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Research Article

Parental Challenges in Child Rearing within Islamic Guidance: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract. Child rearing serves as the fundamental cornerstone of Islamic social development. A parent's primary responsibility involves nurturing faith, character, emotions, and intellect from early childhood, shaping children under the framework of religious guidance. However, in the contemporary era, parents encounter a multitude of complex challenges. Factors such as the influence of external global cultures, the pervasive impact of the digital world, diminishing parent-child communication, workplace stress, and economic constraints have created significant hurdles in the practice of effective parenting. Using a theoretical approach, this study examines the challenges faced by parents in child rearing through the lens of Islamic guidance. The methodology involves a qualitative analysis of primary sources, namely the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, supplemented by

secondary data including research articles, books, journals, and academic web resources. The primary objective of this research is to identify the specific obstacles parents encounter in the upbringing of their children. The findings reveal that parents grapple with challenges such as a lack of parenting experience, daily work-related stress, inflexible lifestyles, and the demanding nature of the long-term investment required for a child's future. The study concludes that adhering to Islamic principles and guidance in child rearing effectively reduces parental stress and provides an optimal framework for cultivating a healthy, responsible, and God-conscious generation.

Keywords: Islamic Guidance, Child Rearing, Parental Challenges

INTRODUCTION

When conceptualizing the advancement of Islamic society, prioritizing the development of the individual remains the foremost obligation (Fayzullaeva, 2021; Nasr, 2009). Research by Bensaid (2021) and Naseem & Ahmad (2024) emphasizes that individual development can only be realized by nurturing a child's thoughts, beliefs, emotions, behavior, and culture to reflect the identity of a true Muslim from early childhood. It is through this foundational process that the institution of the Islamic family is established, making the manifestation of an ideal Islamic social structure possible (Bari, 2002). Children serve as the bedrock of social formation and the primary stones in the fortress of society (Altalib et al., 2016); the strength and stability of that fortress depend entirely on how they are raised.

Effective child rearing requires natural and exemplary training (Memon et al., 2024), for which a disciplined and tranquil family environment is most suitable. While it is true that many factors contribute to a child's upbringing, parental involvement is paramount (Rahmi et al., 2021; Syed, 2014). Healthy child development is constructed by closely observing every movement, transition, and behavior during the child's developmental stages and organizing their innate characteristics toward an upright path (Aziz et al., 2022).

Studies by Ali et al. (2024) and Karimullah et al. (2023) indicate that in Western parenting contexts, children often grow accustomed to making autonomous decisions, which frequently leads to a disregard for parental guidance. Furthermore, it is noted that when parents interact with excessive leniency, children may become lethargic and self-centered. Bukhari et al. (2024) observe that when parents adopt an overly permissive behavioral style, children often fall into negative habits due to unrestrained freedom.

In contrast, deficiencies in Eastern child rearing—specifically an overly protective environment—often prevent children from gaining the necessary experiences to navigate significant life challenges (Bensaid, 2021; Sultan & Awad, 2022). This implies that "over-protected" children lack the resilience to face life's obstacles. Psychological research suggests that children may face psychological issues such as depression and anxiety due to unbearable pressure from parents (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011; Koenig, 2012). Bandura (1977) notes in his research that such

children experience low self-esteem and may internalize a state of rebellion against strict regulations.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) notes that Eastern parents often attempt to mold their children into exact replicas of their own ideals; consequently, when making critical decisions, children may find themselves in a restricted state, unable to think independently. This often stems from a lack of systematic integration of rigorous guidance within their religious teachings. While specific psychological modules and training for parental child rearing exist (Bari, 2002), Islamic guidance has consistently offered healthy and eternal paradigms for the world (Altalib et al., 2016; Naseem & Ahmad, 2024). Those who attain parenthood are expected to be steadfast in prayer, recite the Qur'an, avoid falsehood and backbiting, fill their hearts with virtuous thoughts, and remain in constant remembrance of God (*Dhikr*). As God states in the Holy Scripture: *"Your wealth and your children are but a trial, and Allah has with Him a great reward"* (Al-Qur'an, 64:15).

Bensaid (2021) and Bari (2002) emphasize that when undertaking a specialized activity, clarity regarding the essential skills and "universalist" learning required for that task is vital. In this regard, it is essential to clarify whether Islam provides precise and comprehensive guidance for child rearing. Furthermore, there is a notable research gap in explaining how Muslim parents experience, understand, and attempt to manage the challenges of child rearing by integrating Islamic worldviews with contemporary psychological approaches and family theories.

Nurturing and guiding children in the Islamic way is a monumental responsibility in this modern age. Rescuing them from the pervasive influence of external forces is a daunting task (Alvanda et al., 2024; Bukhari et al., 2024). Ho (2016) notes that compared to previous eras, contemporary child rearing has become more difficult and stressful. Kabir et al. (2024) point out that the nuanced wisdom of child rearing previously passed down by elders is no longer sufficiently available to the current generation due to the rise of nuclear family structures. Additionally, the increased use of digital devices has diminished communication between parents and children (Kabir et al., 2024). Rahmi et al. (2021) observe that economic conditions necessitating both parents to work—both outside and within the home—prevents them from spending adequate time with their children, creating psychological vulnerabilities in the young. According to Koenig (2012), this lack of resilience can lead to tragic instances of suicide when faced with even minor stressors.

The fundamental objective of parents should be to raise children who possess God-consciousness, a sense of responsibility, and strong social skills. Raising a child effectively brings peace to the mind and happiness to the home; it is the constructive element upon which society and civilization are built (Bari, 2002; Nasr, 1989).

Implementing a well-structured plan can simplify the arduous task of child rearing. However, such a plan cannot be fully realized without comprehensive guidance to manage the challenges and obstacles encountered during the parenting

process (Altalib et al., 2016; Fitriyah & Maksum, 2024). The background of this research, therefore, lies in analyzing the difficulties and hurdles parents face in child rearing, utilizing a theoretical approach and a practical perspective rooted in Islamic guidance.

The primary objective of this research is to identify and explore the parental challenges associated with child rearing through an integrated lens of Islamic guidance, psychology, and theoretical frameworks.

Raising righteous children is a noble and rewarding endeavor guided by the wisdom of the Qur'an. Islam provides various directives regarding the challenges faced during the upbringing of children. In this context, the impact of contemporary social structures and opposing ideologies has created various behavioral contradictions in children. To rectify these systemic deviations, precise theories, psychological approaches, and Islamic guidance offer highly valuable and practical strategies for child rearing. Therefore, the significance of this research lies in its examination of the scholarly dimensions of the challenges parents face in child rearing under Islamic guidance, aiming to identify effective paths forward.

Research Problem

Guiding children and raising them under the umbrella of Islam is a significant and demanding responsibility in this modern era. While rescuing children from the pervasive influence of external global forces remains an arduous task, Islam serves as a comprehensive way of life that provides beautiful guidance for all spheres of human existence. Therefore, it is essential to gain clarity regarding the challenges parents face in child rearing within the framework of Islamic guidance.

The central research problem identifies a significant gap in existing academic literature: there is a lack of comprehensive effort to explain how Muslim parents experience, perceive, and attempt to manage these challenges by integrating an Islamic worldview with contemporary psychological approaches and family theories. This study is undertaken to address this specific gap in understanding.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bukhari, Bastiar, and Anwar (2024), in their study titled *Challenges of Parenting in the Digital Era: A Review from the Perspective of Islamic Family Law*, note that the digital age has introduced fundamental shifts in child-rearing methodologies. Their research explains that the use of the internet, social media, and smartphones exerts a direct influence on children's cognitive, behavioral, and ethical development, thereby presenting new challenges to parent-child relationships. Conducted from the perspective of Islamic family law, this study emphasizes the necessity of restructuring parental responsibilities within legal and ethical dimensions. Following this, Alvanda et al. (2024), in their work *The Challenges of Muslim Parents in Rearing Digital Native Children*, provide a detailed account of the obstacles Muslim parents

face in raising "digital native" generations. Their research highlights that traditional parenting approaches are no longer sufficient as digital technologies have transformed children's behavior, social interactions, and lifestyles. Specifically, excessive smartphone usage, the influence of social media, and parents' limited digital literacy emerge as significant challenges to children's moral development, time management, and religious identity formation. The study underscores the vital need for parental guidance that balances Islamic values with digital culture.

In the same year, Fitriyah and Maksun (2024) explored *Islamic Parenting Challenges and Strategies in the Digital Era: Modern Islamic Parenting and School of Parenting*. This research examines the challenges and strategies of Islamic parenting in the digital age through an Islamic lens, pointing out that social media consumption, the proliferation of digital technology, and the influence of secular culture have evolved into new hurdles for parental guidance. Although the study emphasizes the necessity of modern Islamic parenting models and parental education systems, it does not clearly explain how these are integrated with the practical, everyday challenges parents encounter. Previously, Rahmi et al. (2021), in *Challenges of Parents Educating Children's Morals in Muslim Families*, investigated the difficulties parents face in providing moral education within Muslim families. Their findings indicate that social changes, media influence, and secular environments impact children's moral growth, further complicating parental guidance. Additionally, a lack of parent-child communication and a deficiency in moral education were identified as primary barriers. Furthermore, Abubakar, Sa'ad, and Magaji (2020), in *Child Upbringing in Islam and the Challenges of the Modern Time*, describe child rearing in Islam as a spiritual and ethical responsibility. This study highlights that in the modern era, Western cultural influence and media impact pose significant challenges to the development of a child's Islamic identity, stressing the importance of parents balancing Islamic values with the contemporary social environment.

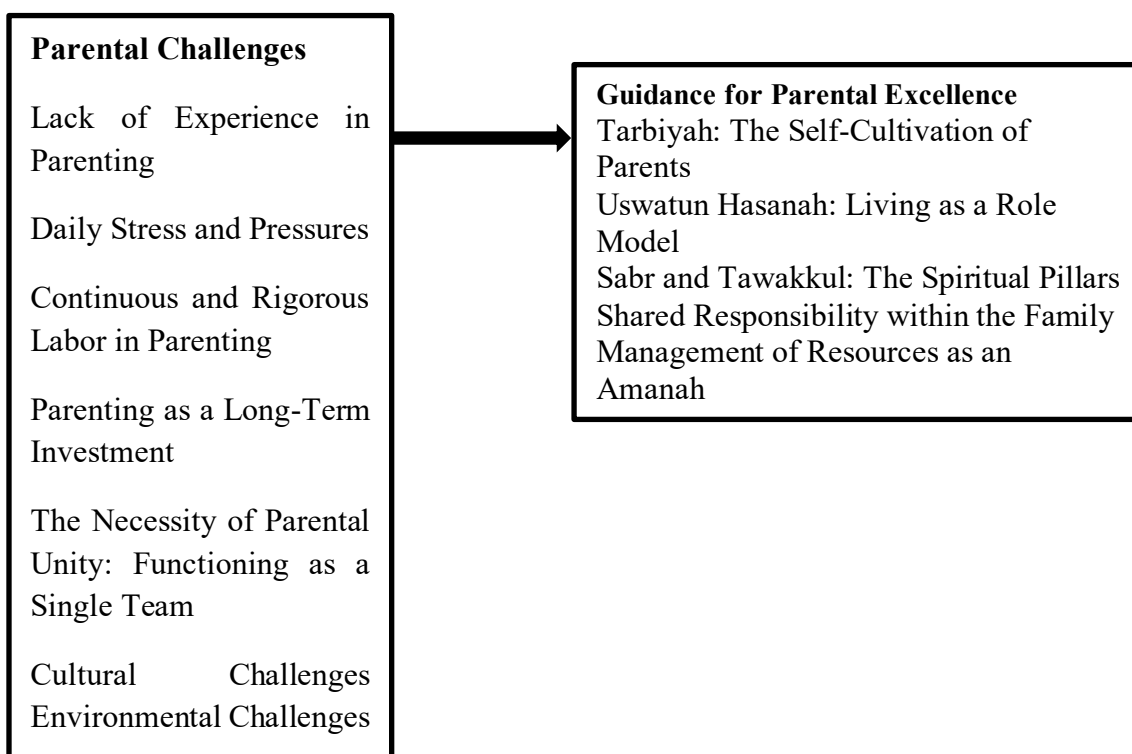
The aforementioned literature reveals that Islamic child rearing has largely been approached through isolated lenses, such as moral development or modern digital challenges. While some studies prioritize challenges in moral and religious identity, others describe the obstacles arising from technological advancement, social media, and modern cultural influences in a fragmented manner. However, there is a distinct lack of research that provides a comprehensive explanation of how parents experience, understand, and navigate these practical daily challenges by integrating an Islamic worldview with contemporary psychological approaches and family theories. Filling this research gap is the central objective of the current study. Consequently, this research is expected to strengthen the intellectual and theoretical foundation for understanding the challenges parents face in Islamic child rearing.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study. It utilizes primary Islamic sources, specifically the Holy Qur'an and Al-Hadith texts, alongside secondary data such as dimensions of previously published research articles, books, and web-based academic content. The study presents an analysis based on theoretical information regarding the challenges parents encounter in child rearing within the framework of Islamic guidance.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Parental Challenges in Child Rearing within Islamic Guidance



The conceptual framework of this study is meticulously designed to elucidate the intricate challenges Muslim parents encounter in child-rearing within the paradigm of Islamic guidance, integrating how these hurdles are experienced, perceived, and managed through a comprehensive socio-spiritual lens. At the first level, the framework identifies specific pedagogical and environmental challenges—such as the digital divide and socio-economic pressures—and details their subsequent impacts on a child's ethical, emotional, and social development, thereby establishing the "problem space" where traditional Islamic mandates intersect with modern external stressors. The second level emphasizes the internal processing of these obstacles, highlighting the central role of religious coping mechanisms where spiritual practices such as *Dua* (supplication), *Sabr* (patience), *Tawakkul* (reliance on Allah), and *Shukr* (gratitude) provide parents with psychological resilience and

mental tranquility, effectively transforming parenting difficulties into meaningful spiritual exercises that facilitate a balanced emotional response.

Progressing to the third level, the study integrates core theoretical foundations from the social sciences—specifically Social Learning Theory, Cognitive Development Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Family Systems Theory—to redefine child-rearing not as an isolated parental task, but as a complex social process shaped by the reciprocal influences of family relationships, environmental systems, and cultural values. Finally, the fourth and fifth levels of this framework demonstrate the profound interconnectivity between the challenges faced, the spiritual strategies employed, and the broader socio-cultural environment, illustrating that the effective synthesis of these elements leads to positive systemic changes within the family unit. Ultimately, this holistic approach ensures the comprehensive development of the child and the sustained well-being of the community, fostering a generation that is both spiritually anchored and socially responsible.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Lack of Experience in Parenting

The lack of prior experience is one of the primary challenges parents face upon the birth of a child. New parents often find themselves without clear knowledge of how to act in diverse and demanding situations. Even if they have acquired certain theoretical ideas, the absence of practical, "hands-on" experience can significantly undermine their self-confidence. Research by Abdulrahman (2025) and Fayzullaeva (2021) likens this phase to "on-the-job training" without a supervisor, where parents must learn through trial and error.

Islamic guidance accepts this lack of experience as a natural human condition. A fundamental premise of the Islamic worldview is that humans are created to grow progressively in knowledge and experience. The Holy Qur'an explicitly points to this developmental journey:

"And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful." (Qur'an, 16:78).

This verse emphasizes that God-given faculties are tools for learning, suggesting that parents are not expected to possess absolute skills or complete experience at the very onset of parenthood (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011). Islam views the lack of experience not as a permanent deficit but as the foundational stage of a lifelong learning process.

Theoretically, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) explains that humans learn not only through direct experience but also by observing and modeling others. In this context, observing experienced parents and seeking their counsel are natural and effective learning pathways. This aligns with the Islamic concept of the "Excellent Model" (Uswatun Hasanah). The Qur'an states:

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often." (Qur'an, 33:21).

This verse indicates that knowledge and experience are cultivated by following the practical examples of those who preceded us. Furthermore, spiritual reliance plays a crucial role in managing the anxieties caused by a lack of experience. As the Qur'an notes:

"...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured." (Qur'an, 13:28).

Psychological studies support this, showing that religious belief systems provide parents with mental fortitude and confidence (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011; Koenig, 2012; Pargament, 1997). Thus, while a lack of experience is an unavoidable challenge, the integration of Islamic guidance with social learning theories transforms this obstacle into a vital opportunity for growth and patience (Abubakar et al., 2020; Lickona, 1991; Nasr, 2009; Nasr, 1989).

Daily Stress and Pressures

Parents frequently experience psychological stress due to the division of labor and differing daily routines based on gender roles. Often, mothers spend the day managing the household while fathers are engaged in work outside. Conflict arises when a mother seeks to go out in the evening for a change of environment while the father seeks rest at home. Failure to understand these reciprocal needs leads to domestic friction and disputes (Altalib et al., 2016; Bensaid, 2021; Ho, 2016).

Islamic guidance perceives these daily pressures as an inherent part of family life. The Qur'an acknowledges the taxing nature of human existence:

"We have certainly created man into hardship." (Qur'an, 90:4).

Based on this, Islam teaches that stress in parental life is unavoidable; however, the methods used to manage this stress determine the stability of the family (Abdulazeez et al., 2025). From a theoretical standpoint, Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978) explains that stress and conflict emerge when roles and expectations among family members are unclear. Consequently, there is an essential need for parents to share responsibilities with mutual understanding and balance. This aligns with the Islamic principle of Mutual Consultation (Mashura) and cooperation, which are the foundations of domestic peace (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011).

Similarly, Bandura's (1986) social theories highlight how the behavior of one family member directly triggers the emotional state and actions of another. If one parent's stress results in a negative reaction, it creates a cycle of tension. Therefore, peaceful communication and "modeling" positive behavior are essential. This is reflected in the Prophetic tradition:

"The most complete of believers in faith are those with the best character, and the best of you are those who are best to their wives." (Tirmidhi, 1082).

This teaching emphasizes that family pressures must be met with mercy and patience. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory explains that family life is directly influenced by the socio-cultural and economic environment. In the Islamic view, this connects to the concept of the *Ummah* (community), where parents should not function in isolation but as part of a supportive social network (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011).

To manage the psychological toll of daily stress, spiritual anchors are vital. The Qur'an offers reassurance:

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained..." (Qur'an, 2:286).

This provides parents with the mental strength and faith that they are not burdened beyond their limits. Psychological research confirms that religious coping mechanisms significantly reduce family stress and enhance overall well-being (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011; Pargament, 1997).

While daily stressors are an unavoidable reality in parental life, Islamic guidance-supported by familial, social, and psychological theories-provides comprehensive methodologies to balance these pressures through patience, mutual understanding, and spiritual steadfastness (Lickona, 1991; Nasr, 2009; Nasr, 1989; Sultan & Awad, 2020).

Continuous and Rigorous Labor in Parenting

Child rearing is not merely an intermittent responsibility but is regarded as a continuous, full-time obligation (Bari, 2002). Unlike professional occupations, this role is devoid of fixed office hours or vacation days; it is a relentless responsibility that spans 24 hours a day, seven days a week, throughout the year. While a marital relationship may legally conclude through divorce, the parent-child bond remains indissoluble. Once an individual transitions into parenthood, it becomes a lifelong commitment (Bari, 2002). Consequently, the fundamental nature of parenting dictates that no other worldly pursuits should obstruct this primary duty (Alvanda et al., 2024).

In this perspective, child rearing functions as an intensive activity requiring constant physical, mental, and emotional labor. Islamic guidance conceptualizes this continuous exertion as a Sacred Trust (*Amanah*) bestowed upon parents. The Holy Qur'an underscores the lifelong nature of this protective duty:

"O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded." (Qur'an, 66:6).

Theoretically, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory explains that child development is not an isolated event but a continuous process shaped by persistent interactions across various environmental levels-family, social systems,

and culture. Within this framework, the perpetual labor of a parent is seen as a natural and necessary constant. Similarly, the Islamic worldview defines human life through the lens of continuous effort, responsibility, and sacrifice (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011).

Furthermore, Bowen's (1978) Family Systems Theory posits that exhaustion or psychological stress experienced by one member can destabilize the entire family structure. To sustain this continuous labor, mutual cooperation, the equitable sharing of responsibilities, and reciprocal support between parents are essential (Rahmi et al., 2021). Islamic tradition provides a practical precedent for this; the Prophet (pbuh) was known to actively engage in domestic chores, demonstrating that parental duties are a shared responsibility rather than a burden placed upon a single individual (Altalib et al., 2016; Rahmi et al., 2021).

Bandura's Social Learning Theory further elucidates that the consistent hard work of parents serves as a primary behavioral model for children. When children observe their parents acting with responsibility and patience, they naturally internalize values of diligence and dedication (Altalib et al., 2016). Scholars like Halstead (2004) and Lickona (1991) emphasize that in the Islamic view, parents must serve as the first and most consistent educators of their children.

To manage the physical and mental fatigue resulting from this incessant labor, spiritual anchors provide necessary fortitude. The Qur'an affirms:

"And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives." (Qur'an, 53:39).

This assurance confirms that there is inherent spiritual merit and reward in continuous effort. Psychological research supports this, indicating that religious conviction and spiritual practices enhance parental resilience and patience. Therefore, while rigorous daily labor is an unavoidable challenge, the integration of Islamic guidance with familial and social theories elevates this exertion to the status of *Ibadah* (worship) and *Amanah* (trust), turning it into a catalyst for moral and spiritual development (Nasr, 2009; Nasr, 1989).

Parenting as a Long-Term Investment

In their research, Naseem and Ahmed (2024) characterize child-rearing as a significant long-term investment that encompasses time, emotional energy, and financial resources. It is a continuous process that progresses at a slow pace, demanding total commitment. It often takes a considerable duration for parents to clearly discern whether their child is developing virtuous traits or manifesting negative behavioral patterns. Furthermore, communicating with young children can be as challenging as interacting with beings of a different species due to their limited cognitive and linguistic developmental stages (Naseem & Ahmed, 2024).

Rahmi et al. (2021) further explain that because children lack fully developed language skills, accurately understanding their needs, feelings, and thoughts

remains a constant challenge for parents. Consequently, parents are often forced to rely on intuition and educated guesswork to interpret their children's states.

Islam views this long-term process not merely as a temporary social role, but as an *Amanah* (sacred trust) assigned to parents by Allah (Alvanda et al., 2024). Parental responsibility is a lifelong duty rather than a short-term activity (Altalib et al., 2016). Therefore, consistent effort and profound patience are fundamental expectations for Muslim parents, even when a child's moral or spiritual growth is not immediately apparent (Alvanda et al., 2024; Altalib et al., 2016).

The Prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*) contains numerous *Hadith* showing the Prophet (pbuh) interacting with children with extreme gentleness, patience, and affection. These teachings emphasize the necessity for parents to adopt a long-term perspective, even in situations where immediate understanding with the child seems impossible (Altalib et al., 2016). Bensaid (2021) notes that the core of the Islamic parental outlook is to view a child's growth like a seed-sowing the effort now and patiently awaiting the fruit in the future.

Theoretically, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory affirms that child development is shaped by long-term interactions across various environmental levels, including family, society, and culture. This theory confirms that while parental efforts may not yield immediate results, they will eventually manifest in the child's personality and behavior. Similarly, Bowen (1978) suggests that patience and continuous emotional support act as long-term investments influencing the family system. Bandura (1977, 1986) further explains that consistent parental behavior serves as a long-term behavioral model; when parents act with integrity without expecting instant changes, children eventually internalize these values. Thus, Islamic guidance and psychological theories converge to present this challenge as a spiritual and worldly endeavor rewarded by both character development and divine merit (Koenig, 2012; Nasr, 2009; Nasr, 1989; Pargament, 1997).

The work of parenting is inherently inflexible. Once a child is born, the responsibility for their care cannot be postponed, rescheduled, or ignored; it becomes an unavoidable and immediate obligation (Ali et al., 2024). Children possess their own biological clocks, and their developmental stages do not adjust to suit parental convenience or preferences. Consequently, parents are compelled to adapt themselves to the developmental needs of their children (Bari, 2002).

Since parents can neither delay nor accelerate a child's natural growth, the best approach is to align oneself with the natural pace of development. In this context, patience becomes an indispensable trait of the parental role (Bari, 2002). Islam views this "inflexibility" as part of the divine order (*Qadar*). A child's birth and developmental stages are seen as part of a divine arrangement, and parents are expected to prioritize the child's needs over their personal time management preferences (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011; Abdulazeez et al., 2025).

The Prophet (pbuh) demonstrated this by adapting his approach based on the age and emotional state of children. While child development follows a fixed natural path, parents are encouraged to cultivate psychological flexibility and patience (*Sabr*) (Chapra, 2008). Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Bowen (1978) both emphasize that the family system must adjust to the child's developmental timeline rather than vice versa. When parents accept this natural speed and regulate their own behavior accordingly, children naturally develop self-discipline (Halstead, 2004; Lickona, 1991).

While parents are primary influencers, they are not the *only* factor in a child's development. Kabir and Islam (2024) note that in a rapidly changing world, parents must remain vigilant as they compete with technological advancements, television, the internet, smartphones, and online gaming for their children's attention. These external forces often create an environment where parents no longer have total control and must "compete" to guide their children.

Sultan and Awad (2022) identify additional ecological factors-such as geographical location, family size, social status, and religious or ethnic ties-that play a significant role in development. In this crowded field of influences, Islam views the parent as the "guardian of the trust" (*Amanah*). Rather than attempting to completely isolate children from the world, the parental responsibility is to build the spiritual and moral resilience necessary for the child to navigate these influences (Abdulazeez et al., 2025). This requires parents to guide their children's external experiences through the lens of Islamic values, ensuring that the *Amanah* is protected despite the surrounding environmental pressures (Abdulrahman, 2025; Ali et al., 2024).

Parental duties are inherently characterized by a lack of flexibility. Once a child is born, the responsibility for their care becomes an immediate and unavoidable obligation that cannot be postponed, rescheduled, or ignored (Ali et al., 2024). Children possess their own "biological clocks," meaning their developmental stages do not adjust to suit parental convenience, professional schedules, or personal preferences. Consequently, parents find themselves in a position where they must adapt their own lives to the non-negotiable needs of the child's growth phases (Bari, 2002).

Since parents can neither delay nor accelerate a child's natural trajectory, the most effective approach is to align oneself with the natural pace of development. In this context, patience (*Sabr*) becomes an indispensable functional trait of the parental role (Bari, 2002). Islam views this "inflexibility" as part of the Divine Decree (*Qadar*); a child's birth and developmental milestones are seen as part of a divine order, and parents are expected to prioritize these over personal time management (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011; Abdulazeez et al., 2025).

The Prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*) demonstrates this through the Prophet's (pbuh) example of adapting his approach based on the specific age and emotional

maturity of children. While development follows a fixed path, parents are encouraged to cultivate psychological flexibility. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that development is a continuous process that cannot be altered by external whims. Similarly, Bowen (1978) suggests that the family system must adjust to the child's developmental timeline to maintain stability. When parents accept this natural speed and regulate their own behavior, children naturally develop self-discipline (Halstead, 2004; Lickona, 1991).

While parents are primary influencers, they are not the sole factor in a child's development. Kabir and Islam (2024) note that in a hyper-connected world, parents must remain vigilant as they compete with rapid technological advancements, social media, smartphones, and online gaming for their children's attention. These external forces often create an environment where parents feel they have lost total control and must actively "compete" to guide their children's values.

Furthermore, Sultan and Awad (2022) identify additional ecological factors—such as geographical location, family size, social status, and religious ties—that play significant roles. In this crowded field of influences, Islam defines the parent as the "guardian of the trust" (*Amanah*). Rather than attempting to completely isolate children from society, the parental responsibility is to build the spiritual and moral resilience (*Taqwa*) necessary for the child to navigate these influences safely (Abdulazeez et al., 2025). This requires parents to interpret external experiences through the lens of Islamic values, ensuring the child's identity remains anchored despite environmental pressures (Abdulrahman, 2025; Ali et al., 2024).

Halstead (2004) argues that parenting is not a single skill but a complex, multidimensional process requiring the integration of various domains of knowledge—including psychology, economics, medicine, education, and social sciences. However, many parents struggle to synthesize these fields into a practical daily routine, making the "integration of domains" a significant modern challenge (Halstead, 2004).

As Ho (2016) suggests, parenting is both an art and a science. In contemporary society, parents often rely on "natural experience" or "common sense," which leaves gaps in areas like emotional management, financial planning, and psychological understanding. This lack of integrated knowledge leads to significant stress in a fast-changing global environment. High academic qualification in a specific field (like science or arts) does not automatically guarantee success in the "science of parenting," highlighting a gap between general education and functional parenting skills (Ho, 2016). Effective communication remains the primary "bridge" between these domains, yet it remains a difficult skill for many to master (Bensaid, 2021).

From an Islamic perspective, this is addressed through the concept of *Tarbiyah*, which emphasizes a holistic approach to the child's faith (*Iman*), character (*Akhlaq*), intellect, and physical health (Aziz et al., 2022). While this mirrors Bronfenbrenner's (1979) holistic ecological approach, Islam adds a central spiritual dimension. In

today's digital age, maintaining this balance is increasingly difficult. The preservation of the child's intellect and faith-aligned with the Higher Objectives of Sharia (*Maqasid al-Shari'ah*)-requires parents to be more than just providers; they must be spiritual compasses and moral guides amidst the noise of modern media (Memon et al., 2024; Fayzullaeva, 2021).

The Necessity of Parental Unity: Functioning as a Single Team

According to Abdulrahman (2025), the ability of a father and mother to function as a cohesive team is paramount in child-rearing, yet achieving this in practice remains a significant challenge. For parents to act in unison, they must operate with a high degree of synchronization and mutual coordination. This requires individuals to prepare themselves not merely as marital partners, but specifically for their future roles as collaborative father and mother figures (Abdulrahman, 2025).

Effective parenting extends beyond providing love and security; it demands that both parents possess shared knowledge, consistent skills, and a unified positive attitude. Because children are in a state of constant growth and transition, a deep and continuous level of cooperation between parents is required to successfully guide them from infancy through maturity (Bari, 2002).

Within the framework of Islamic guidance, child-rearing is never relegated to a single individual; rather, it is defined as a collective responsibility shared by both parents. The Holy Qur'an frames the family as an integrated system of moral and spiritual discipline (Bari, 2002). According to the principle of *Tarbiyah*, a child's development-encompassing faith (*Iman*), character (*Akhlaq*), intellect, and daily conduct-is a holistic process that requires a synchronized environment (Karimullah et al., 2023).

Research indicates that when parents lack unity and synchronization, this holistic development is compromised (Al Talib, 2016). If the father and mother follow conflicting values, different moral codes, or opposing disciplinary approaches, it creates profound psychological confusion in the child's moral development. This lack of a "united front" is identified as a core challenge in contemporary parenting (Al Talib, 2016; Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011).

The Prophet (pbuh) explicitly confirmed this shared accountability in the well-known *Hadith*:

"Every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges... the man is a guardian in his family and is responsible for his charges; a woman is a guardian in her husband's home and is responsible for her charges." (Bukhari, 5188).

From an Islamic psychological perspective, a lack of coordination between these two guardians can lead to a sense of insecurity, chronic stress, and behavioral complications in children (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011).

Furthermore, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, when viewed alongside the Islamic concept of the Excellent Model (*Uswatun Hasanah*), underscores the necessity for parents to exhibit consistent behavior and morality. The Qur'an states:

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern..." (Qur'an, 33:21).

This emphasizes the weight of the example being set. When parents are disunited, children are confronted with contradictory models, which disrupts the internalization of values. Consequently, the failure of parents to function as a single team is recognized as a fundamental obstacle that hinders the successful implementation of Islamic parental guidance (Bensaid, 2021; Rahmi et al., 2021). Therefore, fostering parental cooperation is not just a social preference but a foundational requirement rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah to ensure a balanced upbringing.

Cultural Challenges

Family structures, particularly extended systems involving grandparents and other relatives, play a dual role in child development. While providing a support network, these structures can exert significant "family pressure" and stress on parents due to conflicting upbringing styles (Sultan & Awad, 2022). Traditional parenting methods passed down through generations may clash with modern psychological understandings of emotional well-being, often creating a "generational tug-of-war" (Siyana et al., 2023). Furthermore, societal expectations regarding a child's academic and behavioral success often place immense psychological burdens on parents, as the child's performance is frequently viewed as a public metric of parental competence (Siyana et al., 2023).

In the Islamic context, parenting is not merely a cultural tradition but a process rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, emphasizing faith (*Iman*), character (*Akhlaq*), and intellect (Abdulrahman, 2025). When cultural practices conflict with Islamic values, divine guidance serves as the ultimate benchmark, as stated in the Qur'an: *"And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger"* (42:10). The Prophet (pbuh) prioritized mercy over rigid cultural norms, stating that those who do not show mercy to the young are not of his followers (Abu Dawud, 4943), thereby reinforcing that a child's rights and emotional health take precedence over harmful social traditions (Al Talib, 2016; Karimullah et al., 2023).

Parental responsibility involves the expert management of resources that cannot be fully delegated. Bari (2002) emphasizes that managing a household and raising children requires a strategic allocation of love, time, and attention. Historical precedents, such as state-centric upbringing in ancient Sparta or Soviet Russia, have demonstrated that moving the responsibility away from the natural parents often results in developmental failure (Abdulrahman, 2025).

Islam categorizes children and wealth as a trial (*Fitnah*) and a sacred trust (*Amanah*):

"Know that your properties and your children are but a trial and that Allah has with Him a great reward." (Qur'an, 8:28).

This stewardship requires parents to balance their time, energy, and financial resources with precision. Gaps in parental presence or mismanagement of these resources can lead to significant moral and spiritual voids (Abdullah & Khan, 2017). The Prophet (pbuh) reminded believers that every guardian will be questioned regarding their charges (Bukhari, 2554), highlighting that the "management" of parenting is a fundamental prerequisite for spiritual and worldly success (Bari, 2005; Chapra, 2008).

A critical psychological challenge is the discrepancy between how parents view their guidance and how children perceive it. While a parent may intend to offer "protection," a child may perceive the same action as "authoritarian control" or a threat to their autonomy (Siyana et al., 2023). Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory suggests that children form worldviews based on their subjective experiences; thus, if parental interaction is perceived as overly restrictive, it may trigger rebellion rather than the internalization of values (Ali et al., 2024).

In the Islamic worldview, parents are not "controllers" but compassionate guides. Abu-Raiya & Pargament (2011) note that a child's subjective experience of their parents has a greater impact on their behavior than the parents' actual intent. To bridge this gap, Islam encourages open dialogue (*Shura*), mercy, and patience to ensure the child feels the love behind the discipline (Halstead, 2004; Lickona, 1991).

Negligence in providing clear, balanced explanations can lead to "cognitive distortions" in children (Syed, 2014). If parents provide biased or fear-based explanations-such as teaching a child to fear animals or hate individuals based on their mistakes-the child may develop an arrogant or uncompassionate worldview (Rahmi et al., 2021).

The Qur'an (16:90) commands justice (*Adl*) and excellence (*Ihsan*) in all conduct. Therefore, the knowledge parents pass down must be filtered through these principles. Halstead (2004) argues that parenting is a holistic educational process that reshapes thought and character. If parents are careless in their explanations, they risk distorting the child's moral development, leading to social fragmentation and a loss of human dignity (Abdul Bari, 2002; Sultan & Awad, 2022).

Parenting in Islamic guidance is an integrated process of physical, intellectual, and spiritual development (Fayzullaeva, 2021). By critically evaluating cultural norms against the Sunnah, strategically managing resources, bridging perceptual gaps through empathy, and providing justice-based explanations, parents can fulfill their divine responsibility and ensure the balanced development of their children (Bensaid, 2021; Rahmi et al., 2021).

Environmental Challenges

Based on the extensive research and Islamic principles provided, child-rearing is a profoundly integrated social process that extends far beyond individual family dynamics to encompass a wide range of external ecological factors. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory illustrates that a child's development is the direct result of reciprocal interactions between the family unit and the broader environment, including parental professional stress, economic structures, and cultural frameworks. Environmental stressors such as workload, financial instability, and lack of social support significantly impact a parent's mental state and decision-making capacity (Rahmi et al., 2021). From an Islamic perspective, while the Qur'an acknowledges these hardships-such as hunger and loss of wealth-as inevitable divine trials (2:155), it places a firm responsibility on parents to maintain patience (*Sabr*) and strategic planning to ensure the child's physical, educational, and spiritual needs are met, even amidst economic or natural crises (Alvanda et al., 2024; Kabir et al., 2024).

A critical challenge in this ecological journey is the formation of a stable and positive self-concept in children, which is increasingly threatened by modern media and consumerist cultures. Adolescent girls and young children often internalize unrealistic beauty standards promoted by social media and celebrities, leading to fragile self-esteem and "low self-worth" (Bensaid, 2021). Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains that because children naturally imitate the models they observe, exposure to artificial lifestyles creates a psychological disconnect from their true identity. Islam counters this by grounding human value in *Taqwa* (God-consciousness) and internal character (*Akhlaq*) rather than external appearance or material wealth (Koenig, 2012). Parents, therefore, act as the primary shield against these distortions, tasked with fostering resilience and a sense of dignity rooted in the child's natural state, or *Fitra* (Abdulrahman, 2025; Lickona, 1991).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research highlights that parenting in the contemporary era is a visionary task that requires a holistic integration of education, spirituality, and emotional intelligence. It is not merely about physical maintenance but about building the moral and intellectual fabric of a new generation. By identifying these multidimensional challenges-from economic work-load to the perceptual gaps between parent and child-and applying Islamic strategies of mercy, dialogue, and trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*), parents can navigate these trials effectively. Ultimately, a well-supported and informed parental unit is the foundational requirement for the progress of the family and the broader society, ensuring that future generations are equipped with the knowledge, discipline, and spiritual grounding necessary to thrive (Abdulazeez et al., 2025; Rahmi et al., 2021).

Parenting is not an isolated familial activity but a complex social process deeply integrated with external environmental factors (Rahmi et al., 2021). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, a child's development is the result of reciprocal interactions between the family, the parents' professional lives, social structures, and economic-cultural frameworks.

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