

Educating boys and girls equally: principles of gender-sensitive Islamic parenting

Dwi Ratnasari

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Indonesia

Luqyana Azmiya Putri

International Islamic University of Indonesia, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: dwi.ratnasari@uin-suka.ac.id

Abstract

Differential treatment of boys and girls in parenting and education has led to inequality. The reality of the dual roles often imposed on women demonstrates a complexity that is not easy to navigate. Childhood is an important period because it is during this phase that an individual's personality begins to form and children begin to explore themselves. This can be minimized through equal and proportional educational parenting patterns for both boys and girls. To that end, this study aims to explore the principles of Islamic parenting with a gender perspective. This paper describes the efforts that must be made in raising and educating children with a gender perspective. The research method used is a library research approach. The collected data was then analyzed using content analysis techniques. The results of the study show that one of the principles of gender-sensitive Islamic parenting is framed in the concept of *hadhanah*. Child rearing based on gender values provides equal opportunities for boys and girls to develop their potential in order to realize a just and peaceful society in accordance with the spirit of Islamic values.

Keywords: *Hadhanah, parenting, gender, equality.*

Abstrak

Perlakuan berbeda terhadap anak laki-laki dan perempuan dalam pengasuhan dan pendidikan telah menyebabkan ketidaksetaraan. Realitas peran ganda yang seringkali dibebankan pada perempuan menunjukkan kompleksitas yang tidak mudah untuk diatasi. Masa kanak-kanak merupakan periode penting karena pada fase inilah kepribadian individu mulai terbentuk dan anak-anak mulai mengeksplorasi diri mereka sendiri. Hal ini dapat diminimalkan melalui pola pengasuhan pendidikan yang setara dan proporsional bagi anak laki-laki dan perempuan. Untuk itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi prinsip-prinsip pengasuhan Islami dengan perspektif gender. Makalah ini menjelaskan upaya-upaya yang harus dilakukan dalam membesarkan dan mendidik anak-anak dengan perspektif gender. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan penelitian kepustakaan. Data yang dikumpulkan kemudian

dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis isi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa salah satu prinsip pengasuhan Islami yang peka gender dibingkai dalam konsep hadhanah. Pengasuhan anak berdasarkan nilai-nilai gender memberikan kesempatan yang sama bagi anak laki-laki dan perempuan untuk mengembangkan potensi mereka guna mewujudkan masyarakat yang adil dan damai sesuai dengan semangat nilai-nilai Islam.

Kata Kunci: Hadhanah, pengasuhan anak, gender, kesetaraan.

Introduction

Parenting is the primary setting for the formation of a child's identity, character, and potential (Awiszus et al., 2022). In the context of Muslim society, the parenting process is influenced not only by psychological and cultural dynamics but also by normative values derived from Islamic teachings (Rich et al., 2024). Although the Quran emphasizes the principles of justice, compassion, and collective responsibility within the family, parenting practices are often influenced by gender stereotypes that differentiate the treatment of boys and girls (Dwinandita, 2024). These differences can manifest in subtle ways, such as the division of tasks, emotional expectations, and opportunities for exploration, which then foster different internalization patterns in children.

Modern psychological studies show that gender identity is formed through social learning processes, emotional interactions, and family relationship patterns. Bandura, Baumrind, and Bem provide an important foundation for understanding how children form self-concept and gender identity within the family. Bandura's Social Learning Theory suggests that children imitate the treatment and expectations displayed by their parents (Bandura, 1977), making it easy for gender biases to be internalized. Baumrind's Parenting Styles assert that a warm and firm parenting style supports child development (Levin, 2011), but its application is often unequal for boys and girls. Meanwhile, Bem's Gender Schema Theory explains that children develop their perspectives on gender from early experiences at home (Bem, 1981), allowing stereotypes to limit their potential. These three theories, when read through the principles of justice and compassion in the Qur'an, reinforce the need for Islamic parenting that provides equal space for every child.

The Qur'an presents several parenting narratives that emphasize dialogue, justice, gentleness, and the development of potential without discrimination, such as in the stories of Luqman, Ibrahim and Ismail, the family of Musa, and the family of Imran. These narratives demonstrate that Islam provides an egalitarian foundation for parenting, so that gender bias is not a religious teaching, but rather a social construct that needs to be corrected. Therefore, this study seeks to re-examine the principles and practices of parenting through an integration of modern developmental theory and Qur'anic values to formulate a more equitable Islamic parenting pattern for boys and girls.

Previous research on parenting in Muslim families has shown that religious values have a significant influence on child development, but their implementation is often mixed with cultural norms. Krauss et al. found that religious parenting practices can support the well-being of Muslim adolescents, but the effect is highly dependent on the community context (Krauss et al., 2014).

Spiegler et al. (2016) showed that religious identity-based parenting shapes children's cultural orientations, especially when the family's social status provides a more equal space for emotional involvement. Meanwhile, Muarifah's research revealed that Islamic parenting styles in mothers can reduce adolescent aggression, but did not consider gender aspects (Muarifah et al., 2023). A study (Mas'udah, 2025) emphasized the importance of gender awareness in family relationships, but did not highlight its implications for parenting. Thus, studies that explicitly integrate Quranic values and psychological theory to formulate Islamic parenting patterns with an equality perspective are still rare.

On the other hand, developmental psychology studies show that bias in family interaction patterns

can influence a child's self-concept and social development, which can then conflict with the goals of Islamic education, which emphasize holistic character formation (Godleski & Ostrov, 2020). However, studies that systematically integrate gender theory, parenting theory, and Qur'anic values to formulate Islamic parenting patterns explicitly based on equality are still limited. This gap provides an important foundation for this research to offer a more comprehensive conceptual mapping.

This study selects three main discussion focuses, namely the basic principles of parenting in Islam, the integration of gender theory and parenting psychology with Islamic values, and an analysis of gender-aware Islamic parenting patterns. These three focuses will be used to formulate a conceptual framework that can serve as a basis for parenting practices that are equal and in line with the guidance of the Qur'an. This study answers three main questions, namely 1) how the basic principles of parenting in Islam are understood through the values of the Qur'an, especially regarding justice, compassion, and parental responsibility, 2) how modern psychological theories on gender identity formation and parenting patterns can be integrated with Islamic values to build an egalitarian parenting framework, and 3) how gender-aware Islamic parenting patterns can be formulated through an analysis of the principles of the Qur'an so as to be able to correct gender bias in childcare practices.

Method

This study uses library research methods to explore the principles of gender-aware Islamic parenting (Flick, 2010). Data collection was conducted through critical reading, noting relevant sections, and organizing information according to the research focus. Data collection was conducted through in-depth literature searches and reviews of various primary and secondary sources relevant to the themes of childcare, gender, and education from an Islamic perspective. Data sources included literature such as scientific works in the form of books, journal articles, and other academic documents discussing the concept of parenting (*happiness*), gender construction, and children's education.

A rigorous literature selection process was conducted to ensure that only authoritative sources that supported the research objectives were used. The primary focus of this collection phase was to obtain a comprehensive overview of the discourse on childcare in Islam. With this approach, the researcher sought to establish a strong theoretical foundation for the analysis.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis. (*content analysis*) This study aims to identify, interpret, and categorize key themes from the collected literature. The analysis begins with classifying the literature into specific categories, such as parental roles, children's rights, and the principle of equality. Next, each category is analyzed in depth to identify its relevance to the concept of gender-sensitive Islamic parenting. The results of the analysis are then critically interpreted to determine the extent to which Islamic texts support equal parenting for boys and girls. This process also considers the social and cultural context to ensure the analysis does not stop at a merely normative level. This technique was chosen because it can explore the deeper meaning of the text while simultaneously extracting applicable principles. Thus, the research results present not only classical normative views but also formulations relevant to contemporary needs. It is hoped that this research can provide a significant conceptual contribution in formulating Islamic parenting that is equal and just for children.

Finding and Discussion

Basic Principles of Parenting in Islam

Hadhanah in Islamic tradition is the main foundation that affirms that childcare is a religious mandate encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual care (Candra, 2022). In classical fiqh literature, hadhanah is understood not only as a process of care, but rather as a comprehensive effort to maintain survival, instill character, and ensure children grow up in an environment conducive to personality development. Scholars emphasize that every child is a gift from God and therefore has fundamental rights that must be protected (Alkouatli, 2023). This position demonstrates that parenting in Islam is not passive or merely a response to biological needs, but rather a process with a long-term educational orientation. Hadhanah then becomes a conceptual framework that unifies the roles of parents, the family environment, and the Muslim community to create conditions that encourage the holistic development of children. With this understanding, parenting in Islam stands as a value system that combines care, education, and moral instillation from the earliest stages of life.

The basic principles of Islamic parenting rest on the values of justice, compassion, and responsibility as the moral foundation that defines the parent-child relationship (Bensaid, 2021). Justice is understood as the attitude of providing rights and attention proportionally without gender bias, so that each child's needs and potential can develop without being limited by detrimental social constructs. Compassion is an element that animates the parenting relationship because it creates a safe emotional atmosphere, encourages dialogue, and facilitates the formation of morals. Responsibility complements the previous two principles by emphasizing that parenting is a shared responsibility of both father and mother, so that both are involved in educating and fulfilling the child's rights (Sanver-(Gürsoy et al., 2025). These three values form the foundation that enables balanced and humane parenting practices. They reflect the Islamic view that every child is a subject who must be treated with respect, whose needs must be met, and who must be guided to become individuals capable of living a dignified life.

Hadhanah also functions as a mechanism for protecting and empowering children, aiming to prepare them to face life more independently, ethically, and responsibly (Al Khirzin, 2024).

Parenting, from an Islamic perspective, does not stop at providing physical needs but encompasses intellectual, moral, and spiritual development that shapes a child's long-term quality (Multazam, 2024). The command to protect the family from mistakes and dangers, both physical and moral, emphasizes that family education serves to build character resilience and children's ability to understand the realities of life. Within this framework, empowerment is an inseparable part of protection, as Islam demands the growth of a generation capable of developing its potential without being hampered by limitations not based on divine principles. This awareness opens up space for equal parenting for boys and girls, as both are seen as trusts with the same spiritual and social potential to develop.

The relationship between parents and children in Islam is seen as an educational space that allows for the internalization of values through role models, dialogue, and emotional closeness (Susanti et al., 2023). This relationship positions parents as moral figures whose actions serve as a reference for children in understanding life and shaping morals (Ma'ruf et al., 2025). Islamic tradition places high value on both girls and boys, and this is reflected in the narrations that show how the Prophet treated both sexes with respect and tenderness. The existence of these principles indicates that Islamic parenting inherently encourages the creation of equal relationships, respects the dignity of children, and provides opportunities for them to develop their abilities naturally. Such a parenting relationship does not impose limitations based on gender stereotypes, but is oriented towards meeting the educational needs that are authentic and developmentally appropriate. Thus, the family becomes the primary environment that instills the values of equality, justice, and responsibility, while also being a space that frees children from gender bias practices that are not in line with Islamic teachings.

As a basis for developing gender-sensitive Islamic parenting, the Qur'an presents several parenting narratives that demonstrate the exemplary role of parents in educating, advising, protecting, and respecting children (Gambari & Olawale, 2023). These narratives are clear and explicit, making them a strong conceptual reference for formulating fair and responsive parenting values without gender bias. The following table summarizes examples of parenting directly mentioned in the Qur'an.

Table 1. Parenting Practices in the Qur'an that are Relevant to Equality

Aspect Parenting	Verse The Quran which Explicit	Narrative Content Parenting	The value that Shown	that Relevance for Gender Equality
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Education moral and rational	QS Luqman verses 13–19	Luqman advise his children about monotheism, morality, worship, patience, and social manners	Wisdom, dialog, formation character	Advice addressed to “children” without gender restrictions, emphasizing that education morals are universal
Softness in guidance	QS Maryam verses 16–36	Allah describe the relationship Mary and Jesus with tenderness, including the birth and delivery process message	Empathy, protection, tranquility	This story show tender care for mother and child, confirm that tenderness not a gender-specific trait
Parenting Based deliberation	QS Saffat 102	As Ibrahim dialogue with Ismail about the order of slaughter before take decision	Deliberation, award to child's view	Conversation show that children's voices are valued, so that the principle of dialogue can be applied to both boys and girls Woman
Protection physical and emotional	QS Al-Qasas verses 7–13	Moses' mother commanded to nurse, protect, and comfort him; Moses' sister was given the task of following Moses from afar	Courage, involvement family, protection	Al Qur'an Show that girl (Moses' sister) has an important role, confirm equal capacity in family responsibilities
Strengthening spiritual childhood since childhood	QS Ali Imran verses 35–37	Family Imran raised Maryam from infancy and entrusted her to the care of Zakariya.	Construction from an early age, attention, guidance spiritual	Maryam given education intensive, show that girl have full rights to knowledge and spiritual guidance

All of the examples above demonstrate that the Quran places children as highly valued subjects entitled to education, dialogue, and protection without discrimination based on gender.

This narrative provides a strong theological foundation for building an Islamic parenting style that is just, gentle, and oriented toward developing each child's potential.

Integration of Psychology, Parenting, and Islamic Principles in Childcare

Modern psychology explains that a child's gender identity is formed through cognitive and social processes that occur from an early age, so that early experiences within the family play a significant role in shaping how a child understands or constructs himself as a man. Bem's gender schema theory suggests that children organize experiences based on gender categories they learn from their environment (Bem, 1981), while Bandura's social learning theory asserts that children observe and imitate behavior modeled by their parents as part of developing their self-identity (Bandura, 1977). Interaction patterns such as giving praise, setting limits, or assigning specific tasks will shape a child's judgments about what is considered appropriate for their gender. Thus, modern psychology provides a theoretical basis for the idea that even small differences in treatment within the family can lead to significant differences in the development of a child's self-concept.

Parenting theory suggests that the quality of the parent-child relationship determines the emotional, moral, and social development that underpins a child's future behavior. Baumrind argues that a warm yet structured parenting style produces confident and self-regulated children, while authoritarian or permissive parenting styles can lead to behavioral problems and hinder development (Agbaria & Mahamid, 2023). Parental responsiveness, consistency, and emotional involvement are elements that influence how children view themselves and others. Therefore, parenting theory emphasizes that interaction patterns for both boys and girls must prioritize a balance between warmth and boundaries to ensure a healthy and harmonious child the development of both is optimal.

Gender bias in parenting typically emerges through unconscious parental interaction patterns, such as assigning different household responsibilities, managing children's emotions with unequal standards, or directing interests and activities based on stereotypes. Social psychology research shows that boys are often expected to be more independent and assertive, while girls are encouraged to be more submissive and emotional, resulting in different messages about their abilities and freedom of movement. Such biases are not always born of discriminatory intent, but rather stem from a culture that is inherited and passed on without critical reflection. This inequality leads children to internalize certain limitations, which influence their beliefs about their own potential. In the context of this research, understanding these biases is crucial for formulating Islamic parenting patterns more consciously and fairly.

The Islamic value of justice provides a strong moral framework for correcting gender biases that arise in parenting practices. The principle of 'adl' requires parents to treat children proportionally based on their needs and potential, not based on cultural assumptions about what is appropriate for their gender. The hadith and practices of the Prophet demonstrate equal respect for girls and boys, and the tradition of hadhanah (lawful trust) places both as trusts whose rights must be fulfilled without discrimination (Multazam, 2024). When the principle of justice is understood as an ethical obligation, parents have a foundation to review potentially biased

everyday practices and replace them with more equitable patterns of interaction.

The synthesis of developmental psychology theory, parenting theory, and Islamic values offers a conceptual foundation for developing Islamic parenting with an equal perspective. Psychology demonstrates how children's identities and behaviors are shaped through interactions, parenting theory explains how relationship structures influence development, and Islam provides moral guidelines that ensure that children's treatment is not influenced by social bias. These three principles converge in the idea that parenting should develop children's potential in a balanced way, build their self-confidence, and protect their dignity as human beings. This synthesis then serves as a foundation for research to formulate Islamic parenting principles that can be practically applied in educating boys and girls equally.

Analysis of Islamic Parenting Patterns with Gender Perspective

Fairness in parenting is understood as providing proportional treatment according to a child's developmental needs without bias based on gender. This principle is emphasized in Surah Al Maidah, verse 8, which commands humans to act justly because it is closer to piety. In Bandura's social psychology study, parental behavior serves as a model that is observed, imitated, and then shapes a child's self-concept (Bandura, 1977). If boys are given more space to explore while girls are restricted, both will internalize different self-values. Islam does not oppose differentiation of treatment as long as it is based on interests and developmental needs, but Islam prohibits discrimination that prevents children from reaching their full potential (Wenzing et al., 2024). Therefore, the principle of fairness is the main foundation of Islamic parenting with a gender perspective, as it ensures that each child receives developmental support commensurate with their capacities and needs.

Furthermore, through the principle of mercy, parenting should be built on warmth, empathy, and emotional responsiveness that is equally distributed to both boys and girls. Surah Al-Araf, verse 156, describes God's mercy encompassing all things, and this depiction serves as a guideline for families to emulate this breadth of compassion in their daily relationships. Baumrind's parenting theory suggests that warmth and responsiveness play a crucial role in shaping children's emotional regulation, empathy, and sense of security (Levin, 2011). However, in cultural practice, boys. Boys are often encouraged to suppress their emotions, while girls are given more space to express them. This imbalance not only affects emotional balance but also shapes patterns of self-expression that are inconsistent with developmental needs. By embracing compassion as a parenting value, responsiveness is no longer limited by gender constructs but is instead directed toward the individual needs of children as beings who should be treated with tenderness and care.

The principle of trustworthiness in Islam places parenting as a moral obligation that must be carried out jointly by both father and mother. Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6, commands families to protect themselves and their families, emphasizing that the obligation to guide children is not unilateral. Baumrind's theory and developmental psychology studies show that consistent involvement of both parents strengthens a child's emotional stability, discipline, and sense of security (Levin, 2011). However, cultures that place the mother as the primary caretaker often

overlook the father's crucial role as a closeness figure and role model. This imbalance can diminish the quality of a child's relationship with their father and limit the range of emotional and cognitive experiences necessary for optimal growth and development (Verniers et al., 2022). Islam, through the principle of trustworthiness, encourages the full participation of both parents so that children receive comprehensive support. Thus, collective parenting is not only a religious teaching but also aligns with scientific findings regarding the importance of two parenting figures.

Gender-aware Islamic parenting requires parents to provide children with ample access to develop their potential without being constrained by stereotypes that consider certain abilities only suitable for a particular gender. Surah An-Nisa, verse 1, which states that humans were created from a single soul, affirms the equal dignity and basic capacities of all human beings. In the androgyny theory introduced by Sandra Bem, role flexibility allows children to acquire richer social and cognitive competencies without being tied to rigid masculine or feminine labels (Eisend & Robner, 2022). Islam does not eliminate biological differences, but it rejects cultural restrictions that hinder the development of children's capacities. Therefore, girls have an equal right to learn leadership and adventure, and boys have the right to learn to care and express tenderness. When parents provide this space, they help children develop a more adaptive and empowered self-identity.

Protecting children's rights is a crucial part of Islamic parenting, including the right to a good education without gender discrimination (Supaat & Fa'atin, 2019). Developmental psychology studies show that equal access to education strengthens cognitive abilities, social skills, and future opportunities. Limiting education to one gender not only contradicts developmental principles but also violates Islamic values of trust and justice. Gender-sensitive parenting ensures that boys and girls receive equitable learning opportunities, enabling both to grow into individuals capable of meaningful contributions to society. By combining Islamic teachings, developmental theory, and a gender perspective, this parenting style enables families to build a strong foundation for the formation of an empowered and equal generation.

Conclusion

Gender-aware Islamic parenting is built on the principles of justice, compassion, responsibility, potential development, and protection of children's rights, all of which are firmly grounded in the Quran. The value of justice directs parents to treat children proportionally without limiting opportunities based on gender. Rahmah demands equal warmth and emotional responsiveness for each child, while amanah affirms that parenting is a collective obligation for fathers and mothers. The principle of potential development rejects gender stereotypes that limit children's learning space and experiences, and the protection of children's rights ensures equal access to education and moral guidance. Narratives of parenting in the Qur'an, such as the advice of Luqman, the consultation of Abraham and Ismail, and the care of Mary and Moses, demonstrate that the Qur'an provides ample space for the just and humane upbringing of children. These principles form the basis for formulating Islamic parenting patterns that can correct gender bias while supporting comprehensive child development. By integrating Islamic values and modern psychological findings, Islamic parenting with a gender perspective offers a relevant framework

for developing an empowered, moral, and equal generation.

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