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Qur'anic Dwelling Metaphors as a Model for Muslim Family Education: A Thematic Interpretation

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Abstract

Contemporary Muslim family education requires a Qur'an-based pedagogical framework that can connect scriptural reflection with the routines, relationships, and responsibilities through which religious values are lived in the household. This study develops a conceptual model from three Qur'anic dwelling representations: the bee in QS. An-Nahl [16]:68–69, the ant in QS. An-Naml [27]:18–19, and the spider's house in QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41. Using qualitative library research, thematic Qur'anic interpretation, and qualitative document analysis, the study first establishes the exegetical meaning of each passage and then conducts a separate pedagogical reconstruction. The educational dimensions are therefore presented as interpretive implications derived from Qur'anic imagery rather than as meanings explicitly stated by the verses. The analysis generates three complementary dimensions: spiritual-productive, communicative-collective, and preventive-resilient. These dimensions are integrated into a Qur'anic Dwelling-Based Muslim Family Education Model that links divine orientation and beneficial action, dialogical communication and mutual protection, and critical reflection on fragile relational foundations. The model is positioned as a contribution to Qur'anic pedagogy and as a conceptual resource for parent education, premarital guidance, and family counselling. Because the study is text-based and has not been empirically tested with Muslim families, its practical value is proposed as a potential implication requiring subsequent validation rather than as a demonstrated outcome.

Keywords: Muslim Family Education, Qur'anic Pedagogy, Qur'anic Metaphors, Family Resilience, Thematic Interpretation.

1. Introduction

In Islamic education, the family is not merely a social or biological unit; it is the earliest and most continuous educational environment in which faith, moral orientation, habits, emotional responses, and patterns of interaction are formed. As a primary setting

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of tarbiyah, the household translates religious knowledge into lived practice through parental modelling, repeated routines, dialogue, correction, affection, shared worship, responsibility, and everyday decision-making (Abdalla, 2025; Bensaid, 2021). Recent studies of Muslim families similarly show that religious formation is sustained through ordinary relationships and repeated practices rather than through verbal instruction alone. Family routines, parental example, religious communication, and continuity between home and wider educational environments function as pedagogical mechanisms through which values become embodied (Puspita Sari et al., 2025; Qusyairi et al., 2026; Setiasih & Subur, 2024). This educational function makes the family a crucial site for Qur'anic pedagogy because scriptural values become meaningful when they are enacted in the relational culture of the household.

This pedagogical task has become increasingly important as Muslim families negotiate social, economic, digital, relational, and educational pressures. Studies of marital transitions in Southeast Asia and Indonesia indicate changing expectations and patterns of family life (Jones, 2021, 2023; Ananta et al., 2024; Utomo & Aditya, 2026), while research on Muslim family resilience highlights the importance of religiosity, communication, cooperation, and adaptive relational processes in responding to adversity (Fathoni, 2021; Latifa et al., 2024). These conditions do not imply that contemporary family challenges can be solved by scriptural symbolism alone. Rather, they underscore the need for educational frameworks that help families interpret religious values as practical orientations for communication, responsibility, mutual care, and reflective self-evaluation. The problem addressed in this study is therefore pedagogical: how can Qur'anic meanings be responsibly reconstructed into a conceptual framework that informs everyday Muslim family education?

Existing scholarship provides important insights into Muslim parenting, family-based religious learning, Qur'anic reflection, and the educational significance of revelation, yet these strands are rarely brought together in a single family-education model. Within Qur'anic studies, thematic interpretation seeks to understand related passages in their textual and theological coherence (Helmy, 2020). Within Islamic education, Qur'anic pedagogy concerns the movement from scriptural meaning toward educational reflection, formation, and practice (Abdul-Jabbar & Makki, 2024; Stimpson & Calvert, 2021). This article is positioned primarily within Qur'anic pedagogy: its contribution is not a new zoological reading of animals in the Qur'an and not a direct empirical theory of family functioning, but the construction of a conceptual framework for family education through a disciplined pedagogical reconstruction of selected Qur'anic images. In this respect, the study follows a distinction also visible in recent Qur'an-based educational research, where exegetical meaning is established before educational implications are formulated (Harianton & Jamroji, 2026).

Accordingly, the study develops a Qur'anic Dwelling-Based Muslim Family Education Model from three selected representations: the bee in QS. An-Nahl [16]:68–69, the ant in

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QS. An-Naml [27]:18–19, and the spider's house in QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41. The first analytical level identifies the textual and exegetical meaning of each passage; the second level reconstructs pedagogical implications that remain semantically compatible with that meaning. The bee passage is explored as a basis for reflecting on divine orientation, disciplined action, productivity, and benefit; the ant narrative as a basis for communication, collective awareness, and protection; and the spider-house analogy as a warning about weak reliance and fragile foundations. The spider image is not treated as a biological description of spider family life and is not used to judge particular family structures. The study asks: (1) What pedagogical implications can be responsibly reconstructed from the selected Qur'anic dwelling representations for Muslim family education? and (2) How can these reconstructed dimensions be integrated into a conceptual model that may inform the strengthening of Muslim family education in Indonesia?

2. Literature Review

Research on Muslim family education consistently shows that the household is a formative environment for religious learning, identity, and character. Muslim parents shape children's religious agency through modelling, explanation, moral guidance, ritual practice, and negotiated responsibility (Aantjes, 2022; Bensaid, 2021). Research among Muslim youth also identifies the family as a major religious-learning environment alongside schools, mosques, peers, and digital spaces (Tuna et al., 2023). More recent studies conceptualise family life itself as a pedagogical ecology in which repeated practices, stories, emotional exemplarity, relationships, and community participation support character formation (Qusyairi et al., 2026), while field research in Muslim households shows that worship routines, parental modelling, and continuity across home and community sustain moral-religious socialisation (Puspita Sari et al., 2025). These findings support an understanding of Muslim family education as an embodied and relational process rather than a narrow transfer of doctrinal knowledge.

A second strand of scholarship concerns Qur'anic pedagogy and thematic interpretation. Tadabbur has been advanced as a reflective form of Qur'anic engagement that moves learners from recitation or memorisation toward deliberation, meaning-making, and contextual application (Abdul-Jabbar & Makki, 2024). Qur'anic educational philosophy similarly treats revelation as a source of principles for moral, spiritual, intellectual, and behavioural formation (Stimpson & Calvert, 2021). Methodologically, tafsir maudhu'i seeks thematic coherence by reading relevant passages in relation to one another while preserving linguistic, textual, and theological context (Helmy, 2020). Classical and contemporary exegesis remains necessary at this first level of analysis because pedagogical reconstruction should not replace the primary meaning of the verses (Al-Tabari, 2001; Ibn Kathir, 2003; Shihab, 2002). Recent Qur'an-based

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educational research illustrates this movement by distinguishing the interpretive meaning of a verse from the educational concepts subsequently constructed from it (Harianton & Jamroji, 2026).

A third body of literature addresses animals and non-human creation in Qur'anic and Islamic ethical thought. Such studies demonstrate that Qur'anic representations of non-human creatures can stimulate moral and spiritual reflection concerning compassion, responsibility, stewardship, and human relations with creation (Özdemir, 2022). However, the pedagogical use of animal imagery requires methodological restraint. A metaphor or narrative feature should not be converted into a literal statement about human family structures, nor should contemporary biological claims be imported into the text without exegetical support. In the present study, therefore, the bee, ant, and spider-house passages are treated as scriptural images whose educational implications are reconstructed only after their textual and exegetical meanings have been established. This distinction is particularly important for QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41, whose central analogy concerns weakness of reliance rather than a claim about spider social or reproductive behaviour.

Taken together, prior studies explain family religious socialisation, Islamic parenting, Qur'anic reflection, and family resilience, but they do not yet provide an integrated account of how selected Qur'anic dwelling representations can be transformed into a family-education framework through an explicit two-stage interpretive procedure. Studies of Islamic parenting emphasise parental responsibility and Qur'an-informed guidance (Robiansyah et al., 2024; Setiasih & Subur, 2024), while research on family resilience points to communication, religiosity, and adaptive relational processes as important resources (Fathoni, 2021; Latifa et al., 2024; Walsh, 2016). Work on value internalisation further shows that religious education becomes durable through modelling, habituation, guidance, and family continuity (Maula et al., 2026). The present study addresses the remaining conceptual gap by integrating these insights within Qur'anic pedagogy and by making the analytical transition from exegesis to pedagogical reconstruction transparent.

3. Research Method

This study employed qualitative library research integrating thematic Qur'anic interpretation (tafsir maudhu'i) with qualitative document analysis. Document analysis was used to identify, evaluate, compare, categorise, and interpret textual sources systematically (Morgan, 2022), while thematic interpretation provided the framework for reading the selected Qur'anic passages within their linguistic, textual, and theological contexts (Helmy, 2020). The study is conceptual and text-based; it does not investigate families as research participants and does not claim to measure changes in family quality.

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Its analytical objective is to construct pedagogical propositions whose empirical relevance can be tested in subsequent research.

The primary corpus comprised QS. An-Nahl [16]:68–69, QS. An-Naml [27]:18–19, and QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41, with surrounding verses consulted where necessary to preserve context. The exegetical corpus included classical and contemporary commentaries, including Al-Tabari (2001), Ibn Kathir (2003), and Shihab (2002), together with scholarship on Qur'anic pedagogy and thematic interpretation. Secondary documents addressed Muslim family education, parenting, religious socialisation, communication, spirituality, responsibility, social benefit, and family resilience. Sources were selected purposively when they (a) substantially interpreted the selected passages, (b) provided relevant conceptual discussion of Qur'anic or Islamic education, or (c) directly informed the family-education dimensions examined in the study. Sources merely mentioning the verses without interpretive or pedagogical relevance were excluded.

A researcher-developed document-analysis matrix served as the principal analytical instrument. To ensure epistemological clarity, the matrix separated two analytical layers. Layer 1 recorded the Qur'anic textual unit, immediate context, and dominant exegetical meaning. Layer 2 recorded the pedagogical implication proposed by the researchers, its supporting educational literature, its relevance to family practice, and the limits of the analogy. A pedagogical implication was retained only when it met three criteria: semantic compatibility with the exegetical meaning, support from relevant educational or family scholarship, and avoidance of claims that exceeded the textual evidence. This procedure was designed to prevent educational categories from being presented as if they were direct lexical meanings of the verses.

Analysis proceeded through familiarisation with the corpus, extraction of meaning units, initial coding, comparison of exegetical interpretations, clustering of conceptually related codes, formulation of higher-order themes, pedagogical reconstruction, and conceptual integration (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Naeem et al., 2023). The analysis combined inductive and deductive reasoning. Sensitising concepts such as spirituality, communication, responsibility, protection, productivity, social benefit, and relational vulnerability guided the reading without functioning as predetermined conclusions. An audit trail documented the relationship between textual evidence, exegetical interpretation, pedagogical codes, category revisions, and final conceptual propositions. The final model therefore represents an interpretive educational synthesis rather than an empirically validated causal model.

4. Result

The analysis produced three complementary pedagogical configurations through a two-stage pathway: first, an exegetical core was identified from the Qur'anic passage and its commentarial context; second, educational implications were reconstructed only

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where they remained compatible with that core meaning. Table 1 makes this analytical movement explicit and distinguishes scriptural meaning from pedagogical application.

Table 1. Analytical pathway from exegetical meaning to pedagogical reconstruction

Qur'anic representation	Exegetical core	Pedagogical reconstruction	Potential family-education implication
Bee: QS. An-Nahl [16]:68–69	Divine inspiration, ordered movement, and beneficial production	Spiritual-productive	Shared worship, disciplined responsibility, productive use of capacities, and social benefit
Ant: QS. An-Naml [27]:18–19	Communication of danger followed by coordinated protective action	Communicative-collective	Dialogue, shared awareness, cooperation, mutual warning, and protection
Spider's house: QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41	Analogy of weak reliance and inadequate foundations	Preventive-resilient	Reflection on spiritual, moral, communicative, and relational foundations; not a biological analogy

The bee representation in QS. An-Nahl [16]:68–69 yielded a spiritual-productive pedagogical configuration. At the exegetical level, the passage situates the bee's dwelling, movement, and production within divine inspiration and highlights the beneficial character of what it produces. The categories of discipline, responsibility, and social usefulness are therefore treated as pedagogical reconstructions from this pattern rather than as direct lexical meanings of the verse. Within Muslim family education, the configuration may inform shared spiritual orientation, disciplined participation in household responsibilities, productive use of individual capacities, and an ethic of contributing benefit within and beyond the household.

The ant narrative in QS. An-Naml [27]:18–19 yielded a communicative-collective pedagogical configuration. At the exegetical level, the narrative portrays an ant communicating an imminent danger to its community, followed by coordinated protective action. The educational category of family communication is not asserted as the verse's direct doctrinal meaning; rather, it is reconstructed from the narrative pattern of awareness, communication, and collective response. In Muslim family education, this pattern may inform dialogical communication, attentiveness to others, mutual warning without hostility, shared awareness, cooperation, and protection of vulnerable members. Communication is thus proposed as a formative practice through which responsibility, empathy, and collective identity can be cultivated.

QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41 yielded a preventive-resilient pedagogical configuration, but only through a carefully delimited analogy. At the exegetical level, the verse criticises reliance on protectors other than God by comparing such reliance with the weakness of a spider's house. The pedagogical reconstruction therefore concerns the strength or fragility of relational foundations and forms of dependence, not the biological characteristics of spiders and not a direct judgment about any family structure. Applied

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cautiously to family education, the image may invite reflection on whether household relationships are sustained by spiritual orientation, moral commitment, trust, responsibility, constructive communication, and reciprocal care. Its function is preventive and reflective: it prompts examination of weak foundations without claiming that the verse explicitly describes family dysfunction.

The three configurations are integrated as complementary pedagogical implications rather than literal definitions contained in the verses. The bee representation contributes a spiritual-productive orientation; the ant narrative contributes a communicative-collective orientation; and the spider-house analogy contributes a preventive-resilient orientation. Together they form the Qur'anic Dwelling-Based Muslim Family Education Model. The model proposes family practices such as shared worship, disciplined responsibility, constructive dialogue, cooperation, mutual care, socially beneficial action, and periodic reflection on relational foundations. These practices are conceptual applications of the reconstructed dimensions and should be treated as propositions for education and future empirical inquiry.

5. Discussion

The analysis indicates that selected Qur'anic dwelling representations can be reconstructed pedagogically as complementary conceptual resources for Muslim family education. The key contribution lies in the interpretive procedure rather than in claiming that the verses themselves contain a ready-made family theory. By separating exegetical meaning from pedagogical reconstruction, the study positions Qur'anic pedagogy as a disciplined movement from textual understanding to educational implication. This approach is consistent with broader conceptions of tarbiyah as multidimensional formation (Abdalla, 2025) and with Qur'anic educational philosophy that treats revelation as a source for reflective and transformative educational principles (Stimpson & Calvert, 2021). It also parallels recent Qur'an-based conceptual work that reconstructs educational principles only after establishing the verse's interpretive context (Harianton & Jamroji, 2026).

The spiritual-productive dimension reconstructed from QS. An-Nahl [16]:68–69 links divine orientation with disciplined and beneficial action. The exegetical point is that the bee's movement and production are narrated within a discourse of divine inspiration and benefit; the family-education implication is a subsequent interpretation, not an equivalent meaning of the verse. Within Muslim households, this dimension may support educational routines in which worship, intention, discipline, responsibility, work ethic, and contribution to others are treated as interconnected. Such a proposition is compatible with scholarship on spiritual parenting, which emphasises faith formation through parental responsibility and meaningful practice (Bensaid, 2021), and with

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research showing that family-based religious formation occurs through modelling, routine, and lived participation (Puspita Sari et al., 2025; Qusyairi et al., 2026).

The communicative-collective dimension reconstructed from QS. An-Naml [27]:18–19 foregrounds awareness, communication, coordination, and protection. In the narrative, information about danger is communicated for collective safety. Read pedagogically, this pattern may inform a family culture in which communication is not limited to conflict resolution but also functions as education in attentiveness, responsibility, and care. Empirical scholarship confirms that Muslim families are significant environments for religious learning and identity formation (Tuna et al., 2023) and that parents negotiate responsibility and children's developing agency through everyday interaction (Aantjes, 2022). Research on Muslim family resilience further suggests that communication and religiosity are associated with stronger adaptive processes (Latifa et al., 2024). These studies do not validate the Qur'anic metaphor itself; rather, they support the educational plausibility of the reconstructed family practices.

The preventive-resilient dimension reconstructed from QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41 requires the strongest methodological caution. Classical and contemporary exegetical readings centre the analogy on weakness of reliance and the inadequacy of taking protectors apart from God (Al-Tabari, 2001; Ibn Kathir, 2003; Shihab, 2002). The verse therefore should not be used to infer claims about spider mating, household organisation, or biological family behaviour. Its pedagogical value lies in the possibility of analogical reflection on foundations: family relationships can appear formally intact while remaining vulnerable if trust, moral responsibility, spiritual orientation, communication, and reciprocal care are weak. This conceptual emphasis resonates with systemic approaches to family resilience, which understand resilience as a dynamic relational process rather than a fixed family trait (Walsh, 2016).

Integrating the three configurations produces a conceptual architecture with distinct but related functions. The bee metaphor suggests what family education may cultivate: spiritually grounded productivity and benefit. The ant narrative suggests how relational learning may operate: through communication, coordination, and mutual protection. The spider-house analogy suggests what family education should critically examine: forms of reliance and relational foundations that are fragile. This integration expands Muslim family education beyond doctrinal transmission by treating the household as a pedagogical environment in which values are embodied through routines, interactions, responsibilities, and reflective practices. Similar emphasis on habituation, modelling, and continuity between educational settings and the family appears in recent Islamic education research (Maula et al., 2026; Setiasih & Subur, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, the model may offer a conceptual resource for parent education, premarital guidance, family counselling, and family-oriented Islamic education. Its relevance lies in organising educational practices around spirituality, communication, responsibility, cooperation, social usefulness, and reflective evaluation.

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Studies of Muslim families in Indonesia indicate that religiosity and communication contribute to family resilience (Fathoni, 2021; Latifa et al., 2024), while contemporary parenting research emphasises the continuing role of Qur'an-informed parental guidance in changing social environments (Robiansyah et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the present study cannot demonstrate that adopting the model will improve family quality. At most, the textual and conceptual analysis provides theoretically grounded propositions about practices that may support family education and resilience.

The principal theoretical contribution is therefore the Qur'anic Dwelling-Based Muslim Family Education Model as a framework within Qur'anic pedagogy. Its novelty lies in three features: the comparative use of dwelling-related representations, the explicit separation between exegetical meaning and pedagogical reconstruction, and the integration of the resulting dimensions into a single family-education architecture. Practically, the framework may inform the design of reflective learning materials for parents, premarital education, and family counselling, but such use should be treated as exploratory. Expert validation, qualitative fieldwork, comparative family studies, and intervention research are required before claims can be made about effectiveness, transferability, or measurable improvements in communication and resilience.

6. Conclusion

This study constructs a Qur'anic Dwelling-Based Muslim Family Education Model by distinguishing two analytical levels: the exegetical meaning of selected Qur'anic passages and the pedagogical implications reconstructed from those meanings. On this basis, QS. An-Nahl [16]:68–69 is interpreted as supporting a spiritual-productive educational orientation, QS. An-Naml [27]:18–19 as supporting a communicative-collective orientation, and QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]:41 as supporting a preventive-resilient orientation. These dimensions are not presented as direct lexical meanings explicitly contained in the verses; they are conceptual educational implications developed through thematic interpretation, document analysis, and dialogue with scholarship on Muslim family education.

The model contributes to Qur'anic pedagogy by showing how scriptural imagery can be translated into educational propositions without collapsing interpretation into application. It conceptualises the Muslim household as a formative space where divine orientation, beneficial action, constructive communication, cooperation, mutual protection, and reflection on relational foundations may be cultivated through everyday practices. The framework may therefore serve as a conceptual resource for parent education, premarital guidance, family counselling, and family-oriented Islamic education, especially when used as material for reflection rather than as a prescriptive or empirically proven formula.

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The study remains limited by its library-based design, selective interpretive corpus, and absence of empirical family data. It cannot establish causal effects or demonstrate that the proposed dimensions improve family quality or resilience. Future research should subject the framework to expert validation and examine it through interviews, ethnographic observation, comparative case studies, survey development, or educational interventions involving Muslim families from diverse sociocultural settings. Such studies are needed to test the clarity, cultural relevance, practical feasibility, and possible outcomes of the proposed dimensions

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