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Economic Parentification among Minors in Medan Amplas: A Socio-Legal Analysis under Islamic Law

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Abstract: Children's involvement in family economic activities may result in role reversal, whereby minors assume responsibilities traditionally assigned to parents, potentially compromising their rights to education, care, and protection. This study examines children's economic involvement in Medan Amplas District, the manifestations of economic parentification, and its implications for parental maintenance and caregiving obligations under Islamic family law. Using an empirical legal approach and a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with nine informants: six working children, two social service representatives, and one community leader. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model and source triangulation. The findings reveal three patterns: children contributing to household and educational expenses, working under parental instruction, and independently meeting their basic needs due to inadequate parental care. These patterns reflect varying degrees of instrumental parentification, particularly when children assume financial responsibilities that should be fulfilled by parents. The contributing factors include poverty, paternal illness, parental divorce, and inadequate caregiving. Educational consequences are evident, with two children remaining in school and four discontinuing their education. This study proposes a Substantive Protection-Based *Qawwamah* (parental responsibility)–*Hadhanah* (child custody and care) Restoration Model integrating parental maintenance, caregiving, educational continuity, and social protection. It contributes to the socio-legal study of Islamic family law by distinguishing children's economic contributions from the transfer of parental obligations and developing a conceptual framework for strengthening substantive child protection.

Keywords:
Economic parentification;
Child labor;
Sociology of Islamic Family Law;
Qawwamah;
Hadhanah.

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Introduction

The involvement of minors in family economic activities is a social issue closely associated with poverty, shifting household responsibilities, and the fulfillment of children's rights. This condition is influenced by economic constraints, parental education, and changes in family structure and the distribution of responsibilities (Anwar et al., 2024; Artini et al., 2023). Although children's work may contribute to household income, such involvement can also jeopardize their well-being and development (Avianti & Sihaloho, 2015). This phenomenon is evident in Medan Amplas District, Medan City, where children engage in informal economic activities such as selling tissues, soap, and beverages. Supporting data from the Medan City Social Protection Shelter also document children working as street musicians, public minibus sweepers, car cleaners, and beggars. These activities are associated with economic hardship, parental divorce, and inadequate caregiving support, indicating the

need to understand child labor through the relationship between economic vulnerability and shifting family responsibilities (Khoiruddin et al., 2025). Differences in perceptions among community members and social institutions regarding working children further highlight the importance of considering the broader social context of this phenomenon (Kamangi et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Islamic family law, the provision of maintenance, caregiving, education, and protection for children constitutes a parental responsibility. The principle of *qawwamah* emphasizes financial responsibility and family protection, while *hadhanah* encompasses caregiving and the fulfillment of children's developmental needs. Both principles provide a foundation for evaluating children's economic involvement, particularly when parental financial limitations lead to changes in the distribution of family responsibilities. However, financial hardship resulting from illness or poverty must be distinguished from deliberate neglect, as parents remain obligated to fulfill their responsibilities according to their capabilities (Asni, 2021; S. Lubis et al., 2023). From a legal perspective, Law Number 35 of 2014 establishes protection for children under the age of 18, including their rights to education and appropriate development (Razan et al., 2024; Rofiq, 2021). Therefore, the assessment of children's economic activities must consider their age, safety, working conditions, and the fulfillment of their fundamental rights, as emphasized in the *maṣlaḥah* approach (Munawir, 2023).

Previous studies have examined child labor from various perspectives. Research conducted in Mataram City identified economic hardship, parental education, and changes in family structure as factors associated with child labor (Artini et al., 2023). A study in Seteluk District emphasized parental responsibility toward working children from the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and child protection regulations (Pramasela & Zarkasih, 2023). Meanwhile, research conducted in Medan City examined child exploitation in supporting household livelihoods based on Islamic law and statutory regulations (I. I. Lubis et al., 2023). Another study demonstrated that children working on the streets may engage in income-generating activities due to family economic pressures, with their involvement assessed through *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* by considering its benefits and potential risks to children (Siregar & Turnip, 2023). Furthermore, protecting children's educational rights remains a significant concern because exploitative work may restrict their opportunities to obtain education and experience appropriate development (Razan et al., 2024). Although these studies have examined the causes of child labor, children's economic contributions, and legal protection, they have not fully explained the mechanisms through which economic responsibilities shift from parents to children using a parentification framework within the sociology of Islamic family law.

Research on parentification within Indonesian families has also developed. A phenomenological study of eldest children's experiences revealed that parentification may emerge from imbalances in family relationships, economic pressures, and communication

patterns that encourage children to assume their parents' emotional and instrumental responsibilities (Nassapramita & Rusdi, 2026). Nevertheless, that study primarily focused on experiences of parentification and family communication rather than the economic involvement of minors working in the informal sector. Accordingly, the research gap addressed in the present study concerns the limited integration of children's economic parentification with the implementation of maintenance and caregiving responsibilities under the principles of *qawwamah* and *hadhanah*. Such an approach is necessary to distinguish children's contributions as forms of family assistance from situations involving the assumption of parental economic responsibilities or work that may constitute exploitation.

To address these issues, this study employs parentification theory as its primary analytical framework. The concept of parentification emerged from discussions of the *parental child* and changes in family roles, referring to situations in which children perform functions ordinarily carried out by their parents (Jurkovic, 1997). Parentification is understood as a process in which children assume parental duties and responsibilities, resulting in changes to intergenerational role boundaries. Conceptually, parentification is divided into two forms: emotional parentification, which involves providing psychological and emotional support to parents, and instrumental parentification, which refers to assuming practical responsibilities, including meeting economic needs. This study focuses on instrumental parentification by considering the extent of responsibility, degree of compulsion, continuity of work, and consequences for children's development. Therefore, not every form of assistance provided by children to their families can automatically be classified as harmful parentification (Hooper, 2007).

Understanding these shifts in responsibility is also related to attachment theory and family systems theory, which explain the relationships among caregiving patterns, emotional conditions, and the distribution of roles within families. When parents experience financial or caregiving limitations, children may be encouraged to assume additional responsibilities to maintain family livelihoods. However, such changes may become problematic when the responsibilities imposed on children exceed their capacities and developmental needs (Hooper, 2007). To understand the relationship between these practices and legal provisions, this study integrates parentification theory with the sociology of Islamic family law. This approach examines law in relation to the social and economic conditions of society, allowing the principles of *qawwamah* and *hadhanah* to be analyzed through their implementation in family life rather than solely as normative provisions (Lukito, 2022).

As a supporting framework, this study employs family resilience theory to understand how families respond to economic pressures. Family resilience refers to the capacity of family members to adapt through shared belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication processes. Children's involvement in economic activities may serve as a strategy for meeting daily needs; however, such involvement does not necessarily indicate healthy family resilience when it compromises children's education, caregiving, and

development (Walsh, 2016). This study also considers a gender sociological perspective on the social construction of fathers' roles as breadwinners. Within family life, expectations concerning men's responsibilities as economic providers are shaped by gender norms and social relationships (Connell, 2005). When fathers experience illness, unemployment, or reduced involvement following divorce, the distribution of economic responsibilities within the family may change. Nevertheless, these circumstances do not necessarily indicate deliberate neglect, as they may also reflect broader economic constraints and family conditions. The integration of parentification theory, the sociology of Islamic family law, and family resilience theory, supported by a gender perspective, provides an analytical framework for understanding shifts in economic roles, the fulfillment of parental responsibilities, and their consequences for children's rights.

Based on the issues and research gap outlined above, this study aims to analyze the forms of minors' involvement in meeting family economic needs in Medan Amplas District, examine such involvement from the perspective of Islamic family law, and explain how children's contributions partially assume fathers' economic responsibilities in sustaining family livelihoods. The novelty of this study lies in developing the Substantive Protection-Based Qawwamah-Hadhanah Restoration Model, which integrates the restoration of parental maintenance responsibilities, the strengthening of caregiving and children's education, and social protection against economic exploitation. This model is proposed as a conceptual framework for understanding and addressing children's economic involvement through the restoration of family functions and the integrated protection of children's rights, rather than relying solely on financial assistance or measures to remove children from informal work.

Research Methods

This study employs an empirical legal research method with a qualitative descriptive approach to examine minors' involvement in family economic activities based on field experiences and the perspective of Islamic family law. This approach is intended to identify the forms of children's work, shifts in parental economic responsibilities, and their implications for the fulfillment of children's rights. The research was conducted in Medan Amplas District, Medan City, with supporting data collected through the Medan City Social Services Office and the Medan City Social Protection Shelter. The empirical approach enables the study to examine the relationship between legal provisions and social practices within the community (Amanda & Albina, 2025).

The study involved nine informants, consisting of six working children, two representatives of social services institutions, and one community leader. To protect their identities and maintain confidentiality, all informants were assigned specific codes: AN-01 to AN-06 for working children, DS-01 and DS-02 for social services representatives, and TM-01 for the community leader. The informants' profiles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profiles of Research Informants

Code	Category	Age/Position	Description
AN-01	Working child	13 years old	Tissue and soap vendor; currently attending school
AN-02	Working child	12 years old	Beverage vendor; currently attending school
AN-03	Working child	13 years old	Street musician; no longer attending school
AN-04	Working child	16 years old	Public minibus sweeper; no longer attending school
AN-05	Working child	13 years old	Car cleaner; no longer attending school
AN-06	Working child	9 years old	Child engaged in begging; no longer attending school
DS-01	Social services representative	Management representative of the Medan City Social Services Office	Institutional informant
DS-02	Social services representative	Assessment officer at the Medan City Social Protection Shelter	Child protection informant
TM-01	Community leader	Local community leader	Supporting informant

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers, 2026.

The research was conducted in three stages: preparation, data collection, and analysis. The preparation stage involved a literature review concerning parentification, maintenance obligations, childcare, family resilience, and child protection. Data were collected through direct observation of children's economic activities, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Interviews with informants AN-01 to AN-06 focused on their reasons for working, economic contributions, family conditions, educational experiences, and parental responsibilities. Meanwhile, interviews with DS-01, DS-02, and TM-01 were conducted to obtain information regarding the social conditions of working children and the child protection measures implemented by relevant institutions. Primary data were obtained through observation and interviews, while secondary data were derived from statutory regulations, the Compilation of Islamic Law, Islamic jurisprudential literature, and relevant scholarly articles.

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive analytical model comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by categorizing findings according to the types of children's work, factors contributing to their economic involvement, shifts in family economic responsibilities, and the fulfillment of children's rights. The data were subsequently presented descriptively, supported by interview

quotations identified through informant codes. Data credibility was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from working children, social services representatives, and the community leader, alongside relevant observations and documentation (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024).

The findings were interpreted using three theoretical frameworks. Parentification theory was employed to analyze the assumption of parental economic responsibilities by children (Hooper, 2007; Jurkovic, 1997). The sociology of Islamic family law was used to examine the implementation of maintenance and caregiving obligations based on the principles of *qawwamah* and *hadhanah* (Lukito, 2022). Meanwhile, family resilience theory was applied to understand family adaptation strategies in response to economic pressures and their consequences for children's well-being (Walsh, 2016). These three frameworks were integrated to explain the forms of children's economic involvement, their assessment under Islamic family law, and the contributions and consequences of such involvement for the sustainability of family livelihoods.

Result and Discussion

Forms and Roles of Minors in Contributing to Family Economic Needs

The findings indicate that minors' involvement in family economic activities in Medan Amplas District is associated with limited household income, changes in family structure, and inadequate parental caregiving support. These circumstances encourage some children to work to contribute to household expenses or meet their own basic needs. This phenomenon demonstrates that child labor is influenced not only by poverty but also by changes in the distribution of responsibilities within families. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that socioeconomic conditions and household characteristics are associated with children's participation in informal employment (Anwar et al., 2024; Khoiruddin et al., 2025). Furthermore, research on child labor in Indonesian single-mother households demonstrates that family structure is associated with children's participation in economic activities, particularly when parental separation increases household financial vulnerability (Kharisma, 2026). These findings suggest that children's economic participation should be understood through the interaction between household economic pressures, parental responsibilities, and family relationships rather than being attributed solely to poverty.

Based on the field data, this study involved six working children with different occupational characteristics and family backgrounds. Informant AN-01 (13 years old) had been selling tissues and soap every Friday since 2023, while AN-02 (12 years old) sold beverages on Fridays. Both children were still attending formal education. Meanwhile, information concerning four other working children was obtained through the Medan City Social Protection Shelter. These included AN-03 (13 years old), who worked as a street musician; AN-04 (16 years old), who swept public minibuses; AN-05 (13 years old), who

cleaned cars; and AN-06 (9 years old), who engaged in begging. All four were no longer attending formal education. These differences in occupations and educational circumstances indicate that children's economic involvement arises from diverse family situations and may have different consequences. Research concerning child street entertainers in Medan similarly identifies economic, social, and cultural circumstances as factors encouraging children's participation in informal street-based activities (Harahap, 2024). Nevertheless, differences in working conditions, parental involvement, and educational participation demonstrate the importance of examining each child's experience individually.

Among children who remained in school, economic participation was primarily associated with limited family financial resources. Informant AN-01 explained, "Because of our economic situation and because my father is ill, I have no choice but to work to help my parents" (AN-01, personal communication, 2026). Similarly, AN-02 stated that working enabled the child to "pay school fees and transportation costs to school" (AN-02, personal communication, 2026). These experiences illustrate how children assume part of the responsibility for meeting basic needs that should ordinarily be fulfilled by their parents. From the perspective of parentification theory, such circumstances indicate *instrumental parentification*, in which children assume practical responsibilities generally performed by adults (Hooper, 2007; Jurkovic, 1997). However, the distinction between voluntary family assistance and problematic parentification requires attention to the child's developmental capacity, the continuity of economic responsibilities, and the availability of parental support. A recent review of parent-focused parentification emphasizes that its consequences vary according to the type of responsibility, family circumstances, and social support received by children (Madina et al., 2025). Accordingly, the experiences of AN-01 and AN-02 should not automatically be regarded as harmful merely because they contribute financially to their families.

Although both children remained enrolled in school, their economic activities, recorded within the period between 1:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., warrant attention because they may reduce the time available for studying, playing, and resting. Nevertheless, this recorded time range does not necessarily represent continuous working hours, as the available data do not establish the duration of breaks or the intensity of work throughout that period. Therefore, children's economic participation should be assessed by considering the intensity of their work and its potential implications for the fulfillment of their educational rights (Razan et al., 2024). Research examining educational challenges among street children in Makassar also identifies poverty, family circumstances, and social barriers as factors limiting children's access to formal education (Rempe et al., 2023). In this context, the continued school participation of AN-01 and AN-02 indicates that employment and education may coexist, but it does not eliminate concerns regarding the long-term implications of excessive economic responsibilities.

Unlike AN-01 and AN-02, the economic involvement of AN-03, AN-04, and AN-05 was associated with changes in their family circumstances. Informant AN-04 worked to support the child's mother following parental separation, while AN-05 began working after experiencing parental separation. Meanwhile, AN-03 became a street musician after the child's father and stepmother were unwilling to provide care. These circumstances indicate that parental separation and reduced caregiving support may encourage children to work either to contribute to family income or to sustain their own livelihoods. Nevertheless, their experiences differ considerably. AN-04 illustrates the assumption of part of the family's economic responsibilities, whereas AN-03 and AN-05 more directly reflect inadequate parental caregiving. Accordingly, not all forms of children's economic participation can automatically be classified as the replacement of fathers' breadwinning responsibilities.

The experiences of these informants also highlight the relationship between family restructuring and children's economic vulnerability. Research involving Indonesian households headed by divorced and widowed mothers identifies a higher likelihood of child labor among children living with divorced mothers, indicating the importance of household structure and financial support following marital separation (Kharisma, 2026). This finding provides a comparative perspective for understanding AN-04's circumstances, although the present study does not establish that parental divorce directly caused the child's economic participation. In contrast, the experiences of AN-03 and AN-05 demonstrate that insufficient caregiving may create circumstances in which children undertake economic activities primarily to sustain their own survival. Such differences are important because economic parentification, parental neglect, and independent survival activities involve distinct family relationships and should not be treated as identical phenomena.

A different pattern was identified in the experience of AN-06, a nine-year-old child who engaged in begging under parental instructions. The child's father was reportedly unemployed, while AN-06 had discontinued formal education after previously attending elementary school through the fourth grade. This condition was further supported by an interview with DS-02, an assessment officer at the Medan City Social Protection Shelter, who explained, "The reason these children work is that their parents tell them to. When I assess these children, their parents are sometimes sitting by the roadside, watching them work. In other words, the children are working because their parents tell them to, not because they want to. These children actually still want to play with their friends" (DS-02, personal communication, 22 September 2026). This statement indicates that children's economic involvement is not always based on personal willingness but may occur under parental instructions. Such circumstances suggest potential exploitation when work involves coercion or neglect of children's fundamental rights. Research on the economic exploitation of street children in Surabaya similarly emphasizes the relationship between household economic vulnerability, inadequate parental supervision, and social conditions that normalize children's participation in street-based work (Putri & Fauzi, 2026). Nevertheless, determining whether

a particular situation constitutes exploitation under the law requires further examination of the relevant circumstances and legal elements.

The experience of AN-06 further illustrates the importance of distinguishing economic necessity from the transfer of parental obligations through coercion. Whereas some children participate in economic activities to assist their families, working under parental instructions may place children in a position where they have limited opportunities to determine their own activities. In this case, the combination of a young age, parental direction, and discontinued schooling raises substantial concerns regarding the fulfillment of the child's rights. However, the available evidence should be interpreted cautiously because parental unemployment alone cannot establish intentional exploitation. From a socio-legal perspective, the central issue concerns whether the economic activity reflects age-appropriate participation, an excessive assumption of parental responsibilities, or conduct involving the deprivation of children's fundamental rights.

Based on the experiences of the six informants, three patterns of children's economic involvement were identified. First, children worked to contribute to household expenses or meet educational needs, as experienced by AN-01, AN-02, and AN-04. Second, children worked because of changes in family structure and inadequate parental caregiving, as observed in AN-03 and AN-05. Third, children engaged in economic activities under parental instructions, as demonstrated by AN-06. These patterns reveal differences in family circumstances, work-related motivations, and degrees of compulsion. From the perspective of parentification theory, shifts in intergenerational responsibilities become problematic when children are required to assume burdens that exceed their capacities and developmental needs. Therefore, assessments of parentification must consider family circumstances and the consequences of work for the fulfillment of children's rights (Hooper, 2007; Jurkovic, 1997).

Conceptually, these three patterns demonstrate that children's economic participation cannot be understood through a single category of parentification. The first pattern more directly reflects instrumental parentification because children contribute to needs ordinarily addressed through parental maintenance. The second pattern highlights inadequate caregiving and economic vulnerability following changes in family relationships. The third pattern indicates the potential involvement of coercion and economic exploitation. Although these conditions may overlap, distinguishing them helps prevent the assumption that all working children experience the same degree of responsibility or vulnerability. This differentiation strengthens the application of parentification theory within the sociology of Islamic family law by connecting the distribution of economic responsibilities with the actual fulfillment of children's rights.

These findings were further supported by an interview with TM-01, a local community leader, who explained, "There are quite a lot of underage working children, such as street musicians, tissue sellers, and others. I once asked some of them where their parents were,

and they said their parents were in Kisaran or Tebing Tinggi, so I do not really know exactly where their parents are" (TM-01, personal communication, 2026). The informant also stated, "Sometimes, these children are still selling things late at night" (TM-01, personal communication, 2026). These statements indicate that children's participation in informal economic activities has become a concern within the community, particularly in relation to parental supervision and caregiving responsibilities. However, such observations cannot be used to determine the overall number of working children because this study focuses on individual experiences rather than measuring the prevalence of child labor.

Community observations also suggest that addressing children's economic involvement requires cooperation between families, social institutions, and local communities. Research examining the role of the Social Services Office in Surabaya identifies facilitative, educational, representational, and technical functions in responding to the exploitation of street children, alongside challenges involving institutional resources and law enforcement (Puri & Hertati, 2024). These findings provide a comparative perspective for understanding the importance of institutional support in Medan Amplas. However, the present study does not independently evaluate the effectiveness of local child protection programs. Rather, the interviews with social service representatives and community members demonstrate the relevance of institutional involvement in identifying working children and understanding their caregiving circumstances.

From the perspective of family resilience theory, children's involvement in economic activities can be understood as an adaptive response to financial pressures. Children's earnings may help families meet immediate economic needs, but such involvement does not necessarily reflect healthy family resilience when it compromises access to education, healthcare, and appropriate caregiving. Family resilience also requires the ability to protect vulnerable family members. Therefore, strategies for sustaining household livelihoods should not impose excessive economic responsibilities on children (Walsh, 2016). Research examining the impact of Indonesia's Family Hope Program (*Program Keluarga Harapan*) found that conditional cash transfers did not significantly reduce child labor during the periods examined, suggesting that financial assistance alone may be insufficient to address children's economic participation under conditions of household vulnerability (Candrawati & Auwalin, 2024). This evidence reinforces the importance of understanding family resilience not merely as the ability to maintain household income but also as the capacity to protect children's developmental needs through appropriate parental and institutional support.

From the perspective of the sociology of Islamic family law, these findings demonstrate the relationship between family socioeconomic conditions and the implementation of parental responsibilities. Children who should receive maintenance, education, and caregiving are instead confronted with demands to contribute to household economic needs. Nevertheless, financial hardship does not necessarily indicate deliberate parental neglect, as each family faces different circumstances. Accordingly, children's

economic involvement must be analyzed by examining the relationship between parents' normative obligations and the social realities affecting their implementation (Lukito, 2022). Overall, this study identifies three patterns of children's economic participation associated with instrumental parentification, inadequate caregiving support, and indications of exploitation. These distinctions provide the foundation for examining the implementation of maintenance responsibilities and the principles of *qawwamah* and *hadhanah* under Islamic family law in the following discussion.

Islamic Legal Perspectives on Minors' Roles in Contributing to Family Economic Needs

From the perspective of Islamic family law, minors' involvement in contributing to family economic needs must be examined in relation to parental maintenance obligations, caregiving responsibilities, and child protection. Islam places responsibility on parents to fulfill their children's needs, encompassing not only material necessities but also physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual development. These responsibilities are closely related to the principles of *qawwamah*, which emphasize family leadership, protection, and financial maintenance, and *hadhanah*, which focuses on childcare and upbringing. Both principles provide a normative foundation for evaluating the limits of children's participation in economic activities, particularly when such involvement results from parents' limited ability to meet household needs. Under Islamic law, children's financial contributions do not automatically eliminate parental obligations to provide maintenance and protection (S. Lubis et al., 2023; Rofiq, 2021).

The principle of *qawwamah* is closely associated with a husband's responsibility to provide financial maintenance and protection for his family. This principle is reflected in Surah An-Nisa, verse 34, in which Allah SWT states: *Translation: "Men are responsible for the care of women because Allah has given some of them advantages over others and because they spend from their wealth"* (QS. An-Nisa [4]: 34). This verse establishes a relationship between protective responsibilities and financial obligations within the family. In the context of this study, *qawwamah* provides a framework for understanding fathers' maintenance responsibilities when children participate in income-generating activities. Nevertheless, the implementation of these obligations must be examined in light of family circumstances, as financial incapacity resulting from illness or unemployment does not necessarily constitute deliberate neglect. Therefore, assessments of parental maintenance responsibilities should consider parents' financial capabilities and the efforts they undertake to meet their families' needs.

The obligation to provide for family members is also emphasized in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 233, in which Allah SWT states:

Translation:

> *"The father is responsible for providing their maintenance and clothing in a reasonable manner"* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 233).

This provision indicates that fathers' financial responsibilities constitute an essential aspect of family maintenance, with their implementation taking into account the circumstances and capabilities of those responsible. This principle is also related to the allocation of obligations according to individual capacity, as emphasized in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 286:

Translation:

"Allah does not burden any soul beyond its capacity" (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 286).

Together, these verses establish that the fulfillment of family responsibilities must consider the financial capacity of the responsible individual. Financial hardship does not automatically eliminate parents' obligations to meet their children's needs, nor should it immediately be interpreted as deliberate neglect. In this study, family circumstances involving poverty, illness, or loss of income must be understood as challenges requiring parents to fulfill their maintenance obligations according to their abilities and available support. Such difficulties should not be addressed by imposing excessive economic responsibilities on children who still require protection. Within Islamic family jurisprudence, maintenance obligations must be fulfilled with consideration for financial capacity and principles of justice in family relationships (Bahri, 2024; S. Lubis et al., 2023).

These responsibilities are further emphasized in a hadith narrated by Abu Dawud, Number 1692, in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated: *Translation: "It is sufficient sin for a person to neglect those whom he is responsible for maintaining" (Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith No. 1692).* This hadith emphasizes the moral responsibility to care for family members who depend on others for maintenance and basic necessities. However, its application requires a distinction between parents who are unable to work and those who deliberately neglect their children. Parents experiencing economic hardship should not automatically be considered negligent without examining their capacities and the efforts they have made. Problems arise when children's basic needs are not adequately addressed or when children are deliberately burdened with economic responsibilities that interfere with their education and development. Accordingly, maintenance obligations must be understood in relation to financial capacity, caregiving responsibilities, and protection for dependent family members (Amran, 2018; S. Lubis et al., 2023; Rofiq, 2021).

In addition to financial maintenance, Islamic law emphasizes the fulfillment of children's rights through *hadhanah*. This concept concerns parental obligations to provide care, education, protection, and upbringing so that children can grow and develop appropriately. The foundation of these responsibilities can be found in Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6, in which Allah SWT states:

Translation:

"O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire" (QS. At-Tahrim [66]: 6).

This verse indicates that family responsibilities extend beyond financial provision to encompass the protection of children's lives and development. This principle is reinforced by

a hadith narrated by At-Tirmidhi, Number 1952, concerning the virtue of a father's provision of good moral education to his children (Al-Albani, 2007). From the perspective of Islamic family law, caregiving responsibilities include parental obligations to provide education, guidance, and protection throughout children's development. Therefore, the fulfillment of *hadhanah* must consider children's physical, spiritual, educational, and welfare needs to ensure their appropriate growth and development (Asni, 2021).

Within Indonesian Islamic family law, Article 77(3) of the Compilation of Islamic Law (*Kompilasi Hukum Islam*) establishes that parents share responsibility for children's physical, spiritual, intellectual, and religious development (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 1991). These obligations reflect the principle of *hadhanah*, which emphasizes caregiving and protection rather than merely custodial authority (Syahrida et al., 2025). The findings reveal that AN-01 and AN-02 continued attending school despite working, whereas AN-03, AN-04, AN-05, and AN-06 had discontinued formal education. Although employment potentially limits children's opportunities for learning, rest, and development, the available evidence cannot establish work as the sole cause of school discontinuation. Family instability and inadequate parental support must also be considered (Pramasela & Zarkasih, 2023; Razan et al., 2024).

These circumstances highlight the importance of distinguishing economic necessity from parental exploitation. AN-01 worked because the child's father was ill, while AN-02 sold beverages to finance educational expenses. Neither case automatically demonstrates intentional exploitation. Conversely, AN-06, a nine-year-old child, engaged in begging under parental instructions and was no longer attending school. An assessment officer at the Medan City Social Protection Shelter (DS-02) similarly reported that some children worked because their parents instructed them to do so. Such conditions raise concerns about inadequate caregiving and potential economic exploitation. Accordingly, the principles of *qawwamah* and *hadhanah* require parents to fulfill maintenance and caregiving obligations while protecting children's fundamental rights (Asni, 2021; Rofiq, 2021).

From the sociology of Islamic family law perspective, these findings demonstrate a discrepancy between normative parental obligations and their implementation within economically vulnerable households. Poverty, parental divorce, and inadequate caregiving may shift financial responsibilities toward children without necessarily constituting deliberate neglect (I. I. Lubis et al., 2023; Lukito, 2022). Indonesian child protection regulations address these vulnerabilities through Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection and Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, which generally prohibits child employment while permitting limited light work for children aged 13–15 under protective conditions (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 13 Tahun 2003 Tentang Ketenagakerjaan, 2003; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 35 Tahun 2014 Tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 23 Tahun 2002 Tentang Perlindungan Anak, 2014). Legal protection must therefore consider children's ages, working conditions, educational access, and exposure to exploitation (Alfad et al., 2023).

In this study, AN-01 and AN-02 engaged in economic activities within the recorded period between 1:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., although their actual working duration could not be determined. Meanwhile, street performing, begging, and vehicle cleaning may expose children to physical risks and educational disruption (Fadila & Khayatudin, 2022). A representative of the Medan City Social Services Office (DS-01) emphasized that child protection interventions must follow established legislation rather than individual officers' preferences (DS-01, personal communication, 18 September 2026). Relevant provisions include Article 34(1) of the 1945 Constitution, Law Number 20 of 1999 ratifying ILO Convention Number 138, and Presidential Decree Number 59 of 2002. Nevertheless, effective protection requires integrated legal enforcement, family assistance, and institutional coordination, consistent with the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* approach to safeguarding children's fundamental rights (Yusefri et al., 2024).

Parental responsibilities remain applicable following divorce. AN-04 worked to support the child's mother after parental separation, whereas AN-03 and AN-05 experienced inadequate family support and consequently engaged in informal employment. Articles 105(c) and 156(d) of the Compilation of Islamic Law establish that fathers remain responsible for children's maintenance according to their financial capabilities, notwithstanding marital dissolution (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 1991). Consequently, changes in family structure do not eliminate parental obligations to provide financial support, education, and appropriate caregiving.

Overall, children's economic participation must be evaluated through the interconnected principles of *qawwamah*, *hadhanah*, and substantive child protection. Economic hardship cannot justify transferring excessive parental responsibilities to children, particularly when their safety, education, and development are compromised. Strengthening parental maintenance obligations, caregiving practices, and institutional support is therefore essential to preventing economic parentification and protecting children's rights.

Minors' Contributions in Assuming Fathers' Economic Roles and Sustaining Family Livelihoods: An Islamic Legal Analysis

The findings indicate that children's involvement in economic activities contributes to the sustainability of family livelihoods in different ways. Some children work to support household expenses, while others engage in income-generating activities to finance their education or meet their basic needs due to inadequate parental support. These findings demonstrate that children's economic contributions do not necessarily represent a complete replacement of fathers' roles as breadwinners but may involve assuming part of the family's economic responsibilities. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that economic pressures and changes in family structure may encourage children to enter informal employment as a survival strategy (Anwar et al., 2024; Khoiruddin et al., 2025).

Based on the informants' experiences, AN-01 sold tissues and soap to support the family because the child's father was ill, while AN-02 sold beverages to cover educational expenses. Informant AN-04 contributed to the mother's financial needs following parental separation. Meanwhile, AN-03 and AN-05 worked because of inadequate family caregiving support, whereas AN-06 engaged in begging under parental instructions. These differences indicate that children's economic contributions are influenced by family circumstances, the purposes of their work, and the degree of compulsion involved. Work performed under parental instructions may also indicate exploitation when accompanied by the neglect of children's safety and fundamental rights (I. I. Lubis et al., 2023; Pramasela & Zarkasih, 2023). However, because this study did not measure children's earnings or their proportion of total household income, their contributions cannot be conclusively identified as the primary source of family income.

From the perspective of parentification theory, the experiences of AN-01, AN-02, and AN-04 indicate *instrumental parentification*, a condition in which children assume practical responsibilities that should ordinarily be fulfilled by their parents. Nevertheless, not all forms of children's financial assistance can be classified as harmful parentification, as assessments must consider work intensity, the degree of compulsion, and the consequences for children's development (Hooper, 2007; Jurkovic, 1997). From the perspective of family resilience theory, children's earnings may help households meet immediate economic needs, but this strategy may weaken the family's protective function when it compromises children's education and well-being (Walsh, 2016). This concern is reflected in the experiences of AN-03, AN-04, AN-05, and AN-06, who were no longer attending formal education. Informant DS-02 further explained that some children working on the streets had become accustomed to earning money or felt that they were "becoming too comfortable earning money," while also experiencing physical and psychological pressures. Nevertheless, the available data are insufficient to establish causal relationships between children's work, school discontinuation, and psychological conditions (Fadila & Khayatudin, 2022; Razan et al., 2024).

From the perspective of the sociology of Islamic family law, children's economic involvement reveals a gap between parents' normative responsibilities and their implementation in family life (I. I. Lubis et al., 2023; Lukito, 2022). Changes in fathers' roles as breadwinners due to illness, unemployment, or divorce may influence the distribution of economic responsibilities within families. However, financial incapacity must be distinguished from deliberate neglect, as expectations surrounding fathers' roles as economic providers are also shaped by social constructions of gender and family economic circumstances (Connell, 2005). Under Islamic law, the principle of *qawwamah* emphasizes financial maintenance and family protection, as reflected in Surah An-Nisa [4]: 34, while Surah An-Nisa [4]: 9 underscores the importance of safeguarding the welfare of future generations (Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). Parental maintenance obligations also remain applicable following divorce, as stipulated in Article 105(c) and Article 156(d) of the Compilation of Islamic Law

(*Kompilasi Hukum Islam*) (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 1991). Therefore, children's economic contributions do not eliminate parental obligations to provide financial maintenance, caregiving, and protection (Asni, 2021; Rofiq, 2021).

The protection of working children is also established under Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection. These regulations emphasize the importance of restricting child employment and protecting children from economic exploitation (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 13 Tahun 2003 Tentang Ketenagakerjaan, 2003; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 35 Tahun 2014 Tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 23 Tahun 2002 Tentang Perlindungan Anak, 2014). In an interview conducted on September 18, 2026, DS-01, a management representative of the Medan City Social Services Office, explained that the handling of working children should not be based on "hastily improvised policies or the personal preferences of officers" but must instead follow established legal provisions (DS-01, personal communication, 18 September 2026). These provisions are also related to Article 34(1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 1999 concerning the ratification of ILO Convention Number 138, and Presidential Decree Number 59 of 2002 concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. Accordingly, addressing child labor requires an integrated legal and social approach that extends beyond enforcement measures to include the restoration of educational opportunities, caregiving support, and family economic conditions.

Based on the integration of empirical findings and theoretical perspectives, this study proposes the Substantive Protection-Based Qawwamah-Hadhanah Restoration Model as a conceptual contribution to addressing children's economic parentification. The model consists of three interconnected components. First, the restoration of *qawwamah* involves strengthening parents' economic capabilities and restoring their financial maintenance responsibilities to prevent excessive family dependence on children's earnings. Second, the restoration of *hadhanah* emphasizes strengthening caregiving practices through family assistance, restoring access to education, and fulfilling children's developmental needs. Third, substantive protection focuses on strengthening the roles of government institutions and communities through the prevention of exploitation, the provision of social protection, and interinstitutional coordination to ensure children's safety and continued access to education (Fadila & Khayatudin, 2022; I. I. Lubis et al., 2023). This integrated approach aligns with the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and the welfare state, which emphasize substantive legal protection and the fulfillment of child workers' fundamental rights (Harun et al., 2024).

In conclusion, children's economic contributions should be understood as part of families' strategies for coping with financial hardship, but they cannot justify transferring parental maintenance and caregiving responsibilities to children. The novelty of this study lies in integrating parentification theory with the principles of *qawwamah* and *hadhanah* to formulate a child protection framework grounded in the restoration of family functions. The

proposed model emphasizes that addressing child labor requires the integrated strengthening of parental economic capabilities, improved caregiving practices, and social protection. Nevertheless, the model remains conceptual and is developed from the study's empirical findings; therefore, further research is necessary to evaluate its effectiveness in practical implementation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that minors' involvement in meeting family economic needs in Medan Amplas District is associated with economic hardship, changes in family structure resulting from parental divorce, and inadequate parental caregiving support. Based on the experiences of six working children, three patterns of economic involvement were identified: children working to support household or educational needs, children working to sustain themselves due to inadequate caregiving support, and children engaging in economic activities under parental instructions. These differences indicate that children's economic involvement does not necessarily represent the same form of parentification. Instrumental parentification is particularly evident when children assume part of the economic responsibilities that should ordinarily be fulfilled by their parents, while other circumstances reveal problems of neglect and indications of economic exploitation. Although such activities may provide short-term economic benefits, children's involvement in work requires careful consideration because it may compromise their rights to education, caregiving, and appropriate development. The finding that four children were no longer attending school further highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between economic activities, family circumstances, and children's educational continuity.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, children's participation in economic activities must be evaluated through the principles of *qawwamah* and *hadhanah*, which establish financial maintenance, caregiving, and protection as parental obligations. The principle of *qawwamah* emphasizes fathers' responsibility to provide financial support according to their capabilities, while *hadhanah* underscores children's rights to appropriate care, education, and protection. These responsibilities remain applicable despite financial hardship or parental divorce, although parents' financial incapacity must be distinguished from deliberate neglect. In the context of this study, children's economic contributions cannot justify the excessive transfer of parental responsibilities to children. Furthermore, although children's work may contribute to household expenses or personal needs, the extent of these contributions cannot be determined quantitatively because the study did not measure children's earnings or their proportion of total household income. Therefore, the sustainability of family livelihoods should be pursued through the fulfillment of parental responsibilities and the provision of social protection without compromising children's fundamental rights.

As its conceptual contribution, this study proposes the Substantive Protection-Based Qawwamah-Hadhanah Restoration Model, which integrates three main components: restoring parental financial maintenance responsibilities, strengthening caregiving and children's education, and providing social protection against economic exploitation. The model emphasizes that addressing child labor requires more than enforcement measures or financial assistance alone. It also necessitates family support, the strengthening of parents' economic capabilities, the restoration of educational access, and coordination among government institutions, child protection agencies, and local communities. Accordingly, child protection efforts should address the underlying factors contributing to children's economic involvement while ensuring the fulfillment of their fundamental rights. This study is limited by the number of informants, the absence of quantitative measurements of children's income contributions, and the lack of empirical testing of the proposed restoration model. Future research is therefore encouraged to involve more families, examine the effects of children's economic participation on their development in greater depth, and evaluate the practical implementation of the proposed model to develop more effective approaches to child protection.

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