



Balancing Discipline and Compassion: A Mixed Methods Study on Islamic Parenting Styles

Lubna Lutfia

Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Lubnalutfia07@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Parenting styles significantly influence child development, yet Muslim parents often struggle to balance Islamic disciplinary principles with compassionate child rearing. This exploratory mixed methods study examines how Islamic parenting styles integrate discipline and compassion, as well as their impact on child outcomes. Data were collected from 200 Muslim parents in Indonesia and Malaysia through surveys (adapted from the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire) and in depth interviews with 30 participants. Quantitative analysis revealed three dominant parenting styles: authoritative Islamic (62%), authoritarian (28%), and permissive (10%). The authoritative Islamic style showed the strongest positive correlations with children's emotional regulation ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$), religiosity ($M = 4.2/5$), and parent child communication ($M = 4.5/5$). Qualitative themes highlighted "Discipline with Mercy" through Qur'anic guidance and Prophetic examples, though cultural misinterpretations led some parents toward excessive strictness. Findings align with Keshavarzi and Haque's (2013) adab based parenting model, while challenging the universal applicability of Western parenting theories (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The study highlights the effectiveness of Sunnah inspired balanced parenting and identifies gaps in culturally adapted Islamic parenting education. Practical implications include developing faith based parenting programs that integrate psychological insights with Islamic principles. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to assess long term child outcomes across diverse Muslim communities.

Keywords: Islamic parenting, discipline and compassion, authoritative parenting, child development, Prophetic parenting

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INTRODUCTION

Parenting styles have a significant influence on child development, shaping emotional, cognitive, and social outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Globally, there is increasing concern over the polarization of parenting approaches, where some parents lean toward authoritarian methods, while others adopt overly permissive strategies (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). Authoritarian parenting, characterized by strict discipline and low warmth, has been linked to increased anxiety and lower self esteem in children (Lansford et al., 2018). In contrast, permissive parenting, which lacks

structure, is associated with poor self regulation and behavioral issues (Baumrind, 1991). Striking a balance between discipline and compassion remains a critical challenge in modern parenting. A UNICEF (2021) report highlights that approximately 75% of children aged 2–4 worldwide experience violent discipline at home, indicating a prevalence of harsh parenting methods. Meanwhile, a study by Pew Research Center (2020) found that 52% of parents in the U.S. struggle to balance discipline and emotional support, underscoring the global tension between maintaining authority and fostering a nurturing environment. In Muslim majority countries, cultural and religious norms further influence parenting, with some studies reporting higher use of corporal punishment (El Khani et al., 2016).

In Indonesia, studies by Putri et al. (2020) and Rahmah (2019) indicate that Islamic parenting is often shaped by pesantren culture and local traditions, which can both reinforce and distort Islamic parenting ideals.

Islamic parenting, rooted in Qur'anic principles and Prophetic traditions, emphasizes a balance between *tarbiyah* (nurturing) and *ta'dib* (discipline) (Al Ghazali, 2011). However, contemporary Muslim parents often face challenges in reconciling religious teachings with modern psychological insights on child rearing. Some misinterpret Islamic discipline as strict authoritarianism, while others adopt Western permissive models, neglecting Islamic values (Obeid, 2020). This dissonance necessitates an examination of how Islamic parenting styles can effectively balance discipline and compassion. Existing studies on Islamic parenting highlight its unique integration of spiritual and emotional development. Hussien (2018) found that authoritative Islamic parenting, combining high responsiveness with clear expectations, correlates with better psychological adjustment in Muslim youth. Similarly, Keshavarzi and Haque (2013) emphasize the role of *adab* (respectful discipline) in fostering moral character. However, much of the literature focuses on theoretical frameworks rather than empirical assessments of parenting practices (Mohamed et al., 2021), and cross cultural studies comparing Islamic parenting with Western models remain limited.

Despite growing interest in faith based parenting, few studies empirically examine how Muslim parents operationalize discipline and compassion in daily interactions. Most research either adopts a purely theological perspective or applies Western parenting typologies without adapting them to Islamic contexts (Al Ma'seb et al., 2020). There is also a lack of qualitative studies capturing parental narratives on balancing religious directives with contemporary child psychology principles. The increasing globalization of parenting advice, often detached from religious values, raises concerns about cultural and spiritual erosion in Muslim families (Mogra, 2019). Without evidence based Islamic parenting models, Muslim parents may resort to either excessively rigid or overly lenient approaches, risking adverse developmental

outcomes. Addressing this gap is crucial for promoting child well being while preserving Islamic ethical foundations.

This study contributes to the field by integrating Islamic theology with developmental psychology, providing a nuanced understanding of how Muslim parents balance discipline and compassion. Unlike previous works, it employs a mixed methods approach, combining surveys and in depth interviews to capture diverse parenting experiences. Additionally, it examines regional variations in Islamic parenting practices, providing a more comprehensive view. The study aims to explore how Muslim parents conceptualize and implement discipline and compassion in child rearing, identifying key factors that influence their parenting styles. It aims to establish a framework for balanced Islamic parenting that harmonizes with both religious teachings and contemporary psychological research. The findings will enrich Islamic family studies by offering empirical data on parenting practices, aiding educators and policymakers in designing culturally sensitive parenting programs. They will also provide practical guidance for Muslim parents seeking to align their methods with Islamic ethics and best practices in child development. Ultimately, this research has implications for faith based parenting interventions, mental health professionals working with Muslim families, and Islamic educational curricula. By bridging religious and psychological perspectives, it promotes holistic child rearing strategies that foster emotional resilience and moral integrity in Muslim youth.

This study is theoretically grounded in Baumrind's parenting typology, Islamic Parenting Theory (Hussien, 2018), and the *adab* based *model* (Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013), allowing for the integration of developmental psychology with Qur'anic ethics.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a mixed methods exploratory design, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to examine Islamic parenting styles comprehensively. The target population consists of Muslim parents with children aged 3–18 residing in urban and semi urban areas of Indonesia and Malaysia, selected for their diverse socio religious parenting practices. A purposive sampling technique is used to recruit 200 survey respondents and 30 interview participants, ensuring representation across age groups (25–50 years), educational backgrounds, and parenting experiences. The sample size for the survey was determined using G*Power analysis ($\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80), while interview participants were selected based on theoretical saturation criteria.

Interview participants were drawn from Islamic schools, family counseling centers, and mosque communities. Inclusion criteria required parents to identify as Muslim, have children aged 3–18, and be involved in active parenting."

The research instruments include: (1) a structured survey questionnaire adapted from the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) with added Islamic

parenting modules ($\alpha = 0.82$), (2) a semi structured interview guide developed from a preliminary literature review, and (3) a demographic data sheet. The questionnaire undergoes validity testing through expert review (by three Islamic education specialists and two child psychologists) and reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha (with a threshold of 0.70). Qualitative instruments are validated via peer debriefing and member checking. Data collection involved online surveys (Google Forms) and in depth interviews (Zoom/face to face), conducted over 6 months, with ethical clearance obtained from participating institutions.

Example interview questions include: (1) 'How do you define discipline and compassion as a Muslim parent?' (2) 'Can you share a time when religious guidance influenced your parenting decision?'

Quantitative data are analyzed using SPSS 28.0 for descriptive statistics (frequencies, means) and inferential tests (ANOVA, correlation) to examine patterns in parenting style. Qualitative data undergoes thematic analysis using NVivo 12, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase approach to identify themes related to discipline, compassion, and balance. Triangulation integrates both datasets, while Miles and Huberman's (1994) model guides the interpretive process. The mixed methods approach enables methodological complementarity, where quantitative results identify broad trends and qualitative findings provide nuanced contextual understanding of Islamic parenting dynamics.

Ethical approval was granted by the UIN Jakarta Institutional Review Board (Approval No. 2024/IRB 025), in accordance with the principles of confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study collected data from 200 Muslim parents (60% mothers, 40% fathers) across Indonesia and Malaysia. Quantitative results (Table 1) reveal that 62% of parents identified their parenting style as "authoritative Islamic" (characterized by high discipline and high compassion), while 28% leaned toward an authoritarian style (characterized by high discipline and low warmth), and 10% were permissive (characterized by low discipline and high warmth). A Pearson correlation test showed a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$) between compassionate parenting and children's emotional regulation.

Table 1. Distribution of Parenting Styles Among Participants

Parenting Style	Frequency (%)	Key Characteristics
Authoritative Islamic	62%	Balanced discipline & compassion
Authoritarian	28%	Strict, low emotional warmth
Permissive	10%	Lenient, minimal discipline

Qualitative findings highlight three major themes: (1) "Discipline with Mercy" (Qur'an based correction), (2) "Emotional Connection in Tarbiyah" (Prophetic nurturing), and (3) "Cultural vs. Religious Influences" (negotiating modern pressures). The authoritative Islamic group reported higher child academic performance ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$) and lower behavioral issues, aligning with Keshavarzi and Haque's (2013) findings on *adab* based parenting. Conversely, authoritarian parents cited children's anxiety (35% of cases), supporting Lansford et al.'s (2018) research on harsh discipline's psychological risks. Permissive parents struggled with child impulsivity, echoing Baumrind's (1991) concerns about a lack of structure.

A MANOVA test confirmed significant differences ($F(2, 197) = 6.71$, $p < 0.001$) in child outcomes across parenting styles. Post hoc tests revealed that authoritative Islamic parents scored highest on child religiosity ($M = 4.2/5$ vs. 3.1 for authoritarian) and parent child communication ($M = 4.5/5$ vs. 2.8 for permissive). The dominance of authoritative Islamic parenting suggests many Muslim parents successfully integrate Qur'anic guidance (e.g., Surah Luqman 31:17 on gentle advising) with modern psychology. However, the 28% authoritarian subset reflects cultural misinterpretations of Islamic discipline as rigidity, consistent with Obeid's (2020) observations in conservative communities.

Notably, urban parents were 1.8 times more likely to adopt balanced styles than rural parents ($\chi^2 = 9.34$, $p < 0.01$), likely due to greater exposure to parenting education (Mohamed et al., 2021). Interviews revealed that fathers emphasized discipline (e.g., prayer enforcement), while mothers prioritized emotional bonding, a gendered divide also noted by Hussien (2018). Three specific findings emerged: first, 78% of authoritative parents reported child cooperation without force, citing the Prophet's (PBUH) example of "gentle correction" (Sunan Abi Dawud 494); second, 40% of children under strict parenting exhibited rebellion or secrecy, validating El Khani et al.'s (2016) findings; third, children of lenient parents showed weaker religious identity, supporting Al Ma'seb et al.'s (2020) warning.

This study extends Baumrind's (1991) typology by Islamicizing the authoritative model with Sunnah based compassion (e.g., hadith: "Kindness is a mark of faith" [Muslim 2593]). It also challenges universalist assumptions in Darling & Steinberg (1993), showing that religiosity moderates parenting effects, a gap noted by Pinquart & Kauser (2018). Contrastingly, while Western studies prioritize autonomy (Pew Research Center, 2020), Muslim parents in this study valued interdependence, aligning with Al Ghazali's (2011) concept of tarbiyah. Proposed solutions include Islamic parenting workshops, training on Prophetic models, father engagement programs using Sunnah examples, and cultural sensitivity modules to help parents reconcile modernity and faith (Mogra, 2019).

Although Western parenting theories emphasize autonomy and individualism, Islamic parenting values communal harmony and divine accountability; this

philosophical difference calls into question the cultural relevance of mainstream parenting scales when applied to the Muslim population.

The findings support Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) while refining Islamic Parenting Theory (Hussien, 2018) by empirically validating three dimensions: Qur'anic discipline, Prophetic warmth, and contextual adaptability. The "Discipline with Mercy" theme aligns with Keshavarzi and Haque's (2013) adab framework, but incorporates emotional intelligence as a mediator. Surprisingly, SES had no significant effect ($p = 0.12$), contradicting Lansford et al. (2018), which suggests that religious capital may override economic factors in Muslim contexts. A key tension emerged as parents who used physical discipline (12%) justified it as "Islamic," despite scholars like Ibn Qayyim (2010) condemning excessive harshness, underscoring the need for fiqh-aware parenting guides.

Practical implications include integrating Sunnah based parenting into madrasah curricula for educators, utilizing Qur'anic stories in family therapy for counselors, and funding community programs that bridge imams and child psychologists for policymakers. This study empirically maps Islamic parenting styles, revealing that balance is achievable when faith and psychology intersect. Future research should longitudinally track child outcomes to solidify causal claims. Key references include Baumrind (1991), El Khani et al. (2016), Keshavarzi and Haque (2013), and Obeid (2020), which provide a robust theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of Islamic parenting.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic parenting, when practiced as a balanced integration of discipline and compassion, yields positive child outcomes, including stronger emotional regulation, increased religiosity, and improved parent child relationships. The findings validate the effectiveness of authoritative Islamic parenting, which aligns with Qur'anic principles and Prophetic examples, while highlighting the risks of overly authoritarian or permissive approaches. However, cultural misinterpretations and gendered parenting roles remain challenges, emphasizing the need for better parental education on authentic Islamic child rearing methods. Future research should expand this exploratory study through longitudinal designs to assess long term child development outcomes across different Islamic parenting styles. Additionally, comparative studies across diverse Muslim majority countries could reveal how socio cultural contexts influence parenting practices. Further investigation is also needed to develop and test culturally appropriate interventions that help Muslim parents harmonize Islamic values with contemporary child psychology principles. Such efforts would strengthen both theoretical frameworks and practical applications of Islamic parenting in modern contexts.

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