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FATHERLESSNESS AND QUR'ANIC SOLUTIONS IN INDONESIAN MUSLIM FAMILIES BASED ON AL-MİZĀN BY ȚABĀȚABĀ'Ī

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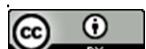
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Abstract

Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, is facing a growing crisis of fatherlessness, with 2,999,577 children reported to have lost access to the functional role of a father in their development (BPS, 2021). Previous studies in Indonesia have largely examined fatherlessness from psychological, sociological, or normative perspectives, focusing on its impacts or offering general Islamic moral guidance. However, there remains a lack of a philosophically grounded, Qur'an-based framework that conceptualizes fatherlessness as a functional crisis while providing a systematic and prescriptive solution rooted in classical exegesis. Addressing this gap, this study critically examines the philosophical and normative foundations of the father's role through the socio-philosophical interpretation of Allāmah Muhammad Husain Țabāṭabā'ī in Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān. Employing qualitative thematic exegesis (tafsīr al-mawdū'ī) with a socio-philosophical approach, the analysis focuses on QS. al-Baqarah: 233, QS. al-Isrā': 24, and QS. at-



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Tahrīm: 6. The findings reveal that fatherlessness should be understood not as biological absence, but as functional absence (mafhum), reflected in the erosion of paternal responsibilities. Tabātabā'i conceptualizes fatherhood as an expression of qawwāmah grounded in fitrah and functional justice, manifested in three inseparable pillars: provider, protector and source of affection, and moral leader. The study contributes by formulating the Three Pillars of the Father's Role model, offering a holistic framework to address the psychosocial and moral consequences of fatherlessness in contemporary Indonesian Muslim families.

Keywords: Fatherless, Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Quran, Paternal Role, Socio-Philosophical Solution, Tabātabā'i.

A. Introduction

Recent scholarship has increasingly problematized *fatherlessness* beyond its conventional association with the physical absence of fathers due to death or marital dissolution(Dearden dkk., 2013; Flouri dkk., 2015; Marco-Gracia, 2021; Zhou dkk., 2024). Current studies highlight a more complex and latent condition in which fathers remain physically present within the household yet fail to perform meaningful paternal functions(Fathoni dkk., 2024; Ishida, 2010; Liu & Xiang, 2025; Zharima dkk., 2025). In this expanded conceptualization, fatherlessness is understood as the erosion of the paternal role at the psychological, emotional, and relational levels—marked by the absence of affective engagement, moral guidance, and nurturing authority(Freeks, 2022; Raffar & Hamjah, 2015). This functional disconnection signals a structural crisis within the family unit, where spatial presence no longer guarantees paternal involvement, thereby reshaping how fatherhood is theorized in contemporary family and social studies(Babul & Luise, t.t, hlm. 36–37; Lamb, 2017; Saunders, 2016, hlm. 20).

This role dysfunction, classified as father absence, is suspected to cause the degradation of children's rights to protection, care (tarbiyah), and education. This degradation causally implies a failure to internalize values, significant moral disorientation(Sulaeman dkk., 2024; Wijayanti & Fauziah, 2020, hlm. 95–106), as well as an escalation in the risk of antisocial behavior, which leads to deep psychological vulnerabilities such as insecure attachment and low self-esteem (Rahmi, 2023, pp. 151–152) . This structural crisis, which has consequences for the erosion of human resource quality in the future, is a global problem that urgently needs to be analyzed in order to



formulate comprehensive and sustainable conceptual solutions(Istiyati et al., 2020, pp. 12–19) .

The urgency of this substantial problem is clearly reflected in Indonesia's demographic context. Data released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2024) in 2021 indicates that around 20.9% of Indonesia's total child population is growing up without a father figure. Considering that the total child population reaches 30.83 million (BPS, 2021) , it can be concluded that millions of children are at risk of the destructive impacts of fatherlessness. The significant increase in divorce cases in Indonesia, which reached 448,126 cases in 2023 (BPS, 2023) , is considered a dominant factor contributing to the absence of functional roles, mainly due to post-divorce conflicts that directly interfere with the father's co-parenting function (Rahmah, 2020) .

In addition, other exogenous factors such as labor migration and the crisis of masculinity in popular culture and urbanization also reinforce the pattern of functional absence, where the role of the father is reduced to that of an economic provider without adequate emotional presence (Astuti & Masykur, 2015, pp. 65–70) . The implications range from academic problems, through economic instability that disrupts focus on learning, to a significant weakening of values education and role models in Indonesian Muslim society.

The issue of *fatherlessness* cannot be ignored and allowed to drag on for the sake of a good life for the children as the future generation of the nation. To find a solution to the crisis of fatherhood or fatherlessness, a major contribution is needed in the field of science to conduct ideological research based on the study of the Qur'an, because the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim. It is very important to participate in finding solutions to fatherlessness by analyzing the role of fathers in the Qur'an with a socio-philosophical approach that is rarely found in many works of interpretation, especially in Indonesia.

According to UNICEF Indonesia's official website, 14,495 children in Indonesia have lost their fathers due to Covid-19. This indicates that fatherlessness still has a negative impact on child development in Indonesia. This issue of fatherlessness prompts society to re-examine the role of fathers in the family, particularly in relation to its negative impact on children's growth and development(Khoiruddin dkk., 2025; Maulida



& Abdurrahman, 2024). This encourages society, especially Muslims in Indonesia, to be aware that there is a situation that needs attention, namely when Indonesian children are in a crisis regarding the role of fathers in their growth and development (Munir dkk., 2024; Park, 2007). The loss of affection from a father may seem insignificant, but in fact, a father's affection is very important for a child's growth process, as it is a source of comfort for a child in facing life's difficulties in the future (Juhari dkk., 2013). Furthermore, the lack of a father's role has a major impact on children, such as the emergence of negative risks of social behavior disorders, increased psychological problems, and lack of self-confidence (Idris, 2013: 73).

In the study "The Impact of Fatherlessness on Children's Character in Islam," it is stated that children who interact more with their fathers have higher IQs than children who interact less with their fathers (Fajarrini & Umam, 2023: 24). Another study also states that children who are not close to their fathers are difficult to persuade, cannot regulate their emotions when their desires are not fulfilled, and become children who are difficult to adapt (Maryam & Mulyaniapi, 2022: 7). A quantitative study entitled "*The Role of Fathers in Early Childhood Care Programs During the Covid-19 Pandemic from the Paternal Involvement Dimension*", involving 256 fathers of young children, found that paternal involvement during the pandemic had a significant positive impact. This involvement operated through three key dimensions: direct engagement in daily interactions that support children's socio-emotional and cognitive development; fathers' physical and psychological presence, which fosters a sense of security and accessibility; and paternal responsibility in decision-making and moral-religious guidance, which strengthens children's independence, discipline, and value formation. (Rahayu, 2023: 17-23).

Based on the foregoing discussion, the persistence of fatherlessness poses a serious threat to the well-being of children as the nation's future generation and therefore cannot be ignored. Addressing this crisis requires a rigorous scholarly contribution that examines fatherhood through a Qur'an-based ideological framework, particularly given Indonesia's Muslim-majority context. Accordingly, a socio-philosophical analysis of the Qur'anic conception of the father's role is essential, especially as such an approach remains underexplored in existing exegetical studies in Indonesia.



Although previous research has been conducted on themes related to the role of fathers, such as by Alifya Bussaina Karim, with the title "The Ideal Role of the Father in the Qur'an," which aimed to answer the question of how Quraish Shihab interprets the verses on the role of fathers in the Qur'an and to what extent the interpretation of these verses is relevant to the current context (Karim, 2022: Xix). Then there is Munajati Rahmah's research, entitled "Fathers as Educators of Children According to the Qur'an", which explains the perfect father figure, his responsibilities, and his position as an educator from the perspective of the Qur'an through the stories of the Prophets, namely Prophet Ibrahim as, Prophet Nuh as, Prophet Ya'kub as. and a person named Lukman (Rahmah, 2020: 2-67). Siti Maryam Munjiat's study on "The Influence of Fatherlessness on Children's Character from an Islamic Perspective" also aims to answer the question of the impact of the father's role on the child's psychology by examining fatherlessness and its effect on child development in greater depth (Munjiat, 2017: 110-115).

Arsyia Fajarrini and Aji Nasrul Umam's study on "The Impact of Fatherlessness on Children's Character in the Islamic Perspective." analyzes the impact of fatherlessness on children's character from an Islamic perspective (), showing that the position of the father in Islam is not only as an imam but also as an educator academically, spiritually, morally, and emotionally (Fajarrini & Umam, 2023: 20-28). These literature reviews did not conduct an in-depth analysis using a socio-philosophical approach to the interpretation of the Qur'an. Research gaps and contributions Previous studies focusing on fatherlessness in Indonesia in general were distributed across two main thematic focuses, namely psychological and socio-empirical impact analysis(Munjiat, 2017, p.. 110-115) , and a general normative review of the role of fathers in Islam without being supported by an axiological philosophical framework(Fajarrini & Umam, 2023, pp. 20-28) . Another crucial gap is the absence of a rigidly structured, functional-prescriptive model for preventing fatherlessness, one with a solid philosophical basis in the Qur'an that offers practical solutions. Therefore, the research questions of this study are: How does the concept of *fatherlessness* according to the Transformation of Etymological, Terminological, and Sociopsychological Paradigms work? What solutions does Thaba'thabai offer in Al-Mizan regarding the issue of fatherlessness, which has a significant impact on children's psychology in the context of Indonesian families?



B. Methods

This study is a qualitative research based on *library research* through interpretive text analysis in contemporary interpretive discourse. The intellectual foundation of this study is built on the philosophical social interpretation approach (*al-Tafsīr al-Ijtīmā'ī al-Falsafī*) of 'Allāmah Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī. Through this approach, this research integrates ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions to explore the essence of the paternal role and formulate theoretical propositions that provide solutions to the problem of fatherlessness in the stability of contemporary families (Gafar & Nurussobah, 2025) .

Primary sources are drawn exclusively from the monumental work *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, focusing on key verses that implicitly contain the functional mandate of the father (*mafhūm*), such as QS. al-Baqarah: 233, QS. al-Isrā': 24, and QS. at-Taḥrīm: 6. Secondary sources include reputable journal articles, scientific monographs, and authoritative reports from institutions such as BPS and UNICEF that are relevant to the construction of fatherlessness, modern parenting theories, and al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's methodological principles.

Data was collected using documentation techniques. The initial stage involved thematic verse taxonomy and systematic review of explanations in the book al-Mīzān. Supporting literature was curated based on its substantive relevance to the crisis of fatherhood in Indonesia and global Islamic discourse, as well as its coherence with modern psychological theories such as Attachment Theory (Bretherton, 1992a) and Social Learning Theory (Ansani & H. Muhammad Samsir, 2022) .

The data was analyzed by applying al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's technique of *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* (*interpreting the Qur'an with the Qur'an*) in order to mitigate the subjectivity of the interpreter(Shodiq, 2019) . The analysis was then deepened in a contextual-philosophical manner to reveal the ontological and epistemological dimensions related to the principles of *fitrah* and *qawwāmah*. An axiological synthesis is then conducted by comparing the findings of the "*Three Pillars of the Father's Role*" interpretation with contemporary psychology to formulate prescriptive-functional solutions for strengthening family resilience. This study is also based on al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's analytical *al-mawdū'ī* (thematic)



interpretation method, reinforced by the framework of Islamic family ethics based on *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah (hifz al-nasl)*. The support of sociological and family psychological perspectives serves as a functional justification for the relevance of the values of the Qur'an to modern human development (al., 2018).

C. Results and Discussion

Results

Three Pillars of the Father's Role: Normative, Philosophical, and Axiological Foundations of Thaba'thaba's Solution to Fatherlessness

The term fatherless is not explicitly found (*mantūq*) in the text of the Qur'an, the substance of the problem can be extracted in depth through implicit meaning (*mafhum*) based on the Qur'an's emphasis on the urgency of the paternal role (Tabatabā'ī, 1997a). Through the lens of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Muhammad Husayn al-Tabatabā'ī, the "Three Pillars of the Father's Role" can be formulated as the normative, philosophical, and axiological foundations for mitigating the crisis of the father's presence in modern Muslim families.

First Pillar: Ontological and Financial Responsibility (QS. al-Baqarah: 233)

Al-Tabatabā'ī's exegetical analysis of this verse yields several fundamental philosophical-juridical points (Tabatabā'ī, 1997a) :

1) Ontological Mandate and Covenantal Relationship

The use of the phrase *al-mawlūdu lahu* (he for whom the child was born) is a very precise term that replaces the direct mention of the word father (*al-wālid*). According to al-Tabatabā'ī, this term implies that ontologically, the father has an inherent and unbroken primary responsibility for the child's existence. The child is seen as a trust that is attributed by lineage (*nasab*) to the father, so that all consequences of the child's survival become his most fundamental responsibility. This shows that the role of the father is not a voluntary choice, but a natural mandate inherent in his existence as a man who has undergone the process of reproduction.

2) Financial Obligations as an Educational Tool.

Al-Tabatabā'ī emphasizes that fulfilling the material needs of children (*rizquhunna*



wa kiswatuhan na bi al-ma'rūf) is not merely an administrative matter. The standard of *bi al-ma'rūf* (in a good/proper manner) requires fathers to provide nutrition, clothing, and a standard of living that is in accordance with social norms and human dignity. In al-Tabāṭabā'ī's perspective, the financial stability provided by the father is an instrument so that children are not distracted by poverty in pursuing intellectual and spiritual paths. Neglecting this pillar causes children to lose their sense of material security, which often becomes the initial gateway to fatherlessness in the psychological dimension.

3) The Balanced Partnership Paradigm (Duality of Parenting).

The use of the pronouns *bi waladīhā* (towards her child—referring to the mother) and *bi waladīhī* (towards his child—referring to the father) side by side emphasizes that fathers and mothers are equal cooperative partners. Al-Tabāṭabā'ī interprets this as a balance of domestic workloads; where the father provides the infrastructure of life (economic/security) and the mother provides the superstructure of love (biological/affective). Both complement each other in the ecosystem of child development without either party exploiting the other.

4) Manifestations of Piety in the Domestic Sphere.

The fulfillment of economic responsibilities is seen as the most tangible form of piety (*taqwā*). Al-Tabāṭabā'ī emphasizes that a father's piety is not measured solely by formal rituals, but rather by the extent to which he manifests (*zāhir*) his responsibilities in the household. Neglecting the material rights of the family is a violation of Allah's limits, which has spiritual and social implications. Therefore, it can be asserted that fathers bear full authority in ensuring the financial stability and educational facilities of their children as a manifestation of spiritual trust. Failure in this pillar creates a condition of economic *fatherlessness* that undermines the dignity of children in society.

Second Pillar: Metaphor of Protection and Affective Education (QS. al-Isrā': 24)

Al-Tabāṭabā'ī's analysis of the paternal affective dimension through a metaphorical-linguistic approach includes (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1997b) :

1) Symbolism of Total Protection and Humility

The metaphor "lowering the wings of humiliation" (*janāḥa adh-dhull*) is



interpreted by al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī as the personification of a mother bird embracing and protecting her young with tenderness. This description is very profound; "wings of humility" implies that a father, despite his authority and power, must set aside his ego and be humble (tawadhu) in front of his children. Fathers must be emotionally accessible figures, positioning themselves as a "secure base" that provides emotional stability amid harsh external dynamics.

2) The Essence of Tarbiyah as an Integrative Process.

The *rabbayāni ṣagīrā* prayer emphasizes that the role of parenting (*tarbiyah*) is not merely physical growth, but rather a long process that includes the internalization of ethics (adab), intellectual stimulation, and mental nurturing. Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī emphasizes that the word *rabbayāni* comes from a root word that means "to grow gradually" (). This implies that fathers must be present in every phase of their children's development, providing appropriate stimulation until their children reach full mental and spiritual maturity.

3) The Impact of Affective Presence on Resilience.

The emotional presence of fathers has been proven to build healthy attachment. Children who receive paternal affection tend to have stronger mental resilience, the courage to explore, and better social adaptation skills. Conversely, the absence of this emotional pillar causes children to seek validation from the wrong figures outside the home, which is at the heart of the psychological crisis of fatherlessness.

Therefore, fathers must be actively involved in providing a safe space and consistent emotional affection. Fathers who fail in this pillar will give birth to a generation that experiences paternal affection deprivation, which is prone to mental fragility.

Third Pillar: Spiritual Leadership and Preservation (QS. at-Taḥrīm: 6)

Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's analysis of the moral authority and transcendental leadership of the father includes (Tabāṭabā'ī, 1997c) :

1) The Mandate of Proactive Leadership (Paternal Authority).

The injunction *qū anfusakum wa ahlikum nārā* ("protect yourselves and your



families from the fire [of Hell]"') is interpreted as assigning a proactive and anticipatory responsibility to the family leader. Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī underscores that, as the head of the household, the father bears a transcendental mandate to avert moral degradation within the domestic sphere. In this framework, the father is not merely an economic gatekeeper, but a spiritual compass who guides family members away from existential meaninglessness and safeguards them from moral and spiritual harm.

2) The Principle of Authority through Modeling.

Drawing on the prophetic traditions cited by al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the effectiveness of paternal leadership is contingent upon the coherence between verbal instruction and embodied practice. Fathers safeguard their families not through authoritarian control or coercion, but through moral exemplarity (*uswah*), whereby the values they teach are first realized in their own conduct. A discrepancy between moral injunctions and personal behavior—such as advocating honesty while acting dishonestly—undermines the very foundation of spiritual leadership.

The failure of fathers to assume this moral leadership role contributes to the emergence of a generation marked by "value disorientation." In the digital age, characterized by pervasive external influences, the absence of the father as a primary filter and mediator of values results in the erosion of ethical orientation within the family. Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī implicitly cautions that eschatological loss is preceded by moral collapse in worldly life, rooted in the absence of effective paternal guidance.

Within al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's framework, every child is born with an innate divine disposition (*fitrah*), and the father functions as its guardian, responsible for ensuring that this nature is not corrupted by a morally deficient environment. Paternal leadership thus entails cultivating conditions conducive to the growth of faith and virtuous character. Accordingly, fathers serve as moral authorities and spiritual compasses who lead through integrity, foster ethical formation, and uphold transcendental values. Failure in this dimension constitutes the most severe form of fatherlessness, as it undermines the spiritual foundation of the child.

The Role of the Father in the Interpretation of Al-Mīzān: Characteristics and Methodology



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Based on an analysis of the "Three Pillars of the Father's Role," the following table outlines the distinctive characteristics of al-Tabāṭabā'ī's methodology in deeply analyzing the text of the Qur'an, complete with references to the verses under study:

Table 1. Distinctive Characteristics of al-Tabāṭabā'ī's Methodology

Characteristic s	Subject of Study	Description	Concept of the Role of the Father	Forms of Fatherlessness
Semantic Analysis & Precision of Diction	QS. al-Baqarah: 233	Examining the selection of specific words that replace general terms to reveal philosophical meanings.	The use of the phrase <i>al-mawlūdu lahu</i> as a substitute for the word "father" to emphasize the ontological mandate.	The role of the father is considered a voluntary choice or a legal status only, not an inherent existential responsibility.
Philosophical-Ontological Approach	QS. al-Baqarah: 233	Viewing the role of humans as a natural mandate inherent in the existence of creation.	The role of the father is seen as a consequence of the reproductive process, which is mandatory by nature.	The emergence of apathy; fathers feel they can relinquish their responsibilities if the legal relationship (marriage) ends.
The Partnership Paradigm (Relationship)	QS. al-Baqarah: 233	Analyzing the use of paired pronouns to indicate role balance.	Emphasizing that fathers (infrastructure) and mothers (superstructure) are equal partners in the child's ecosystem.	There is an imbalance in domestic workload (exploitation); mothers experience role fatigue while fathers experience



				role alienation.
Metaphorical-Linguistic Interpretation	QS. al-Isrā': 24	Exploring the meaning behind metaphors to explain developmental psychology concepts.	The metaphor "lowering the wings" (<i>janāḥa adh-dhull</i>) as the father's obligation to be a <i>secure base</i> () for the child.	The father is trapped in a rigid authoritarianism pattern; the child loses emotional security and experiences <i>insecure attachment</i> .
Axiological-Practical Approach	Social	Connecting revelatory texts with their tangible manifestations in daily domestic piety.	A father's piety is measured by his actual actions in fulfilling the material and spiritual rights of his family in an appropriate manner (<i>ma'rūf</i>).	Religion becomes merely a formal ritualistic symbol; crises in children's welfare and education persist even though the father is devout in his worship.
Leadership Based on Modeling	QS. at-Tahrīm: 6	Emphasizing authority that arises from integrity and personal example (<i>uswah</i>).	The command <i>qū anfusakum</i> requires fathers to <i>improve themselves</i> before guiding their families.	There is hypocrisy in authority; children lose respect due to the discontinuity between their father's words and actions.



Implicit Explanation (Mafhūm)	QS. at-Tahrīm: 6	Extracting solutions to modern problems through the urgency of the role emphasized in the text.	Identifying solutions to the crisis of <i>fatherlessness</i> through the Qur'an's emphasis on the absolute "presence of the role."	The Qur'an is considered irrelevant to modern issues; the crisis of the father's role is not addressed because it is fixated on classical textual meanings.
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Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that the defining characteristic of al-Tabātabā'ī's interpretive approach lies in his capacity to integrate textual analysis (linguistic), rational reflection (philosophical), and empirical reality (social)(Shodiq, 2019) . Rather than remaining at the level of lexical meaning, he probes the deeper essence of Qur'anic expressions and translates them into axiological guidance for contemporary Muslim families. Ignoring this integrative approach risks perpetuating a condition of "functional orphanhood," in which fathers are physically present within the household yet substantively absent in fulfilling their essential roles.

Discussion

Fatherless: Transformation of the Etymological, Terminological, and Sociopsychological Paradigms

Recent scholarly discussions on fatherlessness have moved beyond narrow definitional boundaries and increasingly emphasize its broader social and psychological implications(Fatima, 2024). In contemporary academic discourse—particularly within family sociology and developmental psychology—fatherlessness is no longer treated merely as a legal or biographical condition, such as orphanhood, but is understood as a multidimensional and complex sociopsychological phenomenon that reflects shifts in



family structure, parental roles, and patterns of paternal engagement(Fajarrini & Umam, 2023) .

Building on this broader understanding, the concept of fatherlessness has also undergone a significant terminological transformation(Lamb, 2017). It is no longer confined to the notion of "physical absence" resulting from death, divorce, or labor migration, but increasingly refers to forms of "functional absence" characterized by psychological and emotional detachment from the father figure(Zharima dkk., 2025). This shift reveals a paradox within many modern urban families, where fathers may be physically and spatially present in the household yet experience role paralysis or functional apathy. In such contexts, paternal involvement is often reduced to economic provision alone, while essential functions of nurturing, value transmission, emotional protection, and intellectual stimulation remain neglected. (Diana & Agustina, 2023) .

Sociopsychological literature identifies this condition as father hunger—a chronic emotional deprivation in which children lose their fundamental right to receive crucial paternal stimulation(Benthall, 2019). This stimulation is crucial for the development of personality integrity, the formation of self-confidence, and the stabilization of children's social and sexual identities. As a result, children may physically have a father, but mentally grow up in a state of "functional orphanhood(Afuan dkk., 2023)." The implications include value disorientation, difficulty in building interpersonal relationships in the future, and vulnerability to deviant behavior as a form of compensation for the absence of an authority figure at home. Thus, fatherlessness is conceptually defined as a state of deprivation of a child's right to a holistic paternal role, whether caused by permanent biological absence or destructive psychological failure to engage with the child's growth and development.

The Exegetical Thought of al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī in *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*: Three Pillars of the Father's Role

The results of an in-depth examination of the exegetical thought of 'Allāmah Muhammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his magnum opus, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, particularly through an intertextual reading of QS. al-Baqarah: 233, QS. al-Isrā': 24, and QS. at-Tahrim: 6 indicates the existence of a fundamental structure called the "Three



Pillars of the Father's Role". This structure functions as a radical theoretical and practical antithesis to the increasingly prevalent phenomenon of contemporary *fatherlessness*. The first pillar positions the father as the provider of sustenance and material protection, which is strongly rooted in the dictum of QS. al-Baqarah: 233. In al-Tabāṭabā'ī's philosophical discourse, he emphasizes that the fulfillment of material needs by a father is not merely a daily economic transaction or the fulfillment of legalistic obligations, but rather an existential foundation for the creation of family peace (*sakīnah*). Provision given in a *ma'rūf* (appropriate and proportional) manner creates a physically stable environment, which in turn mitigates the psychological pressure on children due to uncertainty of resources(Tabāṭabā'ī, 1997d) .

Theoretically, this first pillar has a linear correlation with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs (Mcleod, 2025) , which establishes physical security and material stability as absolute prerequisites for children's cognitive growth, self-actualization, and intellectual exploration. When these basic needs are neglected due to the absence of the father's role in providing for the family, children will be trapped in a state of existential " " deficit. Neglecting this pillar not only limits access to adequate educational facilities, but also triggers chronic emotional instability. Children who grow up in an environment with uncertain paternal support tend to experience *future anxiety*, which in the long term manifests itself in the form of antisocial behavior, low self-esteem, or even clinical depression. Al-Tabāṭabā'ī views financial support as a manifestation of God's love channeled through the father's hands, so failure in this pillar is seen as a severing of the chain of divine mercy in the smallest unit of society.

The second pillar, which is derived from the profound meaning of QS. al-Isrā': 24, reinforces the role of the father as an emotional protector and primary source of emotional security. Al-Tabāṭabā'ī interprets the command to "lower the wings of humility" with compassion as a reciprocal, sacred, and transformative emotional bond. Here, the father is no longer viewed rigidly as a cold, sole authority figure, but rather as an "emotional harbor" for the child's psychological development. The father's emotional presence serves as a preventive mechanism against systemic anxiety and the formation of *insecure attachment* patterns. Within the framework of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992b) , an affectively present father figure



provides what is known as a "secure base" (Ningsih, 2020) . The existence of this base is crucial; it allows children to have the courage to explore the outside world, take calculated risks, and build strong mental resilience because they know that there is an authority figure who supports them unconditionally.

The absence of this affective pillar creates a condition that in psychology is referred to as "*father hunger*." This condition drives children to seek self-validation and identity in inappropriate figures outside the family environment, which often leads to promiscuity or deviant behavior as a form of compensation for the emotional void at home. Al-Tabāṭabā'ī in his interpretation suggests that a healthy emotional relationship between father and child is a microcosm of the relationship between a servant and his creator; if this relationship is flawed, then the child's perception of moral authority will also be distorted. Therefore, the presence of the father in this second pillar requires active emotional involvement, deep empathy , and quality time that cannot be replaced by material luxuries(Tabāṭabā'ī, 1997e) .

The third pillar, manifested in QS. at-Taḥrīm: 6, establishes the father as the leader (*qawwām*) and moral educator who is metaphysically responsible for protecting the spiritual integrity of family members from the destruction of immoral values. Al-Tabāṭabā'ī emphasizes that the command "protect yourself and your family from the fire of hell" is a protective-instructional educational mandate. In the perspective of *Social Learning Theory* developed by Albert Bandura, this pillar affirms the position of the father as the main role model or moral *prototype* for children (Ansani & H. Muhammad Samsir, 2022) . The process of learning values in children does not occur through rigid verbal indoctrination, but through a process of observation, imitation, and identification with the father's actual behavior. The absence of guidance and role models not only results in value disorientation in children, but also systemic failure in internalizing the concepts of ethical responsibility, self-discipline, and moral boundaries necessary to navigate the complexities of modern social life, which is often unethical.

The crisis of *fatherlessness* in Indonesia is currently exacerbated by the phenomenon of family value disorientation and the increasingly massive commercialization of gender roles. The tide of modernity tends to degrade the urgency of the masculine role in the domestic sphere to merely an "economic machine" or a financial



supporter. This phenomenon often stems from a reduction in the meaning of the concept of *qawwāmah* in QS. an-Nisā': 34. Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī sharply criticizes narrow patriarchal views; he understands *qawwāmah* not as dominant, authoritarian, or oppressive gender supremacy, but as a responsibility of *servant leadership*, managerial, and protective leadership to ensure the physical and spiritual well-being of family members. This reduction in meaning has caused many fathers in Indonesia to feel that they have fulfilled their duties simply by working, even though the Qur'an demands a multidimensional presence (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1997f).

The transformation of the father's role as a source of affection in QS. al-Isrā': 24 proves that the quality of interaction—which includes mental presence, empathetic communication, and active involvement in children's daily activities—is far more crucial than simply the quantity of physical presence without emotional involvement. This is explicitly reflected in the historical trajectory of Prophet Ibrahim AS as recorded in QS. Ibrāhīm: 37. Even though he was geographically and physically separated from Ismail AS for a very long time in order to carry out divine commands, Ibrahim AS was still able to construct the spiritual well-being and future orientation of his descendants through visionary prayers, careful strategic planning, and continuous transcendental communication. Ibrahim AS's success in educating Ismail AS to become a strong and absolutely obedient person proves that "paternal presence" can transcend the boundaries of space and time through strong spiritual connections and a value-based structured parenting system. This is the antithesis of the modern father who is physically present at home but whose mind is absorbed by gadgets or work, creating a condition of "a father who is present but absent" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī).

Furthermore, the role of the father as a moral educator in QS. at-Taḥrīm: 6 requires a continuous process of self-improvement before a father can provide guidance to his family. The command "take care of yourself" precedes "your family," which implies that a father's moral authority will only be effective if it is based on personal integrity. In this context, the absence of positive behavioral models results in a "vacuum of authority figures" that causes children to fail to understand the concepts of ethical structure and personal integrity. The practical implications of these three pillars must be viewed as an indivisible functional whole. Axiologically, the synchronization of the pillars of



sustenance, affection, and morality offers a comprehensive solution that transcends the conventional parenting paradigm, which often dichotomously separates the roles of provider and caregiver. Within al-Tabāṭabā'ī's framework, a father must be both simultaneously: the hand that gives and the chest that embraces.

The fundamental contribution and novelty of this study lies in the conceptual redefinition of *fatherlessness* through the functional-axiological lens of al-Tabāṭabā'ī. This research offers a significant paradigm shift: *fatherlessness* is no longer defined solely in legal-biological terms—such as the legal status of an orphan or physical absence due to divorce and death—but rather as a "*functional absence*" of the paternal *role*. This gives rise to a new term in this study, namely "functionally orphaned children." This means that a child can be categorized as experiencing a *fatherless* crisis even if his father is physically present at home every day, if his parenting, adequate material protection, and spiritual guidance functions are not carried out or are neglected. This redefinition is highly relevant for analyzing psychosocial problems in urban families in Indonesia that are administratively complete but functionally broken.

This study offers a holistic solution model in the form of "Three Pillars of Fatherhood" that bridges classical interpretation doctrines with urgent contemporary psycho-social needs. This model is a reconstruction of the ideal role that can be actualized through several concrete strategic steps. First, through the reconstruction of gender education based on interpretation to correct misguided perceptions of masculinity in society—emphasizing that parenting is a true masculine trait, not a weakness. Second, the development of a spiritual *parenting* curriculum that integrates Islamic philosophical values into daily practice, so that religion is no longer understood as merely ritualistic but as a guide for human interaction. Third, advocating for affirmative public policies, such as providing space for fathers to be involved in their children's growth and development in the workplace, raising awareness of the importance of longer paternity leave, and involving fathers from the prenatal period to adolescence.

As a final note regarding social protection mechanisms in Islam, this study emphasizes that paternal responsibility is *transferable* within the Islamic kinship system in order to guarantee the fundamental rights of children. Through historical reflection on the life of the Prophet Muhammad, who lost his biological father while still in the womb



but still grew up with perfect integrity (*al-Amīn*) thanks to the total care of his grandfather, Abdul Muthalib, and his uncle, Abu Thalib, it is emphasized that the paternal function is not limited to biological blood relations alone. This functional role can and should be taken over by the closest family members such as the grandfather, uncle, or guardian as an effective *social safety net* mechanism in Islam (Al-Mubarakfuri, 1997).

This affirmation systematically prevents widespread structural *fatherlessness* in society and ensures that every child—regardless of their father's biological status—continues to receive their essential rights, whether material, emotional, or spiritual. This theoretical construct not only enriches the literature of functional interpretation studies in academic circles, but also provides a solid philosophical and practical foundation for efforts to strengthen family resilience amid the increasingly aggressive currents of modernity that are eroding the existence of men's domestic roles. By reactivating these "Three Pillars of the Father's Role," society can hope for the emergence of a future generation that is mentally stable, intellectually intelligent, and spiritually strong.

Solutions for Fatherlessness Through the Role of Fathers in Indonesian Families According to Thaba'thabai

Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 233 consistently positions the father as a provider who bears primary responsibility for ensuring the material foundations of a child's growth and development. In this perspective, paternal responsibility encompasses the fulfillment of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care, supported by careful financial planning that guarantees the continuity of these provisions. Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī further emphasizes that this responsibility must be carried out with commitment and moral awareness, as all paternal actions fall under divine accountability.

This Qur'anic mandate is closely connected to the academic and developmental consequences of fatherlessness. When children's material needs are inadequately met, they become more vulnerable to physical and psychological health problems, including malnutrition, growth disorders, and emotional distress. Limited access to proper nutrition, health services, and a supportive living environment directly affects cognitive development, concentration, and learning capacity. Moreover, economic instability within



the family often generates chronic stress and emotional pressure, increasing the risk of anxiety and depressive symptoms in children.

Such conditions frequently manifest in poor academic performance, reduced motivation, and difficulties in sustaining focus and school attendance. Over time, these disadvantages accumulate and shape children's future life chances and overall well-being. From this standpoint, al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 233 offers not merely a normative injunction, but a substantive solution to the academic and psychosocial challenges associated with fatherlessness.

This is in line with various references related to parenting, particularly the role of fathers in the family as explained in the book *The Role of Fathers in Parenting*, which describes the role of fathers in meeting the physical needs of children. Fathers often become the backbone of the family, ensuring economic stability and providing clothing, food, and shelter for their children. In addition, fathers also play a role in providing physical protection and ensuring the health and well-being of their children by providing access to health services, education, and recreational facilities (BKKBN Team, 2015).

Furthermore, QS. al-Isrā': 24 is closely associated with the paternal role as a source of affection, protection, and moral education. In al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's interpretive framework, this verse underscores the importance of fathers expressing affection through both emotional warmth and embodied presence. Paternal love is not limited to abstract sentiment, but is manifested through physical closeness, attentive communication, and sustained emotional engagement. Fathers are therefore expected to allocate quality time to interact with their children, remain physically and emotionally present, and cultivate a relational environment in which children feel valued, secure, and acknowledged.

In addition, this verse highlights the father's function as a primary source of emotional support and motivation. Such support includes accompanying children through moments of difficulty, affirming their achievements, and offering consistent guidance and encouragement throughout their developmental stages. These forms of affective involvement play a crucial role in preventing children from experiencing a sense of paternal absence, even when fathers are physically present in the household.

When examined in relation to the phenomenon of fatherlessness, QS. al-Isrā': 24 offers a highly relevant corrective. Affective deprivation lies at the core of many



psychological and social consequences associated with fatherlessness. Adequate paternal affection fosters self-confidence, emotional stability, and healthy interpersonal skills, enabling children to develop empathetic and prosocial dispositions. In this sense, love and emotional presence function as a fundamental solution to the psychosocial impacts of fatherlessness and contribute to the formation of balanced and compassionate character in children.

From the perspective of *attachment* theory, the presence of a responsive and supportive father helps form secure emotional bonds, which are an important foundation for healthy psychological development. Fathers who provide emotional support, attention, and affection contribute to the development of a child's sense of security and self-confidence (Ulfiah, 2016). In addition, it also strengthens the child's ability to interact positively with others (Mahmud, 2015). Thus, there is a correlation between the explanation obtained from the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an and the development of psychological science related to the role of fathers in providing affection to children.

Finally, QS. At-Taḥrīm verse 6 relates to the role of the father as a leader who educates and guides children to live according to Allah's guidance. The points of interpretation can be explained as follows:

1. Fathers must be role models in behavior, morality, and responsibility. This includes making wise decisions, demonstrating integrity, and showing commitment to family values. This is in line with the hadith in the Al-Mīzān interpretation, which states that fathers must start with themselves first, namely commanding only what they themselves do and forbidding what they themselves do not do.
2. In line with this, fathers must set clear rules and boundaries within the family. This helps children understand concepts such as responsibility, discipline, and structure.
3. As the head of the family, fathers must be willing to overcome challenges and crises that may arise and be responsible for making decisions. This involves making wise decisions and providing support to family members in difficult situations.



4. Fathers must provide guidance and advice to their children in dealing with various situations in everyday life. This involves mentoring in making decisions, resolving conflicts, and developing life skills, such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving skills. In addition, fathers are responsible for teaching their children morals and ethics.

When analyzed, the points outlined in this interpretation are closely related and relevant as a means of preventing children from being affected by *fatherlessness*, particularly in terms of social and behavioral impacts. Children who receive guidance and direction from a good and capable father are very important for their growth and development so that they can contribute positively to their social environment. In psychology, there is a theory known as *social learning theory*, whereby children learn through observation and imitation (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022). Fathers who model positive behaviors, such as reading, studying, or demonstrating hard work and perseverance, provide real examples for children about the importance of education and other positive values. Children tend to imitate this behavior and internalize these values in their lives (Ebi Ch, 2022). Thus, in general, there is consistency in the explanation of the role of fathers as educators and leaders for children, both in psychology and in the interpretation of the Qur'an.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that fatherlessness must be reconceptualized not merely as a condition of physical absence (*mantūq*), but more fundamentally as a state of functional absence (*mafhūm*), which may persist even when fathers are physically present within the household. Through a socio-philosophical reading of *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, this research answers the first research question by showing that the transformation of the fatherlessness paradigm occurs at the terminological and sociopsychological levels, where the erosion of paternal functions—economic responsibility, affective presence, and moral leadership—constitutes the core of the crisis faced by contemporary Muslim families.



Addressing the second research question, this study finds that Ṭabāṭabā'ī offers a coherent Qur'anic solution to fatherlessness through what this research conceptualizes as the *Three Pillars of the Father's Role*, rooted in the mandate of *qawwāmah* and the ontological responsibility of men. These pillars include the father as provider and guarantor of material stability (QS. al-Baqarah: 233), as protector and source of emotional security (QS. al-Isrā': 24), and as moral leader and spiritual educator (QS. at-Taḥrīm: 6). Together, these functions form an integrated and inseparable framework that directly responds to the psychosocial vulnerabilities experienced by children in contexts of functional paternal absence.

Theoretically, this study contributes to Qur'anic and family studies by advancing a functional-axiological model of fatherhood that bridges classical exegetical thought with contemporary psychological and sociological insights. By shifting the discourse from biological presence to functional responsibility, this model challenges reductive interpretations of *qawwāmah* as mere patriarchal authority and repositions it as an ethical and relational mandate. Consequently, the Three Pillars framework offers a normative-theoretical foundation for rethinking fatherhood in modern Muslim societies, particularly in Indonesia, while providing a conceptual basis for future interdisciplinary research on family resilience, Islamic anthropology, and embodied Islamic knowledge in the context of social transformation.

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