

Building a Harmonious Family: Quraish Shihab's Interpretation of Surah Ar-Rum (30:21) and Its Normative Relevance to Contemporary Family Resilience

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Received: 17 August 2026

Accepted: 15 September 2026

Published: 02 October 2026

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji penafsiran M. Quraish Shihab atas Surah Ar-Rum (30:21) dan relevansi normatifnya bagi ketahanan keluarga kontemporer. Penelitian menggunakan studi kepustakaan dengan analisis tafsir kontekstual yang diinformasikan oleh konsep sosio-psikologis, bukan penelitian empiris psikologi keluarga. Sumber primer adalah Tafsir Al-Mishbah jilid 11, khususnya penafsiran Surah Ar-Rum (30:21), dengan Tafsir Al-Munir karya Wahbah al-Zuhayli sebagai pembanding. Dua puluh satu sumber sekunder dalam korpus awal disaring ulang berdasarkan relevansi, keterlacakan metadata, dan kedekatan dengan pertanyaan penelitian; tujuh belas dipertahankan, sedangkan sumber primer dan instrumen hukum-administratif ditambahkan. Analisis dikodekan ke dalam lima kategori: sakinah, mawaddah, rahmah, mekanisme relasional, dan pemaknaan spiritual. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Shihab memaknai sakinah sebagai ketenteraman yang tidak meniadakan dinamika, sementara mawaddah dan rahmah menggambarkan kualitas afeksi dan kepedulian yang menopang relasi. Perbedaan khalaqa dan ja'ala dibaca secara hati-hati: gagasan bahwa kasih perlu dirawat merupakan sintesis kontekstual penulis, bukan kutipan eksplisit Shihab. Frasa min anfusikum mendukung kesamaan asal-usul manusia, tetapi tidak dengan sendirinya menentukan distribusi hak dan kewajiban hukum. Secara normatif, penafsiran ini beresonansi dengan tujuan perkawinan dalam Pasal 3 KHI dan dapat diusulkan sebagai pengayaan materi Bimbingan Perkawinan, namun efektivitasnya memerlukan pengujian empiris.

Kata Kunci: keluarga sakinah; mawaddah; rahmah; Quraish Shihab; Surah Ar-Rum 30:21

Abstract

This article examines M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of Surah Ar-Rum (30:21) and its normative relevance to contemporary family resilience. It employs library research and a contextual tafsir analysis informed by socio-psychological concepts rather than empirical family-psychology research. The primary text is volume 11 of Tafsir Al-Mishbah, especially the commentary on Surah Ar-Rum (30:21), with Wahbah al-Zuhayli's Tafsir Al-Munir used as a bounded comparator. Twenty-one secondary works in the original corpus were re-screened for thematic relevance, traceable metadata, and analytical proximity; seventeen were retained, while primary and official legal-administrative materials were added. The coding matrix covered five categories: sakinah, mawaddah, rahmah, relational mechanisms, and spiritual meaning-making.

The findings show that Shihab presents sakinah as tranquillity compatible with relational dynamics, while mawaddah and rahmah describe affective and compassionate qualities that sustain marriage. The distinction between khalaqa and ja'ala is treated cautiously: the proposition that affection must be cultivated is the authors' contextual synthesis, not a verbatim claim by Shihab. The phrase min anfusikum supports a shared human origin but does not, by itself, determine the legal distribution of marital rights and duties. Normatively, the interpretation resonates with Article 3 of Indonesia's Compilation of Islamic Law and may enrich existing premarital-guidance materials, although its practical effectiveness remains an empirical question.

Keywords: family resilience; mawaddah; Quraish Shihab; rahmah; Surah Ar-Rum 30:21

INTRODUCTION

Surah Ar-Rum (30:21) is frequently invoked in Indonesian Muslim discourse as a scriptural foundation for the aspiration to build a family characterized by sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah. In Tafsir Al-Mishbah, M. Quraish Shihab treats the verse as one of the divine signs located in ordinary human relational life: spouses are created from the same human kind so that tranquillity may be sought in the marital relationship, while mawaddah and rahmah are placed between them.¹ The verse is therefore significant not because it promises an automatically conflict-free household, but because it provides a normative vocabulary through which marital intimacy, care, and reflection can be interpreted.

The practical motivation for revisiting this verse is not a claim that a particular exegetical reading has been empirically proven to reduce divorce. Rather, family conflict, role negotiation, economic pressure, communication problems, and changing expectations form the social context in which Qur'anic family concepts are repeatedly interpreted. Studies on conflict mitigation in Muslim households likewise show that family resilience cannot be reduced to a single variable and requires relational, normative, and institutional resources.² Accordingly, this article treats contemporary family difficulties as contextual motivation, not as an outcome variable tested by the study.

Previous scholarship has approached the verse from several angles. Research on the Indonesian context of Tafsir Al-Mishbah emphasizes Shihab's sensitivity to social realities and his effort to communicate Qur'anic meanings in language accessible to modern readers.³ Other studies connect the concepts of sakinah, mawaddah, and rahmah to legal objectives of marriage, family education, conflict management, and family counselling.⁴ A more recent conceptual study interprets the verse for strengthening Muslim families, but its emphasis remains broader than a close

¹ M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian al-Qur'an, vol. 11 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 34-38.

² Amrul Muzan et al., "Mitigasi Konflik Rumah Tangga dalam Upaya Menjaga Keutuhan Keluarga Sakinah," Hukum Islam 22, no. 2 (2023): 52, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jhi.v22i2.21434>.

³ Siar Ni'mah et al., "Konteks Ke-Indonesia-an dalam Tafsir Al-Mishbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab," Al-MUBARAK Jurnal Kajian Al-Quran & Tafsir 9, no. 2 (2024): 100-111.

⁴ Kurlianto Pradana Putra, Suprihatin, and Oni Wastoni, "Makna Sakinah dalam Surat Al-Rum Ayat 21 Menurut M. Quraish Shihab dalam Tafsir Al-Mishbah dan Relevansinya dengan Tujuan Perkawinan dalam Kompilasi Hukum Islam," Masalah 12, no. 2 (2021): 15-34.

comparison of Shihab's textual explanation with a bounded contemporary comparator.⁵

The present article narrows the analytical task in three ways. First, it separates statements that can be traced directly to Tafsir Al-Mishbah from contextual inferences developed by the authors. Second, it uses Wahbah al-Zuhayli's Tafsir Al-Munir as a deliberately limited comparator to identify convergence and divergence rather than to construct an exhaustive history of tafsir. Third, it operationalizes the previously loose 'socio-psychological' label as a contextual interpretive lens consisting of relational reciprocity, deliberative communication, emotional regulation, and spiritual meaning-making. Family-resilience literature is used only as an analytical vocabulary and not as evidence that Shihab's interpretation produces measurable psychological effects.⁶

On that basis, this study addresses three questions. How does Shihab interpret *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* in Surah Ar-Rum (30:21)? What is gained by comparing his interpretation with al-Zuhayli's treatment of the same verse? Finally, how may the resulting normative themes be related cautiously to Indonesian family-law objectives and premarital guidance without converting theological interpretation into a direct rule of positive law? The article argues that the strongest contribution of Shihab's reading lies in a relational ethic of tranquillity, affection, compassion, and reflective responsibility, while its translation into counselling practice should remain a proposal subject to empirical validation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is normative library research using contextual tafsir analysis. The principal primary source is M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, volume 11 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), especially the commentary on Surah Ar-Rum (30:21), pp. 34-38.⁷ The comparator is Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Tafsir Al-Munir*, volume 11 in the Indonesian edition, particularly the discussion of the same verse.⁸ Al-Zuhayli was selected because he is a contemporary jurist-exegete whose work combines linguistic, juristic, and thematic exposition, making it suitable for a focused comparison with Shihab. Other tafsir works were not treated as additional comparators because the research design is intentionally a two-text comparison rather than a comprehensive survey.

The revision-stage source search was bounded by a cut-off date of 30 September 2026. The authors re-screened the twenty-one secondary works contained in the submitted manuscript and cross-checked recent literature through Google Scholar, GARUDA, journal DOI pages, and publisher or institutional pages using combinations of the terms 'Quraish Shihab', 'Al-Mishbah', 'Ar-Rum 21', 'sakinah', 'mawaddah', 'rahmah', 'family resilience', and 'bimbingan perkawinan'. Sources were included when they directly addressed the verse, Shihab's family interpretation, Muslim family resilience, or the relevant Indonesian legal-administrative framework, and when their authorship and publication metadata were traceable. Seventeen secondary works

⁵ Muhammad Hafis and Juliani Syafitri, "Nilai Sakinah, Mawaddah, dan Rahmah dalam Q.S. Ar-Rum Ayat 21: Interpretasi Konseptual untuk Penguatan Keluarga Muslim Indonesia," *JURISY: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah* 6, no. 1 (2026).

⁶ Froma Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience*, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2016), 3-16.

⁷ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, vol. 11, 34-38.

⁸ Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Tafsir Al-Munir: Aqidah, Syariah, Manhaj*, vol. 11, trans. Abdul Hayyie al-Kattani et al. (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2016), 75-80.

were retained; four items with duplicative coverage or inadequate metadata were excluded. Because this is a purposive tafsir study rather than a systematic review, no PRISMA-style claim of exhaustive database capture is made.

Content analysis used five a priori coding categories: (1) *sakinah* as tranquillity and emotional stabilization; (2) *mawaddah* as affective attachment and active relational investment; (3) *rahmah* as compassionate care under conditions of vulnerability; (4) relational mechanisms, including reciprocity, deliberation, role coordination, and recognition of the partner's needs; and (5) spiritual meaning-making, including piety, reflection, and the closing expression *li-qawmin yatafakkarūn*. Passages from both tafsir works were entered into a comparative matrix. When the two exegetes emphasized different aspects, the difference was retained as divergence rather than forced into a single synthesis.

The socio-psychological component is therefore interpretive and conceptual. 'Spiritual awareness' is operationalized here as the attribution of marital conduct to a transcendent moral purpose, the reflective evaluation of one's conduct, and the cultivation of patience, care, and responsibility. 'Relational resilience' is used in the modest sense of processes that help a family reorganize and maintain meaningful connection under stress, consistent with family-resilience literature.⁹ The study does not diagnose couples, measure well-being, or evaluate counselling outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Al-Mishbah as a Contextual-Linguistic Reading

Shihab's commentary combines close attention to Arabic expressions with an *adabī-ijtimā'ī* orientation that repeatedly brings Qur'anic language into dialogue with social life. This does not mean that every contemporary application stated in this article appears verbatim in *Al-Mishbah*. A central methodological distinction must therefore be maintained between textual evidence, interpretive reconstruction, and policy application. The first concerns what Shihab actually says; the second concerns the authors' synthesis of his lexical and relational observations; the third concerns possible uses of that synthesis in legal or counselling contexts.¹⁰

At the textual level, the phrase *min anfusikum* is read in relation to spouses being from the same human kind, while *litaskunū ilayhā* points to the orientation of the relationship toward tranquillity. Shihab's explanation of *sakana* and *sakan* associates tranquillity with a state reached after disturbance and with the home as a place of repose.¹¹ This supports describing *sakinah* as relational tranquillity, but it should not be romanticized as permanent psychological calm. Marriage may contain disagreement and stress; the exegetical claim is normative orientation, not empirical immunity from conflict.

Shihab leaves *mawaddah* and *rahmah* with rich semantic breadth rather than reducing each to a single Indonesian equivalent. In the authors' coding, *mawaddah* captures an affective orientation that actively draws spouses toward one another, whereas *rahmah* captures compassionate concern that becomes especially salient when attraction alone is insufficient. This analytical distinction is supported by Shihab's treatment of love, care, loyalty, and willingness to protect the spouse, but the

⁹ Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience*, 17-31.

¹⁰ Muhammad Habib and Izzuddin Amin, "Tafsir *Al-Mishbah* Quraish Shihab: Relevansi dan Kontekstualisasi *Al-Qur'an* bagi Masyarakat Modern," *Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Tafsir* 5 (2025): 9-22.

¹¹ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, vol. 11, 34-35.

labels 'active love' and 'compassion under vulnerability' are analytical summaries rather than direct quotations.¹²

Table 1. Evidence-Mapping Matrix for Surah Ar-Rum (30:21)

Textual Element	Primary-Text Emphasis	Analytical Coding	Limit of Inference
min anfusikum	Spouses are from the same human kind.	Shared human origin; relational proximity.	Does not by itself allocate legal rights, leadership, maintenance, or domestic roles.
litaskunū ilayhā	Marriage is oriented toward tranquillity/repose.	Sakinah; emotional stabilization.	Does not imply an empirically conflict-free household.
mawaddah	A strong affective orientation between spouses.	Affection; active relational investment.	Specific counselling techniques are later applications, not wording of the tafsir.
raḥmah	Compassion and protective care within the relationship.	Care under vulnerability; commitment.	Cannot alone establish a legal doctrine of marital equality.
li-qawmin yatafakkarūn	The sign is addressed to people who reflect.	Spiritual meaning-making; reflective responsibility.	Does not prove that cognition alone causes family resilience.

Khalaqa and Ja'ala: Text, Lexicon, and Contextual Inference

The verse uses *khalaqa* for the creation of spouses and *ja'ala* for the placement of *mawaddah* and *raḥmah* between them. The submitted manuscript treated this lexical distinction as if it directly proved that a spouse is simply 'given' while love must be 'worked for'. That formulation was too strong. In *Al-Mishbah*, the lexical contrast can support a distinction between creation and the establishment or placement of relational qualities, but the further proposition that affection must be cultivated through communication and reciprocal effort is the authors' contextual inference.¹³

This more cautious reading still has analytical value. A divine gift and human effort need not be treated as opposites: the verse can be read as locating marital affection within divine providence while leaving space for human moral agency. Contemporary family-resilience research likewise treats supportive processes as practices that are sustained over time rather than static possessions.¹⁴ The value of the comparison is therefore conceptual, not philological proof of a modern psychological programme.

Table 2. Interpreting Khalaqa and Ja'ala without Overstatement

Dimension	khalaqa	ja'ala	Authors' Contextual Reading
Object in the verse	azwājan from the same human kind	mawaddah and raḥmah between spouses	Creation of the marital counterpart is distinguished from the placement of relational qualities.
Primary semantic function	creation	making/placing/establishing	The verbs do not, by themselves, prescribe a counselling model.

¹² Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, vol. 11, 35-38.

¹³ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, vol. 11, 34-38.

¹⁴ Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience*, 31-48.

Relational implication	human relational possibility	affection and compassion within the relationship	Communication and care are proposed mechanisms for nurturing the relationship, not direct lexical definitions.
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A Bounded Comparison with Wahbah al-Zuhaylī

Al-Zuhaylī emphasizes that the creation of spouses and the placing of mawaddah and rahmah are manifestations of divine mercy through which human beings find intimacy and repose.¹⁵ The difference from Shihab is one of emphasis rather than contradiction. Shihab's Indonesian exposition foregrounds experiential and relational meanings in a style close to contemporary readers, whereas al-Zuhaylī gives greater prominence to the divine ordering of marriage and the juristic-moral coherence of the verse.

Both exegetes therefore converge on three points: marriage is presented as a divine sign; tranquillity is relational rather than merely spatial; and affection and compassion are integral to the marital bond. They diverge in rhetorical emphasis. Shihab is particularly useful for developing a contextual vocabulary of inner tranquillity and relational care, while al-Zuhaylī highlights the gift-character of marital affection and its place within an ordered moral universe. The comparison strengthens the article precisely because it prevents the authors from attributing all contemporary relational language directly to Shihab.

Table 3. Convergence and Divergence between Al-Mishbah and Al-Munir

Issue	Al-Mishbah (Shihab)	Al-Munir (al-Zuhaylī)	Analytical Significance
Sakinah	Emphasizes tranquillity/repose with strong contextual resonance.	Emphasizes repose produced within the divinely ordered marital bond.	Convergent normative aim; different explanatory emphasis.
Mawaddah	Explored as a deep affective orientation in marital life.	Presented as affection placed by God between spouses.	Human experience and divine gift are complementary, not competing explanations.
Rahmah	Compassion and caring commitment are prominent.	Mercy sustains the bond beyond attraction.	Both support a care ethic, but neither supplies an empirical counselling protocol.
Methodological tone	Contextual, linguistic, socially communicative.	Linguistic, juristic, and theological-systematic.	The bounded comparison controls over-contextualization.

Shared Human Origin, Reciprocity, and the Limits of Equality Claims

The phrase *min anfusikum* is important for affirming proximity and shared human origin. It can reasonably be mobilized against assumptions that treat the spouse as an alien or inherently lesser kind of being. However, the submitted manuscript moved too quickly from ontological parity to a complete doctrine of equal legal roles. That move is not warranted by the phrase alone. Rules concerning maintenance, guardianship, leadership, property, and household responsibilities in Islamic family law arise from a broader corpus of texts and legal interpretation.¹⁶

¹⁵ Al-Zuhaylī, *Tafsir Al-Munir*, vol. 11, 75-80.

¹⁶ Anist Suryani and Kadi, "Konsep Sakinah Mawaddah Wa Rahmah Menurut M. Quraish Shihab dan Relevansinya terhadap Pendidikan Anak dalam Keluarga," *MA'ALIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2020): 58-71.

Accordingly, this article uses 'reciprocity' in a relational rather than a doctrinally exhaustive sense. Spouses are moral subjects who must recognize one another's dignity, communicate, consult, and avoid harm. This reading is compatible with contemporary discussions of balanced rights and obligations in Muslim family law, but it does not erase legal differences that may be recognized by particular doctrines.¹⁷ Such precision makes the argument both stronger and more defensible.

Spiritual Meaning-Making and Relational Resilience

The final phrase of the verse, *li-qawmin yatafakkarūn*, provides the textual anchor for the study's category of spiritual meaning-making. Reflection here is not converted into a clinical variable. Instead, it is treated as a moral practice through which spouses interpret marriage as a sign, evaluate their own conduct, and connect ordinary relational duties to a wider spiritual purpose. Shihab's broader family discourse repeatedly connects a *sakinah* household with fidelity, trust, responsibility, and religious commitment.¹⁸

Within a socio-psychologically informed contextual lens, spiritual meaning-making may support resilience through at least three proposed mechanisms: it provides a shared frame for interpreting hardship; it can motivate emotion regulation by placing anger and disappointment within a moral horizon; and it can sustain compassionate action when immediate attraction fluctuates. These are theoretical mechanisms, not measured outcomes. Family-resilience theory similarly emphasizes shared belief systems, communication, and organizational processes as interdependent resources.¹⁹

The article therefore avoids claiming that the verse 'solves' modern family problems. Textual interpretation can offer normative orientation and conceptual resources, but the effectiveness of any intervention depends on social conditions, couple characteristics, facilitator competence, and the design of the intervention. This distinction is especially important when moving from *tafsir* to premarital counselling.

Normative Resonance with Indonesian Family Law and Premarital Guidance

Article 3 of the Compilation of Islamic Law states that marriage aims to realize a household life that is *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*.²⁰ This creates clear normative resonance with Surah Ar-Rum (30:21), but it does not transform every theological inference into an enforceable rule. Article 3 expresses an objective of marriage; concrete rights and obligations remain governed by other provisions of the Compilation, the Marriage Law, and applicable regulations. *Tafsir* can therefore assist interpretation and education, but it should not be presented as an independent source that automatically changes positive-law entitlements.

The current administrative setting for premarital guidance is also more specific than the submitted article suggested. The Ministry of Religious Affairs implements *Bimbingan Perkawinan* for prospective spouses under Decree of the Director General

¹⁷ Maajid Alfariszi Ahsan and Khoirul, "Pelanggaran Hak Asasi dalam Rumah Tangga Perspektif Hukum Keluarga Islam dan Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Positif Indonesia," *Shar-E: Jurnal Kajian Ekonomi Hukum Syariah* 10, no. 2 (2024): 122-132.

¹⁸ Abdul Kholik, "Konsep Keluarga Sakinah dalam Perspektif Quraish Shihab," *Jurnal Pengkajian Penelitian Ekonomi dan Hukum Islam* 2, no. 2 (2017).

¹⁹ Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience*, 49-69.

²⁰ Indonesia, *Compilation of Islamic Law*, Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 1991, art. 3.

of Islamic Community Guidance Number 1221 of 2025.²¹ Within that existing framework, the present findings are best framed as a proposed enrichment of learning outcomes concerning the spiritual foundation of a *sakinah* family, couple dialogue, relational dynamics, and conflict management. They do not justify creating a new mandatory module solely on the basis of this article.

A practical translation could use the evidence-mapping matrix as a discussion tool: participants distinguish what the verse explicitly says, what the exegetes emphasize, and what contemporary couples may infer for communication and care. Such an exercise would reduce the common tendency to use *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* as slogans detached from relational practices. Yet any claim that this material improves marital outcomes would require a pilot programme with pre- and post-intervention measures, follow-up data, and comparison across participant groups.²²

Study Boundaries and Implications

The study has four substantive boundaries. First, it is a textual and doctrinal analysis, so it cannot establish how actual couples understand or practice the concepts. Second, the comparison is intentionally limited to Shihab and al-Zuhaylī and therefore does not represent the diversity of classical and contemporary tafsir. Third, the socio-psychological concepts function as an interpretive vocabulary rather than a tested psychological model. Fourth, the proposed use in Bimbingan Perkawinan has not been evaluated for learning outcomes or long-term family resilience. These limitations require restrained conclusions.

Within those boundaries, the contribution is still significant. The study provides a transparent separation between primary-text evidence and contextual synthesis; clarifies that *min anfusikum* supports shared human origin without independently determining all legal roles; reconstructs the *khalafa*-*ja'ala* argument as a contextual inference; and situates the comparison with al-Zuhaylī in a systematic matrix. It also shows how Qur'anic family language can enter public family education without being misrepresented as a proven psychological treatment.

CONCLUSION

Quraish Shihab's interpretation of Surah Ar-Rum (30:21) offers a relationally rich account of marriage. *Sakinah* is best understood as an orientation toward tranquillity that can coexist with ordinary relational dynamics; *mawaddah* expresses strong affective attachment; and *rahmah* foregrounds compassionate care that becomes crucial when spouses confront vulnerability and change. The distinction between *khalafa* and *ja'ala* supports a textual distinction between creation and the placement of relational qualities, but the claim that love must be continually cultivated through communication and mutual effort is properly identified as the authors' contextual development rather than Shihab's verbatim proposition.

The comparison with al-Zuhaylī confirms substantial convergence while revealing differences in emphasis between contextual-experiential exposition and divine-juristic ordering. The phrase *min anfusikum* supports a shared human origin,

²¹ Indonesia, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance, Decree Number 1221 of 2025 concerning the Implementation of Marriage Guidance for Prospective Brides and Grooms.

²² M. Ageng Satrio, "Implementasi Konsep Pendidikan Keluarga Sakinah: Al-Qur'an Surat Ar-Rum Ayat 21 Perspektif Psikologi Keluarga Islam," *Journal of Scientific Interdisciplinary* 1, no. 4 (2024): 67-73.

but it cannot alone determine the legal architecture of marital rights and duties. The resulting interpretation resonates with the objective of marriage in Article 3 of the Compilation of Islamic Law and may be proposed as an enrichment of existing Bimbingan Perkawinan materials, especially on spiritual foundations, couple dialogue, and compassionate conflict management. Future research should test these applications empirically with prospective spouses and married couples before any claim of practical effectiveness is made.

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