



## The Closeness of Parents and Children in Islam: A Study of the Prophet's Exemplary Behavior in Early Childhood Education

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### Abstract

From an Islamic perspective, closeness between parents and children encompasses not only biological relationships but also interrelated emotional, spiritual, and social aspects. This study aims to analyze the concept of closeness between parents and children in Islam and its impact on early childhood development. Unlike previous studies that tend to discuss early childhood education in general or Islamic values separately, this study offers an integrative perspective that systematically connects early childhood education literature with Islamic values. The study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method through a systematic search and analysis of various literature sources, such as hadith, books, and relevant scientific articles. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques to identify the main concepts and values in building this closeness. The study's findings indicate that the closeness between parents and children in Islam is built through affection, warm interactions, gentle communication, role models (*uswah hasanah*), and early spiritual education, all of which play a crucial role in fostering self-confidence, emotional stability, and noble morals in children. Therefore, implementing a parenting style that emphasizes closeness in accordance with Islamic teachings is a relevant and applicable approach within the context of Islamic education to foster a generation of faith, character, and quality.

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a crucial phase in shaping a child's personality, character, and life values (Hasanah, 2024). During this period, children experience rapid emotional, social, and spiritual development. Therefore, the role of parents as the primary educators is crucial in guiding a child's growth and development. In this context, the closeness between parents and children is a crucial factor that cannot be ignored, as a warm and harmonious relationship will significantly influence the development of a child's future personality.

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In Islamic teachings, the relationship between parents and children is not viewed solely as a biological one, but also as a bond encompassing emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions (Azwar & Usman, 2025). Islam views children as a trust that must be protected, educated, and guided with full responsibility. Therefore, building closeness with children is not only a psychological need but also a form of worship with spiritual value. The best example in this regard can be seen in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, who consistently demonstrated compassion, gentleness, and attention in his interactions with children. International studies also show that parenting based on Islamic values plays a crucial role in shaping children's religious identity from an early age (Mustakim et al., 2022).

However, the reality in society shows that not all parents are able to build optimal bonds with their children. Busy schedules, a lack of understanding of parenting styles, and the use of inappropriate approaches often hinder harmonious family relationships. As a result, children can experience various problems, such as low self-confidence, difficulty managing emotions, and a weak instillation of moral and spiritual values.

Based on this, it is important to examine more deeply the concept of closeness between parents and children from an Islamic perspective, particularly as it relates to the role of affection, interaction, communication, role modeling, and spiritual education. This article aims to analyze how Islamic teachings provide comprehensive guidance on building this closeness and its impact on child development. This study provides an integrative perspective between early childhood education literature and Islamic values, which have rarely been systematically studied. It is hoped that this will contribute to enriching the understanding of Islamic parenting patterns in shaping a generation with faith, noble character, and a balanced personality.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of closeness between parents and children from an Islamic perspective, particularly as it relates to affection, interaction, communication, role models (*uswah hasanah*), and spiritual education in shaping the character of early childhood. This method provides an integrative perspective between early childhood education literature and Islamic values, thus conducting a systematic literature search of various relevant sources related to Islamic parenting and early childhood education.

The data sources in this study consist of the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the primary source, as well as books, national and international journal articles, and other academic publications related to the research topic. Literature selection was carried out purposively with the following inclusion criteria:

(1) the most recently published article, (2) from a peer-reviewed journal, (3) thematically relevant to parent-child closeness and Islamic education, and (4) available in full-text form. Literature that did not meet any of these criteria was excluded from the analysis.

The data collection procedure was carried out through a systematic search of various scientific databases, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and national and international indexed journals, as well as other Islamic literature sources. Keywords used in the literature search included: closeness between parents and children in Islam, Islamic parenting, early childhood education in Islam, affection in Islam, communication in the family, and children's spiritual development. From this search, a number of initial articles were obtained, which were then selected based on the inclusion criteria above until the final literature was obtained, which was used as the main source of analysis [the number of articles found and those that passed the

selection must be stated by the author according to the actual search data]. The literature that passed the selection was then classified based on the discussion theme and systematically arranged according to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis techniques, which involved an in-depth review of the literature to identify concepts, values, and the relationship between parent-child closeness and the formation of children's character and faith. This approach was chosen because it allows for systematic identification of key themes while maintaining the context of meaning within narrative Islamic sources. The analysis results were then interpreted descriptively and synthesized to produce a comprehensive understanding. Based on this synthesis, conclusions and theoretical recommendations were drawn regarding the importance of building closeness between parents and children as a foundation for Islamic education in order to shape a generation of faithful and noble character.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

## The Concept of Closeness Between Parents and Children in Islam

In Islamic teachings, the relationship between parents and children is not merely biological, but also encompasses a very strong emotional, spiritual, and social bond. This closeness is the primary foundation for a child's education, especially at an early age, when children most need their parents' attention, affection, and intense guidance (Salma, 2024). Islam views building closeness with children as part of a responsibility that has the value of worship, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW in his daily life (Mayunda, 2024). Emotional closeness in the family is reflected in the love, attention, and warmth that parents give to their children (Watopa & Kasingku, 2025). Children who experience love and acceptance will grow up with a sense of security and confidence. Meanwhile, spiritual closeness is demonstrated through parents' efforts to instill religious values, such as teaching prayer, worship, and love for God from an early age. Social closeness is evident in harmonious family interactions, such as good communication, mutual respect, and parental involvement in children's daily activities. These three aspects complement each other and form an important foundation for shaping a child's overall character.

In Islam, children are seen as a trust from Allah SWT who must be protected, cared for, and educated as best they can (Natsir et al., 2024). This mandate extends beyond fulfilling physical needs to encompass a child's psychological and spiritual needs. Parents have a significant responsibility to ensure that their children grow up in a positive environment, enabling them to become individuals of faith and noble character. Therefore, closeness between parents and children is the primary means of fulfilling this mandate. The primary goal of fostering this closeness is to foster morals and faith in children from an early age. Through a close and harmonious relationship, parents more easily instill positive values, such as honesty, patience, responsibility, and obedience to Allah SWT. Children who are close to their parents also tend to be more receptive to advice and to emulate the behavior they demonstrate (Juwita & Yunitasari, 2024). Thus, closeness not only strengthens family ties but also serves as an effective means of developing a generation of moral and spiritual quality. This aligns with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which emphasizes the importance of parental responsibility towards children:

[illegible]

It means:

“Each of you is a leader and will be held accountable for those you lead. A leader is a leader over people and will be held accountable for them. A man is a leader over his

family and will be held accountable for them. A woman is a leader over her husband's house and over her children, and she will be held accountable for them. A servant is a guardian over his master's property and will be held accountable for it. Know that each of you is a leader and each of you will be held accountable for those you lead.” (Narrated by Bukhari no. 2554 and Muslim no. 1829).

This hadith emphasizes that every parent has a significant responsibility as a family leader, particularly in educating and nurturing children. By building a strong bond, parents can fulfil this role optimally, ensuring that the trust bestowed upon them by Allah SWT can be fulfilled with full sincerity and responsibility.

### Affection as the Basis for Closeness

Love is the primary foundation for building closeness between parents and children in Islam. Early childhood education cannot be separated from genuine love, as during this phase, children desperately need a sense of security, attention, and acceptance from their immediate environment, especially their parents (Batubara, 2024). In Islamic teachings, compassion is not merely a feeling but is also manifested in concrete actions that reflect gentleness and care. The best example in this regard can be seen in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, who consistently showed compassion to children. The importance of love and compassion in early childhood education lies in their role in shaping the foundation of a child's personality (Manurung & Siregar, 2024). Children raised with affection will grow up feeling valued and loved, making it easier for them to develop self-confidence and empathy for others. Conversely, a lack of affection can leave children feeling neglected, potentially impacting their emotional and behavioral development later in life. Therefore, parents need to make affection a primary approach to raising their children.

Forms of affection in Islam are very diverse and can be done in everyday life, such as hugging, kissing, stroking the head, as well as giving attention and care to children's needs (Abbas et al., 2025). This simple act has great meaning for children, as it can strengthen the emotional bond between parent and child. Furthermore, taking the time to listen, play, and accompany children is also a crucial form of affection in building closeness. Consistent affection will positively impact a child's emotional development (Ishaac et al., 2024). Children will feel safe and comfortable, making it easier to express their feelings and build healthy social relationships. Furthermore, affection helps children manage their emotions, reduce anxiety, and develop empathy and concern for others. Thus, affection not only strengthens family relationships but also forms an important foundation for developing a child's character. This aligns with several hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that demonstrate the importance of affection in raising children:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «مَنْ لَمْ يُقَبِّلْ وَلَدَهُ يَلِدْهُ يَتِيمًا» (Narrated by Bukhari no. 5997 and Muslim no. 2318).

It means:

"The Prophet ﷺ kissed Al-Hasan bin „Ali. Beside him was Al-Aqra“ bin Habis. He said, „I have ten children, but I have never kissed any of them.“ So the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Whoever does not show mercy, will not be shown mercy.' (Narrated by Bukhari no. 5997 and Muslim no. 2318).

In another narration:

جَاءَ أُعْرَابِي إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالَ: تَقْبِلُونَ الْإِصْبِيَّانِ، فَمَا نُقَبِّلُهُمَا، فَقَالَ: أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَكَ أَنْ تُزَعَ الْأَلَمُ مِنْ قَلْبِكَ الرَّحْمَةُ

It means:

“A Bedouin Arab said, „Do you kiss children? We do not kiss them.“ So the Prophet ﷺ said, 'What can I do if Allah has taken away the feeling of compassion from your heart?’” (HR. Bukhari no. 5998 and Muslim no. 2317).

Apart from that, the Prophet Muhammad also showed love through his attitude when interacting with children:

لَيْسَ لَمْ يَكُنْ، وَلَكِنْ ابْنِي الرَّحْمَلِيُّ، فَكَرِهْتُ أَنْ أَعْرِجَهُ حَتَّى يَبْغِضَ حَاجَتَهُ

(Narrated by Ahmad no. 16033 and An-Nasa'i no. 1141; authenticated by Al-Albani) It means:

“Not so, but my grandson was riding on my back, so I didn’t want to rush him until he had completed his wish.”

These hadiths demonstrate that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) not only taught compassion verbally but also practiced it directly in everyday life. This serves as an example for parents that compassion must be manifested in concrete actions. Therefore, a compassionate approach to child education is not merely a recommendation but a core principle in Islam for building closeness and shaping children's character from an early age.

### Interaction and Togetherness with Children

Interaction and togetherness between parents and children are crucial for building strong family bonds. In Islam, spending time with children is not just a casual activity, but also an effective educational tool for shaping their personality and morals. The best example in this regard can be seen in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, who always took time to interact with his children with love and tenderness (Rambe et al., 2024). The importance of spending time with children lies in the quality of the relationships built through this togetherness (Defaza & Vitaloka, 2025). Children who interact frequently with their parents will feel valued, cared for, and loved. This strengthens emotional bonds and fosters a sense of security (Ulfadhilah et al., 2025). In the busyness of everyday life, parents are still required to provide special time for their children, because quality togetherness will have a big influence on children's development.

One form of interaction that is recommended is playing, joking, and being directly involved in children's activities (Nurhusnaina et al., 2024). Playing is not just entertainment, but also a fun learning tool for children. By playing together, parents can enter their children's world, understand their feelings, and build closer communication. This approach demonstrates that education doesn't always have to be formal; it can be delivered through a warm and fun approach. Entering a child's world is a highly effective educational approach. When parents can understand their children's thoughts and feelings, the process of conveying good values will be more easily accepted. Children will feel comfortable opening up and establishing good communication with their parents. Thus, intense and warm interactions will create harmonious relationships within the family.

This is in accordance with the hadith, which shows how the Prophet Muhammad interacted with children:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسِ خُلُقًا، وَكَانَ لِي أُمٌّ يَقَالُ لَهَا أَبُو عُمَيْرٍ، قَالَ: فَكَانَ إِذَا جَاءَ قَالَ: يَا أَبَا عُمَيْرٍ، مَا تَفْعَلُ الْيَوْمَ؟

It means:

“From Anas r.a., he said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the best of people in character. I had a little brother called Abu „Umar. When the Messenger of Allah came, he would joke with him by saying: „O Abu „Umar, what is your little bird doing?“ (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

This hadith demonstrates that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not only gentle but also took the time to joke and interact with children in a way that suited their world. This attitude serves as an example for parents that warm, caring, and enjoyable togetherness is key to building closeness and effectively educating children from an early age.



## Gentle and Wise Communication

Gentle and wise communication is one of the main keys to building closeness between parents and children in Islam. The way parents speak to their children will significantly influence their emotional development, attitudes, and personality (Widyawati et al., 2023). In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) set a perfect example through polite, gentle, and wise speech to everyone, including children. Speaking well to children should be based on gentleness, patience, and respect for their feelings. Parents should use language that is easy to understand, non-condescending, and contains positive values. Through good communication, children will feel valued and more open in expressing their feelings and opinions. This will also help create a harmonious and warm family atmosphere.

In Islam, parents are also encouraged to avoid violence, both verbal and physical. Yelling, harsh words, or excessive punishment can negatively impact a child's psychological development (Ramadhani, 2025). Children who frequently experience abuse tend to become fearful, lack self-confidence, and may even imitate such behavior in their social interactions (Asnia & Muthohar, 2024). Therefore, a gentle and compassionate approach is far more effective in educating children. Giving advice to children also needs to be done wisely and according to their level of understanding. Advice delivered in simple, loving, and non-patronizing language will be more easily accepted by children. Furthermore, delivering advice in a calm and close atmosphere will leave a lasting impression on children, so that the values taught can be firmly ingrained. This aligns with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which emphasizes the importance of speaking kindly and being gentle:

فَمَنْ أَلْبَسَهُ رِيَّةَ رَضِيَ هَالِ أَعْنِي هَالِ رَسُولِ هَالِ هَالِ قَالَتْ: مَنْ كَلَّنِي يَوْمَ نَبَاهِهِ إِلَى الْوَالِدِ يَوْمَ الْآخِرِ قَالَتْ: خَيْرًا أَوْ لَيْسَ بِمَنْ

It means:

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent."

(Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

In addition, the Prophet Muhammad also said:

إِ هُنَّ أَلْـرِّفَقَۃٌ لَّيَّ كُونِ فِي شَيْءٍ يُّ هُنَّ إِ هَلْ زَانَهُ، وَلَيَّ نَزَعَ مِ نْ شَيْءٍ يُّ هُنَّ إِ هَلْ شَانَهُ

It means:

"Tenderness is not present in anything except that it adorns it, and it is not taken away from something except that it makes it bad." (Narrated by Muslim)

These hadiths emphasize that good and gentle communication is a crucial teaching in Islam. By implementing gentle and wise communication, parents not only build closeness with their children but also instill noble moral values that will serve as a foundation for their future lives.

## Exemplary Behavior (Uswah Hasanah) in Children's Education

Role modelling (uswah hasanah) is one of the most effective educational methods in Islam, particularly in educating young children. Children at this age have a very strong tendency to imitate what they see and hear in their surroundings (Rawanita & Jannah, 2025). Therefore, parents play a crucial role as primary role models in their children's lives. In Islam, the best role model of all time is the Prophet Muhammad, who demonstrated noble morals in every aspect of his life, including his interactions with children. As the first and foremost educators, parents have a responsibility to set a good example in their attitudes, words, and actions. Children learn not only from what they are taught, but also from what they observe directly. For example, when parents are honest, patient, and polite, children are likely to emulate these behaviors in their daily lives. Conversely, if parents exhibit negative attitudes, their children are also likely to imitate them (Lidiawati & Purnama, 2023).

Early childhood learns through the process of imitation or copying (Tamonob, 2025). They observe their parents' habits, speech patterns, and how they

handle problems. Therefore, a family environment that provides positive examples will significantly influence a child's character development. In this regard, role models are more effective than mere advice, as children understand better through concrete actions than mere words.

The importance of consistency in parental attitudes and behavior cannot be overstated. Good role models must be consistently demonstrated so that the values taught are firmly embedded in children. If parents are inconsistent between words and actions, children will experience confusion in understanding true values (Agus & Hanif, 2025). Therefore, harmony between words and actions is key to building effective education through role models. Furthermore, instilling faith in children from an early age is essential to foster strong faith in Allah SWT. This is explained in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ مَا مِنْ مَوْلٍ إِذَا هُوَ لَدَى الْبَطَرَةِ قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَهُ وَنَ صِرَافِهِ وَكَيْفَ جَسَدِهِ

It means:

"Every child is born in a state of fitrah; it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

This hadith demonstrates that parents play a significant role in shaping their children's faith and beliefs. Therefore, leading by example in faith and worship is crucial for children to grow up with a strong foundation of monotheism.

The Messenger of Allah also said:

مَنْ ذَهَبَ عَلَى غَيْرِي رَفَقَ مَن لَّ أَجْرُ فَعَلِيهِ

It means:

"Whoever shows kindness will get a reward like the reward of the one who does it." (Narrated by Muslim)

This hadith emphasizes that every good deed parents instill in their children becomes a continuous charity, the rewards of which continue to flow. Thus, parental example not only impacts the child's life but also serves as an investment in rewards for the parents in the afterlife. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was known as a person with exceptionally noble morals, as stated in the hadith:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسِ خُلُقًا

"From Anas r.a., he said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the best of people in character." (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

This hadith demonstrates that the Prophet Muhammad possessed impeccable morals and is worthy of being a role model in all aspects of life, including raising children. By emulating his morals, parents can build a close relationship with their children and instill good values that will shape their future personalities.

### Building Closeness Through Spiritual Education

Spiritual education is a crucial aspect of fostering closeness between parents and children in Islam. From an early age, children need to be introduced to Allah SWT and religious values as the primary foundation of their lives (A'yuni et al., 2025). This spiritual closeness not only shapes a child's faith but also strengthens the emotional bond between parent and child. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) set an example of how to educate children with compassion while gradually instilling religious values. Introducing Allah and religious values from an early age can be done through simple methods appropriate to a child's world (Ditya et al., 2025). Parents can begin by teaching daily prayers, introducing the names of Allah, and telling engaging Islamic stories. This approach aims to help children learn about their religion through love, not coercion. This way, the values of faith can be instilled naturally in children. Furthermore, cultivating a habit of worship from an early age is also an important part of spiritual education. However, this habituation needs to be done with a pleasant approach, such as inviting children to

pray together, offering praise, and creating a warm, non-pressuring atmosphere. Children who are guided in a gentle manner will more easily accept and practice worship on their own.

Instilling monotheism and morals can also be done through emotional closeness between parents and children (Irawan et al., 2025). When children feel close and comfortable with their parents, their advice and teachings are more easily accepted. Parents can use moments together to convey good values, such as honesty, patience, and gratitude to Allah SW'T. In this way, spiritual education is not merely theoretical but also embodied in everyday life. This aligns with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, who instructed parents to accustom their children to prayer:

مَرْوَا أَوْ لَمْ يَلْ هَلَاكَ وَهُوَ مِ الْبَاءِ سَبْعِينَ وَاضْرِبُوا دَعِ الْيَا وَهُوَ مِ الْبَاءِ عِ سَبْعِينَ وَاقْرَؤُوا بَنِيكُمْ فِي الْقَضَائِ

It means:

“Command your children to pray when they are seven years old, and beat them (with a punitive beating) if they abandon it at the age of ten, and separate their beds.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud)

This hadith demonstrates the importance of parents' role in guiding and accustoming their children to worship from an early age. With a compassionate and wise approach, spiritual education will be an effective means of fostering closeness and shaping children with faith and noble morals.

### The Impact of Parent-Child Closeness

The closeness between parents and children has a significant influence on the development of a child's personality. In Islam, a warm and loving relationship within the family is an important foundation for a child's education (Kamila et al., 2025). This closeness not only strengthens emotional bonds but also helps children grow into healthy individuals psychologically, socially, and spiritually. An example of building these caring relationships can be seen in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) constant love and attention to children. One of the effects of close parent-child relationships is increased self-confidence. Children who grow up in a caring and supportive family environment feel valued and loved (Hasibuan et al., 2025). This encourages children to express themselves more confidently, try new things, and develop confidence in their abilities. Self-confidence, developed early on, will help children face life's challenges.

Furthermore, a well-established, close relationship also plays a role in developing an emotionally stable personality. Children who receive affection and attention from their parents tend to be better able to manage their emotions, remain calm, and demonstrate empathy for others (Muali & Fatmawati, 2022). A harmonious family environment will help children learn to understand their feelings and develop positive attitudes in interacting with their surroundings. Closeness between parents and children also facilitates the education and learning process. Children who have a good relationship with their parents are usually more open to advice and direction. They are also easier to engage in discussions with and receive guidance in their studies (Dewi & Kurniadi, 2024). With good communication and close relationships, parents can more easily instill educational and moral values in their children. Furthermore, closeness within the family will help shape children with noble character. Children raised with love, attention, and good guidance will grow into individuals who are polite, honest, and responsible. The good values taught in the family will equip children for life in society. This aligns with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, which emphasizes the importance of educating children well:

مَا تَخَلَّ وَآلِدَ وَلَدَهُ مِ نْ نِ حِ ا فُضِّلَ مِ نْ اَدِّ مِ حَسِّنِ

It means:



"There is no gift a father can give to his child that is more important than a good education (manners)." (Narrated by Tirmidhi).

This hadith demonstrates that education and moral development are crucial responsibilities for parents. By fostering a strong bond, parents can fulfill this role optimally, enabling their children to grow into individuals with faith and noble character who are beneficial to society.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that closeness between parents and children in Islam is the main foundation in early childhood education, encompassing emotional, spiritual, and social aspects. This closeness is built through affection, warm interactions, gentle communication, good role models, and consistent spiritual education from an early age. In Islam, children are a trust that must be educated with full responsibility; this implication emphasizes the need for an Islamic values-based approach in early childhood parenting as a way to instill the values of faith and noble morals. Consequently, children will grow with self-confidence, emotional stability, and good character. Therefore, implementing closeness in accordance with Islamic teachings is a relevant and applicable approach in the context of Islamic education, which not only strengthens family relationships but also plays a vital role in shaping a generation of faith, noble morals, and quality.

Based on these findings, this study recommends several things. Parents are advised to consistently provide affection, gentle communication, and role models in daily interactions with their children as a manifestation of the Prophet Muhammad's good example. For early childhood educators, the results of this study can serve as a reference in designing learning approaches based on Islamic values of closeness and role models in the school environment. Educational policymakers: support is needed in the form of parenting education programs based on Islamic values to expand the application of this concept of closeness more widely in society.

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