UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN AND HADITH RELATED TO CHILDREN'S DEVOTION TO PARENTS WITH HERMENEUTICS OF TAWHID

Dhuha Hadiyansyah  
*Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia*  
dhuha.hadiyansyah@uai.ac.id

Moh In'ami  
*Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus, Kudus, Indonesia*  
mohinami@iainkudus.ac.id

Wiwin Luqna Hunaida  
*Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia*  
wiwinluqna@uinsby.ac.id

Zaharil Anasy  
*Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia*  
zaharil.anasy@uinjkt.ac.id

Umi Faizah  
*Sekolah Tinggi Pendidikan Islam Bina Insan Mulia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*  
umifaizah74@gmail.com

Abstract

children and parents. Thus far, these two sacred texts have been used as the basis for a children’s obedience to their parents. In this sense, being obedient to both parents, whether the ordered is obligatory, sunnah or permissible, is a must. Likewise, if parents forbid from unlawful, makruh or permissible actions, the children are obliged to obey. In this view, obedience to parents is absolute; there is no concept of self-boundary, which in psychology is valued as an important component in the growth of a healthy identity. The study found that, by using
Hermeneutics of Tawhid, the interpretation of the two texts becomes more fair, namely the form of obedience of children to their parents lies in the obedience to roles and functions in the family system. When parents act as caregivers in the family, children need to obey them as the owner of the authority; conversely, when the caregiver role changes, parents need to adjust to the new situation. Through this interpretation, the parent-child relationship pattern can be seen as a bond capable of supporting the sakinah family concept. Wadud's Hermeneutics of Tawhid gives us the opportunity to read texts with a broad horizon of thinking in order to produce more acceptable meanings for those who think logically. This meaning would be more functional to be applied in everyday life in society, not the meaning that only exists in the world of ideas.

**Keywords:** Hermeneutics of Tawhid, Children-Parents Relationship, Mutuality

**Abstrak**


**Kata kunci:** Hermeneutika Tauhid, Hubungan Anak-Orangtua, Kebersamaan

**Introduction**

The principle of mutuality (*mubadalah*) in the relationship between children and parents in Islamic studies is less vibrant than the discussion of relations between women and men. Up to now, the marginality of women in the midst of the great wall of male power has become an attractive icon for observers of contemporary interpretation. Various facts of inequality against women have sparked observers to fight for women’s rights that have not been achieved. If we explore more deeply, if women experience oppression and repression, children will also experience it.

Therefore, the study of the parent-child relationship also needs to be carried out with the principle of justice. So far, we have been presented with a single interpretation of a number of texts, both the Qur’an and Hadith, which lead to the conclusion that children must absolutely obey their parents as long as they are not ordered to commit immoral acts, either to Allah or to other creatures. In everyday life, obedience in this sense is certainly problematic, especially for the child psychology.

Hadiyansyah emphasized that full control of parents over their children is part of toxic parenting. (Hadiyansyah, 2019). Psychological control from parents, such as depriving children of opportunities to
choose, entering children’s private spaces, and making children co-
dependent will only make them less satisfied with life and a stable
mental condition. (Benard, 2004; Bradshaw, 2005; Fisher, 2014; Heide,
1994; O’Brien, C., & Scott, 2007). Research from University College
London (UCL) also found that children whose fathers and mothers are
warm and responsive have higher life satisfaction and better mental
health throughout their lives, in early, middle, and late adulthood. (Al Ali,
2021; Clark, H., Coll-Seck, A. M., Banerjee, A., Peterson, S., Dalglish, S. L.,
Ameratunga, S., ... & Costello, 2020; Dezutter, J., Dewitte, L., & Toussaint,
2018). The research that measures how parenting affects lifelong
happiness is the first in the world. The results of the research have been

No matter how parents treat their children, they will not be able
to protect their children from physical and emotional pain. Children need
to experience a lot of things for them to learn how to cope. If parents
are too involved with all the problems of the child, they will make the
children fail to be independent.

In *Falsafah Keluarga* (Philosophy of the Family), Hadiyansyah
stated that once parents give control over a child’s feelings, what is
missing is spontaneity, then joy. (Hadiyansyah, 2018). Control is the
result of a disabled will, that one’s own will is imposed on others. The
tendency to control in a dysfunctional family will lead family members
to addiction; addiction is a way of escaping from other people’s control.
(Hirschman, 1992; Porter, 1996). According to him, the home does
not need to be made like a prison with rigid rules. Differences (wants,
choices, thoughts, reasoning, decisions, imagination, and views) must be
respected. Therefore, room for compromise and acceptance of opinions
must be opened.

In controlling children, parents easily look for justifications in
sacred texts (*Naqli*). The *Naqli*’s proposition certainly cannot be changed, but its meaning should be adapted to the times. Here, the principles of more recent interpretation, especially the hermeneutics of Amina Wadud as a research tool, need to be used to keep religious teachings contextual and not become a shackled burden. So far, Amina Wadud’s hermeneutics has been used more often to discuss women’s problems. (A. Wadud, 1995, 2000, 2013). However, if we look at it from the perspective of justice, children are also a very vulnerable species, and they can even become objects of women —just as women are objects of men.

Amina Wadud tries to do “contextual reading” in various religious texts in the present era, especially related to equality, by reviewing the words contained in the Qur’an and their context, to understand the prime meaning. (Aurangzaib, 2015; Bhat, 2021; Yakar, 2022). Wadud considered that each “reading” reflects, in part, the intent of the text, and the “previous text” of the interpreter. In addition, the reader’s understanding of the same text will produce different meanings. In Wadud’s view, there is no completely objective method of reading religious texts. Each reading makes several subjective choices. Various details of reading sometimes reflect the subjective choices of the interpreters, regardless of the intention of the text being interpreted. In addition, Wadud assesses, there are many understandings that often do not distinguish between texts and their interpretation products. (Kurzman, 1998)

Wadud views that the reading of classical religious texts has been written by the exclusivity of men, thus giving birth to a gender unequal interpretation. According to her, the views and experiences of men have been included in the interpretation that has been carried out without the participation and views of women (Wadud, 1998). If this proposition is continued, what should also be observed is the bias of parents towards children because the interpretation is also dominated by parents, or at
least the older generation. Wadud indeed has not highlighted this relation yet, but the principles of his interpretation will be relevant for us to use in reading sacred texts, which have been used to restraint children’s will in the name of religion.

This article aims to re-examine the meaning of the sacred text regarding children’s obedience to their parents with the principles of justice and equality as proposed by Amina Wadud. The text is a hadith “The pleasure of Allah depends on the pleasure of the parents, and the wrath of Allah depends on the wrath of the parents” (H.R. Tirmidhi, Ibn Hibban, Hakim) and an ayah “For your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honour your parents. If one or both reach old age in your care, never say to them even ‘ugh,’ nor yell at them. Rather, address them respectfully.” (Q.S. Al-Isra verse 23).

Discussion

The understanding of the text is the product of the interpreter’s thinking in response to the text, which is an answer to the reality of the time (when the text appears). Therefore, the product of thought can be criticized, and very likely to be “deconstructed” if it is considered no longer relevant. In this regard, Amina Wadud (1998) classifies the reading of religious texts related to women into three categories, namely traditional, reactive, and holistic reading.

First, the interpretation of texts related to women in the Qur’an is called “traditional” reading. This reading provides an overall interpretation of the contents of the Qur’an, both from the classical and modern eras, with certain subjects chosen by the interpreters. The subject matter includes law, Sufism, syntax-morphology, balaghah (rhetoric), and history. The subject of this discussion causes different interpretations. In this case, Wadud assesses that there is one similarity
in traditional reading works, namely its atomistic methodology. The atomistic approach is a text interpretation approach that applies several meanings at once to one verse, which does not develop a framework based on systematic thinking to correlate and show the impact of the appropriate relationship with the text (Mustaqim, 2010).

Wadud assesses that in traditional reading, there is almost no methodology that connects similar things, such as ideas, syntactic structures, principles, or similar themes. However, what Wadud pays attention to in traditional readings is that these readings are exclusively the work of men. Wadud stated that the creation of the basic paradigm as a tool for studying and discussing the Qur’an and its interpretation was carried out without the participation and views of women as the first party. The inaudibility of women’s voices during this critical period of the development of the interpretation of the Qur’an was not only overlooked but also mistakenly equated with the absence of women’s voices in the Qur’anic text itself.

Second, the interpretation of women in the Qur’anic text is called by Wadud with the term “reactive” reading. This reading is filled with reactions of modern thinkers to a number of obstacles experienced by women, both as individuals and as members of society, who consider that the source of obstacles and problems for women comes from the text of the Qur’an. In this category of reading, there are many female interpreters and/or men who oppose the message of the Qur’an (in other languages against Islam). The interpreters of this category mostly use women’s low status in society as a justification for their “reaction.” In this case, Wadud considered that the reading of this reactive category also failed to describe the difference between the interpretation and the Qur’anic text itself.

The issues that become the discourse and the methods used
in this category of reading often come from the ideas of rationalist feminists. Although the interpreters are modern thinkers, they often focus on the description of contemporary problems but without being based on a comprehensive analysis of the Qur’an. As a result, sometimes they put women in positions that are completely unnatural, assuming that this is in line with the position of women in the Qur’an. In this case, Wadud thinks that this view must be stifled, to smooth out effective steps for the liberation of women, namely showing the relationship between the liberation of women and the main source of Islamic ideology and theology, which is none other than the Qur’an itself.

Third, Wadud calls it a holistic reading. In Wadud’s perspective, this reading is an interpretation that reconsiders all methods of interpreting the Qur’an and relates it to various modern social, moral, economic and political issues, including women’s issues. Wadud considered this holistic reading to be the best category of reading. Wadud tried to put herself in this category. Wadud considers this category to be relatively new and there are no substantial issues regarding certain problem concerning women in relation to the overall content of the Qur’an and its basic principles.

Wadud attempts to create a “contextual reading” of religious texts that contains women’s experiences and without the stereotypes that have been created in most men’s interpretation frameworks. Wadud seeks to make an “interpretation” of the Qur’anic text and seeks to directly analyze the meaning of the Qur’anic text, with a treatment of women’s problems that is very different from most existing works on similar topics.

Reading in this way will be used in this article to establish a healthy relationship between children and parents by looking at other disciplines, in this case family psychology which has so far been used in
Hermeneutics of Tawhid

Wadud's reading method is strongly influenced by the thoughts of Fazlur Rahman, a pioneer of contextual interpretation who is famous for his Double Movement theory. (Rahman, 1982). In Rahman's view, the issue of method and understanding of the Qur’an has not been sufficiently discussed in the Islamic scientific tradition, and this is an urgent matter to be studied in the current context. The reading style inherited from others will closes the contextualization of text reading as a solution to respond to contemporary issues.

The Wadud’s thought is formulated in a method she calls “Tawhid Hermeneutics”, which departs from the basic assumption that men and women come from the same creation. (Amina Wadud, 2006). So, in her methodology of reading, Wadud emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach, in which the unity of the Qur’an basically overcomes all its parts. One of the aims of this method is to show the dynamics between the universal and aspects of the Qur’anic text.

In contrast to the text’s moral message, which is universal, the Qur’anic texts are very limited by the particularity of the setting of its time and place. Operationalization of Wadud’s hermeneutic of tawhid, which is a form of method for reading religious texts which in its operation is to derive conclusions about the meaning of a text, always relates to three aspects of the text, namely: 1) in what context a text was revealed; 2) what is the grammatical composition of the text (how is it expressed, what is it said); and 3) what is the world view of the text as a whole.

The unity of those three aspects in Wadud’s view is considered to be able to minimize the subjectivity of interpretation and bring the reading results closer to the actual meaning of the text. The basic concept
of Wadud’s hermeneutics of tawhid is based on monotheism which is the foundation of Islam, which is the principle of equality and harmony. Wadud views that at the theological level, monotheism is related to the transcendent and immanent divinity, explicitly the oneness of God. Meanwhile, at the ethical level, monotheism is related to various relations and developments in social and political realities, by emphasizing the unity of all mankind under the One Creator.

In Wadud’s perspective, in the relationship with the oneness of God, humans are a single global community without any distinction based on ethnicity, race, gender, religious traditions, and other aspects of differences. The only distinguishing aspect in the context of monotheism is piety, a moral awareness that cannot be reached by other human judgments even though its external implications can be seen clearly. According to Wadud, the principle of monotheism does not at all support the use of power (male superiority) over women. (Delaney, 1986; Philips, 1994). Again, if this is continued, the Qur’an does not support the use of parental power over children, as in the Roman era that there was a law allowed parents to sell their children as slaves because they viewed children as property. (Hadiyansyah, 2021; Husain, 2000)

Text Interpretation of Children’s Obedience to Parents

In Indonesian, the term filial obedient (bakti) is often used in the parent-child relationship. In the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), filial obedient means: 1) submission and respect; acts of loyalty (love, respect, submission); 2 self-serving; loyal. (Nasional, 2003). In translating the Qur’an and Hadith, the word filial obedient is often paired with the Arabic word “birr.” (Calder, 1988; Rienhart, 2015; Stowasser, 1996). In English, the phrase birrul walidain is often translated with “kindness towards parents,” while in Indonesian it is “devoted to both parents.”
In *majlis taklim* (Islamic studying circle in Indonesia), we often listen the preachers teach that we are commanded to obey our parents. Obedience to both parents—whether they order something *wajib* (duty), sunnah or permissible based on Islamic law—is obligatory. Likewise, if parents forbid from doing things that are *haram* (forbidden), *makruh* (disliked) or something that is permissible, we are obliged to obey it. (Ahmed, E. R., Bin Yahya, S., & Haron, 2014; Islam, 2015; Jawas, 2002). In this view, obedience to parents is absolute; there is no concept of self-boundary, which in psychology is valued as an important component in growing healthy identity.

Among the Naqli arguments that are often cited as the basis for worshiping parents, namely:


2. “For your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honour your parents. If one or both reach old age in your care, never say to them even ‘ugh,’ nor yell at them. Rather, address them respectfully.” (Q.S. Al-Isra verse 23).

For data 1, many parties interpret it as follows:

*First:* A child must try to make his parents happy. In the above hadith, the Prophet said that the pleasure of Allah depends on the pleasure of parents. Just as seeking the pleasure of Allah is an obligation, so it is the same with seeking the pleasure of one’s parents.

*Second:* It is haram to do anything that provokes the anger of both parents. Just as inviting the wrath of Allah is a haram, so does when doing something that can provoke their anger.

*Third:* There is a causal relationship. Devotion to parents is the
cause, and the pleasure of Allah and parents is the effect.

In the hadith above, the preachers also reported so. In fact, if we use Wadud’s point of view on how the world view of the text, we also need to bring the message to parents, for example:

1. Because the pleasure and wrath of Allah are with the parents, the parents functionally replace Allah as the caretaker of the child. These two antithetical traits are used to strengthen the message of attaching God’s nature to parents

2. Because the pleasure of Allah is in the parents, then it is proper for parents to easily please their children to inflame the pleasure of Allah

3. On the other hand, so that God is not angry with the child, parents must manage their anger so as not to provoke God’s wrath

4. Both the parents and kids are children of human too. Because the parents are children of their parents, they need to respect their children so that they are also respected by their parents. Thus, the message of this *rida* (god’s pleasure) is the quality of being one in spirit.

The meaning as above also needs to be presented to the community, so that the pattern of children’s relationships becomes balanced. In a social system of course, we need authority. However, if the authorities do not carry out their obligations and only impose their will, this is an oppression. People often use the above hadith to demand something from their children, while at the same time they do not carry out parenting according to the teachings of the Prophet. This happens many times because the argument is used unilaterally with one-sided meaning.

The pattern of relationships between children and parents
cannot be separated from a natural hierarchical system—not only social or cultural constructions. According to Hellinger, hierarchy in the family follows three criteria: time, weight, and role. (Hellinger, B., Weber, G., & Beaumont, 1998). In relation to time, the family hierarchy flows from who is born first and who is born later. Just like time, this kind of hierarchy cannot be flipped around arbitrarily—parents are always born before their children, and the eldest must be born before the youngest. Marriage (or even a statusless relationship) existed before people became parents. What already exists must be filled with love before anything else is born. Therefore, marriage needs to be treated first before discussing parenting.

Because parents are born first, they give first. Their accumulated gifts will not be able to be pursued by children born later. This is also true for sibling relationships: the eldest usually gives more, and the youngest receives more. The new, or the later born, are more often able to receive more than they give.

Second, related to weight, namely that the most important relationship in the family is between father and mother (marriage), parent-child relationships, relationships with extended families, and only then relationships with others. In the family system, if the most important relationship (marriage) is broken, the relationship with the hierarchy below it is bound to fall apart.

Furthermore, the hierarchy is determined by how big the role in the family is. Because the family is born from marriage, those who marry have the most significant role and at the same time gain the highest position. The same dynamic applies to children. Children who contribute the most to household organization are considered more important. For example, a child who contributes more money or who raises the family dignity more will be judged more important and then loved.
Here, the meaning of the second type is increasingly finding its meaning, namely the quality of a child is precisely dependent on the quality of the parents. The flow of love from Allah to a servant flows through parents. Therefore, parents (with the mandate of Allah’s pleasure and wrath) should not play with this mandate, by using it as a means of control to use children for their own ego interests.

Similarly, the verse 23 in Surah al-Isra’ is also used as a basis for devotion to parents. If we type the keyword of the verse on Google, what appears on the first screen is that meaning. Several large electronic media in Indonesia such as detik.com, inews.id, and dream.co contain articles with similar meanings. In fact, to emphasize the service, the hadith above is also quoted.

The text of Qur’an in this context, of course, is specifically addressed to adults (who may even have become parents) who are taking care of their elderly parents. Here, there are at least three messages:

1. Doing good (in general)
2. (specifically) Not saying “ugh,” let alone yelling
3. Saying polite words (as one concrete example of doing good)

The three messages above are of course very noble. However, if parents use it to control their child without being given an example, the message (especially number 2) will only bring confusion and fear.

Children have a responsibility to care for elderly parents. (Callahan, 1985; Stuifbergen, M. C., & Van Delden, 2011). This is part of showing love. In some countries, like Singapore, this value is attached in the school curriculum. In our country, the culture of caring for the elderly is still firmly held, so that the elderly is not too much of a burden to the state. However, in fact, we witness firsthand some of the parents living neglected.
Every child will be anxious when their parents get old: not only because they are afraid to die, but how or who will take care of them. Usually, this fear stems from the anxiety that they have to take care of the parents the way they want—as opposed to caring for the child, which is usually up to the parents. When the child feels compelled to do it, the anxiety grows.

The phrase “ugh” referred to in the Qur’an is an expression of annoyance. The Qur’an warns like that because the relationship between parents and children is often colored by the tendency that children (by parents) are considered forever as children, regardless of their age. Therefore, how a child (his soul is 6 years old when his actual age is 36, for example) will take care of his parents. In this case, a child needs confirmation that the quality of his soul is proportional to his age. For example, a 35-year-old child is certainly very appropriate to take care of other people, whoever it is, including their own parents. Caring for parents means paying respect and love to them, as well as to ourselves because we care for the source of our genes. (Gilbert, 2014; Mullin, 2006; Wilson, 1993)

Love between children and parents is not much different from the system of love in other relationships, which are limited by a sense of attachment, give, and take, and a unique role in the system. Systemically, the relationship between children and parents will be successful if there is a difference in terms of giving and receiving.

Hadiyansyah mentions that there are three orders of love between children and parents. First, the order of love between children and parents is that parents give more and children receive more. It is undeniable that the most precious thing the parents give to their children is life. Parents are the intermediary of the creation of man, as well as the intermediary between him and God. Therefore, it is impossible for us to
connect with God without reconciling with our parents. In terms of the gift of life, the child cannot be in a position to refuse, avoid or choose. In the early phase, children take for granted what is given by their parents.

Children’s love for parents will blossom when children appreciate the life that has been given by their parents, which one of the proofs is accepting parents as they are. Anything that people need to survive can be provided by anyone, but only parents can provide life itself. Other things that parents give are attention, education, values, and norms (good or bad).

The second order of love is that no matter how much the children wants to repay what their parents give them, they will not be able to make it up. Every child has the instinct to serve his parents by repaying their kindness. Some children openly imitate whatever their parents do, including the profession they are in.

**Third**, the love flow of children and parents will run smoothly when the children act as children and parents act as parents. This also confirms that each occupies a hierarchy in the family based on time and function. In any organization, an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation can only occur when each member carries out his role in an orderly manner. (Hadiyansyah, 2021)

This affirmation needs to be done not only by children but also by parents. While in child’s care, parents must be aware that the household organizational system has changed and they must adapt to the new circumstances. If nothing has changed from a parent’s or child’s perspective, caring for a parent in old age is very complicated: not solely because of the cost, but in how to manage the parent-child relationship when the tide of give and take turns around. Through holistic interpretation, it can be concluded that the form of children’s obedience to their parents lies in obedience to the roles and functions in
the family system. When parents act as caretakers in the family, children need to obey them as the authority; conversely, when these caregiver roles change, parents need to adjust.

In the holistic meaning of Amina Wadud hermeneutics, we all need to prepare for the above conditions. If we are old and live with children, we need to realize that the system in the family has changed: the children are the caregivers, therefore we need to respect them as we used to ask to be respected when raising them. Thus, the relationship becomes fair and healthy, and what the Qur’an fears (a child will be annoyed at caring for elderly parents) will not happen.

In the Holy Qur’an (al-Isra’: 24) it is taught to pray, “Lord, have mercy on my parents as they raised me when I was small.” The last clause is a beautiful prayer as well as a satire, that the affection of parents in the child’s adult years is quite doubtful. Hadiyansyah mentions that the love of parents for children only begins to be truly tested when the child already has the will and develops separation, which peaks at the age of two when the baby has supported his will with language, although it is limited. (Hadiyansyah, 2021). Furthermore, the prayer becomes a kind of warning for parents that if they ignore the child at a very young age, what if Allah does the same thing when parents are in need of Allah’s love in their old age or even in the barzakh or on the Day of Judgment.

Conclusion

The interpretation of the text regarding the parent-child relationship with Wadud’s hermeneutics is quite relevant, although initially it was for gender-based relations. Through holistic meaning, it can be concluded that the form of children’s obedience to their parents lies in obedience to the roles and functions in the family system. When parents act as caretakers in the family, children need to obey them as the
authority; conversely, when these caregiver roles change, parents need to adjust with the new situation.

It cannot be denied that Wadud attaches great importance to the background of a reader or interpreter when interpreting the Qur’an. This is seen explicitly in herself that the scientific, intellectual, social, and cultural background that surrounds her has become the first starting point for her in interpreting. Therefore, all the intellectual backgrounds that we have need to be squeezed out to understand the reality of interpretation.

The initial assumption brought by Wadud was her statement about the impossibility of the Qur’an containing verses that support the idea of patriarchy. This assumption then becomes the determinant in the subsequent interpretation, in which the child also becomes the object. The parent-child relationship needs to be studied in a balanced and fair manner, for the success of parenting as well as the health (mental, spiritual, intellectual, and financial) of the parents, so that the goal of living a life of sakinah (tranquility) and full of love as the ideals of an Islamic family is achieved.

Wadud’s Hermeneutics of Tawhid finally gives us the opportunity to read texts with a broad horizon of thought to produce meaning that is more just and acceptable for people who think. This meaning will be applied in people’s daily lives, not a meaning that only exists in a fantasy world that is completely non-functional.

References


Dhuha Hadiyansyah et al.

Simon and Schuster.

