482	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	71973.223	186	386.953		
	Total	87824.423	188			

a. Dependent Variable: TOTAL RESILIENSI KELUARGA

b. Predictors: (Constant), TOTAL SPIRITUALITAS, TOTAL KERENTANAN

The results of this study provide an overview of the family vulnerability level for most respondents. In general, most respondents have a low level of family vulnerability. It shows that the majority of respondents are in a condition of having the ability to anticipate and overcome potential risks if things happen that are less favorable for the family. However, there are still respondents with moderate and high levels of family vulnerability. This indicates that family groups still need extra help and exceptional attention to increase family resilience. This finding is in line with several previous studies which stated that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on family conditions, especially those in the lower middle social class (Datta et al., 2020; Suryahadi et al., 2020; Sunarti, Kamilah, et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Ybarra & Lua, 2023). Among the forms of vulnerability that generally affect low-income families are prolonged loneliness, mental distress, unemployment, income loss, food insecurity, inequality, and disruption of access to social support and health services. Furthermore, Ha (2023) explained that disruption due to lockdown negatively affected rural households. Obstructed logistics are associated with a more significant loss for high-income households.

The findings of this research also show that most respondents' family resilience is in the medium category. Pandemic conditions

cause families to be exposed to more stress and mental disorders than normal conditions (Prime et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2021; Gayatri & Irawaty, 2021). Additionally, Davidson et al. (2021) explained that stress during this pandemic is related to the difficulty of fulfilling expectations to meet family needs during the pandemic, which results in a decline in mental health. This ultimately impacts the family's resilience and ability to emerge from the pandemic. The findings of Sunarti et al. (2022) also explained that high-stress levels impact low family resilience. To build family resilience, families need to have a shared belief system in the meaning-making process, a positive outlook, hope, transcendent values, and spiritual moorings for inspiration, transformation, and positive growth (Walsh, 2020).

Exciting findings from this research involve two crucial aspects, namely family vulnerability and family resilience, as well as the positive role of spirituality in increasing family resilience. Roberto et al. (2020) revealed a significant positive relationship between spirituality and family resilience. In contrast, the lower the family's vulnerability, the higher the family's resilience. This finding aligns with research by Sunarti (2021), which notes that vulnerability factors can negatively impact family resilience. Not only that, but this research also highlights the importance of frequency of interaction and social support in increasing family resilience. According to research results, the more often families interact and receive social support, the more likely their level of resilience will increase. These findings provide a basis for strategies to strengthen families, especially in facing the challenges of the current pandemic. In this context, Sunarti (2021) also said that efforts to reduce family vulnerability could be the key to increasing their level of resilience. Another study by Ali et al. (2021) lists crucial factors closely related to family resilience. They highlight economic vulnerability, stress levels, and coping strategies as elements that significantly influence family resilience.

Spirituality is also a significant protective factor for family resilience (Lin et al., 2016; Sato et al., 2023). With this understanding, Schwalm et al. (2021) highlight that spirituality positively contributes to family resilience. In this context, the level of family spirituality not only impacts the spiritual dimension but is also closely related to psychological resilience, the family's ability to adapt to change, and the quality of care provided. Belief in spiritual values can also guide family decision-making, form an ethical foundation, and strengthen bonds between family members. In

addition, in crises, spiritual values can be a source of inspiration and hope for families, giving them the strength to remain steadfast and optimistic.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between family vulnerability, spirituality and family resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic. The joint contribution of family vulnerability and spirituality to variations in family resilience is 17.2%. These two factors significantly impact the family's ability to adapt and survive under pressure and uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research contributes to our understanding of family dynamics amidst the pandemic and provides a basis for further research on family resilience. Therefore, it is recommended that future research be more in-depth in exploring other factors that may also play a role in shaping family resilience. The practical implication of these findings is that interventions and support programs for families should include aspects of reducing vulnerability and strengthening dimensions of spirituality as an integral part of strategies to increase family resilience.

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