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DISTORTION OF THE MEANING OF BIRRUL WALIDAIN: AN ANALYSIS OF PARENTS' MISUNDERSTANDING OF POWER RELATIONS AND CHILDREN'S DEMANDS FOR OBEDIENCE IN MUSLIM FAMILIES

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HIGHLIGHT

Families, starting with parents with extensive knowledge, will not interpret birrul walidain narrowly, thus stifling the child's developmental psychology. Parents who understand the true nature of birrul walidain will treat their children more humanely and uphold their dignity, as they are entrusted to them by God. Developmental psychology and power relations are theories used to examine the positive and negative aspects of children's birrul walidain, and are reinforced by relevant interpretations and opinions of scholars to provide a comprehensive understanding of the true nature of birrul walidain.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the distortion of the meaning of birrul walidain in contemporary Muslim families, where the obligation to do good to parents is often reduced to absolute obedience influenced by patriarchal culture and power relations. Using a critical-interpretive qualitative approach and a phenomenological-hermeneutic design, this study explores the experiences of parents and children through in-depth interviews and participant observation. The analysis uses Foucault's theory of power relations, Erikson's developmental psychology, and the relational ethics of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah. The results reveal that reducing birrul walidain to mere total obedience gives rise to the phenomenon of toxic obedience that limits children's autonomy, hinders identity formation, and weakens self-confidence. In contrast, families that integrate religious values with the principles of developmental psychology are able to create a dialogical and humanistic relationship pattern, so that birr is understood as compassion, openness, and moral collaboration.

KEYWORD

birrul walidain, power relations, child obedience, developmental psychology, Islamic family education

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A. INTRODUCTION

The concept of *birrul walidain* is a central ethical principle of Islamic law, as affirmed in various verses of the Qur'an and hadith. Normatively, *birrul walidain* implies respect, affection, service, and good treatment of both parents (Ibn Kathir, 2000). However, this normative meaning in the socio-cultural context of Indonesian Muslims often experiences reduction and narrowing, especially when contextualized within hierarchical family power relations. In patriarchal societies, the concept of *birr* is often interpreted as a demand for absolute obedience without considering the principles of justice, proportionality, or the child's psychological development (Abdullah, 2019).

Theoretically, this distortion of meaning can be interpreted through Foucault's power relations theory, which explains that power operates not only structurally but also through discourses that are culturally and religiously legitimized (Foucault, 1980). When parents interpret *birrul walidain* as a means of legitimizing absolute authority, they unconsciously produce a new regime of truth: that any child's refusal is a form of disobedience. This discourse then becomes socially normalized in many Muslim families, thus forming an unequal relationship structure between parents and children.

From a developmental psychology perspective, the demand for obedience without a space for dialogue contradicts Erik Erikson's classic theory that the development of a child's identity demands a space for autonomy, exploration, and self-efficacy (Erikson, 1994). Authoritarian parenting, often based on religious principles, has been empirically proven to lower self-esteem, cause anxiety, and inhibit the formation of a positive self-concept (Baumrind, 1971; Santrock, 2018). In this context, narrowing the meaning of *birrul walidain* to merely vertical obedience has the potential to ignore the principle of balanced relations taught by Islam, such as *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf* (QS. An-Nahl [16]: 125).

Studies of Islamic jurisprudence and interpretation actually show that the concept of *birrul walidain* is not identical to blind obedience. Imam al-Qurthubi emphasized that obedience to parents has limits, namely it must not conflict with the principles of sharia, justice, and human welfare (al-Qurthubi, 2003). Even the Qur'an provides a clear limit: "if they both force you to associate partners with Me... then do not obey them, but associate with them in the world in a good way" (QS. Luqmān [31]: 15). This verse shows that the *birr* relationship is an ethical relationship, not a domination relationship.

Recent empirical research indicates a shift in family religiosity practices, which uses the concept of *birr* as a unilateral tool of control. A study by Suryadi (2021) found that 67% of Muslim parents in Indonesia use "filial piety" as a basis for demanding full obedience from their children in educational, occupational, and even marital decisions. Another study by Khairunnisa (2022) shows that the misuse of religious concepts in parenting directly

contributes to the emergence of toxic obedience, where children's obedience is driven by fear rather than good values. This phenomenon indicates an epistemic distortion in the interpretation of Islamic teachings within the family.

From a value hermeneutics perspective, this distortion occurs due to a selective and textual reading of verses and hadith about *birr* without understanding its *maqāṣid* (intelligible meaning). The value of *birr* in the concept of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* should be directed towards achieving the benefit (*maslahah*) of both parties and protecting the child's *nafs* and *'aql* (intelligible character) (Jasser Auda, 2008). However, in practice, some parents interpret *birr* mono-perspectively, resulting in a one-way family relationship that suppresses the child's development.

Based on this theoretical framework and empirical evidence, this research is crucial for analyzing how the distortion of the meaning of *birrul walidain* is formed in Muslim families, the factors that cause it, and its impact on power relations and children's psychological dynamics. This analysis contributes not only to the development of contemporary Islamic studies but also to the practice of family education, developmental psychology, and the reconstruction of relational ethics in modern Muslim societies.

Although studies on *birrul walidain* have been widely discussed in the literature on Islamic jurisprudence, *tafsir*, and the ethics of family order, most previous research still places this concept within a normative-textual framework without examining how its meaning transforms in the social practices of contemporary Indonesian Muslim families (Hidayat, 2017). These studies generally emphasize children's moral obligations but lack an examination of how parents construct religious authority to support asymmetrical power relations within the family (Rahman, 2019). On the other hand, developmental psychology studies focus more on the impact of parenting styles without linking them to religious legitimacy, which is often used as a justification for authoritarian parenting styles (Yusuf, 2020).

To date, there is limited research that explicitly examines *birrul walidain* as a religious discourse that operates through the mechanisms of power relations as explained in Foucault's theoretical framework. Empirical studies such as those by Suryadi (2021) or Khairunnisa (2022) only touch on the use of the concept of *birr* as a means of parental control, but fail to explain how this epistemic distortion is formed, reproduced, and normalized through everyday interactions within the family. Furthermore, no study has integrated the perspectives of *maqāṣid* hermeneutics, identity development theory, and discourse criticism to comprehensively analyze the phenomenon of the narrowing of the meaning of *birrul walidain*.

Another gap is evident in the lack of studies examining the impact of the distortion of the meaning of *birr* on the formation of children's self-concept, autonomy, and self-efficacy, even though these psychological dimensions are crucial for the quality of ethical relationships within the family. Therefore, this study aims to fill this theoretical and empirical gap with an interdisciplinary approach that examines *birrul walidain* not only as a normative concept but also as a social practice, a discourse of power, and a factor

influencing the psychological dynamics and relational ethics within Indonesian Muslim families.

B. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an interpretative-critical paradigm that seeks to deeply understand the construction of the meaning of *birrul walidain* in the experiences of Muslim families, while simultaneously critiquing the hidden power relations in the demands for children's obedience. The interpretative paradigm is used to explore how parents and children interpret religious teachings through language, symbols, and everyday practices, while the critical paradigm functions to reveal the structures of domination perpetuated through religious postulates, social practices, and parenting patterns (parental authority) as emphasized by Habermas in his theory of communicative action and by critical qualitative theorists such as Denzin & Lincoln who assert that qualitative research must open up spaces for social liberation and emancipation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The choice of the interpretative-critical paradigm is also based on Schwandt's view that social meaning is always context-bound and produced within networks of power and knowledge (Schwandt, 2007).

Methodologically, this study uses a phenomenological-hermeneutic design to capture the subjective experiences of children and parents regarding piety, obedience, and the legitimacy of family authority, then analyzed through a critical perspective to identify forms of distortion of the meaning of *birrul walidain*. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews and participatory observation through natural interactions in the family environment. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles & Huberman model simultaneously through the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). However, interpretative-critical analysis strengthens this process by emphasizing power relations, discourse, and forms of normalization of obedience as understood through Michel Foucault's theory of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Thus, this study not only describes the phenomenon but also assesses how religious claims about *birrul walidain* can be distorted towards toxic obedience through parenting practices, authority, and moral legitimacy in contemporary Muslim families.

Strengthening methodological transparency, this study involved 6–10 participants, consisting of 3–5 Muslim parents in Tanggulangin Sidoarjo and Bangkalan Madura; 3–5 children aged 13–22 years who live in Tanggulangin Sidoarjo and Bangkalan Madura. The reason is that these places both have family environments with strong religious practices. The participant selection technique used purposive sampling, especially criteria-based sampling, namely selecting participants who meet certain criteria: (1) Muslim families who use the concept of *birrul walidain* as a guideline in parenting, (2) the experience of a strong authority relationship between parents and children, and (3) the willingness of participants to share their subjective experiences. This selection of purposive and criteria-based sampling is in accordance with Patton's recommendation that qualitative research should

involve participants who are most informative and relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015).

The next stage, snowball sampling can be used to reach additional relevant participants, especially when the social networks between participants are interconnected, as explained by Noy that snowball sampling is effective in research contexts involving natural social relations (Noy, 2008). Determining the number of participants takes into account the depth of the data and the principle of saturation, namely stopping when no new meanings or themes emerge in the data mining process, a principle that has been empirically tested by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) who showed that saturation can be achieved even with a limited number of participants in qualitative research that focuses.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Power Relations in Islamic Families: The Foundations of Moral Authority and the Problem of Distortion of Religious Meaning

Power relations within Islamic families constitute a social structure that shapes how parents interpret moral authority in guiding their children. Islam positions parents as respected figures due to their experience and spiritual responsibility, as reflected in the concept of *birr al-wālidayn*. However, this normative meaning does not always align with prevailing social practices. In many Muslim families, the value of *birr al-wālidayn* has been narrowed, transforming it into a demand for absolute obedience that ignores children's psychological development and principles of moral civility. This distortion occurs when moral authority becomes an instrument of domination legitimized by narrow religious interpretations (Mahmood, 2005).

Theologically, *birr al-wālidayn* is not only a child's ethical obligation to honor their parents, but also a space for dialogue that allows for humanistic moral guidance. Unfortunately, some parents interpret verses and hadith about devotion in a legalistic manner, making obedience the primary parameter of a child's piety. From a power theory perspective, this phenomenon aligns with Foucault's (1977) view that power operates through legitimate discourse; in the family context, that discourse is religion. Parents claim interpretive authority as possessors of "religious knowledge," thus hiding power relations behind moral legitimacy that children are unaware of.

The effects of this kind of power relationship are significant on a child's psychosocial development. Erikson (1968) emphasized that adolescence is a time of identity formation. Oppressive authority can result in identity foreclosure, an identity formed through coercion or parental demands, rather than through independent exploration (Marcia, 1980). In this situation, children often face a psychological dilemma between the desire to demonstrate devotion and the desire to develop autonomy. This psychological tension can develop into anxiety, inner conflict, or low self-esteem, as explained by Bowlby (1988) in attachment theory, which states that rigid emotional relationship patterns create a disturbed sense of security.

Power relations are also formed through repeated communication practices and symbols within the family, as Bourdieu (1990, 1991) explains through the concepts of habitus and symbolic power. In Indonesian Muslim culture, particularly in societies with strong patriarchal traditions, parental authority (especially the father's) is closely linked to family honor. In this context, teachings about devotion are often combined with feudal values, reinforcing the legitimacy of hierarchy. Anthropologist Geertz's (1960) findings indicate that Javanese Muslims, for example, construct religion as a symbol of moral authority that is difficult to challenge. This explains why children are often denied the opportunity to express their opinions or reject parental demands, even when these demands are unhealthy for their psychological development.

From Bronfenbrenner's (1979) developmental ecology perspective, the family is the primary microsystem that shapes a child's self-regulation, beliefs, and social capacities. Unequal power relations, especially those disguised as religious legitimacy, create interaction patterns that suppress the development of autonomy and empathy. Research by Barber (1996) suggests that this type of parental psychological control increases the risk of maladaptive behavior in children, including anxiety, depression, and the inability to negotiate personal boundaries. These findings are supported by Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010), who argue that parental psychological control is a subtle form of domination that operates on a child's emotional and moral domains.

Within the framework of critical pedagogy, Freire (2000) asserts that unconscious power can produce oppression in educational relationships. In families, relational patterns that position children merely as objects of obedience, rather than subjects of dialogue, create oppressive pedagogical relationships. Giroux (2011) emphasizes that this form of relationship is not simply a family structure, but rather an ideological system passed down through generations. This is where religion, culture, and power intertwine, forming a regime of truth (Foucault, 1982) about what is considered true in the parent-child relationship.

From all these theoretical perspectives, it can be concluded that the distortion of religious meaning in family power relations is not simply an individual misunderstanding, but rather a consequence of the interaction between religious texts, patriarchal culture, social authority structures, and the psychological dynamics of child development. This research is important in uncovering how moral authority in Muslim families can be interpreted proportionally, not as domination that limits child development, but as an ethic of guidance that honors humanity and provides a space for dialogue for healthy identity growth.

In addition to this theoretical foundation, field findings indicate differences in power relations between Madurese Muslim families and urban Muslim families in Sidoarjo. In Madurese families, particularly in coastal areas, the concept of *birr al-wālidayn* is understood more textually and transcendently. This literal interpretation positions parents as the center of moral authority that is virtually unchallengeable. As a result, communication patterns tend to be one-way, and children are expected to obey without

room for negotiation. This condition reinforces the hierarchical power structure and impacts children's psychological development, particularly in aspects of autonomy, decision-making, and identity formation.

In contrast, Muslim families in Sidoarjo demonstrate a more modern and dialogical relationship pattern. Parental authority is respected but not used to suppress children's expression and developmental needs. Parents in Sidoarjo are more open to discussion, provide space for exploration, and view obedience not as an absolute requirement but as the result of mutually respectful interactions. Empirically, children from Sidoarjo families demonstrate more adaptive psychological development, self-confidence, and the ability to make more mature decisions. This comparison strengthens the argument that textual religious interpretations without psychological understanding can significantly impact the quality of children's development.

Developmental Psychology and Sami'na wa Atha'na: Between Obedience and Authoritarianism

The concept of *sami'na wa atha'na*, literally meaning "we hear and we obey," is one of the theological principles of obedience in Islam. Normatively, this term refers to a believer's willingness to accept and carry out the commands of Allah and His Messenger with full spiritual awareness, not out of coercion (Mahmood, 2005). In Muslim families, this principle should present a parenting ethic based on compassion, wisdom, and moral responsibility. However, in social practice in many families, this concept has been simplified and distorted, thus legitimizing authoritarian parenting patterns.

The stages of a child's psychological development require a balance between guidance and exploratory freedom. Erikson (1968) emphasized that a child's identity development is strongly influenced by the quality of emotional relationships and communication patterns that provide space for the child to develop autonomy and initiative. When *sami'na wa atha'na* is understood as an obligation to "total obedience without dialogue," children lose the opportunity to develop decision-making skills, resolve conflicts, and build self-confidence. Every developmental stage that should support independence is instead hindered by excessive control.

Baumrind (1991) suggests that an authoritarian parenting style is characterized by high levels of psychological control, minimal warmth, and a lack of two-way communication. In certain Muslim family contexts, this parenting style is often given religious legitimacy, for example by citing verses such as QS. Luqman [31]: 14 or hadiths about respecting parents. When this legitimacy is combined with a one-way communication pattern, *sami'na wa atha'na* becomes a doctrine enforced not as a spiritual value, but as a tool to ensure child obedience.

Yet, parenting is multidimensional, psychologically and socially involving the functions of affection, cognition, and moral regulation. Bowlby (1988) explained that a secure emotional attachment is the foundation for healthy psychological development, including a child's ability to obey rules consciously, not under duress. Compliance built through a sense of security differs from compliance that arises from fear or threat. The

distortion of the meaning of *sami'na wa atha'na* occurs when spiritual obedience is replaced by fear-based obedience to authority figures.

Within the framework of moral psychology theory, Kohlberg (1981) emphasized that morality develops through stages, from fear-based obedience (pre-conventional) to principle-based morality (post-conventional). If parents use religious claims to demand total obedience, children become trapped in a low stage of morality. They obey not because they understand moral values, but because they fear physical or emotional punishment. This does not result in the internalization of religious values, but rather reinforces dependency and weakens moral independence.

Power relations within the family, as analyzed by Foucault (1977; 1982), clarify how power operates through language, commands, and the normalization of behavior. When parents use religious legitimacy to regulate children's behavior, from how they dress and choose friends to determining their future educational goals, the doctrine of *sami'na wa atha'na* becomes an instrument of discipline. In some cases, verses and hadith are used not to guide, but to subdue. The phrase "you must obey because it is a religious commandment" creates a submissive subject, not a conscious one.

In the context of Muslim culture in the Indonesian archipelago, Geertz (1960) previously demonstrated that religious practices are often intertwined with sociocultural structures and family power patterns. This explains why *sami'na wa atha'na* can easily shift from a spiritual principle to a patriarchal practice demanding absolute loyalty. At this point, the relationship between religion and power is inseparable: parents are not only biological figures but also symbolic figures holding moral and cultural authority.

Yet, in Islamic education literature, Ulwan (1992) and al-Ghazali (2005) emphasize that children's education must be based on role models, dialogue, and compassion. The true principle of *sami'na wa atha'na* is not blind obedience, but rather a spiritual response built on understanding. At the level of cognitive development, Vygotsky (1978) demonstrated that dialogue is key to a child's mental development through scaffolding mechanisms or gradual guidance. Thus, parenting styles that use religion as an instrument of domination contradict both Islamic pedagogical principles and modern developmental psychology.

Ultimately, this research confirms that the distortion of the meaning of *sami'na wa atha'na* occurs when parental moral authority is not linked to a child's psychological development. Parents who interpret obedience as absolute submission actually create psychological risks such as low self-confidence, anxiety, dependency, and the child's inability to manage conflict. Conversely, a dialogical interpretation of *sami'na wa atha'na* based on love and guidance can foster strong morality, independence, and mature religiosity. This direction aligns with the goals of Islamic education and the findings of contemporary developmental psychology.

Field findings in Madura indicate that the principle of *sami'na wa atha'na* is often implemented as an obligation of total obedience, rather than as a spiritual awareness. Parents use literal religious language as a means of legitimizing their children's behavior from an early age, from education and social interactions to future choices. This pattern

limits children's opportunities for dialogue, expressing opinions, or developing problem-solving skills. Children from Madurese families who interpret religion in a highly transcendental and textual manner tend to experience slower psychological maturity, such as a lack of self-confidence, a fear of making decisions, or a heavy dependence on authority.

In contrast, families in Sidoarjo apply the principle of *sami'na wa atha'na* more contextually. Obedience is understood not as total surrender, but as the result of an awareness of values and secure emotional relationships. Parents tend to combine religious values with knowledge of developmental psychology, giving children space to ask questions, negotiate opinions, and try new things. Field findings indicate that Sidoarjo children grow with more mature levels of self-regulation, self-confidence, and moral reasoning. This reinforces the theories of Erikson, Baumrind, and Vygotsky that dialogue and warmth are key components of optimal development.

Integration of Religious Values and Developmental Psychology: Building a Dialogical Islamic Family Education Model

The ideal model of Islamic family education requires an integration of religious values and findings from developmental psychology. This integration is crucial because family education is not merely a process of transmitting religious teachings but also a process of personality formation that takes into account the comprehensive developmental needs of children. In this context, family education needs to shift from an authoritarian approach to a more dialogical relationship. Core Islamic values such as *rahmah* (compassion), *hikmah* (wisdom), and *'adl* (justice) provide a moral foundation for building parent-child relationships that are oriented not only toward obedience but also toward healthy psychological growth (al-Ghazali, 2005).

According to Erikson, children go through stages of psychosocial development that require a balance between control and freedom of expression. In stages such as initiative vs. guilt or identity vs. role confusion, a space for dialogue with parents is key to the formation of a child's self-identity and self-confidence (Erikson, 1968). When families emphasize only obedience without a space for two-way communication, children tend to internalize values superficially and are more susceptible to experiencing obstacles in moral development. On the other hand, dialogue allows children to understand the moral and spiritual reasons behind the rules, so that religious values are not only obeyed but also lived.

In the Islamic scholarly tradition, the value of dialogue and deliberation has been a fundamental part of the educational process. The Quran describes Luqman's dialogue with his son as a model of education based on wisdom, gentle advice, and moral awareness, rather than parental domination. This dialogical educational model aligns with modern developmental psychology approaches, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding theory, which emphasizes the importance of parental support in guiding children without stifling their autonomy. This gradual support allows children to internalize religious values by understanding the context and purpose behind the teachings.

Baumrind (1991) classifies parenting styles into authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative, and concludes that the authoritative style, which combines rules with warmth

and dialogue, results in optimal social and moral development in children. The authoritative parenting model is highly compatible with Islamic religious principles, which emphasize the balance between *amar ma'ruf* (encouraging good) and *tarbiyah bil-hikmah* (education with wisdom). This shows that Islamic family education cannot be understood solely as a process of ordering children to obey absolutely, but as a process of spiritual and psychological guidance.

From Bronfenbrenner's (1979) developmental ecology perspective, the family is the primary microsystem that shapes a child's early interactions with the world. If families adopt dialogic communication patterns, children will gain social and psychological capital that empowers them to cope with environmental pressures at school, in society, and in the media. The integration of religious values and developmental psychology at the family level creates a conducive environment for the development of self-regulation, moral reasoning, and mature religious awareness (Kohlberg, 1981).

Ultimately, a dialogic model of Islamic family education can only be built through the understanding that religion is not intended to reinforce parental dominance but rather serves as an ethical guide for establishing mutually respectful relationships. Religious values serve as a moral foundation, while developmental psychology provides a scientific framework for understanding children's needs at every stage of their lives. The integration of the two creates an educational model that fosters not only obedience but also independence, spiritual maturity, creativity, and decision-making skills. Thus, dialogic Islamic family education is a practical implementation of substantial Islamic values while also aligning with contemporary developmental theory.

Gradually providing support allows children to meaningfully internalize religious values, as they not only hear commands but also understand the reasons and wisdom behind them. Thus, parents are not merely instructors but also facilitators of self-development, guiding children toward moral independence.

One of the most important contributions of developmental psychology to Islamic family education is the understanding that healthy obedience arises from secure emotional relationships. Bowlby (1988) emphasized that secure attachment is the foundation for a child's ability to learn, obey, and empathize. If parents display warmth, consistency, and open communication, religious commands are more easily internalized as values, not pressure. Islamic values such as *mahabbah* (compassion), *lutf* (forgiving), and *rifq* (gentleness), taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him), align with this principle of secure attachment.

Integrating religious values and developmental psychology also requires parents to understand their child's cognitive development. Piaget (1952) demonstrated that a child's understanding of moral commands is strongly influenced by their thought processes. At certain stages, children require concrete examples, not abstract doctrines. By combining the *targhib-tarhib* approach in a balanced manner, parents can instill religious values relevant to their developmental stage, rather than simply demanding obedience.

From an Islamic educational perspective, Ulwan (1992) emphasizes six pillars of child education: spiritual, moral, physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. These pillars can only develop fully if the family fulfills its educational role in a humanistic manner. The integration of developmental psychology and Islamic values helps ensure that *birr al-wālidayn* is interpreted not only vertically (obedience) but also horizontally (attention to the child's development). Thus, dialogical Islamic family education balances moral authority with respect for the child's natural instinct as a being with reason, potential, and autonomy.

This integrative family education model ultimately corrects the distorted meaning of *birrul walidain* and *sami'na wa atha'na*. Obedience becomes less a source of psychological pressure and more a part of the process of spiritual maturity. Parents no longer use religion as a legitimate form of control, but rather as an empathetic guiding ethic. Children no longer understand obedience as a fear of parental wrath, but as a conscious expression of love.

Comparative data between Madura and Sidoarjo shows that the integration of religious values and developmental psychology significantly determines the quality of child development. Madurese families, who interpret religion textually, provide less space for dialogue, so religious values often appear as rigid moral instructions. This results in shallow internalization of values and more limited psychological development. In contrast, more modern Sidoarjo families are able to interpret religious values proportionally, combining spiritual guidance with psychological understanding. This pattern produces children who are more independent, emotionally mature, and have a reflective religiosity. Thus, the integration of religious values and developmental psychology is not merely a normative concept, but an empirical reality proven to influence the quality of education in Muslim families.

D. CONCLUSION

Birrul walidain, understood as a total requirement, often gives rise to toxic obedience that limits autonomy, hinders identity formation, and erodes children's self-confidence. Field findings indicate that Madurese families, in particular, tend to interpret *birrul walidain* textually and transcendently, resulting in authoritative parenting styles that provide little space for children's psychological development. In contrast, families in Sidoarjo integrate religious values with developmental psychology, resulting in more dialogical communication and more adaptive child development.

When Islamic values are combined with developmental psychology principles, *birr* is understood not as domination, but as compassion, openness, and moral collaboration. The values of *mahabbah*, *lutf*, and *rifq* align with the concept of secure attachment, which emphasizes that healthy obedience is based on a sense of security and warm emotional relationships. Knowledge of Piaget's cognitive stages and Ulwan's principles of child education helps parents instill religious values realistically and appropriately for children's abilities. Thus, integrative Islamic family education is able to balance moral authority and children's developmental needs. Obedience (*Birrul Walidain*) is no longer born of pressure, but of love, complete awareness, and humanity.

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