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Moral Values In Prophet Muhammad's Communication With Non-Muslim Children

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Abstract

This paper explores the values of kindness and morality demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his interactions with children, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplifies noble character, especially through his compassion and tenderness, which he extended equally to all children. The study also highlights Islam's emphasis on the education and protection of children, viewing them as vital assets in fostering a harmonious society. Using a qualitative approach, this paper analyzes primary and secondary sources such as the Quran, hadith, and classical Islamic texts. The findings show that the Prophet's interactions with children embody high moral standards and kindness, providing a model for educating and nurturing them. Moreover, the study emphasizes how Islam's principles of justice and wisdom respect individual rights without compelling anyone to embrace the faith, including non-Muslim children.

Keywords: Moral Values, Good Manners, Non-Muslim children, Children's communication, Majesty

Introduction

Morality and ethics are fundamental in building harmonious and effective social relationships. In the context of Islam, good character is a reflection of the beauty of morality, which forms the core of a Muslim's personality. The Prophet Muhammad

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(PBUH) serves as the best role model in demonstrating noble moral values, especially in his interactions with children. He treated children with great love, gentleness, and respect for their rights, regardless of their religious background or social status. In his interactions with non-Muslim children, the Prophet (PBUH) showed the same level of care and compassion, reflecting the merciful nature of Islam, which does not compel anyone to embrace the religion. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) visited a sick Jewish child and kindly invited him to goodness. Furthermore, Caliph Umar al-Khattab (RA) upheld this principle of justice by not imposing financial burdens on non-Muslim children, reflecting equality and fairness in Islamic governance. Islam's emphasis on the protection and education of children positions them as valuable assets in society, and positive interactions with them foster a harmonious social environment.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach, focusing on text analysis from primary and secondary sources such as the Quran, hadith, classical Islamic texts, and scholarly works that explore Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) teachings and actions regarding children, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Through textual analysis, the study examines the language, themes, and moral principles embedded in these religious texts, providing deeper insights into the Prophet's interactions with children. To further enhance understanding, historical contextualization is used to interpret the Prophet's actions within the socio-cultural and religious environment of 7th-century Arabia, drawing connections between his practices and their modern-day applications. Additionally, comparative analysis compares the Prophet's moral values with broader Islamic teachings and other cultural or religious systems, revealing the universality and specificity of Islamic ethics concerning children's rights and care. The research takes an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating perspectives from Islamic studies, ethics, education, sociology, and communication to ensure a comprehensive understanding of children's communication in Islam. Data is collected from documented religious texts, academic articles, and scholarly commentaries, with interpretations conducted in light of the *maqasid al-shariah* (objectives of Islamic law) to ensure alignment with principles of justice, mercy, wisdom, and human dignity. Through these qualitative methods, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the moral values guiding the Prophet's interactions with children and their relevance in contemporary society.

The Moral Values and Character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

The word 'budi' originates from the meaning of sincerity, which arises from the heart due to feelings of compassion and empathy deeply rooted within. This profound sense of humanity gives birth to 'budi,' derived from intellect and wisdom, perceived as acts of kindness or service (Shamsudin Othman et al. 2015). Besides being associated with a person's wisdom, 'budi' also encompasses meanings such as morality, behavior, conduct, character, goodness, and virtue (Kamus Dewan 2005). Morality and 'budi' are two interrelated concepts that shape the character and behavior of individuals. Both serve as foundations for moral and social judgment in society.

Morality can be considered the basis for developing ‘budi,’ as ‘budi’ guides the application of moral values in daily interactions. A person with good morals tends to display high ethical standards, which strengthen social relationships and ultimately foster harmony in society. Every Muslim individual should maintain the beauty of their ethical conduct, as one's personality is reflected through the outward display of morality, not physical appearance. Morality reflects a person's behavior, whether good or bad. It also encompasses all aspects of life, as it is part of the teachings and demands of Islam that must be preserved to ensure a Muslim's character is well-guarded (Zulfahmi Syamsuddin & Wan Hasmah Wan Mamat 2014).

The Status of Children in Islam

The gradual development of human beings, from birth to death, encompasses profound wisdom. The childhood stage, in particular, holds a unique and cherished significance. Typically, a mother gives birth to one child at a time, with subsequent births occurring after a period of time. During this interval, the first child is given the proper care and education they need, highlighting the importance of the early years when children begin to learn and shape their identities. This formative phase plays a pivotal role in molding their future character, making it essential that they receive comprehensive education and guidance. Therefore, it is clear that educating children is of paramount importance as it directly influences their overall development and future potential.

In Islam, al-Qalyubi defines a child as one who has not yet reached puberty, or in other words, someone who has not yet matured or attained the stage of discernment (*mumayyiz*). This is evident when a child is still unable to perform certain actions without the help of others, such as eating, drinking, or self-cleansing (Hashim, Yusof, & Mohd Kusrin 2019). There are several other terms with similar meanings, such as ‘*sabiyy*’, ‘*ghulām*’, and ‘*tifl*’ (Ibn Manzur 1993). In the Quran, the term ‘*ghulām*’ is mentioned multiple times, as in the stories of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Zakariyya (AS). However, in these narratives, ‘*ghulām*’ refers to a young child, contrasting with the term's other meaning as a young man with emerging signs of maturity. Nevertheless, the use of ‘*ghulām*’ in these stories also reflects optimism or ‘*tafā’ul*’, symbolizing the child's potential to grow and become a fully matured ‘*ghulām*’ (Safiah Abd Razak 2018). Islam greatly values the rights and status of every individual. This ensures that every person, including children, receives their due privileges without harming others, all within the framework of Islamic law (Hashim, Yusof, & Mohd Kusrin 2019).

Children's Communication In Islam

Communication is the art of conveying ideas, information, and attitudes from one person to another. It can be described as the flow of information or ideas from an individual to the receiver or others. Communication, as a concept, has been widely discussed by many. Over the years, numerous definitions of communication have been proposed by scholars, researchers, and practitioners worldwide. In 1970, communication scholar Fran E.X. Dance, in his work "The Concept of Communication," identified over ninety-five different definitions of communication

found in scholarly literature. Moreover, various perspectives exist regarding the interpretation of communication. At its core, communication means sharing or having something in common. The Latin word ‘*Communio*’ is closely related and means friendship or common possession. As such, communication and closely related terms such as commune, communion, and communicant all imply sharing, participating, altering, or common ownership. Thus, when we communicate, we are essentially sharing ideas or information with the individuals we are interacting with. In conclusion, communication can be described as the process of sharing meaning (which may consist of information, ideas, feelings, images, numbers, symbols, etc.) from a source to a receiver through specific channels, with the hope of achieving shared understanding (Abdul Mua’ti @ Zamri Ahmad 2013).

Communication is one of the most essential and complex aspects of human life. It is a fundamental human activity that enables people to connect with each other in their daily lives, whether at home, school, work, or anywhere else. Communication permeates all aspects of life, including social, cultural, political, economic, health, education, and more (Noor Afzaliza Nazira Ibrahim et al. 2018). There are various types of communication, including verbal, non-verbal, intrapersonal, interpersonal, formal, and informal. Communication with children is crucial to their emotional, social, cognitive, and linguistic development. It involves interactions between adults, such as parents, teachers, and caregivers, with children, aiming to convey information, shape behaviour, and nurture their thinking. Effective communication with children requires a different approach than communication with adults due to differences in comprehension levels, emotions, and language abilities.

Children usually communicate to express their internal desires, for example, to state something, give instructions, or make requests (Farra Humairah Mohd et al. 2023). Communication with children has its own distinct features, including:

1. Use of simple language: Since children are still learning basic language concepts, communication with them should employ simple and clear language. Using overly complex or abstract words may be difficult for them to understand. The use of simple language is crucial to ensure that the message is effectively received by the listener. When communicating with others, especially in situations where we need to convey important information, explain a concept, or request cooperation, using language that is easy to understand is essential. Simple language reduces the risk of misunderstandings and conflicts in communication (Alifah Salsabila 2023).
2. Two-way interaction: Communication with children should be two-way, allowing them the opportunity to ask questions, respond, and express their feelings. This helps children feel valued and strengthens their self-confidence. In two-way interaction, children can ask questions or seek further clarification, which helps ensure that the message is accurately understood. When the message is correctly understood, misunderstandings are minimized. Mastery of effective verbal interaction within a linguistic culture includes the practice of greetings, offering congratulations, expressing thanks, declining invitations, giving or responding to compliments, and more (Awang Sariyan 2007).

3. Body language and facial expressions: The use of body language or gestures in communication requires a deeper understanding because body movements in certain areas or among different cultural groups can have the same meaning, while in some cases, they carry different meanings. The meaning of body language in a specific area or culture is usually determined through consensus among members of that culture, or in other words, it is conventionally agreed upon (I Nengah Mileh 2020). Human emotions are vividly expressed through facial expressions. When a person encounters an emotional event, their face often changes to reflect their feelings, even when words fail to describe their emotions. Children are particularly sensitive to body language and facial expressions. A smile, eye contact, and a warm tone of voice can create a comfortable and safe communication environment for children (Nadiatul Shakinah Abdul Rahman 2023).
4. Patience: Adults need to be patient and show empathy when communicating with children. This includes understanding their emotions and allowing them time to think and respond without rushing. In this context, Malay scholars of old would remind us, “Think before you speak, consult before you act.” This wisdom advises us to carefully consider our actions before making any decisions (Abdul Mua’ti @ Zamri Ahmad 2013).
5. Being a good listener: No matter how busy one is, when a child seeks attention, it is important to listen attentively. Set aside your work, make eye contact, and allow the child to speak. Ignoring them can lead to feelings of unworthiness and a lack of confidence. Listening attentively to children is the foundation of good communication. It not only helps adults understand what children are feeling or thinking but also teaches children that their opinions are valuable. A distracted listener fails to provide non-verbal feedback and often interrupts the conversation when they disagree or do not understand. Furthermore, they are easily distracted or overly influenced by differences in style, becoming judgmental. Moreover, an unfocused listener cannot distinguish between the main points and details and often assumes they already know everything important (Ambar Wulan Sari 2016).
6. Creating a positive atmosphere: A positive and pressure-free environment is crucial for effective communication. Children are more likely to open up when they feel comfortable and not judged. In the context of communication with children, barriers like a tendency to judge before understanding their point of view can be major obstacles. Children often have different ways of thinking and expressing their emotions than adults due to their developmental stage and limited life experiences. If adults quickly judge or dismiss a child’s views without making a genuine effort to understand the meaning behind their words or actions, this can hinder effective communication (Mohammad Md Yusoff & Moulita 2015).
7. Giving praise and encouragement: According to Wan Robiah Hj. Meor Osman (2015), praise is a common behavior observed in social interactions. Praise falls

under expressive language acts, which serve specific needs in communication contexts. Praise and encouragement can boost a child's motivation and self-esteem. Recognizing their efforts, even small ones, encourages them to continue striving and growing.

8. Using stories and games: Stories and games are powerful communication tools for children. They help convey values, concepts, and life lessons in a fun and easily understandable format. The method of storytelling is an extension or category of the method of wisdom and also falls under the method of "mau'izah hasanah" (good counsel). According to Nur Ahmad (2016), as highlighted in the method of wisdom, dawah should be carried out wisely and thoughtfully to inspire awareness in the audience (mad'u) to accept the dawah message. The method of wisdom is employed after considering knowledge, the condition of the audience, and the content as the presentation of the dawah message. Therefore, the storytelling method is one option used in dawah when it suits the audience's needs. In the context of children, storytelling is highly effective because children tend to be more engaged and can easily grasp concepts through stories. By using stories that contain elements of wisdom and moral values, dawah practitioners can instill early awareness in children about Islamic values. Stories from the Quran, the life of the Prophet, or moral tales can help children understand and internalize the message of dawah more deeply, ultimately shaping their character from a young age.

A Reflection of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Compassionate Values in His Interactions with Children

One of the most awe-inspiring qualities of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the profound mercy he extended to all children, without exception. His kindness transcended boundaries, embracing every child — whether Muslim or non-Muslim, boy or girl, healthy or unwell, from the wider community or his own family, whether gifted or with special needs. Each was met with the same level of care and affection. The Prophet's (PBUH) view of childhood elevated it to a place of special importance, where tenderness and compassion were paramount. His approach to non-Muslim children was equally extraordinary, characterized by a deep, unwavering kindness that commands universal admiration, praise, and respect.

1. Compassion for Children Even Before Birth

When the people of Ta'if openly opposed and rejected the message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), even going so far as to injure him by pelting him with stones, Allah SWT sent the angel of the mountains to offer assistance by crushing them with the mountains of Makkah, should the Prophet (PBUH) permit it. However, in his immense compassion and mercy, the Prophet (PBUH) responded with kindness. As narrated in a hadith recorded by Bukhari (2000), he said, "I hope that from their descendants will come people who worship Allah alone and associate nothing with Him." This story beautifully illustrates the boundless mercy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), not only towards his followers but also towards his enemies. Despite being harmed, he held no grudge

and instead forgave them, hoping for goodness to emerge from their future generations.

2. A Positive View of Children. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) viewed children through a lens of purity and goodness, seeing them as inherently innocent and untouched by sin. Children are regarded as beings free from wrongdoing, born in a state of natural purity, much like a blank slate (Yusliza Yakimir, 2018). In a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah and recorded by Bukhari (2000), the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Every child is born in a state of fitrah (natural disposition); it is their parents who make them a Jew, Christian, or Magian." Additionally, in a hadith recorded by Tirmidhi (1988), it is mentioned, "The pen is lifted from three types of people: those who are asleep until they wake, from the child until they reach puberty, and from the mentally challenged until they regain reason." Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) kindness and understanding toward children were unparalleled, emphasizing the importance of preserving their innate purity and showing them continuous love and compassion.
3. Compassion for Talented Non-Muslim Children. One of the remarkable ways in which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) engaged with non-Muslim children was his attention and care for their talents, regardless of their faith. This can be seen in the story of a non-Muslim child named Abu Mahzurah al-Jumahi, who was blessed with a melodious voice. In a well-known account, Abu Mahzurah and some young Quraysh boys overheard the azan (call to prayer) outside Makkah. Mocking the muezzin, they imitated the call, and among them, Abu Mahzurah's voice stood out as the most beautiful. He raised his voice in jest, but when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) heard him, he asked for the boy to be brought before him. Fearing punishment, Abu Mahzurah thought he would be sentenced to death. However, instead of anger, the Prophet (PBUH) gently placed his blessed hand on Abu Mahzurah's head and chest, showing him kindness and compassion.
4. This touching story, recorded in Sahih Muslim and other sources, illustrates the Prophet's (PBUH) remarkable openness and tender-heartedness towards children, irrespective of their background. In a narration from Hammad via Ibn Juraij, it is mentioned that the Prophet (PBUH) taught Abu Mahzurah the proper way to deliver the azan at al-Ji'ranah. According to Ibn al-Kalbi, Abu Mahzurah remained in Makkah and did not migrate, passing away sometime after Samurah bin Jundub (Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, 1994). This story beautifully highlights Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) compassionate and nurturing approach to children, valuing them for their talents and treating them with gentleness, regardless of their faith or background.
5. Deep Concern for Non-Muslim Children Who Were Ill. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed immense care and concern for non-Muslim children who were ill, always inviting them towards goodness with gentleness and compassion. Even after Islam had triumphed and the Islamic state was firmly established in Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) continued to give personal attention to non-

Muslim children, especially those who were sick. He would visit them, offering kindness and sharing the message of Islam in the most respectful manner.

6. One such example is narrated in a hadith recorded by Bukhari (2000), where a Jewish boy who used to serve the Prophet (PBUH) fell ill. The Prophet (PBUH) went to visit him, sat by his bedside, and gently said to him, "Embrace Islam." The boy looked towards his father, who was present at his side. His father encouraged him, saying, "Obey Abu al-Qasim (PBUH)." The boy then accepted Islam, and the Prophet (PBUH) left, saying, "Praise be to Allah, who has saved him from the fire." This story reflects the compassion and deep concern of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who not only cared for the physical well-being of the child but also extended his spiritual care, guiding him towards salvation with love and sincerity.
7. Non-Muslim Children Were Not Forced to Bear Financial Burdens or Taxes in an Islamic State. During the caliphate of Umar bin al-Khattab (RA), military campaigns were frequently launched to spread the message of Islam, and many lands were conquered, leading to the acceptance of Islam by large numbers of people. However, one of the unique aspects of Islam is that it does not compel anyone to embrace the faith. Those who chose not to convert and preferred to remain with their own religion were required to pay the *jizyah*, a monetary payment in exchange for protection under the Muslim state. This group became known as the *ahl al-dhimmah* (protected people).

The amount of *jizyah* was determined based on an individual's financial capability, with leaders setting the amount according to local customs and economic conditions. Importantly, Umar (RA) issued clear instructions to his officials in the newly conquered territories that *jizyah* should not be collected from women or children, as they were not part of the fighting class. The tax was only to be levied on adult men capable of defending the state. This policy reflects the fairness and compassion embedded within the Islamic system, where non-Muslim children were not burdened with financial responsibilities. Instead, the tax was proportionate to one's ability to contribute, demonstrating the justice and mercy central to Islamic governance.

Conclusion

The values of kindness and morality demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his interactions with children reflect his boundless mercy and compassion, which encompassed all of humanity, regardless of religious background or social status. In Islam, good character is the foundation of noble conduct, and the Prophet (PBUH) set an extraordinary example in his dealings with both Muslim and non-Muslim children. His compassion was evident in the care and attention he gave to children who were sick, talented, or non-Muslim, respecting their innate purity and treating them with tenderness and love. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never forced anyone to embrace Islam, offering individuals the freedom to choose their faith while respecting their rights within society. This principle was further upheld by Caliph Umar (RA), who ensured that non-Muslim children were not subjected to financial burdens or

taxes, reflecting the justice and wisdom in managing relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. These examples highlight Islam's recognition of children's rights and its emphasis on their education and protection as valuable assets to society. Through his exemplary conduct, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed that the beauty of noble character and moral values towards children contributes to social harmony, ultimately fostering a peaceful and prosperous society.

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