

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Barat, Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia

Ruhama : Islamic Education Journal

p-ISSN:2615-2304, e-ISSN:2654-8437// Vol. 9 No. 1 Mei 2026, pp. 17-29

<https://doi.org/10.31869/ruhama.v9i1.7895>

The Role of Mothers and Fathers in Guiding Islamic Spirituality and Health of Children with Disabilities

Fathul Khair^{a, 1}, Mather^{b, 2}, Rinanda Adi Hardika^{c, 3}, Tika Desviacasari Hustra^{d, 4}^aInstitut Teknologi dan Kesehatan Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia^bInstitut Teknologi dan Kesehatan Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia^cInstitut Teknologi dan Kesehatan Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia^dInstitut Teknologi dan Kesehatan Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia¹khoir@stikmuhptk.ac.id, ²mathershodri@gmail.com, ³rinandaadihardikaaa@gmail.com,⁴tikadesvicasari@gmail.com*

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 2026-04-13

Revised: 2026-05-17

Accepted: 2026-05-24

Published: 2026-05-26

*Corresponding

Author:

Name: Fathul Khair

Email:

khoir@stikmuhptk.ac.id

Phone/WA:

085822326419

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the roles of mothers and fathers in guiding Islamic spirituality and health among children with disabilities. This research uses a systematic literature review approach by analyzing peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025. The findings reveal that parenting grounded in Islamic spiritual values, particularly the concept of children as a divine trust (amanah), significantly contributes to family resilience and child well-being. Modeling behavior and direct religious practices are identified as the most effective methods for spiritual development. In addition, religious coping plays a crucial role in reducing parental stress and improving psychological well-being. The roles of mothers and fathers are complementary, where mothers act as primary caregivers and fathers support decision-making and family stability. This study emphasizes the importance of integrating spiritual dimensions into parenting strategies for children with disabilities.

Keyword

Islamic spirituality; disability; parenting; religious coping

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran ibu dan ayah dalam membimbing spiritualitas Islam dan kesehatan anak dengan disabilitas. Metode yang digunakan adalah literature review sistematis terhadap artikel ilmiah terbitan tahun 2020–2025. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pola asuh berbasis nilai spiritual Islam, khususnya konsep anak sebagai amanah Allah, berkontribusi signifikan terhadap ketahanan keluarga dan kesejahteraan anak. Metode keteladanan dan praktik ibadah langsung menjadi pendekatan paling efektif. Selain itu, religious coping berperan penting dalam mengurangi stres orang tua dan meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis. Peran ibu dan ayah bersifat komplementer. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi dimensi spiritual dalam pengasuhan anak disabilitas.

Kata Kunci

spiritualitas Islam; anak disabilitas; peran orang tua; religious coping

INTRODUCTION

Fathul Khair, Mather, Rinanda Adi Hardika, Tika Desviacasari Hustra. (2026). The Role of Mothers and Fathers in Guiding Islamic Spirituality and Health of Children with Disabilities. *Ruhama : Islamic Education Journal*, Vol. 9, (No. 1), page.17-29 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31869/ruhama.v9i1.7895>

Children with disabilities, from an Islamic perspective, are regarded as a divine trust (*amanah*) from Allah SWT that must be safeguarded, educated, and guided optimally not only in physical and health dimensions but also in spiritual and psychological spheres. This philosophical foundation positions parents, particularly mothers and fathers, as the primary actors in a holistic caregiving process. Islamic spirituality serves as a fundamental basis for constructing meaning in life, strengthening family resilience, and shaping the quality of parent–child relationships. Within this framework, parenting extends beyond fulfilling basic needs to include the internalization of *tawhid* (monotheism), *akhlak* (moral conduct), and *ibadah* (religious practices) in daily life (Bensaid, 2021).

In practice, the number of children with disabilities continues to increase globally, including in Indonesia, presenting multidimensional challenges for families. Parents often experience heightened stress, emotional exhaustion, and long-term caregiving burdens (Wahab & Ramli, 2022). While prior studies have consistently shown that spirituality can function as a coping resource and resilience factor (Lahaije et al., 2024), the conceptualization of spirituality in these studies is predominantly generic and not sufficiently grounded in specific religious frameworks such as Islam. This indicates a critical limitation in capturing how faith-based values concretely shape parenting practices in Muslim families.

The key variables examined in this study include maternal role, paternal role, Islamic spirituality, religious coping, and the health and well-being of children with disabilities. Existing literature tends to adopt a fragmented analytical approach. Studies focusing on maternal roles emphasize mothers as primary caregivers responsible for daily care and spiritual socialization (Widyawati et al., 2022), whereas research on paternal roles largely frames fathers in terms of economic provision and emotional support (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2022). Although these studies acknowledge the complementary nature of parental roles, they rarely conceptualize mother–father dynamics as an integrated system of spiritual caregiving, particularly within a unified Islamic framework.

Similarly, studies on spiritual parenting have demonstrated positive outcomes. Mahfud (2023) highlights the effectiveness of Islamic authoritative parenting in promoting independence among children with disabilities, while Yusuf (2025) emphasizes the role of *amanah*-based perspectives in fostering parental acceptance. However, these studies primarily focus on outcome-based associations and tend to examine spirituality as an isolated variable, without systematically linking it to the interactive roles of both parents. Furthermore, Kadir (2024) shows that spiritual modeling (*uswah*) is more effective than verbal instruction, yet this insight is not extended into a broader analytical model that explains how such practices are distributed or negotiated between mothers and fathers.

Research on religious coping also demonstrates its importance in enhancing parental psychological well-being (Alemdar et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2025). However, prior studies predominantly examine religious coping as an individual-level psychological mechanism, particularly among mothers, rather than as a family-level process that interacts with parenting roles and influences child outcomes. Likewise, studies linking spirituality to the quality of life of children with disabilities (Carter, 2024; Gur & Reich, 2023) tend to focus on either the child or the family broadly, without articulating the mechanistic pathways through which parental spirituality

especially within an Islamic context translates into measurable health and well-being outcomes.

Therefore, the critical research gap lies not merely in the lack of variables studied, but in the absence of an integrative analytical framework. Previous research can be categorized into three dominant but disconnected strands: (1) studies on maternal or paternal roles in caregiving, (2) studies on spirituality or religious coping, and (3) studies on child or family well-being outcomes. These strands have largely been examined in isolation. No study has explicitly integrated the dual parental roles (mother and father), Islamic spirituality as a value system, and religious coping as a mediating mechanism within a single conceptual model, particularly in the context of children with disabilities.

Moreover, within the Indonesian context, existing studies (Daulay et al., 2025) highlight the importance of religion and culture but remain largely descriptive and lack theoretical integration. They do not critically examine how Islamic values are operationalized in parenting practices nor how these values interact dynamically with the roles of both parents in influencing child outcomes. This creates a contextual gap, given that Indonesia's socio-religious environment provides a unique setting where Islamic spirituality is deeply embedded in everyday life.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in its integrative and relational approach. First, this research moves beyond the mother-centric paradigm by positioning mothers and fathers as interdependent actors within a unified parenting system. Second, it advances the literature by embedding Islamic spirituality not as a background variable but as a central analytical construct that shapes parenting behaviors and meaning-making processes. Third, it introduces religious coping as a linking mechanism that connects parental roles and spirituality with child health and well-being outcomes. Finally, this study contributes contextually by situating the analysis within Indonesian Muslim families, thereby offering a context-sensitive model that bridges global discourse with local socio-religious realities.

On this basis, the present study aims to analyze the integrated roles of mothers and fathers in guiding Islamic spirituality and to examine how these roles, mediated by religious coping, influence the health and well-being of children with disabilities. By explicitly positioning itself against fragmented prior approaches, this study seeks to offer a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded contribution to the field of family, disability, and spirituality research.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The selection of this method is grounded in the research objective of comprehensively examining the roles of mothers and fathers in guiding Islamic spirituality and their implications for the health and well-being of children with disabilities. The qualitative approach enables contextual interpretation, while the SLR method ensures a systematic, transparent, and reproducible process in identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing prior studies.

Search Strategy and Data Sources

The data sources consist of secondary data obtained from reputable national and international academic journals published between 2020 and 2025. The databases consulted include Google Scholar and PubMed. The literature search was conducted

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using combinations of keywords and Boolean operators, such as: ("Islamic spirituality" OR "religious coping") AND ("parenting" OR "mother role" OR "father role") AND ("disability" OR "children with disabilities").

The initial search yielded approximately 245 articles across both databases.

Study Selection Process (PRISMA Flow)

The article selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, consisting of four stages:

1. Identification:

A total of 245 articles were identified through database searching. After removing duplicate records (n = 65) using Mendeley reference manager, 180 unique articles remained.

2. Screening:

Titles and abstracts were screened based on relevance to the study variables. At this stage, 110 articles were excluded due to irrelevance (e.g., not addressing disability, not involving parenting roles, or not related to spirituality/religious coping). Thus, 70 articles proceeded to full-text review.

3. Eligibility:

Full-text articles were assessed against inclusion and exclusion criteria. During this stage, 45 articles were excluded for the following reasons:

- Not specifically discussing both parental roles (mother/father) (n = 18)
- Using non-empirical or unclear methodologies (n = 12)
- Not explicitly addressing Islamic spirituality (n = 9)
- Incomplete full text or inaccessible data (n = 6)

4. Inclusion:

A final total of 25 articles met all criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis.

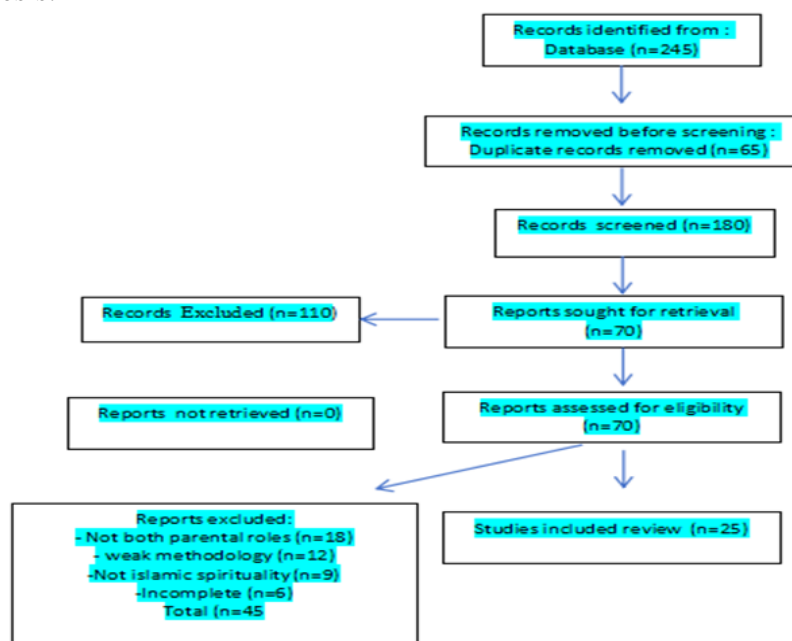


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria were:

1. Articles discussing parental roles (mothers and/or fathers)
2. Studies addressing Islamic spirituality or religious coping
3. Research focusing on children with disabilities
4. Peer-reviewed full-text articles published in English or Indonesian (2020–2025)

The exclusion criteria included:

1. Articles not indexed in reputable databases
2. Studies lacking methodological clarity or rigor
3. Opinion papers without empirical or theoretical grounding
4. Articles not directly relevant to the integration of variables under study

Quality Appraisal of Studies

To enhance methodological rigor, each selected article underwent a quality assessment using adapted criteria from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP), including:

1. Clarity of research objectives
2. Appropriateness of research design
3. Transparency of data collection and analysis
4. Validity and reliability/trustworthiness of findings
5. Relevance to the research question

Articles were categorized into high, moderate, and low quality. Only studies with moderate to high quality were included in the final synthesis to ensure robustness of findings.

Data Management

Reference management and deduplication were conducted using Mendeley. Data extraction was performed systematically using a data extraction matrix that included: author, year, study design, sample characteristics, key variables, and main findings. This ensured consistency and minimized bias in the synthesis process.

Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis with a narrative synthesis approach. The process followed six operational stages adapted from Braun and Clarke:

1. Familiarization with Data:
The researcher repeatedly read the selected articles to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.
2. Initial Coding:
Relevant data segments were coded based on key concepts such as *mother role*, *father role*, *Islamic spirituality*, *religious coping*, and *child well-being*.
3. Searching for Themes:
Codes were grouped into broader categories, leading to the emergence of initial themes (e.g., spiritual parenting practices, gendered caregiving roles, coping mechanisms).
4. Reviewing Themes:
Themes were refined by comparing across studies to ensure internal consistency and external distinction.
5. Defining and Naming Themes:
Final themes were clearly defined, including:

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- a. Integration of maternal and paternal roles
 - b. Islamic spirituality in parenting practices
 - c. Religious coping as an adaptive mechanism
 - d. Impact on child health and well-being
6. Producing the Narrative Synthesis:
The findings were synthesized narratively to highlight patterns, relationships, and research gaps across studies.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To enhance trustworthiness, this study applied:

1. Source triangulation: comparing findings across different countries, study designs, and populations
2. Audit trail: documenting each stage of the review process systematically
3. Critical reflection: evaluating potential biases in article selection and interpretation.

RESULTS&DISCUSSION

Based on the systematic literature review (SLR), a number of articles meeting the inclusion criteria were identified, specifically studies addressing the roles of mothers and fathers, Islamic spirituality, religious coping, and the condition of children with disabilities. Following the stages of identification, screening, and eligibility assessment, a total of 25 primary articles were selected for in-depth analysis. The expansion from the initial pool to 25 articles was conducted to enhance the comprehensiveness and robustness of the synthesis, while maintaining strict relevance to the intersection of disability, parenting roles, and Islamic spirituality. This relatively focused yet expanded corpus reflects the limited but growing body of literature in this specific domain.

The analysis does not merely aggregate findings but reveals recurring patterns, variations, and conceptual interconnections among studies. Five major thematic clusters emerged: (1) Islamic spiritual parenting, (2) religious coping among parents, (3) maternal dominance in caregiving, (4) the supportive yet under-optimized role of fathers, and (5) implications for the health and well-being of children with disabilities. Importantly, these themes are not independent; rather, they form a systemic and interrelated framework in which spirituality acts as a central organizing construct.

To provide a more systematic overview, the research findings are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of Included Studies (n = 25)

Theme	Focus of Analysis	Key Patterns	Variations Across Studies	Contributing Studies	Conceptual Link
Islamic Spiritual Parenting	Internalization of <i>tawhid</i> , <i>akhlaq</i> , and <i>ibadah</i> in children with disabilities	Consistent evidence that spirituality-based parenting improves child development	Differences in approach: experiential (practice-based) vs instructional (verbal guidance);	Bensaid (2021); Mahfud (2023); Kadir (2024); Hassan (2020); Abdullah &	Forms the core value system influencing parenting practices

Theme	Focus of Analysis	Key Patterns	Variations Across Studies	Contributing Studies	Conceptual Link
		and self-concept	experiential methods more effective	Ismail (2021)	
Religious Coping	Use of prayer, <i>tawakkul</i> , and meaning-making in caregiving stress	Strong evidence that religious coping reduces stress and enhances resilience	Varies from individual-level coping (maternal focus) to family-level adaptation (quality of life, harmony)	Alemdar et al. (2023); Hu et al. (2025); Daulay et al. (2025); Rahman et al. (2021); Zulkifli et al. (2024)	Acts as a mediating mechanism between spirituality and parenting behavior
Maternal Role	Daily caregiving, emotional support, and spiritual guidance	Mothers consistently identified as primary caregivers and central agents of value transmission	Dual effect: high involvement improves outcomes but increases stress and burden	Widyawati et al. (2022); Wahab & Ramli (2022); Fitriani et al. (2024); Pratama et al. (2023)	Functions as the primary operational actor in caregiving system
Paternal Role	Emotional, economic, and structural support within the family	Fathers contribute to family stability and decision-making	Limited involvement in direct caregiving and spiritual guidance; variability across contexts	Bourke-Taylor et al. (2022); Langley et al. (2020); Nugroho & Lestari (2022)	Represents a latent but underutilized resource in parenting
Family Resilience & Support	Adaptation, cohesion, and family functioning	Spirituality strengthens family resilience and adaptability	Variation in emphasis: some focus on emotional cohesion, others on structural adaptation	Lahaije et al. (2024); Gur & Reich (2023); Salim et al. (2025); Sari & Putri (2022)	Serves as a contextual system supporting parenting effectiveness
Child Health & Well-being	Psychological, social, and adaptive outcomes of children with disabilities	Positive association between spirituality-based parenting and child well-being	Mechanisms differ: meaning-making, social adaptation, or environmental support	Carter (2024); Hidayat & Kurniawan (2023); Karim (2023)	Represents the ultimate outcome of the parenting system

1. Spiritual Parenting in the Upbringing of Children with Disabilities

Across the reviewed studies, a consistent pattern indicates that spiritual parenting is a central approach in raising children with disabilities. However, a more critical synthesis reveals variation in how spirituality is conceptualized and implemented. Some studies emphasize behavioral transmission through modeling and habituation (e.g., daily prayer, religious routines), while others focus on value internalization and developmental outcomes, such as independence and self-concept.

This indicates that spiritual parenting operates on two interconnected levels: as a process (practice-based internalization) and as an outcome (child development and well-being). Furthermore, studies consistently show that experiential and practice-oriented approaches are more effective than verbal instruction alone, particularly for children with disabilities who benefit from concrete and repetitive learning experiences.

2. Religious Coping as a Parental Adaptation Mechanism

Religious coping emerges as a critical variable; however, the synthesis reveals differences in its level of influence. Some studies conceptualize it as an individual psychological strategy (primarily among mothers), focusing on stress reduction and emotional regulation. In contrast, other studies extend its role to a family-level adaptive mechanism, influencing family harmony, resilience, and quality of life.

This variation suggests that religious coping functions not only as a coping strategy but also as a mediating mechanism that translates spiritual values into adaptive parenting behaviors. In this sense, religious coping connects spirituality (as belief) with parenting practices (as action), thereby indirectly influencing child outcomes.

3. The Role of Mothers in the Care of Children with Disabilities

The dominance of mothers as primary caregivers is one of the most consistent findings across the 25 studies. Mothers are deeply involved in daily caregiving, education, and spiritual guidance, making them the central agents in shaping children's character and religious behavior.

However, a more analytical reading reveals a dual-effect pattern: while intensive maternal involvement enhances the effectiveness of caregiving and spiritual transmission, it also increases vulnerability to stress, emotional fatigue, and caregiving burden. This indicates that maternal roles are both foundational and risk-prone, depending on the availability of coping mechanisms and support systems.

4. The Role of Fathers in Family Support

Compared to maternal roles, findings on fathers show greater variability and relative underrepresentation. Fathers are generally positioned as providers of emotional and economic support, contributing to family stability and decision-making. However, their involvement in direct caregiving and spiritual guidance remains limited in most studies.

Despite this, several studies highlight that paternal involvement has a significant yet underutilized impact on family well-being. This suggests a discrepancy between the potential role of fathers and their actual engagement in spirituality-based parenting. The synthesis indicates that integrating fathers more actively into spiritual caregiving could strengthen the overall parenting system.

5. Impact on the Health and Well-Being of Children

The relationship between spirituality and child well-being is consistently supported, yet the mechanisms differ across studies. Some emphasize psychological dimensions (e.g., meaning in life, self-acceptance), while others highlight family and environmental factors (e.g., resilience, support systems).

A cross-study synthesis suggests that the influence of spirituality on child well-being is indirect and pathway-based, rather than purely direct. Specifically, the findings indicate a conceptual chain:

- Islamic spirituality shapes parental meaning-making and values
- Religious coping transforms these values into adaptive responses
- Parental roles (mother and father) operationalize these responses in caregiving practices
- Caregiving practices influence the child's psychological, social, and health outcomes

This demonstrates a multi-layered and systemic relationship, rather than isolated variable effects.

Integrative Analytical Synthesis

With the inclusion of 25 articles, the findings move beyond a descriptive summary toward a more analytical and integrative synthesis. The literature reveals consistent patterns but also important differences in emphasis, scope, and level of analysis.

Most notably, prior studies tend to examine variables in isolation either focusing on maternal roles, spirituality, or child outcomes without integrating them into a single framework. In contrast, this review highlights that the interaction between parental roles (mother and father), Islamic spirituality, and religious coping forms a dynamic and interdependent system that shapes the health and well-being of children with disabilities.

Thus, the main contribution of this analysis lies in reframing existing evidence into a coherent conceptual relationship, rather than merely compiling previous findings. At the same time, the relatively limited number of highly relevant studies ($n = 25$) underscores that this field remains underdeveloped, thereby reinforcing the need for further integrative and empirical research

Discussion

The findings of this study position Islamic spirituality not merely as a complementary aspect of parenting, but as a central organizing framework that shapes how families understand, respond to, and manage the experience of raising children with disabilities. This aligns with broader perspectives in spiritual parenting theory and family resilience theory, which emphasize that meaning-making systems particularly those grounded in religious beliefs play a crucial role in fostering adaptive capacity and psychological stability. In this context, Islamic spirituality functions as a meaning-making system that transforms caregiving from a burden-oriented experience into a value-driven responsibility rooted in the concept of *amanah*.

More importantly, the findings extend existing theoretical perspectives by demonstrating that spirituality operates not only at the level of belief but also through behavioral and relational mechanisms. The consistent emphasis on practices such as modeling (*uswah*) and habituation of worship suggests that spirituality becomes effective when it is embodied in daily interactions, rather than remaining abstract. This supports the notion that spiritual parenting can be understood as a process-oriented construct, integrating values, practices, and relational dynamics, which ultimately contribute to child development and well-being.

The role of religious coping further reinforces this interpretation. Rather than functioning solely as an individual psychological strategy, the findings suggest that religious coping acts as a translational mechanism that connects spiritual beliefs with

concrete parenting behaviors. This is consistent with stress and coping theory, which posits that coping strategies mediate the relationship between stressors and outcomes. However, this study advances the discussion by highlighting that religious coping in a spiritual context is not only reactive (stress reduction) but also proactive, shaping parental attitudes such as patience, acceptance, and emotional regulation. These qualities, in turn, influence the quality of caregiving and the family environment.

A critical dimension emerging from the analysis is the asymmetry in parental roles, particularly the dominance of mothers as primary caregivers. While this finding is consistent with existing literature, it raises important conceptual and practical concerns. From a family systems perspective, such imbalance may limit the development of a fully integrated parenting system, where both parents contribute equally to emotional, spiritual, and practical caregiving. The over-reliance on mothers not only increases their psychological burden but may also constrain the potential benefits that could arise from more active paternal involvement.

The relatively limited engagement of fathers especially in the domain of spiritual guidance warrants critical reflection. While fathers are often positioned as providers of economic stability and decision-making authority, this structural role does not automatically translate into relational or spiritual engagement. This gap suggests that paternal roles are not inherently absent but rather socially and culturally mediated, shaped by norms that prioritize instrumental over expressive involvement. Consequently, the underutilization of fathers in spiritual parenting represents both a practical limitation and a conceptual gap in the literature.

In addition, the Indonesian socio-cultural context introduces another layer of complexity. Although Islamic values are deeply embedded in society, their translation into parenting practices is not uniform. Variations in religious understanding, educational background, and socio-economic conditions influence how spirituality is interpreted and applied within families. This indicates that spirituality-based parenting should not be viewed as a homogeneous construct, but rather as a context-sensitive practice that is shaped by local cultural dynamics. Therefore, while the cultural context offers strong potential for integrating spirituality into parenting, it also presents challenges related to consistency and implementation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the relationship between Islamic spirituality, parental roles, and child well-being is systemic and multidimensional. Spirituality provides the foundational values, religious coping translates these values into adaptive parental responses, and parental roles operationalize them within everyday caregiving practices. However, this system remains partially fragmented, particularly due to the limited integration of paternal involvement and contextual variability in spiritual practices.

From a conceptual standpoint, this study contributes by proposing that effective parenting for children with disabilities requires not only the presence of spiritual values but also their integration within a balanced parental system and adaptive coping mechanisms. From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for interventions that: (1) strengthen fathers' involvement in both caregiving and spiritual guidance, (2) support mothers in managing caregiving burden, and (3) promote a more contextualized understanding of Islamic spirituality in parenting practices.

Thus, rather than merely affirming the positive role of spirituality, this discussion underscores the importance of integration, balance, and contextualization in developing a holistic and sustainable parenting model for children with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that the integration of maternal and paternal roles, Islamic spirituality, and religious coping constitutes an important framework for improving the well being of children with disabilities and strengthening family resilience. Spiritual parenting based on *tauhid*, parental role modeling, and the habituation of religious practices emerges as a key mechanism influencing children's development and family psychological well being. Although mothers remain the primary caregivers, fathers' involvement is still relatively limited, indicating the need for a more balanced and integrative parenting approach.

The main contribution of this study is the development of an integrative conceptual perspective that connects parental roles, Islamic spirituality, and religious coping within a unified framework, extending beyond the fragmented focus of previous studies. Practically, these findings emphasize the importance of increasing fathers' participation, supporting maternal well being, and incorporating spirituality into family-based intervention and support programs.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations, including the limited number of studies reviewed and the diversity of cultural contexts that may affect the generalizability of findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct empirical and longitudinal studies to test the proposed integrative model across different cultural settings, as well as to explore effective strategies for strengthening paternal involvement and operationalizing spirituality into measurable parenting practices.

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