

The Resilience of Blind Families in Building a *Sakinah* Family: Adaptive Strategies and the Role of Islamic Values

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Keywords:

Blind couples;
Disability;
Family resilience;
Islamic values;
Sakinah family.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v25i2.27276>

Submitted:

February 04, 2025

Accepted:

October 08, 2025

Published:

October 13, 2025

Pages: 399 - 425

Abstract: This study examines how blind couples in Manado, Indonesia, cultivate a *sakinah* family life that is serene and harmonious despite visual impairment. Using a qualitative case study design, the research engaged four married couples with varying degrees of blindness through semi-structured interviews, non-intrusive observation of daily routines, and brief document reviews. Reflexive thematic analysis identified three interlocking processes of family resilience that anchor these households: (1) meaning making, in which Islamic virtues such as *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), and *tawakkul* (trust in God) regulate emotion, guide decisions, and sustain hope; (2) communication, marked by de escalation strategies, turn-taking when one spouse is upset, and the creative use of auditory and tactile cues for coordination; and (3) organization, featuring adaptive role-sharing based on actual capacity and health rather than rigid gender prescriptions. Surrounding these processes is a multilayered social infrastructure of support that ranges from kin and neighbors to mosque communities and disability organizations, supplemented by voice-based technologies and informal income strategies. This article presents an operational mapping of *sakinah* indicators to observable family outcomes, clarifies how paid versus unpaid proximal assistance functions in practice, and shows how faith-informed coping integrates with disability-inclusive support. Policy implications include designing family programs that are both disability-aware and religion sensitive, strengthening local networks that enable independent living, and recognizing flexible caregiving arrangements within households headed by persons with disabilities.

Introduction

Blind couples in Muslim Indonesian cities navigate limited accessibility, uncertain livelihoods, and social stigma while still aspiring to a serene and harmonious *sakinah* family life that is publicly valued and formally recognized in community and policy discourse (Andrews, 2020). These pressures intersect with uneven employment opportunities and volatile household income, which make everyday stability a central task for marriage and parenting, especially in urban settings where assistance and barriers coexist in close proximity (Andrews, 2020; Pan et al., 2024; Suryahadi, 2022).

At the same time, emerging local discussions on disability inclusion and family well-being continue to expand, yet they often underdescribe the daily practices through which couples sustain dignity, faith, and care in their homes (Dunan et al., 2025; Susanto et al., 2023).

To avoid a purely slogan-driven account, this article brings the analysis down to practical routines and decisions that couples actually perform. It treats resilience not as heroic toughness but as an ordinary and reparative capacity that can be learned, supported, and shared. The approach draws on family resilience theory and related community studies to frame the household as an adaptive system that organizes meaning, communication, and roles in response to challenge (Walsh, 2016). Within this frame, Islamic values and devotional life are examined as resources that shape emotion regulation, motivation, and a shared moral horizon for spouses, rather than as a set of abstract ideals detached from practice (Bukido & Aminah, 2024; Walsh, 2016). This religious and cultural grounding is relevant not only to spiritual experience but also to health behavior, coping, and family decision-making in contemporary Muslim contexts (Rassool, 2024; Sulaiman, 2021; Yavari, 2023).

The study therefore links three strands of literature that are often discussed separately. First, research on accessible livelihoods and supportive environments for individuals with visual impairment, including the role of training, mobility skills, and assistive technologies in everyday functioning (Ali, 2024; Poggrund & Fazzi, 2002). Second, analyses of inclusive work and community participation that underscore structural facilitators and constraints across formal and informal sectors (Chung et al., 2021; Jiang & Yang, 2023; Pan et al., 2024; Zewude & Habtegiorgis, 2021). Third, scholarship on religious meaning-making and its contribution to a coherent sense of purpose that can sustain family cooperation and hope during periods of uncertainty (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Together these strands illuminate how families combine skill, technology, and belief to support daily life and long-term aspirations.

Manado is selected as the study site to highlight the specific interplay between urban conditions, intergroup sociability, and the Islamic life world in North Sulawesi. The city features active neighborhood networks, mosque-based initiatives, and disability organizations that can either bridge or buffer gaps left by limited state provision. These networks often mediate access to information, mobility support, and income opportunities, while also shaping norms of care, reciprocity, and religious practice within households (Abubakar et al., 2023; Hariyanto et al., 2021; Riyadi, 2020; Sumiati & Indrianie, 2024). In many neighborhoods, family ethics and community guidance remain influential points of reference for marriage, parenting, and conflict resolution, and they interact with broader Islamic teachings that are widely circulated through local education and preaching (Abdul Jafar & Fahimah, 2022; Fadil et al., 2024; Omar, 2014; Paikah, 2024; Ritonga et al., 2024).

Against this background, the article advances three contributions. *First*, it offers an operational account of the *sakinah* family in mixed-ability households by mapping observed practices and outcomes to the three processes of family resilience, namely meaning-making, communication, and organization (Sar'an et al., 2024; Walsh, 2016). *Second*, it specifies how close

support from kin, neighbors, mosque groups, and disability organizations functions in practice, including the distinction between paid and unpaid proximal assistance and the creative use of voice-based technology for coordination and work (Ali, 2024; Jiang & Yang, 2023; Zaenurrosyid et al., 2024). *Third*, it integrates religion-sensitive and disability-aware insights to inform programming that can strengthen independent living, equitable role sharing, and participation in the life of the community in cities like Manado (Andrews, 2020; Annajah Zelviana & Eren, 2024).

In short, the study shows how blind couples build and protect a *sakinah* family life by aligning faith-informed motivation, careful communication, and flexible role organization with a layered social infrastructure around them. The discussion that follows situates this argument in the most recent literature, explains the qualitative case study design, and presents findings on the observable manifestations of *sakinah* as well as the supports and constraints that shape everyday family practice in Manado.

Method

This qualitative study uses a case study design to understand how blind couples build and sustain a *sakinah* family within the local social and religious context. The design follows case study principles that combine multiple sources of evidence and a replication logic so that a clear chain of evidence links data to findings and conclusions (Yin, 2018). The case unit is the family rather than the individual, so the analysis focuses on processes that unfold within the household and its immediate ecosystem.

Participants were four married blind couples who had been married for at least five years and resided in Manado. Two couples were both blind, and in two couples only one spouse was blind. Proximal informants were drawn from close family members and neighbors who were involved in everyday assistance. The profile is used to make sense of the data rather than to produce statistical generalization. Recruitment used purposive sampling through disability organizations and community networks (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2022; Yin, 2018).

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, observation, and a brief review of relevant documents. Each couple participated in two interview sessions that lasted from 60 to 90 minutes per session. Proximal informants were interviewed once for 30 to 60 minutes. In total there were sixteen interview transcripts. Nonintrusive observation captured patterns of communication, role organization, family worship, and forms of close family assistance both with small compensation and without compensation. Field notes were written immediately after each session and were complemented by contextual artifacts that did not reveal identity. Documents included daily schedules and small proofs of transactions related to support.

The analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis with steps of familiarization, initial coding close to the data, grouping codes into themes, cross-source review, naming of themes, and writing of a thematic narrative that is mapped to three domains of family resilience, namely belief systems, organization of resources, and communication. The approach refers to the

formulation and further development of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2022).

Credibility was supported through triangulation of sources and methods, member checking by confirming theme summaries with couples, peer discussion within the research team, and an audit trail of analytic decisions. Considerations of sample adequacy followed the information power principle, which evaluates the richness and relevance of information in relation to the study aim (Malterud et al., 2021).

The study distinguishes between assistance with small compensation, such as fuel or transport replacement, and assistance without compensation, such as child minding and preparing daily needs, which clarifies the contribution of close kin as a form of social infrastructure that complements formal services and existing worship-based support.

Results and Discussion

Manifestations of a *Sakinah* Family in Mixed-Ability Households

This study examines four blind couples who live in Paal 4 Urban Village, Tikala District, Manado. Degrees of visual impairment range from total blindness to limited sight that does not function optimally. Most households rely on informal livelihoods such as petty trade, massage work, or performing as street musicians. Two couples named in the data are Roni Samsudin with Jelita Kaluku and Lahari Lahasani with Fauziah Basrilato. This context places families under fluctuating income and calls for intensive adjustments in communication and domestic roles.

Findings indicate four interrelated operational manifestations of a *sakinah* family. First, relational calm is maintained through consistent rules of de-escalation. Second, there is a realistic balance between spiritual needs and material needs. Third, affection is expressed as a soothing and reassuring action. Fourth, adaptive role functioning is sustained with support from close family and the wider community. These four manifestations are woven across the three domains of family resilience according to Walsh (2016), namely belief system, communication, and organization.

Table 1. Case Overview and Sakinah Indicators

Indicator	Findings
Religious meaning-making	Joint worship serves as an emotional pause and strengthens closeness
De-escalation communication	The rule that one remains calm when the other is angry so conflict does not escalate
Adaptive role organization	Task sharing based on actual capability and current health condition
Family and community support	Assistance from the nuclear family, neighbors, mosque communities, and disability organizations
Economic adaptation	Small enterprises, such as selling goods, massage, and music, along with the use of social media

Source: Interviews and field observations, 2023.

These four manifestations illustrate how belief systems, communication, role organization, and external support are interconnected. Religious meaning functions as a regulator of meaning and emotion. Simple and consistent communication rules shorten the duration of conflict. Flexible role organization maintains household functioning. Family and community support close gaps left by formal service infrastructure. This integration is consistent with the family resilience framework and clarifies the mechanisms that lead to *sakinah* outcomes in households of blind couples.

Religious meaning-making as a regulator of emotions and daily decisions

Across all four cases, religious meaning functions as a concrete regulator of emotion and a compass for daily choices. Routine worship such as praying in congregation, Qur'an recitation or listening to *murottal*, and participation in *majelis taklim* is understood not only as an obligation but also as a calming pause that strengthens the marital bond. Participant narratives affirm this pause function: for example, "When we pray together, there is a sense of peace. Even though we cannot see the world, our hearts feel illuminated through worship (*Interview with Roni, Street Vendor, Manado, 2023*)." Such practice restores inner calm and closeness so that conversations that might otherwise heat up can resume with clearer focus on feasible solutions. The pattern appears in couples where both spouses are blind as well as in couples where only one spouse is blind. Joint worship becomes a pause button before household decisions, from discussing the division of tasks to setting priorities for daily expenses. This pattern accords with the belief system domain in the family resilience framework, which highlights the role of meaning systems in guiding hope, regulating emotion, and directing attention to steps the family can actually take (Dorrance-Hall et al., 2025; Walsh, 2016).

The core Islamic values most often cited are *sabr*, *shukr*, and *tawakkul*. *Sabr* is enacted as a willingness to delay reaction and to accept reality with clarity while continuing effort. This stance helps couples lower the intensity of conflict and keep discussions on course despite constraints in mobility and income (Rozikin et al., 2025; Yavari, 2023). *Shukr* is expressed as a disciplined focus on available resources such as spousal support, relatively stable health, and provision that comes even if modest. This orientation to gratitude is associated with a more positive outlook and better emotional well-being. *Tawakkul* is understood not as resignation but as trust after effort, which quiets anxiety about the future, especially when facing uncertainty in informal livelihoods (Rassool, 2024).

These three values do not remain at the level of discourse but appear as observable practice. Couples postpone discussion when emotions rise, perform brief worship to steady the heart, then return to the decision table with concrete steps that can be taken that day (Dorrance-Hall et al., 2025; Paikah, 2024). This pattern is consistent with the manuscript's finding that families who weave worship and Islamic values into daily routines show stronger emotional stability and greater resilience under social and economic pressure, while animating the aspiration of *sakinah* grounded in calm, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* in the marital relationship.

Adaptive communication and role organization that reduce escalation

Across all four cases, couples developed a set of simple and consistent communication rules so that tension does not turn into prolonged conflict. Difficulty reading facial expressions and body language prompted them to design more explicit interaction patterns. They emphasize openness in the content of talk, careful attention to vocal intonation, and the use of a light touch as a signal to pause or pay attention, for example, holding hands or tapping a shoulder when the atmosphere begins to heat up. A key principle repeated across interviews is that one party remains calm when the other is angry. Participants state clearly that if both are angry at the same time, the conflict will explode; therefore, when one partner is triggered, the other chooses to hold back so that the conversation does not escalate. This de-escalation pattern is paired with observable nonverbal techniques such as lowering the voice for sensitive topics and brief touch to indicate a short pause before continuing. The findings show that blind couples modify communication channels by maximizing auditory and tactile cues suited to their visual condition, thereby reducing miscommunication and preserving relational stability (Dorrance-Hall et al., 2025; Qiu et al., 2020).

Household role organization is negotiated based on actual capability, health status, and available work opportunities, rather than simply following traditional role schemes (Braithwaite & Suter, 2022). In families where one spouse retains residual sight, outside tasks such as selling goods, handling small administrative errands, or delivering items are more often taken by the partner who still has limited vision. Domestic management, such as cooking, tidying the house, and caring for children, is reinforced by the spouse who is more accustomed to managing daily matters (Uyuni, 2021). The narrative of Roni and Jelita illustrates this pattern:

“We divide tasks according to what we can do. Since I still have limited vision, I take on more tasks outside the home, such as selling goods and handling administrative errands. My wife, on the other hand, takes care of household management, cooking, cleaning, and looking after our child.” (*Interview with Roni and Jelita, Blind Couple, Street Vendor, Manado, 2023*)

This is reinforced by a statement from another couple that underscores flexibility:

“Yes, we do not just follow traditional roles, we see what works best. Sometimes, if my husband is unwell, I help as much as I can, such as preparing his goods before he goes out to sell. We adjust and work together because relying on only one person would make life much harder.” (*Interview with Lahari and Fauziah, Blind Couple, Street performers (formerly street vendors), Manado, 2023*)

These accounts affirm that the division of labor is adaptive to health dynamics and economic opportunity, and can shift from day to day according to family needs. The pattern of de-escalation communication and flexible role organization aligns with the family resilience framework, which treats communication and organization as core processes that sustain family

integrity under challenge (Braithwaite & Suter, 2022; Walsh, 2016). This linkage also appears in the data showing that couples reduce conflict by applying the calm-first rule, then reassign tasks to whoever is most ready and able on that day (Chung et al., 2021). In this way, concrete interaction techniques can be traced to their effects on relational stability and household functioning.

Family and community support systems as social infrastructure

Findings show that the resilience of blind couples does not stand alone. It rests on layered and complementary networks of support. The innermost layer is the nuclear family and relatives who provide small financial help, childminding, and emotional encouragement. The next layer is neighbors and local residents who assist with daily mobility, accompany spouses to work locations, and pass along information on assistance programs. An institutional layer comes from disability organizations and religious communities that offer vocational training, small business capital, food assistance, and spiritual reinforcement. Together, this layered configuration operates as a social infrastructure that sustains household livelihoods while maintaining their participation in the surrounding environment (Andrews, 2020; Kusrin et al., 2025).

The role of the nuclear and extended family is dominant as the first safety net when daily income drops or when one spouse falls ill. The extended family helps cover basic needs, looks after children, and provides space to share psychological burdens. In households with adult children, support becomes more intensive because children can take over part of the housework and daily logistics. Close ties with siblings and other relatives function as a buffer that keeps the family going in difficult situations. This pattern appears consistently across all cases (Ali, 2024).

Table 2. External support sources and forms of involvement

Source of support	Forms of involvement	Contextual notes
Nuclear and extended family	Small financial help, child care, emotional support	Primary backstop in day-to-day crises
Neighbors and local residents	Mobility accompaniment, transport access, information on aid	Community solidarity minimizes isolation
Mosque community	Spiritual reinforcement, social networking, access to program information	Strengthens calm and religious meaning
Disability organizations and social programs	Vocational training, small start-up capital, food assistance	Complements families' self-help efforts

Source: Interviews and field observations, 2023.

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At the community level, support from neighbors and local residents helps blind couples remain both independent and connected to their social space. The most frequently noted assistance includes being guided to cross streets, being accompanied to work sites, and being informed about relevant social assistance schemes. These practices not only ease mobility and access to livelihoods but also reduce the risk of social isolation that families with visual impairment often face. Community solidarity strengthens the sense of belonging and enables couples to remain active in their residential area.

Institutional support fills gaps that family and community cannot cover. Disability-focused organizations provide food assistance, job skill training, and microcapital aligned with participants' visual conditions. Mosque-based groups and other religious communities add a layer of support through spiritual strengthening that reanimates *sabr*, *shukr*, and *tawakkul* in the face of daily pressures (Rassool, 2024; Yavari, 2023). The combination of vocational preparation and religious reinforcement links economic resources with meaning resources, so that couples gain not only work capacity but also a steady mental orientation for navigating uncertainty.

All of this external support interweaves with adaptive economic strategies that largely operate in the informal sector. Most couples work as itinerant vendors, massage workers, or street musicians with highly variable income. To reduce volatility, they adjust sales locations, expand customer networks, and use voice-based phone technologies for communication and transactions. Screen readers and voice messaging applications support simple administration and speed responses to customer requests. These strategies show that social support does not erase household agency. Instead, it complements self-help by providing the logistical base, information, and psychological calm needed to run daily economic strategies in a sustainable way.

Within the family resilience framework, this layered network of support occupies the domain of resource organization and community connection emphasized by Walsh (2016). Family and community offer dependable help at moments of crisis. Disability organizations and religious communities strengthen medium-term capacity through skills building, access to small capital, and reinforcement of meaning systems. When daily income halts because of illness or heavy rain, this safety web maintains continuity of family functioning without canceling the couple's own efforts (Larasati, 2018). Field data also show that when the health of the household head declines, dependence on family and social aid increases, yet this is accompanied by attempts to find alternative sources of livelihood within one's abilities. The constellation confirms that resilience is not only an internal family capacity but also the outcome of an ecology of interlinked supports whose contributions can be traced to daily decisions and practices.

A gender lens in role negotiation and care work

The data show that role sharing in the family does not follow a fixed pattern. It is negotiated according to actual ability, health conditions, and the work opportunities available on a given day. The basic principle is that whoever is more able in a particular context assumes a larger share of work in

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that area, while the other spouse closes remaining gaps. Participant narratives make this very clear. A husband who retains residual sight explains that he tends to take outside tasks such as selling goods and small administrative errands, while his wife, who is more skilled in domestic management, handles household organization, cooking, tidying, and accompanying the child.

“We divide tasks according to what we can do. Since I still have limited vision, I take on more tasks outside the home, such as selling goods and handling administrative errands. My wife, on the other hand, takes care of household management, cooking, cleaning, and looking after our child.” (*Interview with Muklis and Kusumawati, Blind Couple, Street vendors and massage therapists, Manado, 2023*)

His wife adds that they do not simply follow traditional roles but look for what is most effective for the conditions of the day.

“Yes, we do not just follow traditional roles. We see what works best. Sometimes, if my husband is unwell, I help as much as I can, such as preparing his goods before he goes out to sell.” (*Interview with Idar and Sri, Blind Couple, Traveling Vendor and Keyboard player, Manado, 2023*)

These quotations reinforce the results table, showing that blind couples tend to divide roles by capability rather than by rigid gender norms, and that flexibility is key to household functioning amid constraints of mobility and fluctuating income.

The gender dimension is also visible in care work that is often unseen yet consumes cognitive and emotional energy. In several cases, wives strengthen domestic management, schedule daily needs, and accompany children’s learning, including when parents need help reading school materials due to limited vision. There are also different configurations when the husband becomes the primary caregiver due to the wife’s health condition. A notable example is a husband who earns income in the informal sector while caring for his wife, who has experienced a stroke for a decade (Bonfanti, 2022). Another case shows a husband with unstable health, so the wife takes over preparing merchandise and organizing household needs on certain days (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2020). These patterns indicate that care work is not attached to one sex. It follows the family’s real needs. The extended family and community networks then lighten this load through small financial support, child care, and mobility assistance, so that care work does not rest on a single person. Evidence from the tables and narratives about support from relatives, neighbors, and religious organizations strengthens the picture that family resilience is the outcome of a layered ecology of help rather than the strength of an individual husband or wife alone.

Analytically, this adaptive role negotiation and gap-filling care align with the organization and communication domains in the family resilience framework. Simple interaction rules, explicit communication, and flexibility in reassigning tasks function as mechanisms that reduce escalation while maintaining continuity of household functions. These findings also converse with literature that highlights gender role exchange in family resilience

discourse and Islamic law, as well as the links among care policy, caregiver burden in families with disability, and dynamics of family health (Baker, 2015; Walsh, 2016). The manuscript has noted relevant references on role exchange dilemmas and gender analysis in family resilience, studies of health spillover among spouse caregivers in families with disability, and achievements of women with disabilities that display strong role negotiation and work agency. On the normative side, explanations of marital relations in Islamic sources by Paikah (2024) emphasize leadership and companionship that strengthen one another. In the context of blind couples, this normative emphasis serves as a source of meaning that encourages fairness in roles and mutual assistance, rather than as a justification for rigid work division. Thus, the gender lens in these data shows that Islamic values, family communication rules, and support networks work together as institutional and relational prerequisites for achieving *sakinah* in households living with visual impairment (Rassool, 2024; Rosyadi et al., 2024; Sulaiman, 2021).

Role negotiation based on actual capability and health, as shown in the results, indicates that care work is not attached to a single sex but shifts with daily needs. This approach lowers psychological burden from rigid role standards and reduces latent friction because expectations are discussed openly and adjusted to real conditions. When the principle of fairness in roles is supported by religious values that stress mutual help and tranquility, the visible outcomes are affection in action and functional role performance as reflected in Table 1. In this way, the gender lens in the context of visual impairment affirms that *sakinah* is reached through functional justice, not through a fixed division of roles that fails to match actual abilities and real work opportunities.

Challenges in Building a *Sakinah* Family

Building a *sakinah* family for blind couples unfolds along connected challenges in the economic, social, psychological, and caregiving domains. The findings show that uncertainty of income in the informal sector, limited social access, and communication barriers that arise from not being able to read facial expressions and body language act together as the main pressure points on household stability. These pressures are balanced by religious strategies, adaptive communication, and environmental support that correspond to the three pillars of family resilience identified by Walsh, namely belief systems, flexible communication, and social support (Walsh, 2016).

Most couples rely on informal work such as itinerant vending, massage therapy, and street music. Earnings fluctuate with weather, health, and local purchasing power. When health declines, income stops entirely, which directly affects basic needs and children's schooling (Abulaiti et al., 2022; Noonan et al., 2004). A clear example appears in the case of Roni and Jelita. Roni explains that heavy rain or physical weakness prevents him from selling, so there is no income that day. He tries to set aside money when sales are good, yet uncertainty remains because purchasing power also changes.

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Table 3. Spectrum of challenges and field evidence

Category of challenge	Field indicators	Interview excerpt
Economic	Daily earnings are uncertain. Influenced by weather and health. Access to formal work is limited. Adaptive strategies include small enterprise and voice-based technology.	“Sometimes, when I do not feel well, I cannot go out to sell, and that means no income for the day.” <i>(Interview with Muklis and Kusumawati, Blind Couple, Street vendors and massage therapists, Manado, 2023)</i>
Social	Perceived dependence and doubts about capability. Limited access to inclusive facilities. Support from mosque communities and neighbors for mobility and information on assistance.	-
Psychological and communication	Difficulty reading expression and body language. Use of de-escalation rules. Reliance on intonation and light touch.	“If both spouses are angry, it will explode. So, if one is upset, the other must try to stay calm.” <i>(Interview with Roni and Jelita, Blind Couple, Street Vendor, Manado, 2023)</i>
Religious and emotional	Congregational worship as an emotional pause. <i>Sabr</i> , <i>shukr</i> , and <i>tawakkul</i> as regulators of daily decisions.	“When we pray together, there is a sense of peace.” <i>(Interview with Muklis and Kusumawati, Blind Couple, Street vendors and massage therapists, Manado, 2023)</i>
Parenting and care	Double burden in children’s education. Long-term care for a chronically ill family member.	-

Source: Interviews and field observations, 2023.

Temporary dependence on the extended family and social programs is common during income shocks, although support is not always sufficient. Couples therefore adjust by moving to more strategic selling locations and by using voice-based applications for transactions. These findings align with

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evidence of labor market exclusion faced by individuals with disabilities in Indonesia, which constrains access to decent jobs in the formal sector.

Couples face barriers to participation and residual stigma. They are often perceived as less independent or less capable of managing a household, which leads to feelings of being pushed to the margins of neighborhood interaction. Access to inclusive public facilities remains limited, from transportation to health services, and inadequate disability-friendly infrastructure reinforces the sense of being blocked. Even so, inclusive social networks serve as a vital buffer. Extended family provides small financial support, child care, and moral encouragement. Neighbors and mosque communities assist daily mobility, accompany spouses to work sites, and share information about assistance programs. This pattern of solidarity reduces isolation and helps sustain both domestic and public roles.

Because couples cannot rely on reading facial expressions and body language, misunderstandings can arise quickly. To keep tension from widening, spouses apply simple but consistent rules. The principle most often repeated is that one party maintains calm when the other is angry so that disagreement does not expand.

“If both of them are angry, it can explode, so if one is upset, the other tries to stay calm.” (*Interview with Idar and Sri, Blind Couple, Traveling Vendor and Keyboard Player, Manado, 2023*)

This strategy proves effective in preventing prolonged conflict and in maintaining relational stability. Alongside spoken words, couples rely on intonation and light touch to signal attention. At the same time, congregational worship functions as an emotional pause that restores focus.

“When we pray together, there is a sense of peace.” (*Interview with Roni and Jelita, Blind Couple, Street Vendor, Manado, 2023*)

The religious experience nurtures calm and readiness to return to problem solving.

At the junction of these domains, parenting and care work place heavy demands on time and energy. Couples with a blind child carry a double burden in education and social adaptation. Other couples shoulder long-term care, for example, when a husband is the sole income earner in the informal sector while also caring for a wife after a stroke. These dynamics require flexible negotiation of tasks that follows ability and health day by day so that household functioning continues.

Strong social support combines with creative economic adaptation to show that reliance on assistance does not erase family agency (Jiang & Yang, 2023; Sholikhah, 2024). Couples choose to pursue independence by using vocational training, small capital, and promotion through social media while maintaining religious discipline such as *sabr*, *shukr*, and *tawakkul* that regulate emotion and daily decisions (Abdul Jafar & Fahimah, 2022). This pattern is consistent with the pillars of resilience described by Walsh (2016) and with research on the role of social networks in the economic resilience of individuals with disabilities (Andrews, 2020; Suryahadi, 2022).

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Communication as the pillar of household harmony

Effective communication serves as the primary mechanism that preserves warmth and stability in blind couples' households. Limits in reading facial expression and body language require more intensive, voice-based communication that relies on word choice, dialogue rhythm, and agreed nonverbal markers through touch. Field evidence is consistent with the pillar of flexible communication in the Family Resilience framework, which places clarity of meaning, openness, and negotiation as safeguards for relationships under repeated stress (Gonzalez, 2024; Paikah, 2024). The theoretical references in this manuscript affirm three pillars of family resilience, namely belief systems, flexible communication, and social support, and all three are visible in the couples' practice.

At the level of practice, spouses apply simple de-escalation rules to prevent prolonged conflict. A recurring principle is that one partner strives to remain calm when the other is emotional so that the conversation can return to concrete problem-solving. An informant affirms this discipline of emotion in the statement,

"If both spouses are angry, it will explode. So, if one is upset, the other must try to stay calm." (*Interview with Idar and Sri, Blind Couple, Traveling Vendor and Keyboard Player, Manado, 2023*)

This quotation shows a communication agreement that is easy to remember and intentionally repeated in tense moments so that friction does not become a dispute. Such de-escalation practices also indicate that emotion management does not stand alone. It grows out of structured conversations that were agreed upon early in married life.

Beyond spoken words, couples rely on nonverbal markers such as intonation and light touch to signal a need for pause, to convey reassurance, and to express affection. The quality of dialogue is often reinforced by joint worship, which functions as an emotional pause and mood setter before continuing discussions about domestic tasks, caregiving, or economic planning. One participant underscores this point.

"When we pray together, there is a sense of peace. Even though we cannot see the world, our hearts feel illuminated through worship." (*Interview with Lahari and Fauziah, Blind Couple, Street performers formerly street vendors, Manado, 2023*)

This religious experience helps set a calmer psychological climate for communication so that sensitive topics can be discussed without adding emotional burden to either party.

Coordination of domestic and public roles is maintained through deliberation that emphasizes the principle of matching tasks to ability, along with periodic review of each spouse's health condition. Residual visual capacity often becomes a basis for the division of labor. This is illustrated in the statement,

“We divide tasks according to what we can do. Since I still have limited vision, I take on more tasks outside the home, such as selling goods and handling administrative errands. My wife, on the other hand, takes care of household management, cooking, cleaning, and looking after our child.” (*Interview with Roni and Jelita, Blind Couple, Street Vendor, Manado, 2023*)

A non-rigid approach to traditional norms is also emphasized by another couple,

“Yes, we do not just follow traditional roles, we see what works best. Sometimes, if my husband is unwell, I help as much as I can, such as preparing his goods before he goes out to sell.” (*Interview with Lahari and Fauziah, Blind Couple, Street performers formerly street vendors, Manado, 2023*)

Together these quotations show that the division of work emerges from open conversation that is sensitive to limits in vision and mobility and that can be modified according to daily circumstances.

Interaction under economic pressure also elicits support that is both functional and affective. In narratives about fluctuating income, informants insert relational reassurance such as “My wife helps as much as she can,” which shows that practical support is discussed openly and attached to language that preserves the spouse’s dignity (Fekler et al., 2020). This manner of support reduces feelings of isolation when daily earnings are disrupted by weather or physical condition. At the same time, such simple phrasing works as a marker of emotional attachment that strengthens the couple’s coalition in the face of uncertainty.

Studies on couples with sensory limitations describe a characteristic pattern of communication adjustment. Visual cues are replaced with voice modulation, touch, and direct verbal clarity to mark emotion, signal pause, and maintain closeness. Dorrance-Hall et al. (2025) explain that when facial expression and body language are difficult to read, couples develop alternative forms of communication based on intonation and touch, while insisting on explicit meaning so that both parties can track the emotional context in play. This evidence aligns with the communication pillar in the Family Resilience framework, which places message clarity, openness, and flexibility as primary safeguards when families face recurrent pressure (Theiss, 2018).

The same literature emphasizes that flexible conflict resolution and varied communication channels are prerequisites for family resilience among couples with physical disabilities (Dunan et al., 2025; Paikah, 2024; Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2020). The present study shows that couples with sensory limits tend to develop specific de-escalation rules, for example, maintaining calm when a spouse is upset, because such strategies contain conflict and restore focus on problem-solving. These findings fit the idea of multisystemic resilience, in which adaptive communication practices are influenced by and reinforce other resources such as the family belief system and social support. As a result, resilient outcomes are shaped not only by individuals but also by the orchestration of processes at the level of the couple and their surrounding networks.

The micro rules documented in the results one spouse holding back when the other is emotional, softer intonation for sensitive topics, and touch as a pause marker show how families build the communication pillar under visual limits. These techniques close gaps in understanding, shorten the duration of conflict, and return conversation to concrete problem-solving, such as daily work schedules and the distribution of domestic tasks. When these techniques are paired with deliberation about task sharing that follows actual ability and health conditions, the visible outcomes are relational stability and psychological safety. This pattern aligns with the indicators of *sakinah* in Table 1, especially relational calm and affection expressed in action, since ways of speaking, pausing, and touching work as tools that protect the dignity of both parties (Annajah Zelviana & Eren, 2024; Paikah, 2024; Sholikhah, 2024). In this sense, effective communication in the context of visual impairment is not a generic suggestion. It is a set of procedures that can be retaught and that can be supported by religious practice, which has already prepared a calmer emotional climate.

Religious meaning-making and spiritual coping

For the blind couples in this study, religion works as a source of meaning, an emotional regulator, and a support for daily decision-making. Worship is practiced as a rhythm that restores focus and strengthens emotional attachment. Activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation or listening to *murottal*, and participation in *majelis taklim* form a spiritual routine whose psychological benefits are felt directly. One participant stated,

“When we pray together, there is a sense of peace. Even though we cannot see the world, our hearts feel illuminated through worship.”
(Interview with Roni and Jelita, Blind Couple, Street Vendor, Manado, 2023)

This statement shows worship functioning as an emotional pause that settles the heart before spouses return to discuss caregiving, work, and the division of domestic roles. The pattern is consistent with the belief system pillar in the family resilience framework, which places shared conviction as a support for hope and direction of family action (Fadil et al., 2024).

The core values of *sabr*, *shukr*, and *tawakkul* appear as coping mechanisms that lower anxiety, stabilize affect, and keep a solution-oriented focus. Interview data show that couples interpret *sabr* not as mere endurance, but as a cognitive discipline to accept reality while continuing effort. Gratitude is expressed through attention to available resources such as spousal support, health, and any provision that arrives, however small. *Tawakkul* provides a frame for entrusting outcomes to God after maximal effort, especially when facing fluctuating income in informal work (Polka, 2013; Zaenurrosyid et al., 2024).

These empirical traces receive comparative support from studies that link collective religious practice with household harmony and emotional cohesion. Research in Malaysia reports that Muslim families who weave Islamic teachings into daily routines tend to remain stable under economic and

social pressure through congregational prayer, shared recitation, and family supplication. Findings among Muslim immigrant communities in Andalusia likewise show Islamic values as a primary mechanism of family resilience that strengthens conflict management, mutual trust, and relational stability (Othman, 2018).

The normative foundation rests on *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* as explicated in Surah Ar Rum verse 21, which emphasizes tranquility, love, and mercy as aims of the marital bond (Abdul Jafar & Fahimah, 2022). In the context of blind couples, this norm is realized in practice through mutual strengthening, open communication, and acceptance of limitation. Research by Halim et al. (2024) affirms that the success of Muslim families is not measured by the absence of conflict, but by the wisdom with which spouses navigate differences through Islamic principles. Thus, religion serves a dual role as a moral compass and psychosocial instrument that unifies meaning, lowers emotional escalation, and facilitates role coordination when families face economic uncertainty and social stigma.

Regular worship and the cultivation of *sabr*, *shukr*, and *Tawakkul* documented in the results operate as a belief system that guides emotion and household choice. The religious pause used before sensitive discussions shifts attention away from blame toward steps that can be done today, for example, adjusting spending priorities or arranging shared time for caregiving. The integration of transcendent meaning with practical action explains why the *sakinah* indicators in Table 1, such as relational calm, a balanced spiritual and material outlook, and affection in action, tend to move together. In short, religion is not only a normative backdrop. It is a psychosocial mechanism that moderates stress and prepares a calmer inner state for the next round of role negotiation and economic decisions.

Social support and economic adaptation

Household continuity for the blind couples in this study rests on a layered ecology of support that includes the nuclear family, the extended family, nearby neighbors, religious communities, and social organizations. The narratives show that close relatives provide small financial help, caregiving assistance, and emotional encouragement. At the community level, neighbors and mosque congregations assist with daily mobility, accompany spouses to work sites, and share information about social assistance programs. This even pattern of support prevents social isolation and sustains family functioning amid uncertainty in informal income. The findings are consistent with the social support pillar in the Family Resilience framework, which positions external networks as scaffolding for adaptation under recurrent pressure (Theiss, 2018; Walsh, 2016).

Interview data show that social support interweaves with day-to-day economic adaptation. One informant explains the challenge of unstable earnings while affirming spousal support on difficult days:

“Yes, I sell goods around the neighborhood, usually food items and small household necessities. The biggest challenge for me is my health. Sometimes, when I do not feel well, I cannot go out to sell, and that means no income for the day. If it rains heavily or if my body is weak, I

have no choice but to stay home, which affects our household finances. My wife helps as much as she can.” (*Interview with Lahari and Fauziah, Blind Couple, Street performers (formerly street vendors), Manado, 2023*)

This statement shows a direct link among physical limits, income fluctuation, and the spouse’s supportive role as both a psychological and practical buffer when daily earnings halt.

Table 4. Sources of support and economic adaptation

Couple	Primary sources of support	Concrete forms of help	Economic adaptation strategy
Roni Samsudin – Jelita Kaluku	Wife, neighbors, community	The wife prepares merchandise when the husband is ill. Neighbors assist with mobility	Selling daily necessities. Schedule adjustments during illness
Lahari – Lahasani Fauziah Basrilato	Local community, religious organizations	Information on assistance programs, solidarity within the congregation	Transition from vending to street performance
Muklis – Kusumawati Paputungan	Children and extended family	Child reads school materials; relatives help with basic needs	Massage work and vending adjusted to health conditions
Idar – Mokodompit Sri Ngatun	Family and community	Moral support and information on service access while caring for a sick spouse	Traveling vending and music performance

Source: Interviews and field observations, 2024.

The pattern above aligns with Ardi et al. (2022), who identify strong social networks as predictors of a family’s ability to overcome economic barriers in disability contexts. Amin et al. (2025) report that family and religious community support correlates with economic resilience, while access to vocational training and small capital is associated with greater independence. Taken together, the evidence suggests that skill-based livelihood strategies, accompanied by community guidance, can cushion income shocks and preserve marital coherence among blind couples.

On the role management side, spouses negotiate the distribution of domestic and public work according to ability and health so that disruption affecting one party does not automatically lead to conflict or a breakdown of household function:

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“We divide tasks according to what we can do. Since I still have limited vision, I take on more tasks outside the home, such as selling goods and handling administrative errands. My wife, on the other hand, takes care of household management, cooking, cleaning, and looking after our child.” (*Interview with Roni and Jelita, Blind Couple, Street Vendor, Manado, 2023*)

This is reinforced by another couple:

“Yes, we do not just follow traditional roles, we see what works best. Sometimes, if my husband is unwell, I help as much as I can, such as preparing his goods before he goes out to sell.” (*Interview with Lahari and Fauziah, Blind Couple, Street performers (formerly street vendors), Manado, 2023*)

Together these quotations underline that flexible role organization is a resilience strategy rather than a mere preference, because it directly affects economic and emotional stability.

A prominent adaptation is the formation of small enterprises that can be run within visual limits while leveraging local networks. Couples develop income sources close to existing skills, such as vending, massage, and stage music. Some integrate simple technology for promotion and transactions with the help of voice-based applications and social media, which expands customer reach without demanding heavy mobility. This approach diversifies cash flow even though it remains sensitive to weather, health, and purchasing power.

Extended family support is visible where households rely on children for school literacy and routine administrative tasks. Field information notes cases in which a child reads school materials aloud and relatives occasionally cover expenses and basic needs. This shows that caregiving and literacy are domains where family solidarity works in practical, daily ways to fill gaps not met by public services that are not yet fully inclusive.

Religious community networks and disability organizations add a programmatic layer of support through information on assistance, vocational training, and small capital. This sequence of supports works alongside families' own efforts, so reliance on assistance does not erase agency. Instead, it strengthens a family's capacity to make economic decisions that are realistic and ethical. The consistency of these findings accords with Andrews (2020) on the role of social networks in opening economic opportunities and with evidence on how training and access to capital bolster the economic resilience of persons with disabilities.

The spiritual dimension interacts with social support because collective worship helps set the inner climate before families return to economic decision-making:

“When we pray together, there is a sense of peace. Even though we cannot see the world, our hearts feel illuminated through worship.” (*Interview with Lahari and Fauziah, Blind Couple, Street performers (formerly street vendors), Manado, 2023*)

This experience serves as psychological reinforcement that sustains optimism and a solution focus on days without income. In a broader horizon,

perseverance, patience, and *Tawakkul* guide spouses to keep striving while accepting uncertainty that cannot be controlled.

Mapping of proximal support in Table 2 and the challenge spectrum in Table 3 shows that family resilience is upheld by a resource organization pillar that extends beyond the nuclear household. Distinguishing unpaid assistance, such as child minding and accompaniment for worship from paid assistance, such as reimbursement of transport for work-related mobility clarifies the ethics of reciprocity that make helping relations sustainable. When this support structure is combined with adaptive livelihood strategies such as small enterprises compatible with visual conditions and the use of voice-based technology, income volatility can be tempered and economic decisions become more realistic. The pattern illustrates an orchestration between self-help and community networks that does not negate family agency but enlarges it to withstand recurrent pressure. Theoretically, these results strengthen the position that clearly bounded and ethically guided resource organization is an operational prerequisite for *sakinah* outcomes as operationalized in Table 1.

Islam as the Foundation: Framing a *Sakinah* Family for Blind Couples

In Islam, the concept of a *sakinah* family is the ultimate goal of marriage. This concept refers to a family built on the principles of tranquillity, love, and blessings, as explained in Surah Ar-Rum (30:21) (Ariansyah, 2021):

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquillity in them, and He has placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reflect."

This verse emphasizes that the primary purpose of marriage is to create tranquillity between spouses, where Allah has instilled *mawaddah wa rahmah* (love and compassion) in their relationship. In the context of blind couples, applying the concept of a *sakinah* family presents unique challenges, as their physical limitations require special strategies to build and maintain a harmonious household (Shihab, 2010; Tumiwa et al., 2025).

This study found that blind couples apply *sakinah* family values by fostering mutual support, open communication, and acceptance of each other's shortcomings. They understand that challenges and obstacles in marriage are inevitable. However, rather than allowing these difficulties to weaken them, they view their household as a place of refuge and a source of peace in facing life's adversities. This aligns with Al-Qardhawi's research (Baker, 2015; Polka, 2013), which emphasizes that the success of a Muslim household is not measured by the absence of conflict but by how couples navigate differences and hardships wisely, based on Islamic principles.

Although they live with physical limitations, the blind couples interviewed demonstrated a high level of resilience in facing economic, social, and psychological challenges. This resilience stems from a deep understanding of the roles of husband and wife in Islam. According to Nasrullah et al. (2024)

and Rosyad (2023), the husband is responsible as the leader of the family, while the wife acts as a companion who strengthens and supports the household.

One example is a blind couple who shared how they distribute household responsibilities based on their abilities rather than strictly following traditional gender roles. A husband with partial vision may handle tasks outside the home, while the wife, more accustomed to managing household affairs, takes on a larger role in domestic responsibilities.

Furthermore, studies by Abubakar et al. (2023) and Bukido & Aminah (2024) found that households built on Islamic values have greater resilience in facing social and economic challenges compared to those that do not prioritize spirituality. This finding aligns with the results of this study, where blind couples who regularly worship together, engage in discussions about Islamic teachings, and rely on religion as their primary source of strength exhibit greater emotional and psychological stability in coping with stress and external pressures. They believe that a *sakinah* family is not solely built on material aspects but on a balance between inner peace, closeness to Allah, and harmony between husband and wife.

The core Islamic values of *sabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), and *Tawakkul* (trust in Allah) play a fundamental role in the resilience of blind couples. According to Munsoor (2021), these three concepts are crucial in helping individuals overcome life's challenges, from economic uncertainty to social and psychological barriers.

Sabr (patience) is a recurring theme in the Qur'an, emphasizing its importance as a virtue that every Muslim must possess when facing trials. In the context of blind couples, patience is not just about enduring limitations but also about developing a calm and positive mindset in dealing with household, work, and social challenges.

Interviews revealed that blind couples view patience as a key factor in sustaining their marriage. They understand that the challenges they face cannot be changed overnight, so they must accept their reality with an open heart while continuously striving for improvement. This aligns with Omar's (2014) study, which shows that individuals with a high level of patience tend to be more resilient in coping with life's pressures because they do not easily give up or lose hope in difficult situations.

In addition to patience, *shukr* (gratitude) is another essential element in their married life. Their gratitude is reflected in how they appreciate what they have rather than focusing on what they lack. They express thankfulness for having a supportive spouse, good health, and any sustenance, no matter how small.

Research by Eddir (2022) suggests that individuals who practice gratitude have higher life satisfaction and are less prone to excessive stress or anxiety. Similarly, this study found that blind couples who maintain an attitude of gratitude tend to have a more positive outlook on life, strengthening their emotional and marital well-being.

Tawakkul (trust in Allah) also plays a vital role in family resilience. These couples recognize that many aspects of life are beyond their control, so the best way to achieve inner peace is to surrender all matters to Allah. This is particularly evident in how they cope with economic uncertainty. Despite

working in informal sectors with unstable incomes, they firmly believe that sustenance (*rizq*) is preordained by Allah, and every difficulty has a solution. This mindset aligns with Munsoor's (2021) findings, which highlight that *Tawakkul* strengthens an individual's psychological resilience by reducing fear and anxiety about the future.

Many studies have explored the role of religion in family resilience across different social and cultural contexts. Several research findings indicate that Islamic values play a crucial role in helping families endure hardships and in strengthening emotional bonds between family members (Simamora & Hasugian, 2020; Supriatna et al., 2024).

For instance, research by Kusrin et al. (2025) in Malaysia found that Muslim families who incorporate Islamic teachings in their daily lives are better equipped to maintain marital harmony even amid economic and social challenges. Their findings highlight that practicing congregational prayers, reciting the Qur'an together, and making collective supplications within the family strengthen togetherness and deepen emotional ties between spouses (Alia et al., 2024).

Additionally, Choudhury's (2024) study on Muslim immigrant families in Andalusia, Spain, revealed that Islamic values serve as a primary mechanism for fostering family resilience, particularly in facing social and cultural pressures. Families with a strong understanding of their faith were found to have better conflict management, stronger mutual trust, and greater stability despite economic and social difficulties.

In the context of blind couples, this study shows that Islam serves not only as a moral guideline but also as a psychological and social mechanism that enhances family resilience. Despite facing complex challenges, Islamic values help them remain calm, optimistic, and harmonious in managing their household. Therefore, this study reaffirms that Islam plays a significant role in building a *sakinah* family, particularly for individuals living with disabilities.

Conclusion

This study shows that blind couples can build a *sakinah* family through three mutually reinforcing processes. First, religious meaning-making functions as an emotional regulator and a compass for daily decision-making. Second, micro-communication techniques and negotiated role sharing lower escalation and preserve household functioning. Third, close family and community support provide a social infrastructure that sustains mobility, caregiving, and livelihood. The integration of these processes yields outcomes that align with *sakinah* indicators, namely relational calm, affection expressed through actions, a balanced spiritual and material outlook, and flexible role performance.

This article offers specific and verifiable contributions. It operationalizes the concept of *sakinah* into behavioral indicators that can be traced across cases. Its findings also extend the family-resilience framework by showing how religious meaning-making within the belief-system domain flows into communication practices and role organization in the context of visual disability. In addition, the classification of proximal support into unpaid and

paid forms provides a fresh analytic lens for explaining the sustainability of mutual-aid relations in Muslim families.

The implications address family services, disability organizations, and mosque-based ecosystems. Counseling programs can incorporate the practice of de-escalation communication and deliberation on ability-based role sharing. Policy can strengthen access to mobility, vocational training that is compatible with accessible technology, and community support networks. Study limitations include the small number of cases, a single-city setting, and the cross-sectional nature of the data. Future research should be conducted across sites and over time, and should pilot intervention modules derived from these findings in both majority and minority Muslim contexts.

Acknowledgment of Funding Support

This research received no external funding. The authors received no financial support for the authorship or publication of this article. We thank the participating blind couples and their families in Manado, as well as community leaders, disability organizations, and mosque committees for facilitating field access. We also appreciate colleagues for methodological feedback and the editor and anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments. Any remaining errors are the authors' sole responsibility.

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