

## The Inculcation of Islamic Values in Preschool Children

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### Abstract:

Children in Islam are Allah's gift and parents' responsibility at once. Therefore, parents are in charge of providing their children with education, including inculcating Islamic values into them. Before going to elementary schools, the 0-6 year-old children receive education at preschools. At this age, the inculcation of Islamic values in children are highly relevant. Islamic teachings or Islamic values are religious values that were revealed from Allah to Prophet Muhammad through Qur'an and Hadith containing rules on monotheism, sharia, and morals. The inculcation of Islamic values into preschool children can be done by parents through habituation and modelling processes that are applicable to the child's conditions and ability.

**Keywords:** Inculcation, Islamic values, preschool children

### 1. Introduction

From the perspective of Islam, a child is Allah's gift and parents' responsibility at once. As a gift, the birth of a child must be believed as a favor of God that has been bestowed to humans. However, parents who bear children also have a great responsibility to take care of their children. Parents' gratitude and responsibility can be manifested in complimentary treatment, affection, care, fulfillment of clothing, food, spiritual and spiritual needs of the child, including providing appropriate education for him/her to grow and develop in life (Rahim, H, 2001).

Education for children in the context of Islamic religious education is an effort to help or guide children to acquire religious knowledge so that children can grow up with personalities that are in accordance with the core values of Islam. More specifically, it can be said that the existence of religious education for children constitutes an effort to shape children's personalities and enable them to carry out their obligations in worshipping or serving God (Acmedi, 2005), such as indicated in QS. An-Nahl (16): 78 as follows:

تَشْكُرُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ وَالْآفَئِدَةَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ السَّمْعَ لَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ شَيْئًا تَعْلَمُونَ لَا أُمْنِيَّتَكُمْ بَطُونَ مِنْ أَخْرَجَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ

'And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful with (Departemen Agama RI, 2005)

The Qur'an verse shows that every child born to his mother has no knowledge, but been equipped with five senses, including mouth, ears, eyes, heart and others to get knowledge. This indicates that factors that exist outside the child himself play a significant role in affecting the child's effort to obtain knowledge. In its connection with the inculcation of religious values in children, educating children to grow with an Islamic personality is top-priority. A child is born innocent like white paper that can change its color into colors that touch it.

Therefore, parents as the ones who give birth, raise, and guide children have a great responsibility to make sure that their children grow up with Islamic personalities. Islam itself has hinted that every child is cleansed by nature. Whether the child behaves like a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew, or a Magi depends on the parents. Because of that, it is imperative for parents as first educators to instill Islamic values in children at an early age, i.e. preschool age, and to equip children with Islamic teachings as they develop into the later stages in life. The inculcation of religious values in preschoolers will become the main foundation for children to grow with Islamic personality traits (Aly, H. N, 1999). This is in line with Birgit Backer's opinion emphasizing the effect of children's social status on their level of success (Backer, Birgit. 2011).

Applicable and appropriate methods need to be adopted to instil Islamic values in children. Research by Ayu Helmy Rizqillah, Khamidun, and Nurussa'adah (2013) has found that storytelling method is effective in teaching the values of Islam to children. Stories of significant religious figures are appealing and children are

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more likely to emulate figures told in a story. Other researchers, such as Seniati Sutarmin, et al., have pointed out that the teaching of Islam in kindergarten requires cooperation from both parents and school party (**Sutamin, Seniati, et.al., 2014**).

The aforementioned explanations provide the background to this study, which aimed to analyze the urgency of inculcating Islamic values in preschool children as well as to elicit answers to how the inculcation system is carried out in preschool education.

### 2. Material and Method

The method used is literature study. Literature study is an activity to gather information relevant to the topic or problem being the object of research. This information can be obtained from books, scientific papers, theses, dissertations, encyclopedias, the internet, and other sources. By conducting a literature study, researchers can utilize all the information and thoughts relevant to their research. The role of literature study before research is very important because by carrying out this activity the relationship between problems, relevant research and theory will become clearer. In addition, research will be further supported, both by existing theories and by real evidence, namely research results, conclusions and suggestions.

Literature study is a task that is continuously carried out during research activities. A research will produce a scientific work, because it must be able to contribute to the progress of science. Careful examination needs to be done, starting from choosing the title, so that there is no duplication of problems that have already been researched by other people.

Although completely new (original) problems are very rare, previous studies or research results should not be completely replicated, unless the techniques used are proven to be incorrect or the research results and conclusions are questionable, or new information has been found that can provide other solutions. . If we have determined the title, it will be very important to review all the material relevant to the title. In the study or literature review, it is shown how the problems being studied are related to the results of previous research or studies. For certain subjects, it is necessary to look at the problem and a theoretical framework, so it is necessary to review other theories that are needed.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Preschool Education

Growth and development are natural processes that occur in human life from they are conceived until they die. Growth focuses more on the quantitative aspects of life, such as physical growth, while qualitative development refers to a series of progressive changes as a result of maturity and experiences.

Humans are never static, they always change either physically or psychologically. Piaget quoted in Elizabeth explains that human structure is innate and dynamic (**Hurlock. E, 1996**). In other words, mature organisms always experience progressive changes in the form of responses to experiential conditions; these changes result in a network of multiple interactions. Growth and development can be influenced by factors before birth (Prenatal), at birth (perinatal), and after birth (postnatal). In relation to this, every child individual is unique, meaning that no two children are identical even though they are born as identical twins.

Between the age of birth and the age of primary education or better known as preschool age, a child experiences a golden and critical period in life that is key to the child's future development. Therefore, it is the right time to lay the foundations for instilling physical, social-emotional, self-concept, artistic, moral and religious values into children. To that end, efforts to develop the full potential of children must begin at an early age or preschool age so that children's growth and development can be optimally achieved (Mansur, 2005). Early age or preschool age period occurs before children begin formal education. This period provides the best opportunity for children to develop their potential and intelligence. The development of children's potential at this period will have a great impact on their future lives. Conversely, insufficient attention given to the development of a child at this period will result in blunting the actual potential of the child (**Suryadi, 2006**).

Based on what Suryadi suggests, it can be understood that early age or preschool age is a crucial period that occurs before a child receives primary education. At this period, the potential of a child should be properly nurtured; otherwise, the potential cannot grow and develop correspondingly as the child enters the next stages of life. Early childhood education or preschool age includes the process of fostering the entire growth and development of children aged up to 6 years, including their physical and non-physical aspects, by providing stimulation for physical, spiritual (moral-spiritual), motor, reasoning, social and emotional development so that they can grow and develop optimally (**Hartoyo. B, 2004**).

According to Hartoyo's statement, it is known that children aged 0-6 years are categorized into preschool age. At this period of time, children have not received education from primary schools. Law Number 20/2003 on National Education System, article 17 paragraph (1) and (2) explains that:

1. Primary education provides the basis for secondary education.
2. Primary education is held in elementary schools or Islamic elementary schools or other forms of education of the same level, and in junior high schools or Islamic junior high schools or other forms of education of the same level (**Departemen Agama RI, 2005**).

The law article provides an understanding that the most basic education in Indonesia is held in elementary schools or Islamic elementary schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that preschool age includes children under the age of 6 or between 0-6 years old or children who have not officially gone to elementary schools to receive education at the age of 6 or 7.

### **Islamic Values**

Islamic values refer to the core beliefs or teachings of Islam. To obtain a clear picture of the concept, we should first understand the religion of Islam.

1. The Religion of Islam: The religion of Islam is most commonly known as Islam. The word Islam is derived from Arabic language that means submission and obedience to Allah's (God) will. Islam is originated from the word salama that means being obedient or accepting. Salama it self rooted from the word salima, aslama or aslimu which means prosperous, clean, impeccable, flawless, or safe from birth and inner disability. The definitions of the word show that the religion of Islam is full of peace, welfare, cleanliness, and surrender (to God). Therefore, derived from Arabic language, Islam is defined as a religion full of surrender to God Almighty by the guidelines of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah or the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (**Ali, M. D, 2000**). According to great dictionary of the Indonesian language, Islam is a religion taught by Prophet Muhammad and guided by the Holy Qur'an, the revelation from Allah (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1989). Thus, in the linguistic context, it can be understood that Islam is a religion revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad through Gabriel. It is taught to mankind through Qur'an and Hadith. According to experts, such as **H Abuddin Nata (1997)**, the revelation of Islam is bestowed to humanity through Prophet Muhammad in Qur'an and Hadith. Mahmud Syaltut quoted in **Endang Saifudin Anshari (1993)** also adds that the core teachings or values of Islam were first disclosed to Muhammad. Muhammad, Prophet of Islam, was sent to preach the religion to mankind and thus invite them to practice the faith and live according to the rules of Allah. In line with that, **Muhammad al-Ghazaly (1996)**, further emphasizes that Islam is a religion that contains a set of rules that teach how to humble oneself before God and surrender in all matters to God. In other words, the relationship between God and mankind can be established on the basis of listening to and obeying the rules of Allah (God). In conclusion, it can be understood that Islam is a religion bestowed upon humanity from Allah through Prophet Muhammad in Qur'an and Hadith.

2. Islamic Values: According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), values refer to traits (things) that are important or useful to humanity. Values can also be defined as highly appreciated concepts or issues in religious life. These concepts are sacred so that they serve as guidelines for the community members concerned to behave accordingly (**Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 2005**). Islamic values, thus, can be understood as the core teachings of Islam that are revealed to Prophet Muhammad to be delivered to humanity. Qur'an and Hadith are the two main resources of Islamic core values that should be believed and practiced in everyday life. Muslims have to recognize clearly that Islamic values or teachings are not just formality. The core of Islamic teachings is to surrender to Allah (**Al-Rusi, A. A, 1994**). Muslims must obey Allah, stay away from Allah's prohibitions, and perform good deeds for humanity. A servant of Allah will always obey Allah's commands and stay away from Allah's prohibitions. Allah loves those who are obedient and thus perform good deeds in life. Humans who are loved by Allah will fear nothing in life because Allah (God) is always with them. The teachings of Islam can be summarized in three basic principles as follows:

- a. Aqeedah (Faith); like religion in general, Islam also contains a belief system that underlies all its practices, called Aqeedah (Faith). Aqeedah in Islam involves the teachings of Islam that must be believed by every Muslim individual. Individuals are considered Muslims only when they are fully aware of and sincerely willing to be involved in the Islamic belief system. Therefore, Aqeedah in Islam is the ultimate bond or knot. Aqeedah system in Islam is built on six basic beliefs commonly known as the Six Pillars of Faith.

- b. Sharia; Sharia are all the laws and regulations that govern human activities in Islam. The essence of Sharia is worship that regulates horizontal relations with fellow creatures created by Allah (God) and vertical relations with Allah as the Creator.

- c. Morals; The moral system in Islam contains ethics or norms that aim to shape human behavior and attitude towards life and activities in life. To conclude, the teachings of Islam can be summarized into three basic principles known as Aqeeda, Sharia, and Morals. These three concepts of Islamic core values must be known, understood, and applied by Muslims in their everyday life. A pious servant will be able to apply these three concepts in his life (**Zuhairini. 1995**). Thus, the values of Islam refer to religious values revealed by Allah to humanity through Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). These values contain rules about monotheism, sharia, and morals that are written on Qur'an and Hadith.

### **The Inculcation Of Religious Values In Preschool-Age Children**

## The Inculcation of Islamic Values in Preschool Children

Preschool age, as previously discussed, is ranged between 0 and 6 years old. This period of time refers to the time before a child is sent away from home to receive formal education in elementary schools. In this period, children spend most of their time daily with their parents. Therefore, this article particularly focuses on the role of parents in inculcating religious values in their children since the child was born until before s/he attended education at elementary school.

Family is one of the most essential links in the history of human life. There is no denying that family as the first and foremost social institution plays the most strategic role in filling and equipping children with meaningful life values. Although family is not the only party that has a role in managing human life, family remains as a starting point or an initial capital for children's education.

The success of family education in Islam depends entirely on one's ability to understand *manhajul* (Islamic educational methods) that is taught in Qur'an and Sunnah. Islam confirms the role of humans as the Khalifah of Allah. Humans, in Islam, are obliged to develop and uphold the teachings of God and preserve the lives of every creature, including human life. The Khalifah of Allah is responsible for every task assigned to him according to his nature/characters. Allah is Rabbun (the Keeper and Educator). Some of His characters are bestowed upon humans; therefore, every human is also responsible for *tarbiyah* (to educate) **(Rahmat. J, and Muhtar, G, 1993)**

Family is the smallest social group in society. A family consists of a mother, father, and the children **(Shihab. M. Q, 1998)**. Parents are the closest educational institution to children whom they are always with since they were born. Therefore, parents have the responsibility to provide education for their children. Sayyid Sabiq al-Amawi, as is quoted in Rehani states that education functions as a medium to save humans from torment of hellfire. The only way to release mankind from doom and loss is to educate individuals to believe in Allah and to carry out His Sharia as well as encourage them to perform good deeds and follow the path of Islamic life in daily life **(Rehani, 2003)**.

Family education as taught by Prophet Muhammad is carried out through exemplification and habituation by parents. Parents are the role models of their children. Every child must admire his/her parents. Parents' behavior is always imitated by their children; therefore, parents should perform the best behavior to their children. Before eating, for example, parents read the Basmala; In the fasting month, parents encourage their children to wake up for sahur and salat regularly. For this reason, parents play a key role in inculcating religious values in their children from the time they are born until before they receive education in elementary school.

The love and affection that parents give to their children are the principles underlying the physical, social, and psychological aspects of every living creature **(An-Nahlawi. A, 1979)**. Allah implants these feelings in humans to maintain the survival of their kind on earth. These kinds of feelings enable parents to be patiently caring for, nurturing, educating, and paying attention to the needs of the children **(Ulwan. A, 1979)**.

Parents' love and affection towards a child can sometimes become so extreme that they prevent them from carrying out religious provisions. However, that feeling can disappear from time to time, as it ever happened to some parents in Saudi Arabia in the days of ignorance (Jahiliyyah period) by burying his daughter alive. Islam teaches that feelings should be within the provisions of religion. To Muslim parents, Islam reminds that love of Allah and His apostles take precedence and both parents are reminded that Allah's love lies in their love for their children. Education that is provided based on compassion is an obligation that should be accountable to Allah.

Parents are the first adults to assume educational responsibilities because in their early days of life or preschool age, children live in the midst of their mothers and fathers. It is from parents that children begin to recognize religious values. The foundations of life, life attitudes, and life skills should have been planted since children are living with their parents. Parents can introduce everything to children, either good or bad, either the language of love or hate, and either concrete or abstract concepts **(Aly. H. N, 199)**.

The explanations above provide a clear picture that the inculcation of religion values in preschool children can be done through modelling, compassion, and habituation. These methods are relatively effective for children because children have weaker physical and spiritual abilities compared to adults. In addition, children at preschool age are more likely to learn by doing or learn by imitating. A newborn child can see things. S/he cries and uses facial expressions and/or movements to communicate. Therefore, parents should learn the skills to be more responsive and communicative with the children to support their development. Children will be more or less influenced by the environment through interactions **(Patmonodewo. Soemiarti, 2003)**

According to Patmonodewo, as is mentioned above, a newborn child can even communicate with his/her parents through gestures or movements. In addition, the environment can greatly affect the child's personality. Thus, this provides a clear understanding that the inculcation of religious values in children can be done by parents from an early age. Gestures and movements received by children from their environment, especially from their parents, will impact on their development.

Education in Islam requires every educator to endeavor ways that are useful in shaping individuals' good traditions and moral education for purity of conscience, strengthening their willingness to work, empowering their five senses, guiding them in the correct path of life, encouraging them to perform good deeds and to avoid crime. Islamic philosophers have acknowledged the importance of character education in childhood period and of

familiarizing children with good behavior since they are young. They agree that children's education must receive full attention from an early age. The old adage says; Lessons in childhood are like painting on a rock, educating adults is like painting on water. It is therefore not surprising that modern education experts in the 20th century believe that children imitate the character of those who accompany them in the first 5 years of age.

Ibn Jauzi wrote in his book "Treatment for the Soul" that the main foundation of education is laid in early childhood. If a child is left to do something which is not good, a bad habit will be permanently instilled in him/her and it will be difficult to change it. This means that character education must begin at home, in the family, from an early age or in the childhood period. Parents should not leave their children uneducated and lost without a cause. From an early age, a child has to receive education so that s/he is not accustomed to bad habits. If children are left unattended, uneducated, unguided, bad habits will develop in them and it will be a hard work to change or restore their fine characters. In short, to maintain is better than to care (**Al-Abrasyi, M. A, 2003**).

According to Athiyah al-Abrasyi, it can be understood that the inculcation of religious values in children must have been done as early as possible especially in the first five years of children's life. Religious values can be instilled in children through the creation of an Islamic-rich family environment that can accustom children to Islamic behaviors and protect them from behaviors that are not in accordance with Islamic teachings and guidance. The process of inculcating the religious values in children should be carried out with love, compassion, and attention instead of oppression.

This thus implies that the inculcation of religious values in preschool children can be done in two ways. The first method is through modelling. Parents should become the role model of Islamic behaviors to their children; thus, they need to live according to the values taught in Islam. The second is through habituation. Parents should accustom children to living and behaving according to Islamic teachings, not through oppression, but by adjusting to the children's conditions and ability. In relation to this, Al-Gazali in M Athiya al-Abrasyi argues that children that are accustomed to good deeds from an early age will grow to be adults with fine and noble characters and be happy on earth and in heaven. On the contrary, a child who is accustomed to bad habits from an early age will suffer and be ill-fated (**Al-Abrasyi, M. A, 2003**).

Al-Gazali's opinions shows that a child must be provided with religious guidance by his/her parents from an early age. This responsibility must be carried out wholeheartedly; otherwise, children can grow with poor characters. The inculcation of religious values in preschool children through habituation and compassionate modelling will encourage children to achieve happiness in life and heaven. However, the abandonment of this process will lead children to a life full of suffering.

In line with this, Agus Sujanto states that parents and teachers can assist children in; 1) carrying out responsibility based on their current physical and spiritual state, 2) following the rules in the family or in school, 3) expressing themselves using specific gestures through speaking, singing, reciting poems, moaning, and celebrating, 4) practicing movements correctly and appropriately through games (**Sujanto. A, 1988**).

Based on Agus Sujanto's opinion, it can be understood that the inculcation of Islamic values in preschool children can be done through training and teaching children how to develop their potential and behavior. The training must be adjusted to the children's current state of physical and spiritual being, so the ability of the children can function properly as it is in adults. In educating preschool children, parents should not be too hard nor too soft, but be just right. Parents should understand the potential of the child. Rapid sensory development makes many children take the initiative. Children begin to get involved with other people. Play is the activity most loved by children. As a result, parents have to think about how the pleasure of the child's activity is replaced by the exercises of prayer, moral discipline, and so on. Remember, preschool children like to imitate. They imitate all the behaviors they encounter. Obviously, habits and habituation developed in children at this period greatly determine the success of their education in the future (**Ramayulis. H, 2002**).

Therefore, according to H. Ramayulis's opinion, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the inculcation of Islamic teachings or values in children during preschool age and during the school age. In school, learning is mostly dominated by lectures, question and answer sessions, task assignment and discussion. On the other hand, before children receive formal education in school, religious values can be ingrained in children through modelling and habituation. Child development is not a thing that happens by itself. As is the case with plants, children develop well through training and caring. Training and caring for children is not an easy job but requires hard work from both parents in order that children can properly grow as an adult. To be able to achieve the proper development of their children, parents have to be able to fulfill their physical and spiritual needs (**Tadjab, 1994**).

Tadjab's argument implies that children's personality cannot develop by itself; instead it needs to be nurtured and cared for by the parents from an early age. So is spiritual development. Parents should be able to support their children's spiritual needs by inculcating Islamic values in them. Muslim parents should realize that children are the mandate of Allah, that is entrusted to them. Thus, they must not betray this promise. They must care for and

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educate their children properly to become adults that are strong in faith and noble in life. Children who are provided with proper education that is in accordance with what Allah has mandated in Islam will secure their place in Heaven. Conversely, if parents are careless in delivering Allah's message to their children, the Islamic nature of the child will be tarnished or even completely replaced by other faiths, such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism (Magi), or atheism (Mansur, 2005).

Mansur thus emphasizes the responsibility of the parents to provide their children with the teaching of Islamic teachings. Children must be educated properly and correctly because mistakes in children education will lead to fatality in their later stages of life. The "holiness" of the children should be maintained by parents through the process of instilling Islamic values in them. If parents fail to help their children develop Islamic personality, it is possible that children, in the later stages of life, can possess the personality of Jews, Christians, and Magi that will ultimately lead them to the torment of the hellfire. Thus, parents should take care of this responsibility and keep their promise to Allah.

The inculcation of religious values in preschool children can be done through habituation and modelling processes that have been adjusted to the children's current state of physical and spiritual beings. It is expected that through these processes, children can grow into adults with Islamic personality. Exemplary behaviors can also be taught to children through stories. Research by Ayu Helmy Rizqillah, Khamidun, and Nurussa'adah (2013), has found that kindergartners are highly enthusiastic about listening to impressive stories told by their teacher

Besides, environment and the intensity of parent-child relationship have a significant impact on preschool children's education. Preschool education also has a positive effect on children's formal education. This is consistent to the findings reported by Sylva, et al., (2004) proving that preschool education pedagogically affects children when they reach a school age. Furthermore, children's intellectual and social developments also depend on the quality of learning provided by the parents at home.

In addition to that, Mohammad Niaz Asadullah and Nazmul Chaudhury have discovered that children that receive education in Islamic schools can develop a more conducive attitude towards democracy compared to those who go to secular/non-Islamic schools (Asadullah. M. N. and Nazmul. C. 2010). Similarly, Wachira Mercy Wanja (2014) has found that children's morals can be affected by the attitudes of their parents and teachers. This finding corroborates with Kohlberg's theory on moral development stating that a child must develop an equal level of intellectual ability so that s/he can advance to a more developed level of morality. Therefore, religious education should be provided for preschool children and should become part of the national education curriculum (Mohed. M. Mokhtar et al., 2015). In conclusion, family education and education provided in Islamic schools have a positive effect on the inculcation of Islamic values or teachings in preschool children.

### 4. Conclusion

Based on the previous explanations, it can be concluded that preschool children are children in the age range of 0-6 years old who have not received formal education in elementary school. During this period, it is highly important to inculcate Islamic values in children. Islamic values refer to Islamic teachings that were revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad. The teachings of Islam contain rules on monotheism, sharia, and morals that are written on Qur'an and Hadith. The inculcation of Islamic values into preschool children can be done by parents through habituation and modelling processes that are applicable to the child's conditions and ability. In relation to this, parents should pay more attention to the inculcation of Islamic values in children at an early age or preschool age because whatever happens to children at this period determines the success of their development in the later stages of life.

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