

The Role and Domains of Affection in Raising Children from the Viewpoint of the Holy Qur'ān and Ḥadīth

‘Alī Muḥammad Mīrjalīlī^{1*}, Ma’šūma Khayyātiyān Yazdī²

1. Associate Professor, Department of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth Sciences, Meybod University, Meybod, Iran
2. Master's Holder, Virtual University of Hadīth Sciences, ray city, Iran

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Abstract

Human children are creatures who need to be appropriately educated and guided in the light of love. Love is, indeed, a major need of children. Their hope increases towards life by means of generously given love, and they can build a bridge to success from their mistakes with acuity. This causes them not to experience disappointment but rather be successful. Love brings about warm relations between parents and children and makes them intelligent and enlightened. It keeps their spirits high and wards depression off. A child who is satiated with love does not feel any shortage, developing proper relationships with others. Thus, he or she does not get involved in behavioral deviations. Friendly love should be rendered in a purposeful and step-by-step manner. Its factors and indicators need to be distinguished well from its barriers, and those factors should be predisposed and encouraged while the barriers, if any, should be weakened or possibly eradicated. Islam prohibits any extremes in expressing affection towards children and bases child breeding on moderateness. Children's age and needs should be taken into consideration, and loving them should be based on such considerations. If love is expressed excessively or inappropriately, it makes children pampered, spoiled, bully, weak, and too dependent on their parents. In this regard, the educational method proposed by Islam is based on three principles of love, dignity and firmness. Therefore, this study aims to discuss the role and domains of affection in child education and the extent of its application as proposed in the holy Qur'ān and religious quotations, or 'Ḥadīths'.

Keywords

Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, Children, Education, Love.

* **Corresponding Author, Email:** almirjalili@meybod.ac.ir

Introduction

By definition, education is "to provide a basis for growth and talents' florescence and hidden powers of a creature" (Rahbar & Raḥīmīyān, 1998: 5). Man has a godly nature and an independent personality. Thus, there should be wisdom, love and compassion in his/her education, not violence. It is quoted from Imām 'Alī (a) that "Human child accepts advice by politeness and education" (Aḥmadī Tamīmī, 1989: 236). Love between family members strengthens relationships within the family and is useful to society members as well. By virtue of love, parents' hope for the successful future of their children flourishes, and they make all their attempts to bring up healthy and successful children. The valuable gift of God to human to survive generation is love for children, without which parents would not suffer any toil or trouble to bring up well-bred and good-natured children.

This paper aims to study the role of love in human education and its scope in the view of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth (i.e. holy quotations). The main research questions are "what is the role of love in bringing up children from the viewpoint of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth?" and "what are the boundary and scope of expressing love and its applications for children?"

Value of love

Home is the main place where to bring up children and develop relationships between family members. The relationships are sometimes, to some extent, detrimental to child breeding policy. Love is one of the major factors of a hopeful life that increases eagerness for survival and helps man ascend to the highest degrees of moral virtues. In Islam, love is so important that it is interpreted in some traditions as the essence of religious faith (Majlisī, 1982: 27, 95). Imām Bāqir (a) said, "Is religion other than love? Seest thou not that Allāh says in the Qur'an 3:31, "If you love Allāh, follow me! And Allāh will love you and forgive your sins and Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful" (Majlisī, 1982: 27, 95). Popular aspects of faith have been highlighted in the Qur'ān as in the Qur'ān 15:7 that states "But God has endeared the faith to you and beautified it in your hearts ..." (Barqī, 1992: 1, 263). A man who has love in his heart is the source of faith and affection and can feed up children's hungry spirits with friendship and grow the toddling seedling of life into a stout and productive tree so that the society can breathe in its shadow. God deems kindness as one of the factors of eternal salvation and admires affectionate and sympathetic people (Qur'ān 52:26). In terms of love and compassion, the Qur'ān is fraught with educational patterns and examples, as in a chapter where He introduces a good and model family. He considers compassion towards family as one of the factors of prosperity (Qur'ān 52:26). God quotes from prosperous people saying, "We were benevolent to our relatives in the

world and warned them against perdition (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2008: 19, 11). To indicate the importance of love, it is enough to refer to the fact that God put the Prophet Moses's love in the heart of his enemy and brought him up in his lap but under His own supervision in the best way. As the Qur'ān states, "And I threw up a love of myself on you to grow up in front of my eyes (Qur'ān 20:39). God did it so as for the sons of Israel to be freed from oppressors and to reach the apex of glory (Qur'ān 2:47).

Islamic educational model based on the three principles of love, determination and dignity

According to Islam, love is one of the child raising principles that is strongly emphasized, but another aspect of this raising is honor and respect for his personality. Children should not be humiliated for being small; it gives them a sense of worthlessness. In the view of the Qur'ān, training should be based on love as well as the dignity and personality of the child. As stated in Qur'ān 17:70, "And indeed we have honored the sons of Adam". This helps to understand that human training is effective in the shelter of compassion and reverence. Experience has shown that most successful and influential mentors are teachers who believe in the principle of respect and reverence for the character of their students. Imām 'Alī (a) said, "Accustom your tongue to gentle speaking and greetings so as to increase your friends and decrease your enemies" (Aḥmadī Tamīmī, 1989: 457).

The importance of affection for children

One of God-granted gifts to human beings is the existence of children that are loved by parents. Thus, when God informs his dear servants of having a child, He uses the words 'good news'. Ibrāhīm (a) asked God for a virtuous child, as in the Qur'ān 37:100, "O my lord. Give me a descent child." God accepted his prayer and granted him children such as Ismā'īl and Isaac (a). In this regard, Qur'ān 37:101 states that "Then we gave him good news of Isaac (a), subsequently Jacob (a)". In fact, there are several verses with such good news. When Zakariyya (a) asked God for a good child, angels called to him, "God gives the good news of the birth of John (a)" (Qur'ān 3:39). The Qur'ān says about Mary (s) that "(angels said) O Mary, God will give you good news of a child from Himself whose name is Jesus (a)." As it seems, the above verses indicate the honor associated with children. The Prophet Muḥammad (s) said that "Children are like flowers that God distributes among His servants" (Majlisī, 1982: 1, 94).

Children are the human products whose virtues and moralities depend on the efforts of their parents. Indeed, as Imām 'Alī (a) puts it, "The best thing

parents can leave behind is well-bred and well-conducting children.” Of course, achieving this goal needs a long process of monitoring and efforts.

Upbringing children based on love and respect for their rights

Islamic educational methods are of the broadest and finest nature, taking into account both the spiritual and material needs of children. Since children are followers of their elders, their good and evil are attributed to their parents, and good children are proud of their parents. ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd quotes Prophet Muḥammad (s) who said, "I am the result of prayers of my father Ibrāhīm" (Qumī, 1988: 1, 62). In Islamic traditions, there are some commandments given in favor of children’s rights. For example, someone asked the Prophet (s), “What is the right for my child?” He replied “Choose a good name for him, bring him up properly and provide a good future for him” (Majlisī, 1982: 71, 85). The Prophet (s) also said, “Be kind to your children” (Majlisī, 1982: 93, 357). Imām Sajjād (a) considered giving mercy and love to children as the primary duty of parents and others. He believed “a child is entitled to mercy and attempts for his education, forgiveness for his mistakes, approval and help, cover-up of his childish crimes, which persuades him to repent. He should be tolerated and shown no hostility or stubbornness; this is the most appropriate way of growing and guiding him” (Majlisī, 1982: 71, 19). In addition, some rewards have been taken into account in Islam for showing kindness to children. The Prophet (s) said, “A father’s kind look at his child is worship” (Nūrī, 1987: 15, 170). He also said, “Honor your children and teach them rituals so that you will be forgiven” (Ṭabrisī, 1991: 222; Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1988: 21, 476). Imām Ṣādiq (a) once put, "God forgives the one who is so kind to his or her children" (Kulaynī, 1986: 6, 50). Generally, loving others, especially parents, is recommended in Islam, and showing love to children was a frequent practice of the Prophet Muḥammad (s). In his behavior, he was favorable toward people especially his family members. For instance, one day, ‘Alī, Fāṭima Fāṭima, ḤasanḤasan, and Ḥusayn (a) went to the Prophet (s) while everyone said, "I am the closest and the most favored (a) to the Prophet." Then the Prophet (s) asked Fāṭima (a) to sit in front of him, ‘Alī (a) behind her, Ḥasan (a) on the right, and Ḥusayn (a) on the left. Then he said, “You are of me and vice versa” (Ṣadūq, 1996: 14). Thus, he respected them all. The most determining factor in child education is kindness and love. God has put in the heart of parents a sense of love for children, and compassionate women have been praised a lot in the tradition (Warrām b. Abī Firās, 1989: 2, 281). Also, Fāṭima (a) has been introduced as Ḥāniya (Majlisī, 1982: 43, 17-18). In Islam, there exist great examples of motherly affection one of whom is Ḥājar (a), the wife of the Prophet Ibrāhīm (a). After she and her baby were

left alone in the desert on the order of God given to Ibrāhīm (a), she took care of the child so affectionately as for God to honor her by requiring all Muslims of doing what she did, namely going back and forth between the two hills Ṣafā and Marwa. Thus, the jog taken nowadays between these two points is a commemoration of the great efforts that Ḥājar (a) made for her child. With regard to compassion, Fāṭima (a) is an outstanding example, who served as the center of love in the prophet's family and a link between the prophet (s) and the Imāms (a) after him. Her behavior and words towards her children indicate a love of a devoted mother. For example, she would refer to her children as “the apple of my eye” and “the solace of my heart” (Qumī, 1999: 1017). This is also how the Prophet (s) called Imām Ḥusayn (a) in his childhood (Majlisī, 1982: 44, 246). There was not even one instance of anger or fury in her behavior towards her family. In this regard, Imām ‘Alī (a) said: “I swear that Zahra (a) never made me angry and, whenever I looked at her, all my sorrows would be gone” (Majlisī, 1982: 43, 134).

The above examples point to the fact that motherly characteristics form the internal conditions of a family and pave the way for implementing child-raising methods.

The barriers to generous and love-based child raising

Although there are many components that make child raising easy and effective, some barriers also exist in this regard. These barriers all stem from the lack of affection for children and make education ineffective. One can refer to some barriers as toughness, deception, blame, shouting, humiliation, laziness, and sensation of children. When children learn to walk, their ways of expressing emotional problems begin to develop. Meanwhile, they may express their emotional problems through destruction, lack of mobility, opposition, negativism, etc. Kind education requires that parents train the following social principle to children slowly. If parents' desires are appropriate for children and reasonable enough to satisfy their need of love, they gradually come under control. However, if parents' requirements become sever and their expressing way of love is not correct, it is possible for children to deteriorate and develop abnormal behaviors in the growth period. These behaviors may even be fixed in them so that many problems may occur in the future, including rebellion, stubbornness, irritability, and so on. Therefore, in child-raising, it is advisable to take into account the adverse effects of such affairs, which are the product of the lack of affection.

Toughness

One of the elements that make education non-functional is toughness. Some people put their children under pressure in childhood or deceive them into

doing certain things. Children's abilities should be taken into consideration as to give them responsibilities based on those abilities. In Islamic traditions, toughness has been renounced not only about child-raising but also in any other case. Even in doing worships, we should take average abilities into account. As the Prophet (s) said, "Tolerance is a blessing and toughness an evil." According to him, there is abundance in leniency and tolerance, and he who is deprived of it is deprived of bounties (Kulaynī, 1986: 2, 118-119). Also, Imām Ṣādiq (a) said, "A true believer is not strict" (Ṣadūq, 1983: 1, 325). Undue toughness usually pushes children towards deception and other abnormalities, and deceiving them decreases their confidence in their parents and leads to disobedience.

Blaming and shouting

There is no place for blaming and shouting in kind education. Blaming kindles the fire of stubbornness in anyone. Imām 'Alī (a) holds that indulgence in blaming causes intransigence to ignite (Aḥmadī Tamīmī, 1989: 94). The more gently parents behave a child, the better he or she gets along with them and takes their orders. Blaming and shouting cause a challenge in parents' relationship with children, and, if it continues to become deeply-rooted, it leaves undesirable effects on the spirit of children. Umm al-Faḍl, the nanny of Imām ḤusaynḤusayn (a) said, "One day, the Prophet (s) took the baby from me, but he wetted the Prophet's clothes. I rapidly took the child from him so that he cried. The Prophet (s) said, "Umm al-Faḍl, take it easy. My clothes can be washed with water but what can be washed away with your resentment on this child?" (Nūrī, 1987: 2, 557) It is to be said that even family debates can bring a feeling of insecurity to children at home and encourage them to be away from home.

Humiliation

Humiliation is against respect and affection to be shown to children. If children at home face parents' humiliation, some frustration occurs to them, which later emerges in the form of rebellion or social deviations. When someone insults a child or humiliates him or her, his/her personality gets ruined, his/her attitudes are ignored, and he/she takes resort to unsafe people to meet his/her spiritual needs. Children who encounter humiliation initially become deprived of good humor and self-esteem and then internalize and get used to being humiliated. Such people do not have any motivation to think and are without an independent personality and, thus, get dependent on others. Their talents and powers will never flourish. Hitting is a kind of violence and humiliation and has no place in respectful child-raising. This behavior aggravates problems. If a child does not receive enough praise and

is frequently humiliated, it is possible for him or her to face depression in adulthood. Regarding avoidance of child humiliation and the necessity of respect, Imām ‘Alī (a) says, “Human children are wise enough to gain advice through politeness and good breeding; it is animals that should be trained only by hitting” (Aḥmadī Tamīmī, 1989: 236). Punishment and humiliation of children in public is more dangerous, destroys their dignity, and makes them bolder for doing evils. In addition, it takes away from them the courage of saying no and has a negative role in their future happiness. Generally, in Islam, humiliation of people is prohibited. The Qur’ān states, “Never turn away from people with disregard, and do not walk proudly on the earth; God does not love the arrogant” (Qur’ān 31:18). The verse discourages looking away from people out of arrogance and looking down on those who speak with us out of contempt (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1994: 4, 146).

Taking long huffs

Sometimes, when others give us miseries and we are angry or uncomfortable, we huff to express our discomfort. Huffs may be temporal or long-term. Huffing, in general, is not desirable and can damage a relationship. Some people have the lack of affection or like to be taken into account by others. In Islam it is not allowed to break up relations with children. Of course, to have a push on children, huffing for a short time is allowed so that it can be effective in treating some of their abnormal behaviors. Someone went to Imām Mūsā Kāzīm (a) to complain about his child. Imām said, “Don’t hit him, but keep away from him not for a long time” (Majlisī, 1982: 101, 99). If children apologize after their mistakes, their apology should be accepted and they should be given an opportunity to improve themselves. When Joseph’s brothers confessed their wrongdoing in front of him to apologize, he not only forgave them but also asked God to forgive them (Qur’ān 12:92).

Giving primacy

In a home where more than one child lives, parents should be careful about their behavior and practice equity among them in terms of material facilities as well as expression of friendship. Of course, heart feeling is something that no one has a control on. Sometimes, it is possible to treat children with priorities, but a difference made may lead to discrimination among them. In expressing love to children, no discrimination should be made. Giving more affection to some children triggers jealousy among others. The verse in the chapter ‘Joseph’ implies that if jealousy is dangerous enough, it can even deny some children of their virtues (Joseph: 5). This is because jealousy may get rooted deeply enough as to even make a person kill his brother, as there

was such an incident about the sons of Adam (a). The incidence is referred to in the Qur'ān; "Cain's ego persuaded him to murder his brother, and he did. But he became one of the losers (Qur'ān 5:30). In this regard, the Prophet (s) is said to be of a similar opinion. Once, he saw a man that had two boys. The man kissed one of them but not the other. The Prophet (s) asked him, "Why don't you treat them equally?" (Majlisī, 1982: 99, 101). Then, he said, "God loves people to practice justice among children even in kissing" (Pāyanda, 2003: 306).

Domains of affection in raising children

In Islamic sources, there are certain boundaries to express affection, as there are boundaries for other issues. God says, "We have created everything in a due amount" (Qur'ān 54:49). Also, as Imām Bāqir (a) puts it, "God has set a limit to everything" (Kulaynī, 1986: 1, 59).

Expressing affection moderately

With regard to all recommendations to parents about loving their children and the role of love in proper education, we shouldn't forget that going too far with affection has destructive effects on children. Thus, Islam has prohibited its followers from overindulging in love of children. Imām Bāqir (a) said, "The worst fathers are those who indulge in loving and being good towards their children" (Sharīf Qurayshī, 1992: 1, 312; Anṣārī Shīrāzī, 2008: 3, 383). In education, improper love has reverse effects and causes children to be spoiled and irresponsible. In Islam, the principle of balance in all matters including affection for children is taken into account. Imām 'Alī (a) considered balance as a proper path in all affairs (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 16) and the Prophet's lifestyle as moderate (Ibid, Sermon 94). The Holy Qur'ān critically refers to overindulgence in love of children and states, "O ye who believe, do not let your possessions and children keep you from remembering God. Anyone who does so is a loser" (Qur'ān 63:9). Therefore, there should be a balance in everything.

Basically, the blessings of God should be used as a means of obeying Him. Expressing love to others as well as children is allowed to the extent not to lead to forgetting God. 'Alī (a) asked one of his companions not to indulge in paying attention to his family and children and not to view it as his basic duty (Majlisī, 1982: 101, 73); that is, not to be so busy in affairs related to wife and children. To advise 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd, the Prophet (s) said, "Sympathy with the family and children should not lead you to disobeying God or prohibited deeds" (Ṭabrisī, 1991: 457). Kids who are subject to excessive love in an aspect are weak, dependent, demanding and remain emotionally childish. They are not powerful and patient against

problems and cannot face problems in their families and social life. In addition, overindulgence in love causes a child to be selfish, and he may dare to stand against his parents. This may finally cause him to be disowned by his parents. Imām Ḥasan Ḥasan ‘Askarī (a) said, "A child who is daring enough to stand against his father will be disowned in adulthood" (Majlisī, 1982: 75, 374).

Man has different physical and spiritual powers. To be healthy, all his different physical and spiritual powers should work cooperatively. Thus, we should avoid overindulgence in everything, and a balanced and moderate policy should be taken into account in this regard. In Islam, the principle of moderation is given a serious consideration. God says, "Be moderate in the way you walk" (Qur’ān 31:19).

"Policy" here means a way of life in the sense that moderation should be taken into account in all affairs of life" (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 2008: 5, 440). Parents should show kindness to children in terms of their material needs but not surrender to their thoughts and suggestions based on wrong beliefs and behaviors. This is the main point of moderation that provides for the rights of both God and parents. Of course, those who are in charge of child education, such as parents, should be aware of individual differences of people under their education and consider children according to their own merits. Also, they should know the emotional needs of children at different ages so that they can be fulfilled well enough.

Doing justice to children

One of the major educational issues and the best solution to problems in behaving children is the establishment of justice and equity among them. Parents can do justice by expressing love to children and assigning material facilities to them. In Islamic sources, justice is recommended as a principle. The Holy Qur’ān states, "In fact, God orders justice and charity to relatives and prohibits reprehensible deeds and injustice". (Qur’ān 16:90)

The Messenger of Allāh (s) considered justice necessary even in love and looking and deemed it as the entrance to the heaven (Majlisī, 1982: 101, 92). One day, a woman went to ‘Ā’isha (the Prophet’s wife) with her two little children. She gave the woman three dates. The mother distributed them among the children and split another one into two halves and gave the children a half of it. When the Prophet (s) returned home, ‘Ā’isha told him what happened. The Prophet (s) said, "God will send her to the heaven because of doing justice and equity to her children (Amīnī, 1980: 239). Justice should, thus, be observed even in generosity to children (Pāyanda, 2003: 519). Parents should not discriminate among children in giving gifts, especially material gifts. Otherwise, their personality is adversely affected.

Bashir, one of the Prophets' followers, gave a gift to one of his sons but not to the other children. The Prophet (s) asked him, "Did you give all your children such a gift?" he replied no. The Prophet (s) said, "Be afraid of God and behave them equally" (Ṭūsī, 1986: 3, 564). Justice to children can create major training effects. First, children mutually respect parents and observe their rights. Second, they do not violate boundaries of justice to children. Third, it can prevent jealousy and hostility to them. Finally, if a kid is raised with justice from the beginning, he/she will have a good mind to do justice in the society in future. It is clear that fair behavior means equal and identical treatment. However, it is likely that justice requires us to act differently with children based on their abilities, talents, facilities, or shortages. Even in such cases, the biased behavior should be accounted for to the children with appropriate words.

Doing justice is often a mutual practice. As the Prophet (s) has advised, "Observe justice among your children in generosity as you like them to do justice in good and affection to you" (Ṭabrisī, 1991: 220).

Conclusion

Islam has shed light on appropriate ways and manners of child-raising and introduced supreme role models in this regard. This study suggests a number of points concerning child-raising. First, love, generosity and approval are among the basic spiritual needs of children. Second, love brings security and calmness to children, and, when they feel calm and secure, they will be safe from many deviations and find the floor prepared for their later growth. Third, children who are saturated with love and magnanimity will be kind and good-tempered in the future so as to love others and be patient and strong against problems. Fourth, loving children causes them to be intelligent, quick-witted and keen and keeps them away from depression in the future. A well-satiated child has good relationships with others and is not likely to face deviations because he does not feel any shortage. Fifth, love needs to be plainly expressed to children; loving children at heart without showing that to them has no effect on their breeding. Finally, balance and moderation, as the basis of Islamic teachings, should be especially considered in matters of child-raising and expression of love; too much love causes children to be pampered, spoiled, bully, or too dependent on their families.

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