

STIMULATING CHILD DEVELOPMENT: PROPHETIC PARENTING VIEWPOINT

Niken Kusuma Hapsari

Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

nikenkusumahapsari@gmail.com

Abstract: Early childhood, or in specific, the period of age zero to six, is the golden period in which many major developments in children take place. Families are considered to be the first and the most important support system to facilitate those developments. However, amidst the overwhelming information regarding parenting over the globe, parents can be left indecisive in choosing the most appropriate strategies to nurture and support their children's development. This qualitative study explores the prophetic ways to stimulate children development, including 5 (five) development areas, including: (1) cognitive development, (2) language development, (3) motor and physical development, (4) socio-emotional development, and (5) moral development. It was found that there are several similarities between the prophetic ways in stimulating children with those founded by scholars in early childhood education or child psychology. Parents can follow Rasulullah's steps in nurturing young children, such as by breastfeeding babies until the age of two and weaning them afterwards, inviting children to discussions, telling stories about Rasulullah s.a.w. and his companions, communicating effectively with children, playing with young children, showing affection to them, and teaching them that Rasulullah s.a.w. is the main role model in life.

Keywords: child stimulation, child development, prophetic parenting

INTRODUCTION

Major development in human life mostly takes place during the first six years of their life, which termed as child development. Child development covers five areas, including cognitive, language, motor and physical, socio-emotional, and moral development which mostly influenced by genetics, prenatal development, and environmental factors. Cognitive development is the development ability to think, analyse, and solve various problems and concepts¹. Language development

¹ Fadlillah, M. and Pangastuti, Ratna. "Parenting Style to Support the Cognitive Development of Early Childhood". *Jurnal Iqra'* 7(1). 2022. 156-163.

refers to the development of capability in comprehending and using language to communicate². Motor and physical development is related to the development of fine and gross motor skills. It is highly necessary for children to execute their daily activities. Socio-emotional development refers to developing the capability to understand and regulate inner self and interacting with others. Lastly, moral development can be defined as the development of skills in understanding the concept of right and wrong, which then using those skills to make appropriate judgement from moral viewpoint.

Even though, there are possibilities in which children in the earlier years of their lives, for example age 2 to 6, already enrolled in early childhood education institutions, such as day care, baby school, or preschool, it does not hinder family role as the main caretaker of young children. Families, or in specific parents or caregivers, play pivotal roles in stimulating child development.³ It is mainly due to the proximity they have with young children. Therefore, to make sure children grow optimally, parents need to be educated and to actively educate themselves about various parenting practices so they can assist children growing up in the best and the most supportive environment. There are many approaches or literature providing suggestions for parents and teachers to stimulate child development. Those approaches include Montessori, Reggio Emilia, High Scope, Waldorf, and many more. However, most of them were derived by western scholars. Parents, especially those who are Moslem, need guidance on how to stimulate their child's development wholly while keeping the urgency to instil Islamic values to their children from a young age.

This qualitative study offers insight on how prophetic parenting views child development and ways to support it. It is expected that this study can provide valuable insight for parents and educators, especially those who sought references surrounding the issue of stimulating child development from Islamic perspective. The main reference for this library research is *kitab Atfalu Al-Muslimin Kaifa Rabbahum an-Nabiyu Al Amin Salallahu 'Alaihi Wa as-Salam* which was written by Jamal Abdurrahman.

FIND AND DISCUSSION

Despite various parenting styles, approaches, or strategies shared and implemented over the globe, parents and educators have to understand that Prophet Muhammad has shown many ways to nurture young children in Islamic

² Fellowes, Janet and Oakley, Grace. (2016). *Language, Literacy, and Early Childhood Education*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

³ Khuluqi, Hasanah, and Moh Mashudi. "Relevansi Konsep Pendidikan Keluarga dalam Al-Qur'an." *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 8, no. 2 (2020): 67-82.

ways before the death of prophet Muhammad, both implicitly and explicitly. Those acts in which Rasulullah taught his followers about how to parent and support child development were recorded in two Islamic fundamental texts – al Quran and hadith. Thus, it is obvious that Muslims worldwide should no longer be worried on how to raise their children for Rasulullah already showed and left many practical ways for parents and educators to copy so they can ensure the quality/sustainability of pious Moslem generations. Those ways Rasulullah did to nurture or parent children in Islamic ways then are known as a term called ‘Prophetic Parenting’.

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Cognitive Development.

Islam puts a big emphasis on the importance of nurturing young children carefully and thoughtfully so that they can grow into knowledgeable and pious generations. This is not only aimed to fulfil Allah Swt’s command, to continue the development of Islam as a religion, but also as one of the ways in which parents can be rewarded in the afterlife.⁴ Hence, it is crucial for parents to understand the way Prophet Muhammad Saw taught his followers to support cognitive development in young children. In specific, there are at least three ways of Prophetic Parenting strategies to be incorporated by parents, educators, or other main caregivers in order to stimulate children cognitive development, which are described as follows. First, *Breastfeeding babies until the age of two and weaning them afterwards*. The command to breastfeed babies for two years was understood from surah Al Baqarah verse 233, which was written as follows. “And the mother should breastfeed their children for two complete years for those who want to complete the period of breastfeeding.” From this verse, it can be understood that breastfeeding is necessary and beneficial, for both mothers and babies. It transfers, not only nutrition, but also love and calmness, which is found to be effective to help brain development.⁵ This is in line with what researchers in brain and neurology discovered so far that breast milk affects a child’s brain extraordinarily. Besides, it is rich in nutrients which eventually boost child development.

Second, Inviting children to discussion. Inviting children to discussion can instil curiosity and critical thinking in children.⁶ This act is also encouraged in Islam.

⁴ Jamal Abdurrahman. (2022). *Aṭfālu Al-Muslimin Kaifa Rabbāhum an-Nabiyyu Al Amīn* Ṣalallahu ‘Alaihi Wa as-Salām. Aqwam.

⁵ Merali, S. (n.d.). From Marriage to Parenthood: The Heavenly Path. Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org/marriage-parenthood-heavenly-path/chapter-9-breastfeeding>.

⁶ Amalia, E. R., & Khoiriyati, S. (2018). Effective Learning Activities To Improve Early Childhood Cognitive Development. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 4(1), 103–111. <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2018.41-07>

“Everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges. The ruler who has authority over people, is a guardian and is responsible for them; a man is a guardian of his family and is responsible for them; a woman is a guardian of her husband’s house and children and is responsible for them; a slave is a guardian of his master’s property and is responsible for it; so all of you are guardians and are responsible for your charges.” [[Sahih al-Bukhari](#)].

This hadith implicated that parents hold the highest the responsibility in taking care of children. They are the ones who have to teach them so they can grow on al-fitr, becoming intelligent, and obey Allah and follow Rasulullah s.a.w.⁷

The term ‘cognitive development’ refers to the way children’s ways of thinking develop and alter overtime, which are generally affected by both internal and external factors, such as genetics, environment, and socioeconomic background.⁸ Cognitive development can also be defined as the development of children’s skills in perception, comprehension, reasoning, intuitive thinking, making judgement, and language.⁹

According to Jean Piaget, there are four major stages in human cognitive development. Those stages include: 1) Sensorimotor Stage (Birth to 2 years old). This is the phase where infants try to make sense of the world around them using their sensories. They use their physical actions to gain knowledge about their surroundings. 2) Preoperational Stage (2 to 7 years old). In this phase, children start to be able to do symbolic thinking. Their thinking capability also develops to the stage where they can differentiate different time concepts, for example, the concept of past and future. They can recall memories and imagine things, which then affect the way they play and learn. 3) Concrete Operational Stage (7 to 11 years old). Children in the Concrete Operational Stage begin to do logical thinking, where they can make sense of concrete events. Some more complex thinking skills, such as, classifying, seriation, conservation, are also started to be conducted by them in this point. 4) Formal Operational Stage (11 years old to adulthood). In this stage, the ability to think in an abstract, idealistic, and logical manner is developed more notably. Adolescents begin to manipulate ideas in their head independently and this will develop continuously until they reach adulthood.

⁷ Jameela Ho. (2016). *Five Basic Principles on Islamic Parenting*. Accessed on 14 September 2022 from <https://productivemuslim.com/islamic-parenting/>.

⁸ Santrock, J.W. (2014). *Child Development: Fourteenth Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

⁹ Rollè, L., Gullotta, G., Trombetta, T., Curti, L., Gerino, E., Brustia, P., & Caldarera, A. M. (2019). Father involvement and cognitive development in early and middle childhood: A systematic review. In *Frontiers in Psychology* (Vol. 10, Issue OCT). Frontiers Media S.A. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02405>

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Language Development

Language development is highly crucial to be paid attention to since it is related to the way humans communicate.¹⁰ Language development starts when babies are born and it is much linked to physical growth, which in specific, is brain growth.¹¹ When children start to understand language and how to use it in daily life, they will actively make an effort to communicate their thoughts and needs to others. Communication in young children comes in various types, starting from crying, pointing, to making complete sentences.

The achievement of language milestones in young children can happen in different timing from one to another. It is hugely affected by many factors, including genetics, socioeconomic background, and geographical location. However, in general, according to John W. Santrock, it can be classified into several stages, as follows: Communicating by crying from birth (0 months), Cooing (2-4 months), Starting to understand the first words (5 months). First words can be different between children in different countries. However, they typically mention words related to their parents or their main caregivers, such as 'mama' (mother) or 'dada' (father), Beginning to babble (around 6 months), Becoming language-specific listener (7-11 months), Starting to use body languages, such as, pointing onto something to show their intention (8-12 months) and starting to comprehend few more words, Speaking first words one by one (13 months), Vocabulary highly grows at around minimum 50 words (18 months), Starting to make two-words sentences (18-24 months)

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Language Development, follow: First, *Telling stories about Rasulullah s.a.w. and his companions*. Telling stories to young children can stimulate language development. In this type of activity, children get the chance to directly learn different kinds of vocabularies and the way to assemble and incorporate them in daily life. This is proved in line with one of the Quranic verses. "And all that We relate unto thee of the story of the messengers is in order that thereby We may make firm thy heart. And herein hath come unto thee the Truth and an exhortation and a reminder for believers." (QS Hud, 11:120)

Second, Communicating effectively with children. Research found that effective communication is one of the keys to many major developmental milestones in

¹⁰ Santrock, J.W. (2014). *Child Development: Fourteenth Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

¹¹ Al-Harbi, S. S. (2019). Language development and acquisition in early childhood. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 14(1), 69–73. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v14i1.14209>

young children. It can stimulate language, cognitive, and even socio-emotional development in children.¹² Effective communication with young children including delivering information in sentences that can be easily understood by children.

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Physical Development

Motor and physical development is related to children's body and brain growth, which typically goes hand in hand with the development of diverse physical abilities in children. Motor and physical development is the growth and changes that occur in a person's body. The most obvious changes are changes in the shape and size of one's body. Motor development is a change that occurs progressively in the control and ability to perform movements obtained through the interaction between maturation and training or experience during life which can be seen through changes/movements made.

Motor development includes gross motor and fine motor development. Gross motor involves large muscles and fine motor involves small muscles. The movements made by children involve muscles and children at an early age are more likely to be active, prefer to experiment or practice, enjoy movement still involves the muscles, so motor development is central to other aspects of development.

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Physical Development, follow: *Playing with young children*. Allocating a certain amount of time to play with children, both indoor and outdoor, is proven to be effective in stimulating children's physical development. It can train children fine and gross motor skills. Playing with a loose part or any game that involves fingers can enhance fine motor skills, while some more intense outdoor games, such as those involve running, jumping, rolling, and many more. Rasulullah s.a.w. was also a man who was fond of children. His companions discovered that he was always kind, patient, and willing to play with children. Abu Hurairah narrated that one day, Rasulullah s.a.w. was with him but talked nothing to Abu Hurairah. Nevertheless, when they reached the market of Banu Qainuqa', he went to the tent of Fatimah and asked her, "Is the little chap (Al-Hasan) there? Afterwards, Rasulullah s.a.w said, "O Allah, I love him, hove him, and love one who loves him." (Muslim). Thus, it can be understood that this hadith shows how Rasulullah s.a.w was compassionate about children and loved to play with them as well.

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Moral Development

Teaching children that Allah's Messenger is the main role model. In terms of depth of character, he truly was a man with all the good characteristics. Rasulullah s.a.w. is the best exemplary on how to be a good moslem with great moral. Therefore, parents must teach children that Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. is the best role model Moslem can ever have. By knowing who to models, children will get the idea on how to be a well-behaved moslem generation. This notion is also in accordance with one hadith. Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) said, describing the rights: "The right of your child is that you know that he belongs to you and he is related to you in this world with his good and his evil. You are responsible for teaching him good manners, leading him towards his Lord and assisting him in obeying Him. Therefore, in regard to his affairs you must act like one who knows that he will be rewarded for being benevolent to him and will be punished for committing wrong to him.

Moral development includes the development of acts, feelings, and thinking skills which are anchored to the standard concept of right and wrong. According to Berns, in Pranoto, there are three factors that can influence children's morality, namely situation, individual and society (Pranoto & Khamidun, 2019). Those factors are explained as follows. 1) Situation refers to the circumstances in which children live. The norm that children observe in their daily life will eventually affect their morals. 2) Individual refers to the nature of children's characteristics. Every individual is born with their own distinctive natures. This innate modality will assimilate with the environment in which children live and, finally, affect their moral development. 3) Society refers to the whole community in which children live. The term 'society' here includes family, peer groups, schools, and everyone living around children. Children will undeniably observe their surroundings and try to conclude anything. Therefore, it is undeniable that society holds such a crucial role in shaping children's moral development.

According to Jean Piaget, the milestones of moral development consist of two stages: heteronomous morality and autonomous morality. First, *Heteronomous morality*. Children go through this phase at the age of 4 to 7 years of age. In this phase, children perceive that rules and justice are something unchangeable. Besides, they believe that it is unchangeable and people do not have power over it. Around 7 to 10 years old, children will start to show some signs of moral reasoning, where they start to make a few judgments of what is right and wrong. *Second, Autonomous morality*. Since age 10 years and older, children can perform autonomous morality. In this stage, children start to realise that rules are made by people. They also become more skilled in making judgments.

Even though it is debatable at first, however, research discovered that both parents and peer groups can hugely affect moral development in children.¹³ The notion that peer groups can influence children's moral development stemmed from the concept that in peer groups, the relationship tends to be horizontal, in which children can discuss and negotiate things. This type of relation is dissimilar with another type of relationship, such as parent-child relation. Parent-child relationship tends to be more strict, even though it still stimulates moral development in children.

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Social and Emotional Development

The word 'emotions' is often understood as intrapersonal capabilities in managing feelings towards any evoking situation.¹⁴ This element will definitely affect the way humans interact with each other and the way they represent themselves in the society. Hence, the term social-emotional development can be defined as the development of ability in comprehending the feeling of one's own and others, which then be used to make decisions and/or behave towards any circumstance.

Emotion develops since infancy. Lewis explained that there two emotions developing during human life, which are *primary emotions* and *self-conscious emotions*. Primary emotion appears during the first six months of infancy. This type of emotion covers surprise, interest, joy, anger, sadness, fear, and disgust. While self-conscious emotions involves a more complex process. It takes self-awareness and the ability to evoke the sense of 'me'. Self -conscious emotions includes the feeling of jealousy, empathy, embarrassment, pride, shame, and guilt.¹⁵

Prophetic Parenting Approaches in Stimulating Social and Emotional Development follow: First, *Growing confidence in young children*. Nurturing confidence in young children can increase children's self-worth and self-esteem. This action will eventually stimulate children's emotional development. In Islam, parents are asked to teach children. Additionally, in a hadith, it was explained that Rasulullah Saw once saw Abdullah bin Ja'far, who was commanded to sell things. This kind of command was basically a way in which his parents trusted his ability

¹³ Santrock, J.W. (2014). Child Development: Fourteenth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Education

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lewis, M. (2010). The emergence of consciousness and its role in human development. In W. F. Overton & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), Handbook of life-span development. New York: Wiley

in doing transactions and it would make him believe that he was capable and trustworthy, which in the long run, basically stimulated his emotional maturity.

Second, Showing affection to children. In a hadith, Abu Hurairah r.a. reported that al-Aqra' bin Habis saw Allah's messenger s.a.w. kissing Al-Hassan (the Prophet's grandson). He (al-Aqra') said: "I have ten children, but I never kissed any of them." Whereupon Allah Messenger s.a.w. answered: "He who does not show mercy (towards his children), no mercy would be shown to him."

CONCLUSION

In order for children to grow optimally, the role of parents in stimulating children's growth and development is very important. Parents need to understand well the milestones and factors that support children's growth and development, which include cognitive development, language development, physical motor development, moral development, and socio-emotional development. In stimulating the various elements of child development, parents can also insert Islamic values. Thus, children's growth and development can run optimally, as well as their understanding of Islam. Parents can do this in various ways, such as breastfeeding babies until the age of two, inviting children to discussions, telling stories about Rasulullah s.a.w. and his companions, communicating effectively with children, playing with young children, showing affection to them, and teaching them that Rasulullah s.a.w. is the main role model in life.

References:

- Abdurrahman, Jamal. (2022). *Aṭṭālu Al-Muslimīn Kaifa Rabbāhum an-Nabiyyu Al Amīn Ṣalallahu 'Alaihi Wa as-Salām*. Aqwam.
- Al-Harbi, S. S. (2019). Language development and acquisition in early childhood. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 14(1), 69–73. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v14i1.14209>
- Amalia, E. R., & Khoiriyati, S. (2018). Effective Learning Activities To Improve Early Childhood Cognitive Development. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 4(1), 103–111. <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2018.41-07>
- Fellowes, Janet and Oakley, Grace. (2016). *Language, Literacy, and Early Childhood Education*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Jameela Ho. (2016). *Five Basic Principles on Islamic Parenting*. Accessed on 14 September 2022 from <https://productivemuslim.com/islamic-parenting/>.

- Khuluqi, H. & Mashudi, M. (2020). "Relevansi Konsep Pendidikan Keluarga Dalam Al-Qur'an." *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam* 8, no. 2 (2020): 67-82.
- Lewis, M. (2010). The emergence of consciousness and its role in human development. In W. F. Overton & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of life-span development*. New York: Wiley
- Medina, John. (2014). *Brain Rules for Baby: How to Raise A Smart and Happy Child from Zero to Five*. Pear Press.
- Merali, S. (n.d.). From Marriage to Parenthood: The Heavenly Path. Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org/marriage-parenthood-heavenly-path/chapter-9-breastfeeding>.
- Rollè, L., Gullotta, G., Trombetta, T., Curti, L., Gerino, E., Brustia, P., & Caldarera, A. M. (2019). Father involvement and cognitive development in early and middle childhood: A systematic review. In *Frontiers in Psychology* (Vol. 10, Issue OCT). Frontiers Media S.A. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02405>
- Santrock, J.W. (2014). *Child Development: Fourteenth Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Zulminiati, Z., Hartati, S., & Roza, D. (2022). *The Urgency of Parents' Effective Communication in Improving Intelligence of Early Childhood*. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/125975273.pdf>