CHILDREN EDUCATION ACCORDING TO ISLAM

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Abstract: The present study was a "comparative survey of children education according to Islam" that was conducted in order to explain the stability and durability of the Quranic principles in education programs. In this study, a qualitative method was applied and content analysis was utilized. The results indicated that Islam's educational methods can change in accordance with time and individual circumstances and requirements. Religious leaders (AS) as human guiders have referred to very constructive and good tips that parents can make use of in their children's Islamic and proper education. Since parents are the first and the most important educators of their children, they should do their best to educate blissful children by applying correct principles. Therefore, the word of the Holy Quran and religious leaders (AS) can be the best principles to be utilized in proper education of children.

Keywords: education; child; religion; ethics; society

1. Introduction

Children education is one of the necessary principles in human life, which is intentionally and sometimes unintentionally neglected. The present study was aimed at investigating children education according to Islam. The results of the study are meant to be used as guidelines for parents and educational practitioners. Children education means to provide necessary arrangements to actualize their capacities on the way of nearness to Allah. This requires knowledge and practical training. If parents attempt to transfer correct beliefs and create right behavior in their children, their blessing will be guaranteed and Allah will have His mercy on them. Parents have been assigned a great responsibility to transfer correct beliefs to their children because the effect of the beliefs that children acquire in their families on their future is inevitable. Educational practice in family is equal to protecting the children's divine nature. Providing this protection is a great educational and moral responsibility which can actualize the family's function if being fulfilled.

Children are like promising buds whose lifeblood is the pure seed of the nature and their growth substrate is the fertile grounds of the family and the society. However, these tender and sensitive buds can flourish and fructify if only they are provided with compassionate educational care and the sun of the truth (Mazaheri, 1998: 16).

2. Children education according to the Holy Quran

Education includes gradual breeding and perfection of a creature and converting the inner talents into actuality (Amini, 2005: 30). Identifying the effective factors in the trainee's personality in educating a righteous child is a significant issue (Aghatehrani & Heidari Kashani, 2009). One of the advantages and properties of the Holy Quran is that it is an educational book. All of the Quranic ayahs directly or indirectly deal with human education at different age groups. Quranic teachings on children education include:

2.1. Considering equality in expressing love to children

"When they said: "Truly, Yusuf (Joseph) and his brother (Benjamin) are loved more by our father than we, but we are a strong group. Really, our father is in a plain error. "Kill Yusuf (Joseph) or cast him out to some (other) land, so that the favor of your father may be given to you alone, and after that you will be righteous folk (by intending repentance before committing the sin)"1 (Yusuf/8 & 9)."
The abovementioned ayahs present an example of consequences of failure to express equal love to children. In these ayahs, we learned that jealousy encouraged Yusuf's brothers to nearly kill him, and their only reason in doing so was that they said, "Father loves him more than us".

### 2.2. Paying attention to healthy games and entertainments as the children's divine and natural need

The Holy Quran states, 
"They said: "O our father! Why do you not trust us with Yusuf (Joseph), - when we are indeed his well-wishers? Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and verily, we will take care of him. He [Ya’qub (Jacob)] said: "Truly, it saddens me that you should take him away. I fear lest a wolf should devour him, while you are careless of him. They said: “If a wolf devours him, while we are a strong group (to guard him), then surely, we are the losers”" (Yusuf/ 11-14).

The above ayahs indicate that Ya’qub did not reject his children's understanding that Yusuf needed entertainment so he accepted their request. Therefore, healthy games and entertainments are among divine and natural needs of children and they should not be prevented.

In another ayah, the Holy Quran refers to the play and race of Ya’qub's children:
"They said:"O our father! We went racing with one another"3 (Yusuf/17). In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) stated, "Child's playfulness in childhood is an indication for his/her increased wisdom in adulthood" (Ghazi Na'man: 194).

### 2.3. Not showing astray paths to children

According to the abovementioned ayahs, the Prophet (PBUH) stated, "Do not suggest them [children] to lie so that they do not tell you lies. Ya'qub's sons had not known that wolves could attack humans until their father told them so. And they learned this from their father"4 (Majlesi, 1855: 220).

Sometimes the children do not even think about astray paths, in these cases you should be careful that you do not suggest him such paths implicitly. For example, you can command your child not to hit the light with his ball, which indirectly makes the child aware of that this action is possible and his curiosity will be motivated that what would happened if the ball hits the light. However, Ya’qub told his sons that fact (that wolves can attack humans) because of his purity and innocence, but his astray sons misused their father's words.

### 2.4. Forgiving ad ignoring the children's faults if they are remorseful

"They said: "O our father! Ask forgiveness (from Allah) for our sins, indeed we have been sinners. He said: "I will ask my Lord for forgiveness for you, verily He! Only He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful"5 (Yusuf/97 & 98).

Children should test so that they can distinguish the right path from the wrong path. Children, teenagers, or youths have to use trial and error method in order to discover their needs, talents, and abilities. Therefore, error and mistake are inevitable and the children should be given second chances so that their talents and capacities can flourish.

### 2.5. Doctrinal guidance of children

"And (remember) when Luqman said to his son when he was advising him: "O my son! Join not in worship others with Allah. Verily! Joining others in worship with Allah is a great wrong indeed"6 (Luqman/13).

This ayah and the next few ayahs refer to a part of Luqman's advice to his son about monotheism, fight against polytheism, and ethics. These six pieces of advice that are expressed in six ayahs explain doctrinal issues, ethical
topics, and religious principles and responsibilities, for example, issues like intimate conversation with children⁷, preaching to the children⁸, and kind preaching not reproaching or belittling one⁹. Other ayahs that refer to human doctrinal guidance include ayahs 132 and 133, Al-Baqara. These two ayahs cover Ibrahim (AS) and Ya'qub's (AS) advice to their children about approaching monotheism and avoiding polytheism.

2.6. Advising children to respect their parents

"And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination. But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of him who turns to Me in repentance and in obedience. Then to Me will be your return, and I shall tell you what you used to do"¹⁰ (Luqman/ 14 & 15).

In the above ayahs, Almighty Allah recommends all humans to respect their parents and reminds that thanking them along His worship. A large number of ayahs deal with respecting parents especially mother, like (Luqman/14, Al-Ahqaf/15, Al-Baqara/83, An-Nisa'/36, Al-An'am/151, Al-Isra'/23, Maryam/14, Al-Ankabut/8, and Al-Insan/14).

2.7. Advising children to pray, enjoin to good, forbid from evil, and patience

"O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination"¹¹ (Luqman/17).

In this ayah, Allah talks about Luqman's advice for his children on performing worship and proper reaction in countering with social corruptions.

2.8. Teaching social etiquettes to children

Inviting to good behavior with people, prohibiting from pride and arrogance, and observing justice are among the social issues that are discussed in the Holy Quran. "And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful. And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys"¹² (Luqman/ 18 & 19).

Good behavior and fight against pride and arrogance are among the etiquettes of social life, which are reminded by Luqman to his children.

3. Children education in religious leaders' view

Islamic leaders' method of children education is a remarkable educational model. Islam emphasize on children's ideal future from the very beginning of their birth. Therefore, parents should attempt to educate their children well as soon as they are born because children are born with a pure nature and parents can raise it the way they like and prefer. Ali (AS) states, "The child's heart is like a bare land without any plantation and is ready to grow any kind of seed and accept whatever is planted in it"¹³ (Dashti, 2004: 372). Childhood and adolescence are the most sensitive periods of human life, and if the child is taught something in this period, he/she will never forget because "Learning in children is like carving on stone, which remains for years"¹⁴ (Majlesi, 1855: 224). In this regard, the family is like a university where lessons of life, humanity, ethics, or the opposites are taught (Foroughan, 2008).
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Another recommendation of religious leaders is to obligate children to observe good manners and ethics and use different opportunities to transfer experiences and advice to them. Infallible Imams (AS) would utilize every single opportunity to transfer their experiences to their children. For instance, Ali (AS) told his son Hassan (AS) about some invaluable points like introducing social ambiguities and deviations, advising to read about history, selecting favorite path, tolerating life crises and problems, establishing discipline in life, distinguishing friend from enemy, and respective the relatives (Nahjolbalagheh/Letter 31).

4. Parents’ responsibilities in educating their children

The greatest service that parents can provide for their children is to educate them well and teach them the correct way of life (Karimzadeh, 2009). Grown-up individuals possess information and experience that children lack. If grown-ups deprive children from their information and experiences, the children will lose a lot of appropriate and good opportunities (Ghaemi, 1989: 76).

4.1. Appropriate naming

Every word contains a meaning. Beauty and ugliness of words is directly dependant on their meaning. Although meaning is an arbitrary matter and is not much paid attention to in naming, it is evoked while being utilized. While a good name results in dignity and honor, a bad name can bring about shame and humiliation because one’s name is accompanying them until their death and the individual is always facing with its good and bad consequences.

4.2. Preparing halal aliment

As well as fulfilling the wife and the children's spiritual needs, the father should provide them with opportunities to reach healthy and correct physical development by preparing halal food. The effect of food on children, even before their birth, is inevitable. A Muslim should set a table, though simple, with halal and clean foods in order to correctly raise his children. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) considered halal jobs to be necessary for both Muslim men and women like other worship practices and stated, "Earning halal income is necessary for all Muslim men and women"15 (Majlesi, 1855: 9).

4.3. Creating a lively environment

Having a happy, lively, and cheerful environment is one of the most important needs of the children in their path toward success and prosperity. Parents should not deprive their children from having such an environment. Imam Sadiq (AS) introduced good behavior as one of the indications of faith perfection and stated, "All Muslims possess a kind of humor and vivacity"16 (Kolini, 663). He also stated that, "Allah loves those who cause humor and vivacity among the Muslims without using bad words"17 (Mohammadi Rey Shahri, 1983: 17).

4.4. Mother's milk

Paying attention to breastfeeding is one of the most important religious recommendations for parents. Almighty Allah has referred to the importance of breastfeeding in physical and psychological growth and orders children to thank their parents, "And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years"18 (Luqman/14). It is also stated that, "And We have enjoined upon man, to his parents, good treatment. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months"19 (Al-Ahqaf/19).

Ali (AS) considered breast mother as the most useful and blessed milk for children and stated, "No milk is more blessed than mother's milk for children"20 (Kolini: 40). Not only do mothers give physical strength to their children but also do they transfer their emotions, feelings, beliefs, and spiritual status to their children.
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4.5. Kindness to children
Children are the flowers of the life garden and their thirst can only be quenched by their parents' kindness. The relationship between kindness and the soul is as the same as the relationship between food and the body. However, kindness should be sufficient, with intervals, and various. Mere kindness in the heart is not sufficient and parents should express it (Parvaresh, 2008). Kindness is the relieving medicine for the heart and the best solution for educational inconsistencies.

4.6. Conversing with children
Children's understanding is limited and they cannot understand the meaning of all words. However, parents' talking to them is an indication of their care about their children. Parents can be the best model and teacher for their children (Panahi & Hosseini, 2010). Children consider their parents' care as a sort of kindness and love expression and respond to it with smiling and moving their legs and hands.

4.7. Avoiding irrational expectations
Tendencies, states, and the world of the children and adolescents should be paid appropriate attention, which should be taken into consideration by the parents while conversing and interacting with their children. Unlike the grown-ups, children do not understand concepts like commitment, duty fulfillment, and responsibility; therefore, parents should understand their world and avoid assigning them difficult tasks and questioning them.

4.8. Overlooking the children's mistakes
Parents should try not to have irrational expectations from their children. Sometimes they should overlook their mistakes and faults and do not reproach them all of the time.

4.9. Paying attention to the children's games and entertainments
Games and entertainments are among childhood needs. Games help the children's curiosity and internal powers flourish and bring about creativity and physical and spiritual development in them. By playing with their child as his/her partners, parents can not only boost his/her self-confidence and self-esteem but also teach him/her indirectly. However, parents should not indulge in playing with their children.

4.10. Exercise and healthy entertainments
Providing opportunities of happiness and lively movements and exercises is another need to be fulfilled for children. Parents are responsible for strengthening their children's spirit by paying attention to their games and entertainments. In religious leaders' (AS) tradition, exercising is introduced as one of the methods of entertaining and boosting the body and the soul. In addition to raise their soul, they did not neglect recreational and educational sports.

4.11. Teaching knowledge and ethics
Another responsibility that parents should take is to teach their children human ethics. In the Prophet's (PBUH) view, teaching ethics is one of the most important responsibilities of parents. Ali (AS) stated, "Father is responsible to choose a good name for his child and teach him/her ethics and the Holy Quran" (Nahjolbalagheh, Hekmat 399). He also stated, "No legacy is more precious than ethics" (Dashti, 2004: 546).

4.12. Necessity of spiritual education
In addition to teaching ethical and social behaviors, according to Imams (AS), children should be made familiar with religious education and spiritual points. Pleasant sound of monotheism is the first religious teaching that enriches the child's soul and guides him/her toward religion and spirituality. On the verge of their adolescence and adulthood, children get interested in religion and are equipped with a fertile ground for religious education.
4.13. Assigning responsibilities for children
If responsibilities that are appropriate for the children's abilities are assigned for them and they are helped in fulfilling them, their confidence will be strengthened and they will get prepared for taking bigger responsibilities. Moreover, children feel that their parents respect them and do not consider them as weak individuals.

4.14. Fulfilling the promises
Fulfilling the promises, even to the infidel, is among the characteristics of the religious leaders. This is more important while interacting with children. Children never doubt their parents' fulfillment of promise and always await the promised time. Any delay or breakage of promise can resent them and result in the devastation of their spirit.

4.15. Seeking independence
Paying attention to independence is one of the important educational points. Along with physical development and increase in age, peoples' expectations from the child rise and he/she should prepare himself/herself to play his/her role in the society. On the other hand, the child's dependence on hi/her parents, especially his/her father, is neither good nor always possible. While conducting proper and calculated supervision, parents should gradually create the opportunity for their children to be independent and boost their ability to manage their lives by assigning responsibilities for them.

4.16. Indicating the consequences of the children’s good deeds to them
Highlighting good deeds conducted by children is a spiritual encouragement and results in creation and enhancement of motivation and prepares them to do better and greater works. It is worthy that parents depict the consequences of their children's good deeds because they will gain more confidence for conducting greater works in the future.

4.17. Forgiving
Children are highly prone to make mistakes. They are at the beginning of growth path. They have not reached sufficient physical development nor is their wisdom perfect. Therefore, any kind of mistake and fault can occur in their behavior and speech. Parents and adults should accept this fact that their children are just small humans and expecting them a lot is wrong. As a result, adults should overlook their faults kindly and accept their apologies easily.

4.18. Overlooking the faults and neglecting
Mistake in children's behavior and deeds is not far from expectation. In addition to being sensitive and careful, parents should make use of the method of overlooking and neglecting which is an effective method because neglecting is an important educational principle. If children and adolescents are faced with their parents' punishment and reproach whenever they make a mistake, they will lose their credit and value. Moreover, constant reproaches can lead to the children's obstinacy and destroy the acceptance of advice.

4.19. Applauding
Applauding is effective in educating children and adolescents. Proper applauses can create motivation in children and prepare them for greater works. In fact, applauding is the ladder of success and progress.

4.20. Giving presents
Giving presents not only increases the love and passion of the present taker but also strengthens the passionate relationship between the two sides. It is also a sign of respect. Moreover, the present taker is being cared and feels pleased whereby his/her self-esteem and self-confidence will increase. Therefore, religious leaders (AS) have passed specific rules and principles about giving gifts on happy days and Eids.

4.21. Quitting obstinacy with children
Due to lack of necessary knowledge and sufficient understanding, children have many shortcomings and defects. They are likely to get obstinate with their parents and resent them. In such situations, the adults should tolerate the children and avoid mutual obstinacy and quarrel.
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4.22. Improving self-esteem
Strengthening the adolescents' personality can result in appropriate grounds for good characteristics and praised qualities. Therefore, another responsibility that parents should take is to strengthen self-esteem in adolescents, which can be accomplished in different ways. In this regard Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated, "Respect your children and treat them with good behavior" (Mirzaee, 2006: 432). Children who are respected and paid attention by the adults will be respectful and successful individuals and have self-confidence.

4.23. Choosing an appropriate job
Unemployment not only destroys inner talents of an individual and causes him/her to be lazy but also as a social crisis it directs the youth to different social and ethical corruptions. Therefore, an individual who is supposed to serve the community will become a trouble for it. Therefore, committed parents guide and help their children to choose appropriate jobs.

4.24. Helping with marriage
In Islam, marriage is a blessed issue and worship. By getting married, young couples take their first steps from selfishness toward altruism. They get out of selfishness and step into a new period of their lives. This way, they compensate for some of their shortcomings. Through marriage, their needs will be fulfilled. Some needs include generation survival, attainment of calmness, perfection, sexual need, social security, and spiritual and psychological needs. In Islamic texts, parents are ordered to take action about their children's marriage.

Conclusion
One of the advantages and properties of the Holy Quran is that it is an educational book, and its ayahs directly or indirectly deal with human education at different age groups. In Islamic leaders' (AS) teachings and speeches, there is deep emphasis on the effect of education on the structure of human personality, and there are a large body of principles and orders. Therefore, useful children can be educated for the society by following the Quranic orders and utilizing the infallible Imams' (AS).

The role of the family in educating the children is remarkable and affects all their aspects because children spend most of their time at home and with family members. In addition, family is the first place in which the children feel safe and is the first social institute that accepts the children and protects them. Therefore, parents should first correct themselves in order to have good children. They should also lean correct methods of educating their children.

According to Islamic teachings, parents are responsible to follow some principles in order to educate their children. These principles include: appropriate naming, preparing halal aliment, creating a lively environment, mother's milk, kindness to children, conversing with children, avoiding irrational expectations, overlooking the children's mistakes, paying attention to the children's games and entertainments, exercise and healthy entertainments, teaching knowledge and ethics, necessity of spiritual education, assigning responsibilities for children, fulfilling the promises, seeking independence, indicating the consequences of the children's good deeds to them, forgiving, overlooking the faults and neglecting, applauding, giving presents, quitting obstinacy with children, improving self-esteem, choosing an appropriate job, and helping with marriage.

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