



Exploring the Concept of Children as a *Fitnah* in Islamic Family Law: A Deeper Understanding

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ABSTRACT

In marriage, the presence of a child is one of the greatest blessings granted by Allah SWT to a husband and wife. The arrival of a child can be a source of joy and comfort for the parents, and the child can also be an adornment for both parents. However, it is important to recognize that a child can also become a *fitnah* for the parents, as mentioned in Q.S. at-Tagābun verse 15. When examining the verses concerning *fitnah* in the Qur'an, we find that there are many different meanings of *fitnah*, which may vary significantly when compared to its definition in the Indonesian Dictionary. This study aims to explore the understanding of the concept of "Children as *Fitnah*" from the perspective of Islamic Family Law. This research is based on the analysis of relevant Qur'anic verses and hadiths, as well as their application in Islamic family law. Furthermore, this article also examines the views of several Tafsir lecturers at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, who refer to various Tafsir interpretations. This study is qualitative in nature, utilizing a descriptive writing technique. The data sources include primary data from the thoughts of Tafsir lecturers referring to various Tafsir interpretations, and secondary data from journals and books related to this concept and its impact on parenting patterns and parental responsibilities in a modern context. The research findings highlight the importance of understanding the rights and responsibilities of each family member and instilling key values in the family, particularly to children from an early age. These include teaching faith and belief, encouraging kindness and affection, promoting regular worship, setting a good example, and providing *halal* and *toyyib* sustenance to the family.

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Children as *Fitnah*;
Islamic Family Law;
Parenting in Islam;
Qur'anic Interpretation;
Parental Responsibility;

Article History:

Received: 25 October 2024
Revised: 24 December 2024
Accepted: 29 December 2024
Published: 30 December 2024

How to Cite in APA Style:

Luthfi, M., Musdatulia, M. ., Fauzan, A., & Baihaqi, Y. . (2024). Exploring the Concept of Children as a *Fitnah* in Islamic Family Law: A Deeper Understanding. *IJLHE: International Journal of Language, Humanities, and Education*, 7(2), 407–416.
<https://doi.org/10.52217/ijlhe.v7i2.1782>

INTRODUCTION

As the word of Allah, the Qur'an contains perfect teachings. Behind its verses lies profound knowledge. All of His creations are not in vain, as each of them has meaning and purpose. This is evident in the creation of the universe, which is made in pairs, where every element has a counterpart that complements and supports balance in

life. The purpose of this paired creation is to provide a positive impact on humanity, namely mutual complementarity, the creation of harmony, and the dynamics of life. Eventually, this makes life more balanced and meaningful (Zaelani et al. 2021).

In Islam, children are considered both a gift and a great trust for parents. Parental responsibility towards children not only concerns fulfilling physical needs but also spiritual and moral needs. Children are often seen as a trust from Allah SWT, described as the adornment of life in this world and a source of tranquility for their parents' hearts. However, the Qur'an also states that children can become a *fitnah* (test) for their parents, as mentioned in Qur'an (Q.S. at-Tagābun [64]: 15) as follows:

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ١٥

"Indeed, your wealth and your children are but a trial, and with Allah is a great reward" (Q.S. at-Tagābun [64]: 15).

This verse specifically addresses wealth and children as potential sources of *fitnah*. When examining the term *fitnah* in the Qur'an, it is found to have different meanings, including polytheism, misguidance, murder, obstruction from the path of Allah, deviation, justification, decision, sin, illness, target, retribution, test, torment, burning, and madness. These interpretations, when compared to the definition in the Indonesian Dictionary, may carry different connotations. Although these meanings generally refer to harmful actions or behaviors that can lead to significant dangers. To gain a clearer understanding of the meaning of children as *fitnah* in the context of Q.S. at-Tagābun [64]: 15, it is necessary to conduct an interpretation, as understanding the Qur'an, even in its simplest form, is essentially an act of interpretation.

Therefore, the researchers intend to study the concept of children as *fitnah* within the context of Islamic Family Law by consulting the opinions of several Tafsir lecturers at the State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung, based on their respective Tafsir references. The focus of this research is to explore the concept of children as *fitnah* in Q.S. at-Tagābun [64]: 15 to avoid differing interpretations and misunderstandings regarding this issue. The goal is to deepen our understanding of Allah's word in Q.S. at-Tagābun [64]: 15.

The objective of Islamic Family Law is to regulate the relationships between husband, wife, and other family members. According to Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, family law encompasses rules about human relations within the family, starting from the process of marriage to the division of inheritance when a family member passes away. The harmony of family relationships in Islamic Family Law is crucial, as it forms the foundation for creating a balanced and happy life, both in this world and the hereafter (Alam, 2024).

METHOD

This study is classified as qualitative research with a descriptive pattern, which is a type of research that only describes the conditions and events of an object in a comprehensive, detailed, clear, and systematic manner (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). In this research, the authors will provide an in-depth explanation of children as *fitnah* based on the views of several Tafsir lecturers from the State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung, in accordance with their respective Tafsir references, and examine the concept of children as *fitnah* within the context of Islamic Family Law. The data sources used include primary data from interviews with several Tafsir lecturers from the State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung, and secondary data from Tafsir books, articles, and relevant books that are related to the issues to be discussed in this study. The data is then presented based on sub-topics, including the meaning of children as *fitnah* in the perspective of Islamic Family Law, which will subsequently be analyzed to produce conclusions from the discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the responses of several lecturers regarding the meaning of *fitnah* in Surah at-Tagābun, verse 15, nearly all the lecturers agree that this *fitnah* refers to a trial, a trust from Allah SWT to parents regarding their children, where children are considered the adornment of the world but can also lead their parents into misguidance. The Qur'an itself mentions several typologies of children.

1. Children as the Adornment of Life in This World

Children are the adornment of family life. As explained in (Q.S. al-Kahf [18]: 46):

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَقِيَّةُ الصَّالِحَةُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا ٤٦

"Wealth and children are the adornment of the worldly life, but the enduring good deeds are better with your Lord for reward and better for hope." (Q.S. al-Kahf [18]: 46)

This verse illustrates that children serve as embellishments that beautify a family. The cries of babies, the whines of children asking for something, their amusing chatter, and the sight of a child taking their first steps are beautiful moments in a family. Husband and wife often feel incomplete when they do not have children. The perfection and beauty of a household are only truly felt when children are present within it.

2. Children as the Coolness of the Heart

In the Qur'an, children are described as the coolness of the eyes or the heart, *qurrata a`yun*. As stated in (Q.S. al-Furqān [25]: 74):

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ۖ ٧٤

"And those who say, 'Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us leaders for the righteous.'" (Q.S. al-Furqān [25]: 74)

Children are called the coolness of the heart because when one looks at a child, it brings joy. Therefore, children are an invaluable treasure to parents. There is a saying, "My child is my jewel." (Ahmad, 2014).

3. Children as Fitnah

In the Qur'an, children are also referred to as a trial or *fitnah*, as mentioned in (Q.S. at-Tagābun [64]: 15), where Allah SWT says:

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ١٥

"Indeed, your wealth and your children are but a trial, and with Allah is a great reward." (Q.S. at-Tagābun [64]: 15)

In this verse, the word *fitnah* has a broad and diverse meaning. The word *fitnah* linguistically refers to seduction, temptation, misguidance, burning, and obstruction. It can also be interpreted as affliction, punishment, temptation, chaos, or even madness (Nuraini & Husniyani, 2021). Similarly, according to several Tafsir lecturers from the State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung, such as Mr. Ahmad Muttaqin, M.Ag, the context of children being referred to as *fitnah* is that they are a trial, a trust. Excessive love for children can become a test or *fitnah* for parents, as it may tarnish their reputation if the child behaves badly. Conversely, if the child is righteous, it reflects positively on the parents. Therefore, to properly implement love for children, as explained by Mr. Beko Hendro, Lc., M.Hum, it is important to provide a good education and guide them on the right path. He views children as an investment for the hereafter, in accordance with the following hadith of the Prophet Muhammad:

إِذَا مَاتَ ابْنُ آدَمَ انْقَطَعَ عَمَلُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ ثَلَاثٍ: صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ، أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ، أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ.

"When the son of Adam dies, his deeds come to an end, except for three things: a continuous charity, knowledge from which benefit is derived, or a righteous child who prays for him." (HR Muslim No. 1631).

This hadith highlights that a righteous child who prays for their parents is one of the three deeds whose rewards do not cease even after death. What the Prophet Muhammad conveyed serves as a guiding principle for Muslims. The Prophet delivered Allah's revelation through the Qur'an and provided practical explanations and examples through hadith and sunnah. By following his teachings, we can practice Islam correctly and draw closer to Allah. The Qur'an even teaches that when we recite Surah al-Fātiḥah, we are encouraged to always pray for guidance and to stay on the straight path—the

path of those who have received Allah's favor. According to Tafsir scholars, the prophets are among those who have received Allah's favor (Baihaqi, 2019), as mentioned in (Q.S. an-Nisā' [4]: 69):

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا ٦٩

"And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger (Muhammad), those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor, of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs, and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions." (Q.S. an-Nisā' [4]: 69)

Allah grants humans the trust of children, and parents must manage this trust because children are important as they can be a source of comfort, adornment, and also a trial for parents. Islam views children as having a very important role, not only for their parents but also for society and the nation as a whole. The role of the family in Islam is very important, and the quantity of family law content in the Qur'an indicates the importance of having high-quality families, as the goodness of a society depends on the quality of its families, which are the foundational components of a community (Baihaqi, 2017). Therefore, it is important in a family for both parents and children to understand each other's rights and obligations. A family consists of a father, mother, and children, each of whom has rights and duties that must be fulfilled and adhered to.

According to Wahbah al-Zuhaili, there are several rights of children towards their parents. In fulfilling these needs, parents must adhere to religious guidance and the applicable laws. An individual working for their family must ensure their work is permissible by religious standards, undertaken through lawful methods, and that the income earned is both lawful and of good quality. The following are the rights of children that must be safeguarded.

a. Right to Life

This guarantee is inherent in an individual from the moment they are a fetus until they are capable of managing their own life. In essence, this right persists until death. If parents find it difficult to fulfill their child's needs, they must not let such a burden lead them to harm or even end their child's life. The piety mentioned in this verse encourages individuals to trust in Allah's assistance to provide solutions to various challenges, as outlined in (Q.S. at-Talāq [65]: 2):

فَإِذَا بَلَغَ أَجَلُهُنَّ فَامْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوَيْ عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ٢

"And when they have reached their term, either retain them in kindness or part with them in kindness, and call to witness two just men from among you, and establish the testimony for Allah. This is an admonition for those who believe in Allah and the Last

Day. And whoever fears Allah – He will make a way for him to get out." (Q.S. at-Ṭalāq [65]: 2)

However, in reality, there are still instances where parents neglect their children. News of such cases is common, such as babies being abandoned, children being subjected to violence, or threats to a child's life. These scenarios must be avoided by reminding parents that children are entrusted to them by Allah and must be protected, nurtured, and shown affection. Regardless of the situation, children remain the cherished ones of their parents.

b. Right to Growth and Development

An environment filled with affection supports a child's growth and development. The initial step involves fulfilling the child's basic needs, particularly healthy and adequate nutrition, which should never be neglected. Proper nutrition contributes significantly to a child's physical health, ensuring proper development. We have encountered research-based advertisements stating that children who consume nutritious breakfasts tend to perform better academically.

This reflects the heavy responsibility parents bear. Fulfilling these duties without sincerity and love may result in a burden, leading to difficulties in the future. If parents react with anger towards their children, resort to violence, or neglect them, it underscores the importance of protecting children from all forms of abuse, be it domestic violence, school violence, physical or social exploitation, or other forms of mistreatment.

c. Right to Protection

As outlined in Article 1, Paragraph 2 of Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, child protection encompasses all activities aimed at ensuring and safeguarding children and their rights so that they can live, grow, develop, and participate optimally according to their human dignity, while being protected from violence and discrimination. With these rights in place, it is the responsibility of parents, families, and society to guarantee children's safety from various threats.

The family should serve as a child-friendly environment. The safety children experience enables them to actualize their potential comfortably, learn effectively, and achieve their dreams. Parents should also adopt the most appropriate methods in protecting their children, ensuring children do not feel constrained by excessive protection. In Indonesia, there are at least two organizations concerned with child protection: the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPA) and the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI). This reflects the significant importance of child protection.

d. Right to Participate

Children must be involved in any decisions concerning them. Although children are not yet adults, they have the right to be informed about the decisions their parents make regarding them (Rini, 2014). For example, this includes decisions about which school to attend, language courses, and other such matters. Children should always be engaged in family discussions. Once children are actively involved in family matters, they are expected to socialize within external environments such as their community or school.

e. Duty to Be Kind to Parents

Being kind to one's parents is one of a child's fundamental obligations. This duty arises when a child is capable of using their intellect to discern what is right from wrong (Jukhairin, 2023). Kindness or doing good deeds for one's parents can take various forms, such as helping with household chores, not burdening parents, showing attention, and other similar acts. This kindness should be demonstrated continuously by the child.

Expressing love and affection towards parents should also be prioritized by a righteous child. This love can be manifested through soft, polite speech rather than harsh words. Prioritizing parents over acts of worship that can be performed later is another form of respect. Protecting the reputation of one's parents is a fundamental responsibility of a child in society. Therefore, a righteous child is expected to exhibit good morals and serve their parents with kindness and respect.

f. Faith and Religious Education

Education is a fundamental right for everyone and can even be classified as a basic human right that applies to every individual from birth until death. Education is a process of knowledge transfer, teaching, learning, and self-actualization, necessary to develop the potential bestowed by Allah, who has created humans as His most exalted creatures (Fadhilah & Maunah, 2022).. The intellectual abilities unique to humans set them apart from other creatures and are what make humans the guardians of the earth.

By receiving proper education and sufficient resources, an individual activates their intellectual potential in a focused manner, enabling them to solve problems and contribute to society. Parents must not neglect their children's education across various fields. They should maintain their pivotal role in educating their children. Parents are the first educators within the family, and when children reach an appropriate age, they continue their education at formal institutions.

The experiences of childhood and interpersonal relationships within the family play a significant role in personality development (Fatmawati, 2016). These experiences, though hidden in the subconscious, drive an individual to replicate behaviors learned in childhood. Therefore, religion and scholars emphasize that no child is inherently sinful. Instead, children are often victims of their surrounding environments. Past educational methods typically taught general knowledge or

information in formal educational institutions, often with a cognitive focus. However, as education evolves, it now embraces a broader role. Modern education now integrates affective elements, and within the educational realm, various fields of study have developed, such as character education, political education, non-formal education, and crucially, religious education. Religious education, in this context, focuses on nurturing piety to develop noble character (Alwi, 2023).

Every parent, regardless of wealth or status, feels incomplete without children (Budiyanto, 2015). Life feels dull, quiet, and empty. Eventually, such parents are willing to sacrifice wealth for visits to various doctors or even shamans, just to conceive. Furthermore, children in Islam are also seen as a continuous source of reward for their parents, a reward that persists even after the parents' death. As affirmed by the Prophet Muhammad in his hadith: *"When a person dies, their deeds come to an end except for three things: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for them."* (HR Bukhari-Muslim).

From this hadith, the role of children is understood not only as the continuation of the parent's efforts and the preservation of lineage but also as an investment in their parents' deeds, whose rewards continue indefinitely. This perhaps explains why Allah describes the event of a child's birth as something to be joyful about. In (Q.S. Maryam [19]: 7), Allah SWT states:

يٰزَكَرِيَّا اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اِسْمُهُ يَحْيٰى لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا ۝

"O Zechariah! We give you good news of a boy whose name will be John. We have not made for him before any name." (Q.S. Maryam [19]: 7)

Therefore, a child has the right to receive sustenance from their parents until they reach adulthood or marriage. Likewise, once the child reaches adulthood, they are obligated to care for their parents to the best of their ability if the need arises (Ontolay, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Children are a trust from Allah SWT, which can serve as both a worldly adornment and a trial. The trial refers to the test that the presence of children represents for parents, whether in moments of joy or hardship, as children can lead parents to betrayal of Allah due to the deep love they feel for their offspring. In expressing love and affection for children, parents must treat them as prescribed by the teachings of the prophets, guiding them toward goodness and truth, without excessively indulging their desires. Overindulgence can lead to detrimental outcomes. Additionally, the position of children as an entrusted responsibility for parents is also a trial because the parents are tested by whether they can fulfill the rights that children are entitled to. Therefore, what parents must consider are their rights and responsibilities within the framework of Islamic family law.

In Islam, children's rights are deeply rooted in the concept of trust, as these rights are regarded as a responsibility granted by Allah SWT to the parents. The fulfillment of these rights is essential for ensuring that children grow into healthy, faithful individuals who can contribute positively to society. By honoring these rights, parents not only fulfill their religious obligations but also play a pivotal role in shaping future generations. The rights of children in Islam encompass several key aspects, each vital to their development and well-being. One of the primary rights is the right to lineage (Nasab), which is of utmost importance in preserving the family lineage. This right ensures clarity in the child's identity, establishing their status within the family and granting them entitlement to the rights of the parents. Another fundamental right is the right to breastfeeding, which is unanimously recognized by scholars (fuqaha) as obligatory for the mother. This is directly supported by the Quran, specifically in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 233, which mandates that a mother must breastfeed her child and complete the process for two years. The right to upbringing also forms a critical part of children's rights, signifying the parent's responsibility to care for those unable to care for themselves, such as young children or those with mental incapacities. This includes the provision of education, nourishment, and all necessary care. Lastly, the right to maintenance (Nafkah) is obligatory for parents, as reaffirmed by Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 233. The majority of Islamic scholars agree that parents must provide for the maintenance of their children, which encompasses all material needs required for their growth and well-being.

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