



The Application of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in Islamic Counseling to Address Psychological Crises in Young Mothers After Divorce

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Abstract

Divorce can trigger a sense of life disorientation and difficulties in fulfilling the role of a single parent. Using the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) approach, which emphasizes practical solutions and self-empowerment, counselors assist clients in recognizing their strengths, planning concrete steps to improve their lives, and accepting destiny with patience and sincerity in accordance with Islamic teachings. This study aims to examine the application of SFBT in Islamic counseling as an effort to address the psychological crisis experienced by young mothers after divorce. A case study method was employed, involving five counseling sessions. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and counseling notes, and were analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that the application of SFBT in Islamic counseling is effective in helping clients cope with psychological crises, focus on solutions, and enhance emotional well-being and their role as mothers. In conclusion, the SFBT approach in Islamic counseling can empower young divorced mothers to overcome life challenges and improve the quality of their personal and family life. The contribution of this study lies in integrating the modern psychotherapeutic approach of SFBT with Islamic spiritual values, demonstrating its effectiveness in the cultural and religious context of Indonesian society. These findings provide new insights for practitioners of Islamic counseling and psychotherapy regarding the importance of integrating strength-based and faith-oriented approaches in supporting clients through life crises. Furthermore, this research enriches the literature on Islamic counseling with a practical approach relevant for guiding women after divorce.

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INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a life event that can have a significant emotional impact, especially for young mothers who must assume the role of a single parent after separating from their partners. For some young mothers, divorce not only changes their social status and role within the family but can also trigger feelings of losing direction in life, difficulties in carrying out daily routines, and increased stress in raising children independently. This condition can lead to fairly serious psychological disturbances, such as depression, anxiety, and feelings of helplessness. Data from the World Health Organization (2022) indicates that women, particularly single mothers, are a vulnerable group at risk of experiencing mental health disorders due to complex life stressors. Therefore, effective counseling approaches are needed to help them cope with these psychological crises. Thus, effective counseling approaches are needed to assist them in dealing with these psychological crises.

One approach that can be used in counseling is Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), which focuses on finding practical solutions and empowering individuals to address the problems they face. SFBT is a therapy that prioritizes positive change that clients can implement in their daily lives, paying attention to the strengths and abilities they already possess (Shazer, 1985). This approach is very suitable for individuals facing difficulties in high-pressure situations, like those experienced by young mothers post-divorce. In this context, SFBT offers a framework that helps clients focus on what they can do to improve their life situation, rather than solely concentrating on the problems or difficulties they are facing (Turns et al., 2022).

On the other hand, Islamic counseling provides a holistic approach, integrating religious values into the therapeutic process. In Islam, the teachings of patience and sincerity are emphasized to assist individuals in accepting their fate and facing it with full trust in God. These two values can become major sources of strength for clients in confronting feelings of difficulty and loss of direction that often arise after divorce (Ali, 2008). In Islamic counseling, the counselor also acts as a spiritual guide, teaching clients to draw closer to Allah through prayer, self-reflection, and acceptance of life's destinies.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of SFBT in various contexts, such as addressing mild to moderate depression (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013; Żak & Pękala, 2024), enhancing client resilience (Kim et al., 2019; McNulty & Smith, 2021), and accelerating goal achievement in a limited timeframe. When discussing research related to the application of SFBT, many studies have been conducted, such as those by Ho et al. (2024), Fadhli & Situmorang (2022), Goh et al. (2025), Dartina et al. (2024), Potabuga (2020), Anshori (2024), Atika & Hastiani (2022), and Indika et al. (2024). However, studies on the integration of SFBT with Islamic approaches are still quite limited, especially in the context of young mothers post-divorce in Indonesia, which has a strong cultural and religious background as explored by the researchers. The integration of SFBT and Islamic values offers an approach that is not only psychologically solution-oriented but also provides spiritual tranquility.

The research gap that emerges is the lack of counseling models that combine

practical solution approaches like SFBT with the spiritual approach of Islam in addressing the psychological crises of young mothers after divorce. In fact, the need for this integrative approach is quite urgent, considering the predominantly Muslim demographic in Indonesia and the importance of spiritual support in the emotional healing process (Nuzliah & Niesa, 2023; Tata et al., 2024). Studies specifically examining the impact of SFBT counseling interventions within the framework of Islamic values on the well-being of single mothers post-divorce are still scarce in the current academic literature.

One significant technique in SFBT is the miracle question, which encourages clients to envision how their lives would change if the problems they face suddenly disappeared. In the context of divorce, this question helps young mothers visualize a more positive and hopeful future and plan practical steps to achieve it. Furthermore, small, realistic, and measurable goals are emphasized in the counseling process, providing a sense of achievement and enhancing the emotional well-being of the clients. In the context of Islamic counseling, the values of patience and sincerity are not merely supplementary but form crucial foundations that strengthen the psychological resilience of the clients. Islamic teachings regarding patience and sincerity imbue suffering with profound religious meaning, thereby reducing emotional burdens and bolstering spiritual optimism (Pandya, 2023; Rassool, 2015).

This study aims to examine the application of SFBT in Islamic counseling for young mothers post-divorce. The focus of this research is on how the SFBT approach can help clients find practical solutions to address the psychological crises arising from divorce, as well as how Islamic values can provide spiritual and emotional support throughout the therapy process. Through this research, it is hoped that findings will enrich the understanding of the application of SFBT within the context of Islamic counseling and contribute to the development of counseling practices in Indonesia. The integration of these two approaches aims to create a more comprehensive framework that not only addresses psychological issues but also fosters spiritual growth and resilience in young mothers navigating the challenges of post-divorce life.

By identifying and implementing effective counseling strategies that combine the strengths of both SFBT and Islamic principles, the study also seeks to provide practical recommendations for counselors working with young mothers facing similar circumstances. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance the overall well-being of these individuals, helping them to regain a sense of direction and purpose in their lives after experiencing the upheaval of divorce. In this endeavor, the study will utilize qualitative research methods to gather insights from experts in both counseling and Islamic studies, as well as from young mothers who have undergone the divorce process. Through interviews and focus group discussions, the research will delve into the experiences of these mothers and the effectiveness of integrated counseling approaches in alleviating their psychological and emotional distress. By spotlighting the voices of young mothers and drawing on the expertise of practitioners, the study aims to fill the gap in existing literature and provide a valuable resource for future counseling interventions that incorporate both practical solutions and spiritual support. This endeavor not only holds

potential benefits for the individuals involved but may also inform broader community practices that recognize the significance of both psychological and spiritual dimensions in healing.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the application of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in Islamic counseling for young mothers post-divorce. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences and internal changes of clients (Creswell, 2007). The subject of the study is a young mother who has recently undergone a divorce and struggles to manage her life and care for her children. The selection of the subject was based on purposive sampling due to the significant emotional impact of divorce, such as feelings of losing direction in life and anxiety (Konstantinos, 2024; Yin, 2017). Given the exploratory nature of this research, the researcher recommends that future studies involve more than one subject to enhance external validity (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The counseling process was conducted over five sessions using SFBT, which focuses on solution-seeking and individual empowerment and can yield results in a short time. The counselor sought to explore the client's strengths and plan positive steps while integrating Islamic values such as patience, sincerity, and trust in God to provide inner peace and spiritual strength in facing life's trials (Rassool, 2015). Corey (2016) collected research data through observations, in-depth interviews, and counseling notes to understand the client's emotional dynamics and changes.

Data analysis used thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes, such as acceptance of fate and reinforcement of the role as a mother (Konstantinos, 2024). The analysis process involved open coding and categorization, as well as examining the relationships between SFBT principles and Islamic values. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of counseling practices based on Islamic values in Indonesia, particularly in helping young mothers overcome emotional crises post-divorce.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in Islamic Counseling

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) is a brief therapeutic approach that emphasizes the strengths of clients and practical solutions that can be applied to resolve the issues they face. This approach was first developed by Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg, and their colleagues in the 1980s and 1990s. The primary focus of SFBT is to help clients identify and build solutions based on their existing strengths and skills, rather than solely concentrating on the problems or difficulties they encounter (Habsy et al., 2024; Iman & Jannah, 2022).

The development of SFBT began in the 1980s and 1990s. Steve de Shazer (1985, 1988), Insoo Kim Berg, O'Hanlon Bill, and Michele Weiner Davis made significant contributions to SFBT. Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) was initially pioneered

by Insoo Kim Berg and Steve De Shazer, who were the executive director and senior researchers at the non-profit organization Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, in late 1982. Insoo Kim Berg started her work in the mid-1980s and has published books and video recordings on the solution-focused approach. She is a highly influential proponent of solution-oriented therapy. As a Korean American, Insoo Kim Berg developed an approach influenced by her Eastern cultural heritage combined with training experiences in the West. The result is a psychotherapeutic approach that creatively blends awareness cultivation with the processes of making choice-driven changes.

The counseling and guidance approaches in Indonesia have seen considerable development; however, this progression has not fully aligned with the goals of guidance and counseling through Islamic approaches. One main factor contributing to this situation is the narrow view of Sufistic counseling. Some experts limit Sufistic counseling to approaches that directly use the Quran and Hadith or rituals such as prayer, dhikr, fasting, etc. While this perspective has played a significant role in helping clients face various life challenges, it may not address all problems effectively.

However, the existing SFBT approach tends to lack the integration of religious values, particularly within the Islamic context. In counseling practices in Indonesia, despite rapid development, there are still relatively few approaches that deeply incorporate Islamic elements. Therefore, SFBT Islami emerges as an alternative that aligns the principles of SFBT with Islamic values, such as patience (*sabar*), acceptance (*ikhlas*), and reliance on God (*tawakal*) in facing life's trials.

This integration enhances the therapeutic process and provides a holistic framework that respects the spiritual and psychological dimensions of clients, ensuring that they are supported in both their practical and spiritual needs. As a result, SFBT Islami can serve as an effective model for addressing the unique challenges faced by clients in Indonesia, particularly in balancing their psychological well-being with their spiritual beliefs.

Integration of Islam in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)

The integration of Islamic values into SFBT represents a profound approach that emphasizes not only counseling techniques but also a fundamental spiritual understanding. In this context, Islamic values such as patience (*sabar*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and reliance on God (*tawakal*) serve as the main pillars that shape the counseling process, providing deeper meaning to the solution-seeking experiences of clients (Rizai, 2022; Rostini, 2021).

It is vital to clarify that the integration of these values must be consistently applied at every stage of therapy. Counselors who implement Islamic SFBT do not merely strive to help clients find practical solutions to the everyday problems they face, but also aim to instill a broader understanding of destiny (*qadar*) and the will of Allah SWT (Istiqamah & Padli, 2023). This approach can help clients realize that, even though they earnestly endeavor to effect change, the ultimate outcomes of their efforts are part of divine will that must be accepted with an open heart.

For example, in the "miracle question" technique, clients are invited to envision how their lives would change if the problems they faced were resolved. Within the SFBT Islamic context, counselors can guide clients to reflect on how these ideal solutions arise not only from human efforts but also as manifestations of Allah's plan. This provides clients with motivation to remain optimistic and strive, while also trusting that what is best for them has been determined by the Almighty.

Furthermore, the technique of "scaling questions" can also be expanded in the spiritual context. For instance, when counselors ask clients to assess their belief that Allah will provide a way out of their problems, this not only measures the level of faith but also strengthens their spiritual connection with Allah. Such questions stimulate self-reflection in clients about how much they rely on Allah in facing life's challenges. This offers clients the space to identify their potential, while also reminding them that hope and trust in Allah are key to confronting obstacles.

Additionally, counselors can utilize Islamic principles in the process of setting achievable goals within therapy. By considering values such as justice, compassion, and social responsibility, counselors can assist clients in formulating objectives that benefit not only themselves but also others (Isa & Utomo, 2024). Thus, Islamic SFBT is not merely a counseling method but also a spiritual journey that invites clients to explore their potential within the framework of Islamic teachings. The aim is to provide peace and sustainable solutions in their lives (Kumar et al., 2024). The success of therapy is not only measured by the practical solutions found but also by how clients can grow, accept their destinies, and live confidently, knowing that Allah is always with them in every step they take.

Results of the Application of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy in Islamic Counseling

The subject of this case study is a 29-year-old young mother who has recently experienced a divorce after five years of marriage. She is now a single parent of two young children. Following the divorce, the client underwent a psychological crisis characterized by a loss of direction in life, excessive anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy in fulfilling her role as a parent independently. In the initial interview, the client expressed feelings of emotional exhaustion and frequent difficulties sleeping due to the pressure she felt. She also conveyed uncertainty about her children's future and feelings of guilt over the end of her marriage.

During five counseling sessions using an integrated approach of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) with Islamic values, the client demonstrated significant changes in her perspective on life. Initially, she felt trapped in her difficulties and often blamed herself. However, after several sessions, she began to recognize the strengths within herself that had remained hidden, such as her ability to endure as a single mother without the support of her ex-husband or her family.

In the second and third sessions, the counselor utilized the "miracle question" technique, which helped the client envision her ideal life if her problems were suddenly resolved. The client described herself as a strong, calm individual who could raise her children with love. This visualization not only sparked hope and motivation but also

reinforced her belief that Allah SWT has the best plan behind every trial. The counselor then guided the client to outline small, realistic steps to achieve that envisioned life.

In the subsequent sessions, the counselor employed scaling questions to evaluate the client's progress, such as asking, "On a scale of 1–10, how confident are you that you can face tomorrow better?" The client showed a gradual increase in her scores from session to session, reflecting her growing self-confidence and emotional regulation abilities.

The entire counseling process was enriched with Islamic approaches, where the counselor consistently instilled values of patience, sincerity, and *tawakal* (reliance on God) within the client. The client was encouraged to understand that all efforts must be accompanied by a sincere acceptance of fate and the belief that Allah will provide the best path. This helped the client release negative emotions such as guilt and resentment towards her ex-partner.

By the end of the fifth session, the client stated that she felt more prepared to face the future and capable of fulfilling her role as a single mother with greater optimism. She began establishing a more structured daily routine, improving communication with her children, and starting a small home-based business. These changes indicate that the implementation of Islamic SFBT is not only effective in fostering self-awareness and personal strength but also enhances her spiritual connection as a primary source of inner peace.

The application of the five stages of SFBT in Islamic counseling illustrates that a 29-year-old young mother who recently experienced a divorce underwent significant changes in her perspective on life. After five counseling sessions utilizing the SFBT approach integrated with Islamic values, the client began to comprehend and realize the strengths within herself. Throughout the counseling, the client, who initially felt trapped in difficulties, started to show progress by building hope and motivation for life as a stronger single parent.

The "miracle question" technique applied in the second and third sessions proved effective in helping the client visualize an ideal life without the problems. Through this visualization, the client was able to build a positive image of herself as a loving mother capable of raising her children well. The instillation of spiritual values during the counseling process, such as patience, sincerity, and *tawakal*, significantly aided the client in releasing negative emotions and developing the belief that every trial has its own meaning and lessons.

Analysis from the counseling sessions shows that the client underwent an increase in self-confidence and emotional management, as reflected in the improving scores on the scaling questions. This change was evident not only in how the client interacted with her children but also in establishing a more structured daily routine and engaging in small home-based ventures. The client now feels more prepared and optimistic about her future, indicating that the application of Islamic SFBT has a significant impact in helping her rediscover her identity and strength.

This research affirms that the SFBT approach in Islamic counseling is effective in assisting young mothers post-divorce in overcoming psychological crises. By focusing on practical solutions and self-empowerment, clients can identify and plan positive steps to improve their lives. The integrated Islamic values provide essential emotional and spiritual support in facing life's challenges. Clients learn to accept their fate with an open heart and focus on self-improvement, which is a crucial aspect of the healing process after painful experiences such as divorce.

Overall, the implementation of SFBT integrated with Islamic teachings offers substantial benefits for clients experiencing emotional difficulties. This approach not only helps clients find solutions to their problems but also equips them with the inner peace required to live their lives better. Therefore, this method can serve as a model in counseling practices, particularly for individuals facing similar emotional crises, by combining self-empowerment aspects and spiritual support to achieve comprehensive well-being. By applying SFBT Islami, counselors can effectively address the multifaceted challenges faced by clients, particularly young mothers navigating the complexities of post-divorce life. This integrative approach not only emphasizes the development of practical coping strategies but also nurtures the spiritual and emotional dimensions of the clients' experiences. As clients engage with both the techniques of SFBT and the wisdom embedded in Islamic teachings, they are guided towards a more resilient mindset. The skills acquired through counseling enable them to tackle not only immediate concerns but also long-term challenges with increased confidence and hope. The positive outcomes observed in this study suggest that SFBT Islami can be an essential component of counseling frameworks in Indonesia, where cultural and religious contexts play a significant role in individuals' lives. Counselors who adopt this integrated approach are better equipped to resonate with clients' values and beliefs, creating a more meaningful and personalized therapeutic environment.

CONCLUSION

The application of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) integrated with an Islamic counseling approach is effective in helping young mothers post-divorce overcome psychological crises. Through five counseling sessions, clients demonstrated significant changes in their perspectives on life, transitioning from feelings of being trapped and lost to optimism and self-confidence as single parents. The "miracle question" technique has proven effective in assisting clients to visualize their ideal life and plan practical steps to achieve it. The integration of Islamic values, such as patience (*sabar*) and reliance on God (*tawakal*), not only provides emotional support but also imparts a profound spiritual meaning to the experiences and challenges faced by clients. Throughout the counseling process, clients learn to release negative emotions and accept their fate with an open heart, which is a crucial aspect of recovery and personal growth. The findings of this research underscore the importance of spiritual support in counseling practices, especially in the context of Indonesian society, which is predominantly Muslim. Overall, the implementation of Islamic SFBT not only helps clients find solutions to their problems

but also grants them inner peace and the skills necessary to face life's challenges. This approach can serve as a model in counseling practices for individuals experiencing emotional difficulties, combining self-empowerment and spiritual support to achieve holistic well-being. It is hoped that this research enriches the literature on the application of SFBT within the context of Islamic counseling and makes a positive contribution to the development of counseling practices in Indonesia.

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