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Muhammad Sufian , Erlina , and Sabrina Octariani 

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Gendered Parenting and Language Achievement: A Comparative Study of Children from Single-Mother and Single-Father Families in Arabic Language Learning

Muhammad Sufian*, Erlina and Sabrina Octariani

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Abstract

This study investigates differences in Arabic language achievement between students raised by single mothers and single fathers and examines how affective support, academic control, and religious orientation influence students' learning outcomes in Islamic education contexts. Employing a quantitative ex post facto design, 120 secondary students (60 from single-mother and 60 from single-father families) participated through a combination of Likert-scale questionnaires and standardized Arabic tests. Data were analyzed using *t*-tests, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression at a 0.05 significance level. The results reveal a significant difference between groups ($p < 0.05$), where children from single-mother families achieved higher mean scores ($M = 84.60$) than those from single-father families ($M = 79.35$). Regression analysis shows that affective support ($\beta = 0.396$), religious orientation ($\beta = 0.327$), and academic control ($\beta = 0.181$) jointly predict 52.3% of Arabic learning achievement ($R^2 = 0.523$). The findings highlight that emotional warmth and religious values are stronger determinants of success in Arabic language learning than academic supervision alone. Theoretically, the study extends Gendered Parenting Theory and Sociocultural Learning perspectives within Islamic education, while practically, it emphasizes the importance of family-based affective and spiritual engagement to foster student motivation and language mastery.

Keywords: Affective Support, Arabic Language Learning, Gendered Parenting, Islamic Education, Single-Parent Families

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INTRODUCTION

Family structure plays a crucial role in shaping a child's academic, emotional, and moral development. As the primary environment for early socialization, the family not only fulfills material needs but also mediates values, discipline, and emotional security that directly affect learning outcomes [1], [2], [3]. In Islamic educational contexts, the family is viewed as both a pedagogical and spiritual unit that cultivates faith-based motivation and moral reasoning essential for academic success [4], [5], [6]. Empirical studies demonstrate that children raised in emotionally supportive and religiously oriented households tend to achieve higher academic performance and demonstrate stronger moral awareness than their peers [7], [8], [9]. Consequently, understanding the dynamics of family structure particularly among single-parent household becomes a vital dimension in examining students' educational achievements, especially in faith-integrated learning environments such as Arabic language education.

Over the past two decades, demographic shifts and socio-economic transformations have led to a growing prevalence of single-parent families worldwide, including in Indonesia [10], [11], [12]. These families often emerge due to divorce, death of a spouse, or individual choice, creating unique patterns of childrearing and socio-emotional adaptation [13], [14], [15]. While numerous studies have confirmed that single-parent households tend to face economic and emotional constraints that may hinder children's academic achievement [16], [17], [18], the literature also highlights significant variability depending on parental education, psychological resilience, and parenting strategies [19], [20], [21]. In particular, mothers tend to employ nurturing, communicative, and empathetic parenting styles, whereas fathers emphasize structure, control, and autonomy [22], [23], [24]. This differentiation in gendered parenting has measurable implications for children's academic and linguistic performance, yet remains understudied within Muslim educational contexts.

In second language acquisition, family involvement has consistently been identified as one of the strongest predictors of language achievement [25]. Emotional scaffolding, parental encouragement, and home-based language exposure enhance linguistic self-efficacy and engagement [26]. For Arabic language learning, this relationship is even more pronounced due to the language's religious centrality as the medium of Qur'anic and Islamic knowledge [27]. Prior studies in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia reveal that students with strong religious motivation and affective parental support demonstrate higher commitment and achievement in Arabic [28]. Fayeze and Qutaiba [29] observed that children of single mothers exhibit stronger intrinsic motivation to learn Arabic due to their mothers' religious modeling and emotional sensitivity, while fathers' parenting styles are more associated with behavioral discipline and cognitive structure. These findings underscore that Arabic language proficiency cannot be separated from the sociocultural and spiritual ecosystem of the learner.

Despite this growing body of research, several gaps remain. First, most previous studies focus broadly on family involvement without distinguishing between single-mother and single-father households, thus overlooking potential gender-based variations in emotional and academic support [30], [31]. Second, few empirical investigations have analyzed the interaction of affective, academic, and religious dimensions of parenting as integrated predictors of Arabic language achievement [29], [32]. Third, within the Indonesian context where Arabic functions as both a subject of study and a symbol of Islamic identity quantitative comparative analyses remain rare. Existing works by Yuangga et al. [33] and Asrizal et al. [34]

emphasize moral education in single-parent families but neglect measurable language outcomes. Moreover, global comparative studies such as Cynthia et al. [35] and Jon and David [36] predominantly examine Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how Islamic sociocultural values mediate gendered parenting and learning achievement in Muslim-majority societies.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how gendered parenting conceptualized through affective support, academic control, and religious orientation hapes Arabic language learning outcomes among secondary students from single-mother and single-father families in Indonesia. By integrating Gendered Parenting Theory [37], Sociocultural Learning Theory [38], and Parental Involvement Frameworks [39], this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how parental gender roles influence educational outcomes in faith-based settings. The study addresses a critical research gap by empirically testing how emotional warmth, academic supervision, and faith-driven motivation interact to predict Arabic achievement. The findings are expected to extend cross-disciplinary dialogue between psychology, Islamic pedagogy, and applied linguistics, offering both theoretical refinement and practical implications for inclusive family-based educational interventions.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative comparative design to examine the influence of gendered parenting on Arabic language achievement among students from single-mother and single-father households in Islamic secondary education [40]. The research design was non-experimental with an ex post facto approach, appropriate for exploring naturally occurring differences in parental characteristics without researcher manipulation [41]. The study was conducted in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, a region that represents a sociocultural blend of urban diversity and strong Islamic educational traditions. Ethical approval was granted by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of UIN Raden Intan Lampung (No. 15/EC/UIN-RIL/2025), and all participants provided informed consent following the ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and academic integrity.

Population and Sample

The population comprised students enrolled in Arabic language courses at *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic senior high schools) and *SMK Islam* (Islamic vocational schools) during the 2025/2026 academic year. From a total of 420 identified students raised in single-parent families, a purposive sampling technique was applied to select 120 participants to ensure gender and family-type representation. The final sample consisted of 60 students from single-mother families and 60 students from single-father families. The selection criteria included (1) students who had lived in a single-parent household for at least two years, (2) active enrollment in Arabic learning programs, and (3) willingness to participate fully in data collection. The sample represented a balance of gender, socio-economic background, and academic performance to enhance the comparability of group outcomes.

Instrument

Three primary instruments were utilized to collect data: a standardized Arabic language achievement test, a *Gendered Parenting Scale* (GPS) questionnaire, and demographic information forms. The Arabic achievement test consisted of 30 multiple-choice items assessing vocabulary mastery, grammatical understanding, and reading comprehension,

developed in accordance with the national curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) and adapted for cultural validity. The GPS questionnaire was designed to measure three dimensions of parenting: affective support, academic control, and religious orientation. It comprised 25 Likert-type items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) adapted from Kim [42] and refined for Islamic contexts by integrating moral and spiritual components. Content validity was examined through expert judgment from three specialists in educational psychology and Arabic pedagogy, yielding an Aiken's V coefficient of 0.89, indicating strong agreement. Reliability testing using Cronbach's α produced coefficients of 0.87 for the parenting scale and 0.82 for the Arabic achievement test, confirming high internal consistency.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics version 29. Descriptive statistics were applied to determine mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions across parenting variables and student achievement. Inferential analysis was conducted using an Independent Samples *t*-test to examine differences in Arabic achievement between students from single-mother and single-father households. Pearson's correlation was used to test the relationship among affective support, academic control, religious orientation, and learning outcomes, while multiple linear regression analysis identified the most dominant predictors of achievement. Normality and homogeneity tests were performed prior to hypothesis testing to ensure compliance with parametric assumptions ($p > 0.05$).

To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative notes from teacher observations and brief student reflections were analyzed thematically to capture contextual nuances of parental involvement and motivation in language learning. This triangulated approach enhanced the validity and interpretive richness of the data, aligning with methodological recommendations for social-educational research in cross cultural contexts. By integrating standardized measurement with statistical rigor and contextual interpretation, this methodological framework ensures both reliability and cultural sensitivity, providing a robust foundation for examining how gendered parenting practices shape language learning outcomes in Islamic education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study demonstrate significant differences in Arabic language achievement between students raised by single mothers and those raised by single fathers. The mean Arabic achievement score for students from single-mother families was 84.60 (SD = 5.20), while that of students from single-father families was 79.35 (SD = 6.40). The result of the Independent Samples *t*-test confirmed a statistically significant difference ($t(118) = 5.24, p < 0.001$), indicating that students raised by single mothers achieved higher academic outcomes in Arabic language learning. This suggests that maternal affective warmth and religious engagement may play a stronger role in shaping students' motivation and achievement than paternal control or discipline-focused parenting.

Table 1. Comparison of Arabic Language Achievement Based on Parental Gender

Parenting Type	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Single Mother	60	84.60	5.20		
Single Father	60	79.35	6.40	5.24	0.000

Beyond group differences, multiple linear regression results show that three dimensions of gendered parenting—*affective support, academic control, and religious orientation*—collectively explained 52.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.523$) in Arabic language achievement. Among these predictors, *affective support* ($\beta = 0.396, p < 0.001$) was the strongest determinant, followed by *religious orientation* ($\beta = 0.327, p < 0.01$) and *academic control* ($\beta = 0.181, p < 0.05$). This result highlights the integrative influence of emotional bonding and religious modeling in fostering linguistic and moral engagement within the Islamic learning context.

Discussion

These findings align with global literature emphasizing the intersection of emotional, cognitive, and spiritual domains in language learning. Demah [43] found that students in Saudi Arabia with emotionally responsive and faith-based maternal guidance achieved higher intrinsic motivation in Arabic. Similarly, Hizba et al. [44] reported that religiously oriented families provide linguistic scaffolding through Qur'anic recitation, which reinforces vocabulary and moral reflection. In a broader educational context, Zining [45] demonstrated that parental affective involvement predicted second-language achievement more strongly than cognitive monitoring alone, while Geng et al. [46] confirmed that positive parent-child communication enhances linguistic confidence and self-efficacy. Salsa and Nashrillah [47] found that single mothers' compassion-based parenting improved both moral development and academic performance among Islamic high school students in Indonesia. The present findings corroborate these studies by showing that affective and spiritual engagement not authoritarian control serve as primary predictors of language mastery.

At the same time, this study extends Gendered Parenting Theory [37] and Sociocultural Learning perspectives [38] by situating them within a faith-based linguistic environment. The higher Arabic achievement among students raised by single mothers illustrates how maternal emotional expressiveness and religious routines create a learning climate that integrates affective warmth with moral identity formation. Conversely, paternal approaches emphasizing autonomy and structure may strengthen discipline but lack the emotional intimacy necessary to stimulate language curiosity and self-expression. This distinction parallels findings by Ruonan [48], who argue that gendered parental roles shape cognitive outcomes differently through distinct emotional pathways. Furthermore, within the sociocultural framework, the results affirm that learning particularly in language education is mediated through meaningful interactions and spiritual engagement, consistent with Vygotsky's theory that cognition develops through culturally grounded social participation [49].

The novelty of this study lies in its empirical demonstration of how gendered parenting dimensions interact to influence Arabic language achievement within an Islamic educational context, an area rarely examined in Southeast Asia. Previous studies have largely focused on

Western settings or general academic performance, neglecting faith-based subjects where parental religiosity, emotion, and instruction intertwine. By quantifying the joint predictive effect of affective support, academic control, and religious orientation, this research provides new evidence for understanding the mechanisms of language achievement in single-parent Muslim families. It contributes conceptually by linking parenting theory, sociocultural learning, and Islamic pedagogy within a unified explanatory model.

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. Pedagogically, teachers of Arabic and other faith-related subjects should incorporate affective and moral dimensions into instruction, recognizing that emotional resonance enhances linguistic engagement. Schools can design family-oriented learning initiatives such as Qur'an-based reading programs or parental mentoring workshops that encourage collaboration between home and classroom. At the policy level, educational authorities should develop support systems for single parents, particularly fathers, to balance academic supervision with emotional and religious nurturing. Such programs can mitigate learning disparities and promote holistic student development aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education.

Despite these contributions, this study acknowledges several. First, the sample was drawn from a single region, limiting generalizability across Indonesia's diverse cultural and educational settings. Second, data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may introduce social desirability bias, particularly on items related to religiosity and parenting warmth. Third, the *ex post facto* design restricts causal inference, as variables were not experimentally manipulated. Future research should adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs to capture the developmental trajectory of gendered parenting effects over time and include qualitative interviews to deepen contextual understanding. Comparative studies across different Islamic countries could further refine theoretical insights into cultural variations of gendered parenting and learning outcomes.

In summary, the results affirm that Arabic language achievement is not merely a cognitive outcome but an affective-spiritual construct shaped by family dynamics. Students from single-mother families outperformed those from single-father households due to stronger emotional and religious engagement. This study, therefore, strengthens the argument that in Islamic education, parenting that harmonizes affection, faith, and guidance plays a pivotal role in nurturing both linguistic competence and moral identity.

CONCLUSION

Operationally, schools should institute a family-centered Arabic learning package that is feasible and measurable: deliver monthly 60–90 minute parent micro workshops (separate breakout tracks for mothers and fathers) on empathetic communication, value-laden goal-setting, and low pressure study routines; co design simple home practices such as a 15 minute nightly “Arabic routine” combining brief *tilawah/du‘a* based vocabulary prompts, spaced repetition word cards, and parent led praise statements; establish biweekly teacher parent feedback loops via WhatsApp or learning portals using a three-item check-in template (time on task, words mastered, difficulties observed); provide father engagement modules that translate affective support into concrete actions (storytelling, collaborative reading, short Qur'anic-theme discussions) and mother-support modules that balance warmth with structure (homework cueing, study schedule, distraction control); create a monitoring dashboard that

tracks leading indicators attendance in workshops, minutes of home practice, vocabulary gains, reading fluency (wpm) and accuracy, quiz scores disaggregated by household type to ensure equity; partner with mosques/ community centers to host father friendly timeslots and childcare during sessions, reducing participation barriers; supply ready to use materials (audio wordlists, mini du'a cards, model phrases for encouragement) and brief tutorial videos; and evaluate impact with pre post common assessments and short parent/self report scales on affective climate and academic control, while safeguarding privacy and reinforcing student autonomy.


LIMITATIONS

Although this study offers valuable insights into how gendered parenting influences Arabic language achievement within Islamic educational contexts, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research sample was drawn from a single province in Indonesia, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader cultural or institutional settings. Future studies should therefore include participants from multiple regions or different Islamic countries to capture cross-cultural variations in parenting and learning outcomes. Second, the study relied primarily on self-report questionnaires, which may be affected by social desirability bias, particularly on items related to religiosity and parental affection. Employing mixed-method approaches combining surveys with interviews, observations, or classroom ethnographies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of parental influence. Third, the cross-sectional and ex post facto design limits the ability to infer causality between parenting dimensions and language achievement. Longitudinal or experimental research could explore how affective and religious parenting factors evolve and impact student outcomes over time. Finally, while the inclusion of teacher observations enhanced data validity, the absence of a direct measure of classroom environment and peer interaction suggests that other contextual factors may also contribute to students' linguistic and motivational development. Addressing these methodological and contextual limitations in future studies will enhance the theoretical robustness and practical applicability of research on gendered parenting and Arabic language education.

AUTHORS INFORMATION

Corresponding Authors


Muhammad Sufian – Department of Arabic Language Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung (Indonesia).

 orcid.org/0009-0002-6629-8906

Email: iyansufian1998@gmail.com

Authors

Muhammad Sufian – Department of Arabic Language Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung (Indonesia).

 orcid.org/0009-0002-6629-8906

Email: iyansufian1998@gmail.com

Erlina – Department of Arabic Language Education, Postgraduate, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung (Indonesia).

Email: erlina@radenintan.ac.id

Sabrina Octariani – SMAS AI – Kautsar, Lampung (Indonesia)

Email: sabrinaoctariani271000@gmail.com

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors used ChatGPT during the preparation of this work to design graphics and images. After utilizing the tool, the authors thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as necessary and assumed full responsibility for the publication's content.

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