

Prophetic Educative Communication and Family Harmony *A Thematic Hadith Analysis in Dialogue with Contemporary Family Research*

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Abstract

Family harmony is sustained not only by shared commitments but also by communicative practices that protect dignity, regulate conflict, and cultivate emotional security. Although prophetic ethics are frequently invoked in Islamic family scholarship, the communicative mechanisms embedded in family-related hadith have rarely been reconstructed through an explicit thematic procedure and placed in dialogue with contemporary relationship research. This qualitative library study examines four authenticated hadith reports depicting the Prophet Muhammad's communication with spouses and children. The corpus was delimited through four criteria: an identifiable family interaction, an observable communicative act, an educative or corrective function, and an acceptable hadith grade. Analysis combined source tracing, comparison of parallel transmissions, consultation of classical commentaries, and directed thematic coding. Four interdependent patterns emerged: appreciative verbal affirmation, dignity-restoring conflict intervention, embodied parental affection, and balanced appraisal of a spouse's shortcomings. These patterns form a coherent model of prophetic educative communication organized around *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (fairness), emotional attunement, and morally proportionate correction. Contemporary studies of couple communication, gratitude, empathy, dyadic coping, forgiveness, parental warmth, and emotion socialization provide convergent—not evidentially equivalent—support for the relational mechanisms identified in the hadith corpus. The study contributes a transparent bridge between thematic hadith analysis and family communication scholarship while avoiding the reduction of hadith to modern psychological categories. It proposes an operational framework for Muslim family education and counseling: affirm before distance develops, listen and restore dignity before correcting, communicate affection through appropriate embodied presence, and evaluate faults within the whole moral history of the relationship. Field research is needed to test how these practices are interpreted and enacted across diverse Muslim families.

Keywords: *Prophetic Communication, Thematic Hadith, Family Harmony, Marital Communication, Parental Warmth, Islamic Family Ethics*

INTRODUCTION

Family harmony is better understood as a dynamic relational achievement than as the absence of disagreement. Families must continuously interpret needs, negotiate expectations, respond to stress, repair hurt, and preserve each member's dignity. Communication is therefore not a peripheral household skill; it is one of the principal processes through which affection, authority, moral instruction, and conflict are organized. Longitudinal and dyadic studies show that positive and negative communication covary with relationship satisfaction, although the direction of influence is reciprocal and embedded in broader vulnerabilities and stressors (Johnson et al., 2022; Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Lavner et al., 2016). Research also

indicates that constructive interaction learned in the family of origin can predict later marital interaction and adjustment (Whitton et al., 2008). These findings caution against treating communication as a simple technique, but they confirm its central place in the ecology of durable relationships.

Contemporary families face additional communicative pressures. Economic strain, parenting demands, digital distraction, and reduced shared time can alter how partners attend and respond to one another. Among parents in West Java, dyadic coping buffered some of the relational consequences associated with financial strain, underscoring that stress is often managed as a shared rather than purely individual problem (Novianti et al., 2024). Parenting stress and depressive symptoms can also affect marital satisfaction and the quality of time partners experience together (Dong et al., 2022). Digital media may connect family members while simultaneously weakening undivided attention and parent-child closeness; partner phubbing is likewise associated with loneliness, empathy, and relationship satisfaction (Liu et al., 2024; Zhan et al., 2022). Recent Muslim family scholarship therefore emphasizes the need to combine digital participation with reciprocity and ethical communication (Nurhidayah et al., 2025). In Indonesia, official divorce statistics continue to identify persistent quarrelling and conflict among the major recorded causes of divorce (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). Such figures should not be interpreted as proving that communication alone causes marital dissolution, yet they make the study of conflict communication socially consequential.

Within Islam, family communication is simultaneously relational, moral, and educative. Speech and action do not merely transfer information; they form character, establish expectations, correct wrongdoing, and communicate mercy. The Prophet Muhammad occupies a distinctive normative position because his conduct is understood as an embodied explanation of Islamic ethics. Hadith reports describing his interactions with wives, children, and other household members therefore offer a corpus for examining how moral guidance was communicated in intimate relationships. The educational dimension is visible not only in explicit instruction but also in timing, tone, embodied affection, attention to emotion, and the proportionality of correction.

Existing Islamic scholarship has made several important contributions. Studies of Muslim family communication have described dialogical conflict resolution, reciprocity, and communication ethics grounded in Islamic family law (Halim et al., 2024; Nurhidayah et al., 2025). Work on parent-child communication has highlighted respectful speech, affection, moral modeling, and age-appropriate instruction in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Asriani & Wahyudi, 2026). These studies establish the normative relevance of Islamic sources. Nevertheless, three problems remain. First, some discussions collect scriptural quotations without explaining why particular reports were included or how their authenticity was assessed. Second, prophetic practices are often presented as a list of virtues rather than analyzed as communicative sequences with identifiable relational functions. Third, the conversation with contemporary family research is commonly either absent or overly assimilative: hadith is treated as though it merely anticipated modern psychology, while modern empirical findings are invoked as if they authenticated revelation.

This study addresses those problems by using a delimited thematic hadith analysis and a disciplined interdisciplinary comparison. It does not claim that contemporary psychological studies verify the truth of hadith, nor that modern constructs exhaust the meanings developed by classical commentators. Instead, it asks whether contemporary evidence can illuminate plausible relational mechanisms through which prophetic practices may contribute to family harmony. The distinction matters: classical hadith scholarship establishes textual provenance and interpretive context, whereas social-scientific studies describe patterns observed in particular populations, measures, and historical settings.

The study is guided by three questions. First, what educative communication patterns are displayed in authenticated hadith reports concerning the Prophet's family interactions? Second, how do source criticism and classical commentary clarify the meaning and scope of those patterns? Third, in what respects do the patterns converge with, extend, or challenge contemporary scholarship on couple and parent-child communication? The article's contribution is a four-part model of prophetic educative communication that connects normative principles to observable practices without collapsing Islamic categories into secular therapeutic language.

Conceptual Orientation

Educative Communication as Relational Moral Formation

Educative communication refers here to verbal and non-verbal conduct that transmits meaning while shaping moral perception, emotional regulation, and relational responsibility. This definition is broader than instruction. A reassuring statement can educate by teaching a spouse what commitment sounds like; attentive listening can teach that injury deserves recognition; a kiss can teach a child that mercy is embodied; and balanced evaluation can teach partners to resist totalizing judgments. The educative effect lies in the union of message, manner, timing, and modeled disposition.

This relational understanding is compatible with contemporary findings that effective communication is not reducible to the frequency of positive statements. Relationship satisfaction depends partly on how partners respond to positive and negative events, accommodate one another, and interpret communicative intent (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022; De Netto et al., 2021). People reporting higher relationship satisfaction also tend to use more receptive listening, valuing, and constructive emotion-regulation strategies with their partners (Walker et al., 2023). The Islamic category of *adab*, however, adds a normative dimension: communication is evaluated not only by its immediate effectiveness but also by truthfulness, justice, mercy, and accountability before God.

Family Harmony as Tranquility with Capacity for Repair

The term family harmony in this study denotes a relational condition characterized by emotional safety, mutual respect, affectionate connection, fair treatment, and the capacity to repair conflict. It does not denote uninterrupted agreement or suppress legitimate grievances. Studies of marital stability increasingly reject single-factor explanations; satisfaction and stability emerge from interactions among enduring vulnerabilities, adaptive processes, stress, and social context (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Cross-temporal evidence also shows that marital satisfaction can vary with socioeconomic and cultural change,

although such trends remain population-specific (Li et al., 2022). Conflict itself is not necessarily destructive. The decisive issue is whether family members respond with hostility, contempt, avoidance, coercion, or with empathy, accountability, and repair.

This definition also prevents the religious language of harmony from being used to silence harmed family members. Mercy without fairness can become indulgence toward wrongdoing, while correction without mercy can become humiliation. Prophetic communication, as reconstructed below, repeatedly binds compassion to moral clarity. Harmony is thus a disciplined capacity to maintain connection while naming harm and restoring right relationship.

METHODS

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative library design using thematic hadith analysis (*al-hadith al-mawdu'i*). Thematic analysis was selected because the research question concerns a communicative pattern distributed across reports with different interlocutors and contexts. The procedure combined classical hadith methods—source tracing, comparison of transmissions, grading, and commentary—with directed qualitative coding. The analysis was interpretive rather than statistical and made no claim to exhaust all family-related hadith.

Corpus Delimitation and Selection Criteria

The initial domain comprised reports concerning the Prophet's interactions with wives, children, and household members. Search descriptors included Arabic terms and semantic equivalents relating to speech, listening, weeping, mercy, kissing, anger, fault, affection, wives, and children. Reports were retained when they met four criteria: (a) the interaction occurred within a family or household relationship; (b) the report contained an identifiable verbal or non-verbal communicative act; (c) the act had an educative, consoling, corrective, or relationship-maintaining function; and (d) the report was included in a canonical collection with a sound or otherwise accepted grade suitable for argument. Reports describing family law without an enacted communicative episode were excluded, as were reports whose authenticity remained seriously disputed.

Four reports were selected because together they represent spouse-directed affirmation, conflict intervention between spouses, parent-child affection, and cognitive-moral reframing of a partner's faults. Purposive selection served analytic diversity rather than numerical representativeness. Table 1 makes the corpus and authentication basis explicit.

Table 1. Hadith Corpus, Communicative Episode, and Authentication Basis

Report	Family interaction and communicative act	Principal source	Authentication basis	Analytic code
Umm Zar' report	The Prophet verbally compares his devoted companionship with 'A'ishah to that of	<i>Sahih al-Bukhari</i> , no. 5189; <i>Sahih Muslim</i> , no. 2448 (Al-	Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim	Appreciative verbal affirmation

Report	Family interaction and communicative act	Principal source	Authentication basis	Analytic code
	Abu Zar' toward Umm Zar'	Bukhari, n.d.; Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, n.d.)		
Safiyyah and Hafsa	The Prophet asks why Safiyyah is crying, restores her dignity, then admonishes Hafsa	<i>Jami' al-Tirmidhi</i> , no. 3894; <i>al-Sunan al-Kubra</i> (Al-Tirmidhi, n.d.; Al-Nasa'i, 2001)	Al-Tirmidhi: <i>hasan sahib gharib</i> through this route; accepted supporting transmission	Dignity-restoring conflict intervention
Kissing al-Hasan	The Prophet kisses al-Hasan and corrects al-Aqra's rejection of affectionate behavior	<i>Sahih al-Bukhari</i> , no. 5997; <i>Sahih Muslim</i> , no. 2318 (Al-Bukhari, n.d.; Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, n.d.)	Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim	Embodied parental affection
<i>La yafra' mu'min mu'minah</i>	The Prophet instructs a husband not to reduce his wife to a disliked trait	<i>Sahih Muslim</i> , no. 1469 (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, n.d.)	Recorded by Muslim with a connected sound chain	Balanced appraisal of shortcomings

As Table 1 shows, the corpus includes three reports graded *sahih* through the canonical collections and one report described by al-Tirmidhi as *hasan sahib gharib* through its route. The study therefore uses the more precise term “authenticated reports” rather than claiming an identical technical grade for every transmission.

Sources and Analytical Procedure

Primary sources were *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, and *al-Sunan al-Kubra* of al-Nasa'i. Parallel transmissions were consulted where they clarified wording. Interpretive sources included al-Baghawi's *Sharh al-Sunnah*, 'Ali al-Qari's *Mirqat al-Mafatih*, al-Sa'di's *Bahjat Qulub al-Abrar*, al-'Uthaymin's commentary on *Riyad al-Salihin*, and major commentaries on *Sahih Muslim*. Contemporary journal literature was selected for conceptual relevance to couple communication, empathy, gratitude, forgiveness, dyadic coping, parental warmth, emotion socialization, and Muslim family ethics. All journal articles included in the reference list have DOI-linked or open journal pages through which their metadata and, in most cases, full text can be accessed.

Analysis proceeded in five stages. First, each report was traced to its principal collection and compared with available parallel wording. Second, the technical grade was recorded without re-performing a complete independent biographical evaluation of every

narrator. Third, classical commentaries were read to identify lexical, legal, ethical, and contextual meanings. Fourth, the communicative sequence was coded by antecedent, prophetic response, immediate relational function, and educative principle. Fifth, the resulting themes were compared with contemporary family research. Convergence was treated as interpretive dialogue, not as proof of equivalence.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Scope

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation across canonical collections, parallel reports, classical commentaries, and contemporary studies; explicit inclusion criteria; preservation of the Arabic text; and negative-case caution. In particular, the analysis avoids inferring that a brief prophetic episode constitutes a complete clinical protocol. Because the study used published texts and involved no human participants, institutional ethics approval and informed consent were not applicable. Ethical responsibility nevertheless required accurate attribution, contextual interpretation, and restraint in translating normative teachings into contemporary recommendations.

FINDINGS

Appreciative Verbal Affirmation

The first report belongs to the extended narration in which eleven women describe their husbands. After ‘A’ishah recounts the account of Umm Zar’, the Prophet says:

كُنْتُ لَكَ كَأَبِي زَرْعٍ لَأُمِّ زَرْعٍ

“I am to you as Abu Zar’ was to Umm Zar’.”

The comparison does more than communicate affection. It demonstrates attentive listening: the Prophet has followed a long narrative, identified the feature that mattered relationally, and responded in a form meaningful to ‘A’ishah. Classical commentaries place the statement within *husn al-’israh*, gracious marital companionship. They explain it as speech intended to gladden her heart and affirm devoted treatment (Al-Baghawi, 1983). A transmitted explanatory addition—“except that I will not divorce you”—clarifies that the comparison concerns affectionate companionship rather than every detail of Abu Zar’s conduct.

The communicative sequence is therefore listening, interpretive uptake, personalized comparison, and reassurance. Its educative force lies in making attachment explicit. Affection is not left to be inferred from provision or duty; it is spoken in a way that recognizes the spouse’s emotional world. This differs from flattery because the statement is anchored in an ongoing relationship and a narrative the listener herself has supplied.

Contemporary relationship research offers a useful point of convergence. Perceived and expressed gratitude are associated with relationship quality, especially when appreciation is experienced as responsive rather than formulaic (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2016; Barton et al., 2023). Accurate perception of a partner’s gratitude and responsive appreciation also matter for satisfaction (Tissera et al., 2022). Studies across different cultural samples link gratitude with dyadic coping, affectivity, and relationship satisfaction (Roth et al., 2024; Shujja & Adil, 2023). Yet gratitude and prophetic affirmation are not identical constructs. The hadith adds

moral constancy and attentive companionship: affirming a spouse is not merely a strategy for increasing satisfaction but an expression of gracious conduct.

Dignity-Restoring Conflict Intervention

The second report recounts that Safiyyah learned that Hafsah had called her “the daughter of a Jew” and began to weep. The Prophet entered and asked why she was crying. After she explained, he replied:

إِنَّكَ لَأَبْنَةُ نَبِيٍّ، وَإِنَّ عَمَّكَ لَنَبِيٍّ، وَإِنَّكَ لَتَحْتِ نَبِيٍّ، فَبِمَ تَفْخَرُ عَلَيْكَ؟ ثُمَّ قَالَ: اتَّقِيَ اللَّهَ يَا حَفْصَةُ

“You are indeed the descendant of a prophet, your uncle was a prophet, and you are married to a prophet. On what basis, then, can she boast over you?” He then said, “Be mindful of God, O Hafsah.”

The report contains a carefully ordered intervention. The Prophet first notices visible distress and invites disclosure. He then counters the degrading label by restoring Safiyyah’s social and spiritual dignity. Only after addressing the injury does he correct Hafsah. ‘Ali al-Qari interprets the insult as a remnant of pre-Islamic boasting based on lineage (Al-Qari, 2002). The response does not deny Safiyyah’s Jewish ancestry; instead, it rejects its use as an instrument of humiliation and reframes that ancestry through prophetic lineage.

Three educative features follow. First, emotion is treated as morally relevant information rather than as an inconvenience. Second, the harmed person’s dignity is restored without endorsing retaliatory contempt. Third, correction is direct and theologically grounded but proportionate: “Be mindful of God” identifies accountability without an extended public denunciation. Empathy therefore precedes correction, but it does not replace it.

Empirical research similarly indicates that empathy, receptive listening, and constructive conflict processes are associated with relationship quality (Papp et al., 2010; Ulloa et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2023). Empathy and conflict-resolution styles can mediate associations with marital satisfaction in stressful contexts (Sokhanvar et al., 2023), while interpersonal mindfulness may reduce the intimacy-eroding effects of conflict (Dehghanidowlatabadi et al., 2025). A systematic review of Iranian couple interventions also found communication skills consistently relevant to marital functioning and reduced conflict (Azarnik et al., 2024). The prophetic episode adds an ethical insight often underdeveloped in skills-based models: conflict repair requires attention to status injury and moral dignity, especially where prejudice or demeaning lineage language is involved.

Embodied Parental Affection

The third report states that al-Aqra’ ibn Habis saw the Prophet kissing his grandson al-Hasan. Al-Aqra’ said that he had ten children but had never kissed any of them. The Prophet replied:

مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ

“Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.”

The report makes non-verbal behavior the site of moral teaching. The kiss communicates affection to the child, while the Prophet’s verbal response interprets that act for the observing adult. Classical commentators read the episode as a correction of emotional

hardness and as evidence that tenderness toward children belongs to mercy, not weakness. The pedagogical structure is exemplary before discursive: the Prophet first embodies affection, then names its moral meaning when challenged.

This pattern is strongly resonant with research on parental warmth. Warm and sensitive parenting is associated with children's emotion regulation and attentional control (Mathis & Bierman, 2015). Parental warmth predicts adolescent emotion-regulation strategies and mental health, and trajectories of warmth are associated with prosocial behavior (Boullion et al., 2023; Buckley et al., 2023). A long-term study linked perceived childhood warmth with adult well-being and coping (Moran et al., 2018). Observational research further treats praise, positive touch, shared positive affect, and affectionate proximity as distinct behavioral indicators rather than as vague parental attitudes (Prasad et al., 2023).

The evidence also shows why affection must be understood relationally and developmentally. Parent-child bonding affects how criticism is perceived across cultures (Neoh et al., 2021), and supportive responses to children's negative emotions are associated with socioemotional outcomes (Li et al., 2025). Warm communication and emotional intelligence may also function as protective factors in coercive parent-child dynamics (López-Martínez et al., 2019). Studies of parental bonding and emotion regulation similarly link relational quality to internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Mannarini et al., 2018). The hadith does not specify developmental dosage or authorize unwanted touch; it establishes the moral legitimacy of appropriate embodied affection and rejects emotional deprivation as a sign of strength.

Balanced Appraisal of a Spouse's Shortcomings

The fourth report states:

لَا يَفْرَكُ مُؤْمِنٌ مُؤْمِنَةً، إِنْ كَرِهَ مِنْهَا خُلُقًا رَضِيَ مِنْهَا آخَرَ

"A believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one trait in her, he should be pleased with another."

Classical commentators interpret the report as an instruction to judge a spouse fairly (Al-Sa'di, 2002; Al-'Uthaymin, n.d.). A disliked trait must not erase the person's other qualities or the accumulated good of the relationship. The teaching does not require denial of serious harm, nor does it prohibit addressing a fault. It disciplines perception by resisting totalization: one behavior is not the whole person, and one moment is not the whole marriage.

This balanced appraisal may be described as a moral correction of selective attention. Contemporary research finds that forgiveness can support satisfaction through greater relationship effort and reduced negative conflict (Braithwaite et al., 2011). Gratitude and perceived partner responsiveness can protect relationship quality, although power asymmetries may weaken these effects (Jin et al., 2024). That qualification is important: appreciation should not be used to normalize coercion or injustice. The hadith's language of faith and fairness applies to moral evaluation, not to the concealment of violence.

The report also challenges perfectionistic expectations. Studies associate maladaptive relational expectations, chronic negative communication, and unconstructive interaction with poorer relationship outcomes. Communication and satisfaction influence one another

over time, which means that a negative interpretive climate can become self-reinforcing (Johnson et al., 2022; Lavner et al., 2016). Observed negative communication may transmit relational difficulties across generations (Zamir et al., 2025). Conversely, balanced attention to good qualities creates space for gratitude, repair, and realistic commitment. The prophetic instruction thus integrates cognition, emotion, and ethics: see the fault accurately, refuse to let it monopolize judgment, and remain accountable to fairness.

DISCUSSION

An Integrated Model of Prophetic Educative Communication

The four themes are not isolated virtues. Together they describe a relational sequence for maintaining connection across ordinary family life. Affirmation nourishes attachment before crisis. Empathetic intervention repairs dignity when injury occurs. Embodied affection creates emotional security, particularly for children. Balanced appraisal prevents a specific disappointment from hardening into contempt. Table 2 synthesizes the model, the mechanism visible in each report, and its practical boundary.

Table 2. Integrated Model of Prophetic Educative Communication

Pattern	Observable prophetic practice	Relational function	Educative principle	Necessary boundary
Appreciative verbal affirmation	Attentive listening followed by personalized reassurance	Makes affection and commitment perceptible	Gladdening the heart and gracious companionship	Must be sincere, specific, and consistent with conduct
Dignity-restoring conflict intervention	Notices distress, invites disclosure, restores status, then corrects wrongdoing	Repairs injury without abandoning accountability	Empathy joined to justice and God-consciousness	Validation does not mean endorsing every interpretation or avoiding correction
Embodied parental affection	Affectionate touch followed by moral explanation	Builds emotional security and models mercy	Compassion is strength and a duty	Touch must be safe, appropriate, culturally intelligible, and welcomed
Balanced appraisal of shortcomings	Places a disliked trait beside valued qualities	Interrupts totalizing judgment and contempt	Fairness, gratitude, and proportionality	Never use positive reframing to excuse abuse, coercion, or persistent harm

As Table 2 indicates, prophetic communication operates at four levels: verbal content, emotional attunement, embodied conduct, and moral cognition. Its unifying logic

is *rahmah* regulated by *'adl*. Compassion makes the other person's experience visible; fairness prevents compassion from dissolving accountability and prevents correction from becoming humiliation. This dual structure distinguishes the model from both sentimental harmony and authoritarian moralism.

Dialogue with Contemporary Couple Research

The model converges with contemporary couple research in several respects. Positive communication is associated with higher relationship satisfaction within couples over time, but the association is reciprocal and should not be interpreted as a simple one-way causal law (Johnson et al., 2022; Lavner et al., 2016). Models of lasting relationships likewise identify communication, cohesion, flexibility, and mutual investment as interacting resources (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022). Prophetic affirmation and balanced appraisal can be understood as practices that help create such resources, while the Safiyyah episode illustrates a repair process in which emotional recognition and moral accountability occur together.

Gratitude research offers particularly close convergence with the first and fourth themes. Expressed gratitude is most beneficial when it is met with responsiveness and when partners perceive one another's appreciation accurately (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2016; Tissera et al., 2022). Gratitude may also mediate the relationship between dyadic coping and satisfaction (Roth et al., 2024). The hadith corpus, however, broadens the frame from positive affect to ethical companionship. Appreciation is not only a response to receiving benefits; it is a disciplined refusal to erase the spouse's good because of a disliked trait.

The conflict-intervention theme also aligns with evidence on empathy and emotion recognition. Dyadic studies connect empathy with both one's own and one's partner's relationship quality (Ulloa et al., 2017). Empathic accuracy in conflict depends on emotional context and cannot be assumed merely because partners feel close (Papp et al., 2010). The Prophet's question "What makes you weep?" is therefore analytically significant: he does not presume complete knowledge of Safiyyah's internal state. He invites her account before responding. The sequence resembles receptive listening, yet goes further by identifying the moral structure of the insult and correcting the offender.

The model also accommodates contextual stress. Financial and parenting pressures influence couples' well-being, and dyadic coping can sometimes buffer their impact (Dong et al., 2022; Novianti et al., 2024). A prophetic framework should therefore not be reduced to advising distressed spouses to "communicate better" while ignoring economic strain, unequal burdens, or unsafe conditions. Communication practices operate within material and power contexts. Research showing that relationship power can attenuate the benefits of gratitude reinforces the need for this qualification (Jin et al., 2024).

Dialogue with Parent-Child Research

The report of the Prophet kissing al-Hasan contributes an embodied dimension often neglected in textual accounts of Islamic education. Warmth is communicated through voice, facial expression, proximity, play, praise, touch, and reliable response. Contemporary measures of parent-child warmth likewise distinguish observable behaviors such as positive physical contact and shared affect (Prasad et al., 2023). Across developmental stages, parental

warmth is associated with emotion regulation, prosocial behavior, coping, and well-being (Boullion et al., 2023; Buckley et al., 2023; Mathis & Bierman, 2015; Moran et al., 2018).

Digital family life makes embodied and attentive presence especially salient. Electronic media use can be associated with reduced parent-child closeness, which in turn relates to emotion regulation and prosocial behavior (Liu et al., 2024). “Presence” should not be romanticized (digital tools can support learning and transnational connection) but prophetic mercy requires that children experience care as more than material provision or online availability. Responses to children’s emotions and the quality of parent-child relationships are related to subjective well-being and socioemotional functioning (Li et al., 2024, 2025; Thümmeler et al., 2022).

Islamic parent-child communication scholarship similarly emphasizes respectful speech, modeling, affection, and moral formation (Asriani & Wahyudi, 2026). The present analysis adds a source-critical and sequential account: an affectionate act becomes public moral education when the Prophet corrects the adult who equates emotional restraint with strength. This pattern can inform parent education by framing warmth as an ethical practice rather than a personality preference.

Contribution to Islamic Family Communication Scholarship

The study advances Islamic family communication scholarship in three ways. First, it makes corpus selection and authentication visible. The claim is not that four reports exhaust prophetic family conduct, but that each report meets explicit inclusion criteria and contributes a distinct communicative function. Second, it analyzes action sequences rather than extracting abstract values alone. “Mercy,” for example, becomes observable as noticing, asking, listening, reassuring, touching appropriately, and correcting proportionately. Third, it establishes an interdisciplinary boundary: social science may illuminate relational mechanisms and practical implications, but it does not determine the normative authority of hadith.

The findings complement studies of Muslim couples that emphasize dialogue and Islamic legal-ethical principles in resolving household conflict (Halim et al., 2024). They also resonate with reciprocity-based approaches to contemporary Muslim family communication, particularly in digital contexts where authority and participation must be continually negotiated (Nurhidayah et al., 2025). The distinctive contribution is to organize prophetic episodes into a model that can be translated into educational practices while retaining the theological concepts of *rahmah*, *’adl*, *taqwa*, and *husn al-’israh*.

Practical Implications

For premarital education, the model can be taught as four repeatable practices: verbalize specific appreciation; ask before assuming during conflict; restore dignity while addressing wrongdoing; and evaluate a fault within the partner’s broader character and relational history. For marital counseling, these practices can support assessment of interaction patterns, but they should not substitute for safeguarding procedures where abuse or coercive control is present. Balanced appraisal is not an instruction to remain silent about danger.

For parenting programs, the findings support age-appropriate affectionate presence, emotionally receptive conversation, and explicit rejection of harshness as a marker of

authority. Warmth should accompany boundaries rather than replace them. Parent-child interventions may operationalize the model through observable indicators: undistracted listening, gentle tone, appropriate affectionate touch, emotion labeling, and correction that preserves the child's dignity.

For religious educators, the study suggests presenting hadith as relational episodes rather than isolated proof texts. Learners can be asked to identify what occurred before the Prophet spoke, how he responded, whose dignity was at stake, and what moral outcome the response sought. This approach protects against decontextualized quotation and makes the educative architecture of the Sunnah more visible.

Limitations and Future Research

The study is limited by its textual design and purposive corpus. Four reports cannot represent the full diversity of prophetic household communication, including humor, consultation, apology, grief, economic negotiation, and responses to serious wrongdoing. Authentication relied on established canonical judgments and commentary rather than a new exhaustive narrator-by-narrator isnad study. The contemporary comparison also draws on heterogeneous populations, including non-Muslim and non-Indonesian samples; convergence at the level of relational mechanism does not establish cultural equivalence or universal effect sizes.

Future research should expand the hadith corpus through a preregistered or otherwise auditable search protocol, compare commentaries across legal and theological traditions, and examine gendered reception of the model. Qualitative interviews could explore how Muslim spouses and parents interpret these reports in daily life. Intervention studies could then test culturally adapted educational modules using outcomes such as perceived responsiveness, conflict repair, parental warmth, and emotional safety. Researchers should also examine negative cases in which religious language about patience, gratitude, or harmony is used to obscure unequal power or abuse.

CONCLUSION

The thematic analysis identifies four interdependent patterns in the Prophet Muhammad's family communication: appreciative verbal affirmation, dignity-restoring conflict intervention, embodied parental affection, and balanced appraisal of a spouse's shortcomings. The reports show that prophetic education occurs through more than explicit instruction. It is carried by attention, sequence, tone, touch, moral framing, and the proportionality of correction.

Together, the patterns constitute a model of compassion regulated by fairness. The Prophet listens before interpreting distress, restores dignity before or alongside correction, makes affection perceptible through words and action, and prevents a single fault from erasing the whole person. Contemporary family research provides convergent insight into why responsiveness, empathy, gratitude, dyadic coping, forgiveness, and parental warmth can sustain relationships, while the hadith tradition supplies a specifically Islamic moral grammar for these practices.

The practical implication is neither a slogan about "good communication" nor a promise that communication alone resolves structural hardship. It is a disciplined family

ethic: affirm before distance develops, listen before assuming, correct without humiliating, embody mercy, and judge with proportion. Applied with attention to safety and power, this framework can strengthen Muslim family education and provide a credible agenda for empirical research on prophetic communication in contemporary households.

Declarations

Funding. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics statement. The study analyzed published texts and did not involve human participants; institutional ethics approval was therefore not required.

Data availability. All primary texts and scholarly sources analyzed in this study are publicly identifiable in the reference list.

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