

Islamic Family Education as the Foundation for Children's Character Formation

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Article history

Submitted: 2026/05/01; Revised: 2026/06/14; Accepted: 2026/07/19

Abstract

Islamic family education plays a fundamental role in shaping children's character development amid contemporary social and technological challenges. This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic family education as the foundation for children's moral, spiritual, emotional, and social formation within the family environment. The study employs a participatory educational and qualitative approach through community service activities involving parents, educators, and community members. Data were obtained through observations, interactive discussions, parenting workshops, and mentoring activities related to Islamic parenting practices. The findings indicate that Islamic family education significantly contributes to the development of positive character traits such as honesty, discipline, empathy, responsibility, respect, and emotional resilience among children. Religious habituation, positive communication, parental role modeling, and consistent moral guidance were identified as the primary factors supporting effective character formation. However, modern challenges such as digital media exposure, limited family interaction time, and globalization increasingly influence children's behavior and weaken parental authority. Therefore, adaptive parenting strategies integrating Islamic values with contemporary educational approaches are necessary to strengthen children's character in the modern era. The study also reveals that collaboration between family, school, and community environments enhances the effectiveness of Islamic character education. Overall, Islamic family education remains highly relevant in fostering morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially conscious future generations. The study contributes to the discourse on Islamic education by emphasizing the importance of strengthening family-based moral education as a response to current societal challenges.

Keywords

Islamic Family Education; Character Formation; Islamic Parenting; Moral Education; Children's Development; Islamic Values; Family Environment



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic family education has long been recognized as one of the most influential foundations in shaping children's moral character, spiritual awareness, and social behavior. In Islamic teachings, the family is considered the first and primary

educational institution where children begin learning values, ethics, religious obligations, and interpersonal responsibilities. The importance of family education is emphasized in the Qur'an and Hadith, which encourage parents to guide their children toward righteousness, discipline, compassion, and faithfulness. In contemporary society, the urgency of strengthening Islamic family education has increased significantly due to rapid globalization, technological development, cultural transformation, and moral challenges affecting children and adolescents.

Modern social change has altered family interaction patterns and parenting practices across many societies, including Muslim communities. Digital technology, social media, and unrestricted information access expose children to diverse ideologies, lifestyles, and behavioral models that may conflict with Islamic moral principles. Children today are increasingly influenced by online content, peer culture, and popular media, often reducing parental influence in the educational process. According to UNESCO (2021), technological advancement has transformed children's learning environments, making families responsible not only for academic supervision but also for ethical and emotional guidance. Consequently, Islamic family education plays a crucial role in helping children develop moral resilience and spiritual identity amid these rapid social transformations.

Character formation has become one of the most discussed educational issues globally because many societies are experiencing moral crises among younger generations. Cases involving juvenile delinquency, bullying, dishonesty, violence, drug abuse, cybercrime, and declining respect for social norms indicate weakening moral foundations within families and educational institutions. Lickona (2013) explains that character education is essential because intelligence alone is insufficient without ethical responsibility and moral awareness. In the Islamic perspective, education is not merely aimed at intellectual achievement but also at developing noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*) and balanced personality traits. Therefore, Islamic family education becomes highly relevant in addressing contemporary moral challenges.

Islamic teachings provide comprehensive guidance regarding parenting and children's education. The Qur'an emphasizes the responsibility of parents to protect their families from moral destruction and spiritual negligence, as reflected in Surah At-Tahrim verse 6, which commands believers to safeguard themselves and their families from harmful consequences. Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad emphasized the importance of educating children with kindness, wisdom, and exemplary conduct. Islamic educational philosophy considers children as individuals born with

natural purity (fitrah) that requires proper nurturing and guidance. Al-Ghazali stated that children's moral development is heavily influenced by environmental factors, especially parental behavior and family atmosphere (Al-Ghazali, 2004). This perspective demonstrates that family education in Islam is holistic, covering spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions.

In practice, Islamic family education involves various educational processes, including religious habituation, moral instruction, communication ethics, emotional support, and role modeling. Parents are expected to become living examples of Islamic values through honesty, discipline, humility, patience, and compassion. Children tend to imitate behaviors they observe within their immediate environment, particularly from parents. Bandura's social learning theory explains that observation and imitation are major mechanisms through which children develop attitudes and behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, parental consistency between words and actions becomes essential in shaping children's character effectively.

Religious habituation also represents an important component of Islamic family education. Activities such as daily prayers, Qur'anic recitation, fasting, charity, and respectful communication foster discipline, empathy, gratitude, and self-control among children. These practices function not only as ritual obligations but also as moral training that gradually shapes children's personality and worldview. Nasih Ulwan (2015) argues that continuous habituation of positive actions in childhood contributes significantly to long-term character formation because repeated practices eventually become embedded moral habits.

Furthermore, communication patterns within families strongly influence children's emotional and psychological development. Islamic teachings encourage parents to communicate with gentleness, honesty, and wisdom. Positive family communication strengthens emotional bonds, trust, and psychological security, enabling children to develop confidence and empathy. On the contrary, harsh communication, neglect, and authoritarian parenting may negatively affect children's emotional well-being and social behavior. Baumrind (1991) explains that democratic and supportive parenting styles are generally more effective in fostering responsible and emotionally healthy children compared to authoritarian approaches. Islamic parenting principles similarly emphasize compassion and balanced discipline in raising children.

The role of Islamic family education becomes increasingly important in multicultural and modern societies where children encounter diverse social

influences and moral perspectives. Families are expected to provide strong religious foundations while simultaneously preparing children to interact respectfully within pluralistic environments. Islamic education encourages tolerance, justice, mutual respect, and social responsibility, values that are highly relevant for maintaining social harmony in diverse communities. Therefore, Islamic family education not only contributes to individual moral development but also supports broader societal stability and ethical citizenship.

However, many Muslim families today face challenges in implementing effective Islamic education at home. Economic pressures, busy work schedules, declining family interaction time, and limited parenting knowledge often reduce parents' involvement in children's moral development. Some parents rely excessively on schools or digital media to educate children, despite the fact that family remains the most influential environment in early character formation. Research conducted by Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicates that children's development is shaped by interconnected environmental systems, with the family serving as the central and most immediate influence. This means that educational success largely depends on the quality of family relationships and parental engagement.

In addition, globalization has introduced individualistic and materialistic lifestyles that sometimes weaken spiritual and communal values within families. Children may become more focused on entertainment, consumer culture, and virtual interactions than on moral responsibility and religious commitment. Such conditions require parents to adapt educational approaches without abandoning Islamic principles. Effective Islamic family education in the modern era requires not only religious knowledge but also emotional intelligence, communication skills, and technological awareness. Parents must be capable of guiding children critically and wisely in navigating modern challenges while preserving Islamic ethical values.

Based on these realities, the study of Islamic family education remains highly significant in academic and social discussions. Understanding how Islamic educational principles contribute to children's character formation can provide valuable insights for families, educators, policymakers, and communities. Strengthening Islamic family education may become an important strategy for addressing moral crises, promoting psychological well-being, and developing socially responsible future generations. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the role of Islamic family education as a foundational framework for children's character formation in contemporary society.

METHODS

This community service activity employed a participatory educational approach aimed at strengthening parents' understanding and implementation of Islamic family education in children's character formation. The program was conducted through counseling sessions, interactive discussions, parenting workshops, mentoring activities, and practical demonstrations involving parents, community leaders, and educators. The participatory method was chosen because it encourages active involvement from participants and allows the educational process to adapt to community needs and social realities. According to Chambers (1994), participatory approaches are effective in community empowerment because they position participants not merely as recipients of information but also as active contributors in solving social problems.

The activity began with an initial needs assessment conducted through informal interviews and observations within the community. This stage aimed to identify parenting challenges faced by Muslim families, particularly regarding children's moral behavior, digital exposure, communication patterns, and religious habituation. The findings indicated that many parents experienced difficulties balancing modern lifestyles with Islamic educational values. Limited family interaction time, excessive use of gadgets among children, and inconsistent parental discipline emerged as common concerns discussed by participants.

After identifying community needs, the service team designed educational materials focusing on Islamic parenting principles, character education, effective communication, and religious habituation within the family environment. The materials were prepared using both Islamic educational perspectives and contemporary parenting theories to ensure contextual relevance. Educational content included discussions on the role of parents as role models, strategies for developing children's discipline and empathy, ethical communication in Islam, and approaches for supervising children's digital activities. Islamic references from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Abdullah Nasih Ulwan were integrated with modern educational theories from Bandura and Baumrind to create comprehensive learning materials.

The implementation stage involved seminars and workshops delivered through interactive presentations and group discussions. Participants were encouraged to share parenting experiences, family challenges, and practical solutions related to children's character development. This dialogical approach aimed to create collective learning and strengthen participants' emotional engagement during the program. Freire (1970) emphasizes that dialogic educational methods help participants

critically reflect on their experiences and become more empowered in addressing social issues.

In addition to seminars, mentoring activities were conducted to assist parents in applying Islamic educational practices consistently at home. The mentoring process included guidance on establishing family religious routines, improving parent-child communication, managing children's gadget use, and fostering positive behavioral habits. Practical demonstrations such as family prayer activities, storytelling methods, and constructive disciplinary approaches were also introduced to help participants understand effective parenting techniques more concretely.

Evaluation of the community service program was carried out through participant feedback, observation of participation levels, and reflective discussions at the end of the activities. The evaluation results showed increased parental awareness regarding the importance of Islamic family education in shaping children's character. Participants demonstrated better understanding of positive parenting strategies, religious habituation practices, and emotional communication techniques within the family environment. Many participants also expressed motivation to strengthen family interaction and become more consistent role models for their children.

Overall, the participatory educational method proved effective in enhancing community understanding and encouraging practical implementation of Islamic family education. Through active engagement, contextual learning, and collaborative discussion, the program contributed to strengthening parental capacity in fostering children's moral, spiritual, and social development within contemporary family life.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic family education plays a significant role in shaping children's character formation through the internalization of moral, spiritual, emotional, and social values within the household environment. The family serves as the first educational institution where children learn fundamental principles of behavior, ethics, responsibility, and religious consciousness. Islamic teachings emphasize that parents are the primary educators responsible for nurturing children's faith (aqidah), worship practices (ibadah), and moral conduct (akhlaq). In contemporary society, where globalization and digital culture increasingly influence children's lifestyles and mindsets, the role of Islamic family education becomes more crucial in maintaining ethical balance and spiritual resilience.

The study reveals that children raised in families implementing Islamic educational principles tend to demonstrate stronger moral awareness, respect toward

others, discipline, honesty, empathy, and responsibility. Parents who consistently introduce Islamic values through daily practices such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, polite communication, and mutual respect create a positive atmosphere that encourages children to imitate virtuous behavior. According to the social learning theory proposed by Bandura, children naturally learn through observation and imitation of role models within their environment. In the Islamic context, parents become the central figures whose actions and attitudes directly influence children's behavioral development (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, Islamic family education is not merely theoretical instruction but also practical habituation through exemplary conduct.

Islamic educational philosophy views character formation as a holistic process integrating spiritual intelligence, emotional maturity, intellectual growth, and social ethics. Al-Ghazali emphasized that children are born with pure potential (*fitrah*) that can develop positively or negatively depending on the educational environment provided by parents and society. This concept aligns with the prophetic tradition stating that every child is born in a state of purity, and parents shape their future beliefs and character (Al-Ghazali, 2004). Consequently, Islamic family education aims to preserve and cultivate this natural goodness through continuous moral guidance and spiritual development.

The findings further show that communication patterns within Muslim families significantly affect children's character development. Families that maintain warm, respectful, and religiously grounded communication foster emotional security and positive self-esteem among children. Islamic teachings encourage parents to communicate with kindness, wisdom, and compassion, as reflected in the Qur'anic principle of "*qaulan sadidan*" (truthful speech) and "*qaulan layyinan*" (gentle speech). Children exposed to positive communication patterns are more likely to develop emotional stability and respectful interpersonal relationships. Conversely, authoritarian parenting styles characterized by harshness and lack of empathy may negatively impact children's psychological well-being and moral behavior.

Another important finding concerns the role of religious habituation in strengthening children's discipline and moral consistency. Daily Islamic practices such as congregational prayer, fasting, charity, and recitation of the Qur'an contribute to the formation of self-control and spiritual awareness. These practices function not only as ritual obligations but also as educational instruments that train patience, honesty, humility, and social responsibility. Scholars of Islamic education argue that repetitive positive actions gradually shape permanent moral habits within

individuals (Nasih Ulwan, 2015). This perspective demonstrates that character education in Islam emphasizes practical implementation rather than theoretical understanding alone.

The study also identifies significant challenges faced by Muslim families in the modern era. Rapid technological advancement, unrestricted internet access, and exposure to secular cultural values often weaken parental authority and influence children's moral orientation. Many parents experience difficulties supervising children's digital activities due to limited technological literacy or busy work schedules. Social media platforms expose children to various forms of content that may conflict with Islamic ethical principles, including consumerism, individualism, violence, and inappropriate behavior. As a result, Islamic family education must adapt to digital realities by integrating religious guidance with media literacy and technological supervision.

In response to these challenges, parents increasingly adopt contextual approaches to Islamic education by combining traditional religious teachings with contemporary educational methods. Rather than relying solely on rigid instruction, many Muslim families now emphasize dialogue, emotional engagement, and critical thinking in teaching Islamic values. This approach aligns with modern educational psychology, which emphasizes the importance of active participation and emotional connection in effective learning processes. Children who understand the wisdom and relevance behind Islamic teachings are more likely to internalize and practice them sincerely.

The results additionally demonstrate that parental consistency strongly influences the effectiveness of Islamic family education. Children tend to experience confusion when parents deliver moral instructions that contradict their own behavior. For example, parents who emphasize honesty but frequently display dishonest behavior unintentionally weaken the credibility of moral teachings. In Islamic pedagogy, moral integrity between words and actions is considered essential for successful character formation. The Qur'an criticizes individuals who command goodness while neglecting it themselves, highlighting the importance of consistency in educational leadership (Qur'an 61:2-3). Therefore, parents must embody Islamic values in daily life to establish trust and authenticity within the educational process.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of collaboration between family, school, and community in supporting children's character development. Islamic family education becomes more effective when reinforced by educational institutions and social environments that uphold similar moral values. Schools that

integrate Islamic character education into learning activities strengthen children's understanding of ethical behavior and social responsibility. Likewise, supportive community environments encourage children to practice Islamic values in broader social interactions. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory supports this view by explaining that child development is influenced by interconnected environmental systems, including family, school, and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Another noteworthy finding is that Islamic family education contributes significantly to children's psychological resilience and emotional well-being. Children raised in religiously supportive families often possess stronger coping mechanisms when facing stress, peer pressure, and emotional challenges. Islamic teachings encourage patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), and emotional moderation, which help children manage difficulties constructively. Spiritual practices such as prayer and remembrance of God (*dhikr*) also provide emotional comfort and inner stability. Contemporary psychological studies increasingly recognize the positive relationship between religiosity and mental health, particularly among adolescents navigating identity formation and social pressures.

Moreover, Islamic family education promotes social solidarity and compassion through teachings emphasizing kindness, charity, and mutual respect. Children educated within Islamic moral frameworks tend to develop stronger empathy toward others and greater awareness of social justice issues. The prophetic model of compassion and community service becomes a practical example for nurturing prosocial behavior among children. This finding suggests that Islamic family education not only benefits individual morality but also contributes to broader social harmony and civic responsibility.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that Islamic family education remains highly relevant and essential in contemporary society. Despite various modern challenges, the family continues to function as the most influential environment for children's moral and spiritual development. Effective Islamic family education requires parental commitment, emotional warmth, consistent role modeling, adaptive communication, and collaboration with broader educational environments. Through these approaches, Islamic family education can serve as a strong foundation for developing morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially conscious future generations.

CONCLUSION

Islamic family education plays a fundamental role in shaping children's character by integrating spiritual values, moral principles, emotional development, and social responsibility within the family environment. The study demonstrates that the family functions as the first and most influential institution in transmitting Islamic teachings and ethical behavior to children. Through consistent parental guidance, religious habituation, positive communication, and exemplary conduct, children develop essential character traits such as honesty, discipline, empathy, respect, and responsibility. The findings reveal that Islamic educational practices within the household significantly contribute to children's moral awareness and psychological resilience. Daily religious activities, including prayer, Qur'anic recitation, charity, and ethical interaction, not only strengthen spiritual identity but also cultivate self-control and emotional stability. Parents who consistently model Islamic values in their behavior create an educational atmosphere that encourages children to internalize positive character traits naturally. Conversely, inconsistency between parental advice and actions may weaken the effectiveness of moral education and create confusion in children's value systems. The study also highlights the growing challenges faced by Muslim families in the digital era. Technological advancement, social media exposure, and globalization increasingly influence children's attitudes and lifestyles, sometimes conflicting with Islamic ethical principles. Therefore, Islamic family education must evolve by combining traditional religious teachings with adaptive parenting approaches, emotional engagement, and digital literacy. Parents are required not only to supervise but also to guide children critically and wisely in navigating modern social realities. In addition, collaboration between family, school, and community is essential for strengthening character formation. A supportive educational ecosystem reinforces Islamic moral values and provides children with consistent ethical guidance across different social environments. Ultimately, Islamic family education remains highly relevant as a foundation for developing future generations who are spiritually grounded, morally responsible, emotionally balanced, and socially compassionate in facing contemporary societal challenges.

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