

Criticism of The Fatherless Phenomenon From Rashid Rida's Interpretive Perspective: A Thematic Study

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Article Info

Article History:

Received: 8 December 2025
Revised: 16 February 2026
Accepted: 16 March 2026
Published: 23 March 2026

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Keywords

Abstract

The phenomenon of fatherlessness has increasingly attracted scholarly attention as a complex social issue affecting family structures across different cultural contexts, including Muslim societies. Rather than assuming a uniform impact, contemporary research highlights that the absence or weakening of paternal roles whether physical or relational interacts with broader social and ethical dynamics in shaping children's development. This study examines the concept of paternal leadership and responsibility in the Qur'an through a thematic (*mawdu'i*) exegetical approach, with particular focus on Rashid Rida's Tafsir al-Manār. Using qualitative library research, the study analyzes key Qur'anic passages related to fatherhood, including Q. 4:34, Q. 2:233, and Q. 31:13-19. The findings indicate that the Qur'an conceptualizes fatherhood as a multidimensional form of responsibility encompassing financial provision, moral guidance, and spiritual education. Rida's interpretation frames paternal leadership not merely as authority, but as an ethical and socially embedded responsibility shaped by his reformist perspective. However, the study also shows that the application of this framework to contemporary contexts requires critical consideration, particularly in light of diverse modern era family structures. This research contributes to the development of socially engaged Qur'anic exegesis by offering a more integrative understanding of Islamic fatherhood that bridges textual interpretation and contemporary social analysis. It also provides a conceptual framework for re-evaluating paternal roles in Muslim families without reducing the issue of fatherlessness to a single causal explanation.

Fatherlessness; Paternal Leadership; Tafsir al-Manār; Rashid Rida, Islamic Family.

Abstrak

Fenomena *fatherlessness* semakin mendapat perhatian sebagai persoalan sosial yang kompleks dalam berbagai konteks budaya, termasuk dalam masyarakat Muslim. Alih-alih dipahami sebagai kondisi yang memiliki dampak tunggal, kajian kontemporer menunjukkan bahwa ketiadaan atau melemahnya peran ayah baik secara fisik maupun relasional berkaitan dengan dinamika sosial dan etis yang lebih luas dalam membentuk perkembangan anak. Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep kepemimpinan dan tanggung jawab ayah dalam al-Qur'an melalui pendekatan tafsir tematik (*mawdu'i*), dengan fokus pada Tafsir al-Manār karya Rasyid Ridā. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kepustakaan kualitatif dengan menganalisis ayat-ayat kunci tentang peran ayah, seperti QS. an-Nisā' [4]: 34, QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 233, dan QS. Luqman [31]: 13–19. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa al-Qur'an memposisikan peran ayah sebagai tanggung jawab multidimensional yang mencakup pemenuhan ekonomi, bimbingan moral, dan pendidikan spiritual. Penafsiran Rasyid Ridā menempatkan kepemimpinan ayah bukan sekadar otoritas, melainkan sebagai tanggung jawab etis yang terikat dengan konteks sosial melalui pendekatan reformisnya. Namun demikian, penerapan konsep ini dalam konteks keluarga modern memerlukan pembacaan kritis, terutama mengingat keragaman bentuk keluarga era kontemporer. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan tafsir sosial kontemporer dengan menawarkan pemahaman yang lebih integratif mengenai konsep ayah dalam Islam, yang menjembatani antara teks keagamaan dan realitas sosial. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga memberikan kerangka konseptual untuk mengevaluasi kembali peran ayah dalam keluarga Muslim tanpa menyederhanakan fenomena *fatherlessness* sebagai hubungan sebab-akibat yang tunggal.

Kata Kunci: *Fatherlessness*; Kepemimpinan Ayah; Tafsir al-Manār; Rasyid Rida; Studi Keluarga Islam.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of fatherlessness or the absence of a father figure has become an increasingly prominent social issue in modern society, including within contemporary Muslim families. The term “fatherless” refers not only to children who have lost their fathers due to death but also encompasses the absence of a father’s role resulting from divorce, work commitments, or indifference toward child-rearing (Mubarok, 2023). According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (2024), divorce rates in Indonesia continue to rise, directly contributing to an increase in the number of children growing up without a father’s presence. On the other hand, there are many fathers who are physically present at home but do not play an active role in their children’s upbringing emotionally or socially. This situation gives rise to various social problems, ranging from weak moral control to an increase in deviant behavior among adolescents (Risnawati, 2021). This phenomenon highlights the importance of re-examining the role of the father in Muslim families from an Islamic perspective.

From an Islamic perspective, the father holds a strategic position as the leader (*qanwām*) of the family, bearing not only financial responsibility but also moral and spiritual (QS. an-Nisā’ [4]: 34). The concept of *qiwāmah* indicates that a father’s leadership encompasses the functions of protection, guidance, and discipline within family life, thereby positioning him as the central authority directing the development of a child’s values, attitudes, and behavior. This responsibility is not merely material but also includes instilling the values of tawhid, shaping moral character, and providing consistent guidance in practicing religious teachings. Within this framework, the father functions as the primary role model (*uswah*), whose behavior and attitudes serve as a reference for children in shaping their moral and spiritual identity.

A father’s leadership in Islam is closely tied to social responsibility, namely, shaping children to be able to fulfill their roles as ethical individuals who contribute to society. Therefore, the father’s role cannot be reduced merely to that of a breadwinner but must be comprehensively understood as an educator, guide, and guardian of values within the family. The father’s absence, whether physical or emotional, has the potential to weaken these functions and disrupt the process of internalizing values within the child (Putri & Putro, 2025). Thus, the crisis of the father figure is not merely a domestic issue but has evolved into a structural problem affecting the quality of future generations, societal morality, and the social stability of the Muslim community (Shihab, 2002). This underscores the urgency of re-examining the role of the father within the framework of Qur’anic teachings as the foundation for strengthening leadership in Muslim families.

Numerous academic studies on the role of fathers have been conducted using a variety of approaches, ranging from family psychology and sociology to Islamic education. Psychological research indicates that the absence of a father leads to a decline in children’s emotional intelligence and moral stability (Hanifah et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, a study by Sengkey et al (2025) indicates that fatherlessness contributes to increased delinquent behavior among adolescents and low self-discipline. Meanwhile, research by Fajriyanti and Safitri emphasizes that the father’s role has direct implications for the formation of a child’s religious character within Muslim families (Fajriyanti & Safitri, 2024). Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir al-Misbbab* emphasizes the importance of a father’s exemplary role in instilling spiritual values (Shihab, 2002), while *Tafsir al-Azhar* highlights a father’s moral responsibility as the family’s protector (Hamka, 1982). Mutiarasari’s research

confirms that fathers' involvement in early childhood care in the digital age faces various challenges, such as economic demands, time constraints, and adapting to technology, even though this role is crucial for children's emotional and cognitive development (Mutiarasari et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, an analysis of Ibn Kathir's Tafsir of Surah Luqman, verses 12-19, emphasizes that the concept of parenting in Islam positions the father as the primary educator responsible for instilling the values of tawhid, good character, and wisdom in the child (Andriansyah & Permadi, 2022). Pisba et al (2025) through an analysis of Rasyid Ridha's exegesis of Quranic Surah An-Nisa' verse 34, demonstrate that male leadership within the household must be understood within the framework of gender justice and moral responsibility, rather than domination, thereby affirming the role of the father as a just and responsible leader. Taken together, these three studies demonstrate that the father's role is not limited to economic aspects but also encompasses educational, leadership, and relational dimensions that adapt to the changing times. These studies highlight the interpreters' attention to the ethical and educational dimensions in parent-child relationships. However, most research still focuses on the father as an educator, rather than as a spiritual and social leader within the context of the modern family crisis. Several recent studies have also examined the relevance of classical exegesis to contemporary social problems, but none have specifically analyzed the phenomenon of fatherlessness through the framework of *adab ijtimā'i* style exegesis, particularly in Rasyid Ridā's *Tafsīr al-Manār*. This indicates that there remains room for research linking reformist social exegesis with modern family issues in Islam.

Although a considerable body of research has examined fatherhood and child-rearing, these studies tend to develop along two largely disconnected trajectories. On the one hand, empirical research in psychology and sociology focuses on the behavioral and developmental outcomes of father involvement but often lacks engagement with Islamic normative and theological frameworks. On the other hand, existing exegetical works, including studies based on Tafsir al-Mishbah and Tafsir al-Azhar, generally adopt a descriptive-normative approach, presenting Qur'anic concepts of fatherhood without critically interrogating their assumptions or systematically relating them to contemporary social phenomena such as fatherlessness. As a result, there remains a significant gap in integrating Qur'anic exegesis with contemporary social theory, particularly in understanding paternal leadership as a dynamic and context-dependent construct.

To address this gap, this study employs a thematic (*maudū'i*) exegetical approach, focusing on Rashid Rida's Tafsir al-Manār as its primary analytical framework. Rather than treating the Qur'anic concept of fatherhood as a fixed normative ideal, this study critically examines how paternal leadership is constructed within Rida's reformist exegesis, particularly through the *adab ijtimā'i* (social-literary) approach, which seeks to connect scriptural values with socio-historical realities. This perspective allows for a more contextualized reading of Qur'anic teachings, positioning them in dialogue with the complexities of modern family structures rather than assuming their direct and universal applicability.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the concepts of paternal leadership and responsibility in the Qur'an through a thematic exegetical approach, with particular attention to Rashid Rida's interpretation in Tafsir al-Manār. Specifically, it seeks to (1) identify and categorize Qur'anic verses related to fatherhood, (2) critically examine Rida's interpretive framework within its socio-intellectual context, and (3) assess its relevance to the contemporary phenomenon of

fatherlessness. By bridging textual interpretation and socio-cultural analysis, this study contributes to the development of socially engaged Qur'anic exegesis and offers a more nuanced framework of Islamic fatherhood grounded in ethical responsibility, relational engagement, and social accountability.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a thematic interpretation method (*mawdu'i*). This approach was chosen because it is relevant to collect and analyze Qur'anic verses that address the themes of the role, responsibility, and figure of the father in the Muslim family. The thematic interpretation method allows researchers to study verses scattered across various surahs, then systematically compiled to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of fatherhood according to the Qur'an. The interpretation is carried out by referring to the *Tafsir al-Manār* by Rasyid Ridā, which is characterized by the *adab ijtimā'i* (social society), so as to connect the message of revelation with contemporary social reality, especially the phenomenon of fatherlessness or the crisis of the father figure in the modern Muslim family.

This study made all verses of the Qur'an related to the theme of leadership and responsibility of fathers in the family as a study population. From all these verses, some are chosen that are considered the most representative, namely QS. an-Nisā' [4]: 34, QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 233, and QS. Luqman [31]: 13-19. The selection of these verses is based on their relevance to the focus of the research as well as their relevance to the social interpretation of Rasyid Ridā in *Tafsir al-Manār*. In addition to the main source in the form of Qur'anic texts, this study also uses secondary sources in the form of other tafsir literature such as *Tafsir al-Mishbab* by M. Quraish Shihab and *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Hamka as well as various academic studies that discuss the theme of the family and the role of the father in the Islamic perspective.

The data collection technique is carried out through library research. The researcher collected primary sources in the form of the Qur'an and *Tafsir al-Manār* by Rasyid Ridā, then traced the interpretation of verses that were relevant to the research theme. The data collection process is carried out by identifying verses about the role of fathers, classifying verses based on the categories of responsibility, leadership, and education of children, examining the interpretation of Rasyid Ridā in a social context, and collecting secondary data from books, journal articles, and previous research results.

This study uses the verses of the Qur'an as the main research tool that functions for reference and interpretation of interpretation data. In addition, thematic categorization tables are used to systematically compile data and strengthen the validity of the analysis. The analysis process applies a thematic-analytical approach which is carried out through four stages. *First*, the classification of Qur'anic verses that are relevant to the theme of leadership and fatherly responsibility. *Second*, an in-depth study of the interpretation of Rasyid Ridā to identify the epistemological framework and social context of his thought. *Third*, compare the results of interpretation with the phenomenon of fatherlessness in modern society in order to find the correlation between the message of the Qur'an and social reality. *Fourth*, a synthesis of the father's leadership values in the Qur'an to formulate a conceptual contribution to strengthening the role of the father in the contemporary Muslim family. This approach is expected to produce

comprehensive, valid, and applicable findings for the development of Islamic studies based on Qur'anic values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Father as the Person Responsible for Providing Financial Support

In Islamic family law, the term *nafkah* is derived from the Arabic root *anfaqa-yunfiqun-nafaqan*, which denotes the act of expending resources for the benefit of others. Conceptually, *nafkah* refers to the legal and moral obligation of a husband or father to provide for the essential needs of family members, including food, clothing, shelter, as well as aspects of social and emotional well-being (Toha Ma'arif, 2025). The father holds the position of primary provider of *nafkah* within the family, which includes meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, as well as education and healthcare expenses. This obligation is not merely a moral recommendation but a legal duty rooted in the Qur'an, hadith, and further reinforced in Islamic legal compilations, thereby establishing the father as the family leader responsible for the well-being of his family members. Maintenance is understood as a concrete manifestation of this leadership, which must be provided in a "*ma'ruf*" manner that is, in accordance with one's capacity and social standards of adequacy, without excess or deficiency (Husniyati et al., 2026). Thus, maintenance is not merely material in nature the concept of maintenance is comprehensive and dynamic. Its essence is a father's responsibility to ensure his family lives decently and in harmony with the principle of justice within the family (Mutiarasari et al., 2024). Allah states in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 233, emphasizing that the father figure bears the responsibility as the guarantor of well-being.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُنْتِمَ الرِّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ
تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تُنْتَرِضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٣﴾

"Mothers should breastfeed their children for a full two years, for those who wish to complete the breastfeeding period. It is the father's duty to provide for their food and clothing in a proper manner. No one is burdened beyond their capacity. A mother should not be made to suffer because of her child, nor should a father be made to suffer because of his child. The same applies to the heirs. If both wish to wean the child (before two years) based on mutual agreement and consultation between them, there is no sin upon them. If you wish to have your child nursed (by someone else), there is no sin upon you if you provide payment in a proper manner. Fear Allah and know that indeed, Allah sees what you do." (Al-Baqarah: 2: 233)

According to Rasyid Ridā in *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Surah al-Baqarah [2]:233 does not merely address the legal aspects of breastfeeding (*radā'ah*), but also contains fundamental principles regarding justice, responsibility, and emotional bonds within the family. Ridā emphasizes that this verse describes the Islamic social system, which views the family as a moral institution, not merely an economic unit. *Radā'ah* is positioned as part of the child's rights that must be fulfilled, where the mother acts as the one who breastfeeds, while the father remains responsible for the financial costs of the process, including providing compensation to the mother under certain conditions such as divorce (Fauziah, 2026). This underscores that while the biological function of

breastfeeding lies with the mother, the economic responsibility remains with the father as the primary provider.

The father's responsibility is not limited to meeting the family's general needs but also encompasses full support for the child's growth and development from the earliest stages of life through the fulfillment of financial obligations related to breastfeeding (Abidin, 2022). Therefore, the father functions not only as the provider (*al-munfiq*) but also as the guardian of values and the guarantor of the spiritual well-being of family members (Harmaini et al., 2015). The affirmation of the father's responsibility in the verse "*wa 'ala al-maulūdi labu rizqubunna wa kiswatubunna bil-ma'rūf*" reflects the concept of *mas'ūliyyah* (moral responsibility). Ridā rejects a family model that separates economic responsibility from spiritual responsibility, as both are inseparable in building an Islamic household (Rida, 1947).

The book *Ihya' Ulum ad-Din* states that providing financial support is not merely about fulfilling physical needs, but also serves as a form of *qurbah* (drawing closer to Allah) because it is performed with the intention of upholding the trust as the head of the family (Al-Ghazali, 1989). Thus, the crisis of the father figure emerging in modern society where fathers are present only formally without an emotional role can be viewed as a form of neglect of the leadership trust established by Islamic law. In the context of modern society, *Tafsir al-Manar* aligns with the theory of responsible fatherhood in contemporary family psychology, which emphasizes that a father's role encompasses emotional involvement, financial responsibility, and active participation in child-rearing (Fajriyanti & Safitri, 2024).

The verse "*lā tudārru wālidatun bivaladibā walā maulūdun labu bivaladib*" affirms the principle of psychological justice and relational balance within the household. Ridā interprets this statement as a call for husbands and wives not to use children as tools of conflict, as any form of emotional injustice will undermine the spiritual foundation of the family (Rida, 1947). Protection for mothers and children after divorce is a form of Islamic social compassion that prevents the emergence of a "generation without direction" a condition that, in today's context, is synonymous with the phenomenon of a fatherless society (Lestari, 2024). The concluding verse "*wattaqullāha wa'lamū anna Allāha bimā ta'malūna bashīr*" also carries profound theological significance. Ridā interprets the command of *taqwa* here as the foundation of parenting ethics: a father cannot fulfill his responsibilities without a high level of spiritual awareness.

Taqwa functions as a moral compass in every family decision, whether regarding financial support, children's education, or relationships among household members (Yusuf et al., 2021). This aligns with Quraish Shihab's explanation in *Tafsir al-Misbbab*, that a father's responsibility does not end with material provision but extends to shaping the child's religious character through exemplary conduct and moral guidance (Shihab, 2002). Thus, Islam does not recognize the concept of a family without a father figure, as the father's presence is the foundation for the continuity of education, emotional balance, and the development of values within the child (Lestari, 2024). In this context, Surah Al-Baqarah verse 233 rejects any form of absence of paternal responsibility. This verse also contains three dimensions relevant to the fatherless crisis, namely:

1. The economic dimension of responsibility

The verse “*riḥqubunna wa kiswatubunna bil-ma'rūf*” emphasizes the non-transferable obligation to provide financial support. By rejecting the view that divorce releases the father from his social obligations toward his children (Husniyati et al., 2026).

2. The dimensions of social and psychological justice

In the phrase “*lā tudārru wālidatun bivaladibā walā maulūdun labu bivaladib*,” exploitation or suffering caused by a child is prohibited. In the *al-Manār* commentary, this is interpreted as emotional protection for both parties, as well as a measure to prevent the child from becoming the object of conflict. The phenomenon of fatherlessness often arises from a failure to uphold this principle of emotional justice (Karmila et al., 2025).

3. Spiritual and moral dimensions

The closing verse, “*wattaqullāba wa'lamū anna Allāba bimā ta'malūna bashīr*,” contains a warning that a father's leadership is a divine trust. Piety serves as the foundation of parenting ethics. The absence of a father signifies the loss of one of the spiritual pillars in the formation of a child's personality, as also emphasized by Quraish Shihab, who states that a father's role is not merely that of a provider but also that of a moral guide for the family (Shihab, 2002). The portion of the verse “*lā tukallafu nafsun illā wus'aba*” in the *al-Manār* commentary is understood as a principle of justice in family relations. Islam does not impose obligations beyond a person's capacity, yet it remains morally binding. Rasyid Ridā asserts that a father must not shirk his responsibilities on the grounds of economic hardship, just as a mother must not be forced to bear the burden when she is unable to do (Rida, 1947).

This means that *Tafsīr al-Manār* views the absence of the father figure (a fatherless society) as a deviation from the Islamic social system. When the role of the father is eliminated, the structure of justice, compassion, and spirituality as outlined in the Qur'an loses its balance. Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 233, provides normative guidance for resolving the crisis of the father figure in Muslim society. *First*, by affirming the father's economic and emotional responsibilities toward his children as a religious trust. *Second*, by instilling the values of consultation and gender justice in child-rearing, as mentioned in the verse: “*fa in arādā fīsālan 'an taradin minbumā wa tashāwur, falā junāha 'alayhimā.*” *Third*, by restoring piety as the foundation of family leadership. Within this framework, *Tafsīr al-Manār* positions this verse as an anticipation of the “fatherless” phenomenon, as Islam rejects the concept of a family without paternal involvement. The presence of a father is not merely a symbol of hierarchy, but a manifestation of moral responsibility that cannot be replaced by any social system.

Fathers as Leaders in the Family

QS. an-Nisā' [4]: 34 is the verse most frequently cited as a basis in discussions regarding family leadership (*qiwāmah*). In *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Rashid Rida interprets this verse as an affirmation of the father's moral and spiritual responsibility in guiding the family, rather than merely legitimizing patriarchal authority. His interpretation of QS. An-Nisā': 34 provides conceptual reinforcement for the father's role as the provider for the family, yet simultaneously opens the door to criticism of its epistemological foundation. In this exegesis, men are positioned as *qawwām* (leaders) because they are considered to possess certain advantages, both in terms of physical

attributes and capabilities, which are then used as the basis for the division of roles, including economic responsibilities (Faridatun et al., 2025). QS. An-Nisa' [4]:34 :

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۗ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطُتٌ ۖ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنِ اطَّعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

“Men (husbands) are responsible for women (wives) because Allah has made some of them (men) superior to others (women) and because they (men) spend part of their wealth. Righteous women are those who are obedient (to Allah) and guard their chastity when (their husbands) are absent, for Allah has guarded (them). As for those women from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, abandon them in bed (separate beds), and (if necessary,) strike them (in a way that does not cause pain). However, if they obey you, do not seek ways to cause them distress. Indeed, Allah is Exalted and Great.” (an-Nisa’: 4:34)

The verse “*al-rijālu qawwāmūna ‘ala al-nisā’*” is interpreted not as legitimizing male superiority, but rather as a form of leadership (*qiwāmah*) that entails moral, spiritual, and social responsibility toward the family. According to Ridā, a husband’s leadership is based on two main principles: functional superiority (*tafdīl*) in rational capacity and the obligation to provide financial support (*al-naḥaqah*). She rejects interpretations that position men in a hegemonic manner, because leadership in Islam is an embodiment of compassion and justice, not absolute power (Rida, 1947). Additionally, the father holds a position one rank higher. However, this rank does not signify domination but rather greater responsibility and obligation to protect, provide for, and lead the family. This verse also reinforces the principle that leadership here is synonymous with responsibility, not unilateral power (Pisba et al., 2025).

The father, as the leader of a family, is a blessing entrusted by Allah, making him the protector of his family. The concept of a father’s leadership in Islam is educational and ethical, serving to guide the family toward moral well-being, not to subjugate them hierarchically (Faridatun et al., 2025). Thus, *qiwāmah* in *al-Manār* is an expression of social responsibility rooted in spiritual values. Ridā views this verse as a normative framework that balances rights and obligations in the husband-wife relationship. He criticizes classical exegetes who interpret *qiwāmah* purely textually, without considering the social context and *maqāsid al-ṣyār’ah* (the objectives of Islamic law) (Pisba et al., 2025). According to Ridā, the superiority of men mentioned in the verse is not a form of discrimination, but rather a social responsibility that demands a high level of spiritual and moral awareness. A father’s leadership means providing guidance, protection, and upholding justice within the household.

Within the framework of thematic exegesis, this verse cannot be separated from the principles of *mu’āsyarah bil-ma’rif* (good interaction) and *ta’āwun* (cooperation), which form the foundation of harmonious family relationships. Thus, Ridā’s concept of paternal leadership reflects a relational ethic that prioritizes the values of empathy, consultation, and emotional balance. A key aspect of Ridā’s interpretation is the dimension of moral education within the family. He asserts that the social and moral crisis facing the Muslim community stems from the weakness of the father’s role in fulfilling his spiritual leadership functions. In *Tafsīr al-Manār*, the father is described as *al-mu’allim al-awwal* (the first educator), responsible for guiding children toward the values of

faith, discipline, and moral character (Rida, 1947). Ridā rejects the family model that delegates all educational responsibility to the mother or the school, as the father plays a key role in instilling moral exemplarity through concrete actions. This indicates that a father's leadership in contemporary exegesis has a pedagogical dimension, wherein the father serves as a spiritual and social model for his children.

Ridā's interpretation of QS. an-Nisā' [4]: 34 has direct relevance to the social problem of fatherlessness in the modern era, namely the absence of the father figure in emotional, spiritual, and moral functions. From the *al-Manar* perspective, the loss of paternal leadership causes a void in values within the family system, leading to the moral disintegration of the younger generation. A father's leadership must be grounded in piety (*taqwā*) and compassion (*mahabbah*), not power or economic dominance. The absence of a father figure significantly impacts the decline in moral control, emotional stability, and religious orientation among Muslim adolescents (Faridatun et al., 2025). Therefore, *Tafsir al-Manar* provides a foundation for reconstructing the role of the father as a present, caring, and responsible spiritual leader, serving as a preventative measure against the crisis of a fatherless society in modern Muslim communities

The Father as a Moral Authority

In Rasyid Ridā's view, the father plays a central role in shaping a child's character and morality as part of his responsibility for family leadership (*al-qiwāmah*). Through his *Tafsir al-Manar*, Ridā emphasizes that a father's leadership is not merely structural but also educational and spiritual. The father is viewed as the primary educator tasked with instilling the values of tawhid, moral discipline, and social responsibility in his children (Adawiyah et al., 2022). According to Ridā, the crisis of the modern family often stems from the weakness of the father's educational role, which leads to a loss of moral guidance and spiritual direction within the household. The Qur'an mentions several examples of exemplary conduct demonstrated by Luqman in Surah Luqman, verses 13-19:

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٣﴾

“(Remember) when Luqman said to his son, as he was advising him, ‘O my son, do not associate partners with Allah! Indeed, associating partners with Allah is a great injustice.’” (Luqman: 31:13)

Luqman's first message to his son was *“Lā tusyrik billāh, inna al-syrka laẓulmun ‘aẓīm”* that is, the prohibition against committing shirk. In *Tafsir al-Manar*, Rashid Rida interprets tawhid as a rational principle that upholds the freedom of reason and human dignity. In his explanation of QS. al-An'ām [6]: 74-78, he states that shirk is a form of epistemological injustice because it plunges humans into irrational dependence on creatures (Rida, 1947). The father serves as the moral authority within the family, where the father's role extends beyond that of a structural leader to include being the primary educator in shaping a child's faith and moral character. The story of Luqman demonstrates that a father's moral authority is built through a dialogical and wisdom filled educational process, beginning with the instillation of monotheism as the primary foundation emphasizing that the father bears the responsibility to instill the values of faith from an early age (Al Ayyubi et al., 2024). Luqman's counsel to his son reflects an integral educational approach, where the father not only conveys teachings normatively but also cultivates the child's internal awareness through wisdom, compassion, and exemplary conduct.

The instillation of tauhid in verse 13 serves as the primary foundation affirming that the father's moral authority is rooted in the responsibility to safeguard the purity of the child's faith. Tawhid is not merely a theological concept but a principle of social liberation. A community that falls into shirk loses its intellectual independence and social morality (Liriwati & Armizi, 2021). Thus, this verse contains a powerful educational message: a father must instill tawhid as the primary intellectual and moral value in child-rearing. Tawhid serves as the foundation for personal responsibility, spiritual discipline, and public ethics. In the modern context, this message is highly relevant to the moral crisis among the younger generation, who have lost their spiritual foundation due to the absence of the father figure as an educator of faith and a model of religious devotion (Liriwati & Armizi, 2021). Furthermore, in Surah Luqman, verses 14-15:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفَصَّالَهُ فِي سَامِيَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَىٰ الْمَصِيرِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَإِن جَاهَدَكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَىَّٰ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

"We have enjoined upon mankind to be kind to their parents. His mother bore him in a state of increasing weakness and weaned him over two years. "Be grateful to Me and to your parents." It is to Me alone that you will return. The latest time for weaning is when the child is 2 years old. "If both of them force you to associate with Me something about which you have no knowledge, do not obey them, (but) treat them well in this world and follow the path of those who return to Me. Then, to Me alone you will return, and I will inform you of what you used to do." (Luqman: 31:14-15)

This verse highlights the importance of balance between affection and rationality in parent-child relationships. A child is commanded to honor a mother who has endured great hardship in childbirth and breastfeeding, yet is also reminded not to obey parents if they lead them into polytheism (Rahmawati et al., 2024). For Ridā, this reflects Islamic education that instills filial piety without fanaticism. He writes that love for parents is an expression of social affection, but faith must remain the moral compass (Rida, 1947). In a modern context, this verse emphasizes the need for family education that strikes a balance between love and principles. Children are taught to respect their parents, but they are also nurtured to develop critical thinking skills, so they do not blindly submit to misleading authority (Hamid & Zakiya, 2020). Luqman's message to his children is also found in the following verses, namely in QS. Luqman 16-19:

يَبْنَئِي إِنْهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٦﴾ يُبَيِّنِي أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ﴿١٨﴾ وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ﴿١٩﴾

"(Luqman said,)"O my son, indeed if there is (an act) as small as a mustard seed and hidden within a rock, in the heavens, or on the earth, Allah will surely bring it to light (to be recompensed). Indeed, Allah is Most Gentle and Most Aware." "O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, that is among the matters that must be prioritized." "Do not turn your face away from people (out of arrogance), and do not walk upon the earth with haughtiness. Indeed, Allah does not love anyone who is

arrogant and boastful.” “*Walk with moderation and soften your voice. Indeed, the worst of sounds is the braying of a donkey.*” (Luqman: 31:16-19)

Surah Luqman, verses 16-19, illustrates how the core values of family education particularly for children center on the father as a moral educator. Luqman instills the value of God-consciousness by warning that no deed, no matter how small, escapes Allah's knowledge. In Islam, this message reflects the concept of *muraqabah*, which involves cultivating moral awareness rooted in a direct relationship with Allah. Additionally, Luqman emphasizes the values of social responsibility and steadfastness through the command to establish prayer and to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil (Hamid & Zakiya, 2020). In verses 18-19, Luqman educates his children on social etiquette, courtesy, and *tawadhu'* or self restraint as the foundation of social harmony. When linked to modern issues such as fatherless families, the absence of a father figure capable of instilling proper communication etiquette leads to increased aggression, individualism, and the deterioration of children's social relationships (Andriansyah & Permadi, 2022). The *al-Manār* social exegesis directs that the cultivation of etiquette and emotional intelligence is part of a father's religious responsibility within the family. Surah Luqman depicts an ideal figure through Luqman al-Hakim, who teaches his children the values of monotheism, social ethics, and spiritual awareness with great wisdom. Luqman does not merely act as an advisor but serves as a concrete example of steadfast faith in his behavior (Andriansyah & Permadi, 2022).

This exemplary value is demonstrated through three main aspects: monotheism and spirituality, social ethics, and educational psychology. The story of Luqman highlights monotheism-based education as the primary foundation for shaping a child's character. The figure of the father in the Qur'anic narrative demonstrates that the true authority of a family head does not lie in power, but in wisdom, compassion, and moral exemplarity (Zahro et al., 2024). Thus, the father's role as a virtuous role model cannot be replaced by formal education alone. The exemplary conduct demonstrated by Luqman represents a success in a child's spiritual education that begins with loving communication. The father, in the perspective of this surah, is not merely a giver of advice but a spiritual role model a guide fostering emotional intelligence (Kadri, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the concept of paternal leadership in the Qur'an through a thematic exegetical analysis of Rashid Rida's *Tafsir al-Manār*, situating it within the contemporary discourse on fatherlessness. The findings suggest that the Qur'anic framework conceptualizes fatherhood as a multidimensional form of responsibility encompassing material provision, moral guidance, and spiritual formation. In Rida's interpretation, paternal leadership (*qiwamah*) is not merely a form of authority but an ethically grounded and socially embedded responsibility shaped by his reformist orientation. However, rather than assuming a direct causal relationship, this study argues that the weakening or absence of paternal roles may contribute to disruptions in value transmission within the family, depending on broader social and relational contexts.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of socially engaged Qur'anic exegesis by demonstrating how classical interpretive frameworks can be critically re-examined in light of contemporary social issues. It highlights the relevance of *Tafsir al-Manār* as a reformist model that connects scriptural interpretation with social realities, while also underscoring the need

to approach such interpretations critically rather than normatively. In this regard, the study proposes a more nuanced understanding of Islamic fatherhood as a relational and context-dependent construct, rather than a fixed hierarchical model.

Practically, the findings offer a conceptual lens for rethinking paternal roles in Muslim families, particularly in contexts shaped by changing family structures and socio-economic conditions. However, the study acknowledges its limitations as a text-based analysis that does not directly engage with empirical data on family dynamics. Therefore, future research is needed to integrate exegetical insights with empirical approaches, including comparative studies across different interpretive traditions and interdisciplinary research involving family studies, psychology, and gender analysis. Such efforts are essential for developing a more adaptive and context-sensitive framework of Islamic family ethics in contemporary society.

DECLARATION OF USING AI

The authors utilized several digital tools, including Perplexity, DeepL, Grammarly, and Turnitin, to support the writing process, particularly in improving language quality, readability, translation accuracy, and similarity checking. All outputs generated by these tools were carefully reviewed, revised, and validated by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript.

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