



Household Education according to Abdulhamid AbuSulayman

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Article Info: Received: May 03, 2025; Revised: June 09, 2025; Accepted: June 15, 2025

Keywords

AbdulHamid
AbuSulayman;
Household institutions;
Extended family;
Discipline

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand family issues from the perspective of Abu Sulayman's interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an, in accordance with the spirit of Islamic law. The method used was qualitative through literature research and content review, with data analysis using a hermeneutic and contextual approach based on the theories of Abdullah Saeed and Fazlur Rahman. The study's findings reveal the epistemological and structural innovations introduced by AbuSulayman in his work *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*. Family education based on a comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic texts and hadith, supporting the well-being and virtue of women and children, while protecting their rights in accordance with Islamic law. In conclusion, AbuSulayman's thinking offers an inclusive and fair approach to understanding the dynamics of the household in Islamic law. The implications of this research are important for the development of family education that is more in line with the principles of gender justice and family rights in Islam.

Kata Kunci

AbdulHamid
AbuSulayman;
Institusi rumah tangga;
Keluarga besar;
Pendisiplinan

Abstrak

Tujuan kajian ini adalah memahami persoalan kekeluargaan dari perspektif penafsiran AbuSulayman terhadap ayat-ayat al-Qur'an, sesuai dengan semangat syariat Islam. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif melalui penelitian pustaka dan tinjauan isi, dengan analisis data menggunakan pendekatan hermeneutik dan kontekstual berdasarkan teori Abdullah Saeed dan Fazlur Rahman. Hasil kajian menunjukkan adanya pembaharuan epistemologis dan struktural yang diperkenalkan AbuSulayman dalam karyanya *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*. Pendidikan rumah tangga yang berbasis pemahaman komprehensif terhadap teks-teks al-Qur'an dan hadith, serta mendukung kesejahteraan dan kebajikan wanita dan anak-anak, sekaligus melindungi hak-hak mereka sesuai hukum Islam. Kesimpulannya, pemikiran AbuSulayman menawarkan pendekatan inklusif dan adil dalam memahami dinamika rumah tangga dalam hukum Islam. Implikasi penelitian ini penting untuk pengembangan pendidikan keluarga yang lebih sesuai dengan prinsip keadilan gender dan hak-hak keluarga dalam Islam.

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How to Cite (APA Style):

Amir, A. N., & Rahman, T.A. (2025). Household Education according to Abdulhamid AbuSulayman. *Jurnal Hawa: Studi Pengarus Utamaan Gender dan Anak*, 7(1), 1-9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/hawapsga.v7i1.7754>



INTRODUCTION

The discussion on family issues and the consequences of marital crises, including the risks of divorce, has been extensively explored by renowned Islamic activists and thinkers, particularly Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr. AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman (1936–18 August 2021), in his writings aimed at addressing complex marital issues in modern history, grounded in the principles of Maqasid al-Shariah and perspectives of religion, law, and Islamic values (Zakaria & Long, 2024). His most recent work, the concise book *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law* (AbuSulayman, 2008), delves into the meaning and higher objectives of Islamic law, advocating for establishing a harmonious marital structure. He revisits the misinterpretation and misuse of the Shariah provision regarding the beating of wives, which he believes has been misunderstood and violated, contrary to the original intent and spirit of the law.

In this book, AbuSulayman explores practical methods for resolving marital conflicts based on the perspectives of the Qur'an and Sunnah. He highlights aspects of family structure from the Qur'anic viewpoint, emphasizing the foundation of love that binds the spirit and fosters deep understanding and harmony. His work focuses on a practical methodology for addressing marital issues by analyzing Qur'anic verses and Hadith that outline the correct approach and interpretation of divorce, beating, nusyuz (disobedience), and more (Mohamed, 2018).

A central theme in this book is the reinterpretation of the term *daraba* (beating) in the Qur'an, which is discussed comprehensively and thematically. He refers to the opinions of renowned mufasssirun (Qur'anic commentators) and fuqaha (Islamic jurists) on this issue, outlining a universal understanding and message that reflects the high ideals of maqāsid (higher objectives) aimed at reform (Islah) and the dignity of the human being. This discussion shapes a foundational understanding of the ideal Qur'anic methodology and its true maqāsid in addressing marital issues within Islamic law and sharia.

In previous discussions, several writings have explored the idealism developed by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman regarding the values of education, the institution of marriage, and its maqāsid. This is elaborated by Belayat Hossen and Mizanur Rahman (2024) in their detailed article on the strength of *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*, presenting a perceptive debate on the law of wife-beating and measures to normalize family relationships. In another aspect, Imad ad-Dean Ahmad (2022) wrote an obituary about AbuSulayman's legacy in intellectual reform and the fields close to his thought. He provided scholarly insight into AbuSulayman's influential works and their impact on Islamic thought and thinkers, explaining the philosophy and intellectual movements he developed in classical, traditional, and modern contexts. Furthermore, a memoir by Anwar Ibrahim (2022) commemorates his friendship, contributions, and efforts in elevating the dignity of the ummah and advancing the mission of modern and progressive Islamic education. Other writings examine fundamental themes of his thought and its relevance to contemporary contexts, including aspects of values, society, economy, morality, legislation, ethics, and holistic educational policies, as discussed by Nurizal Ismail & Siti Aisyah (2024), Muhammad Mumtaz Ali (2015), Abdelaziz Berghout (2022), and Nurul Ain Norman (2021).

The gap analysis in this study shows that although many previous studies have discussed household issues in Islam, few have focused on AbuSulayman's approach to interpreting the Qur'an about family issues, particularly about a comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic texts and hadith in the context of a more inclusive and just Islamic law. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the epistemological and structural contributions introduced by AbuSulayman, who emphasizes the importance of family education based on the principles of Maqasid al-Shariah and the protection of women's and children's rights. This research aims to provide a new perspective on understanding household dynamics through the principles of gender justice and family rights in Islam and encourage the development of more relevant and progressive family education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a research design based on a literature review and content analysis. This research design aims to understand and analyze AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's views on household education within the context of Islamic law, highlighting how these concepts are conveyed and applied in his works. The primary focus of this study is to explore the meanings found in AbuSulayman's writings related to family education and link them to the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings, particularly those related to the rights of women and children and their roles in the family institution.

The subject of this study includes AbuSulayman's key works, especially the book *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*, along with relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadith. AbuSulayman's works serve as the primary source for understanding his views on household education, focusing on how he articulates Islamic legal principles within the context of family relationships. Additionally, this research includes an analysis of articles and previous studies related to household education in Islam and discussions about the role of women and children in the family from a contemporary Islamic perspective.

Data was collected using the library research method, in which the researcher gathered relevant primary and secondary data sources related to the research topic. The primary sources include AbuSulayman's writings, such as *Marital Discord* and other works discussing household education. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, related books, publications that review household education in Islam, and discussions on the reform of family interpretations and gender roles within the household. Data was collected systematically by identifying relevant texts that provide insights into AbuSulayman's views on household education.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using descriptive, analytical, and historical approaches. The descriptive approach was used to explain AbuSulayman's views on household education based on existing texts and to describe how these concepts are applied in the family context. The analytical approach evaluated and critiqued how AbuSulayman's ideas align with or challenge existing understandings of household education in Islam. This approach also involved applying a hermeneutic perspective, using the theories of Abdullah Saeed and Fazlur Rahman to understand relevant texts within their social and historical contexts. The historical approach was used to trace the evolution of AbuSulayman's thinking on household education, considering the period and social developments that influenced his thought. The collected data was then analyzed to identify the epistemological and structural innovations introduced by AbuSulayman on the topic of household education and to formulate relevant findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The discussion on AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's educational theory is highlighted in this section, specifically regarding his concepts and theories on household education. This includes a review of the essence of his holistic thinking presented in his prolific writings such as *Islamization of Knowledge*, *Crisis of the Muslim Mind*, and *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*, which cover essential discussions related to educational issues. His broad understanding of the Qur'anic verses and Hadith is developed through his classical and contextual interpretations.

Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr. AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman was the former President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in the United States, President of the Child Development Foundation, USA, and former Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) [1408/1989-1999]. He was also the author of various works, including *The Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Islamic Methodology and Thought* (1987), *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* (1987), *Revitalizing Higher Education in the Muslim World* (2007), as well as several books and papers in Arabic.

AbuSulayman also presented many papers and lectures and played a key role in organizing numerous international symposiums, conferences, and seminars.

Born in Mecca in 1355 H/1936, he was a prominent Islamic thinker in the 20th century and a leading figure in the Islamic knowledge movement. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Business from Cairo University in 1378 H/1959, followed by a Master's degree in Political Science from Cairo University in 1381 H/1963, and then earned his PhD in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania in 1398 H/1973 with his thesis titled *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Islamic Methodology and Thought*. He began his brief career in administration as Secretary of the National Planning Committee in Saudi Arabia (1383-1384 H/1963-1964) before being appointed Director of the Department of Political Science at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (1402-1404 H/1982-1984).

AbuSulayman was a co-founder of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) in 1392 H/1972, and its former president (1405-1407 H/1985-1987), Secretary-General of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) (1393-1399 H/1973-1979), and held important roles as Chairman of the Board of Directors, Trustee, and former President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). He authored several articles and books on community reform, including *The Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Islamic Methodology and Thought* (Masum, 2018), *Azmat al-'Aql al-Muslim* (Arabic) [Crisis in Muslim Thought], and *The Islamic Theory of Economics: Philosophy and Contemporary Means* (Ahmed, 2002).

His seminal work *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, originally titled *Azmat al-'Aql al-Muslim* (translated into English by Yusuf DeLorenzo), addresses the intellectual crisis, moral decay, and cultural naivety, central themes in his discussion. His analysis of cultural and moral stagnation points to the root causes of the intellectual crisis, which he identifies as the underlying factor behind widespread moral and cultural decline. His solution is clearly outlined, providing an understanding of the ideal Islamic philosophy, epistemology, and methodology rooted in tawhid and universal, dynamic moral values. AbuSulayman also formulates significant strategies for revitalizing strength and reforming the educational system to rejuvenate Islamic ideals. This revitalization of the spiritual and intellectual strength of Islam, rooted in the Qur'anic and Sunnah ideals, aims to reconstruct Islamic thought and continue the mission of Islam in the modern era. This approach is explored in many of his other works to reconstruct thought and continue the legacy of Islamic da'wah in the modern age.

Discussion

1. Household Education

The discussion on the principles and understanding of household education, especially in the construction of family life and its comparison with other related theories, is explored by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman in his book *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*. In this book, the author addresses the complex issues of marital disputes and the "beating" (darb) of wives, with a deep appreciation for the position and status of women. He challenges the historical and contemporary confusion surrounding the debate on *idribuhunna*, which has largely obscured any meaningful interpretation of verse 4:34 from the Qur'an, except for granting the husband the right to use physical discipline on a "disobedient" wife.

His theory is based on the principles within the philosophy of *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives and goals of Islamic law) (Güney, 2024), which forms his conclusions regarding the interpretation of the verb *daraba*, aiming to realize human well-being, dignity, and honor. His argument is supported by various uses of the same verb in different contexts within the Qur'an, the actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the spirit of the Qur'anic message.

According to him, it is important to define the meaning of the verb *daraba*, which carries multiple meanings, as he successfully demonstrates, depending on the situation and context in which the verb is used. Considering the highest goals and principles of Islam (maqāsid) based on love and affection in

marriage, he explains that interpreting *daraba* as hitting, striking, or any form of "abuse" takes it beyond its intended purpose and misuses it. Physical abuse, harsh language, or verbal abuse is unacceptable in Islam (Saifollah, 2023).

He asserts that domestic violence and the common male oppression have nothing to do with the teachings of the Qur'an or the actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Instead, these practices contradict preserving the family unit and human relationships, which should be the primary concern, particularly when children are involved. The negative impact of any form of violence between spouses on children is well documented. It supports the argument that actions should focus on realizing the true spirit of Islam, which promotes dignity for all family members. This is emphasized in many verses of the Qur'an and the actions of the Prophet (PBUH), particularly his relationship with his wives.

According to AbuSulayman, verse 4:34 indirectly places the responsibility on men to preserve marital harmony and resolve domestic conflicts. This is likely because of the verse's opening phrase, which addresses men as *qawwāmūn*. This word, derived from the root *qa wa ma*, has been translated in various ways into English, including "care," "responsibility and support," "protection," "power," and "accountability." Given the context in which men are addressed in this verse, it is reasonable to conclude that they are advised to maintain harmony.

However, this does not mean that women are the sole source of marital problems or that men are the only ones who can resolve them. Verse 4:34 should be read about verse 4:128 from the same surah, which discusses how to address a husband's mistreatment:

"And if a woman has reason to fear cruelty or desertion from her husband, it is no sin for both of them if they make peace between themselves, and peace is best. Moreover, human souls are swayed by selfishness. However, if you do good and fear God, God is always Aware of what you do." (4:128)

The verb *nushūz*, which appears in both verses (4:34; 4:128) and means the act of bad behaviour or mistreatment by either party, is also significant in AbuSulayman's thesis. For women, *nushūz* is often translated as more severe "disobedience/rebellion," in contrast to the softer translations for men as "alienation," "rejection," "hatred," and "refusal." Muhammad Asad makes an interesting observation in verse 4:34 regarding this verb in his exegesis *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Ogunbado & Ahamad, 2014): "The term *nushūz* (literal meaning, 'disobedience' – here translated as 'bad will') encompasses every form of bad behaviour by a wife that is intentionally directed against her husband or by a husband against his wife, including what today might be described as 'mental cruelty'; concerning the husband, it also denotes 'bad treatment,' in the physical sense, towards his wife (cf. verse 128 of this surah). In this context, the wife's bad will signifies a deliberate, ongoing violation of her marital responsibilities."

In conclusion, we must reflect on the cultural practices and biased attitudes related to interpreting or translating the Qur'anic verses. AbuSulayman's book is an exemplary example of the approach and methodology used in understanding and interpreting difficult Qur'anic verses, based on *maqāsid* principles, in drawing conclusions that uphold dignity, honour, and well-being, grounded in a substantive understanding of the highest objectives of Islamic law.

2. Wisdom and Legal Objectives (Maqāṣid)

According to Katherine Bullock (2008) in her introduction to the Book *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*, the methodology used by Dr. AbuSulayman involves examining the nature of the issues, exploring the context, and achieving an objective understanding based on the divine revelation and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He addresses marital conflicts with a deep sensitivity to the female perspective, a refreshing attitude often overlooked in works on womanhood written by men.

Dr. AbuSulayman tackles this crucial issue with his distinctive insight. He strongly recommends this work to anyone interested in exploring the Qur'anic teachings on husband-wife relationships in Islam. There are many ways to read the Qur'an, from misogynistic to emancipatory perspectives. This

work advances the debate by introducing alternative interpretations of Qur'anic texts. His explanations are fresh and strong, advocating for defending women's human rights.

One of the key themes is the discussion on the essence of *sharī'ah*, where he attempts to provide alternative interpretations of the Qur'anic texts, offering fresh and robust explanations that support the defence of women's human rights. While not everyone may agree with his conclusions, as AbuSulayman shows, even according to traditional records, the Qur'an does not endorse domestic violence (Nurzaman, 2017). Therefore, no one can deny his call for husbands and wives to handle marital disputes with kindness, nor can one ignore its noble aim toward an Islamic family based on the Qur'anic values of human dignity, love, compassion, and the sanctity of life (Azlan & Siraj, 2023).

He argues that the issue of women's "abuse" carries critical meaning, requiring close examination and comprehensive reevaluation within the Islamic context, taking into account the reality of contemporary society, which differs from the early Islamic period when women's freedoms were more limited. This issue affects the husband-wife relationship (and others involved in this issue) and family life in general (Single-Mother & Its Impact, 2019).

AbuSulayman emphasizes the foundation for building family relations in Islam, which is generally based on the concepts of "peace, love, and mercy," values reflected in various hadiths, such as: "The best among the believers are those with the best character, and the best of you are those who are best to their wives." The Sunnah also records that the Prophet (PBUH) strongly condemned a husband who beat his wife: "One of you strikes his wife like a slave and has no shame in continuing to sleep with her" (*Bukhārī*, vol. 6, p. 153). The Prophet (PBUH) also said, "So many women came to the family of Muhammad (PBUH) complaining about being beaten by their husbands, and they were not the best among you" (*Abū Dawūd*, vol. 8, no. 2146, p. 608). The Prophet (PBUH) himself set the best example of love, compassion, dignity, and kindness: "He (PBUH) never extended his hand to hurt a woman, a servant, or anyone else..." (*Muslim*, vol. 2, no. 2328, p. 1814).

In his examination of Qur'anic references to the issue of "abuse," these sacred verses also convey the same tone and understanding: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their wealth on them. Moreover, righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding what Allah would have them guard in the husband's absence. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and refuse to share their beds and beat them; but if they return to obedience, seek not against them any means. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Great. Moreover, if you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from her family. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Acquainted." (4:34-35)

AbuSulayman attempts to expand upon his interpretation by connecting it with other related Qur'anic verses, such as: "O humanity, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. Moreover, fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs [of mothers]. Verily, Allah is ever over you, an Observer." (4:1)

"And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find rest in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for people who give thought." (30:21)

"When you divorce women, and they fulfil their term [of waiting], either keep them in kindness or release them in kindness, but do not take them back to harm them or to take from them something unjustly, and whoever does that has wronged himself. Moreover, do not take the verses of Allah in jest. However, remember Allah's favour upon you and what He has revealed to you of the Book and wisdom by which He instructs you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Knowing of all things." (2:231)

"O you who have believed! When you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them, there is not for you any waiting period for them which you should count. So provide for them and give them a gracious release." (33:49)

"Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] in an acceptable manner or release [her] with kindness. And it is not lawful for you to take anything from what you have given them unless both fear that they will not be able to maintain the limits of Allah. However, if you fear that they will not maintain the limits of Allah, then there is no blame upon either of them if she gives something for her freedom. These are the limits of Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah – it is those who are the wrongdoers." (2:229)

In his effort to interpret these verses, AbuSulayman attempts to refine and examine them in terms of *maqāṣid* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) and the socio-legal dimensions rooted in Islamic tradition and experience, where these verses reflect strong Islamic principles of human dignity, freedom, responsibility, and the status of human beings as *khalīfah* (representatives) chosen by Allah, as well as the rightful right to self-determination.

Thus, in identifying the proper understanding of what is meant by "abuse," and its place in familial relationships, marriage, and parenthood, and whether the original Islamic household structure upholds the Islamic family structure, he endeavours to comprehensively investigate its various dimensions and connotations, re-evaluating the entire issue within his methodological framework. He explores the varied connotations of the verb *daraba* and its derivatives throughout the Qur'an, resulting in nearly seventeen different nuances as shown in the following verses: (16:75, 76, 112; 66:11), (43:57), (17:48), (16:74), (4:101), (18:11), (43:5), (24:31), (20:77), (26:63), (2:26), (2:60), (2:61), (3:112), (47:27), (8:12), (38:44), (47:4), (4:94), (57:13), and (37:93).

Ultimately, he sees that the root verb *daraba* (transitive and intransitive) carries several figurative or allegorical connotations, which can mean to separate, leave, abandon, avoid, discard, and so on. Therefore, the general connotation of the root verb *daraba* in the Qur'anic context means to separate, to distance, to abandon, to remove, and so on.

When this interpretation is applied to the resolution of marital issues and the restoration of intimacy and harmony between estranged couples, in the context of the verse (4:34), the consideration and objective of the verse is peace in a dignified manner, without coercion or threat, as each spouse has the ability and right to dissolve the marriage. Thus, the meaning of *darb* cannot imply the infliction of harm, pain, or shame. Therefore, the most straightforward interpretation is withdrawal, separation, or distancing. This arrangement, where the husband separates himself and leaves his wife entirely for some time, helps resolve the situation as it is the final step after admonishing her and refusing to have relations with her (Musthapar et al., 2024). Now, while the husband is distant, the wife has ample opportunity to reconsider the entire situation, reflect on the inevitable consequences, and realize the outcome of rejection - divorce. Now, she must carefully decide whether to be permanently separated from her husband or reconciled to the original marriage.

His analysis of the verb *daraba* aligns with the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) and the actual practice of the Prophet (PBUH), as acknowledged in the narration that reports the Prophet (PBUH) distancing himself from his wives when they disobeyed after the demand for a better standard of living was denied. The Prophet (PBUH) withdrew to a place in the house known as *al-mashrabah* for a month and offered them the choice to accept the standard of living that he (PBUH) could provide or to be released from the marital bond and separated in dignity.

Separating, distancing, and withdrawing from them is consistent, on the one hand, with the psychological nature of the situation and, on the other hand, with the general understanding of the various uses of the root verb *daraba* in the Qur'an and its conceptual, derivative, and figurative forms.

CONCLUSION

In his book *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law*, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman presents important principles related to the values of family education in line with Islamic teachings. He proposes a practical understanding of the relationship between husband and wife that fosters peace and harmony within the family. Grounded in wisdom and the teachings of

the Qur'an, AbuSulayman emphasizes the importance of a family structure based on love, compassion, and the creation of an environment that responds to the challenges of contemporary life. This highlights the alignment between Islamic teachings and the dynamics of modern family life.

The thoughts and *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) expressed by AbuSulayman align with the goals and objectives of Islamic law, which focus on forming a harmonious society. In this context, the family is viewed not only as a social institution but also as an entity responsible for its members' spiritual, emotional, and psychological well-being. These principles support the creation of a safe and responsive household that can adapt to changing times and provide a secure space for individual growth within the family. In this regard, family education goes beyond the roles of husband and wife, encompassing a deeper understanding of each individual's rights, duties, and responsibilities in maintaining harmony.

The principles proposed by AbuSulayman demonstrate how Islamic law, through a comprehensive understanding, not only adheres to textual rules but also allows room for reasoning and *ijtihad* in facing modern challenges. The collective guidance of *shari'ah* and the prophetic ideals that serve as a foundation for family life direct Muslims to uphold noble values in nurturing relationships between husband and wife. Therefore, the principles presented in his book offer a new perspective on understanding the role of the household as an essential element in creating a just and prosperous society.

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