

Parenting Approaches Based on Stories from the Quran

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Abstract

Parenting technique is one of the most important aspects in raising children in a family. However, effects of technological developments and influence of Western thoughts and also parents' lack of exposure to parenting knowledge especially knowledge based on Islam, has caused parents to be more inclined towards Western parenting models, thus abandoning more suitable parenting guidelines based on the teachings of Islam. Without realizing, the Quran through many of its stories have shown its own parenting techniques which should be followed by Muslims to raise and educate their children. Thus, this study attempts to identify the parenting methods extracted from stories in the Quran. This study is a qualitative study that involves gathering of data related to tafseer of Quranic stories from primary and secondary sources, and comprehensive analysis were made to produce a parenting approach based on Quranic stories. Parenting approach based on the Quran is a perfection of Islamic parenting methods which are commonly practiced currently, in an effort to improve and solidify the Muslim parenting styles, at the same time providing the best alternative for the best parenting method suited for Muslims.

Keywords: Parenting, Islam, Quranic stories, parents

Introduction:

Education in a family is a very crucial element that needs great attention from parents, as commanded by Allah SWT in verse 6, Surah al-Tahrim:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا

Meaning: "O you who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell)"

Ibn Kathir (2000) interpreted this verse by stating that obey Allah SWT, fear evil and order your family members on this by giving reminders that can distance yourself from hellfire. This verse shows that the end outcome of education in a family is to avoid hellfire and enter paradise. Thus, this ultimate goal needs accurate education techniques and strategies in accordance to Allah SWT's revelation guidelines.

However, a good education solely cannot be delivered to the children if the parents raised them recklessly without clear parenting guidelines, what more as a Muslim family. Therefore, parenting knowledge is one of the knowledge that has to be mastered and practiced as the basis in raising children in this globalization era. Parenting skills result in teaching, nurturing and guiding correctly that play an important role in determining the well-being of a family (Rozumah & Rahimah, 2008; Voydanov & Donnelly, 1998).

Today's Muslim parents face many conflicts, among them in determining the best parental approach to be applied onto children, until they choose the Western approach compared to the Islamic approach (Fauziah Hanim, et.al: 2009). What people don't realize is that the Western community is still searching for their purpose of family life and having offspring (Hoghghi: 2004). At the same time, the Quran as the revelation and guidance to mankind, surely offers guidance in parenting responsibilities.

However, upon general observation, the number of Quranic verses that touch on the roles and

responsibility as a parent for children is scarce, compared to verses on the responsibilities of children towards their parents. This is an important question which answer we must seek. Besides, according to al-Syarqawi (2001), roles of fathers in stories in the Quran are seen to be more dominant, with character descriptions and statements being clearer compared to roles of mothers. This reality has to be scrutinized and analysed because the common parenting approach in the society emphasized a balanced approach between the mother and father. Thus, a study on the stories found in the Quran is one of the methods to identify the parenting approach implied in the Quran through the characters of mother and father in the collection of Quranic stories.

CHARACTERS OF MOTHER AND FATHER IN QURANIC STORIES

The Quran is the words of Allah SWT where in each verse, word and letter carry meanings and lessons as guidance to mankind. The same goes to the stories written in it. Contemporary scholars have defined Quranic stories as stories of the earlier people and not limited to stories of the prophets, like Ashab al-Kahfi, owner of two orchards, *ashab al-ukhdud*, Talut and Jalut etc. Whereas stories related to the seerah or the life of Prophet Muhammad SAW are not considered parts of Quranic stories (Sulaiman Duqur, 2012).

Every character mentioned in the Quran plays a certain role in a story, whether the main character or not, male or female. Every character serves its own purpose and lesson for mankind of all times because the purpose of Quranic stories is to show Allah SWT's greatness and obligations of humankind to devote themselves to Allah only. Thus when every character is analysed, it delivers a certain message, to be emulated or stay away from.

The same goes with parenting matters, even though the Quranic verses that mention parenting approaches is hardly stated, there are many parent characters in the stories in the Quran. Father roles are found in stories of Luqman al-Hakim, Prophet Ibrahim AS, Prophet Nuh AS, Prophet Yaakub AS, Prophet Zakariya AS and the story of Syeikh Kabir which was interpreted as Prophet Syuaib AS. Whereas characters of mothers are seen in stories of Maryam AS, Ummu Musa, Asiah and Ummu Maryam.

1. Story of Luqman al-Hakim's will which was mentioned from verse 1 to 19 in surah Luqman clearly shows his important advice to his children that covers many aspects followed with aqidah, followed with obedience to sharia and goodness of character.
2. Story of Prophet Ibrahim AS which was stated from verse 15 to 13 in surah al-Baqarah that tells of the tribulations to him as a prophet, followed his role to build the Kaabah with his son, Prophet Ismail AS. Later the story was followed with his advice or will for his son.
3. The story of Prophet Nuh AS in surah Hud from verse 42 to 46 that tells of the conversation between Prophet Nuh AS and his son who is a disbeliever in the event of the big flood.
4. The story of Prophet Yaakob AS is mentioned in surah Yusuf from verse 4 to 6, where Prophet Yusuf AS told his dreams to his child that emphasized his wisdom as a father. Besides, in verse 133, surah al-Baqarah was also about Prophet Yaakob AS' will to his children.
5. The story of Prophet Zakariya AS stated in surah Maryam verse 5 to 13 illustrates the implores of a servant to Allah SWT to be granted an offspring as a continuation of his prophetic heredity.
6. The story of *Syeikh Kabir* interpreted as Prophet Syuaib AS in verse 23-28 surah al-Qasas showed the role of a father to his adult female children.

7. The story of Maryam, the mother of Prophet Isa AS in surah Maryam verse 16-29, who went through difficult moments as a pregnant woman without a husband. The verses describe the emotions of a woman and mother facing immense physical, emotional and societal pressure.
8. The story of Ummu Musa or the mother of Prophet Musa AS as stated in verse 7-10 surah al-Qasas depicts the story of a woman who surrendered completely to Allah SWT to save her son's life.
9. The story of Asiah, the wife of the Pharaoh in verse 9, surah al-Qasas that tells how she successfully influenced Pharaoh to care of the baby she found although her husband had ordered for the murder of all boys born under his rule.
10. The story of Ummu Maryam or the mother of Maryam AS stated in verse 35 to 36 showed the sincerity of intentions and nazar of a mother to give away her child to serve in the path of Allah.

These stories are analysed holistically with reference to each verse's interpretation based on the opinions of classic and contemporary tafseer scholars and from many genres of tafseer, whether tafseer bi al-ma'thur or tafseer maudhu'iy. In addition, comparison was also made to see the similarities and differences between Islamic parenting approach and Western parenting approach.

SPECIALTY OF PARENTING APPROACH BASED ON QURANIC STORIES

There have been many writings and studies on parenting methods, whether the Islamic or Western approach, or the combination of both. Through the studies of contemporary Islamic intellects for example Abdullah Nasih Ulwan who wrote *Tarbiyat al-Awlad fi al-Islam*, until this book is considered the main reference that discusses about Islamic parenting approaches. In this book, the approach he used is holistic on children's education that is the parents' responsibility. He emphasized the element of education that has to be delivered to children, including akhlaq (ethics) education, physical education, and sexual education.

Besides, he also stated an education method that can be applied which are leading by example, the regular method, method of advice and punishment, and method of monitoring. These have been interpreted from Quranic verses and many Hadiths by Prophet Muhammad SAW. The approaches he stated in his work actually covers the diversity of Islamic Sharia.

The al-Ghazali Model Parenting Skills (2015) which was developed by a few researchers based on Imam Ghazali's magnum opus stated that parenting skills cover four main domains which are: knowledge, parents' relation with Allah SWT, parents' relation with the children and parents' relation with others. According to this model, every domain is always connected to each other in empowering and perfecting the responsibilities of parents which is getting increasingly demanding these days. The main pillar of this model is the strength of knowledge and continued education that has to be applied as the basic element in children's education.

Belsky's model (1984) gives focus on parenting aspects influenced by characteristics and parents' personality, individual characteristics of the children and the social context that covers marriage, network, and parents' careers. This model is actually the result of a study which seeks to know about the two-way relationship between parents and children which is the process of influencing one another.

Moreover, Baumrind model (1966) which becomes a source of attention from researchers in this field,

stated that the parenting model styles is divided into three, which are authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. The authoritarian model style is shown by parents with high expectations of their children, besides strict controlling with no questions to be asked. For the authoritative model style, parents practice a firm approach which is balanced with tolerance and parents are always ready to listen and get involved with their children. Whereas for the permissive model, parents are seen to be too soft and passive that they let the children make their own decisions without much control and rules. These models were developed by Baumrind three times in 1967, 1971 and 1991. The things that expand in this models are the variation in the intimacy levels of parental control towards their children.

Lamb's Model (1997) is rather unique as it focuses on parents' involvement in children's education which covers three things which are firstly, time together or the father's involvement in interaction with the children in various activities. The second is easy to access and thirdly, responsibility. This model also stated that the determining factor of the father's involvement are motivation, skills, social support and consistent practice. This model also suggested that the father's involvement will happen at the optimum rate when the father is in high motivation, has good parenting skills, has a supportive environment towards his involvement also is not weakened by career and other things.

Basically, it is found that the parenting models mentioned above touches on many aspects whether general or specific. As an example, the parenting model by Nasih Ulwan is a good model that takes a holistic approach in the life of a Muslim. All the laws related to the roles of parents are stated clearly and in detail. The same goes with Baumrind model, where it has three approaches and the main style is practiced by parents in educating their children. Whereas the Lamb's model seems to focus on the role of father in the children's education.

Parenting approaches based on Quranic stories is actually more special for its focus on the important things in the methods of educating children. It touches many aspects including the function of mother and father, parenting goals, the needed approach and message to be delivered to children. However, it is only focused on the most important aspect to be done by parents and did not state all of the aspects. Thus, it can be said that parenting approaches based on the Quran can be compared to tips (*petua*). According to *Kamus Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, '*petua*' means instructions or guide that is applicable to do or achieve something effectively. As for the rest, Muslim parents can choose any methods suitable with their situations with the condition that they prioritize this parenting approach based on Quranic stories.

In other aspect, the Quran is the revelation or the words of Allah sent down to Prophet Muhammad SAW as the guide for the last of people. Muslims have to prioritize the obligations and orders contained in the Quran because it is the responsibility and proof of faith towards Allah SWT. Thus, this parenting guide based on Quranic stories can be assumed to be the main guide before other Western parenting models. This is not to say other models are not Islamic, and in fact everything is knowledge from Allah SWT, and there is nothing wrong in practicing other models with the parenting approach based on Quranic stories.

CHARACTER AND PATERNAL APPROACH IN QURANIC STORIES

Father Being More Dominant than Mothers

Through the analysis on the verses stated above, it is found that paternal characters are more dominant compared to maternal characters. This is because, there are more stories related to father and child compared to mother and child. There are characters of fathers in six stories compared to only four stories with characters of mothers. In this matter, Islam is not a religion that gives full authority to males but Allah granted *qawwamah* or leadership to males suitable with their nature and disposition. They have the physical strength and their own calibre compared to women who have their strength in emotions than physical strength. According to Sayid Qutb (2004), leadership and calibre are given to men on the basis

that it eases and smoothens the management of an organization as how an organization operates. While companies need to be managed by certain leaders, the same goes with family institutions which are the important institutions in a community and country.

In addition, characters of fathers in these stories display different situations. Some situations are peaceful, while some situations come in conflicts between the father and child, father handling a conflicting child, also situations where the father is carrying out a mission for the ummah, and situations where the father is in a helpless state. Whereas characters of mothers are focused on situations of the mother with a young child, or before the child is born. These situations given in the Quran surely provide signs that fathers are pictured in multiple situations whereas mothers are focused on young children. It can be concluded that Allah SWT teaches us about the roles and responsibility of the father is more important and holistic compared to mothers, because the mother is the follower or helper to the father.

This may be a bit different from norms of our society where the roles of both father and mother are the same and balanced in raising and educating children. The theory of Family Functionality and *Australia of Statistical (ABS) Model* stated that the influence of the integrity factor (family functionality) and parenting skills are the main signs of the psychological well-being of the parents and children (Amran Hassan, et.al, 2014). This theory does not separate or differentiate between the roles of both father and mother, but showed that balance needs to exist between the two parties.

In this challenging times, added with the norms of wives working outside of their homes, the roles of fathers in controlling and managing the household is extremely important. He is not only responsible in providing basic physical needs of the family, but also play a role in determining the direction of education and giving attention to the children. In this matter, Lamb's Model (1997) can be used as a strong basis in this statement.

Father as the Source of Main Reference When Facing Conflicts

The most important story that shows the importance of the father to be made the reference when the children face conflict is the story of Prophet Yusuf AS and his father Prophet Yaakub AS. This may not happen spontaneously, unless the father has a good relationship with his son that creates a feeling of trust and comfort to confide his problem with the father. This is proven with the use of word (يا بني) by Prophet Yaakub AS to his son Yusuf AS. Such names used is very gentle and showed that Prophet Yaakub's heart was very close to his children, added with love to his son who has yet to understand what truly matters and what does not (Al-Sya'rawi, 2001).

It is also the role of the father to increase his prayers to Allah SWT for the goodness of iman (faith) in his children. The prayers asked must focus on those things, and not only on the worldly affairs like health and success in life and examinations. The prayers by Prophet Ibrahim AS and Prophet Zakariya AS to be granted offspring are also proof of their consistency in praying that finally Allah SWT granted their prayers even though their situation seemed impossible to have a child. However, it has to be remembered that their main purpose of praying for a child specifically is as a continuation of the struggle to spread the words of Allah, and not just as the inheritors of their wealth and honour.

Father has to Invite Children to Serve the Ummah

This is very important to be done by fathers so that their thoughts and struggles will be continued by their children and the next generation. The meaning of 'serving the ummah' is an action or practice of an Islamic, which is any activity that brings mankind back to knowing and putting themselves as the servant of Allah SWT. This action is not limited to family activities only, but more than that, it involved things that benefit the local community.

This approach is clearly shown through the story of Prophet Ibrahim AS with his son Prophet Ismail AS together built Baitullah which is Kaabah. Imam al-Tabari explained in his tafseer work that the process of building Kaabah is the commitment, effort and teamwork by both the father and son. In a hadith narrated by Bukhari which means:

عن ابن عباس قال: جاء -يعني إبراهيم- فوجد إسماعيل يصلح نبلا من وراء زمزم. قال إبراهيم: يا إسماعيل، إن الله ربك قد أمرني أن أبني له بيتا. فقال له إسماعيل: فأطع ربك فيما أمرك. فقال له إبراهيم: قد أمرك أن تعينني عليه. قال: إذا أفعل. قال: فقام معه، فجعل إبراهيم يبنيه، وإسماعيل يناوله الحجارة ويقولان: "ربنا تقبل منا إنك أنت السميع العليم". فلما ارتفع البنيان، وضعف الشيخ عن رفع الحجارة، قام "على حجر، فهو مقام إبراهيم، فجعل يناوله ويقولان: "ربنا تقبل منا إنك أنت السميع العليم".

He said, "O Ishmael, Your Lord has ordered me to build a house for Him." Ishmael said, "Obey (the order of) your Lord." Abraham said, "Allah has also ordered me that you should help me therein. Will you help me?" Ishmael said, "Then I will do." So, both of them rose and Abraham started building (the Ka`ba) while Ishmael went on handing him the stones, and both of them were saying, "O our Lord ! Accept (this service) from us, Verily, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." (2.127). When the building became high and the old man (i.e. Abraham) could no longer lift the stones (to such a high position), he stood over the stone of Al- Maqam and Ishmael carried on handing him the stones, and both of them were saying, 'O our Lord! Accept (this service) from us, Verily You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (2.127)

(Hadith narrated by Bukhari)

Through the hadith above, it can be found that Prophet Ibrahim AS as a father tried as much as he can to use the best way to persuade his son to join him, by using the sentence: "Will you help me?" and not directly with "Come with me build the Kaabah" etc. Here can be seen a father not wanting to force through words, but in reality forces his son through the act of leading by example in addition to kind words of invitation and persuasion. It resulted in the child having no choice but follow his father with much willingness.

Fathers Always Need to Remind Their Children on Faith

Certainly every parent would want every child to be a believer of Allah until the end of his life. Thus from the guidance of the Quran, through the stories contained it, Allah SWT showed the common practice of parents in doing two things with the mission that the offspring and generations to come will always be in faith (iman) and Islam.

The first thing is that the father will always give advice and reminders to his children about important matters as a Muslim. A father should always try to complete and guide his child in things that has to be practiced and things to stay away from (Al-Razi, 2000). According to Al-Sya'rawi (2001), the advice by Luqman in the surah showed him as a true man and have given reminders to people previously. The process of giving reminders and advice is indirectly showing the involvement of a father in raising and educating his offspring. This will result in the children feeling more ease in receiving the role of the father in their lives and can reduce anti-social acts in the children's lives (Culp. et.al, 2000).

However, fathers should give advice and reminders by firstly putting importance on more important things like aqeedah, followed by advice on ibadah (worship) and akhlaq (ethics). Yet, many Muslim parents in Malaysia easily give advice to their children on worship and ethics compared to aqeedah. This has to be corrected.

The second thing is that fathers have to give will of faith to their offspring. According to Al-Tabari (2001), Prophet Yaakub AS not only ordered his children to stay firm in Islam, he also made it a will. The sign of will is stronger than the sign of any ordinary order. Besides, a will is not tied to certain time and

place, and showed that this call is high and big. Prophet Ibrahim AS' will in verse 133 surah al-Baqarah does not mix with other wills, indicating that it is an important matter to be given attention. On the other side, this is also like making an oath for the children to always worship Allah SWT as a Muslim as long as they live.

MATERNAL CHARACTERS IN STORIES FROM THE QURAN

Mothers Have to Show Strong Emotions and Love

If paternal characters based on Quranic stories are mostly displayed through dialogues, maternal characters are portrayed oppositely. Characters of mothers have no direct dialogue stating advice to their children, but only dialogues with other characters. What is clear is that monologues also occur in Quranic stories of mothers.

The story which is most obvious is the maternal character through the story of Maryam AS. Maryam AS was tested with huge tribulations. She went through depression when she got a pregnancy without a husband. Later she went through more calamity in form of physical pain as she struggled to give birth alone to Prophet Isa AS. After that, it was the societal pressure by the society who looked down on her state.

Pressure after pressure she faced put her in a dire situation. However, it never crossed her mind to shield her shame by acting beyond boundary because her great faith in Allah SWT. Thus, she does not focus on her difficulties towards the child she carried and gave birth to. She focused on the powers that created the baby inside her, which is Allah SWT. As a result, she was able to face the difficulties by leaving them completely to Allah SWT.

The story of Ummu Musa or the mother of Prophet Musa AS shows the maximum effort of a mother to save her child from being a sacrifice of the Pharaoh. Even though the decision to release her child into the river Nile did not guarantee his safety, Allah SWT gave her the inspiration to do it. However, Ummu Musa did not just surrender to Allah SWT, she also made her daughter watch the basket carrying Musa AS floating in the river. At that moment, Allah SWT recorded in the Quran that her heart was empty. It means her heart and emotions truly depended on Allah SWT for the safety of her son Musa.

From both these situations, it can be concluded that the strength of emotion and love from a mother to her child is very important as a mother. Love and strength of emotion are shown through a mother's actions to ensure her child is safe and protected. Thus, the appropriate action for a mother to show love is through good actions, and not only focused on words or nags.

Good actions here cover physical and emotional for the children like food and drinks, moral support like hugs, smiles, sacrifice of emotions and consistent prayers, in addition to necessary words. From these stories, it is evident that Allah SWT is All-Knowing that a mother's nature is to talk. Thus, Allah SWT has focused here that mothers have to prioritize love in form of actions compared to words. Runchkin, et.al (2000) stated that the power of emotions that exist in a family is a factor that determines the prosperity and stability of a family.

CONCLUSION

Parenting approaches is one of the most important things in raising children in a Muslim family. Based on the stories in the Quran, the most important role is played by the father. The father has to become the source of reference when children face conflicts, as the example for the children, and also has to invite the children to give service to others. In addition, the importance of fathers to always communicate with

children is heavily emphasized so that they can empathize with the children's feelings and finally result in a comfortable and harmonic relationship between them. Other important roles by a father is to always advice and give reminders on faith for the children. The most important thing to be done by mothers is to always show as much love according to their nature towards children in the form of actions and not only words. Mothers have to control their words and speak only when it is necessary. The parenting method showed through the stories of the Quran is very special because it only focuses on the most important thing and most needed compared to other things. Moreover, in addition, whatever good approaches and suitable can be applied as long as this method is the priority.

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