The principles of raising a child from the perspective of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus

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Abstract---Children are parents’ life investments and assets and their proper upbringing is of great importance. Islam emphasizes educating children and has enumerated a number of principles for educating the new generation. This article examines the principles of child rearing according to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through a descriptive-analytical method. These principles include: the principle of moderation, the principle of gradualism, the principle of attention to individual differences, the principle of empathy with the child, the principle of facilitation, the principle of honoring the child’s personality, the principle of affection towards children, and the principle of prevention and precaution. The result of this study showed that parents can raise their children with Islamic honor if they follow the mentioned principles.

Keywords---Discipline, Child, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Principles.
Introduction

Children are the most precious and delicate gifts from God. He has entrusted this gift to us and we are responsible for their future. We are to take the responsibility seriously and choose the method of discipline wisely. Proper upbringing requires getting help from the Quran and hadiths as well as turning to Islamic norms.

Education and its many methods are nothing new and have been of great importance in human life in all ages. In addition to the prophets who were responsible for educating human societies, scientists, philosophers and thinkers have strived to accompany them on this path. Islamic scholars have left valuable guidelines and writings, all of which are inspired by Islamic teachings with the help of the Quran and hadiths.

Since children have a pure and gentle nature, they are more receptive to religious education and principles than adults. Religious education includes the upbringing and development of the child in accordance with religious methods recommended by the Holy Prophet of Islam and the infallible Imams to provide the grounds of development in innate abilities in cognitive, emotional and moral aspects. This will allow the child to voluntarily step on the path of spiritual growth and finally reach eternal happiness; that is reaching God.

In this study, after reviewing the concept of education and its types, we intend to use a descriptive-analytical method to examine the principles of child education according to the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

2. Concepts

2.1. The Concept of Education

2.1.1. The Terminology of Education

Education or “Tarbiat” roots from the word “rabava”, meaning to increase, grow or provide a means of growth. It also means purification; But “Tarbiat” from the root “Rababa” means leading to spiritual perfection. In this case, education not only allocates to quantitative growth, but also includes qualitative growth.

2.1.2. Education in Concept

Morteza Motahhari defines education as follows: “education means nurturing; That is, to actualize and cultivate inner talents that are potentially present in a subject, therefore, education is true only for living beings, such as plants, animals, and human beings. Hence, education must be in accordance to nature and inheritance”.

Al-Ghazali, a Sunni scholar, says: “To educate means to prevent from evil morals and replace them with righteous morals”. Khajeh Tusi, a Shiite scholar, says: “Education is chiasmus through which the highest human degrees and the lowest reach their complete rank”. Some define education as: “raising by removing
obstacles and providing the grounds for growth and flourishing talents and the realization of hidden forces”.

2-2. The Concept of Sireh

2-2-1. The Terminology of Sireh

Sireh is the infinitive of “Sir” which refers to flowing and moving. According to Ragheb Isfahani, Sir means moving on the ground, walking on the ground and mobilization. Therefore, scholars explain Sireh as; “a method, tradition, religion, approach, behavior, way and attitude.”

2-2-2. Sireh in Concept

“Sira” on the root of “Fi’la” is a behavioral state; that is, a specific type of human movement and behavior. According to the meaning of Sireh, it can be said that the study of Sireh means to study behavior; or the knowledge of principles, criteria and methods that a person inherits in behavior and actions. Therefore, the study of Sireh is in fact a methodology.

3. Principles of raising a child according to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

By studying the Holy Prophet’s (PBUH) behaviors, we see that if parents wish to raise children with Islamic education, they should pay attention to the principles of education recommended in the Prophetic tradition. Some of these principles are as follows:

3.1. The principle of moderation

Every educational and behavioral movement must be based on moderation and one must not be drawn to extremes. The prophetic and Islamic way and tradition has called for moderation in all behaviors and actions.

In verse 143 of Surah Al-Baqarah, the Holy Quran introduces the Islamic Ummah as a moderate nation. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) recommends to follow this nation and says:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا﴾

“And thus, we made you a moderate nation, that you may be witnesses to the people, and that the Prophet may be a witness to you’.

A religious orientation in education is that all behaviors should be moderate and any extremes should be avoided. In verse 19 of Surah Al-Luqman, the Holy Quran states:

﴿وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ﴾

“Be moderate in your ways”.
In family relationships and educational behaviors, moderation facilitates the path to reach the final goal; that is, avoiding extreme love, avoiding excessive strictness, being cautious to the trap of emancipation and insignificance, avoiding commanding and strict management, not falling prey to unruly and flawed management, not repeating the same thing over and over, and being able to forgive and forget easily. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has mentioned that the best behavior in education and all actions is moderation.

"خَيْرُ الأُمُورِ أُوْسَطُهَا"

"The best of things is the middle",11-12

Man is created in such a way that any departure from the boundaries of moderation harms him, thus leading him to act arrogantly. In Hikmat 108 of Nahj al-Balaghah, we read from Imam Ali (as):

"فَلَنَّ أَقْصِيرَ بِهِ مُضِرٌّ وَكُلُّ إِفْرَاطٍ لَهُ مُفسَدٌ"

"Any extreme, weather high or low is harmful".

Therefore, one must care for moderation in all dimensions and avoid extremes. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has called on his followers regarding moderation:

"أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْقَصْدِ، عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْقَصْدِ، عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْقَصْدِ"

"People! let there be moderation upon you, let there be moderation upon you, let there be moderation upon you". 13-15

3.2. The principle of gradualism

"Gradual" means to move slowly and step by step. Discipline is a gradual process and is based upon abilities, attractions and placement. No human being, except on the basis of his abilities and a gradual and appropriate movement can achieve divine perfection. Similarly, no human being falls and spoils suddenly. It is a gradual process.

It is necessary to consider the child’s abilities in all stages of upbringing, and gradually lead them to perfection, because farfetched expectations tire the child out and the desired upbringing will not be achieved. Knowledge of the developmental stages and specific characteristics of each stage as well as the expectations and behaviors of each stage are the main components of correct educational movement. The famous hadith from the Prophet regarding the stages of development says:

"أَوْلَادُ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ وَعَدَّ سِنِينَ وَوَزِيرُ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ"

"The child is the master in the first seven years of his life, obedient in the second seven years, and the minister in the third seven years”. 17

It has also been narrated from Imam Sadiq (AS) that:
"Let your child live freely for the first seven years, discipline him in the second seven years, and make him your companion for the third seven years".  

According to the above hadiths, the first seven years of upbringing requires emotional development, which needs maturity and care, it is necessary to understand their feelings and needs and to provide them with the necessary freedom to flourish. Their body and soul should be nourished, and because they are not yet mature and are not strong enough to accept physical work and take on family responsibilities, they should not be expected to work and obey. Playing and embracing their childhood is the best way for development. It is noteworthy to say that the instinct of imitation that dominates the child in this period, makes possible to cultivate positive and desirable emotions through the power of imitation.

The second stage (seven to fourteen years), taking into account the mental and physical progress by this age, is the stage of accepting responsibilities and duties, which should also be moderate and to the best of the child’s abilities. The child is ready to understand positive values and can distinguish good and bad now, thus, they can be disciplined through special responsibilities and duties which are commensurate with the physical, mental capacity and ability. These responsibilities, if accomplished based on the child’s best actions, should be well accepted by the parents. Therefore, in the second seven years, the axis of education is to accept responsibility, to understand good and pure values from counter-values, and to discipline.

In the third seven years (fourteen to twenty-one years), which coincides with the age of puberty and adolescence, the child (adolescent) should be treated as a counselor. Instead of being against the child, parents should take the necessary measures of life to them, hear their side, and harmonize their own intellectual aspects with their child to provide a healthy environment for their development.  

In a narration from Imam Sadigh (AS), a very delicate and gradual way of expressing the child’s interest in God and religion has been mentioned: “When the child reaches the age of three, he should be told to repeat "الله لَا إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ " seven times. After three years, seven months and twenty days he should be told to say "محمد رسول الله " seven times. At the age of 4 he should be told to say " صلى الله عليه وسلم " seven times. When the child is 5 years old, ask him which is his right and left hand? When he responds correctly, turn his face to the qibla and tell him to prostrate. When he is seven years old, tell him to wash his face and two hands. When he does so, tell him to Pray! Then leave him alone until he is 9 years old. When he is 9 years old, teach him about ablution and encourage him to pray. “God will forgive and bless the child and the parents when the child learns ablution and prayer".

"إِذَا بلَغَ الْغلََمُ ثَلََثَ سِنِينَ يقَالُ لَهُ قُلْ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللََُّّ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ يتْرَک حَتَّی يتمَّ لَهُ ثلََثُ سِنِينَ وَ سَبْعَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَ عِشْرُونَ يوْماً فَيقَالَ لَهُ قُلْ مُحَمَّد  رَسُولُ اللََِّّ سَبْعَ مرَّاتٍ وَ يَتْرَک حَتَّی يتمَّ لَه أَرْبعُ سِنِينَ ثُمَّ يقَالَ لَهُ قُلْ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ صَلِّی اللََُّّ عَلَی مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ ثُمَّ يَتْرَک حَتَّی يتمَّ لَهُ خَمْسُ سِنِينَ فَإِذَا تَعَلَّمَ الْوُضُوءَ وَ الصَّلََةَ غُفَرَ اللََُّّ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لَهُ وَ لِوَالِدَيْهِ إِنْ شَاءَ اللََُّّ
3.3. The principle of paying attention to individual differences

It is important to consider individual differences in talents and stages of education in discipline. The fact that human beings have different stages and levels in their life as well as a unique personality and characteristics, and that no two people are the same, is necessary for child upbringing and development.

In verses 13 and 14 of Surah Al-Nooh, it is stated that:

﴿مَا لَكُمْ لاَ تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا﴾

“What is the matter with you that you are not inwe of the Majesty of Allah, when He truly created you in stages of development?”

Differences in talents, tastes and other areas are necessary for a perfect system of human development and in raising children. Imam Ali (AS) says:

"لا يَزَالُ النَّاسُ بِخَيْرٍ مَا تَفَاوَتُوا فَإِذَا اسْتَوَوْا هَلَكُوا"

“People’s greatness lies in their differences, if people were all equal, they will perish”. 22,23

According to this hadith, if capacities and talents are not taken into consideration, not only they will not grow, but they will be destructive.

God asks to treat people according to their abilities and not burden anyone beyond their capabilities. In verse 286 of Surah Al-Baqarah, we read:

﴿لاَ يُكَلِِّفُ اللََُّّ نَفْسًا إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا﴾

"Allah does not require of any soul more than what it can afford.”

3.4. The principle of empathy with the child

Understanding these stages and adopting a proper behavior towards each stage is a necessity of education. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his guardians have paid special attention to this matter in their teachings. As narrated from the Messenger of God (PBUH):

"مَنْ كَانَ عَلَّدًا صَبِيبًا فِلْيُصَابَ لَهُ"

“Whoever has a child must have a child within”. 24

And it has been narrated from Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (AS):

"مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدًا صَبِيبًا"

"Everyone who has a child should have a child with him.” 25
Understanding the child’s world from their perspective at every stage and behaving in accordance with them should not be neglected. The above hadiths emphasize the fact that a child’s perspective of the world is different from adults. Hence, adults and educators should not look at children through the lens of their feelings and thoughts, rather, they should understand this period of development, be aware of its realities and behave according to their spiritual and physical needs.26

3.5. The principle of facilitation

Facilitation means making things easy.27 The principle of facilitation refers to making educational programs and activities easy and accessible and not based on hard tasks. Methods should be sought that the child willingly accepts what he is taught and treats the teacher with gentleness and patience so he can pave the way for achieving the desired goals. This is the tradition of divine education, and God, the Merciful, has made His path easy and accessible for all to be endowed with divine perfections. Verse 185 of Surah Al-Baqarah states:

﴿يُرِيدُ اللََُّّ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلاَ يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ﴾

“Allah intends ease for you, not hardship”

He also says in verse 78 of Surah Al-Hajj:

﴿وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ﴾

“and (God) laid upon you no hardship in the religion”

God’s recommended path of upbringing is easy. The founder of this educational system, the Messenger of God (PBUH), said:

"بَعُثَنِي بِالْحَنِيفِيَّةِ السَّهْلَةِ السَّمْحَةِ"

“God has sent me to accomplish the easy and gentle mission of Hanif and Sharia”.28-30

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) emphasized that Muslims should follow his recommendations on the path of child rearing:

"يَسِِّرُوا وَ لاَ تُعَسِِّرُوا إِنِِّي بُعِثْتُ بِالْحَنِيْفِيَّةِ السَّمْحَةِ"

“Be gentle and avoid being strict. I have been chosen to prophethood -easy and gentle- for Hanif and Sharia”.

Education based on hard and difficult work causes serious harm, and such education is against the prophetic way and tradition. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) says:

"بَعُثْتُ بِالْحَنِيْفِيَّةِ السَّمْحَةِ أوِ السَّهْلَةِ وَ مَنْ خَالفَ سَلَطَتِيُّ فَلَيْسَ مَنِ"

"مِيَّذَأَۡنَا لِلْمُتَّقِيِّنَۡ بِالْحَنِيْفِيَّةِ السَّمْحَةِ وَ السَّهْلَةِ وَ مَنْ خَالفَ شَرِيَّةِ غَيْرَ مَنْ"
“I have been sent to the religion of Hanif- mild and easy- and whoever opposes my way will not have my blessing”. 31-32

A formal way that is based on facilitation is easily realized and does not cause reluctance and escape. That is why religious leaders emphasize on this principle. It is stated in the Alawite teachings:

"خَيْرُ الأُمُورِ ما سَهُلَتْ مِبَادِيهِ وَ حَسُنَتْ خَوَاتِمُهُ وَ حُمِدَتْ عَوَاقِبُهُ"

“The good of our affairs is the light of the beginning and the beauty of its end is the praise of its consequences”. 33

Facilitation is more important in the first years of a child’s life, because their existence is more subtle and needs more facilitation. Younis Ibn Rabat, a reliable narrator of Imam Sadigh (AS) says: 34-36 “The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: “May God have mercy on who gives birth to a child. May God have mercy on who helps his child in goodness and charity”. Younis Ibn Rabat asked the Prophet: “How can one help their child in goodness and charity? “He said:

"يَقْبَلُ مَيْسُورَهُ وَ يَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ مَعْسُورِهِ وَ لاَ يُرْهِقُهُ وَ لاَ يَخْرَقُ بِهِ"

“Accept from him for what is able to do, and do not ask of him what is too much for his capabilities, do not overwhelm him with duties, and do not cause him confusion and shame”.37-38 Therefore, the path towards goodness is a path different from harshness and violence, and is based on ease and gentleness. 39

3.6. The principle of honoring the child's personality

According to the Messenger of God (PBUH), a child should not be humiliated or underestimated and experience feelings of worthlessness. Children need love more than adults, but this does not mean disrespecting the child’s personality. A child who is valued and respected acquires a sense of ‘self-worth’ and a person who values himself does not contaminate himself with ugliness. It is stated in Islamic narrations that:

"مَن كَرُمَت عَلَيهِ نَفْسُهُ لَمْ يَهِنَّهَا بِالمَعصِية"

“One who honors and respects himself, will not devalue himself with sin”.40

Dignity of the soul is the axis and basis of Islamic morality and education.

Honoring a person in childhood and respecting and taking a child’s emotions seriously in the first seven years of their life has been greatly emphasized in Islamic teachings.

3.7. The principle of affection towards children

We often see recommendations for showing love and affection to children and younger people in the Prophet’s (PBUH) teachings. According to the Messenger of God (PBUH):
“Whoever kisses his child, God will glorify and honor him”.  

He also states:

“Kiss your children because for every kiss there is a place in heaven and the distance between two places is five hundred years”.  

Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari says: “One day I went to see the Messenger of God (PBUH). I saw that the Prophet (PBUH) was on his knees while carrying his two grandchildren Hassan and Hussein (AS). He was walking around the room on his hands and feet, and he said: “Your ride is a good ride, and you are good riders”.

Feyz Kashanieh (RA) says: “Whenever the Prophet (PBUH) returned from a journey and came across children on the way, he would pause for a moment and tell someone to pick up the children one by one and put them on his back. The children would recount this memory to each other with joy after the Prophet (PBUH) left. They were surprised that someone with such a high position would have a delightful attitude towards children”.

3.8. The principle of prevention and precaution

This principle has a special role in educational psychology. Attempts are made to identify and prevent the causes of behavioral disorders before they occur. On one hand, many parents are dissatisfied with their child’s behavior nowadays and hope one will introduce their child to parental rights. However, these behaviors originate from the parents’ own shortcomings since they are not aware of the right way to discipline their children.

The Messenger of God (PBUH) says: “May God have mercy on who helps his child to do good”. He was asked how to do so? He replied: “1. Accept what the child has done based on his capabilities, 2. Do not ask of them what is beyond their abilities, 3. do not force them to sin and rebellion, 4. do not lie to them 5. and do not behave irrationally towards them”.

According to this hadith, if parents want their children to be honest, they must pursue honesty and avoid dishonesty themselves. Imam Sadigh (AS) says:

“Introduce your children to (our) path before the authority (and other sects) overtake you (and lead them astray)”.  

Since the words of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) originate from the source of revelation and truth, their words can be considered as the secret of salvation and perfection in humanity, and protect people from doubts. Since children are exposed to intellectual damage and doubts, it is necessary for families to be extremely careful
in this regard (learning the sciences and knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt) in order to increase their child’s knowledge and guide them to the path of truth.

4. Conclusion

An important subject researched by experts for a very long time is how to raise a child. Islam includes rules and principles targeting human’s happiness and well-being, and emphasizes the correct way of raising a child since they are the future of every nation. In this study, we investigated the principles of child rearing according to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) through a descriptive-analytical method. These principles include: The principle of moderation, the principle of gradualism, the principle of attention to individual differences, the principle of empathy with the child, the principle of facilitation, the principle of honoring the child’s personality, the principle of affection towards the child, and the principle of prevention and precaution. The result of this study showed that parents can raise their children with Islamic honor if they follow the mentioned principles.

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