

Conceptual Reconstruction of Fatherhood in Early Childhood Care: The Perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith as the Foundation of Contemporary Islamic Parenting Models

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Abstract

The phenomenon of fatherlessness and the limited literature reconstructing the role of fathers in early childhood caregiving thematically represent a serious challenge in early childhood education studies. To date, the role of fathers is often confined to the financial function within the family, namely, as breadwinners. Meanwhile, the role of fatherly caregiving in Islam has received relatively little attention in the academic world. Therefore, this study aims to conceptually reconstruct the role of fathers in early childhood caregiving based on the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith. The research uses a qualitative approach, drawing on a literature review of Qur'anic verses and Hadiths as primary sources. This study also cites articles from indexed journals, including Scopus and Google Scholar, published during the 2020–2025 period as secondary sources. The study identified three main roles of fathers in early childhood parenting: as a protector both physically and psychologically; as a provider of material needs, emotional support/affection, leisure time for bonding, and assistance when the child needs it; and as an educator in all aspects of the child's life, such as being a role model, a spiritual guide, or an academic instructor at home. The novelty of this research lies in a comprehensive, thematic reconstruction of the role of fatherhood that differs from previous literature, which remains partial. Implicatively, this study offers a comprehensive model of Islamic fatherhood as an alternative to social assumptions about fathers' roles, while also providing a conceptual and practical foundation for early childhood parenting today. This model emphasizes that fathers' involvement is a crucial foundation in shaping a child's identity from an early age.

Keywords: conceptual reconstruction, early childhood care, fatherhood, Quran and Hadith

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of fatherlessness has become a serious concern not only in Indonesia but also worldwide, particularly amid the growing paradigm of shared parenting. This paradigm emphasizes the equality of roles between fathers and mothers in children's lives, representing a more balanced form of parenting than traditional models that tend to place primary responsibility for child-rearing and education on mothers (Deutsch, 2001). In traditional parenting practices, childcare is often understood as the mother's main obligation, especially in educational matters. Moreover, the popular paradigm "the mother is the first school for the child," as expressed in the Maqolah of Hafiz Ibrahim, has further reinforced social stigma that positions parenting as the exclusive responsibility of mothers (Hidayah, 2021). On the other hand, there remains a prevailing perception that fathers' roles are limited to economic provision and do not include emotional involvement in childrearing (Kurniawan & Lestari, 2022). Fathers are frequently socially constructed as breadwinners, despite their strategic role in children's education, character formation, and overall development (Bitalo, 2024). This paradigm generates social expectations that gradually erode fathers' involvement in parenting, leading children to experience the absence of paternal roles, either partially or entirely, a condition commonly referred to as fatherlessness.

Fatherlessness is a serious and persistent issue. Numerous studies indicate that this phenomenon occurs across various countries, including the United States, Africa, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Scandinavia, Iran, Laos, Georgia, Uruguay, and other regions, where children experience the loss or weakening of paternal involvement in their lives (Hill, 2020; Chan, 2021; Esmaceli, Khayyer, & Basiri, 2025; Arvidsson, 2025; Stolz & Maatta, 2025). This condition is further reinforced by a UNICEF report (2023), which shows that only approximately 18% of fathers in Southeast Asia are regularly involved in childcare activities, such as playing with their children, accompanying them to sleep, or assisting with learning at home.

Studies in developmental psychology demonstrate that fathers' involvement plays a significant role in children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Empirical findings indicate that active father involvement contributes to children's emotional regulation, identity formation, self-confidence, empathy, and social competence (Towe-Goodman et al., 2020; Brough et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021). In a study by Raja Muhammad Kadri (2023) on the tafsir tarbawi of Surah Luqman, verses 14–19, it was found that fathers play a substantial role in children's education. From a family sociology perspective, fatherhood is understood as a social construction shaped by cultural norms, economic pressures, and gender relations, in which modern fathers are confronted with an identity defined by traditional expectations as breadwinners while simultaneously being required to remain involved in parenting (Bitalo, 2024). Meanwhile, studies in Islamic education emphasize that fathers bear primary responsibility for children's moral guidance, spiritual development, and character formation, as taught in Islamic values (Hassan, 2020)

The presence and involvement of fathers in direct childcare are, therefore, a critical issue. For Muslim communities, discussions regarding fathers' roles are explicitly addressed in the Qur'an and Hadith. More than thirty Qur'anic verses portray fathers as actively involved in guiding their children, while verses that directly discuss mothers' roles in parenting are relatively limited. This indicates a strong emphasis on fathers' roles in child-rearing within Islamic teachings (Shofiyah et al., 2023). As explained by Towe-Goodman et al. (2020), fathers' physical and emotional presence significantly influences



children's emotional regulation and identity development. Numerous empirical studies show that fathers make important contributions to children's cognitive, emotional, and social development and self-adjustment (Brough et al., 2020; Wijayanti & Fauziah, 2020; Puteri & Rudi, 2021). Children who receive active paternal involvement tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-confidence and empathy (Jeong et al., 2021), as well as greater independence and social skills through paternal role modeling (Cholidah, 2023). Conversely, the absence of paternal roles has serious consequences for children's future development, including increased risks of behavioral disorders, anxiety, academic difficulties, and socio-emotional imbalance (Yu et al., 2021; Zahra et al., 2023; Rajagukguk et al., 2025). Children who experience parental divorce and limited paternal involvement are also more likely to develop long-term relational insecurity (Arvidsson, 2025).

Although studies on fathers' roles continue to grow, several research gaps remain. First, most studies on fatherhood focus on Western contexts and are dominated by empirical psychological or sociological approaches, making them less relevant to Muslim family contexts. Second, parenting studies within Islamic education are generally descriptive and have not yet undertaken a systematic thematic integration of the Qur'an and Hadith. Third, there is a limited number of holistic conceptual models that reconstruct fathers' roles in early childhood parenting by integrating theological foundations with contemporary perspectives on child development. Based on these gaps, this study aims to holistically reconstruct a conceptual understanding of fathers' roles in early childhood parenting from the perspectives of the Qur'an and Hadith. This research is expected to produce a conceptual framework of fatherhood that is theologically authentic, holistic in addressing children's developmental needs, and relevant to the context of contemporary Muslim families, thereby offering an original contribution to the fields of Islamic education and early childhood parenting.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library-based research approach with a conceptual design, utilizing thematic analysis to reconstruct the role of fatherhood in early childhood parenting. Situated at the intersection of Early Childhood Education and Educational Psychology, this research interprets religious texts through a pedagogical and developmental lens. Primary data were systematically selected through a multi-stage process. Qur'anic verses were identified using digital search engines, while Hadiths were retrieved by tracing narrations depicting the Prophet Muhammad's interactions with children. Thematic keywords, including father, child, advice, education, responsibility, and Luqman, were applied in various derivative forms to ensure comprehensive coverage. Inclusion criteria restricted Hadiths to narrations classified as sahih or hasan, while narrations lacking pedagogical relevance or relational context were excluded. Selected Hadiths were subsequently verified against authoritative compilations, scholarly books, and peer-reviewed articles to ensure textual reliability. Secondary data consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (2020–2025) focusing on Islamic fatherhood and parenting.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic framework. Initial inductive coding identified recurring paternal behaviors, which were synthesized into three interrelated core themes: Protector, Provider, and Educator. These themes were validated through iterative comparison to ensure thematic saturation, conceptual coherence, and relational interdependence. The research team, consisting of scholars in



Early Childhood Education and Educational Psychology, maintained a reflexive stance throughout the analysis. Interpretive bias was mitigated through peer discussions and cross-referencing findings with classical and contemporary commentaries, including Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir al-Munir. This study is limited by its textual-normative nature, which restricts empirical generalizability and may introduce selection bias. Moreover, the reconstructed model serves as an ideal normative framework that may face contextual challenges when applied across diverse socio-economic settings or non-traditional family structures.

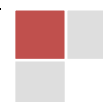
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

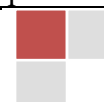
In the Qur'an, there are more than 30 verses that describe interactions between fathers and children. This is in stark contrast to interactions between mothers and children, which are only mentioned in a few verses. Meanwhile, there are many hadiths that discuss how the Prophet Muhammad interacted with and treated young children as a father. Here are some verses that describe interactions between fathers and children.

Table 1.
 Role Themes Qura'n Narrative Context

Role Themes	Qura'n	Narrative Context
Educator	Al-baqarah: 132-133	It tells the story of prophet ibrahim and prophet ya'qub bequeathing to their children to continue striving until death to remain faithful to the religion of allah until death comes. This is followed by the next verse which mentions that the children of prophet ya'qub replied that they would remain faithful to allah, the same god worshipped by their ancestors (prophet ibrahim, ismail, and ishaq). This verse shows the interaction between two prophets who were fathers to their children. These prophets not only carried out their roles as leaders of the people, but they also carried out their roles as fathers who guided and always protected their children's faith. They not only guided their people to the true faith, but they also provided spiritual education to their children.
Provider	Al-an'am: 74	Tells of the interaction between prophet ibrahim and his father. In this interaction, prophet ibrahim expressed his doubts about the essence of god as believed by his father and his people. This verse shows prophet ibrahim's courage in expressing his opinion to his father. However, prophet ibrahim did not intend to feel superior to his father, but rather to guide his father to the right path. Prophet ibrahim also expressed his opinion in a polite manner and continued to respect his father.
Protector	Hud: 42-43	It is recounted how prophet noah warned his son of the danger that would befall him and urged his son to follow his command and leave the disbelievers around him. However, in the next verse, prophet noah's son loudly rejected his father's invitation and said that he could save himself by



		taking refuge in the mountains without the help of allah and his father. In this verse, prophet noah warns his son to follow him for his own safety. Even though his invitation and warning are rejected, prophet noah does not stop trying to persuade and convince his son by giving him another warning. Prophet noah does this because he wants to protect his son from allah's wrath, but in the end, his son chooses to reject prophet noah's invitation and accept the wrath of allah swt.
Provider	Yusuf: 4-5	Tells a story about the emotional closeness between prophet yusuf and his father. Prophet yusuf told his father about a strange dream he had, but prophet ya'qub (his father) warned prophet yusuf not to tell his brothers about his dream, because prophet ya'qub wanted to prevent his other sons from harming prophet yusuf.
Protector, provider	Yusuf: 11-14	There is open communication between the father (prophet jacob) and his children. These verses tell of the prophet jacob's children asking for permission to take prophet joseph with them. They tried to convince and persuade prophet jacob that they would take good care of prophet joseph and return safely. Meanwhile, prophet jacob has doubts about giving his children permission to take prophet joseph with them because he is afraid that something bad will happen to prophet joseph.
Educator	Yusuf: 16-18	Prophet jacob's sons lying to their father about the death of prophet joseph (his son). Although prophet jacob was dealing with emotional turmoil and did not believe the news brought by his sons, he still responded wisely and rationally.
Protector, educator	Yusuf: 63-67	The prophet jacob's children asked their father for permission to take bunyamin (another of his children) with them. However, prophet jacob no longer trusted them to take his brother on a trip because of their past negligence in protecting prophet joseph, whom he had entrusted to them. Then, they still tried to persuade prophet jacob to give them permission. In the end, prophet jacob gave his children permission on the condition that they swear an oath in the name of allah to bring back their brother unless they were surrounded by enemies.
Provider educator	Yusuf: 81-87	These verses is a continuation of prophet jacob's interaction with his children after leaving and taking benjamin with him. In this verse, prophet jacob is once again disappointed by his children for their failure to uphold the trust that had been given to them. However, prophet jacob remained firm as a leader in his family. Even though turmoil enveloped him to the point that his eyes turned white, prophet jacob remained calm in dealing with his children. Prophet jacob continued to admonish his children and treat them well, just as a father with boundless love would. Prophet jacob remained patient



		and once again confided his sadness to allah and entrusted allah with everything he had planned.
Provider, educator	Yusuf: 94-100	This verse describes the arrival of prophet jacob before the egyptian leader to atone for his children's mistakes. There, prophet jacob recalled and believed in the presence of joseph (his son) through the surrounding scents even though his eyes could no longer see. However, his sons doubted his words until the egyptian leader rubbed a shirt on his father's (prophet jacob's) face so that he could see again. Prophet jacob found confirmation of his belief, namely the presence of his son joseph, who had long been missing, as the leader of egypt. His children then asked for forgiveness through prophet jacob for the mistakes and sins they had committed. With love and tenderness, prophet jacob asked allah to forgive them, reminding them that allah is most forgiving and most merciful. Prophet joseph then happily welcomed his parents and placed them on the throne, telling his father that this was the meaning of the dream he had told.
Provider, educator	Maryam: 41-48	Tells of the conversation between prophet ibrahim and his father, who worshipped idols. Prophet ibrahim loved his father dearly and did not want anything bad to happen to him, including the wrath of allah. However, he was powerless to persuade his father to worship the one god instead of idols that could not hear, see, or even help his father. Prophet ibrahim repeatedly warned him with polite words, but his father refused and even asked prophet ibrahim to leave him. Nevertheless, prophet ibrahim continued to ask for forgiveness and pray for his father's well-being to allah.
Provider	Al-qashash: 26-27	A dialogue between two women and their father (prophet shu'aib) and suggesting that he hire a man (prophet moses) who has helped them as a worker in their home. This is because of prophet moses' strength and personality, which they believe to be trustworthy. The next verse describes prophet shu'aib's conversation with prophet musa, offering him a job and proposing to marry him to one of his two daughters. This was because prophet shu'aib understood his daughters' feelings towards prophet musa. Prophet shu'aib exemplified the character of a wise and just leader. Prophet shu'aib left the final decision to prophet moses and would not force his will if prophet moses did not agree.
Educator	Luqman: 13-19	These verses contain advice given by a father named luqman to his son. The most important advice luqman taught his son was tauhid, which is the prohibition against associating partners with allah. Luqman then taught his son to always be devoted to his parents. However, if they invite you to associate partners with allah, then refuse them politely. Luqman then continues by reminding his son to watch his actions, because god's supervision is never absent. The next



		piece of advice is for his son to always perform the acts of worship that allah has commanded humans to do, one of which is prayer. Luqman also emphasizes that his son should always behave well and pay attention to his morals and manners in life.
Provider, educator	Ash-shaffat: 102	This verse relates to the most difficult decision that prophet ibrahim had to make as a father. Prophet ibrahim was tested with the command to sacrifice his son (prophet ismail) through a dream. He conveyed this news to his son to find out how prophet ismail viewed allah's command. Prophet ishmael accepted the command with patience and sincerity while reassuring his father of the goodness in every decree and command of allah. Prophet ishmael willingly allowed his father to do so because of his awareness of allah's command to his father through this command, saying, "insha'allah, you will find me among the patient ones." Despite facing a profound emotional trial, prophet ibrahim remained submissive and fully obedient to allah's command, so allah removed his sadness by replacing prophet ismail with a sheep when he was about to slaughter him.

Not only taught in the Qur'an, but the role of the father is also demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad through his sunnah, which is recorded in several Hadith narrations. The Prophet's involvement as a father was not limited to being the family's breadwinner, as is commonly believed today. The Prophet's involvement in raising his children, or in caring for young children, goes beyond that. The following hadiths show the interactions between the Prophet Muhammad and his daughter, Siti Fatimah; how he instructed parents, especially fathers, in treating their children; and how he, as a male parent, treated young children.

Table 2.

Categorization of Hadith on the Example of the Prophet in the Household

Role Themes	Sub Themes	Hadith	Narrative Context
Protector	Emotional	Bukhari: 3729 & Muslim: 2449	The Prophet Muhammad Rejected the Request of Bani Hisham bin Al-Mughirah for Ali bin Abi Talib to Marry the Daughter of Abu Jahl, Even Though Ali Was Already Married to Fatimah (The Daughter of the Prophet Muhammad). The Prophet Made This Rejection in Order to Protect His Daughter's Heart and Firmly Said, "Whoever Hurts Fatimah Hurts Me."
	Physical & Emotional	Bukhari: 3371	The Prophet Muhammad once specifically prayed for Hasan and Hussein to be protected from the evil of creatures and from the envious eyes (jealousy).



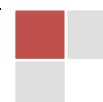
	Physical	Bukhari: 3280 & Muslim: 2012	The Prophet Muhammad commanded parents to restrain and instruct their children not to leave the house at dusk (when night falls), because at that time the devils are spread out and will harm humans, especially children.
Provider	Material	Muslim: 995	The provision given to one's family will receive a greater reward than wealth that is used, spent, and given in charity in the way of Allah, to free slaves, or to the poor.
		Bukhari: No. 893	The Prophet warned every leader (in work or family) not to neglect their responsibilities because if someone neglects them, it is a sin upon them.
Emotional (Love)		Muslim: 2603	The Prophet warned that whoever does not love children will not be loved (by others).
		Muslim: 2316	Anas RA saw that the Prophet Muhammad was the person who loved his family the most, and he had never found anyone who loved their family more than the Prophet Muhammad. He also testified that the Prophet would always greet and stroke the heads of children when he met them, and the Prophet never failed to pray for the child's happiness.
		Abu Dawud: 4947	Anas bin Malik narrated that when he was a child, the Messenger sent him on an errand, and he spontaneously (playfully) refused the Prophet's command, even though in his heart he actually intended to go and carry out the order. Then, when he was about to go to the place, the Prophet held the back of his neck while laughing and called Anas by his beloved nickname while asking about the command he had given.
		Ibnu Majah: 144	The Prophet once playfully chased and caught little Hussein who was playing on the street.
		Bukhari: 6129	Anas RA swore that the Messenger of Allah had the best character. And he witnessed that Prophet Muhammad once comforted the younger sibling of his servant (Anas bin Malik) over the death of his pet bird.
		An-Nasa'i: 1141	Abdullah bin Syaddad witnessed that when Prophet Muhammad was praying, the Messenger of Allah allowed Hasan and Hussein (his grandsons) to climb on his shoulders while he was prostrating, as if they were playing horse-riding.



	Bukhari: 516 & Muslim: 543	The Prophet also carried Umamah bint Zainab (a baby) while he was praying.
	Bukhari: 5997	Yusuf bin Abdullah bin Salam R.A testified that when he was a child, the Prophet gave him the name Yusuf. He also said that the Prophet held him in his lap and stroked his head at that time.
	Bukhari: 6003	Usama bin Zaid mentioned that the Prophet usually carried him on his lap on one thigh and carried Al-Hasan bin Ali on the other side while praying for them, saying, "O Allah, love them, for I love them."
	Muslim: 2635	The Prophet once said that every small child who dies is like a little bird in Paradise who will hold onto their father's clothing and will not let go of it until their father is admitted to Paradise by Allah.
	Bukhari: 2351 & Muslim: 2030	When the Prophet was offered milk, he prioritized giving the milk to a child on his right side rather than to his adult companion on his left side.
	Bukhari: 707 & Muslim: 470	The Prophet Muhammad once shortened his prayer simply because he heard the cry of a baby (fearing that the prolonged prayer would burden the child's mother).
	Abu Dawud: 5217	Every time the Prophet visited Fatimah's house, his daughter would always stand up, welcome him, hug the Prophet, and kiss her father.
	Bukhari: 240	Little Fatimah once saw her father being treated badly by Abu Jahl and his companions. He challenged people who were brave enough to put camel dung on the Prophet Muhammad. While the Prophet was prostrating, Uqbah bin Abi Mu'aith placed camel dung on his back. Seeing this, Fatimah immediately cleaned the dung from the Prophet's back and scolded the perpetrators.
Free Time (Play)	Abu Dawud: 4190	The Prophet once called a child by the name "Dhu al-Qarnayn," which means "The One with Two Ears" (a term of endearment), while giving him a small pebble as a gift that was making the child laugh.



		Abu Dawud: 4932	The Prophet playfully asked young Aisyah about the type of her horse doll with wings, and Aisyah replied by saying that Prophet Solomon's horse also had wings. The clever answer from young Aisyah made Prophet Muhammad laugh.
		Abu Dawud: 2578	The Prophet once played a running race with little Aisha, and Aisha defeated the Prophet at that time. Then, later on, the Prophet managed to beat Aisyah in that race.
	Energy	Ibnu Al-Maghazili & Bukhari: 676	Once the Prophet was visiting Fatimah's house while Fatimah was grinding wheat. The Prophet gladly helped his daughter to grind it. Aisyah also narrated that the Prophet often helped her with household chores. However, he would stop to pray when the time for prayer came.
Educator	Religious	Bukhari: 3113 & Muslim: 2727	Fatimah once complained about the exhaustion she experienced in performing her household duties and asked Prophet Muhammad for a servant to help lighten her household work. Prophet Muhammad received his daughter's complaint and did not ignore it. As a form of love for his child, the Prophet taught her a better and more meaningful phrase, namely the phrases of Tasbih (Subhanallah), Tahmid (Alhamdulillah), and Takbir (Allahu Akbar), which can be recited 33 times each after every prayer.
		Tirmidzi: 2516	Ibn Abbas said that the Prophet once taught him some very important words while saying, "O boy (a young boy who has not reached puberty), I will teach you these words." These words serve as a reminder that if he guards (the commands of) Allah and places his full hope in Allah, no creature can harm him without Allah's decree, because all destinies have been written by Allah.
		Abu Dawud: 495	Abdullah bin Amr said that the Prophet commanded every parent to give a strict order to their children to perform prayers after the age of seven. If at the age of ten they are still reluctant to perform prayers, the Prophet instructed to lightly tap them (as a firm warning) as a means of discipline.



	Bukhari: 75	Ibnu Abbas recounted that when he was a child, the Prophet embraced him closely, pressing his body against the Prophet's, while praying, "O Allah, teach him (grant him the ability to learn) the Book (Qur'an)."
Skill	Bukhari: 2899	When the Prophet passed by a group of young men from the Aslam tribe who were practicing archery, he encouraged them and reminded them to continue diligently learning archery, especially since they were descendants of Prophet Isma'il, who was skilled in archery.
Academic	Abu Dawud: 3645	The Prophet once instructed Zayd bin Tsabit to study the Jewish language and script, and he was able to master it within half a month.
Manner	Bukhari: 5376 & Muslim: 2022	Told by Umar bin Salamah (a young boy raised in the household of Prophet Muhammad), the Prophet taught Umar to take the food closest to him first, to eat with his right hand, and most importantly, to eat by mentioning the name of Allah (saying Bismillah).

Discussion

Prophet Muhammad's Role as Protector: Physical and Emotional Safeguarding of Children

The Qur'an establishes the fundamental obligation of family protection in Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6, where Allah commands believers to safeguard themselves and their families from the fire of Hell, fueled by humans and stones. According to Ibn Kathir's tafsir, this verse emphasizes the family's responsibility to prevent its members from committing sins that could lead them to destruction (Latif, Samad, Rasyid, 2024). This protective role is exemplified by numerous Prophets in the Qur'an. In Surah Hud (42-43), Prophet Noah persistently warned his son about impending danger, demonstrating that a loving father never tires of protecting his children despite repeated rejection and disappointment. Similarly, Surah Yusuf (11-14 & 63-67) depicts Prophet Yaqub's protective hesitation regarding his sons Yusuf and Benjamin, illustrating a father's constant vigilance against potential harm to his children, whether physical danger or negative influences.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) embodied this protective role through both emotional and physical safeguarding of children, as documented in authentic hadiths. In a narration recorded by Bukhari (3729) and Muslim (2449), the Prophet firmly rejected Bani Hisham's request for Ali bin Abi Thalib to marry Abu Jahl's daughter while already married to Fatimah, declaring, "Whoever hurts Fatimah hurts me," demonstrating profound emotional protection of his daughter's heart. The Prophet also physically protected children through specific prayers for Hasan and Hussein against evil creatures and envious eyes (Bukhari 3371), and commanded parents to restrain children from leaving home at dusk when devils are widespread and harmful (Bukhari 3280, Muslim 2012). These Qur'anic verses and hadiths establish that fathers bear crucial responsibility for both physical and psychological protection of children, expressed through direct



actions, prayers, attention, and guidance. Contemporary research confirms this, showing that actively involved fathers who supervise and care for their children significantly prevent juvenile delinquency and positively influence adolescent behavior (Su et al., 2024).

The Comprehensive Role of Fathers in Islam: Provider, Protector, and Nurturer of Children

Allah establishes the father's obligation as the primary provider in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 233, which also explains the mother's responsibility to breastfeed and mandates that the father provide food and clothing for the mother and child (Istihanah, 2025). According to Tafsir al-Munir by Wahbah az-Zuhaili, this sustenance stems from the marital contract that obligates both spouses to fulfill their respective duties, while Tafsir al-Nur by Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy emphasizes that provision is considered sufficient according to the father's ability (Izzah & Sari, 2023). Scholars unanimously agree that fathers must provide both material and spiritual needs for their children, either directly or through the mother (Khollis, 2023; Maharany et al., 2024). The Prophet Muhammad reinforced this responsibility in a hadith narrated by Bukhari (893), warning every leader, whether in work or family, to avoid neglecting their responsibilities, as negligence constitutes sin. Furthermore, in Muslim (995), the Prophet proclaimed that provision for one's family receives a greater reward than wealth spent on charity, freeing slaves, or aiding the poor, highlighting the immense spiritual value of fulfilling this duty.

The Qur'an establishes the fundamental obligation of family protection in Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6, where Allah commands believers to safeguard themselves and their families from the fire of Hell. According to Ibn Kathir's tafsir, this verse emphasizes the family's responsibility to prevent its members from committing sins that could lead them to destruction (Latif, Samad, Rasyid, 2024). This protective role is exemplified by numerous Prophets in the Qur'an. In Surah Hud (42-43), Prophet Noah repeatedly warned his son about the impending danger, demonstrating that a loving father never tires of protecting his children despite repeated rejection. Similarly, Surah Yusuf (11-14 & 63-67) depicts Prophet Yaqub's protective hesitation regarding his sons Yusuf and Benjamin, illustrating a father's constant vigilance against potential harm. The Prophet Muhammad embodied this protective role through both emotional and physical safeguarding. In Bukhari (3729) and Muslim (2449), the Prophet firmly rejected a request for Ali bin Abi Thalib to marry another woman while already married to Fatimah, declaring, "Whoever hurts Fatimah hurts me," demonstrating profound emotional protection. The Prophet also physically protected children through specific prayers for Hasan and Hussein against evil creatures and envious eyes (Bukhari 3371), and commanded parents to restrain children from leaving home at dusk when devils are widespread and harmful (Bukhari 3280, Muslim 2012). Contemporary research confirms that actively involved fathers who supervise and care for their children significantly prevent juvenile delinquency and positively influence adolescent behavior (Su et al., 2024).

Beyond material provision and physical protection, the Qur'an extensively illustrates profound emotional bonds between prophets and their children. In Surah Yusuf (4-5), Prophet Yaqub's loving response to his son Yusuf's dream demonstrates emotional security, as Yusuf felt comfortable sharing his vision while Yaqub wisely protected him from potential jealousy. This narrative exemplifies how fathers can serve as trusted confidants, creating emotional safety. Contemporary research confirms that a father's



emotional presence significantly influences children's emotion regulation abilities and stress management throughout development (Puglisi et al., 2024; Choi et al., 2021). The Prophet Muhammad embodied emotional fatherhood, declaring in Muslim (2603) that "whoever does not love children will not be loved," while Anas bin Malik testified in Muslim (2316) that he never saw anyone who loved their family more than the Prophet. According to Hasan and Siddiq (2021), Islamic fatherhood fundamentally incorporates emotional closeness as a key element of parenting. This love extended to all children, as Yusuf bin Abdullah bin Salam testified in Bukhari (5997) that the Prophet kindly named him, held him in his lap, and stroked his head. The reciprocal love was evident when Fatimah would stand, hug, and kiss her father whenever he visited (Abu Dawud 5217), and when she, as a child, immediately cleaned camel dung from his back (Bukhari: 240), demonstrating the deep emotional bond between them.

The Prophet Muhammad's interactions with children demonstrate his commitment to spending quality time with them regardless of his leadership responsibilities. Numerous hadiths document his playful engagement: racing with young Aisyah (Abu Dawud: 2578) and later playfully acknowledging when she won and when he won; playfully chasing and catching his grandson Hussein on the street (Ibnu Majah: 144); comforting a boy grieving his pet bird (Bukhari: 6129); and allowing Hasan and Hussein to climb on his back during prayer (An-Nasa'i: 1141). The Prophet even carried Umamah bint Zainab while leading prayers (Bukhari: 516; Muslim: 543), demonstrating that children were never considered disturbances. He consistently prioritized children's needs, offering milk first to a child on his right rather than to an adult companion (Bukhari: 2351; Muslim: 2030), and shortening prayers upon hearing an infant's cry (Bukhari: 707). The Prophet also called a child by the nickname "Dza al-Qarnayn" while giving him a pebble that made him laugh (Abu Dawud: 4190), and laughed at young Aisyah's clever response about her doll with wings (Abu Dawud: 4190). Sudarto et al. (2023) emphasize, based on interpretations by al-Mishbah, al-Azhar, Ibnu Kathir, and at-Thabari, that fathers must collaborate in child-rearing as friends to their children, thereby strengthening emotional bonds through quality interactions.

The Qur'an presents additional prophetic models of father-child relationships. Surah Al-Qashash (26-27) depicts Prophet Shuaib listening attentively to his daughters' opinions and feelings, leading to his decision to employ and marry Musa to one of them. Surah Ash-Shaffat (102) portrays Prophet Ibrahim consulting his son, Ismail, about his dream, demonstrating mutual trust as Ismail comforts his father and supports Allah's command despite personal risk. Research confirms that children learn positive social interaction through fathers' active involvement in play and discussion (Arbel et al., 2021). The Prophet also provided practical guidance for children's development: he instructed parents to command prayer at age seven and lightly tap at ten for neglect (Abdullah bin Amr), embraced Ibn Abbas while praying for his understanding of the Qur'an (Bukhari), encouraged archery practice for young men (Muslim), and taught children proper eating manners using the right hand, eating closest food, and saying Bismillah (Umar bin Salamah). He also instructed Zayd bin Tsabit to study Jewish language and script, mastered within half a month, demonstrating investment in children's education. Even prophetic fallibility is acknowledged, as Surah Al-An'am (74) and Maryam (41-48) show Prophet Ibrahim respectfully engaging with his idolatrous father, demonstrating that children deserve space to express opinions while maintaining respect.

Maryuni et al. (2023) and Jeong et al. (2022) affirm that strong father-child closeness promotes emotional well-being, helping children cope with stress. This



comprehensive Islamic framework aligns with international standards such as Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1990), which guarantees children's right to express opinions without coercion. Azwar and Usman (2025) emphasize that a balance of responsibility, firmness, and parental affection is essential for the formation of children's character in Islamic Parenting, while Maunah, Junaris, and Jabbar (2025) affirm that fathers are the primary agents in early childhood character development. Wang et al. (2024) and Rahmadhani et al. (2025) further confirm that actively involved fathers enhance positive social values and emotional education in children, completing the comprehensive portrait of fatherhood in Islam as provider, protector, emotional nurturer, and engaged companion.

The Father's Role as Provider of Energy: Physical Presence and Effort in Islamic Parenting

The Qur'an establishes the father's fundamental obligation as a provider in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 233, mandating fathers to furnish food and clothing according to their means, as elucidated in Tafsir al-Nur by Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (Izzah & Sari, 2023). This responsibility extends beyond material provision to encompass the dedication of physical energy and effort for the family's well-being. In fulfilling the family's needs, a father must exert his utmost effort, demonstrating his commitment to his wife and children through action. This physical exertion represents a tangible form of love and devotion that complements financial provision, acknowledging that children require not only material resources but also the visible presence and active involvement of their father in their daily lives. The expenditure of paternal energy serves as evidence of a father's dedication, transforming the abstract concept of provision into a concrete, lived experience within the family.

The Prophet Muhammad exemplified devotion of physical energy to children through his actions, as narrated in Ibnu al-Maghazili and Bukhari (676), when he visited Fatimah's house and willingly helped his daughter grind wheat. Despite his immense responsibilities as a leader and messenger, the Prophet made time and offered his physical energy to ease his child's tasks, setting an enduring example for every parent, especially fathers, to provide material, emotional, temporal, and physical support for their children. This prophetic model challenges contemporary societal misconceptions that limit a father's role to financial provision alone, overlooking the profound impact of paternal time and energy on children's development. The Prophet understood that a father's physical presence in helping with household tasks, playing, and simply being available communicates love and care in ways that money cannot replicate.

For young children, the availability of a father's free time and energy constitutes a precious gift that creates lasting memories carried into adulthood. In early childhood education and parenting, a father's involvement in physical activity can manifest in simple yet meaningful ways: inviting the child to play, teaching basic physical exercises, helping with tasks, or demonstrating how to perform physical activities. These engagements create a sense of safety and affection that forms the foundation of secure attachment. When a father expends energy in direct interaction with his child—whether through rough-and-tumble play, assistance with homework, or helping with chores—he communicates that the child is worthy of his time and effort, building the child's self-esteem and sense of value.

Research increasingly affirms the critical importance of fathers' physical presence and energy expenditure for healthy child development. Jeong et al. (2018) found that



Muslim fathers in Pakistan demonstrate involvement through nurturing, playing, entertaining, and meeting their children's emotional needs, highlighting how physical engagement transcends cultural boundaries. Hadfield et al. (2024) documented that high paternal involvement among Syrian refugee families correlates with better child development outcomes, even in challenging circumstances. Saaka et al. (2022) similarly found high levels of father involvement in childcare among Muslim families in Ghana. These international studies reinforce the view that fathers' expenditure of energy in direct childcare activities, such as playing, helping, teaching, and simply being present, yields measurable benefits for children's development across diverse contexts, confirming the timeless relevance of the prophetic model.

The integration of fathers' physical energy into family life also addresses the contemporary challenge of fatherlessness, whether physical or emotional. Mashar et al. (2024) documented numerous cases of limited father involvement in direct care in Javanese culture, where fathers primarily serve as economic providers and engage minimally in children's daily lives. Wulaningsih (2023) found that father involvement in Indonesian Muslim families is strongly influenced by perceptions of masculinity, indicating cultural barriers to full paternal engagement. Yet the prophetic example demonstrates that expending energy in childcare—helping with household tasks, playing with children, responding to their needs—does not diminish masculinity but rather fulfills the comprehensive responsibility of fatherhood as modeled by the Prophet himself. When fathers withhold their physical presence and energy, children lose not only assistance with tasks but also the emotional connection, sense of security, and modeling of engaged parenting that only hands-on involvement can provide.

CONCLUSION

This study seeks to reconstruct the conceptual understanding of the father's role in early childhood parenting through qualitative thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, in response to the limited literature specifically discussing Islamic paternity. The findings of the study indicate that the father's role is not singular but encompasses three interrelated core roles: the father as a protector of the child (both physically and psychologically), as a provider of the child's needs including material, emotional, time together, and energy, and as an educator for the child (covering spiritual and moral aspects, manners, life skills, and even the child's academic aspects). Theoretically, this study makes a significant contribution by presenting a holistic reconstruction of the Islamic father, while also going beyond the traditional view that positions the father merely as a breadwinner. This model emphasizes that the spiritual, emotional, and pedagogical aspects are an inseparable part of a father's role in early childhood parenting. From a practical perspective, these findings can serve as a guide for Muslim parents in developing a more balanced parenting style, as a basis for educators and policymakers in designing context- and culturally value-based parenting programs, and as a conceptual framework for future researchers. Nevertheless, this study has limitations as it relies on a literature review and has not been empirically tested in the context of real family life. Therefore, further research is recommended to empirically test this model, conduct cross-cultural comparative studies, and develop measurement instruments to examine Islamic fatherhood practices across various social contexts.



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