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## Teachers' Perspective on Parent-School Relationships for Moral Development of Young Children

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### Abstract

The morality of an individual forms the basis of personality and needs to be fostered and nurtured. Although morality exists in every phase of life, it is apparent that it is more effective if it starts at a young age and must be afforded exceptional attention by parents. This research aimed to obtain the views of Islamic Education teachers who teach in Pre-schools of the Ministry of Education Malaysia through in-depth interviews on what role parents should play concurrently with teachers to establish the sound moral foundation of children at this stage. The study's findings revealed that parental involvement was imperative in forming pre-school children's morality which one could achieve through good communication between parents and the school, particularly with teachers and school-based parental involvement. The conclusions also discovered a need for parents to be proactive in building good relations with the school if they want to accomplish these agendas succeed

**Keywords:** Morality Development, Parent-school Relationship, Parent, School Communication, School Based Parental Involvement, Young Children.

### Introduction

A person's life begins in a state of ignorance or a state of instinct. The growth of an individual from infancy to adulthood is influenced by the lineage and parenting style acquired by them since childhood (Hamzah et al., 2014). Hence, it is the adults' responsibility to educate them to become a significant part of society. When education acquired is inadequate, then the future structure of society is at stake too.

Earlier scholars have given some guidance in educating children. Ulwan (1996), in his book, *tarbiyah al-Awlad fi al-Islam*, has outlined seven aspects of education that need to be performed by each party responsible for children. These aspects are religion, morality, physical, mental, emotional, social, and sexual education. Meanwhile, El-Muhammadiyah (1991) divided children's education from five to seven years into three parts, including the spiritual aspect, which covers religious education and moral education, and mental aspect

and physical aspect. According to these two scholars, the gravity of children's early education is on forming manners and morality.

Hanifah (2010) asserted that children who have not reached puberty had not reached the age of *mukallaf* that puts them responsible for all actions. Accordingly, it is the adult's obligation to the mother and father to provide complete morality education and motivate the overall potential in children.

Along with modernity, parental responsibilities towards children seem to have been forgotten and placed on the accountability of educational institutions alone (Tan & Maizura, 2020). This is due to the change in orientation and structure of the current family. It bears a notable transformation process due to the impressions of globalisation that necessitate high commitment from parents to meet the needs of the family (Langier, 2016). Parents have been preoccupied with work affairs. Thus, the reduced time with children has caused their moral deterioration (Langier, 2016). Further, a study by Sonia et al (2015) reported that parental factors that neglect the position of religion and the sense of its institutions have also worsened the circumstance.

A school is where children discover moral knowledge and nurture innate instincts through communication between teachers and peers, which is the grounds of the educational process (Korotaeva & Chugaeva, 2019). Nevertheless, moral formation efforts transpire in the school environment and classroom through learning experiences and include other social factors involving many parties in many places (Munawwar & Azmi, 2016; Zaharah et al., 2017). Hence, a more holistic strategy linking schools, families, and the local community can significantly influence stand-alone programs such as classroom-based approaches or parental involvement alone (De Palma et al., 2012; Snyder, 2014). This finding follows Lapsley (2014), who maintained that morality formation efforts should be comprehensive, hold multiple components, consider the overlap of diverse ecological contexts, and commence as early as possible.

To be added, Hornby and Lafaele in 2011 show how PI in school-based activities is an opportunity to better parent-school relationships and improve school climate and enhance student performance and personality. Graham-Clay (2005) also noted that teachers who encourage positive communication with parents would find an increased level of trust in the broader community.

The morality learned from home taught by the parents will be brought to school. Therefore, the adults around the children in these two institutions need to work concurrently. It is critical to developing noble morality in children. Confusion will result in children assessing the truth when morality is only highlighted at school but not at home. Nonetheless, if the morals taught in school are given reinforcement at home, such teachings will become more consequential and practical, which is parents' key responsibility (Passy, 2005).

### **Research Methodology**

This research used a qualitative study design that involved an in-depth interview method to collect critical data. Researchers employed a multi-case study design that included the collection of information systematically, clearly and exhaustive related to the views and experiences of pre-school Islamic Education teachers regarding the role and involvement of parents in the establishment of pre-school children's morality. This study was classified as a multi-case study because it included different Islamic Education teachers but had similar characteristics. In addition, the study was also conducted at different locations and times. The

use of in-depth interview methods confirms that studies are done naturally on the phenomena involved (Gall et al., 1998).

The primary study participants involved three Islamic Education teachers (GPI) applying the purposive sampling method. The characteristics of participants for this study were (i) Islamic Education teachers who taught pre-school; (ii) served more than seven years in educating preschool children (iii) served in the preschool of the Ministry of Education Malaysia; (iv) agreed to be involved in the study. The primary study participants of this study included three Islamic education teachers who taught in Minister of Education pre-schools. Analysis of interview data as primary data involves systematic processes such as preparing field notes and transcripts, coding, tracking and forming main themes, ascertaining sub-themes and sub-themes, determining expert evaluation and Cohen Kappa level, formatting matrix table and theme analysis, and presenting the results of the study

### Result and Finding

The study's data confirmed a need for parents to maximise their involvement to form the noble morality of pre-school children. Proper and genuine involvement with the current needs of children could help Islamic Education teachers to shape children's morality through close cooperation between teachers and parents could ensure the formation of morality that children formally learn in school. The following Table 1 shows the findings of the study in detail:

Table 1: The Finding in the Aspects of Parent-School Relationship Effort

No.	Duties and Responsibilities of parent	GPI1	GPI 2	GPI 3
<b>Communication between home and school</b>				
1.	Read the current memo or report given by the teacher.	\		\
2.	Actively involved in social media groups constructed by teachers.	\	\	
<b>School-based Parental Involvement</b>				
1.	Exchange information about children's daily routines and difficulties they face either at home or school.	\	\	
2.	Participate in discussions between teachers and parents that impact children's morality.	\	\	
3.	Participate in activities organised by the school	\	\	
4.	Give appropriate responses and ask teachers to reprimand children's negative behaviour wisely.	\		\
5.	Making teachers partners form children's morality at home and school.		\	\

GPI 1 considered that it is necessary for parents always to read the current memos or reports given by teachers. It applies primarily to matters related to the current development of the child's personality. He mentioned, "The most crucial element is to recognise if there is a

teacher's report regarding their child's development in school," which GPI 2 later added with the statement, "The parents must read the messages in the children's class' WhatsApp group, and respond to indicate that they are aware of their children's activities."

GPI 1 also recommended that parents establish two-way communication and form a close relationship with the school to develop children's morality by actively engaging in social media groups created by teachers. He mentioned, "Parents need to join communities such as Facebook or WhatsApp group because I will share the classroom activities update in the group. When they do this, they will know the update." In addition, GPI 2 supported the statement by highlighting the importance of being directly involved in the medium provided by the teacher. He mentioned, "When the school teachings do not reciprocate the home teachings, it leads to confusion, particularly when the parents do not take charge. No matter how hard the teachers try to teach productively, it will be in vain".

All GPIs for this study underlined the weight of information exchange between teachers and parents and reported that it essentially related to children's daily routines and challenges at home or school. GPI 1 mentioned, "Parents should always be aware of the children's (update and activities) in school. They should ask the teacher what their children are learning, what they are good at". GPI 2 continued later, who suggested, "Parents should also spend time with the children. It involves updates in terms of lessons, but they should also do a spot check with their children's friends. It includes knowing their whereabouts with friends, and if it is necessary, do inform us so that we can monitor them at school".

According to the GPI, parents should also be actively involved in discussions between the two parties, particularly those that impact the moral development of children as the following statement... "We need thoughtful ideas from parents because sometimes children behave differently in house and school. GPI 2 supported this idea that the methods and approaches to each child are not identical and demand ideas from parents as the following statement... "In personalised learning, teachers need information from parents especially ways best to 'handle' and 'tackle' their children at school".

Next, two out of three GPIs mentioned that parents should attend activities organised by the school involving children. GPI 1 mentioned, "Parents need to participate in activities organised by the school, such as sports day. Thus, parents and teachers can know each other better". GPI2 added and agreed with GPI 1's statement, "If there is an activity that requires the cooperation of parents to attend together such as regular PTM meetings, I recommend them to come. In this way, we can reflect and talk face-to-face about the development of the children."

GPI 1 also shared the idea regarding the parents' response to an issue highlighted by teachers. It primarily involves children's morality, and the comments should be wise and do not promote the element of provocation ... "I have once told a father of a student whose son quarrelled with another student. He asked me the student's parents' mobile number to apologise for what happened". GPI 3 also supported the statement by sharing... "I have met a great father in which he asked me to advise his son accordingly and shared with me the tips on how to do it should it happens again".

Also, taking teachers as partners in forming children's morality at home or school is an imperative matter mentioned by the GPI in this study. GPI 2 recommended it, "Parents and teachers need to be good partners to shape the morality of these children. The sharing of teachers' expertise in pedagogy and child psychology and the reality of children's morality development needs to be shared to facilitate the nurturing of this morality". Besides, GPI 3 agreed that a series of meetings between teachers and parents should facilitate a sharing

opportunity. He mentioned, "Ideally, in a series of teacher-parent meetings, parents take the opportunity to share a little knowledge about their children's development and take note of what the teacher has to say about their child".

### Discussion

Generally, it is the responsibility of parents to teach children about the beliefs and moral responsibilities that they need to play. Nevertheless, parents who are the bearers of this trust tend to reflect the opposite (Tay & Yildirim, 2009) and prefer to place this obligation on the accountability of others, especially teachers (Le Sage & De Ruyter, 2008). Good parents do not completely entrust the task of educating children to the school because of the duty of educating and attending to children's morality, including children's rights must be fulfilled by parents (Suaid, 2005; Al-Qardawi, 1998). Parents aware of this responsibility will be more motivated and vary their efforts to achieve those goals. According to Pelletier and Brent (2002), parents who see themselves as essential in forming children's morals will be more proactive and always frequent and participate in activities organised by the children's school.

Parents should pay more attention and monitor the children, especially matters related to morality, compared to advising older children, because the level of parental supervision will decrease as the child grows into adolescence (Power & Bradley-Klug, 2013). One of the fundamental aspects that need to be emphasised by parents is parent-school communication because communication between parents and school is quintessential to finding the best manoeuvrings to assist children in their development (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). It is supported by other scholars, such as Badri et al. (2014), who stated that regular parent-teacher discussions could significantly influence a child's developmental process. Fantuzzo et al (2004) also suggested that among the contents of the discussion to be discussed are the difficulties children face and the current achievements of children and discussions concerning ways to promote children's learning at home.

According to the revised KSPK parental involvement policy (KPM, 2016), the continuation of P&P from school to home or from home to school is considerably inspired by the extent to which the effectiveness of information sharing between teachers and parents. Therefore, it becomes indispensable for teachers to hold the right attitude in delivering aspirations and information sharing with parents because teachers are the mediators between the school and parents (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In addition, regular communication between home and school can lessen the likelihood of children's behavioural dilemmas (McNeal, 2012). When parents and teachers regularly communicate with each other constructively, parents begin to get a more distinct conception of what teachers' perceptions of children in school are, and they will be more apt to learn and listen to advise from their children's teachers of what they need to do at home to equally aid in the improvement of their child (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Mahmood, 2013).

Therefore, parents, teachers and management must work concurrently to design assertive communication to achieve the maximum level of parental involvement (Kocyigita, 2015). The more frequent discussions are held between parents and teachers, the higher the trust and sense of responsibility between them (Cankar et al., 2012). Typically, the way of communication between parents and teachers is parent-teacher meetings (Cankar et al., 2012), while according to Kocyigita (2015), teachers and parents prefer individual meetings because they feel more productive and private.

Furthermore, the involvement of school-based parents is vital in this effort. Mahmood (2013); Semke et al (2010) acknowledged that close cooperation between parents and

teachers in early childhood education could instil a high sense of trust and security in children, and it is thus a determinant of children's attainment in social and academic reinforcement. Cooperation provided by parents such as attending and spending time with activities involving school and parents inspires children to do the same in school (McCormick et al., 2014). This finding is explained by social learning theory which stated that children would mimic parental behaviour and help provide a more profound understanding between school-based engagement and children's behavioural problems (Bandura, 1977). When children observe the attitude of parents who respect teachers and spend time with school-organised activities such as visiting school-organised activities, children will begin to understand that school is half of their family and thus, they learn that they need to behave. Hence, they need to demonstrate that good behaviour (Bandura, 1986; McCormick et al., 2014). This exercise can reduce the moral dilemmas of children, especially problems including morality and manners with teachers.

Furthermore, parents who spend time with school-organised activities and teachers typically have more satisfying relationships with teachers than parents who do otherwise. Based on that, teachers will view children whose parents are actively involved in school activities as problem-free children (McCormick et al., 2014).

### Conclusion

The writings addressed the idea to form children's morality, parents' involvement, and the responsibilities of playing with the school and teachers. In the beginning, children learn about morality and values from their parents. However, teachers also play a contributing role when they join the school atmosphere. The study results reveal that the parents' physical and effective communication involvement is most welcome by the teacher and school to work together. On the other hand, from here teachers can learn how to play the role of parent trainer and mediators between school and the child, family psychologist, and emotional sustainer of the environment in which the children form and grow. Hence, close cooperation between these two entities is needed to sustain this effort. The study's data decided that parents' involvement that needs to be played by parents with the school to form a noble morality must be in the form of (i) communication between home and school (ii) school-based involvement activities.

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