

# The fundamental principles of child upbringing in islam: a historical perspective

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**Abstract:** This article examines the fundamental principles of child upbringing in Islam from a historical perspective. The study analyzes the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, explores the views of medieval Islamic scholars, and evaluates the role of Islamic civilization in shaping parenting practices. It also discusses their application in modern parenting practices.

**Keywords:** Islam, child upbringing, history, Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic scholars, education, family, ethics.

**Introduction:** Child upbringing in Islam has always been a central aspect of Muslim society. The Qur'an and Hadith provide clear guidance on raising children with moral values, knowledge, and ethical behavior. Throughout history, Muslim scholars and educators have emphasized the importance of proper child upbringing based on religious teachings. The role of Islamic civilization in shaping educational structures and family values has been profound, and understanding these historical perspectives offers valuable insights into modern parenting practices.

The Islamic perspective on child upbringing is holistic, encompassing not only religious and ethical education but also intellectual, emotional, and social development. This study explores how Islamic traditions have influenced parenting and education, focusing on historical practices, scholarly contributions, and the relevance of these principles in the contemporary world.

## METHODS

This study employs a historical-descriptive approach, analyzing primary and secondary sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Islamic texts, and modern academic research. Comparative analysis is used to examine the consistency and evolution of Islamic pedagogical principles across different historical periods. The study also considers the impact of cultural and societal factors on child-rearing practices within Islamic history.

Additionally, the research draws from interdisciplinary perspectives, incorporating insights from Islamic theology, history, pedagogy, and psychology. This multifaceted approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

## RESULTS

### The Foundations of Child Upbringing in Islam

Islamic teachings emphasize several key principles for child upbringing:

- Moral and ethical development: The Qur'an (66:6) instructs believers to protect themselves and their families from wrongdoing by instilling righteousness and faith. This verse highlights the responsibility of parents in ensuring their children grow up with strong moral values.
- Compassion and kindness: Prophet Muhammad (s.a.v) treated children with immense love and respect, encouraging their intellectual and moral growth. The Hadith states: "He is not one of us who does not have mercy on our young nor respects our elders." (Sunan Abu Dawood 4943)
- Pursuit of knowledge: Education is regarded as a religious duty in Islam, as evidenced by the Hadith: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim." (Ibn Majah, 224)
- Parental responsibility: Islam places great emphasis on the role of parents in shaping their children's character and ensuring their proper upbringing (Qur'an

31:13-19). Luqman's advice to his son in these verses serves as a model for parental guidance, emphasizing monotheism, gratitude, patience, and good conduct.

- Discipline with balance: Islamic teachings advocate for moderation in disciplining children, emphasizing guidance over harsh punishment.

- Practical skills and independence: Children are encouraged to develop practical life skills, preparing them for adulthood while maintaining a strong moral foundation.

According to Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, the responsibility of parents in raising children begins at an early stage. He emphasizes that children should be nurtured with love and care, instilled with both religious and worldly knowledge, and guided by exemplary moral conduct. In his works, he underscores that the foundation of a righteous society starts within the family, where parents act as the primary role models for their children. He further stated: "a child's heart is like a pure mirror, reflecting the values and actions of those around them" (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2010).

#### Contributions of Medieval Islamic Scholars

Prominent Islamic scholars made significant contributions to the philosophy of child upbringing:

- Imam Al-Ghazali: Stressed the importance of nurturing good character from an early age and integrating religious and secular education.

- Ibn Sina (Avicenna): Advocated for a holistic approach to education, incorporating physical, intellectual, and spiritual development.

- Al-Farabi: Highlighted the influence of social environment on a child's upbringing and the need for a structured educational system.

- Ibn Khaldun: Emphasized the role of discipline and gradual learning in shaping a child's personality and intellectual capabilities.

- Al-Tusi: Advocated for the role of mentorship and role models in child education, stressing the importance of leading by example.

- Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: Addressed psychological aspects of child development, discussing how love, discipline, and education should be balanced for optimal growth.

#### Historical Context of Islamic Upbringing

Throughout Islamic history, various periods have witnessed different approaches to child upbringing, shaped by the socio-political and cultural contexts of their time. The role of education and child-rearing was not only a matter of family life but also a fundamental aspect of the larger intellectual and religious

development of Muslim societies.

#### **The Early Islamic Period and the Rashidun Caliphate (7th–8th centuries)**

In the early years of Islam, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.v) and the Rashidun Caliphate, child upbringing focused heavily on the moral, spiritual, and ethical guidance provided by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Prophet Muhammad's (s.a.v) approach to children was deeply rooted in mercy, compassion, and education. His teachings emphasized the importance of nurturing children with kindness and teaching them the fundamental tenets of Islam, such as Tawhid (the Oneness of God) and good character.

Parents were encouraged to educate their children in the ways of the Qur'an and Hadith, and to lead by example, as the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.v) himself demonstrated. His practice of teaching the young and treating them with respect was foundational in setting a high standard for the upbringing of children in Muslim communities. During this period, education was primarily focused on religious knowledge, but as the Islamic empire expanded, it gradually included subjects such as science, law, and literature.

#### **The Abbasid Caliphate (8th–13th centuries)**

The Abbasid Caliphate marked a golden age for the development of Islamic education, with a significant transformation in the ways children were educated. This period saw the establishment of madrasahs (Islamic schools), which became centers not only for religious education but also for the study of medicine, astronomy, philosophy, and mathematics. Education during this era was both religious and intellectual, providing children with a well-rounded upbringing.

The Abbasids' commitment to knowledge was reflected in the writings of scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina (Avicenna), who placed great emphasis on the holistic development of children. In their works, the importance of nurturing a child's intellect and character, while balancing spiritual and secular education, was highlighted. This period is often seen as one where the ideal of the balanced education of the child — intellectual, moral, and spiritual — was firmly established.

#### **The Ottoman Empire (14th–20th centuries)**

The Ottoman Empire continued the traditions of education established by the Abbasids, with significant contributions to both the Islamic and secular educational systems. During this period, the family continued to play a central role in the moral and spiritual development of children, but the state also assumed responsibility for providing education to all

children, regardless of their social status.

In this context, the role of the father as an educator was deeply ingrained in Ottoman culture. The father was not only a provider but also a teacher, especially in rural areas, where the family was the primary institution of education. This approach was influenced by the teachings of Ibn Khaldun, who underscored the importance of social environment and the role of education in the formation of a child's character and intellectual abilities.

The madrasahs under the Ottomans continued to offer a blend of religious and secular studies. They provided children with a comprehensive education, including training in Islamic jurisprudence, logic, rhetoric, and the natural sciences. However, with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent influence of Western education models, the system of child upbringing began to evolve, incorporating elements of modern educational philosophy and pedagogy.

#### **Islamic Spain (Al-Andalus) (8th–15th centuries)**

In Islamic Spain, child upbringing was characterized by an integration of religious values and cultural knowledge. Education in Al-Andalus was highly advanced, with a focus on both religious and secular learning. Children were raised to be well-rounded individuals, with a deep understanding of Islamic teachings as well as a broad knowledge of the sciences, philosophy, and arts.

The city of Cordoba became a leading intellectual center, with numerous schools and libraries. Islamic Spain emphasized the importance of critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, traits that were encouraged in children. Scholars such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and Ibn Arabi contributed significantly to both Islamic theology and philosophy, reinforcing the idea that a child's upbringing should include a deep understanding of both religious and intellectual traditions.

#### **The Safavid Empire and Mughal India (16th–18th centuries)**

During the Safavid period in Persia and the Mughal era in India, the role of the family continued to be paramount in shaping the moral and ethical values of children. In these regions, the influence of Sufism played a major role in child upbringing. Sufi teachings emphasized spiritual development alongside moral and intellectual growth, highlighting the importance of compassion, humility, and self-control.

The Mughal Empire, known for its cultural and intellectual achievements, also contributed to educational practices. The Mughals were instrumental in establishing madrasahs and schools throughout the empire, integrating the principles of Islamic education

with the local culture. Children in Mughal India were taught not only the religious sciences but also the arts of governance, warfare, and administration, preparing them for leadership roles in society.

The historical development of child upbringing in Islam shows a continuous evolution, from the early years of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.v) to the flourishing of educational systems in the Abbasid, Ottoman, and other Islamic empires. Each period emphasized the importance of a balanced approach to child upbringing, integrating religious, intellectual, and social education. The insights from these historical periods continue to offer valuable lessons for contemporary child-rearing practices, underscoring the enduring relevance of Islamic teachings on child upbringing in shaping well-rounded, ethical, and knowledgeable individuals.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Islamic upbringing provides a well-balanced framework for raising ethical and responsible individuals. In contemporary society, the erosion of family values and increasing moral challenges highlight the necessity of returning to foundational Islamic teachings.

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf underscores the impact of parental neglect on moral decay, asserting that “parents who fail to instill Islamic values in their children contribute to societal degradation” (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf (2011)). His perspective aligns with modern psychological research that emphasizes the crucial role of early childhood education and parental involvement in character development.

Furthermore, historical insights from medieval Islamic scholars remain relevant today. For example, Al-Ghazali's integration of religious and secular education is echoed in modern discussions on holistic education. Similarly, Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on discipline and structured learning resonates with contemporary pedagogical theories on gradual learning and behavior reinforcement.

Thus, Islamic child upbringing principles offer not only spiritual guidance but also practical methods for addressing modern educational and moral challenges. The integration of these teachings with modern methodologies could enhance contemporary parenting and education systems.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The study highlights that Islamic teachings on child upbringing have been deeply embedded in Muslim societies for centuries. The emphasis on moral development, knowledge acquisition, and community responsibility has shaped generations. The wisdom of past scholars, the guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith,

and the insights of contemporary Islamic thinkers all reinforce the importance of a structured, ethical, and balanced approach to raising children.

Applying these historical insights in modern contexts can contribute to raising well-rounded, ethical, and knowledgeable individuals in today's rapidly evolving world. Islamic teachings offer timeless values that can be adapted to address the educational and moral needs of the present and future generations.

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