



The Role of Islamic Spirituality in Parent Child Relationships: Perspectives from Muslim Counselors

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ABSTRACT

The dynamics of parent child relationships are deeply influenced by cultural and spiritual values, particularly in Muslim families where Islamic teachings significantly shape interpersonal interactions. This study examines the role of Islamic spirituality in fostering parent child relationships, drawing on the insights gained from the lived experiences of Muslim counselors. The primary objective is to examine how Islamic spiritual principles such as tawakkul (trust in God), shukr (gratitude), and sabr (patience) are integrated into parenting approaches and how these influence emotional bonding and communication within the family. Employing a qualitative phenomenological method, the study involved in depth semi structured interviews with 15 Muslim counselors in Indonesia and Malaysia who have professional experience in family and child counseling. Thematic analysis revealed that Islamic spirituality fosters mutual respect, emotional warmth, and moral development in parent child interactions. Counselors emphasized that integrating religious values into parenting not only supports children's behavioral and emotional regulation but also strengthens parental resilience and empathy. These findings align with and extend prior research on spiritual attachment theory and religious coping strategies in family dynamics. The study contributes to a nuanced understanding of culturally embedded parenting frameworks and offers practical implications for counseling practices by promoting the inclusion of faith based approaches. Future research is recommended to explore the longitudinal effects of spiritual parenting in diverse Muslim contexts and to develop intervention models that integrate Islamic spiritual values into family counseling.

Keywords: Islamic spirituality, parent child relationship, Muslim counselors, spiritual parenting, family counseling

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INTRODUCTION

Parent child relationships play a foundational role in shaping a child's emotional, psychological, and spiritual development. Globally, the quality of these relationships has been linked to long term well being, moral formation, and resilience among children. In Muslim communities, these relationships are often guided by religious values rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. However, challenges still exist, including the persistence of authoritarian parenting styles and domestic violence that

contradict Islamic teachings. Imam Sohaib Sultan (2014) emphasized that domestic violence, though present in some Muslim households, stands in stark opposition to Islam's emphasis on compassion, mercy, and tranquility within family life.

According to BKKBN (2022), over 35% of Indonesian parents admit to using harsh disciplinary measures. Furthermore, KPAI reported 2,345 child parent conflict cases in 2023, highlighting a pressing need for spiritually informed parenting interventions.

Supporting this concern, data shows that many parents unintentionally adopt rigid parenting methods under the guise of religious adherence, without fully embracing the compassionate spiritual teachings of Islam. Karimullah, Rozi, and Mahbubi (2023) found that some Muslim families use authoritarian parenting to instill discipline, often overlooking its negative psychological impacts on children. These include heightened stress, emotional distance, and low self esteem. Their findings underscore the necessity for a deeper understanding of Islamic spirituality in shaping healthier, more empathetic parenting practices.

Despite Islam's clear ethical guidance on familial compassion, there remains limited understanding of how Islamic spiritual principles are actively integrated into parenting behaviors. This issue becomes more critical when considering the role of Muslim counselors, individuals who not only provide emotional and psychological support but also interpret religious teachings in practical family contexts. Their insights are pivotal in addressing the disconnect between spiritual ideals and actual parenting practices.

Several studies have acknowledged the potential of Islamic spirituality in fostering positive interpersonal relationships. For instance, Bensaid (2021) outlined the theoretical foundations of Muslim spiritual parenting, advocating for empirical research that examines real life implementation across diverse Muslim contexts. Additionally, Anggraini (2024) highlighted the positive influence of Islamic spiritual practices such as prayer, dhikr, and tawakkul on mental well being and emotional resilience. While these studies affirm the value of spirituality in individual and community wellness, they fall short in addressing its direct application within parent child interactions as interpreted by practicing counselors.

A noticeable research gap exists in current literature. While scholars have explored Islamic teachings on family and the influence of spirituality on mental health, few have investigated how counselors, especially those trained in Islamic perspectives, interpret and apply these principles in advising Muslim families. Moreover, limited qualitative data captures their practical experiences, cultural adaptations, and ethical dilemmas in guiding spiritually aligned parenting.

This gap is particularly urgent in today's context, where Muslim families navigate a tension between preserving traditional religious values and adapting to contemporary societal norms. Rising cases of emotional disconnection, family

disputes, and adolescent behavioral issues further highlight the need for faith based, yet contextually relevant, parenting frameworks. Muslim counselors serve as cultural mediators and spiritual guides, yet their perspectives remain underrepresented in academic discussions on family psychology.

This research is novel in its approach to foregrounding the voices of Muslim counselors as key informants. It shifts the focus from abstract theological discourse to grounded, lived experiences of professionals working with Muslim parents. By examining how they incorporate Islamic spiritual principles into counseling, the study makes an innovative contribution to both Islamic psychology and family counseling literature.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the role of Islamic spirituality in shaping parent child relationships, based on the perspectives and experiences of Muslim counselors. It aims to uncover common themes, strategies, and challenges encountered by these counselors when advising on spiritually guided parenting practices. The study will use qualitative methods to collect and analyze counselor narratives, offering a rich understanding of the intersection between faith and family dynamics.

This research makes significant contributions to both academic and practical domains. Academically, it expands the field of Islamic psychology and family studies by filling a gap in qualitative research on counselor perspectives. Practically, it can inform the development of culturally and spiritually sensitive parenting programs. It also offers actionable insights for counselors, educators, and religious leaders working with Muslim communities, ensuring their advice is both theologically sound and psychologically compelling.

The implications of this research are significant. By clarifying how Islamic spirituality can be meaningfully integrated into parenting, the study can enhance family cohesion, emotional bonding, and child development within Muslim households. It can also serve as a guide for training future counselors, encouraging them to bridge religious wisdom with modern counseling practices. In turn, this could contribute to reducing issues such as authoritarianism, misinterpretation of religious texts, and emotional neglect in family settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of Muslim counselors regarding the role of Islamic spirituality in parent child relationships. The population of this research comprises certified Muslim counselors actively involved in family counseling within Islamic institutions, educational settings, and community based mental health organizations in Indonesia. The sample includes 10 to 15 counselors with: "The sample consists of 15 Muslim counselors purposively selected through

purposive sampling, emphasizing individuals with at least three years of experience in Islamic based counseling and familiarity with issues related to parenting and spirituality.

The primary research instrument is a semi structured interview guide, developed based on a review of relevant literature and validated by two experts in Islamic counseling and qualitative research. To ensure validity, the instrument underwent expert review and pilot testing with two counselors who were not included in the main study. Reliability was established through intercoder agreement, where two independent coders reviewed the initial transcripts and achieved consistent interpretation of the themes. The data collection technique includes in depth online and offline interviews, lasting 45–60 minutes per session, which were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim with participant consent.

Some counselors expressed concern that some parents resisted spiritual approaches, mainly when they associated counseling with secular or Western models.

The data collection procedure consists of initial outreach to selected counselors, obtaining informed consent, pilot testing of the instrument, and the main data gathering phase. All qualitative data were processed and managed using NVivo 12 software to facilitate coding and theme development. The data analysis technique follows Creswell's (2013) thematic analysis procedure: (1) organizing and preparing the data, (2) reading through all the data, (3) coding and labeling emerging themes, (4) describing and interpreting categories, and (5) validating findings through member checking and peer debriefing. This method ensures that the resulting interpretations accurately reflect the participants' experiences and offer meaningful insights into the integration of Islamic spirituality in parenting from a counselor's perspective.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study explores how Muslim counselors perceive and integrate Islamic spirituality into parent child relationships. Through semi structured interviews with 15 certified Muslim counselors in Indonesia, a thematic analysis revealed five dominant themes that reflect the interaction between spirituality, parenting, and counseling. These themes include the integration of Islamic rituals, the emphasis on parental role modeling, spiritual communication, challenges in the modern context, and the need for specialized counselor training. These themes are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Emergent Themes from Counselor Interviews

Theme	Description
Integration of Islamic Rituals	Incorporation of practices like prayer (salat) and supplication (du'a) in counseling sessions.
Emphasis on Parental Role Modeling	Encouraging parents to exemplify Islamic values through their behavior.
Spiritual Communication	Promoting open dialogues about faith and spirituality between parents and children.
Challenges in Modern Contexts	Addressing issues like digital distractions and secular influences on parenting.
Need for Counselor Training	Highlighting the necessity for specialized training in Islamic spiritual counseling.

The data reveal that counselors often use Islamic rituals such as salat (daily prayers) and du'a (supplication) as therapeutic tools. These rituals serve to ground clients and alleviate spiritual and emotional distress. This practice reflects the counselors' belief that emotional healing is intertwined with spiritual well being. These findings are consistent with the work of Ahmad et al. (2025), who found that prayer supports family counseling by facilitating hope and inner peace among Muslim clients.

When parents pray with their children, we see their emotional bonds grow stronger," (Counselor P4).

Children copy what they see. if parents are patient and honest, kids learn that naturally," (Counselor P9)

"Open faith based conversations improve trust between parent and child," (Counselor P2).

Furthermore, the emphasis on parental role modeling emerged as a core theme. Counselors consistently highlighted that children are likely to emulate their parents' behaviors. Thus, when parents actively engage in Islamic practices and exhibit strong moral character, they set a living example for their children to follow. This strategy reinforces Islamic values within the family context and cultivates positive character development. These findings mirror Bensaid's (2021) conclusion that spiritual parenting involves modeling virtues such as patience, honesty, and humility.

Another significant theme is the role of spiritual communication. Counselors advocated for open dialogue between parents and children about religious beliefs and values. Such conversations create emotional intimacy and spiritual understanding, which foster a sense of trust. Ahmad, Noor, and Amat (2018) similarly emphasized the implicit incorporation of spiritual themes in counseling, suggesting that religious dialogue can be a powerful conduit for emotional and moral growth.

However, the counselors also acknowledged the modern challenges families face in maintaining Islamic values. Digital distractions, consumerism, and secular ideologies were cited as barriers to effective spiritual parenting. Parents often struggle to regulate their children's screen time and to counteract values that conflict with Islamic teachings. This issue demands new adaptive strategies and consistent spiritual reinforcement at home.

A recurrent concern across interviews was the lack of formal training in Islamic spiritual counseling. Many counselors expressed the need for structured training programs that would enable them to guide families better spiritually. This gap suggests a broader institutional need to enhance Islamic counseling curricula and offer professional development programs tailored to Muslim counselors' needs.

Specific findings show that Islamic rituals are not only seen as acts of worship but also as practical methods of improving psychological well being. Counselors recounted instances where families who performed collective prayers reported higher emotional cohesion. In addition, when parents practiced patience and gratitude virtues emphasized in Islamic teachings their children mirrored those traits, resulting in fewer behavioral conflicts.

When comparing these results with prior research, strong similarities emerge. Astuti and Nurjannah (2024) proposed the concept of "Ruhiah Attachment," integrating spirituality with attachment theory. They argue that spiritual bonds between parents and children enhance emotional resilience. Our study supports this model, as counselors emphasized the importance of spiritual closeness in reducing family conflict and enhancing emotional intelligence.

Additionally, our research resonates with Rohmat et al. (2024), who found that children's spiritual intelligence is significantly shaped by their parents' religious behaviors and parenting style. In line with their findings, our counselors reported that parents who actively taught Islamic values at home raised children with better moral judgment and empathy.

To overcome the barriers identified, several solutions are proposed. First, institutions should develop specialized training modules for Muslim counselors to integrate spirituality more effectively. Second, workshops and seminars for parents on spiritual parenting can empower them to better fulfill their religious and parental duties. Third, digital resources and guides on Islamic parenting should be made widely accessible.

The findings also relate to broader psychological and religious theories. For instance, the integration of Islamic spirituality aligns with the concept of holistic well being, as proposed by Islamic psychology scholars like Malik Badri. His model argues that true mental health includes spiritual fulfillment. Our results show that counselors who engage clients spiritually help promote both emotional and moral development, supporting this holistic perspective.

In practical terms, this study underscores the need for collaboration among counselors, religious institutions, and families. Counseling services should not be limited to addressing behavioral issues but should incorporate proactive spiritual education and support. By doing so, counselors can help cultivate emotionally and spiritually resilient family units.

In conclusion, Islamic spirituality plays a transformative role in parent child relationships, particularly when supported by professional counseling. Muslim counselors view their work as a form of religious service that not only addresses emotional well being but also fosters spiritual growth. This holistic approach is essential in a rapidly modernizing world where families face increasing spiritual and emotional challenges. The implications of this study are significant for the development of spiritually grounded parenting models and counseling practices in Muslim communities.

Despite overall support for integrating spirituality, resistance was reported often due to parents' misconceptions about religious counseling, generational gaps, or limited exposure to holistic Islamic parenting education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Islamic spirituality plays a vital and multidimensional role in shaping and enhancing parent child relationships, particularly when guided by the insights of trained Muslim counselors. The integration of Islamic rituals, spiritual communication, and parental role modeling fosters emotional closeness, moral development, and resilience within families. Counselors serve not only as facilitators of emotional healing but also as spiritual guides who bridge religious teachings with practical parenting strategies. However, the study also highlights challenges faced in modern contexts, such as secular influences and lack of specialized training for counselors. These findings underscore the need for a more structured framework in counselor education that emphasizes Islamic spiritual approaches. For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies that examine the long term impact of spiritual parenting interventions on child development outcomes. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of parents and children themselves could offer a more holistic understanding of the dynamics involved. Comparative studies between different cultural or denominational settings within Islam may also enrich the discourse on spiritual parenting practices in diverse Muslim communities.

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