Character Building in Islamic Society: A Case Study of Muslim Families in Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study seeks to identify the position, goals, and role of parents in Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia with regards to character building. It takes the form of descriptive-qualitative research and employs data triangulation during data collection. The data analysis involved organizing data and sorting it into manageable units that could be managed, synthesized, and searched to find out what was important and useful to convey. It was found that parents need the necessary skills to educate their children to have a good personality, with the goal of this character building being to create well-rounded adults who will make good citizens. It was further found that parents play an important role in influencing a child to adopt an Islamic character in life. This study adds to the existing knowledge by showing how the integration of Islamic and global values can, when parents have the necessary skills, build characters for adults who are pious (*salihah*), good servants of Allah, and responsible for their thought and speech according to Islam while also being honorable, creative, tolerant, hardworking, responsible, trustworthy, respectful of nature, disciplined, brave, efficient, effective, diligent, skillful, helpful, consistent, and affectionate to other human beings, as well as being able to make shared decisions.

Key-words: *character building, global era, Islamic perspectives, parent reeducation, education.*

Introduction

Character building in the Islamic world does not always yield optimal results, as evidenced by the widespread social behaviors that indicate a lack of character in many Muslim countries. Bandial (2011), for example, expressed in *The Brunei Times*:

> *Statistics from the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) showed that in 2009, 126 offenders aged 18 and under were arrested for a variety of offences including assault, theft and vandalism. The latest figures from RBPF also showed that between January and March*

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> *2010, 39 minors were arrested in a three-month period, a 19 per cent increase from the same time period in the previous year* (Bandial, 2011).

For Qatar, Winslow (2013) wrote that according to INTERPOL data, the murder rate increased from 1.52 to 2.11 per 100,000 people between 1995 and 1999, an increase of 38.8 percent. The incidence of rape decreased from 5.23 to 1.72, a decrease of 67.1 percent, while the rate of robbery increased from .67 to 1.34, an increase of 100 percent. The rate for aggravated assault increased from 4.05 to 7.09, an increase of 75.1 percent, while the burglary rate decreased from 58.18 to 34.10, a decrease of 41.4 percent. The rate of larceny increased from 78.58 to 136.01, an increase of 73.1 percent. The rate of motor vehicle theft increased from 10.12 to 11.49, an increase of 13.5%. The rate of total offenses increased from 158.35 to 193.86 per 100,000 people, an increase of 22.4 percent, with larceny accounting for the bulk of this increase (Winslow, 2013).

The problem of violent youth groups has escalated in Indonesia following economic recession, unemployment, and weakened state institutions. Young people have been affected by a lack of income and broken expectations. Consequently, youth gangs have emerged and sought to generate economic revenue for their members, as well as create identity and confidence. Drianyanto (2011) expresses how juvenile delinquency in Indonesia has led to many underage children becoming smokers, using narcotics, engaging in casual sex, and committing crimes. He adds that the more violent activities, including murder, are often related to drugs and/or gangs, and he mentions media reports of female gangs clashing in high school (Drianyanto, 2011).

Muslims can feel a little proud, however, because Egypt seems to have succeeded in character building. Souryal's (1992) research*,* which was published in the *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* and entitled *Juvenile Delinquency in the Cross-Cultural Context: The Egyptian Experience,* describes this. He expresses how juvenile delinquency in Egypt remains remarkably benign and relatively stable*.* He attributes this to three main factors: (a) an orthodox religion-based value system where the daily moral behavior of juveniles is heavily influenced by Islamic institutions; (b) a family structure that is closely connected and where children are routinely taught how to behave in a socially acceptable manner and shamed if they commit a crime; (c) a progressive juvenile justice system that rather than treating delinquency as a crime, regards it as a social phenomenon instead (Souryal, 1992).

In Turkey, whose most cohesive and lively population takes part in pilgrimage, character-building education issues have apparently received enough attention through youth education (Bailleau &

Cartuyvels, 2011). In the U.S.A., Lickona (1992) identified 10 signs of moral degradation that could damage the character of the nation. He states that a number of factors have adversely affected young people, and there is a new impetus to revive character education. These factors include poor parenting (even in unbroken families); inappropriate adult role models; mass media's portrayal of materialism, sex, and violence; and peer pressure. He adds that the effects of this unfriendly environment on youth character can be seen in 10 areas, namely increasing youth violence; mounting disrespect for authority; growing dishonesty (e.g., cheating, lying, and stealing); cruelty to peers; bigotry within schools, starting in preschool and continuing through to higher education; sex at earlier ages; dropping work ethics; an increasing selfishness and declining regard for civic responsibility; more self-destructive behavior; and a lack of ethical competence (Lickona, 1992). Important research into the importance of character education has been published by the Character Education Partnership. The results of a study by Berkowitz (2012) from the University of Missouri–St. Louis showed that the motivation of school students increased in schools with character education. Indeed, those classes that were thoroughly engaged in character education saw negative student behavior, which would normally affect academic progress, drop significantly (Berkowitz, 2012).

Literature Review

The term "Character Education"

The implementation of character education for students in Islamic countries is still a thorny issue, with it often being a formality, normative, stuck in superficiality, lacking priority for substantial aspects, and overlooking the depth and meaning of students' lives. Based on this, educators around the world are starting to realize that the study of moral education needs to be revived (Karatas & Oral, 2015). Three considerations underline the importance of a moral education: i) weak family ties; ii) the negative tendencies in modern teenagers' lives; and iii) a revival of the need for ethical values, morals, and manners in modern times (Nurul Zuriah, 2007).

Malaysia has also experienced many problems related to character education. Jeremah (2012) explains that violent crime rates in Malaysia are reaching worrying levels. In practice, Malaysia seems serious about strengthening character education through Islamic and moral education. Balakrishnan (2010) states that moral education is a compulsory formal subject in the Malaysian school system. This is taught to non-Muslim pupils, while Muslim pupils are taught Islamic Education. The pupils study this subject from their first year of primary/elementary school to form

five in high school (about age 17), culminating with a formal centralized public examination conducted at the end of form five by the Examination Board of the Ministry of Education (Balakrishnan, 2010).

The general aim of moral education (ME) is to develop individuals with good characters, so they will be responsible and contribute to harmony and stability in the nation, as well as global society. The main objectives are to enable pupils to (i) understand and internalize the noble values necessary for good character, (ii) learn and accept the importance of harmony between people and the environment and strive to sustain it, (iii) enhance understanding and cooperation by sustaining a peaceful and harmonious life in a democratic Malaysia, (iv) develop mature thinking based on moral and spiritual values to be used when making moral decisions and solving problems, (v) develop a commitment to act morally based on justice and altruism in line with the noble values of Malaysian society (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Based on the above descriptions, parents who pay more attention to the future of the coming generations are certainly concerned about the current condition of child morality. Moral decadence has occurred in Muslim countries, and it is the responsibility of all Muslims in the world to correct this, especially parents as family educators, teachers as school educators, and other scholars as educators in society.

The term *character education* is simply the current term for a millennia-old concept. For our purposes here, we define it as the deliberate development, usually in schools, of young people's tendency and capacity to be responsible, social, and respectful democratic citizens in society. Character education is by nature complex—it truly is like rocket science. Developing a varied set of psychological character components (e.g., conscience, empathy, moral reasoning, values, moral identity, etc.) requires a diverse and multi-faceted implementation strategy. At its most molecular level, character education entails building a network of positive pro-social relationships (e.g., among students, among staff, between staff and students, between staff and parents, between administrators and staff, and so on). At a more macro level, it involves comprehensive school reform and encompasses all aspects of a school's functioning, from its academic curricula to its disciplinary policies, from its mission statement to its governance structures, the adult culture of the school, and so on (Berkowitz, 2012).

Character (*akhlaq*) is a set of internal states, traits, qualities, and abilities that individuals possess, leading them to behave without thought and deliberation having developed into habits whose

values lay in the teachings of Islam. It includes both inward qualities and outward human behavior, and it is based on the view that behaviors are closely related to the soul and its intentions. Aside from the home, school is another significant place where character can be inculcated (Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012).

Character education seeks to develop virtue, or human excellence, as the foundation of a purposeful, productive, and fulfilling life and a just, compassionate, and flourishing society. Character education takes deliberate steps to cultivate moral and intellectual virtues through every phase of school life, such as the example set by adults, the relationships among peers, the handling of discipline, the resolution of conflicts, the content of the curriculum, the instruction process, the rigor of academic standards, the environment of the school, the conduct in extracurricular activities, and the involvement of parents. Everything that happens in a school is a form of character education, because everything affects character.[6]

Thomas Lickona (1992), author of *Educating for Character*, states: "Moral education is not a new idea. It is, in fact, as old as education itself. Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals: to help young people become smart and to help them become good." Good character is not formed automatically but rather developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, setting examples, learning, and practicing (i.e., character education). The deliberate teaching of good character is particularly important in today's society because the youth face many opportunities and dangers that were unbeknown to earlier generations. Character education encompasses a broad range of concepts, such as a positive school culture, moral education, just communities, caring school communities, social emotional learning, positive youth development, civic education, and service learning. All of these approaches promote the intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical development of young people and encourage them to share a commitment, thus helping young people become responsible, caring, and contributive citizens (Lickona, 1991).

Character building in the global era

In the current global era, Muslims need a strong handle, so they can select and sort the many values they are offered. In general, there have been three educational focuses, namely to build knowledge,

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[6] See http://www.gobookee.net/character-education.

skills, and character. Education in Muslim countries has apparently been successful enough in building knowledge and skills, but it still fails to build character. Based on this situation, it can be said that comprehensively realizing character education in Muslim countries is needed. This should be oriented to the strong philosophical foundation of Islamic principles, strong educational management, educational democracy and empowerment, the preparation of qualified and professional educational human resources, and quality, as well as character-based education development.

The above new educational paradigm indicates that the responsibility for giving an education is no longer merely that of school leaders. In fact, control has been given back to the community in that schools and communities have the same responsibilities and deliver education together hand in hand. Character education is the intentional effort to develop in young people core ethical and performance values that are widely affirmed across all cultures. To be effective, character education must include all the stakeholders in a school's community and must permeate the school's climate and curriculum (DeRoche, 2000).

Azra (2000) has put forward the thought that Islamic education—whether in school, in the family, or in society—should be interconnected and harmoniously cooperate, as well as be a common step in the educational process of students. All of these three things should complement each other and support each other in achieving the goals of an Islamic education that truly forms individual students according to the teachings of Islam (Azra, 2000).

Failed character development in the education of Muslim countries has arisen due to a lack of an optimal focus. Josephson (2006) states that the need for character education in school settings becomes more apparent with the passing of each day. Young people almost unanimously say that ethics and character are important on both a personal level and in business, but they express very cynical attitudes about whether a person can be ethical and still succeed (Josephson, 2006).

When reforming character education in Muslim countries, an important factor we need to consider is the need to build commitment within the Muslim community. Without a strong commitment to a character-education program, we will have difficulties implementing it. The teaching of Islamic education should not just focus on theoretical aspects but also emphasize the practical application of Islamic knowledge (Tamuri et al., 2013). A teacher of Islamic education needs to educate and develop students' character by infusing them with knowledge, providing supportive conditions and environment, and then giving chances to practice and form character

(Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012). Character development requires behavioral change as well as knowledge acquisition, and incorporating such behavioral change into university administrator preparation programs requires a faculty to consider recent findings in neuroscience on how the brain learns and then incorporate these findings into program design and instruction (Calabrese & Roberts, 2002).

Muslims need to build an earnest commitment to conduct Islamic character education around the world. Starting from the paradigm of Becker et al. (2012), which is embodied in the document *Building Character Education in Your Community: A Resource Guide for Communities*, it is time for Muslims around the world to promptly implement a macro-level character-education movement. It should begin with (i) determining who must be involved to gain the commitment needed to begin the character-education initiative and (ii) determining the community's needs. These needs could be determined through (i) focus groups, (ii) surveys, and (iii) one-on-one interviews. A coalition including key community leaders could then be built by considering using an existing network focused on community needs and/or forming a new coalition with character education as its primary mission (Becker et al., 2012).

In America, The Character Education Partnership (CEP) is a national organization for the advancement of character education. It provides the following eleven principles of character education:

- Effective character education promotes core ethical values as well as supportive performance values as the foundation of good character.
- Effective character education comprehensively defines "character" as including thinking, feeling, and behaving.
- Effective character education uses a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive approach to character development.
- Effective character education creates a caring school community.
- Effective character education provides students with opportunities for moral action.
- Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed.
- Effective character education strives to develop students' self-motivation.

- Effective character education engages the school staff as learning and moral community that shares responsibility for character education and attempts to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of the students.

- Effective character education fosters shared leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative.

- Effective character education engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.

- Effective character education assesses the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character (Eleven Principles of Character Education, 2004).

These eleven principles provide guidance for local school districts as they begin to develop their character-education programs. The *Character Education Quality Standards* self-assessment tool is used in this study to quantify the overall effectiveness, or lack thereof, of a character-education program. Character education includes a broad range of concepts, such as a positive school culture, moral education, a just community, a caring school environment, social emotional learning, positive youth development, civic education, and service learning. All of these promote the intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical development of young people and express a commitment to help young people become responsible, caring, and contributing citizens (Lickona, 1991). But which virtues are most important for a strong character? Here are ten that are recognized and taught by nearly all philosophical, religious, and cultural traditions: (i) wisdom, (ii) justice, (iii) fortitude, (iv) self-control, (v) love, (vi) positive attitude, (vii) hard work, (viii) integrity, (ix) gratitude, and (x) humility (Lickona, 1991).

Character education from an Islamic perspective

The character education of learners becomes a task that must be done seriously, systematically, and in a programmed manner due to its interconnection with the lives of children. Kupperman (2005) states that character (or moral) education is "a complicated business" (Kupperman, 2005, p. 216). A character-education program needs to develop moral literacy in teachers and showcase effective methods for integrating moral literacy across existing curricula (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007). Character education has existed since ancient times, but the primary task of an educator is to optimize this character education in order to succeed. The character-education

movement in the United States, for example, has been around since the first years of the 21st century, and there is actually an awareness movement among educators, as revealed by Elkind and Sweet (2004) in their article *Character education is not new*. It was in fact included as an important objective for the first U.S. public schools. It is even legislatively mandated or at least encouraged in most states. In reality, the current movement is simply a reminder of education's long history of stressing core values—such as respect, integrity, and working hard—to help students become creative, capable people and good citizens. Character education provides effective solutions to ethical and academic issues that are of growing concern (Elkind & Sweet, 2004; Lafer & Tarman, 2019).

From the Islamic perspective, *Aqidah* can establish and oversee the actions and human behavior that stem from the formation of the self, the family, and community life. If people are aware of the responsibility of what must be done, they will not become involved in unhelpful, harmful, or sinful behavior. The faith within themselves will yield positive results, because they will always feel the presence of *Allah*, the most well-known of human deeds. With faith, human beings tend to do good deeds in line with Islamic values. Islamic *Aqidah* enables human beings to think openly, oversee the future, and be optimistic about life. The nature of the here and now and what will come later makes human beings able to consider the future and take actions for the present and the future in a balanced manner. All actions, behaviors, and deeds are therefore confidently performed based on the principles of *Aqidah* and acceptance of all *Allah's* revelations. This establishes a harmonious community and secures it. It encourages people to respect other people's rights, whether they be family members, neighbors, guests, or whomever. This also educates human beings to mutually respect one another and be mutually affectionate (Fatmi, Hidayat, Huzairi, Bahti & Ahmad, 2010).

Islam views manners, morality, and a religious soul education as always being needed for children and learners and therefore takes them seriously. Ibn Miskawayh (n.d.) suggests that character is original and can be changed slowly or quickly. He rejects the opinion that character cannot be changed, because if it cannot be changed, the power or differentiation in power (*tamyiz*) and thinking *(al 'aql)* will not be considered, so all forms of norms, guidance, and education will have no benefits. Human beings would therefore become wild and uncontrolled (Miskawayh, n.d.). Changes in human character occur on several levels, as can be seen in how children grow and develop from birth. Among children, some easily accept character improvement and education,

while others reject them. These are often hardheaded, covetous, and envious of others. If such characteristics are ignored and not corrected, children will tend to act in accordance with their natural tendencies. Education prompts further thinking about that nature, so these human beings will be educated. Maskawaih argues that newborn babies are naturally good, not cruel, and without sin. Their thoughts are clean like a blank sheet of paper. Soon, however, they are influenced by their environment at certain levels (Jalaludin & Said, 1994).

When describing a method of education that is relevant to children, al Ghazali (1936) mentions practices and habituation. According to Maskawaih (n.d.), *Shariah* religion is a decisive factor for a straight character, because it accustoms people to perform commendable deeds and makes the soul ready to receive wisdom, so people can achieve happiness.

Changing the human character needs better systematic guidance and education. This can be achieved with knowledge of the human soul and an understanding of what the human soul was created for, including its real aims and its inherent power. If the soul is guided properly, human beings follow lofty and noble aims (Maskawaih, n.d.). Therefore, religious rules and the human soul are the main foundations of children's character education. Child education must be done in accordance with religious rules for correcting children's characters. If knowledge about the soul is not included in the process of childhood education, however, the effort will be worthless. This concept is mirrored in educational psychology by contemporary thinkers.

Methods

Research Design

This study is descriptive-qualitative research that involves data that was collected and expressed in the form of words and images and words arranged in sentences, such as the result of interviews between researchers and informants. The presence of the researcher is a measure of success or understanding in several cases. The researcher acted, with the help of other people, as the main instrument in collecting data from people in Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia. This research used a sampling technique commonly employed in qualitative research, namely purposive sampling, which was implemented using the chimney technique. Data were first collected broadly and then were narrowed down and focused based on the research. Over an eight-month period, this research was conducted in three areas of Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia: (i) Kendal Gondang, (ii) Kutoanyar, and (iii) Mangunsari Kedungwaru Tulungagung.

Data and Sources of Data

The sources of data were classified into three groups: informants, documents, and places of evidence. In qualitative research, data sources are also divided into two groups, namely primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained directly from parents in Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia, while the secondary data had already been obtained by other parties. The roles and functions of these two data were mutually complementary and supportive. The techniques for the data collection were data triangulation, which involves combining various methods of data collection and in this case included (a) in-depth interviews, (b) participant observation, and (c) documentation.

Data-analysis techniques

The techniques for data analysis involved working with data, organizing data, sorting them into units that could be managed, synthesizing them, and then searching for what was important and deciding what would be of use for others. At this stage, the data analysis was performed and utilized in such a way to successfully derive the truths that could be used to answer the questions and issues raised in the study. An inductive method was used to manage the qualitative data of this study. The inductive method allows for set of specific facts to inform generalizations with common properties. This line of thought has been used to obtain an opinion consisting of several special opinions. By connecting these opinions, the researchers generalized them.

Checking the validity of data

The validity of the data in this study was determined using the criteria of credibility (degree of confidence). The credibility of the data was intended to prove that the data accorded with the reality that exists in the study. To establish the validity of the data, the researcher used the inspection technique as follows: 1) The extended research participation allowed an increased degree of confidence in the data collected. With extended participation, the researcher could examine the accuracy of information introduced by distortion and build confidence in the subject. Therefore, a limited participation was not performed in a short time. Instead, the researcher extended the participation that took place on the study background. 2) Perseverance observations meant that the researchers found the characteristics and elements in situations that were very relevant to the issue being studied and then concentrated on such matters in detail. 3) Triangulation helped data

checking by comparing it with something else. This involved a significant source of triangulation to compare and check that the degree of confidence in information gained over time with different tools. This involved (a) comparing the observed data with the interview data; (b) comparing what people say in public with what they say in private; (c) comparing the state and perspective of someone with different opinions and the views of the principal, teachers, students, guardians, and chairman of the Board of Education; and (d) comparing what people say about the research situation with what they have said previously.

Results and Discussion

Parents teaching good character to their children

Parents need to have optimal skills to educate their children about having a good character. It is therefore important for parents to have a mastery of educational methodology and the appropriate materials, as well as the ability to provide guidance, direction, and motivation. Parents first need to look inwards and decide whether they themselves are mature in their lives. If they find they are not, they need to engage in self-education by seeking out information from people with the capacity to educate young people, because parents themselves should have a mature character.

When educating themselves, parents should understand the indicators of personal maturity, such as having healthy thoughts and being able to be independent rather than relying on other people. They should be able to make decisions about their attitudes to life without hesitation while also considering others and accepting their views. They should be responsible for their attitudes, behaviors, and actions and be able to accept, give, and feel friendship and real affection. What is more, a mature person is able to balance emotion and intelligence in all aspects of physical and spiritual fulfillment and manifest it in his or her behavior. Indeed, mature people can balance their personal needs with the demands of society and their obligation to their chosen deity to serve their social milieu. They should have a social conscience, which enables them to become mature, useful citizens in society (Hashim, 1983).

Our personalities result from an interaction between our genes and our social environments, so every person is unique with his or her own personality. Even when individuals have a similar genetic makeup and social environment, this interaction can produce widely different personalities. Ahmad (2012) states that the significance of personality development lies in producing a well-balanced person physically, spiritually, and mentally, so he or she can face challenges in any

circumstances. Furthermore, in line with Mahmud (2000), Ahmad (2012) explains that the balanced growth of an individual should occur within the physical, mental, and spiritual being of the individual. Personality can therefore be developed through methods that correspond to those aspects, namely spiritual training (*tarbiyah ruhiyyah*), physical training (*tarbiyah jismiyyah*), and intellectual training (*tarbiyah fikriyyah*) (Ahmad, 2012).

In accordance with the demands of these fast-moving times, parents need reeducating in the broadest sense. Guidance and counseling, the delivery of information, and/or training is often needed for parents. Both developed and developing countries commonly implement non-formal adult education programs.

Adult education, in a specific and systematic form, seems to have been missed by education practitioners in Muslim countries, however. It is the researcher's belief that the paradigm of adult education should receive the attention of education researchers and practitioners. This should be studied and developed in order to develop more competence in character education for Muslim children. The concept of family education needs to be continuously reaffirmed, because family is the first and foremost institution for learners, namely children of today who live in an ever-changing era.

The goal of character building for children

The goal of character building for children in Muslim families is to shape them into perfect adults who are pious (*salihah*), good servants of *Allah*, and responsible for their own thoughts and speech. They should also be honorable, creative, tolerant, hardworking, responsible, trustworthy, respectful of nature, and affectionate to other human beings. They should also be capable of making shared decisions and be disciplined, brave, efficient, effective, diligent and skillful, helpful, and consistent. In other words, they should be good citizens.

Maturity is a basic foundation and an aim of education, so if education is to succeed, it must be administered by a professional adult, because if they themselves have chosen norms and values and act with their own responsibility, their students will also become self-sufficient citizens when they become adults. We need to accept that the main goal of Islam is the establishment of a moral and character education that can develop people, both men and women, with clean souls, willpower, the right ideals, and a high degree of morality. Such people know the meaning of duty and respect human rights. They know the difference between good and bad and choose to avoid a

reprehensible act because they know it would be disgraceful, instead remembering the supreme being in everything they do (al-Abrasyi, 1970).

In the modern context, efforts to educate children need to be conducted in the steady and creative environment of the Muslim family. Chauhan (1979) asserts the characteristics of a creative child: 1) Courageous in convictions: A creative child shows strong conviction in his or her beliefs and values, going beyond socially conformist behavior. 2) Curious: A creative child is eager to learn more and more about his environment. 3) Independent judgment: A creative child can judge crucial matters independently. 4) Independent thinking: A creative child thinks independently when faced with various problems. 5) A creative child becomes easily absorbed in tasks. 6) A creative child applies intuition in problem solving. 7) A creative child does not always accept the established solution to a problem and does not always conform. 8) A creative child is willing to take risks. 9) A creative child can develop a vision for future problems. (Chauhan, 1979)

In Muslim families, for parents as educators in the family, it is necessary to understand the concepts, tasks, functions, and properties of Muslim educators and how they seek to develop children into creative people. According to Tafsir (1992), Islamic educators are responsible for developing students by achieving their full potential, whether it be their affective, cognitive, or psychomotor potential (Tafsir, 1992).

The role of parents in character building

In relation to character building in the children of Muslim families, parents play important roles in influencing their children to develop good characters in life. Parental knowledge about the theory of Islamic education, Islamic guidance and counseling, developmental psychology, education, and personality is very important, especially in the daily education activities of a family.

Nichols (1974) proposed that there are three main factors that likely have an important influence on children's ability and school achievement: (a) the school or other education institution; (b) the family and other social influences; and (c) the child's genetic makeup. In addition, one might also want to consider nutritional factors, community influences, and so on (Nichols, 1974).

Nichols' theory insists on that the second factor (i.e., family and other social influences) greatly affects a child's ability. As it is effectively an informal educational institution, the family offers the first learning environment to a child. In this environment, children receive their first guidance from their parents. In reality, Islam positions Muhammad the last prophet and his apostles as

exemplary Muslims for character education in children. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is an ideal role model for all of humanity. Among his various outstanding virtues and characteristics, he was an extraordinary husband, a perfect father, and a unique grandfather. He was also a great statesman, judge, and spiritual leader. His most distinctive quality, however, was the fact that he brought blessings to all in both words and deeds. He infused justice, love, and dignity in all those around him. He spread the power of goodwill to the extent that he became exceptional in human history (Mansouri, 2011).

In this context, it is necessary to raise the awareness of a new paradigm to all parents engaged in the philosophical concept of children's character education from an Islamic perspective. This new paradigm should emphasize the following: 1) Educate a child according to his or her psychological development. 2) Educate a child to build character and create a perfect adult. 3) Reinforce the urgency of reeducating parents as character builders. 4) Teach Islamic religious education. 5) Create educational facilities. 6) Create a favorable environment.

The material for Islamic character building is the character of Prophet Muhammad as a good example for humanity. The approach to character building from an Islamic perspective is systemic, ethical, personal, and contextual.

Character building in the Islamic world has not always enjoyed optimal results. From a philosophical perspective, character building has lacked the power of a philosophical foundation that is understood and followed by all parties. The purpose of Islamic education is to teach learners to face their futures independently, intelligently, and with a moral beauty, but in reality, moral issues have become the subject of public apprehension. In addressing such issues, the family plays a highly important role. The family environment provides the very first education for learners, so in Islamic countries, the strengthening of character building in the family environment is highly needed as the basis for further education. The researcher has offered new ideas about the philosophical concept of parents' need for a greater awareness of educating character for children in the Muslim family environment, and in the modern global era, parents themselves may need reeducating according to the Islamic perspective.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, this study concludes that parents must have the necessary skills to educate their children for them to have good personalities. Specifically, this study asserts that in Muslim

families, character building in children aims to develop them into perfect adults who are pious (*salihah*), good servants of *Allah*, and responsible for their own thoughts and speech according to Islam. Such people are honorable, creative, tolerant, hardworking, responsible, trustworthy, respectful of nature, and affectionate to other human beings. They are also capable of making shared decisions and are disciplined, brave, efficient, effective, diligent, skillful, helpful, and consistent. In short, they are good citizens. In addition, parents play an important role in influencing a child to develop an Islamic character in later life. Parental knowledge about Islamic education theory, Islamic guidance and counseling, developmental psychology, education, and personality are especially important for the daily education activities in the family area.

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