

# ISLAMIC PARENTING AND EARLY CHILDHOOD CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: A THEORETICAL STUDY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN MUSLIM FAMILY EDUCATION

Achmad Junaidi, Premuriska Eka Wulandari, Moh. Madani, Maimun

Universitas Islam Negeri Madura

\*Corresponding Author: [achjun56@gmail.com](mailto:achjun56@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** Character formation in early childhood constitutes a critical foundation for cultivating a morally upright generation. This article aims to theoretically examine Islamic Parenting, a child-rearing approach grounded in Islamic values, and its implications for early childhood character development. Employing a descriptive-analytical library research method, this study collects and analyzes primary and secondary sources, including classical Islamic texts, Islamic education textbooks, and nationally and internationally indexed journal articles. The findings indicate that Islamic Parenting integrates three primary dimensions: the tawhid dimension, the akhlaq dimension, and the exemplary modeling dimension, which collectively shape a child's character holistically. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic family education by proposing a conceptual framework for Islamic Parenting that can serve as a practical reference for Muslim parents.

**Keywords:** Islamic parenting; early childhood character; family education; Islamic parenting style; moral formation.

## INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization, characterized by advances in information and communication technology, has brought complex impacts on children's development, particularly during early childhood. On the one hand, these advances provide broader access to knowledge; on the other hand, they also pose real threats, including moral degradation, weakened family bonds, and the displacement of religious values from everyday parenting practices (Astuti et al., 2022). This threat has become increasingly evident as young children are exposed to digital media without sufficient cognitive and moral maturity to filter the content they encounter.

In the context of Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population, the issue of character formation during early childhood has become increasingly urgent. The weakening of Islamic values in contemporary Muslim family life reflects the fragility of the character foundations that should be instilled from an early age (Annisak et al., 2023). Research by Annisak et al. (2023) reveals that a spiritually unsupportive family environment is a dominant factor weakening the development of religious character among young children.

Ideally, the family, particularly parents, plays a central and irreplaceable role as the child's first and primary educational institution. In Islam, parenting responsibility involves not only fulfilling children's physical and psychological needs but also a spiritual responsibility for which parents will be accountable before Allah SWT (Al-Qur'an al-Karim, 2023). As emphasized in the Qur'an, Surah At-Tahrim verse 6, believers are commanded to protect themselves and their families; implicitly, this entails an obligation to educate the next generation with sound values.

Various previous studies have examined the relationship between parenting styles and children's character development. Bensaid (2021), in a theoretical study published in *Religions* (MDPI), emphasizes that Islamic Parenting offers a rich conceptual framework for the holistic development of children's spirituality. Meanwhile, Hidayat et al. (2022) found that Islamic values in parenting yield a more comprehensive model of character formation than conventional approaches. At the implementation level, Sholehuddin et al. (2023) demonstrated that Islamic family education methods in Indonesia are effective in developing children's spiritual intelligence in the digital era. These findings indicate that Islamic Parenting makes an important contribution to children's character and spirituality; however, studies that integrate the major dimensions of Islamic Parenting into a single, coherent conceptual framework remain relatively limited.

Nevertheless, these studies remain partial in scope. There is still no conceptual framework that systematically integrates the dimensions of tawhid, akhlaq, and exemplary modeling into a unified Islamic Parenting construct. Dwinandita (2024), in a systematic literature review, concluded that research on Islamic Parenting in Southeast Asia remains dominated by micro-level case studies and lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework. This study seeks to address this gap.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate three dimensions of Islamic Parenting that have previously been examined separately in the literature. Bensaid (2021) examined Islamic Parenting primarily from the perspective of spirituality without formulating an integrative model; Hidayat, Ramdhani, and Fathurrahman focused on a character-formation model without explicitly connecting it to tawhid and exemplary modeling as a unified construct; while Sholehuddin, Atqia, and Aini emphasized family education practices in Indonesia without formulating a theoretical framework that could be generalized. In contrast, this study proposes the Islamic Parenting Integration Model (MIIP), which explicitly formulates the structural relationship among the dimensions of tawhid, akhlaq, and exemplary modeling as an integrated construct, while positioning it comparatively alongside established theories of parenting and character education in the international literature, namely Baumrind's (1971) theory of authoritative parenting, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, and Lickona's (1991) character education approach. This comparison emphasizes that Islamic Parenting is not merely a religious equivalent of these theories but offers a distinct ontological and axiological foundation: the understanding of parenting responsibility as a divine trust rather than merely a psychosocial process.

Accordingly, this study is expected to make two contributions: theoretically, to enrich the field of Islamic education through a systematic Islamic Parenting construct; and practically, to provide operational guidance for Muslim parents, educators, and policymakers. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How is the concept of Islamic Parenting understood from the perspectives of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic scholarly traditions? and (2) What are the implications of Islamic Parenting for the character development of young children?

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical library research (Jamaluddin et al., 2025). This method was selected because the study focuses on an in-depth examination and analysis of textual sources relevant to Islamic Parenting and early childhood character development.

The data sources were divided into two categories. First, primary data sources comprised: (1) the Qur'an and its translation; (2) authentic Hadith collections, including Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidhi; and (3) classical Islamic education texts, particularly *Tarbiyah al-Aulad fi al-Islam* by Abdullah Nashih Ulwan, which served as a normative reference in the study of Islamic

Parenting (Ulwan, 2012). Second, secondary data sources included contemporary Islamic education textbooks and national and international journal articles indexed in Scopus, DOAJ, and Sinta 1–2 and published between 2020 and 2025.

Data were collected through a systematic documentary study using a bibliographic guide. The literature search used Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, ERIC, and national religious-journal portals with the following keywords: "Islamic parenting," "early childhood character," "Muslim family education," "akhlak formation," and their variations. The inclusion criteria were: (1) thematic relevance; (2) source reliability (peer-reviewed); and (3) publication recency (2020–2025).

Data analysis followed the qualitative analysis model of Miles et al. (2014), which consists of three stages. First, data reduction involves selecting and focusing data from various sources. Second, data display, involving the organization of information into thematic frameworks. Third, conclusion drawing and verification through interpretation of the reduced and displayed data to produce findings that can be scientifically justified.

It should be emphasized that this study has several methodological limitations due to its library research design. First, the findings are conceptual and theoretical and have not yet been empirically tested in the field; therefore, the validity and effectiveness of the proposed Islamic Parenting Integration Model (MIIP) cannot yet be generalized to the broader Muslim family population. Second, the selection and interpretation of textual sources are not entirely free of researcher subjectivity, although explicit inclusion criteria were applied to minimize this. Third, most of the empirical studies cited in this review come from local Indonesian contexts, such as Aceh, Karo, and Metro City, so generalizing the implications to Muslim families in other contexts should be approached with caution. In light of these limitations, the findings should be understood as an initial framework requiring further empirical verification rather than as final, generalizable conclusions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Concept of Islamic Parenting from an Islamic Perspective**

#### ***Definition and Foundations of Islamic Parenting***

Islamic Parenting can be defined as a child-rearing system derived from the values of divine revelation (the Qur'an and Sunnah) and the Islamic scholarly tradition, aimed at developing children who are faithful, morally upright, and capable of fulfilling their role as stewards (khalifah) on earth (Mighfar, 2023). Mighfar (2023), in his study of Islamic Parenting from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali, emphasizes that this concept is rooted in an Islamic view that regards children as an amanah (trust) from Allah SWT, rather than merely as biological descendants.

The Qur'an provides a strong foundation for Islamic Parenting practices. The advice of Luqman al-Hakim to his son, as recorded in Surah Luqman verses 12–19, reflects a holistic parenting model encompassing tawhid education, moral development, religious practice, and social-personality development (Arianto, 2024). Arianto (2024) emphasizes that the Qur'anic and Hadith texts contain a comprehensive system of child education that remains relevant to modern contexts.

Within the Islamic scholarly tradition, Abdullah Nashih Ulwan, in *Tarbiyah al-Aulad fi al-Islam*, identifies five effective methods of child education: exemplary modeling (al-qudwah), habituation (al-'adah), advice (al-mau'izhah), supervision (al-mulahazah), and educational discipline or punishment (al-'uqubah) (Ulwan, 2012). Kosim et al. (2023), in their study of an Islamic parenting module published in Pegem, reinforce the relevance of these five methods to contemporary Muslim family education.

### ***Dimensions of Islamic Parenting***

Based on a synthesis of textual sources and contemporary literature, this study identifies three primary dimensions of Islamic Parenting that are mutually integrated in shaping children's character holistically.

**First Dimension: The Tawhid Dimension.** Tawhid is the fundamental dimension that constitutes the spirit of the entire practice of Islamic Parenting (Lestari & Matondang, 2024). Lestari and Matondang (2024), in their study in Karo Regency, North Sumatra, found that Muslim families that consistently instill tawhid values from an early age produce children with stronger Islamic identities. The cultivation of tawhid begins even before birth through the selection of a righteous spouse and parental prayers; after birth, the recitation of the adhan in the baby's right ear is recommended as the child's first "input" of the value of divine belief. Thus, the tawhid dimension serves as the principal foundation of Islamic Parenting, shaping children's faith, Islamic identity, and life orientation from an early age.

**Second Dimension: The Akhlaq Dimension.** The development of noble character is a primary goal of Islamic education, as expressed in the prophetic mission: "Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character" (HR. Ahmad) (Mulyani, 2023). Mulyani (2023), in her analysis of the book *Islamic Parenting* by Shaykh Jamal Abdurrahman, emphasizes that moral education for elementary-school-aged children, rooted in Islamic values, produces more enduring character formation than secular approaches to character. Ayunina and Zakiyah (2022) further report that Islamic Parenting, with a focus on moral education, is effective in developing the Islamic character of Generation Alpha living in the digital age. Thus, the akhlaq dimension of Islamic Parenting plays an important role in internalizing Islamic moral values, enabling children to develop virtuous character and face the challenges of modern life wisely.

**Third Dimension: The Exemplary Modeling Dimension.** Exemplary modeling (*uswah hasanah*) is one of the most effective pedagogical methods in early childhood education, given children's strong capacity for imitation and modeling during this developmental stage (Rohmat et al., 2024). Rohmat et al. (2024), in their study in Metro City, Lampung, demonstrated that parents with strong religious understanding who consistently model everyday religious practices have a significant impact on children's spiritual intelligence. This finding reinforces the view that exemplary modeling is not merely a pedagogical method but also an organic and continuous mechanism for transmitting values. Therefore, exemplary modeling is a highly effective means of instilling Islamic values because children tend to learn and develop their character from observing their parents' behavior.

Taken together, these three dimensions have conceptual connections with Baumrind's (1971) theory of authoritative parenting, particularly in the balance between warmth (*rahmah*) and boundary-setting through supervision (*mulahazah*). Nevertheless, several studies cited in this review, such as those by Lestari and Matondang and by Rohmat et al. (2022) are still case studies conducted within particular communities. Therefore, generalizing these three dimensions to more diverse Muslim family contexts—culturally, socioeconomically, and across schools of thought—requires caution. In addition, the potential tension between the akhlaq dimension, such as the application of educational discipline (*al-'uqubah*), and the compassion-based exemplary modeling dimension (*rahmah*) has not been explicitly discussed in much of the reviewed literature. This issue is important to ensure that Islamic Parenting is not reduced in practice to an authoritarian approach.

### ***Islamic Parenting Integration Model***

Based on the comprehensive review, this study develops the Islamic Parenting Integration Model (MIIP), comprising three major components that interact dynamically. The first component is the Value Foundation, which comprises the internalization of tawhid, aqidah, and sharia as the basis for all parenting practices. The second component is the Parenting Process, encompassing exemplary modeling, habituation, educational dialogue, and compassionate supervision. The third component is the Character Output, namely the crystallization of the entire process into a noble character that reflects a well-rounded Islamic personality.

The model emphasizes that the effectiveness of Islamic Parenting is determined by the harmony and consistency of these three components within a supportive Muslim family ecosystem (Abubakar et al., 2023). Abubakar et al. (2023), in their research on parenting education in Islamic families in Aceh, reinforce this idea by showing that structured parenting programs grounded in Islamic values, within a family-resilience framework, yield more optimal child-character outcomes than parenting without a clear conceptual framework.

### **Implications of Islamic Parenting for Early Childhood Character Development**

#### ***Early Childhood Character Development through Islamic Parenting***

Young children aged 0–6 years are in a critical developmental period often referred to as the "golden age" (Jamaluddin et al., 2025). During this stage, every stimulus received, whether positive or negative, can influence neural development and have lasting implications across the lifespan. Consistently implemented Islamic Parenting during this period may therefore have substantial formative implications for character development. The application of Islamic Parenting during the golden age is consequently important because the values instilled during this stage can serve as a foundation for children's character and personality into adulthood.

Islamic Parenting has significant implications for early childhood character development in four major areas. First, it strengthens Islamic identity. Dwinandita's (2024) systematic review indicates that consistent, community-based Islamic Parenting practices in Southeast Asia are associated with children having more cohesive Muslim identities and greater resilience to external influences. Second, it develops spiritual intelligence. Sholehuddin et al. (2023) demonstrated that Islamic family education practices—including habituation to prayer, Qur'an recitation, and collective supplication—significantly contribute to children's spiritual intelligence in the digital era. These findings indicate that Islamic Parenting not only strengthens children's religious identity but also develops spiritual intelligence as a foundation for Islamic character from an early age.

Third, Islamic Parenting strengthens family resilience. Purwandari et al. (2022), through a mixed-method study in Aceh, found that an Islamic Parenting model integrated with local cultural values significantly improves family resilience, which in turn has positive implications for children's character development. Fourth, it supports social-emotional competence. Sholeh et al. (2021), in the *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, argue that awareness of Islamic law as a spiritual factor is positively associated with parenting quality and children's social-emotional character development in Muslim families. Beyond its effects on individual children, Islamic Parenting therefore contributes to family resilience and the development of social-emotional competencies that support balanced and sustainable character development.

These four implications are derived primarily from qualitative and small-scale mixed-method studies conducted in specific geographical contexts in Indonesia. Therefore, the strength of causal relationships between the implementation of Islamic Parenting and children's character outcomes cannot yet be established empirically. Caution is warranted when interpreting these findings as

causal relationships, as most of the cited studies are correlational or descriptive-interpretive rather than experimental or longitudinal.

### ***Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening Islamic Parenting***

The implementation of Islamic Parenting in the contemporary era faces several challenges. First is the challenge of technology and digital media. Astuti et al. (2022) identify that poorly managed gadget use within Muslim families may displace the socio-cultural Islamic values being developed through parenting. Second is the challenge of parents' digital literacy. Hasanah and Sukri (2023) emphasize that low levels of digital literacy among Muslim parents constitute a significant barrier to implementing adaptive Islamic Parenting in the Industry 4.0 era (Hasanah & Sukri, 2023). These conditions indicate that the successful implementation of Islamic Parenting in the digital era depends substantially on parents' ability to manage technology wisely and develop digital literacy consistent with Islamic values.

To address these challenges, this study recommends several strengthening strategies: (1) implementing structured parenting education programs based on Islamic values in educational and religious institutions; (2) developing digitally accessible Islamic Parenting modules, consistent with the recommendation of Kosim et al. (2022), who demonstrated the effectiveness of an Islamic parenting module in improving parents' Islamic knowledge; (3) empowering Muslim communities through parenting halaqah in mosques; and (4) promoting cross-institutional collaboration to build a cohesive Islamic parenting ecosystem. (Kosim et al., 2022) These strategies are expected to create an Islamic parenting ecosystem that is adaptive to contemporary developments while preserving the foundational Islamic values that underpin children's character development.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has identified and analyzed the concept of Islamic Parenting as a comprehensive and systematic approach to child-rearing derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Islamic scholarly traditions. The study confirms that Islamic Parenting is not merely a conventional parenting practice infused with religious elements, but a family education system with a strong philosophical, methodological, and teleological foundation.

Three principal dimensions of Islamic Parenting—the tawhid dimension, the akhlaq dimension, and the exemplary modeling dimension—are theoretically integrated to holistically shape early childhood character. The positive implications include the development of a strong Islamic identity, spiritual intelligence, family resilience, and children's social-emotional competence. The Islamic Parenting Integration Model (MIIP) formulated in this study provides a conceptual framework that can guide future empirical research and serve as a practical reference for Muslim parents, educators, and educational policymakers.

Further empirical research, including experimental and longitudinal studies, is strongly recommended to test the validity and effectiveness of the MIIP model across diverse Muslim family contexts in Indonesia and globally. In addition, developing valid and reliable instruments for measuring Islamic Parenting should be a priority for future empirical research.

## **REFERENCES**

- Abubakar, B., Sanusi, S., Razali, R., Yeniningsih, T. K., & Mujiburrahman, M. (2023). Parenting education in Islamic families within the framework of family resilience in Aceh, Indonesia. *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam*, 7(2), 1121–1141. <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v7i2.17901>

- Al-Qur'an al-Karim. Terjemahan oleh Kementerian Agama RI. (2023). Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an.
- Annisak, A., Sary, D. P., Fitria, D., & Noviani, D. (2023). Peran lingkungan dan pola asuh orang tua dalam pembentukan karakter anak usia dini. *Khirani: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 1(4), 146–156. <https://doi.org/10.47861/khirani.v1i4.640>
- Arianto, D. (2024). Orang tua dalam mendidik anak perspektif Islam. *Tarbiyatul Misbah: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, 17(1), 101–124. <https://doi.org/10.70688/tarbiyatulmisbah.v17i01.422>
- Astuti, R., Hijriyani, Y. S., Aziz, T., & Bariyyah, K. (2022). Digital parenting: The use of gadgets in instilling socio-cultural values in children. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 660, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220104.025>
- Ayunina, N. Q., & Zakiyah, Z. (2022). Islamic Parenting sebagai upaya mendidik karakter islami generasi Alpha. *Alhamra: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 3(1), 47–60.
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monograph*, 4(1, Pt. 2), 1–103. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0030372>
- Bensaid, B. (2021). An overview of Muslim spiritual parenting. *Religions*, 12(12), 1057. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12121057>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Dwinandita, A. (2024). Islamic child parenting practices and Muslim family resilience in Southeast Asia: A systematic literature review. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 10(2), 83–105. <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2024.102-01>
- Hasanah, U., & Sukri, M. (2023). Implementasi literasi digital dalam pendidikan Islam: Tantangan dan peluang di era industri 4.0. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), 55–72.
- Hidayat, A., Ramdhani, N., & Fathurrahman, M. (2022). Islamic values in early childhood parenting: A character formation model. *Journal of Islamic Psychology*, 3(1), 44–59.
- Ikhsan, R., Padila, C., Amanah, T. R., Safni, P., & Kosim, M. (2025). Islamic Parenting as an effort to educate the Islamic character of the Alpha Generation. *AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v8i2.1382>
- Jamaluddin, A., Rahmatullah, M., & Farid, T. (2025). Literature review Islamic parenting dan perkembangan anak usia dini. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam*, 12(1), 1–15.
- Kosim, M., Ilman, N., Anidar, J., Kustati, M., Ritonga, M., & Perrodin, D. (2022). Advancing learners' Islamic knowledge through a parenting education module. *Pegem Eğitim ve Öğretim Dergisi*, 12(3), 79–88. <https://doi.org/10.47750/pegegog.12.03.09>
- Lestari, I., & Matondang, H. A. (2024). Harmoni tauhid dalam wadah Islamic Parenting pada kasus Kabupaten Karo Sumatera Utara. *Kamaya: Jurnal Ilmu Agama*, 7(2), 130–142.
- Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Mighfar, S. (2023). Islamic Parenting perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali. *Atthufulah: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 3(2), 119–130.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Mulyani, D. T. (2023). Konsep pendidikan akhlak dalam buku Islamic Parenting karya Syaikh Jamal Abdurrahman pada anak sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 6(1), 34–49.

- Purwandari, S., Husna, A. N., & Tawil, T. (2022). Islamic parenting model to increase family literacy: A mixed method study. *International Journal of Islamic Educational Psychology*, 3(2), 120–139. <https://doi.org/10.18196/ijiep.v3i2.14039>
- Rohmat, R., Fajri, A., Huda, M., & Santoso, B. (2024). The influence of Islamic parenting patterns and parents' religious understanding on children's spiritual intelligence in Muslim families in Metro City. *Assyfa Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.XXXXX/ajis.v2i2.628>
- Sholeh, A. N., Saputra, N., & Manurung, A. H. (2021). The awareness of Islamic law as a spiritual factor in family resilience and parenting quality during the COVID-19 era. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 15(2), 329–358. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2021.15.2.329-358>
- Sholehuddin, M. S., Atqia, W., & Aini, R. (2023). Developing children's Islamic spiritual intelligence in the digital age: Indonesian family education methods. *International Journal of Instruction*, 16(1), 357–376. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2023.16120a>
- Ulwan, A. N. (2012). *Tarbiyah al-Aulad fi al-Islam* (Pendidikan anak dalam Islam), terj. E. H. Al-Basyir. *Insan Kamil*. (Karya asli diterbitkan 1981; edisi terjemahan yang digunakan adalah cetakan 2012)
- UNICEF. (2023). *The state of the world's children 2023: For every child, vaccination*. UNICEF.