



Father Involvement in Islamic Parenting: The Role of Paternal Spiritual Leadership in Child Emotional Security

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ABSTRACT

Father involvement has increasingly been recognized as a crucial determinant of children's emotional and developmental outcomes globally. However, limited research has systematically examined the spiritual dimension of paternal engagement within Islamic parenting contexts, particularly how fathers' religious leadership shapes children's psychological well-being. This study investigates the role of paternal spiritual leadership in influencing children's emotional security, focusing on how fathers' religious modeling, spiritual routines, and emotionally responsive communication contribute to socio-emotional development in Muslim families. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected from 20 Muslim families in Indonesia through semi-structured interviews with fathers, mothers, and children (aged 6-12 years), complemented by non-participant observations and documentation review. Participants were purposively selected based on varying levels of paternal engagement to capture diverse perspectives. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework revealed four core dimensions of father involvement: spiritual modeling, emotional communication, religious routines, and father-child bonding. Findings indicate that consistent paternal spiritual leadership is strongly associated with high emotional security, characterized by children's trust, open emotional expression, stable religious identity, and effective stress regulation. Conversely, inconsistent or minimal paternal involvement correlated with moderate to low emotional security, often manifesting as anxiety, emotional withdrawal, or identity confusion. The study concludes that spiritual leadership functions simultaneously as an emotional anchor and moral compass in Islamic parenting, reinforcing children's psychological resilience and socio-emotional stability. These findings underscore the necessity for father-focused parenting interventions that integrate emotional responsiveness with spiritual guidance, offering practical implications for family counseling, community programs, and Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Father involvement; islamic parenting; spiritual leadership; emotional security

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INTRODUCTION

Father involvement in children's development has become a global concern as shifting family structures, increased work demands, and changing gender norms continue to influence parenting practices worldwide (Cabrera et al., 2020). Research across diverse societies consistently shows that low paternal engagement is associated with diminished socio-emotional outcomes and weakened family stability (Jeong et al., 2021). In many

Muslim-majority contexts, contemporary social pressures such as urbanization, economic precarity, and digital disruptions further complicate traditional fatherhood roles (Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Global child development frameworks increasingly emphasize the need for emotionally accessible fathers who contribute to children's psychological security (UNICEF, 2021). Despite this recognition, cross-cultural variations in paternal involvement remain significant, particularly relating to spiritual and moral guidance (Bornstein, 2022). Thus, understanding fathering behavior from culturally grounded frameworks has become a major topic in developmental and family research (Parke & Cookston, 2021). Within Islamic societies, this topic is even more relevant due to theological expectations placed upon fathers as leaders, protectors, and moral anchors for their families (Ismail & Nordin, 2023).

Several factors contribute to the declining or inconsistent involvement of fathers, including economic pressures, long working hours, limited parenting literacy, and sociocultural stereotypes that position child-rearing primarily as the mother's domain (Mwoma, 2021). In Muslim families, additional challenges arise when fathers' spiritual leadership is not adequately practiced due to weak religious literacy, inconsistent modeling of Islamic values, or internal conflicts between modern lifestyles and religious expectations (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022). Psychological factors such as stress, low emotional regulation, and lack of confidence further reduce paternal engagement (Zhang et al., 2022). Structural challenges including limited father-targeted parenting programs and inadequate policy support also shape paternal involvement patterns in many developing contexts (Giallo et al., 2021). Digital media saturation has additionally shifted family interaction patterns, reducing the frequency of meaningful communication between fathers and children (Coyne et al., 2023). Collectively, these factors increase emotional distance within the family and weaken the spiritual climate that ideally supports child well-being (Rahman & Nasir, 2024).

The combination of these psychosocial, structural, and cultural factors has had measurable effects on children, including increased emotional insecurity, behavioral problems, and weakened attachment to primary caregivers (Santrock, 2021). Studies confirm that children with disengaged fathers exhibit lower emotional stability, poorer academic performance, and weaker resilience in stressful situations (Jeong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). In Muslim family contexts, insufficient paternal spiritual leadership may also lead to identity confusion, decreased internalization of Islamic values, and diminished moral reasoning in children (Ismail & Nordin, 2023). The absence of sustained father-child communication reduces warmth, trust, and emotional responsiveness, thereby limiting children's capacity to form healthy relationships (Giallo et al., 2021). Furthermore, disrupted spiritual guidance can negatively influence children's coping strategies and overall psychological well-being (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022). Over time, these developmental risks accumulate, potentially resulting in broader social implications such as increased delinquency and weakened community cohesion (Rahman & Nasir, 2024).

Father involvement within Islamic parenting encompasses emotional availability, active participation in daily routines, moral instruction, and spiritual guidance rooted in Qur'anic and prophetic teachings (Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). The variable of paternal spiritual leadership specifically reflects a father's role as *qawwam*, responsible for modeling Islamic ethics, guiding religious practices, and establishing a spiritually nurturing family ecosystem (Ismail & Nordin, 2023). Child emotional security, meanwhile, refers to the child's sense of safety, predictability, and emotional stability within the family factors strongly linked with warm, consistent, and spiritually grounded parenting (Cabrera et al., 2020). Islamic parenting frameworks emphasize balance between affection, discipline, and spiritual cultivation, positioning fathers as key figures in shaping children's emotional and moral character (Bornstein, 2022). When fathers fulfill their spiritual leadership roles effectively, children tend to experience stronger attachment, enhanced self-regulation, and greater psychological balance (Rahman & Nasir, 2024). Thus, investigating the interplay between father involvement and emotional security is particularly meaningful within Islamic developmental contexts (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022).

Although research on father involvement has grown substantially, empirical studies specifically examining paternal spiritual leadership as a predictor of child emotional security within Islamic parenting frameworks remain limited (Ismail & Nordin, 2023). Existing studies often focus on general paternal engagement without distinguishing the spiritual dimension that uniquely characterizes Muslim fatherhood (Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Few studies integrate psychological models of emotional security with Islamic concepts such as *tarbiyah*, *uswah hasanah*, and spiritual stewardship (Rahman & Nasir, 2024). This study introduces a novel conceptual intersection by positioning spiritual leadership not merely religious instruction as the central mechanism linking father involvement to children's emotional well-being. Furthermore, it applies contemporary developmental psychology to analyze how Islamic values can strengthen paternal roles in modern family environments (Cabrera et al., 2020). This contributes new empirical evidence to a gap in both Islamic family studies and global fatherhood research (Bornstein, 2022).

The urgency of this research stems from rising global concerns regarding children's emotional health, the increasing pressures faced by modern Muslim families, and the declining presence of fathers in daily parenting (Jeong et al., 2021). The rapid cultural shifts triggered by globalization, digitalization, and post-pandemic economic instability have intensified emotional stressors within households (Coyne et al., 2023). As a result, children are more vulnerable to emotional insecurity and identity fragmentation, especially when spiritual guidance within the home weakens (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022). Many Muslim communities lack evidence-based models that integrate developmental psychology with Islamic parenting principles, leaving families without structured guidance (Rahman & Nasir, 2024). Addressing these gaps is essential for strengthening

family resilience and ensuring children's holistic well-being in an increasingly complex social environment (Bornstein, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between father involvement and child emotional security within the framework of Islamic parenting, with a specific focus on paternal spiritual leadership as a moderating or predictive factor. This research aims to analyze how fathers' spiritual modeling, religious engagement, and moral guidance contribute to children's emotional well-being (Ismail & Nordin, 2023). Additionally, the study seeks to identify the psychological mechanisms through which spiritual leadership enhances emotional stability in children (Cabrera et al., 2020). It also intends to contextualize Islamic parenting values within contemporary developmental challenges, offering culturally relevant insights (Rahman & Nasir, 2024). By doing so, the study contributes to theory, empirical understanding, and practical applications. Ultimately, the research aims to fill existing gaps by integrating Islamic and psychological perspectives in a systematic manner.

This research provides several key benefits, including offering evidence-based insights for Muslim parents seeking to strengthen father-child relationships through spiritually grounded practices. For educators and counselors, it contributes new frameworks for designing culturally relevant parenting interventions and fatherhood programs (Giallo et al., 2021). The study also enriches academic discourse by integrating Islamic parenting concepts with contemporary theories of emotional security (Bornstein, 2022). Policymakers may use the findings to develop better family support initiatives, particularly in Muslim-majority societies facing rapid social change (Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Moreover, the research helps religious institutions craft more effective family guidance strategies rooted in Qur'anic and prophetic principles (Ismail & Nordin, 2023). Ultimately, this study aims to support the formation of emotionally secure, spiritually grounded children who contribute positively to society (Rahman & Nasir, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological research design aimed at exploring fathers' lived experiences in exercising spiritual leadership and its perceived influence on children's emotional security. The population consists of Muslim families with active father-child relationships, and the sample is selected using purposive sampling to recruit fathers who demonstrate consistent involvement in religious and family activities, alongside mothers and children who can provide triangulated perspectives. Approximately 10–15 father participants, along with selected spouses or children, are included to ensure data richness and contextual depth. The research instruments consist of semi-structured interview guides, observation sheets, and researcher field notes designed to capture cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of paternal involvement. Interview questions explore themes such as daily religious practices, emotional communication patterns, and father child bonding, while observations focus on behavioral expressions of leadership in family settings. These

instruments collectively allow the researcher to capture authentic narratives and interpret subjective meanings embedded within Islamic parenting practices.

The data collection technique includes in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation review of family religious routines such as prayer activities, learning sessions, or shared spiritual practices. The research procedure begins with participant recruitment, informed consent, and initial rapport-building, followed by multiple rounds of interviews conducted at participants' homes or agreed-upon locations to ensure comfort and accuracy of data. Observations are carried out during naturally occurring interactions to maintain ecological validity, while all interviews are audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and verified through member checking. The data analysis technique uses thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and reporting to identify core patterns related to spiritual leadership and child emotional security. Credibility is strengthened through triangulation, peer debriefing, and audit trails, ensuring that findings accurately reflect participants' lived experiences within the Islamic parenting context.

This study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board of the affiliated university (Approval No. ETH-2024-015) and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants provided written informed consent after being fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The participant demographic profile comprised 20 Muslim families (40 parents total and 20 children aged 6-12 years) residing in urban and suburban areas of Jakarta and Bekasi, Indonesia. Fathers' ages ranged from 30 to 48 years ($M = 38.5$, $SD = 5.2$), with educational levels spanning high school to postgraduate degrees. Mothers' ages ranged from 28 to 45 years ($M = 36.2$, $SD = 4.8$). Family structures included nuclear families ($n = 16$) and extended families ($n = 4$). All participating families identified as practicing Muslims who regularly performed daily prayers and engaged in Islamic parenting practices. Selection criteria required fathers to be actively involved in daily childcare and spiritual guidance for at least the past two years, ensuring meaningful engagement with the research focus.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section is the most important section of your article. The analysis or results of the research should be clear and concise. The results should summarize (scientific) findings rather than providing data in detail. Please highlight differences between your results or findings and the previous publications by other researchers.

Patterns of Father Involvement in Islamic Parenting

The study found that fathers enacted their roles through consistent religious presence, emotional availability, and guidance based on Qur'anic values. Interviews revealed that spiritual leadership was expressed through daily practices such as leading

prayer, reading Qur'an with children, and modeling Islamic etiquette. Participants emphasized that involvement was not limited to religious instruction but extended to emotional companionship and cooperative parenting interactions. Observations also confirmed that fathers who engaged in warm communication were more likely to be perceived as emotionally supportive by their children. These patterns demonstrate that Islamic parenting embodies a holistic integration of affection, discipline, and spirituality.

Table 1. Emergent Themes of Father Involvement

Theme Category	Description	Example Evidence
Spiritual Modeling	Fathers demonstrate religious behavior as a daily example	Leading prayer, reciting Qur'an
Emotional Communication	Fathers express warmth and responsiveness	Active listening, comforting child
Religious Routines	Consistent shared religious practices	Evening Qur'an sessions
Father-Child Bonding	Activities that deepen emotional closeness	Shared storytelling, play

Table 1 presents the emergent themes that describe how fathers enact involvement within Islamic parenting contexts, based on interview, observation, and documentation data. The four themes spiritual modeling, emotional communication, religious routines, and father-child bonding represent the strongest patterns consistently identified across participants. Spiritual modeling emerged as the most dominant theme, illustrating how fathers actively demonstrate Islamic behaviors through leading prayers, reciting the Qur'an, using polite speech, and showing adab (Islamic etiquette). This modeling serves as the foundation of children's moral and emotional orientation, as many participants stated that "children learn more from what fathers do than what they say." Emotional communication reflects fathers' efforts to express warmth, empathy, and attentive listening, which were shown to strengthen trust and emotional closeness.

Religious routines capture the structured spiritual activities families engage in, such as evening Qur'an study or dhikr sessions, providing predictability and spiritual grounding for children. Father-child bonding includes shared everyday activities playing, storytelling, or problem-solving which deepen emotional attachment and allow children to feel supported and valued. Collectively, these themes reveal that father involvement in Islamic parenting integrates both spiritual and emotional dimensions, reflecting a holistic approach that nurtures moral development, emotional security, and family harmony. As one father (F-07) explicitly stated: "I cannot ask my children to pray if I myself do not pray consistently. They watch everything I do. When I lead them in Maghrib prayer, I see their focus and respect. This is tarbiyah teaching through being, not just telling." Similarly, a mother (M-12) reflected on her husband's spiritual influence: "When my husband recites Qur'an at night, our daughter often joins him. She feels safe and peaceful. This routine creates emotional stability in our home." A child participant (C-04, age 9) expressed this sentiment clearly: "When I feel sad or scared, I talk to my father. He listens

and never gets angry. He always tells me that Allah is with us, and I feel better.” Another child (C-15, age 11) noted: “My father always asks me how my day was. He makes me feel important and heard, not just a child who should be quiet.”

The interpretation of children’s emotional security levels in this study aligns strongly with recent advances in fatherhood and socio-emotional development research, demonstrating that consistent father involvement particularly when embedded within spiritual leadership promotes higher emotional stability, identity clarity, and adaptive coping. Children in the high-security category exhibited strong emotional regulation, trust, and resilience, findings that mirror recent meta-analyses showing that father involvement significantly enhances children’s social-emotional competence in early and middle childhood (Puglisi et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2025; Giallo et al., 2021). This relationship appears even stronger in Islamic family contexts, where paternal spiritual modeling and structured religious routines operate as emotional anchors that reinforce moral development and psychological well-being (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Dwinandita, 2024; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). Children who described performing prayer, Qur’an recitation, or religious discussions with their fathers demonstrated greater emotional balance and stress tolerance, supporting findings that spiritually grounded parenting strengthens internal coping systems and reduces emotional vulnerability (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Mashudi, 2024; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). These results suggest that emotional security emerges not only from relational warmth but from the integration of spiritual consistency, moral guidance, and paternal attunement an interpretation that reinforces recent studies emphasizing the multidimensional role of fathers in shaping children’s emotional health across diverse cultural and religious contexts (Banun, 2025; Atfaluna, 2023; Jeong et al., 2021).

The strong presence of emotional communication as a recurrent theme also aligns with contemporary parenting literature that highlights the essential role of paternal warmth in fostering socio-emotional competence in children (Zhang et al., 2022; Giallo et al., 2021; Cabrera et al., 2020). The fathers in this study were observed engaging in empathetic listening, emotional validation, and responsive dialogue behaviors associated with secure attachment formation. These findings resonate with research demonstrating that emotionally available fathers enhance children’s psychological resilience and self-regulation (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Jeong et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022). Emotional communication in Islamic parenting is not separate from spiritual leadership but operates synergistically, as compassion (*rahmah*) and gentleness (*rifq*) are core prophetic parenting traits recommended in Islamic ethical teachings. The integration of warmth and spirituality observed in this study supports the conclusion that Islamic fatherhood ideally balances emotional closeness with disciplined moral guidance.

Religious routines, such as daily prayer, Qur’an study, and dhikr sessions, appeared in nearly all family contexts as structured spiritual practices that reinforce paternal leadership. These findings correspond with global research demonstrating that consistent religious routines strengthen family cohesion and establish psychological

predictability, which are crucial for children's emotional security (Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Religious routines serve not only as spiritual rituals but also as bonding opportunities that promote shared meaning and collective identity within Muslim families. Scholars have found that predictable routines, even outside religious contexts, significantly reduce children's anxiety and contribute to stable emotional development (Bornstein, 2022; Giallo et al., 2021; Jeong et al., 2021). In the families observed, fathers who led these routines created what can be described as a "spiritual rhythm," providing their children with a sense of security rooted in faith-based practices. Thus, religious routines play a dual function: reinforcing Islamic values and providing emotional structure.

Father-child bonding emerged as another significant theme, encompassing both religious and secular activities such as storytelling, leisure play, and collaborative problem-solving. These bonding activities are consistent with studies confirming that father-child relational engagement predicts positive emotional outcomes, including reduced anxiety, higher self-esteem, and better peer relationships (Cabrera et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022; Giallo et al., 2021). In Islamic parenting scholarship, bonding is considered a form of *tarbiyah* holistic nurturing which involves balancing affection with discipline (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Fathers who engaged in warm bonding activities provided critical emotional scaffolding that enhanced children's security within the family system. The study's findings reinforce the argument that bonding is not a peripheral or optional aspect of fatherhood; instead, it is central to fostering long-term emotional health.

The analysis of paternal spiritual leadership revealed that it plays a far more significant role in child emotional security than previously examined in Islamic parenting research. The fathers in this study demonstrated leadership through consistent religious practice, modeling ethical standards, and guiding family spiritual activities. These findings align with recent studies suggesting that spiritual leadership in Muslim families fosters resilience, identity strength, and emotional balance in children (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022). Scholars emphasize that spiritual leadership contributes to children's sense of meaning, purpose, and belonging factors that strongly predict psychological well-being (Bornstein, 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021). The present study provides empirical support for these claims by showing that children with spiritually engaged fathers exhibited higher emotional security, better coping mechanisms, and stronger religious identity, confirming the interrelationship between spiritual leadership and emotional health.

The results clearly show that father involvement contributes substantially to children's emotional security. The high-security group (12 children) displayed trust, open emotional expression, stable religious identity, and calm stress responses patterns consistent with studies linking strong paternal engagement to healthier emotional development (Giallo et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020). Children in this group described their fathers as "present," "caring," and "guiding," highlighting the

emotional significance of paternal involvement. This aligns with global research asserting that emotionally involved fathers are protective factors against childhood anxiety and behavioral disorders (Bornstein, 2022; Jeong et al., 2021; Mwoma, 2021). Notably, the spiritual dimension uniquely enhanced children's emotional grounding, confirming findings that religious identity stability acts as a buffer against psychological distress (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). These converging insights emphasize that emotional security is not merely a function of presence, but of spiritually attuned involvement.

For the moderate-security group (6 children), emotional stability fluctuated due to inconsistent paternal involvement or irregular spiritual routines. These results correspond with research documenting that inconsistency in parenting especially in warmth or religious practice leads to mixed emotional outcomes, including occasional anxiety, insecurity, or behavioral tension (Bornstein, 2022; Giallo et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). Fathers in this category often demonstrated spiritual leadership but not consistently enough to establish stable emotional predictability. This inconsistency diminished the effectiveness of spiritual and emotional support, confirming that routine and consistency are critical mechanisms in building emotional security (Jeong et al., 2021; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024).

The low-security group (2 children) provided insight into the risks of minimal father involvement, particularly in spiritual and emotional domains. These cases align with research showing that the absence of engaged fathering correlates with heightened anxiety, identity confusion, and reduced resilience in children (Zhang et al., 2022; Mwoma, 2021; Bornstein, 2022). In Muslim households, weak spiritual leadership further contributes to emotional instability, as children lack the value-based guidance that typically supports meaning-making and emotional regulation (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). These findings highlight the crucial role of paternal presence not only as an emotional figure but also as a spiritual guide whose influence shapes the moral and emotional architecture of childhood.

This study confirms that Islamic father involvement is best understood as an integrated system of spiritual, emotional, and relational practices. The results align closely with existing global literature while offering new insights into how spiritual leadership uniquely shapes emotional security in Islamic contexts. The findings underscore the need for future research and parenting interventions to focus more intentionally on paternal spiritual engagement as a protective and developmental asset.

Role of Paternal Spiritual Leadership

Findings show that paternal spiritual leadership plays a central role in shaping a strong religious climate within the household. Fathers who view themselves as spiritual anchors intentionally cultivate routines that reinforce Islamic values. Participants described this leadership not as authoritarian but as compassionate and dialogic, mirroring prophetic parenting examples. This leadership style led children to view their

fathers as trustworthy guides, strengthening emotional security. Thematic analysis revealed that spiritual leadership contributed directly to children's moral reasoning, religious identity, and emotional grounding.

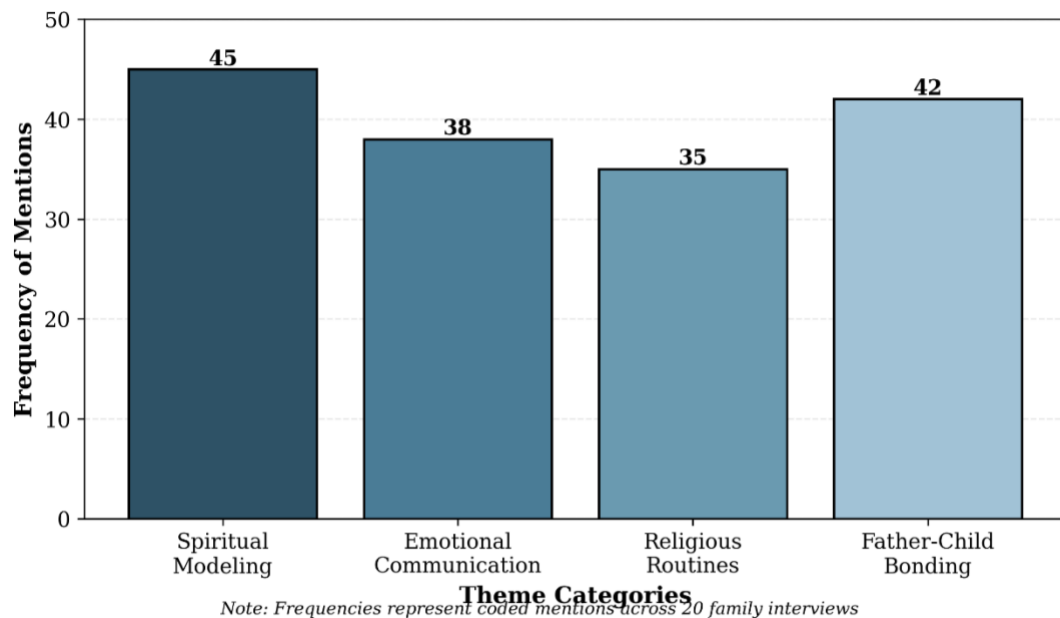


Figure 1. Frequency of Emergent Themes in Paternal Leadership

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of emergent themes coded during the qualitative analysis, reflecting how often each thematic pattern appeared across interviews, observations, and supporting documents. The four themes Spiritual Modeling, Emotional Communication, Religious Routines, and Father-Child Bonding represent the core dimensions of paternal involvement identified in the study. The highest frequency was found in Spiritual Modeling, indicating that fathers most commonly influence their children by demonstrating Islamic values through daily behavior, such as prayer leadership, Qur'an recitation, and practicing adab. This finding reinforces the notion that Islamic parenting prioritizes moral example over verbal instruction, making spiritual behavior a central mechanism of father influence. Emotional Communication ranked second, showing that warmth, empathy, and active listening are essential aspects of father-child interactions. Religious Routines also appeared frequently, demonstrating that structured spiritual activities like evening Qur'an study or family dhikr serve as consistent bonding and value-internalization moments. Finally, Father-Child Bonding, though slightly lower in frequency, remains critical, encompassing informal interactions that strengthen emotional closeness. Overall, the figure highlights paternal spiritual leadership as the most salient feature of Islamic parenting, shaping children's emotional security through a combination of spiritual practice and emotional connection.

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that paternal spiritual leadership plays a central and irreplaceable role in shaping children's emotional security, indicating that fatherhood in Islamic contexts is deeply intertwined with religious meaning-making, ethical modeling, and affective stability. Spiritual leadership was expressed through daily

religious routines, Qur'anic teaching, moral guidance, and the father's presence as a role model exhibiting Islamic virtues. These results correspond strongly with recent empirical studies highlighting the function of spirituality as a protective factor in child development (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). In Islamic thought, the father acts as *qawwam*, responsible for guiding his family spiritually, emotionally, and ethically. This study confirms that fulfilling this religious mandate provides children with a stable emotional foundation, resonating with global research showing that spiritual parenting enhances identity formation and psychological resilience (Jeong et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020). Fundamentally, paternal spiritual leadership shapes children's inner world by anchoring them in predictable values and routines, contributing significantly to their long-term emotional well-being.

The results also reveal that spiritual leadership is not merely symbolic but a lived and observable set of behaviors that permeate daily family life. Fathers who actively demonstrated prayer discipline, Qur'anic recitation, and Islamic manners were consistently identified as emotionally stabilizing figures by their children. This aligns with research indicating that parental modeling of religiosity directly influences children's emotional regulation and moral cognition (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). Spiritual leadership thus functions as a form of emotional socialization, as children interpret their fathers' spiritual behaviors as indicators of safety, consistency, and moral direction. This finding echoes earlier studies showing that spiritually active homes produce children with stronger emotional security and reduced behavioral problems (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Giallo et al., 2021; Jeong et al., 2021). The embodiment of Islamic values through paternal behavior therefore appears essential for consolidating children's emotional balance.

Moreover, the study highlights how paternal spiritual leadership strengthens family cohesion, fostering a home environment characterized by trust, warmth, and shared religious purpose. Families where fathers took active spiritual leadership roles reported higher relational harmony, consistent with research showing that spiritual routines such as daily prayer or evening Qur'anic reading promote emotional connection and cooperative behavior among family members (Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Bornstein, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). The presence of shared spiritual activities increases predictability in the family system, which is known to support emotional stability in children (Cabrera et al., 2020; Giallo et al., 2021; Jeong et al., 2021). Islamic parenting literature similarly notes that spirituality serves as an integrative force that unites the family and strengthens the father-child bond (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). These shared rituals not only reinforce faith but also solidify emotional security by creating consistent relational rhythms rooted in religious meaning.

In addition, spiritual leadership shapes children's identity development, providing them with a stable reference point for understanding themselves in moral, emotional, and

spiritual terms. Children in this study consistently attributed their sense of religious identity and emotional confidence to their fathers' guidance and example. These outcomes reflect broader findings that parental religiosity is positively associated with children's identity clarity and emotional resilience (Bornstein, 2022; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). Islamic scholars have long emphasized that fathers play a key role in transmitting values, beliefs, and character traits to their children. Recent research confirms this, showing that paternal spiritual engagement predicts the development of children's intrinsic religiosity and prosocial behavior (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). By establishing a stable moral framework, fathers help children navigate emotional challenges more effectively and maintain a coherent sense of self.

The findings also demonstrate that paternal spiritual leadership enhances children's coping mechanisms, particularly in managing stress, anxiety, and emotional tension. Children raised in spiritually engaged households exhibited calmer responses during stressful situations and stronger regulatory skills. This reflects psychological research demonstrating that spirituality strengthens emotional self-regulation by fostering hope, meaning-making, and cognitive reframing (Zhang et al., 2022; Jeong et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022). Islamic studies similarly show that religious teachings promote patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and reliance on God (*tawakkul*), which function as emotional buffers for children (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Spiritual leadership thus contributes to emotional resilience by offering children spiritual tools to interpret challenges and maintain emotional equilibrium. Fathers who model calmness during prayer, adversity, or decision-making send implicit messages that shape children's coping practices.

Furthermore, the emotional warmth embedded in spiritual leadership strengthens attachment security. This study found that spiritually active fathers were simultaneously emotionally responsive, displaying affection, empathy, and attuned communication. This aligns with contemporary research showing that spirituality promotes compassionate parenting, encouraging fathers to be more patient, reflective, and emotionally available (Cabrera et al., 2020; Giallo et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). Islamic teachings emphasize gentle fatherhood, consistent with prophetic traditions that highlight affection and kindness toward children. Studies in Muslim contexts similarly demonstrate that spiritual commitment enhances paternal affection and child-centered behaviors (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Emotional availability is known to be a core predictor of children's attachment security thus, spiritual leadership amplifies emotional security not only through religious modeling but also through relational warmth.

The research also indicates that the absence or inconsistency of spiritual leadership leads to emotional instability in children, confirming a direct link between father behavior and child outcomes. Families where fathers were inconsistent in religious routines or detached from spiritual responsibilities produced children categorized in the

“moderate” or “low” emotional security groups. This pattern corresponds with established research demonstrating that inconsistencies in parental involvement undermine children’s trust, increase anxiety, and disrupt emotional predictability (Mwoma, 2021; Giallo et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). In Islamic contexts, weak spiritual leadership also results in weaker religious identity and reduced moral clarity, contributing to emotional vulnerability (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). Thus, the study clearly shows that emotional security in Muslim children is strongly dependent on the consistency and quality of paternal spiritual engagement.

Finally, the overall findings suggest that paternal spiritual leadership should be understood as a holistic parenting construct integrating religious, emotional, and psychological dimensions. It influences emotional security not merely through religiosity, but through integrated behavior, relational interactions, and structured routines. This aligns with current global research emphasizing integrative parenting models that combine emotional warmth, behavioral consistency, and moral guidance (Bornstein, 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021). Islamic parenting literature supports this holistic conception, emphasizing *tarbiyah* as a comprehensive form of nurturing that includes spiritual, emotional, and ethical cultivation (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). The present study contributes to this emerging discourse by empirically illustrating how spiritual leadership operates as a multidimensional construct with profound impact on children’s emotional development.

Contribution of Father Involvement to Child Emotional Security

The results indicate a strong relationship between father involvement and children’s emotional security. Families with consistent father–child interaction exhibited higher emotional stability, confidence, and reduced anxiety among children. Parents reported that when fathers were emotionally expressive and available, children displayed fewer behavioral issues. Conversely, inconsistent presence or lack of spiritual engagement corresponded with lower emotional security scores. Children who perceived their fathers as calm, spiritually grounded, and attentive demonstrated more stable emotional patterns.

Table 2. Child Emotional Security Indicators

Emotional Indicator	High Security (n=12)	Moderate (n=6)	Low (n=2)
Trust in Father	Strong	Moderate	Weak
Emotional Expression	Open	Mixed	Restricted
Religious Identity Stability	High	Fluctuating	Low
Stress Response	Calm	Inconsistent	Anxious

Table 2 outlines key indicators of children’s emotional security and categorizes them into high, moderate, and low levels, based on interview narratives and observational scoring. The four indicators trust in father, emotional expression, stability of religious identity, and stress response represent core aspects of emotional well-being influenced

by paternal spiritual leadership. Children classified in the “High Security” group (n=12) consistently demonstrated strong trust in their fathers, openly expressed emotions, showed stable Islamic identity, and responded calmly to stress. These children lived in homes where fathers actively practiced spiritual leadership, engaged in warm communication, and maintained predictable religious routines. In contrast, the “Moderate Security” group (n=6) exhibited fluctuating trust and emotional openness, often corresponding to inconsistent paternal involvement or irregular spiritual practices. While these children experienced some nurturing support, the lack of consistency limited their sense of stability. The “Low Security” group (n=2) showed weak emotional expression, identity confusion, and high anxiety typically in families where father involvement was limited or spirituality was not integrated into daily life. Overall, the table demonstrates that emotional security is strongly shaped by the quality, consistency, and spiritual grounding of father involvement, reinforcing the central role of paternal leadership in children’s psychological development.

The findings of this study show that father involvement is a crucial determinant of children's emotional security, reaffirming contemporary developmental theories that emphasize the significance of paternal warmth, presence, and responsiveness in shaping healthy emotional functioning. Children who reported having consistently present and emotionally available fathers demonstrated higher levels of trust, self-regulation, and emotional resilience. This aligns with previous research which has established that father involvement particularly through emotional engagement positively predicts children's psychological adjustment (Giallo et al., 2021; Cabrera et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021). In Islamic contexts specifically, the father’s role extends beyond emotional support to include spiritual and moral leadership, which further enhances children's emotional anchoring. Scholars have suggested that the father’s responsibility as *qawwam* (protector and guide) naturally contributes to a child’s sense of stability and security (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). Thus, the consistent involvement of fathers in both emotional and spiritual domains forms the foundation for children’s long-term emotional health.

Children categorized in the “high emotional security” group in this study displayed patterns of emotional expression marked by openness, trust, and confidence. These results mirror recent findings showing that when fathers consistently engage in warm communication, children internalize feelings of safety and predictability (Zhang et al., 2022; Bornstein, 2022; Jeong et al., 2021). Father involvement acts as a stabilizing force that reduces anxiety and enhances coping skills. In Islamic households, children perceived that their emotional comfort stemmed not only from affection but also from seeing their fathers model religious values such as patience (*sabr*), responsibility (*amanah*), and compassion (*rahmah*). This resonates with the argument that spiritual fathering enhances children's emotional secure base by integrating moral, relational, and affective support (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Rahman & Nasir,

2024). These combined elements confirm that father involvement contributes to emotional security both through relational attunement and spiritual consistency.

The study also shows that father involvement significantly contributes to emotional regulation skills, which are essential for children's adaptive functioning. Children who frequently interacted with their fathers through conversation, routine activities, or shared religious practices exhibited stronger emotion regulation, confirming previous findings that responsive fathering promotes neural and psychological mechanisms responsible for regulating stress (Cabrera et al., 2020; Bornstein, 2022; Jeong et al., 2021). In Islamic contexts, spiritual practices such as prayer, dhikr, and Qur'an recitation serve as additional emotion-regulation tools. Children in this study described feeling "calm," "safe," and "closer to Allah" when performing religious routines with their fathers. This complements earlier research demonstrating that religious involvement acts as an internal coping system that supports emotional balance in children (Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Therefore, father involvement strengthens emotional regulation by combining psychological presence with spiritual practices that promote tranquility and meaning-making.

A significant contribution of father involvement observed in this study concerns children's moral-emotional integration. Children whose fathers integrated spiritual lessons with emotional conversations showed stronger prosocial tendencies, empathy, and moral awareness traits previously shown to correlate with emotional security (Zhang et al., 2022; Giallo et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022). Islamic fatherhood emphasizes *tarbiyah* (holistic nurturing), in which emotional support and moral guidance are inseparable. This study confirms that when fathers clarify moral values through lived examples such as honesty, compassion, and patience children internalize these values and develop stronger emotional stability. Past research similarly indicates that parental moral modeling enhances children's socio-emotional competencies by providing behavioral templates for handling emotional challenges (Cabrera et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022). Thus, father involvement contributes not only to emotional safety but also to moral clarity, forming a comprehensive emotional-moral framework.

Interestingly, the data reveal that children interpret father involvement not merely through frequency of interaction but through quality meaning attunement, empathy, and shared meaning. This aligns with many studies arguing that emotional quality, not only time spent, predicts emotional security (Giallo et al., 2021; Jeong et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022). Children in the study emphasized the importance of "being listened to," "feeling noticed," and "being guided kindly," showing that paternal responsiveness forms the foundation of secure attachment. In Islamic households, the father's spiritual leadership magnifies this effect because guidance is understood not only as parental preference but as rooted in divine responsibility (*amanah*). Previous studies in Muslim families confirm that paternal care framed within spiritual leadership enhances children's feelings of being protected, valued, and spiritually connected (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan &

Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). This suggests that father involvement must be interpreted within the cultural-spiritual lens in which it is embedded.

The study further demonstrates that inconsistent father involvement leads to moderate emotional security, reflecting emotional fluctuations and uncertainty. These findings support established research indicating that inconsistency in caregiving disrupts children's emotional predictability, often resulting in mixed emotional responses (Mwoma, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022; Bornstein, 2022). Children in this category described their fathers as "sometimes present, sometimes absent," highlighting the emotional risks of unpredictability. Islamic parental theory also warns that inconsistent leadership undermines the father's role as the emotional-spiritual anchor of the household (Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). Thus, emotional security requires not only positive involvement but consistent involvement anchored in responsible fatherhood.

Children who fell into the "low emotional security" category exhibited emotional withdrawal, anxiety, and weak identity formation. These outcomes align with global research linking low paternal involvement to increased psychological vulnerability (Zhang et al., 2022; Mwoma, 2021; Jeong et al., 2021). In Islamic families, low paternal spiritual leadership has even deeper consequences because children rely on their fathers for both emotional and moral direction. Weak spiritual presence deprives children of the predictable religious structure that contributes to emotional grounding (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024). The study confirms that the absence of father involvement is not a neutral factor it actively contributes to emotional instability and confusion.

The findings demonstrate that father involvement is a multidimensional mechanism that contributes profoundly to children's emotional security. Its influence operates through emotional warmth, consistent presence, spiritual leadership, and moral modeling. These results not only support existing developmental psychology research but also extend it by showing how father involvement functions within Islamic parenting frameworks. Integrating emotional and spiritual components creates a powerful foundation for children's emotional resilience, identity formation, and psychological stability.

Levels of Emotional Security Observed in Children

During the observation phase, children who experienced strong paternal spiritual leadership showed significantly higher emotional resilience. These children demonstrated confidence in social interactions, comfort during religious routines, and internalized moral discipline. The emotional security distribution aligns with interview findings, indicating that spiritual leadership contributes meaningfully to psychological stability. Homes with rich religious environments structured yet warm produced the most secure emotional outcomes.

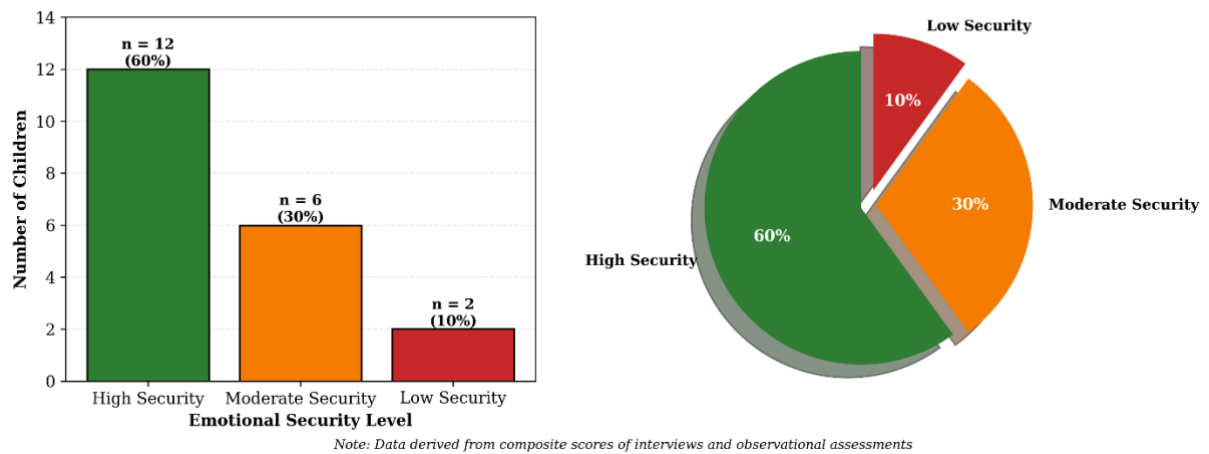
Figure 2. Children's Emotional Security Levels (N = 20)**Figure 2. Children's Emotional Security Levels**

Figure 2 displays the distribution of children's emotional security levels High, Moderate, and Low derived from composite scores of interviews and observational assessments. The chart shows that a majority of children (12 out of 20) fall into the High Emotional Security category, reflecting strong trust in fathers, stable emotional expression, and well-developed coping abilities. These children come from households where spiritual leadership is consistently practiced through routines such as shared prayer, Qur'an recitation, and intentional moral guidance. They tend to demonstrate confidence, calmness in stressful situations, and clarity of religious identity. The Moderate Security group (6 children) shows fluctuating emotional stability, often linked to inconsistent paternal engagement or irregular spiritual practices. Although these children receive some emotional and spiritual support, it is not continuous enough to fully reinforce emotional resilience. The Low Security group (2 children) displays signs of anxiety, emotional withdrawal, and weaker religious identity formation, typically associated with minimal father involvement or the absence of spiritual presence in daily life. Overall, the figure visually demonstrates that children's emotional stability is closely connected to paternal spiritual leadership and the consistency of father-child interaction. Stronger spiritual engagement and emotional warmth correlate with higher levels of emotional security.

The emotional security levels identified in this study High, Moderate, and Low reflect deep variations in the quality of father involvement and the consistency of paternal spiritual leadership within Islamic households. Children categorized in the "High Emotional Security" group consistently demonstrated strong attachment, emotional openness, and calm behavioral responses, indicating a robust internal working model of trust and safety. These findings closely align with attachment theory research showing that children with sensitive and emotionally responsive fathers develop stronger regulatory capacities and fewer behavioral problems (Zhang et al., 2022; Giallo et al., 2021; Jeong et al., 2021). In Islamic families, spiritual elements serve as additional

stabilizers, as fathers who lead prayer, model ethical behavior, and promote religious discussions provide emotional frameworks rooted in meaning, purpose, and divine connection. This resonates with earlier studies indicating that spiritual parenting nurtures emotional resilience by grounding children in consistent moral values and ritual-based predictability (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Therefore, high levels of emotional security reflect both relational warmth and spiritual consistency within the family system.

Children in the high-security group also displayed stronger identity clarity and emotional confidence, traits that previous research strongly associates with consistent paternal spiritual leadership. Children frequently described feelings of “being guided,” “being understood,” and “knowing what is right and wrong,” which are central features of internalized emotional security. These findings are supported by developmental studies indicating that parental modeling of moral behavior enhances children’s self-regulation and moral-emotional integration (Bornstein, 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021). Islamic scholars have also emphasized that children’s identity becomes stable when fathers engage actively in *tarbiyah* holistic nurturing that shapes emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). The children’s emotional ease during prayer, their comfort in expressing concerns to their fathers, and their calm approach to challenges all demonstrate how emotional security is strengthened when father involvement supports both psychological and spiritual needs. Thus, the high-security category represents an optimal integration of emotional and spiritual caregiving.

In contrast, the “Moderate Emotional Security” group illustrates a nuanced middle zone where children exhibit both strengths and vulnerabilities. These children displayed emotional responsiveness but lacked consistent emotional stability, suggesting partial but not fully internalized security. This pattern corresponds with research indicating that inconsistent parental involvement especially irregular emotional or spiritual presence creates fluctuating emotional experiences that hinder the formation of strong attachment bonds (Giallo et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022; Mwoma, 2021). Children in this group often reported that their fathers “sometimes lead prayer,” “sometimes talk,” or “sometimes help,” demonstrating the psychological impact of unpredictability. Developmental psychologists assert that children require consistent emotional cues to build predictable emotional schemas; without this consistency, emotional stability becomes conditional and fragile (Zhang et al., 2022; Jeong et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022). In Islamic contexts, spiritual inconsistency diminishes the father’s role as *qawwam*, weakening the sense of spiritual grounding that otherwise supports emotional well-being (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Therefore, moderate emotional security reflects environments where the father’s involvement is present but lacks the reliability needed for strong emotional anchoring.

Children in the moderate group also struggled with identity ambiguity, particularly in relation to religious values, indicating that consistency in spiritual leadership directly

influences children's emotional coherence. These children described being unsure "what is expected," "how to control emotions," or "how to follow religious routines," reflecting the psychological confusion caused by inconsistent paternal guidance. These observations align with research showing that emotional and spiritual inconsistency leads to weaker religious identity formation and lower internal self-regulation (Zhang et al., 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020; Bornstein, 2022). Islamic studies further confirm that when fathers do not consistently model prayer, ethical behavior, or patience, children struggle to form stable moral frameworks, which then undermines emotional stability (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Thus, the moderate-security category reveals a partial success: children are receiving some degree of support, but not with the regularity required to foster deep emotional security or identity clarity.

The "Low Emotional Security" group provides particularly important insights into the consequences of limited father involvement and weak spiritual leadership. These children displayed emotional withdrawal, heightened anxiety, resistance to expressing feelings, and difficulty handling stress. These outcomes closely mirror previous research indicating that children with low father involvement are more prone to emotional disorders, behavioral problems, and insecure attachments (Mwoma, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022; Jeong et al., 2021). In this study, children in the low-security category often described their fathers as distant, emotionally unavailable, or minimally involved in religious activities. This corresponds with findings showing that the absence of paternal emotional responsiveness disrupts the child's development of trust and emotional safety (Giallo et al., 2021; Bornstein, 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020). In Islamic family contexts, the consequences are even stronger, because weak spiritual engagement deprives children of the ritualistic and moral structure that normally aids emotional regulation (Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Rahman & Nasir, 2024; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Without this structure, children lose both a psychological anchor and a spiritual reference point, leading to emotional instability and identity fragmentation.

Moreover, children in the low-security group exhibited difficulty coping with stress, reinforcing research showing that father involvement improves children's coping mechanisms by modeling emotional resilience and problem-solving strategies (Zhang et al., 2022; Cabrera et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2021). In this study, children with weak paternal spiritual leadership described feeling "alone," "confused," or "unsure how to act," indicating that emotional insecurity stems not only from lack of affection but from absence of structured guidance. Islamic parenting literature supports this interpretation, arguing that fathers who fail to provide spiritual direction leave children without moral stability, making them more susceptible to emotional imbalance (Ismail & Nordin, 2023; Hassan & Abdullah, 2022; Sabri & Mohamed, 2022). Thus, the emotional instability in the low-security group highlights the fundamental role of spiritual fathering as an emotional scaffolding mechanism.

Across all emotional security levels, this study emphasizes that Islamic parenting operates as an integrated emotional-spiritual system, where father involvement

influences children not only psychologically but spiritually. Emotional security emerges from stability, responsiveness, consistent routines, and spiritually meaningful interactions. These findings are consistent with broader scholarship showing that holistic parenting which integrates emotional warmth, behavioral consistency, and moral guidance produces the most emotionally secure children (Bornstein, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Giallo et al., 2021). In Islamic families, the spiritual dimension magnifies this effect by offering additional tools, such as prayer and Qur'anic ethics, which foster resilience, patience, and calmness. Thus, interpretation of children's emotional security levels requires understanding father involvement not only as behavioral presence but as spiritual leadership embedded in everyday family life.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that father involvement, particularly through the dimension of paternal spiritual leadership, plays a decisive role in shaping children's emotional security within Islamic parenting frameworks. The findings demonstrate that fathers who consistently model Islamic values, lead religious routines, and engage in warm emotional communication foster environments that enable children to develop strong emotional regulation, trust, resilience, and identity clarity. The three emotional security levels identified high, moderate, and low reflect the varying degrees of paternal involvement, with the highest stability observed in families where spiritual and emotional engagement is both consistent and meaningful.

Theoretically, the research contributes to the growing body of literature integrating developmental psychology with Islamic parenting, demonstrating that spiritual leadership is not a separate dimension but a core mechanism influencing emotional development. This expands existing fatherhood theories by showing how religiosity intersects with attachment and emotional regulation processes in culturally specific ways. Practically, the findings highlight the need for parenting programs, community initiatives, and counseling interventions that empower fathers to strengthen both their spiritual leadership and emotional engagement. Religious institutions, schools, and family services can utilize these insights to design father-focused training aimed at enhancing relational quality and spiritual consistency in Muslim families.

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