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## THE ROLE OF ATTACHMENT PARENTING, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND PATERNAL EXEMPLARITY IN SHAPING THE CHARACTER OF COMMUNITY LEADERS IN RIAU PROVINCE

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### Kata Kunci:

attachment parenting; keteladanan ayah; pendidikan karakter; pengasuhan Islami; kepemimpinan masyarakat.

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### ABSTRAK

**Latar Belakang:** Penelitian ini mengkaji peran *attachment parenting*, program pendidikan, dan keteladanan ayah dalam membentuk karakter tokoh masyarakat di Provinsi Riau. Ayah memiliki peran sentral dalam pendidikan agama dan moral, berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai kepala keluarga, tetapi juga sebagai pendidik pertama yang meneladankan nilai-nilai Islam dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. **Tujuan:** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami bagaimana kedekatan emosional, pembinaan keagamaan yang konsisten, serta perilaku keteladanan berkontribusi terhadap pembentukan karakter mulia dan jiwa kepemimpinan. **Metode:** Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan lima tokoh masyarakat yang memiliki latar belakang keluarga dan sosial yang beragam. Analisis dilakukan berdasarkan teori pengasuhan Islami dan pendidikan karakter. **Hasil:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa attachment parenting yang berlandaskan prinsip-prinsip Islam seperti kasih sayang, disiplin, dan bimbingan spiritual, mampu menumbuhkan rasa aman emosional dan kekuatan moral pada anak. Ayah yang secara konsisten menunjukkan komitmen religius dan perilaku etis menumbuhkan integritas, tanggung jawab, dan kedewasaan spiritual anak-anaknya. Selain itu, program pendidikan Islam memperkuat pembentukan karakter berbasis keluarga, sehingga meningkatkan religiusitas dan kesadaran moral anak. **Kesimpulannya**, integrasi antara kedekatan emosional, pendidikan keagamaan, dan keteladanan ayah menjadi dasar penting dalam melahirkan individu berkarakter mulia, tangguh, dan mampu memberikan kontribusi positif bagi masyarakat di era modern.

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| <b>Keywords:</b>   | <b>ABSTRACTS</b>   |
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| Attachment Parenting; Paternal Exemplarity; Character Education; Islamic Parenting; Community Leadership | <p><b>Background:</b> This study explores the role of attachment parenting, educational programs, and paternal exemplarity in shaping the character of community leaders in Riau Province. The research is grounded in the understanding that fathers hold a central role in moral and religious education, serving not only as family heads but also as primary educators who model Islamic values through daily behavior. <b>Purpose:</b> The study aims to examine how emotional attachment, consistent religious guidance, and exemplary conduct contribute to the formation of virtuous character among children who later become influential figures in their communities. <b>Method:</b> Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with five community leaders representing diverse backgrounds. The analysis employed an interpretative framework of Islamic parenting and character education theory. <b>Result:</b> The findings reveal that attachment parenting, when aligned with Islamic principles of affection, discipline, and consistency, fosters emotional security and moral resilience in children. Moreover, fathers who serve as moral exemplars strengthen their children's sense of responsibility, integrity, and faith-based leadership. Educational programs emphasizing religious values further reinforce these formative experiences. <b>In conclusion,</b> the study highlights that the harmonious integration of emotional closeness, spiritual education, and role modeling plays a crucial role in cultivating individuals with strong faith, noble character, and social responsibility traits essential for community leadership in the contemporary era.</p> |

## A. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the primary means to develop the quality of human resources, and it is an essential responsibility for every country. Education is generally implemented as a long-term national program designed to address the needs and challenges faced by each nation (Yuniarti, 2023). Recent studies show that in the era of Industry 4.0 and digital transformation, education plays a critical role not just in cognitive / technical skills, but in shaping character, ethics, and social values (Munawarsyah, 2023).

The urgency of Islamic Religious Education is also reflected in its role in maintaining a balance between the development of science and technology and spiritual values. In the era of globalization, the challenges faced by younger generations are increasingly complex due to various negative influences such as hedonism, individualism, and secularism (Saepudin, 2024; Global Research on Secularism, 2022). Islamic Religious Education plays a critical role in shaping the character of the nation by instilling noble morals. Fachri (2018) emphasizes that IRE not only teaches Islamic knowledge but also develops students' personalities to be characterized by integrity, tolerance, and responsibility. This is vital in building a harmonious and civilized society (Islamy, 2024; Nur Aziza et al., 2025).

Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education possesses both theological and sociological dimensions. The sociological dimension is particularly important in understanding the function of IRE within society, including promoting social solidarity, social control, and the formation of religious identity. Theories such as the functionalism of religion, symbolic interactionism, and social reproduction are used to explain how IRE contributes to shaping social structures and cultural values (Hosaini et al., 2024; Orhan, 2025; Bangun & Ndoana, 2024). These perspectives illustrate that

religious education does not only concern doctrinal transmission but also the reproduction of moral order and collective consciousness within society.

The attachment parenting approach, which emphasizes emotional closeness between parents and children, has significant potential to support the development of character based on religious values. Unfortunately, public understanding of this concept in Riau Province, especially in relation to religious education, remains limited. Many parents may apply close and affectionate parenting styles but have not consciously linked these practices to religious role modeling, which is essential for shaping children into future community leaders with integrity (Rosli et al., 2022; Bowlby & Ainsworth, 2021).

In Riau Province, Indonesia, the role of fathers in child-rearing is often confined to economic provision, with limited involvement in moral and spiritual guidance. This traditional view overlooks the significant impact fathers can have on their children's character development, particularly through Islamic religious education and attachment parenting. Islamic teachings emphasize the multifaceted role of fathers as educators, protectors, and moral exemplars. The Qur'an presents father-son narratives, such as those of Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Ya'kub, Prophet Nuh, Sheikh Madyan, and Luqman, as models for instilling monotheism, moral integrity, and resilience in children (Taqwadin, 2024; Hasanah & Abdullah, 2023; Omar & Ahmed, 2022).

Attachment parenting, which focuses on fostering strong emotional bonds between parents and children, aligns with Islamic values of compassion and empathy. Positive parental attachment is associated with enhanced psychological well-being among adolescents in Islamic boarding schools, underscoring the importance of emotional closeness in character formation (Cahyani, 2024). Recent international studies also highlight that attachment-based parenting strengthens children's emotional regulation, empathy, and moral reasoning (Davis et al., 2023; Cabrera et al., 2021; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2022). This shows that attachment parenting, when integrated with Islamic teachings, provides a holistic framework for nurturing emotionally secure and spiritually grounded individuals.

Despite these insights, cultural norms in Riau often relegate fathers to financial providers, neglecting their potential as active participants in moral and spiritual education. This limited involvement contributes to the "fatherless" phenomenon, where children lack male role models, leading to potential issues in moral and social development. Recent studies emphasize that paternal engagement significantly predicts children's emotional regulation, academic success, and prosocial behavior (Cabrera et al., 2021; Jia et al., 2022). The critical role of fathers in instilling discipline, moral values, and emotional support in children highlights the need for a paradigm shift in parental roles (Maharany, 2024; Safitri, 2025; Lee & Yoon, 2023).

Attachment parenting emphasizes the importance of a secure emotional bond between parents and children. Research by Wang (2023) indicates that parenting styles based on responsiveness and demandingness influence attachment styles, with insecure parenting leading to insecure attachment and parental warmth fostering secure attachment. Secure attachment is fundamental for positive mental health outcomes in adolescents (Tan et al., 2023; Allen et al., 2022). Similarly, cross-cultural studies confirm that attachment-based parenting enhances empathy, self-control, and resilience traits essential for moral and character education (Gao et al., 2024; Morris et al., 2023).

Theoretically, this research builds on the integration of Islamic pedagogy and attachment theory, both of which emphasize the significance of emotional bonds and moral exemplarity in character education. Prior studies indicate that effective character formation requires consistent emotional connection, spiritual guidance, and behavioral modeling within the family (Rosli et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2024). By situating this study in the cultural context of Riau, where Islamic values and communal harmony form the moral foundation of society, the research offers an interpretive framework that links religious education with psychosocial development. This approach not only reinforces the father's role as a provider and protector but also redefines him as a mentor and moral guide in the family ecosystem.

From an applied perspective, the findings of this study are expected to inform policy and educational practices that promote holistic family-based character education. Strengthening paternal engagement in Islamic Religious Education programs could enhance the quality of moral instruction both at home and in formal educational settings. Moreover, integrating attachment-based parenting principles into Islamic education curricula may help bridge the gap between emotional literacy and spiritual values, enabling children to internalize *akhlakul karimah* through empathy, compassion, and self-regulation (Morris et al., 2023; Hasanah & Abdullah, 2023). Such integration has the potential to serve as a model for community-based character education initiatives across Indonesia. Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for educators, policymakers, and families seeking to strengthen character education through culturally and religiously relevant parenting approaches (Rahman et al., 2024; Khairunnisa et al., 2024).

This study employs clearly defined selection and coverage criteria in reviewing the literature, including thematic relevance to paternal exemplarity, moral character (*akhlakul karimah*), and leadership development within Muslim socio-cultural contexts, as well as publication quality and relevance. A critical thematic synthesis was conducted to evaluate prior studies and identify conceptual and methodological limitations. The analysis reveals a notable gap in the literature, particularly the absence of empirical research linking fathers' exemplary moral practices to the formation of community leadership within specific local contexts such as Riau Province. This unresolved grey area substantiates the necessity and originality of the present study.

Based on these considerations, this study is guided by two central research questions: (1) How do fathers shape the *akhlakul karimah* character of their children who later emerge as community leaders in Riau Province? and (2) In what ways does the father's exemplary role contribute to the formation of leadership qualities among community leaders in Riau Province? Correspondingly, this study hypothesizes that (1) fathers who consistently demonstrate moral integrity, spiritual discipline, and social responsibility play a decisive role in cultivating *akhlakul karimah* character in their children, and (2) paternal exemplarity significantly influences the development of leadership attributes, ethical orientation, and social legitimacy among community leaders in Riau Province. These hypotheses position the father not merely as a caregiver, but as a central moral agent whose lived example shapes both personal character and public leadership trajectories.

## B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach to explore the role of Islamic Religious Education and paternal involvement in character development. Qualitative methodology produces descriptive data in the form of spoken or written words and observable behaviors (Moleong, 2011). A pedagogical approach was adopted to guide the research, focusing on the integral development of basic competencies toward forming a well-rounded personality (Sugiono, 2011).

Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews. Analysis was conducted manually by labeling and grouping data to identify key patterns and themes, following systematic steps to ensure consistency and transparency. The validity of the data was ensured through three strategies: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Susanto, Risnita, & Jailani, 2023).

The study was conducted in Pekanbaru, Riau Province, with five community leaders as research subjects: Dr. H. Firdaus, ST., MT.; H. Hendry Munief, M.BA.; KH. Muhammad Mursyid, M.Pd.; Dr. H. Musthafa Umar, Lc.; and Prof. Dr. Tengku Dahril, M.Sc.

The selection of Riau and these five community leaders was based on their significant influence in religious, educational, and social spheres, making them ideal representatives of paternal leadership models in Riau society. Their diverse backgrounds provided rich insights into the dynamics between Islamic Religious Education and fatherhood in character formation. The interpretive analysis emphasized understanding the meaning behind participants' experiences, aligning with the qualitative paradigm that seeks to explore phenomena within their natural context. This approach allowed the researcher to capture the nuances of paternal values, teaching practices, and moral exemplarity that shape the development of akhlakul karimah among children in Riau's cultural and religious landscape (Rahman & Yusof, 2024; Nurhadi, 2023).

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Role of Fathers in Shaping the Akhlakul Karimah Character of Children among Community Leaders in Riau Province.

#### a) Early Approaches in Religious Education

The effectiveness of early approaches in teaching religion is evident from interviews conducted by the researcher with community leaders in Riau Province, which provide a concrete depiction of how religious values are applied in daily life. The fathers of the informants taught religion to their children using varied yet consistent approaches in instilling Islamic values. Informant F stated that despite the limited time spent with his father due to work responsibilities, his father always made quality time to provide religious advice and guidance. MM added that paternal exemplarity served as the main educational method, even though his father did not have a formal religious education background. HM explained that religious discussions, especially about *tariqat*—were a key part of his relationship with his father, strengthening the Islamic atmosphere within the family. TD recounted that his father often took him to the surau and introduced him to *tasawuf* teachers, allowing him to experience religious learning firsthand.

Other approaches were carried out through storytelling, advice, and joint worship activities. MU explained that his father regularly led the family prayer every week and guided his children in reading the Qur'an. His father, who was also a qori, served as a role model in Qur'anic recitation. HM emphasized that akhlakul karimah (noble character) was the foundation of education, with priorities extending across the household, school, and community. MU further mentioned that his father directly taught the Qur'an to his children and continued to provide religious guidance to the surrounding community, instilling religious values from an early age.

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that the fathers of the five Riau community leaders consistently motivated and encouraged their children, which significantly influenced their personalities. Generally, children who are raised under the father's direct guidance tend to develop greater independence.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the fathers of the five community leaders in Riau instilled religious values from early childhood, which became integral components of their personalities. This early religious foundation enables individuals to regulate their desires and impulses effectively. A person whose faith has become part of their character will naturally refrain from taking others' rights or committing deceitful acts—not out of fear of societal or governmental punishment, but out of fear of God's wrath and the loss of His divine favor. In this process, the father's role is vital, as he involves his children in various religious activities such as collective worship, thereby deeply embedding the values of faith and devotion in their hearts.

### **b) Teaching Religious Values**

The internalization of religious education through parental (particularly paternal) socialization is reflected in how fathers impart religious teachings based on their understanding, enabling children to develop faith and internalize moral and spiritual values. The fathers of the informants taught religious values to their children through diverse yet consistent approaches aimed at instilling Islamic principles. Informant F noted that although his father's time was limited due to work commitments, he consistently made quality time to provide religious instructions and moral guidance. MU added that his father emphasized the idea that every child should one day serve as a teacher for their own children, underscoring the importance of setting a good example. HM reported that his father taught him to emulate the noble character of Prophet Muhammad as the ultimate model of conduct. MM described how, from an early age, his father stressed the importance of congregational prayer, requiring all his children to participate, with the father serving as imam. TD emphasized that his father's foremost message was to never abandon prayer, reminding him that even Prophet Muhammad, despite being assured of paradise, continued to perform his prayers with devotion.

The involvement of Riau community leaders' fathers in shared religious activities, such as performing worship rituals together, represents a tangible manifestation of the religious function within parenting. In this context, fathers play a central role in nurturing their children's spiritual values and shaping their

religious behavior through direct exemplification. Active participation in religious practices allows children to learn firsthand how to perform rituals according to the family's faith traditions. This form of modeling is particularly significant for male children, as the father figure often serves as the primary role model in the formation of personal and social identity. Boys tend to imitate their fathers' attitudes, speech patterns, and emotional expressions, both consciously and subconsciously (Khadijah, 2016). Religious values thus serve as a foundational element in preparing children for social life within their communities and environments, contributing to the formation of a more harmonious and morally grounded lifestyle (Idham Juanda, 2021; Nisa Cahaya Karima et al., 2022).

**c) Challenges in Teaching Religion**

One of the strategies fathers employed in addressing the challenge of limited time due to work obligations was to intentionally set aside moments to maintain meaningful interaction with their children. The fathers of the informants consistently taught religious values to their children using diverse but coherent approaches rooted in Islamic teachings. F reported that despite limited interaction time, his father always made an effort to provide religious advice and instructions. MU explained that his father taught the importance of becoming future educators for one's own children by being exemplary role models. HM stated that his father emphasized the need to follow the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character, while MM described how his father prioritized congregational prayer, requiring all family members to attend, with him serving as imam. TD reaffirmed his father's message not to abandon prayer, highlighting that even the Prophet, though guaranteed paradise, never neglected his prayer obligations.

F elaborated that his father instilled the importance of reciting the Qur'an and maintaining prayer as a guiding principle for life. MU added that his father, who had a background in pesantren education and served as both official and preacher, regularly engaged his children in religious discussions. HM explained that his father persistently reminded his children to read the Qur'an and pray regularly while understanding and applying Qur'anic values. MM asserted that his father successfully transmitted religious values to all seven of his children by emphasizing that each of them should become role models for their own offspring. TD reiterated his father's message never to abandon prayer, following the Prophet's example of steadfast devotion.

In addition, the fathers of the informants actively involved their children in religious activities such as Qur'anic recitation and congregational prayer. F and HM both mentioned that they routinely engaged in these activities with their fathers. MU further explained that from an early age, his father included the children in dakwah activities and raised them in an environment conducive to Islamic learning and moral development. Through these consistent efforts, fathers not only fulfilled their roles as spiritual leaders within the household but also ensured that religious values became deeply rooted within their children's character formation.

## **2. The Father's Exemplary Role in Shaping Community Leaders in Riau Province**

A father's exemplary behavior serves as a fundamental cornerstone in the formation of a child's character. The informants described their fathers not merely as heads of the household but as teachers of life who imparted noble values through concrete actions and emotional closeness. These fathers became living examples of moral integrity, discipline, and sincerity, demonstrating that character formation is most effectively achieved through lived experience rather than verbal instruction alone. Through consistent modeling of ethical behavior, spiritual devotion, and social responsibility, the fathers of these Riau community leaders played a pivotal role in shaping their children into individuals who later emerged as respected figures in their communities.

### **a) The Exemplary Conduct Demonstrated by Fathers**

Informant F revealed that his father consistently emphasized the importance of emotional self-control through calm and comforting advice. Reciting the Qur'an and performing prayers were not merely acts of worship but also served as daily routines to internalize noble values, helping one to live with serenity and wisdom. Informant MM shared that the most fundamental lesson from his father was the harmony between words and actions. His father never instructed something he had not practiced himself. This consistency instilled a deep sense of respect and obedience in his children, as they witnessed firsthand the embodiment of the values being taught. MM also recalled a childhood incident when his younger brother was caught smoking his father firmly reprimanded and even sanctioned him. Though the approach seemed strict, it left a lasting impression and served as an effective deterrent.

For informant HM, his father was the primary role model in matters of honesty and religiosity. Since childhood, he regularly recited the Qur'an and performed congregational prayers with his father. These moments became cherished memories that directly instilled religious values in his life. HM recalled a formative moment from his childhood when, during a period of poor health, his father advised him, "You must study diligently and use your intellect and knowledge for your future." That advice left a deep mark, nurturing his motivation to grow into an independent and capable individual.

Meanwhile, informants MU and TD both highlighted their fathers' exemplary influence through religious activities. From an early age, they were often taken to religious gatherings with their fathers. Watching their fathers stand before the congregation as preachers inspired in them a strong desire to emulate and contribute in similar ways. MU recounted that whenever he demonstrated his abilities such as reciting the Qur'an fluently or delivering speeches his father proudly mentioned his achievements in front of others. This public recognition served as a powerful source of encouragement and motivation. Similarly, TD recalled that his father exemplified remarkable diligence and respect for time, values that he has carried with him into adulthood as guiding principles for his personal and professional life.

### **b) Shaping the Character of Community Leaders**

In exploring the development of a strong work ethic, the researcher asked the community leaders (informants) to describe how their fathers instilled the value of hard work through example and daily practice. Informant F explained

that his father taught diligence through practical activities such as trading and farming, involving his children in managing small family businesses like grocery shops. KM added that despite his father's busy schedule, he always encouraged the children to help with household chores such as washing dishes and clothes, as well as gardening and managing the harvests, which were later deposited into the bank to teach responsibility and financial discipline.

MU described that the learning process of hard work began early in life, as his father exposed the children to environments that nurtured discipline and resilience, such as Islamic boarding schools. Similarly, TD shared that his father applied strict discipline, even preparing a rattan stick as a form of sanction for neglecting prayer. Through this, his father taught the importance of patience and perseverance in fulfilling one's duties and achieving goals. F emphasized that his father viewed Qur'anic recitation and prayer as fundamental life principles, while MU highlighted that his father equipped his children with faith (iman) and the practice of *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness) as spiritual defenses against worldly temptations. With plans to send his children abroad, MU's father stressed the importance of spiritual endurance and moral resilience, particularly in the digital age.

MM reflected on the generational shifts and the growing challenges faced by children today. His father emphasized the significance of early religious education beginning even before birth and the need to preserve faith through exemplary conduct in everyday life. TD reiterated that his father implemented a disciplined approach to childrearing, using the rattan not out of anger but as a pedagogical tool to reinforce religious commitment, particularly in maintaining prayer obligations. This approach reflected his father's belief that patience and perseverance are essential virtues in fulfilling spiritual and moral responsibilities.

From the informants' accounts, it is evident that fathers played a pivotal role in embedding religious and moral values within their children's character. In the Islamic perspective, a father is not merely the administrative head of the household but also serves as the head of the home *madrasa* responsible for guiding, supervising, and nurturing the religious education of his children. F emphasized that prayer and Qur'anic recitation must be upheld as guiding principles of life. MU underscored the need to strengthen children's faith and spiritual resilience in an increasingly challenging digital era, particularly for those pursuing studies abroad. MM highlighted the importance of religious education from the earliest stages of life and the power of parental exemplarity as a moral foundation. TD, meanwhile, asserted that the family remains the most vital environment for a child's education, where parents must serve as primary role models.

Drawing from the experiences of these Riau community leaders, it becomes clear that fathers hold a central role in shaping their children's spiritual, moral, and social character. By understanding and fulfilling these roles, fathers can more effectively guide their children toward lives grounded in faith, discipline, and noble character.

## **Analysis/Discussion**

### **1) The Father's Role in Shaping the Virtuous Character of Community Leaders in Riau Province**

The results of this study reveal that the father's role in religious upbringing and character formation holds a central position in shaping morally upright and resilient individuals, as demonstrated in the life stories of community leaders in Riau Province. The findings align closely with Islamic educational philosophy, which regards the family as the madrasah al-ūlā—the first and foremost educational environment where moral and spiritual foundations are laid (Al-Attas, 1999). The fathers of the informants functioned not only as breadwinners but also as the primary educators and emotional anchors in their children's lives. This dual role reflects a holistic model of parenting where affection, guidance, and discipline coexist harmoniously.

Consistent with Bowlby's (1988) Attachment Theory, emotional closeness and responsiveness between father and child foster a secure attachment, which in turn supports the child's psychological stability and moral development. In this study, the application of attachment parenting was evident in the informants' descriptions of their fathers' daily interactions—such as engaging in leisure activities, sharing religious practices, and communicating affectionately. These findings suggest that attachment parenting, when integrated with Islamic principles, reinforces the development of emotional intelligence and moral sensitivity, key components in forming a virtuous character.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the fathers' active engagement in religious instruction such as guiding their children to perform prayers, recite the Qur'an, and participate in religious gatherings instilled a consistent sense of spiritual discipline. This finding resonates with the work of Nuraeni and Rahman (2020), who argue that religious habituation within the family strengthens moral awareness and self-control. The emphasis on early exposure to religious practice among the informants underscores the significance of tarbiyah diniyah (early religious education) as a preventive mechanism against moral degradation, particularly in contemporary society influenced by digital culture.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the findings also reflect the traditional Riau Malay values rooted in Islamic morality and communal responsibility. Fathers acted not merely as personal guides but as transmitters of cultural and religious identity. This echoes the assertion of Abdullah (2016) that in Malay societies, paternal authority is inseparable from the responsibility to preserve cultural and spiritual heritage. Thus, the father's role extends beyond the domestic sphere into the broader moral fabric of the community, explaining why many informants grew into community leaders with strong religious and ethical commitments.

Another dimension emerging from this study is the integration of moral instruction with emotional modeling. Fathers did not rely solely on verbal commands but demonstrated consistency between speech and action. This approach aligns with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviors and values primarily through observation and imitation of significant role models. Informants such as MM and HM highlighted that their fathers embodied honesty, discipline, and sincerity, reinforcing the idea that moral values are more effectively internalized through lived example than through prescriptive instruction.

Interestingly, the study's findings reveal that affection and firmness were not mutually exclusive. For instance, several informants described instances of paternal discipline, such as verbal admonitions or mild sanctions—to correct behavior and instill responsibility. While such disciplinary acts might seem rigid, they were often contextualized within an emotional framework of care and moral intention. This aligns with Baumrind's (1991) authoritative parenting style, which combines warmth with firm guidance, producing children who are both self-disciplined and emotionally secure.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the father's presence and participation in religious and emotional education fostered the emergence of spiritually mature, socially responsible, and morally grounded individuals. These outcomes resonate with the Prophet Muhammad's teaching that "every father is a shepherd, and every shepherd is responsible for his flock" (Hadith, Sahih al-Bukhari). In this context, paternal guidance serves not only as a familial obligation but as a divine mandate that contributes to community welfare and leadership development.

In comparison to earlier studies on paternal influence, this research provides a more nuanced understanding by highlighting the synergy between Islamic religious values and attachment-based parenting. Prior studies (e.g., Hosseini & Mehdinezhad, 2017; Yusof, 2019) have predominantly emphasized maternal roles in moral education, often overlooking the father's distinct impact. The present study expands this discourse by demonstrating that fathers, when emotionally and spiritually engaged, can play an equally decisive role in shaping akhlakul karimah.

These findings have profound implications for future research and policy. In educational settings, programs focusing on parental involvement should incorporate modules that emphasize the emotional and religious dimensions of fatherhood. In community contexts, religious institutions and social organizations can play a vital role in revitalizing paternal engagement through family-based religious education initiatives. Future studies may also explore how modern challenges, such as work migration, media exposure, and technological influence affect the continuity of this traditional paternal role in Muslim societies.

## **2. The Father's Exemplary Role in Shaping Community Leaders in Riau Province**

The second major finding of this study highlights the power of paternal exemplarity in moral education. The fathers of the informants demonstrated integrity, consistency, and religious devotion that became the moral compass for their children's lives. This finding reinforces the concept of uswah hasanah (good example), an Islamic pedagogical principle rooted in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:21), which underscores the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the ultimate model of ethical conduct. Fathers who internalize this principle naturally transfer these values to their children, creating a generational continuity of moral leadership.

Empirical evidence from the informants reveals that children who grew up observing disciplined and spiritually conscious fathers tend to replicate similar values in adulthood. For example, one informant recounted that his father never instructed him to perform any act of worship that he himself did not practice. This consistency between word and deed cultivated deep respect and obedience, illustrating how moral authority is earned through example rather than imposed through control.

This observation aligns with the findings of Mubarok and Hidayat (2021), who reported that modeling is one of the most effective methods in moral and religious education among Muslim families.

The study also found that paternal exemplarity contributes not only to the development of individual character but also to leadership qualities. Fathers who demonstrated commitment to religious and social responsibilities indirectly inspired their children to assume leadership roles within their communities. This connection between moral upbringing and civic engagement echoes the findings of Darling and Steinberg (1993), who suggest that parental modeling of responsibility and altruism fosters prosocial leadership behaviors in offspring.

The element of discipline emerged as another essential theme. Several informants recalled that their fathers ensured strict adherence to religious obligations, particularly prayer and Qur'anic recitation. While some forms of discipline such as physical sanctions may appear rigid in modern educational discourse, within the cultural and religious context of Riau, such actions were interpreted as expressions of care and moral concern. This reflects a culturally contextualized form of *tazkiyah* (moral purification), where correction is part of the spiritual journey toward moral excellence.

The study's findings thus illustrate that exemplary parenting, rooted in Islamic ethics, creates a ripple effect extending beyond the family. The moral consistency and discipline practiced by fathers have transformed into the guiding principles of their children's leadership ethos. This outcome supports the argument by Al-Ghazali (1993) that education within the home is the foundation for building a virtuous society, as children who grow under the guidance of exemplary parents become agents of moral renewal in their communities.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings correspond with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that the family serves as the primary microsystem influencing individual development. Within this framework, the father's exemplary behavior constitutes a powerful proximal process that shapes children's values, social behavior, and aspirations. The evidence from Riau demonstrates that paternal exemplarity not only molds personal ethics but also has far-reaching implications for community cohesion and social integrity.

In light of these results, it becomes evident that the father's exemplary role functions as both moral pedagogy and social inheritance. The Riau fathers studied here did not merely transmit doctrines; they embodied values that their children absorbed through daily interaction. Consequently, the informants' emergence as respected community leaders can be understood as the fruition of a lifelong educational process grounded in paternal exemplarity, emotional attachment, and spiritual discipline.

Future research might expand upon this study by exploring how paternal exemplarity interacts with changing family dynamics in modern Indonesia. As societal structures evolve, understanding how fathers adapt their moral and educational roles in the face of globalization and technological transformation will be essential. Such studies could inform contemporary Islamic education strategies and contribute to broader efforts to strengthen family-based character education.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the role of fathers in shaping akhlakul karimah among community leaders in Riau Province is a decisive and structurally significant factor in long-term moral and leadership development. Addressing the research objectives, the findings demonstrate that fathers function not only as economic providers but as central moral agents whose consistent exemplification of Islamic values through daily religious practices, ethical conduct, and emotional engagement directly contributes to the internalization of virtues such as integrity, empathy, discipline, and social responsibility. These virtues subsequently emerge as core leadership attributes, confirming the formative influence of paternal exemplarity across the life course.

In advancing current scholarship, this study generates new knowledge by empirically linking attachment-based fathering with Islamic moral pedagogy in the production of socially legitimate leadership, an intersection that remains insufficiently addressed in existing literature. The findings extend contemporary discussions on character education by positioning uswah hasanah as a repeatable and contextually grounded mechanism for moral transmission, rather than a purely normative ideal. Within the state of the art, this research reinforces and refines ecological and religious frameworks of moral development by situating paternal exemplarity as a pivotal proximal process within Muslim family systems. Collectively, the results substantiate the originality and relevance of this study while offering a culturally embedded model for strengthening family-based character and leadership education.

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