



Modified REACH Counseling Model to Increase Forgiveness Motivation in Marital Relationship Distress

Stefanus Soejanto Sandjaja*

Faculty of Psychology, Krida Wacana Christian University, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Author for correspondence: Email: sandjaja@ukrida.ac.id

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Abstract

Interpersonal conflict, verbal abuse in the household, and demands to behave like someone else significantly impact an individual's psychological functioning and trigger marital relationship distress. The aim of this study was to evaluate the role of the modified REACH counseling model in increasing forgiveness motivation in a 33-year-old woman experiencing relationship distress with her spouse. The research used a one-case pretest-posttest design and data collection was conducted using the Indonesian Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation Scale (The Indonesian TRIM-18). The findings showed a reduction in the dimensions of avoidance motivation and revenge motivation, decreasing from high to low categories. Likewise, the benevolence motivation dimension improved positively, from low to moderate. Qualitative data also supported the quantitative findings. These outcomes proved that the application of the modified REACH counseling model can deliver positive changes in the context of a high-conflict marital relationship, which is further discussed in the article along with implications and recommendations.

Keywords: forgiveness motivation; REACH counseling model modification; relational distress with spouse; The Indonesian TRIM-18.

Problematic interpersonal relationships often cause significant emotional distress, which can affect mental health and relationship quality. One form of interpersonal relationship problems in married couples is frequent negative verbal behavior, such as insults, blame, and harsh criticism of a partner (McNulty, 2008; McNulty & Russell, 2016). The more often negative verbal behavior occurs, the higher the level of emotional distress becomes. Individuals may experience emotional pain, high anxiety, severe depression, and even the urge to distance themselves from their partners and seek revenge. As a result, the quality of the couple's relationship deteriorates and they find it difficult to forgive each other. Without proper psychological intervention, this condition can lead to divorce. This is particularly relevant because Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (2023) recorded a sharp increase in Indonesian divorce rates over the past two years. In 2021, there were 291,677 divorce cases, and in 2022, the figure increased by 53.51% to 447,743 cases.

Forgiveness, considered a complex psychological process because it involves various perspectives across scientific domains, has been identified as a positive change strategy to resolve relational conflicts and improve individual well-being. There are at least three main approaches in the study of forgiveness: a purely psychological approach, a purely theological approach, and an integrative approach between psychology and theology. Research on forgiveness in the psychological domain, such as that conducted by Wulandari and Megawati (2020) and Akhtar and Barlow (2018), showed that forgiveness counseling can improve the psychological well-being of the counse-

lee. Research by Praptomojati (2022) similarly found that forgiveness counseling is effective in improving the psychological well-being of female prisoners.

Forgiveness counseling is a therapeutic relationship between counselor and client aimed at increasing the client's motivation to act benevolently and reducing their urge to withdraw and seek revenge so that they can decide to forgive others and experience peace and well-being (Worthington & Wade, 2020b). One of the most widely used forgiveness counseling models is the REACH model, which has been tested in various contexts and has shown positive outcomes in enhancing forgiveness motivation and reducing emotional distress.

First developed by Worthington (2005) and later revised by Worthington and Wade (2020a, 2020b), the REACH model is a systematic approach designed to facilitate the process of forgiveness. It consists of five core steps: recall, empathize, altruistic gift, commit, and hold. Each step is intended to help individuals process and overcome emotional distress in a structured manner while also increasing their motivation to forgive.

The first step, recall, involves identifying and remembering events that caused emotional wounds in the client through the use of guided imagery. This stage helps the client become calmer, reduce emotional distress, enhance self-honesty, and recall painful events more clearly and objectively. The work of Jyoti and Parel (2021) supports the effectiveness of guided imagery in relieving depression, distress, and anxiety, particularly among wives of individuals with alcohol addiction.

The second step is empathize, which refers to the



process of understanding others' perspectives so that the client can develop compassion toward the individual who caused them emotional pain. M. H. Davis (2017) found that the ability to understand another person's perspective is positively correlated with the quality of interpersonal relationships, including romantic partnerships.

The third step is altruistic gift, in which the counselor encourages the client to recognize the benefits of forgiving altruistically, both for their own well-being and that of their partner. This step is closely related to recall and empathize, as a relaxed and calm state can reduce cortisol levels, which in turn lowers emotional distress and enhances compassion and altruistic behavior. Research by Schulreich et al. (2022) indicated that in a distressful situation, cortisol levels tend to rise, leading to a decrease in compassion and difficulty acting altruistically.

The fourth step is commit, or the process through which the client makes an explicit decision to forgive their partner. Gámiz et al. (2021) determined that an explicit decision to forgive can shift an individual's attitude from negative to more positive and enhance their forgiveness motivation. However, they also noted that emotional decisions to forgive do not always endure, as individuals may face challenges, such as the desire to distance themselves from the person who caused them emotional harm, avoid interaction with them, or even see something bad happen to them.

Therefore, the fifth step, hold, is necessary. In this stage, the counselor helps the client maintain their decision to forgive and overcome temptations to revert to negative emotions, withdraw from the person who caused harm, or seek revenge. This step is crucial for preserving the stability of the forgiveness decision and encouraging the client to remain on the path of emotional and relational healing.

However, Ho et al. (2024), in their recent publication, acknowledged that purely psychology-based forgiveness interventions tend to be secular and inefficient. The REACH model they used was conducted over a long period of time, comprising seven sessions which led to a high client dropout rate. Even the early REACH model encompassed twelve sessions. This occurred because clients had less motivation and lacked spiritual motivation. Therefore, they suggested that the psychological approach in forgiveness interventions be complemented with a theological perspective. Another weakness of the purely psychological approach is that forgiveness scores tend to be unstable or easily diminished. This is supported by Cook et al. (2022), who stated that in collective cultures like Indonesia, the cognitive decision to forgive is temporary and easily diminishes without an accompanying emotional decision to do so. These conclusions indicate that psychology-based forgiveness interventions should be complemented by other approaches to strengthen clients' decisions to forgive.

Research on forgiveness with a theological approach was published by Worthington (2020) in the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. Based on work by Choe et al. (2019), Worthington found that religious beliefs play an important role in transgressors, increasing their decision to forgive both emotionally and cognitively. Because a situation in which the transgressors had first been hurt by their victims, than victimized them afterwards. As a

result, the motivation to seek revenge and distance from the victim decreases, while the motivation to do good for the victim increases. This shows that the perpetrator has a strong urge to forgive.

Rye (2022) also concluded that religious coping can increase the motivation to forgive and suggested that this component be included in the forgiveness counseling model for optimum results. The process of increasing motivation to forgive occurs through the following dynamics: individuals experience distress in their relationships with their partners or other people, then rely on their religious beliefs to face and overcome their intensifying negative emotions. The hope of gaining strength and comfort is realized through spiritual practices.

Buju and Jugrin (2021), in an article entitled "A Christian Model of Forgiveness," firmly stated that forgiveness cannot be understood or mediated solely through a psychological approach and emphasized the necessity of a deep theological intervention. They criticized reductionist approaches to forgiveness, which rely exclusively on psychological perspectives while neglecting religious aspects, and strongly advocated for the generality of religious practices, such as fasting, praying, reading the Bible, reflection, pilgrimage, and attending retreats as efforts to strengthen people's relationship with God.

Based on the findings of Worthington and Wade (2020b), Buju and Jugrin (2021), and Rye (2022), it is recommended that religious practices be incorporated into the REACH counseling model. This integrative approach between psychology and theology was applied in the present study and represents the novelty offered by it. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are still very few studies and publications that have modified the REACH counseling model to enhance the effectiveness of forgiveness. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to enrich the scientific literature and provide empirical evidence in the domain of psychology–theology integration, which remains limited in academic journals.

In this study, the REACH counseling model was modified by incorporating religious practices, in accordance with the results of Worthington and Wade (2020b), Buju and Jugrin (2021), and Rye (2022). The added religious components encompassed a one-day spiritual retreat, during which the client was guided by a clergyman or clergywoman to engage in spiritual activities, such as fasting, praying, reading the Bible, writing reflections and discovering new meanings, singing hymns and psalms, meditating, and participating in pastoral discussions. The purpose of these activities was to help the client maintain their decision to forgive—both cognitively and emotionally—in a consistent and stable manner.

Studies have indicated that counseling using the modified REACH model enhances not only psychological well-being but also interpersonal relationships (Wade et al., 2018). Research by Wu et al. (2020) showed that forgiveness counseling could promote cognitive reframing, emotion regulation, and awareness of obstacles against temptations in the forgiveness process.

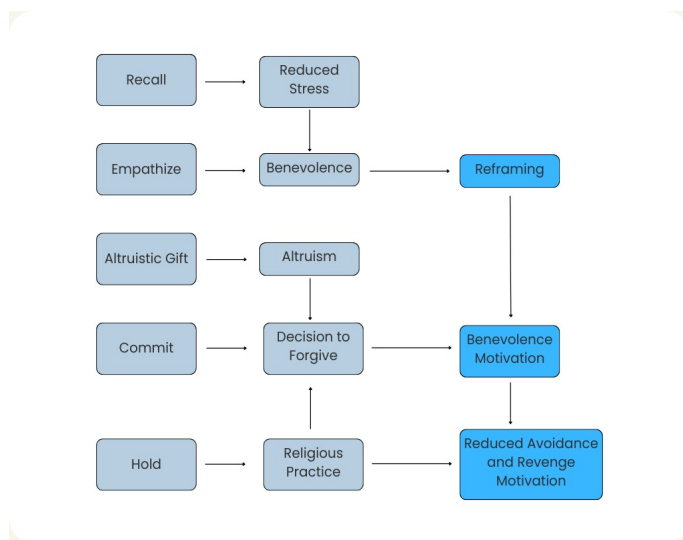
The inclusion of religious practices has been proven effective in sustaining the motivation to forgive and even fostering hope for relationship recovery with a partner. The hope for a renewed, harmonious, and loving rela-

tionship encourages the client to resist the temptation to withdraw from their partner or seek revenge. Instead, they become motivated to increase benevolent actions toward them. This reflects a significant increase in the client's motivation to forgive.

The modified REACH counseling model is supported by the findings of Washington-Nortey et al. (2023), who stated that religious practices can increase the motivation to forgive and hope. Concisely, it can be hypothesized that this model is an effective approach to increase a person's motivation to forgive and reduce their emotional distress.

The dynamic psychological process through which the modified REACH counseling model increases motivation to forgive in a distressed relationship is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Psychological Dynamics of the Modified REACH Counseling Model



Through the application of the modified REACH counseling model with integrated religious practices, this research aimed to evaluate the positive change in the forgiveness motivation of a woman experiencing relational distress with her partner. The study offers insight into the practical application of the modified model within the context of high-conflict couple relationships.

The main contribution of this research lies in the specific application of the REACH forgiveness model in an individual case, utilizing an integrative psychology and theology approach. While many previous studies have evaluated the psychological effectiveness of the REACH model in a general context, this work highlights the novelty of its implementation within the context of a specific couple experiencing emotional conflict. By doing so, it broadens understanding of the practical application of integrative forgiveness counseling and adds to the scientific literature in the domain of psychology–theology integration, which is still relatively limited in academic publications.

1. Method

1.1 Participants

The participant in this study was a 33-year-old woman, hereinafter referred to as Yani (pseudonym), who was experiencing relational distress with her partner. Yani is the youngest of two siblings, a Christian, and works as a stylist at a national television station. Both of her parents are pastors and are of Chinese descent. At the time of the study, Yani had been married for 10 years with three children. Her husband is a successful entrepreneur.

Yani reported difficulty forgiving her husband because, during their marriage, he often compared her to her mother-in-law, demanding that Yani possess the same knowledge, skills, and attitudes as his mother. This made Yani feel she could not be herself, and as a result, she often clashed with her husband and experienced dissatisfaction and sadness in her marriage. She admitted to being very desperate and said she often distanced herself from her husband. In this state, Yani chose to confess her emotional pain to an ex-boyfriend from high school, which later led to an affair that was discovered by her husband. This situation exacerbated the conflict and caused significant relational distress.

1.2 Research Design

This research used a case study method with a modified REACH counseling model intervention and a one-case pretest-posttest design. Data was collected using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation Scale (TRIM-18), which measures an individual's motivation to forgive. The client filled out the scale before and after the intervention.

1.3 Intervention

The goal of the intervention was to help the client forgive herself and her partner through the modified REACH counseling model developed by Worthington (2005) and updated by Worthington and Wade (2020a, 2020b). This modification combines the original psychology-based REACH model with a theological element in the form of spiritual exercises, based on the finding that forgiveness is a process that is both psychological and spiritual.

The counseling sessions were conducted by a competent counselor, a graduate of the Pastoral Counseling Professional Education program from the Indonesian Pastoral Counseling Association (AKPIN) and the Counselor Professional Education program from Semarang State University (UNNES), who also holds a doctoral degree (S-3) from the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Yogyakarta.

The modification of the model led to an increase in the number of sessions, a condition that has been found to potentially increase the dropout risk. To counter this, the religious exercises were designed to be realistic and enjoyable. The final counseling process consisted of six sessions, each lasting 100 minutes, and was conducted once every two weeks.

The modification was done by adding religious practices in the form of a one-day spiritual retreat. This retreat included activities like fasting, prayer, Bible reading, writing reflections and new meaning-making, singing praises and psalms, meditation, and pastoral discussion. Each counseling session focused on the steps in the modified

REACH model, with the goals and activity descriptions presented in Table 1.

1.4 Research Instrument

The Indonesian TRIM-18 was used to measure the client's motivation to forgive. This 18-item instrument consists of three main dimensions: avoidance motivation, revenge motivation, and benevolence motivation. The measurement was conducted twice, once before and once after the intervention.

Sandjaja (2011) conducted validity and reliability testing on this version of the Indonesian TRIM-18, which had been translated from English to Indonesian and subjected to a back-translation process by a professional translator. The validity test results showed that all items were declared valid, with a validity coefficient ranging from 0.360 to 0.627. Reliability was tested using internal consistency, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.889. Based on factor analysis results, the Indonesian TRIM-18 was also found to be multidimensional.

In 2024, the Indonesian TRIM-18 was re-tested for its validity and reliability by Andhika and Sandjaja (2024). In this case, the item validity was within the range of 0.847 to 0.877, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.869.

1.5 Data Analysis

After the client filled out the Indonesian TRIM-18 Scale, the researcher scored it according to the instrument manual and then summed the total score for each dimension. The total scores were consulted against the available norms and then interpreted. Subsequently, the Indonesian TRIM-18 results before and after the intervention were compared to see whether there was an increase in the motivation to forgive or, conversely, a decrease.

The benevolence motivation dimension contains six items, with a sample item being: "I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship." The items in this dimension are favorable, and responses are measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The higher the score for this dimension, the higher the benevolence motivation being exhibited.

The avoidance motivation dimension consists of seven items, with a sample item being: "I try to keep as much distance between us as possible." Meanwhile, the revenge motivation dimension comprises five items, with a sample being: "I wish that something bad would happen to him/her." Both of these dimensions are unfavorable and therefore, the scoring is reversed, ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree). The lower the total scores for both dimensions, the higher one's avoidance and revenge motivation, and vice versa.

The hypothetical norms for benevolence motivation are as follows: scores 6–11 are categorized as low, 12–17 as moderate, and 18–24 as high. For the avoidance motivation dimension, scores 7–13 are categorized as high, 14–20 as moderate, and 21–28 as low. Finally, for the revenge motivation dimension, scores 5–9 are categorized as high, 10–14 as moderate, and 15–20 as low.

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data were also collected through interviews, observation, and client verbatims. This data was used to supplement information and further explain the impact of the intervention.

2. Result

2.1 Quantitative Data

Table 2 shows pretest and posttest comparison of the client's scores across the three dimensions of the Indonesian TRIM-18. The data obtained from this measurement scale showed a positive increase in the motivation to forgive after the intervention was conducted. The avoidance motivation score displayed a significant decrease, dropping from an initial score of 7 (categorized as high) at the baseline stage to 24 (classified as low) after the intervention. A decrease in revenge motivation also occurred after the intervention, falling from an initial score of 9, which was categorized as high, to 19, which was categorized as low.

Conversely, there was an increase in the benevolence motivation dimension. The initial score of 8, categorized as low, increased to 15, which falls into the moderate category. This change in scores indicated that the client experienced an increase in her motivation for benevolence, as well as a decrease in her motivation to avoid and seek revenge against her partner. These findings show that the modified REACH counseling intervention applied in this study had a positive impact on forgiveness motivation in the client.

2.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitative descriptions were obtained through interview verbatims, feedback verbatims, observation notes, and impression and message sheets. During the counseling sessions, Yani experienced positive changes in her perspective on religious practices, as well as in emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects toward her partner. She expressed a deeper sense of empathy and an understanding of the positive impact of forgiveness. She also reported improvements in emotional well-being and a decrease in the intensity of conflicts in her relationship.

Based on the interview verbatims, it was found that Yani began to experience a reduction in distress, as described in the following statement:

"I feel relieved. . . no longer distressed. . . now I can sleep more soundly and my head rarely hurts anymore. . ."

She also said:

"Actually, I was not the only one suffering. . . My husband also looked dejected, and both of us were miserable. . . I was in the fault too, actually. . ."

"Now I feel calmer. . . I'm sure that God has forgiven me; therefore, I also forgive my husband. . . My prayer is that my relationship with [my] husband will be more harmonious."

This indicated that the client had begun to empathize with her husband's emotions and could now express them accurately. She had also developed a new, more positive perspective, becoming able to show empathy, engage in cognitive reframing, and maintain hope for a more harmonious relationship with her husband.

In addition to the interview verbatims, the observation notes and feedback verbatims revealed several behavioral

Table 1
Counseling Process of the Modified REACH Model

Stage	Objective	Activity	Duration
Pre-counseling	To introduce the client to the counselor, obtain informed consent, and administer the pretest.	The counselor and the client introduced themselves; the counselor explained the counseling process and objectives, session duration and number, and principles of confidentiality; the counselor asked the client to complete the informed consent form and the TRIM-18 Scale.	30 minutes
Recall	To help the client become relaxed and calm so that she could identify and recall the events that caused emotional distress.	Guided imagery (techniques for regulating breath, relaxation, concentration, imagination); free association to recall painful events.	90 minutes
Empathize	To help the client regulate her emotions, understand the perspectives of others, and communicate her understanding appropriately so that she could act with compassion.	Active listening exercises; exercises in reflecting on the thoughts and feelings of others; exercises in valuing and accepting others without making judgments.	90 minutes
Altruistic Gift	To evoke compassion from within the client so that she could forgive her partner.	Re-practicing guided imagery; inner dialogue exercises to evoke feelings of compassion toward others; exercises in expressing compassion to the partner.	90 minutes
Commit	To encourage the client in making the decision to forgive her partner.	The counselor asked the client to conduct a SWOT analysis by listing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the decision to forgive (three for each); guided the client through making the decision based on the SWOT analysis.	90 minutes
Hold	To help the client maintain the decision to forgive and overcome the temptation to revert to negative feelings.	Empty chair technique to recognize the temptation to become angry again; practice in maintaining a compassionate attitude toward the husband.	90 minutes
Religious Practice	To strengthen the client's decision to forgive both cognitively and emotionally so that she could overcome the temptation to distance herself from and seek revenge against her partner, and instead, new hope for establishing a loving relationship could emerge.	Spiritual practices composed of praying, singing psalms, Bible reading, meditation and reflection, and pastoral discussion.	Morning, afternoon, and evening retreat sessions, each lasting 60 minutes.
Closing	To reassess the client's motivation to forgive and understand her impressions of the counseling process.	The counselor asked the client to complete the TRIM-18 Scale and write down her impressions of the counseling process.	20 minutes

Table 2
Pretest and Posttest Results of the Client's TRIM-18 Scores

No.	Dimension (Number of Items)	Pretest	Category	Posttest	Category
1	Avoidance Motivation (7 items)	7	High	24	Low
2	Revenge Motivation (5 items)	9	High	19	Low
3	Benevolence Motivation (6 items)	8	Low	15	Moderate

changes in the client before and after participating in the modified REACH counseling model. A more detailed qualitative description is presented in Table 3.

3. Discussion

The results of this study support the hypothesis that the modified REACH counseling model can increase an individual's motivation to forgive. The increase in benevolence motivation and decrease in avoidance and revenge motivation indicate that the intervention successfully helped the client overcome anger and the urge for revenge against her partner. This is consistent with previous research showing that the modified REACH counseling model can increase motivation to forgive, reduce emotional distress, and improve interpersonal relationships with partners (Wade et al., 2018).

This study's outcomes are also in line with the findings of Toussaint et al. (2020), who demonstrated that the REACH counseling model could increase motivation to forgive and enhance self-esteem, and Kankpog and Awabil (2023), who found that the REACH could increase motivation to forgive and reduce anger in individuals experiencing inner wounds. Furthermore, a study conducted by Skalski-Bednarz (2024) concluded that an intervention using the Christian REACH Forgiveness protocol over six sessions, each lasting 60 minutes, could increase the motivation to forgive and reduce anger and aggression (both verbal and physical). The cognitive and emotional decision to forgive in that study was also proven to be sustainable for one month after the intervention concluded.

The psychological dynamics during the counseling process were characterized by the client's frustration that she could not meet her husband's expectations to be more like her mother-in-law in terms of knowledge, skills, and household management attitudes. She also felt angry daily due to being admonished, criticized, and blamed by her partner. Consequently, she began to distance herself from her husband and started approaching her ex-boyfriend from high school to share her story and emotional distress. These psychological dynamics align with Baucom et al. (2006) determination that frustration, anger, and helplessness encourage partners to distance themselves from one another and contemplate revenge.

Consciously, the client sought to avenge her husband's treatment by rekindling a romantic relationship with her ex-boyfriend, which led to an affair. This outcome is reflected in Gordon et al. (2015) assertion that emotional wounds trigger the most hurtful form of revenge against a partner, which is engaging in an affair or cheating. The

client's motivation for benevolence toward her husband also decreased. She became passive, quiet, and behaved like a robot or only acted when instructed to by her partner. The increase in avoidance and revenge motivation, along with the decrease in benevolence motivation, indicated that she had low forgiveness motivation (Worthington & Wade, 2020b).

By implementing the modified REACH counseling model with the client, we saw a decline in distress, allowing her to recall the interpersonal conflict with her husband more objectively. Her frustration and anger also began to diminish. This aligns with Worthington (2024) finding that the REACH counseling model could enhance the forgiveness experience because it leads to a reduction in emotional distress, anxiety, and even depression. Optimism began to emerge, replacing the sense of hopelessness due to the damaged marital relationship. These psychological dynamics are consistent with the work of Côté et al. (2022), who determined that the process of counseling or forgiveness therapy is a crucial factor in relationship recovery after repeated transgressions have occurred.

In the subsequent stage, the client was able to recognize the thoughts and feelings of her husband, who was also hurt by the affair with her high school ex-boyfriend. She felt guilty and wanted to act altruistically with her partner again, leading her to forgive both him and herself. Ma and Jiang (2020) found that empathy and altruism are key mediators for the occurrence of forgiveness motivation toward a partner who has committed repeated transgressions.

One variable that contributed to the client's increase in forgiveness motivation is her perception that the transgressor shared similarities in spirituality and religiosity, which then encouraged the act of forgiveness. The motivation to forgive can also be strengthened by maintaining the decision to forgive, both cognitively and emotionally, through religious practices in the form of a spiritual retreat with pastoral guidance. This aligns with the work of E. B. Davis et al. (2023), who stated that psychological counseling could potentially induce positive and complete change if supplemented with religious rituals, such as praying, Bible reading, singing spiritual songs, meditation, and reflection. Such spiritual activities strengthen the motivation to forgive within the client, especially the hope for changing the distressed relationship with the partner into a harmonious and loving one.

3.1 Limitations

Despite its positive outcome, this study had several limitations. It used a single case study design, so the results cannot be generalized to a wider population. Moreover, although it found that the motivation to forgive can be enhanced through the modified REACH counseling model, the researcher did not monitor the duration of the persistence of this forgiveness motivation over a period of time. Further research is needed to evaluate the extent to which the motivation to forgive can be consistently maintained, both cognitively and emotionally.

Additionally, the emotional distress experienced by the client was not quantitatively measured, making it impossible to ascertain the precise percentage of its reduction after

Table 3
Qualitative Description Before and After the Modified REACH Counseling Model

Aspect	Before the Modified REACH Counseling Model	After the Modified REACH Counseling Model
Behavioral	Robotic, mostly silent, and acted only when instructed to by her husband.	More flexible in communicating with her husband, is performing her duties as a wife (e.g., preparing meals, making the bed) without being told, and has started to initiate conversations with her husband.
Emotional	Felt angry, sad, disappointed, and pressured.	Feeling relieved, rather cheerful, enthusiastic, calmer, more peaceful, valued, and optimistic.
Religious	Felt guilty, confused, worried, fearful, and hopeless.	Feeling calmer, more peaceful and optimistic, grateful, closer to the Creator, loved by God, and happy.
Cognitive	Had difficulty concentrating, was hesitant in making decisions, lacked ideas, and had nothing to talk about with her husband.	Able to focus better on conversations with her husband, has several topics to discuss together, and is fairly confident in making appropriate decisions without always seeking her husband's approval.

the intervention. Therefore, subsequent research should explicitly measure emotional distress so that the impact of the intervention can be analyzed more comprehensively.

4. Conclusion

This research demonstrated that the modified REACH counseling model is effective in increasing the motivation to forgive in individuals experiencing distress in relationships. The integration of religious practices into the intervention was proven effective in strengthening the client's hope for rebuilding a harmonious and loving relationship. This finding indicated that an integrative approach between psychology and theology can be practically applied in counseling to help individuals face relational conflicts systematically, constructively, and meaningfully. These results also affirmed the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue between psychology and theology to improve the psychological well-being and mental health of clients.

4.1 Recommendations

Based on the research outcomes, it is recommended that psychology practitioners consider incorporating religious rituals relevant to the client's background into the counseling process. This approach has the potential to yield more positive and comprehensive changes. Future research is encouraged to expand the number of participants and extend the duration of the intervention to confirm the consistency of the increase in forgiveness motivation. A second posttest could also be done to evaluate the stability of the forgiveness decision over a period of time. Furthermore, the use of religiosity and spirituality scales in the counseling process should be considered as part of data collection to strengthen the cross-disciplinary research contribution. Finally, future researchers could explore the application of the modified REACH counseling model in other relational contexts, e.g., a poor relationship between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law.

5. Declaration

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5.3 Authors' Contributions

A, S, M, and C contributed to the journal search, data analysis, and spell-checking of this manuscript.

5.4 Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there was no conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this manuscript.

5.5 Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

The author acknowledges the use of artificial intelligence tools (elicit.org) solely for the literature search and keyword brainstorming. All AI-generated content was reviewed and verified by the author. All writing and analysis are the work of the human author(s).

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