

## **RELIGIOUS COPING AMONG WIVES WHOSE HUSBAND HAD EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIRS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the dynamic of religious coping on the wives whose husband had extramarital affair. Religious coping is also taught by Islam. Every muslim is commanded to be patient in dealing with every problem. This verse is commanded in Al-Qur'an surah Al-baqarah:155 that said "we test you with danger, hungry and losing something that precious to you like life and fruits; then give good news for them who always patient". Respondents in this research are two wives as victims of extramarital affair by their husbands. They engaged in religious coping to cope with their situation. Researcher use qualitative method with phenomenology design. Data were collected by interview. The content of the interview guideline constructed based on Pargament's questionnaire of religious coping. The data was classifying into categories and sub-categories. The result showed that using negative religious coping in respondent N withdrawn her from God and caused her to focus on negative emotion. Meanwhile, using positive religious coping in respondent N and F created positive emotion where both respondent succeed to conquer and take benevolent from the problem. In conclusion, religious coping (especially positive religious coping) helps respondents to have control over themselves. Before the used of this coping, respondents tend to used emotion focus to control their feeling then manifested in negative behavior. Religiosity need to be developed by doing more religious activities to increase positive religious coping. In the other hand, respondents have to learn forgiving and stop blaming themselves which might make them involved more in their negative emotion.

**Key words :** Extramarital affair , Religious coping

### **INTRODUCTION**

Marriage is the one of the most important stages in life, where two people that have their own personality and characteristic conduct in a sacred bond. Marriage is based on a sacred promise that the couple will be faithful each other untill the end. Marriages demand every couple to understand their own differences and get along with their problem. Despite of them ideal value, sometimes couple fail to adjust their self and fail to resolve their marriage problem which can lead to trigger prologed conflict (Sarafino in Ginanjar, 2009). Conflict that occur in marriage which cannot be solve can lead couples decision to divorce as the final way. One of the trigger in the marriage problem is unfaithful spouse. Extramarital affair is the relationship between an individual (who has been married) with third party in the emotional or sexual way (Ginanjar, 2009). Extramarital affair that occur may be the biggest cause to divorce. Especially for couple who aren't ready to marry each other they will have difficulty to face every problem in their marriage. This condition often

occur on the unplanning marriage where couple not ready yet to be wife and husband or to be parent. This unreadiness potentially can trigger marriage problem to the marital dissatisfaction. According to Whisman & Gordon (2007), marital dissatisfaction is the main factor for extramarital affair.

There is sadness process that occur on the spouse that been betrayed. This sadness process can be explain with Kubler-Ross's "sorrow process" that consist from five stage (Subotnik & Harris in Ginanjar, 2009):

1. Rejected stage: is the stage where wife cannot yet believe about her husband extramarital affair.
2. Angry stage: after the first stage, wife usually would feel very angry with the condition.
3. Bargaining stage: after the anger soothes, the wife will do positive action as a purpose for her marriage not to be destroyed.
4. Depression stage: as a consequence for everlasting pressure, wife would feel depress.
5. Acceptance stage: acceptance divide to two type, (1) cognitive acceptance where wife can accept and understand what happen , (2) emotional acceptance where wife can discuss about the problem without overreacting.

From prior explanatory studies, we can conclude that extramarital affair is a life crisis in an individual's life. This event will worsen if couple are married and have kid where their problems do not only affect the two of them but also their children and large families. Extramarital affair committed by one or both parents can effect children to question the values of marriage in which fidelity is supposed to be an important foundation. This crisis of life, can be encouraged individuals to regret the situation, even regretting herself. This is of course bad for their psychological health. However, some individuals may become stronger if they make it through the crisis in their lives. Many factors that make individuals can survive to overcome their problems. This factor can be sourced from family, friends, yourself and individual religiosity.

Religiosity is proven to help people to get through the crisis in their life. In line with research conducted in Swiss, Mohr found that patients suffering from schizophrenia who use religious coping, showed fewer negative symptoms and also improvement in social skills and quality of life three years after implementing this type coping (Pargament & Lomax, 2013). According to Gall, et al. and Maclean, et al. (Zwingmann, et al, 2006) mentions that spirituality plays an important role in the process of coping in patients who experienced a particularly severe illness such as cancer.

Some measure of religiosity emphasis more on individual frequencies of religious practice than the use of religiosity in the face of life crisis. Pargament, et al. (2013) proposed the concept of positive religious coping and negative religious coping, positive religious coping illustrates the strong relationship between the individual and God and is associated with the quality of life of individuals, while negative religious coping illustrates the tenuous relationship between the individual and God and is often associated with the size of individual happiness (Hebert et al., 2009). This theory can be considered as an alternative to religious understanding of individual comprehensive coping mainly to do with the crisis of life. The purpose of this study was to understand and explore about impact of husband's extramarital affair to his wife and explore

about respondents's religious coping that can help restore the negative impact of the affair that happened.

## **METHOD**

This study is using Phenomenology design where researchers trying to understanding the essence of respondent's experiences about a her husband marital affair. At the beginning of the study, the researchers set up a research procedure that will be used as a reference to carry out this research. Such procedures include:

1. Researchers determine the research respondents in accordance with the required characteristics, namely a woman who have been cheated by her partner.
2. Researchers make interview guide that will be used in exploring the data of respondents and Significant Other.
3. Researchers prepare Informed Consent as evidence that the respondent is willing to cooperate in this research.
4. The procedures for data collection in this research that researchers ask permission first to respondent to conduct the interview
5. The researcher will write the data in the form of verbatim interviews were then coded to determine the themes. Researchers used this method in order to reduce the answers of the respondents so that it will find answers to the research questions.

There are several main characteristics needed to become a respondent of this research. Characteristics of respondents in this study include: 1) Female; 2) Her husband is having an affair;, 3) Muslim.

Researchers will use audio tapes technique and transcripts recorded in chat with the respondent during the interview. This method was chosen so that the data can be documented thoroughly and assist in making verbatim. In addition, during the interview the researcher will also pay attention to the subject expression while answering the various questions posed by researchers. To maintain the validity and reliability of the study, researchers took several steps to defend it. Validity (in qualitative better known as credibility) maintained by interviewing participants more than once. In addition, with a significant other interviews conducted to confirm the accuracy of respondent's answer and to enhance the credibility of the answer. The researchers also provide scale for respondents with The Brief RCOPE: Psychometric Current Status of a Short Measure of Religious Coping created by Pargament, Margaret and Feuille (2011).

Brief RCOPE have 13 items to measure about religious coping on the individual when face with severe life problems. This scale has been adapted into Indonesian by researchers with the subject as many as 121 people, aged between 19-44 years old with Cronbach Alpha value of each type of positive religious coping is coping was 0.895 and negative religious coping was 0.761. Data analysis was performed using the inductive method. Inductive method is a technique or method that departs from the statements that are special to be common. This method was chosen researchers with the aim to filter and purse statement so that it can be concluded from the concrete into a concept.

## RESULTS

Results of this study will be explained one by one respondent so that it will be easy to understand the psychological dynamics of each respondent.

### 1. Respondent N

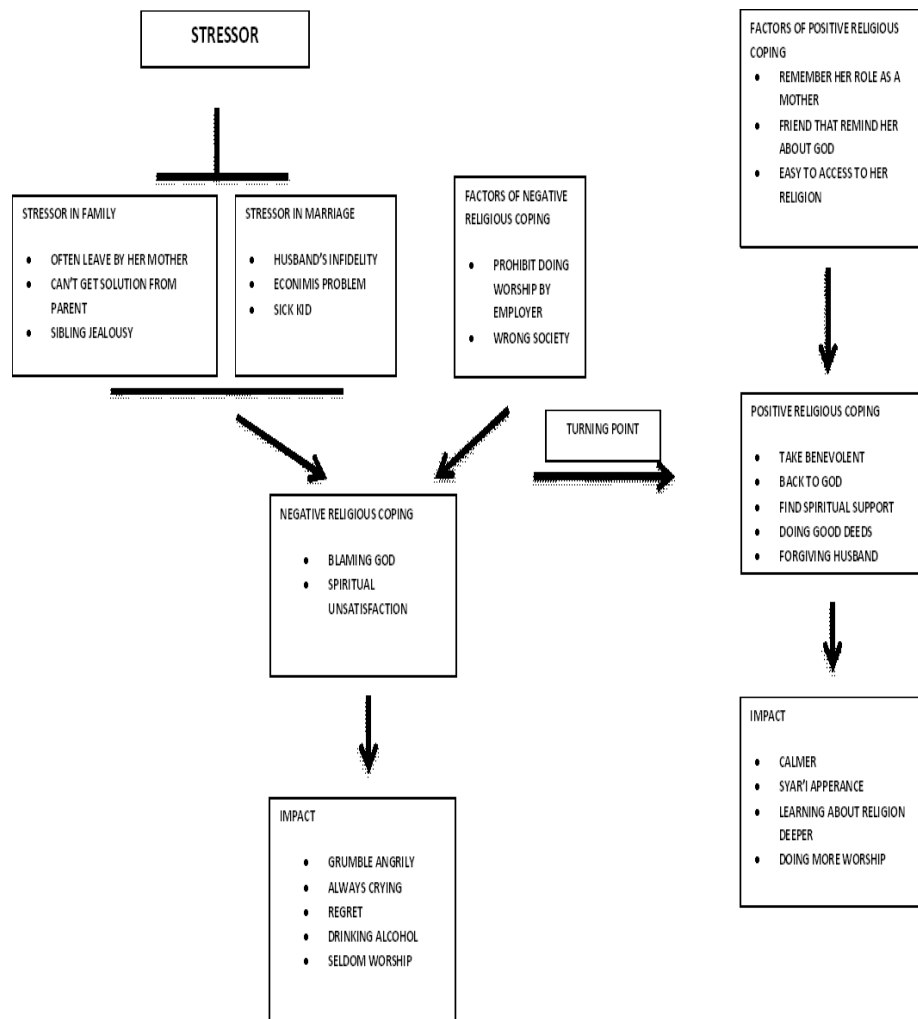
Due to the disappointment of the husband's extramarital affair, respondent vent her emotion in such a negative way. Respondent who was then working abroad feel miles away from God and apply negative religious coping to deal with her husband's extramarital affair. Moreover, respondent is forbidden to pass worship, especially prayer. Therefore, the respondents felt she had no faith fort and finally vents her anger by crying continuously even drink alcohol to calm her nerve. As a result of these actions, respondent began to blame God for the trouble. She felt that God treated her unfairly. Respondents also felt that the devil is also influential in her behavior at that time in addition, respondent also feel that life is unfair. Besides that, her fellow friend support her behavior like drank liquor and curse. It lasted some time until respondent admitted that she began to realize after she talked with her children and starts thinking to change. Initially she started leaving friends which she said made her away from God and her religion.

Since childhood, Respondent has been taught about her religion and describing her life according to that. In Islam, religion is a way of life that must be always held by its adherents. Therefore respondent can easily switch from negative religious coping to positive religious coping. Respondent felt that she who was then applying negative religious coping was wrong in applying her religion because influenced her friends and make her away from God. In the other hand, respondent state that rarely perform prayers also has effected her to do negative religious coping. Moreover, the respondents finally has positive friends and help her to back for her religion. With the friends who support the respondent and led her to confront the problem by involving religion, she began to return doing prayers that previously had been halted.

Respondent find it easier to rely on the figure of God as the solution to her problem. This is reflected in both types of religious coping respondents. At which time she uses negative religious coping, respondents feels easier to blame God when she says God is unfair for giving her destiny. At that time respondent who are in a slumped time after knowing about her husband's extramarital affair decide to do negative behavior such as drinking, cursing and stop praying. It gives satisfaction to her because she felt God did not accept her good servant instead give punishment to her. On the other hand, respondent also rely on the figure of God as a solution when she used positive religious coping where she with God face her husband's infidelity problem. Among other things, she began to pray again and learn more about her religion. By relying on the figure of God in positive religious coping, she felt secure and she began to think that God is her protector and she also felt that the negative religious coping had worn before was a mistake that must be changed.

To explain respondent's psychological dynamic, can be seen at the Fig. 1 below:

**Fig. 1. Psychological dynamic respondent N**



2. Respondent F

F married her husband because she had previously been pregnant. F's family stated that they didn't like F's husband and they want F to leave her husband. This condition is used by her husband to have an affair with another woman. He says that he is disappointed to have a wife who did not obey him and it made him choose another woman. That's when respondent admitted often feel stressed and depressed. Respondent state that it seems a big pressure from the family and her husband that made her very sad. Moreover, the problem of extramarital affair which her husband done is the biggest stressor that time.

She did not dare tell her family about the problems of her husband's extramarital affair because she feels that it is her own problem. At that time, respondent admitted to prefer vent her emotions to her children by hitting his daughter when she been naughty. Respondent became more devastated when she learned that her husband prefers another woman. The otherwomen was often stayed in her husband's home. This situation make respondent took a big hit because her husband's family instead seemed to support his extramarital affair.

Problems between F and husband has an impact on their children. Their daughter feel that she has only a mother and no father. Estrangement between a child with her husband caused her daughter have a weak psychological relationship to her father. Even when her daughter is fussy, it can be soothed if the F said he would send her to her father. F's daughter prefers to regard his grandfather as his father.

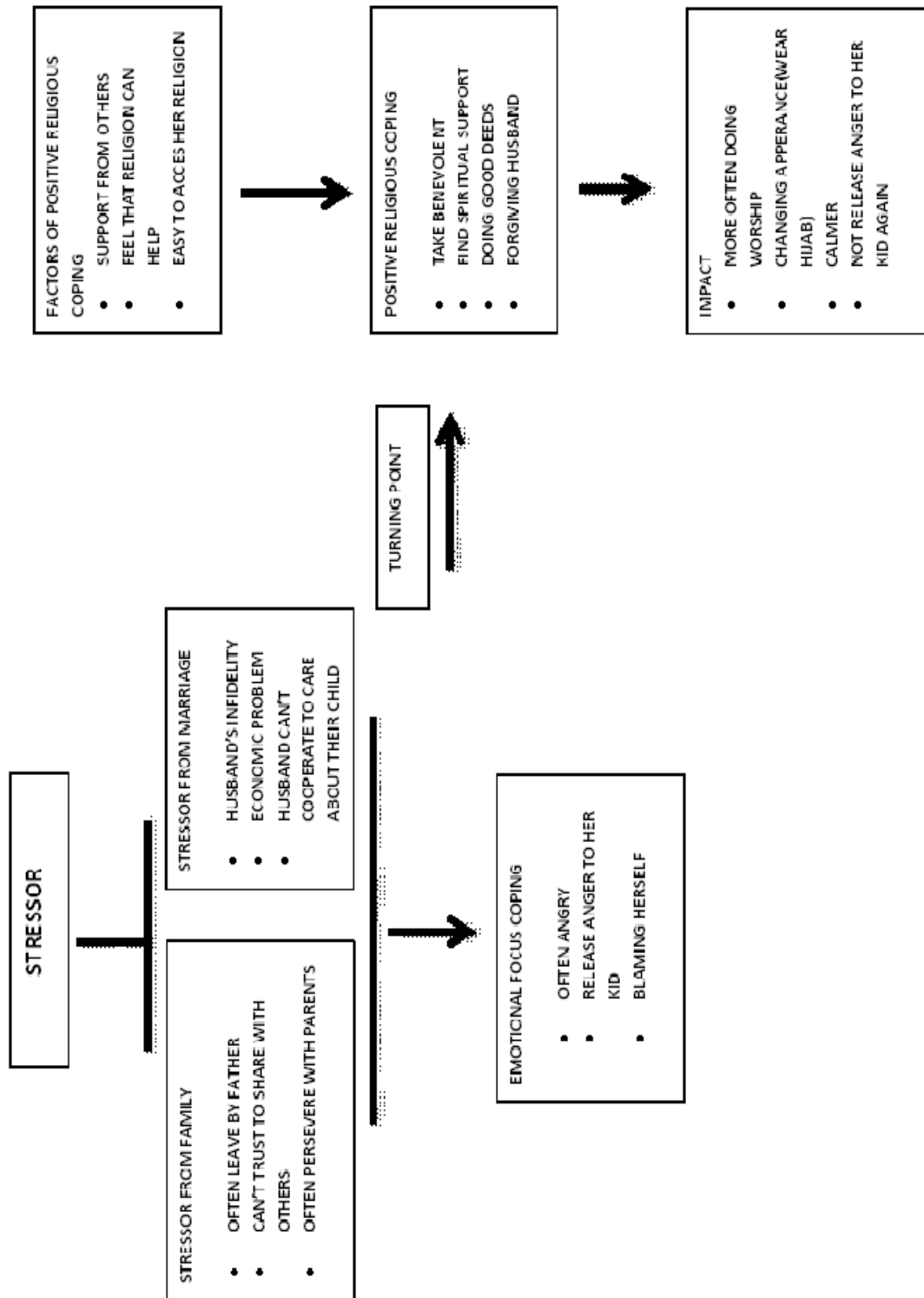
Respondent realize and regret for what she did wrong in the past. Although at that time respondent claimed to have started using positive religious coping, she admits that she often rely on her emotions before she did increase positive religious coping. At that time, a small problem can be bigger for the respondents. Currently, the respondents claimed to be able to control his emotions, especially after she did more religions worship.

Many factors induce respondent to choose used religious coping. Influence from her family is one of strong reason. Respondents admitted despite her husband's extramarital affair problems make respondent grumpy and often angry, she remains obligatory prayers. This indicates that respondent is aware that religion remains an important part in her life. Respondent solve the problem by more closer to the Lord. Respondent claimed that she has been supported in conducting worship, support comes from family and friends. After learning that her husband prefers another woman and divorced her, this is the turning point of the respondent's life. Respondents who had previously claimed still believe at her husband because she does not think that her husband would be able to betray her start to receive her condition and act benevolent.

Respondent who had previously been in the stage of denial in which she has not believe that her husband did it began to enter the stage of acceptance. Respondent claimed to have started accept the deeds of her husband as she made positive religious coping. Respondent claimed quieter after carrying out a night of worship such as prayer, chanting, and wearing hijab. These actions constitute the respondent's effort to carry out his religious order. So that respondents felt more protected and receive forgiveness for past mistakes. In addition, respondents were also supported by those who closest to her for continue to draw closer to God so she were not feel alone anymore.

To explain respondent's psychological dynamic, can be seen at the Fig. 2 below:

Fig. 2. Psychological dynamic respndent F



## **DISCUSSION**

In this section, researchers will discuss the impact of extramarital affair experienced by wife who had cheated husband and how to develop ways of religious coping were used to tackle her husband's extramarital affair. In addition, also will be revealed the factors behind the selection of religious coping by both respondents. Moreover, it will reveal the effectiveness of religious coping affect the psychological state of the respondent.

### **1. Impact of extramarital affair against respondent**

The impact of this affair can also be explained according to the theory of "grieving process" Kubler-Ross consisting of five stages (Subotnik & Harris, in Ginanjar 2009), each stage of "grieving process" can represent the stage of emotion that experienced by respondents. The five stages are:

- a. Rejection stage: both respondents are experiencing a stage where both of them do not believe that their husbands are having an affair behind them.
- b. Angry stage: the respondents pass through this stage with emotion. Where respondents N takes it by drinking beer (which had not previously been done) and lush anger at her husband. Respondent F admitted that at that time she was more often grumpy and easily provoked. In fact it is easy to hit their children when her children misbehave.
- c. Bargaining stage: at this stage the respondents is trying to improve her household. Respondents N relented and said that in fact after she learned about her husband's extramarital affair she is not willing to bring up again as long as her husband did not repeat his actions. How to bargaining afforded by the respondent F was that she went straight to the husband to seek clarification about the news of his extramarital affair.
- d. Depression stage: two respondents through this stage with cries constantly. At the time each of them thought about these problems, they will immediately appear a deep sense of sadness.
- e. Acceptance stage: although both of respondent really hurt, they were finally able to accept her husband's extramarital affair as fate that they have to dealt with.

### **2. Respondents's ways to develop their religious coping**

Based on the previous description of analysis, it is known that the two respondents developed religious coping as a way to face the problem of extramarital affair committed by their husbands. Types of religious coping they use are the positive and negative religious coping. Respondent N use them interchangeably as initially negative and positive religious coping as eventually. For respondent F, she looks for the use of religious coping consistently positive but ultimately respondent increase her positive religious coping. Both claimed to be able to start receiving her husband's extramarital affair and more calm in when face it with positive religious coping.

This indicates that the positive religious coping helps both of respondenst to be more calm when facing their problems. They can also control their negative emotions which caused by their husband extramarital affair. Some previous studies also showed a positive relationship between



positive religious coping with positive psychological adjustment (Ano and Vasconcelles in Utami, 2012). Additionally, Pargament, et al. (Utami, 2012) also expressed the same positive where positive religious coping also associated with positive affective.

Aspects of positive religious coping, which is used by both respondents showed significant results with the larger value of both religiosity. This was proven by their efforts to live by the commandment from God as the more frequency of worship and always wear hijab which they didnt do it before. This is consistent with findings by Pargament, et al. (2011) states that the use of positive religious coping has little impact on psychosomatic symptoms and is directly proportional to the growth of spirituality after facing major problems in life.

3. Elections factors of religious coping by respondent

There are several factors that influence the selection of religious coping by both respondents which include:

- a. Religious belief and religious practice becomes a big part of the orientation of the individual against the world.

Both respondents came from a religious Muslim family. This is indicated by the respondents' knowledge and practice of worship of their religion. Families with strong religious background generally and instill religious values as a way of life of their children.

- b. Individuals assume that religion is more attractive as a source of solution to their problems.

Both respondents stated that their worship helped both of them to be calm in the face of problems. This calmness undertaken due to the relationship between respondents and God who makes them feel safe and comfortable. God is seen as the highest strength more than anything in the world to make both respondents tend to make a “keeper”. So that respondents can feel protected despite having to suffer from severe problems.

- c. Familiarity and easy to access or implement their religion

From observations conducted by researchers, both respondents have smartphone gadget that assist them in carrying out religious activities. Respondent N stated that the smartphone helped her listened religious lectures and learn the Koran from ustadz. While respondent F admitted that she used a smartphone application contains the Qur'an that can be read at any time. This convenience coupled with easy access to both carry out worship

- d. Individuals integrate the values of religiosity with itself and its role in socializing.

Both respondents combines beetwen their religiosity and the way they socialize with others. For example is to change their appearance. Respondent N who does not wear hijab before, now wears a long veil covering the chest to the waist. For respondent F also began wearing hijab (although like respondent N) after she experienced problems. Change the appearance of the two respondents will have an impact on their environment. By wearing hijab, it will be connected with a more personal religious identity because hijab is a Muslim identity.

4. Turning point is important

Both respondents claimed there was a turning point in their life which bring them closer to god. On respondent N, remembering her position as a mother and on respondent F when her husband filed a divorce. This turning point is an event that encourages them to begin together with god solve their problems. Besides that, they began to accept the situation and take benevolent from their husband extramarital affair.

5. The effectiveness of religious coping affect the psychological state of the respondents

Both respondents is wife whose husband cheated them had extramarital affair have married between 4-6 years. Both respondents were pregnant before married so it could be said that both are not ready to undure dual role, namely as wives and mothers. Conflicts that occur in their marriage is when third person entry in their marriage that made them decide to terminate their marriage. Both respondents undergo "grieving process" as described previously. This stage is closely related to the type of religious coping were used both. When they are in the stage of denial and anger, people tend to use negative religious coping. When people began to enter the stage of acceptance, those who are not getting satisfactory results by using negative religious coping began switching to positive religious coping in which they can be helped to take back their state while helping to organize their goal. Generally, individuals who tend to wear this type of coping are individuals who come from a strong family religion. Both respondent's families are devout Muslim family in conducting worship. Therefore, when their children had such a problem, the family tends to push both of them back to God.

## **CONCLUSION**

Extramarital affair has a great impact on the psychological state of the respondents. Both claimed the problem was make their feelings are mixed between sadness, anger, do not accept, blame themselves even blame God. This can be explained by the grieving process "Kubler-Ross" which both endures several stages, namely:

1. Rejection stage, both of respondents still do not accept that her husband was having an affair,
2. Angry stage, in which respondents were angry with the various parties which she said caused this to happen,
3. Bargaining stage, where respondents do anything to save their marriage,
4. Depression stage, where respondents felt that their efforts futile because their husband did not support reconciliation,
5. Acceptance stage where they began to accept that the husband's extramarital affair is a destiny that they must go through and taken benevolent from this situation.

Respondents develop religious coping in several ways such as improving worship, seeking support from those closest and others. They do this effort because they both seem to be more comfortable to perform religious coping in dealing with their problems. Many factors that encourage both respondents to perform this type of coping include the parties are pushing for them draw closer to God, in addition, easy access to carry out their religion is also encourage respondents to use this type of coping. In conclusion, positive religious coping

help respondents to have better self-control, when previously the respondent easily provoked emotions and vent on things that are negative.

Recommendations of this research are: 1) For respondents, religiosity which is owned by both respondents should be enhanced by increasing the intensity of worship and perform other acts of worship. This will help them to have more self-control to deal with other problems in their life. In addition, both respondents should learn to start did not blame herself this will only make them more stuck in negative feelings. Respondents should focus more on the goals of their life now; 2) For further research is expected to further detail in analyzing the respondent's answers. In addition, further research need to reveal other types of coping that can help a wife who has been cheated her husband to recover from the suffering they face. For clinical use, counselor can use religiosity as a help for their clients to deal with their problems.

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