

The concept of moral education for Singaporean Muslim children: An analysis of Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan's educational thought

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Abstract

Morals are the main problem that is being felt in the world of Islamic education today. It has an impact on social, cultural, political, economic, and even religious problems in a country. Singapore's Muslim community is generally a Malay nation that also experiences the same problems as those experienced by the general Islamic community in various other parts of the world. Some cases of delinquency among Muslim children are caused by the destruction of their morals. In this case, the concepts of moral education that are extracted from the sources of Islam itself, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, are needed so that Singaporean Muslim children can continue to grow and develop in Islamic values. This article tries to analyze the concept of educational thought of Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan, an Islamic education figure who consistently uses the two main sources of Islam in explaining moral education that can be applied to Muslim children in Singapore. The research used is library research using a descriptive-qualitative approach. Data analysis uses descriptive analysis, content analysis, and interpretative methods. The results show that one of the objectives of Islamic education in Singapore is to shape the morals of madrasa students to be in accordance with Islamic morals. This goal will be even stronger if we take the concept of moral education according to 'Ulwan. The concept aims to form children who believe, obey worship, and have good social sensitivity. The material is divided into three categories: moral education for Allah, moral education for oneself, and moral education for others. The education process has two supporters, namely teachers and parents as implementers, as well as appropriate methods, namely educating by example, habituation, advice, attention or supervision, and punishment. The evaluation is to see the extent of the achievements that have been obtained by children in preparing their morals, intellect, and mentality, shaping their physique, behavior, and social sense, and being able to become useful members of society.

Keywords: Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan; Akhlaq Education; Islamic Education; Singapore.

Abstrak

Akhlaq menjadi masalah utama yang sedang dirasakan oleh dunia pendidikan Islam saat ini. Hal itu berdampak pada permasalahan sosial, budaya, politik, ekonomi, bahkan agama di sebuah negara. Masyarakat muslim Singapura umumnya adalah berbangsa Melayu yang juga mengalami permasalahan yang sama sebagaimana yang dialami oleh umumnya masyarakat Islam di berbagai belahan dunia lainnya. Beberapa kasus kenakalan anak muslim disebabkan oleh rusaknya akhlak dan moral mereka. Dalam hal ini dibutuhkan konsep-konsep pendidikan akhlak yang digali dari sumber Islam itu sendiri, yaitu al-Qur'an dan Hadis, agar anak-anak muslim Singapura dapat terus tumbuh dan berkembang dalam nilai-nilai Islami. Artikel ini mencoba untuk menganalisis konsep pemikiran pendidikan Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan, tokoh pendidikan Islam yang konsisten

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menggunakan kedua sumber utama Islam tersebut, dalam menjelaskan pendidikan akhlak yang bisa diterapkan untuk anak muslim di Singapura. Penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian pustaka dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Analisis data menggunakan analisis deskriptif, analisis isi, dan metode interpretatif. Hasil penelitian memperlihatkan bahwa salah satu tujuan pendidikan Islam di Singapura memiliki tujuan untuk membentuk akhlak para siswa madrasah agar sesuai dengan akhlak Islam. Tujuan ini akan semakin kuat jika mengambil konsep pendidikan akhlak menurut 'Ulwan. Konsep tersebut memiliki tujuan untuk membentuk anak yang beriman, taat beribadah, dan memiliki kepekaan sosial yang baik. Materinya terbagi menjadi tiga, yaitu pendidikan akhlak kepada Allah, pendidikan akhlak kepada diri sendiri, dan pendidikan akhlak kepada orang lain. Proses pendidikannya memiliki dua pendukung, yaitu guru dan orang tua sebagai pelaksana, serta metode yang tepat, yaitu mendidik dengan keteladanan, pembiasaan, nasihat, perhatian/ pengawasan, dan hukuman. Adapun evaluasinya adalah melihat sejauh mana pencapaian yang telah diperoleh anak dalam mempersiapkan akhlaknya, intelektualnya, mentalitasnya, dan juga membentuk fisiknya, perilakunya, dan rasa sosialnya, serta mampu menjadi anggota masyarakat yang bermanfaat.

Kata kunci: Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan; Pendidikan Akhlak; Pendidikan Islam; Singapura.

Introduction

The younger generation is a generation that is easily influenced and vulnerable to moral shifts (Bahri, 2015). This is often seen in real life when teenagers do not have wisdom in their behavior. It is really worrying about the current condition, especially for the Muslim generation. Because without morals embedded in a person, it will damage a future generation. This is what then causes moral problems, which are the cause of the downturn of Muslims globally. This condition is certainly very contradictory to the principles of Islamic teachings, which are very concerned with morals and morality. The great attention of Islamic teachings to moral problems is also reflected in the words of the Prophet: "Indeed, among the best of you is the best in morals" (Bukhari, 1993).

A character's good and evil must have a clear and distinct measure or guidance. The Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet are the instructions from an Islamic standpoint. This signifies that the Qur'an and Sunnah are used to judge good and bad morality. Unfortunately, the status and actuality of the ummah today are far from what the Qur'an refers to as *khaira ummah*. Today, the world and Islamic civilization are in the grip of a severe multidimensional crisis rooted in moral issues. Almost every facet of people's existence is under crisis, including social, cultural, political, economic, moral, educational, and even religious ones (Hasanah, 2023). This was the topic of a discussion between Java scholars in 1929: "The situation of Muslims today is not encouraging, both in religious and worldly aspects, both in material and spiritual aspects. When Muslims live in a country with other people, they are bound to fall behind them" (Arslan, 2013).

This moral dilemma is shared by Singapore's Muslim minority, which is predominantly Malay. Almost all Singaporean Malays are Muslims, while there are Muslims from other ethnic groups, such as Indian, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and Eurasian nationalities, although their numbers are minor in comparison to the Muslim Malay community. Politically, Singaporean Muslims are a minority in a

plural and multi-cultural society (Chua et al., 2005; Noor & Leong, 2013). As a result of the tremendous flow of migration since British colonization, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity has become increasingly visible in the country. Furthermore, the country's growing modernization and expansion, as well as the current global economy, necessitate a dependable and skilled workforce. This is one of the elements contributing to the rapid flow of labor migration from many parts of the world to this country, adding to Singaporeans' ethnic, cultural, and religious variety (plurality and multi-culturalism) (Helmiati, 2021).

Singapore is known as a secular state in terms of the connection between the state and religion; the state is impartial in religious matters and does not support religious or non-religious persons (Yanti, 2022). Faith is a private subject; the government has no authority or obligation to regulate any individual's faith. Singapore State officials confirm Singapore's secularism: "Singapore's government is secular, but it is certainly not atheistic" (Helmiati, 2021). This viewpoint exemplifies the government's strategic secularism, which emphasizes that secular does not imply atheist (godless) because more than 80% of Singaporeans practice specific religions.

The Singaporean Muslim community is in the same boat as the majority of Islamic groups around the world. This can be observed, at least, in Hussin Mutalib's (2015) writing, which highlights the multifaceted problem confronting Singapore's Malay/Muslim population. According to him, based on statistical data (census) compiled by the Singapore government, the Malay/Muslim community in Singapore is still plagued by socioeconomic issues such as *dadah* collection (drug addiction), a lack of education, juvenile delinquency, high levels of divorce, poor health, and a lack of economic opportunity (Mutalib, 2015). According to the findings of numerous institutes' research, the presence of Malay Muslims in Singapore does not appear to have a good impact on the country's development and prosperity. According to Michael Barr (2000), Singapore is fortunate because 77% of its people have Chinese traditions that emphasize family integrity, raising children, and educating them to become individuals who are humble, diligent, frugal-careful, responsible to both parents, loyal, and obedient to the law. The non-Chinese community is influenced by the good culture or character of the Chinese-Singaporean community.

This is an irony, because the issues raised by Lee Kwan Yew above are all related to good values, which are at the heart of Islamic teachings, as the Prophet stated:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ: إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ صَالِحَ الْأَخْلَاقِ.

"Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: Verily, I was sent only to perfect good manners" (HR. Imam Bukhari).

The facts stated above undoubtedly raise the question of what has happened to the Islamic community in general, both in Singapore and elsewhere. What caused them to be hampered by such serious moral issues? In this scenario, the author contends that moral education should be the primary focus of Muslim children's

education. Children, according to Islam, are a gift from Allah. All parents owe it to their children to educate them so that they can become devout and *salihah*, knowledgeable, and pious people. Each parent is accountable to their *Khaliq*.

Moral education aims to produce human beings who are useful for themselves and their communities, happy and fond of practicing and developing Islamic teachings in dealing with God and with their fellow human beings, and can take advantage of this for the benefit of the world and the hereafter. This goal seems too ideal, making it difficult to achieve. But with concepts that are arranged in a plan with conceptual frameworks, achieving that goal is not impossible. To achieve these goals, it takes a concept of child education that is structured and in accordance with the Qur'an and hadith. In this case, the author chose the educational thought of Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan because he wanted to dig deeper into the concept of moral education, especially if it is related to the conditions that exist in Singapore today.

Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan is a charismatic and respected educational figure among the world's Muslim scholars. The contents of his books always refer to the Qur'an and hadith, making him a literalist. The book *Tarbiyāt al-Awlad fī al-Islām* is one of his works that became phenomenal because of the completeness of its discussion, starting from the birth of a child to adulthood. The content of the book also presents Islamic arguments from the Qur'an and hadith, as well as the legacy of the righteous *shalafush-shalih*, which contains laws, advice, and ethics. Important educational studies are only sourced from original references without adapting the opinions of other groups, except for one specific reason and purpose.

'Ulwan is a contemporary Muslim figure who was born in 1928/1347 H in the town of Qadhi Askar, which is located in the Syrian city of Halab. Because of his piety, he hailed from a well-respected family. Sheikh Said, a well-known scholar and physician, was his father. 'Ulwan's ancestors include al-Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib (Faqih, 2020). Raised in a religious family, 'Ulwan grew up to be a scholar, faqih, *da'i*, thinker, and educational observer, as well as an educator.

'Ulwan is one of the outstanding scholars born in the twentieth century, whose style has a *mu'ashirah* perspective, which tries to propose solutions to problems that arise in the present. His intelligence has been evident since an early age, and his command of religious knowledge is exceptional, so it is not surprising that he has broad insight and understanding in responding to the numerous types of challenges that exist today. Among other scholars, 'Ulwan is known for being polite, *tawadhu'*, knowledgeable, and bright. He based all of his ideas and opinions on the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions, then supports his explanations with examples from the Prophet, his companions, and the righteous *shalafush-shalih* (Khaliq, 1999).

Shaykh Wahbi Sulaiman al-Ghawajji al-Albani stated in 'Ulwan (2018)' that 'Ulwan has replicated Islamic evidence found in the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the tradition of the *salaf* (past scholars and intellectuals) to define the law. 'Ulwan is also

an independent writer, as indicated by his discussion of child education, which is based on pure references and does not include references to viewpoints outside of Islam, according to his Islamic culture. He is a scholar who is nice and smiling; his verbal expression is simple for others to understand; and he is solid on the truth.

Hasan Anwar, Dean of Tarbiyah IAIN Faculty Sunan Ampel stated during the printing event of the translation of the book *Tarbiyāt al-Awḷād fī al-Islām* that Abdullah Nashih Ulwan's book can be used as a very appropriate reference for all types of needs related to the educational guidance of children and the younger generation as the successor to the ideals of a noble and pious nation. This is due to the book's content being full of many moral and educational concerns with *naqli* or revelation arguments supplemented with arguments that are very rational and in harmony with current development (Iskandar, 2017). Yusuf al-Qardhawi, a modern scholar who is contemporaneous with Abdullah Nashih Ulwan, disclosed that his writing is born from a heart that is honest to Allah, literature that has a magnificent *tarbiyah* worth. Abdullah Nashih Ulwan is a scholar who is well regarded for his struggle and writings, and what he wrote accurately describes his personality, which is noble, pure, and true (Iskandar, 2017). Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, a Palestinian scholar, indicated that what Abdullah Nashih Ulwan wrote came from a pure soul and a true heart. In his writings, Abdullah Nashih Ulwan always makes the Qur'an and Sunnah the principal references, which are supplemented by the opinions of scholars, both *salaf* (prior) and *khalaf* (living today). As a result, it is impossible to deny that his writings are extremely useful as a reference for educators of all eras (Iskandar, 2017).

From the above opinions, it can be seen that Abdullah Nashih Ulwan is a scholar who bases his studies purely on the Qur'an, the hadith of the Prophet, and the generations of *shalafush-shalih*. He is also a writer who has a breadth of knowledge and insight into critical thinking and is firm and argumentative. He is also known as a friendly, smiling, noble, pure, and sincere person. The book *Tarbiyāt al-Awḷād fī al-Islām* is the result of his thoughts by taking the Islamic sharia approach from the angle of *fiqh* discussion. The book is widely considered to contain educational values because every Islamic teaching contained in the Qur'an and hadith does have educational values. Because indeed Allah revealed His book, which was clarified by the sunnah of the Prophet and followed by the generations of companions and *tabi'in*, to provide education to mankind.

Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan despised divides and the rise of *firqahs* within the Islamic state. He frequently urges for unity and integrity in the name of Islam in order to strengthen the dwindling power of the Muslim *ummah*. He believed that every layer of the Muslim Ummah should investigate the divide of the Muslim Ummah. His eyes well up with emotions whenever he speaks of Muslim unity and honesty. It demonstrates that he genuinely cares about Muslim unity.

The completeness of the discussion and its focused analysis make Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan a reference place for Muslim families in terms of child education, especially moral education. According to him, pious children can only be formed through children whose hearts always love Allah, Rasulullah, and *ahlul bait* and draw closer to Allah's commands, do not associate Allah with others, *birrul walidain*, carry out *amar ma'ruf*, be patient in facing life's trials, and have Islamic morals by not being arrogant and polite to others. For this reason, the right method is needed in order to educate children to have Islamic values and become *qurrata a'yun* children, coveted by all parents who soothe their eyes and hearts in the future ('Ulwan, 2018).

Research Method

This article's research employs qualitative research methods, which are a sort of library research. The data in this type of study comes from written sources, such as books or other materials relating to the topic of debate. The literature study's content can take the form of a theoretical study, with the discussion centered on knowledge concerning the problem to be solved through research (Sukardi, 2013). The narrative technique was utilized in this case as a research model to help comprehend the identity and vision of something by referring to the narrative given. This method can be defined as a process of critically studying historical events and providing exact and correct descriptions, narratives, and interpretations of those events (Adlini, M. N., Dinda, A. H., Yulinda, S., Chotimah, O., & Merliyana, S. J., 2022).

In qualitative research, data sources typically take the form of spoken or written words describing observable human behavior. The research sources employed in this study are the outcomes of documentation-based data collection. After gathering the data, it is divided into two categories: primary data sources and secondary data sources (Jasmi, 2012). According to this understanding, this article has two data sources, namely the book *Tarbiyāt al-Awlād fī al-Islām* by Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan as a primary source, as well as the works of other authors related to the book by 'Ulwan, both in the form of books, journals, and other scientific research as a primary source of research.

After gathering the data, it will be examined to draw conclusions. This study's data analysis approaches include descriptive analytical, content analysis, and interpretative methods. The descriptive analysis approach is used to collect and compile data before analyzing it. According to Lexy J. Moleong (2011), descriptive analysis is data that is collected in the form of words and images rather than statistics. This is due to the use of qualitative approaches; also, everything gathered is likely to be the key to what was researched. Researchers assembled data in the form of Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan's opinions on children's moral education found in primary data, then summarized and evaluated using data obtained from secondary data sources for this study.

The content analysis approach is used to conduct an in-depth examination of the written or printed information in the mainstream media. According to Noeng Muhadjir (1992), content analysis is a scientific examination of the content of a communication message. Content analysis technically involves the classification of signs, the use of criteria as a basis for classification, and the use of analytical procedures to produce predictions. This approach is utilized in this study to identify the main ideas concerning children's moral education from 'Ulwan's point of view, gather data and form preliminary conclusions, compare with secondary data, and lastly analyze and derive appropriate conclusions.

The interpretive approach, as a way of thinking rationally, critically, analytically, logically, purposefully, and constructively, is used to decipher the meaning of the description offered in the text. According to Bakker and Zubair (1990), the interpretive approach is a technique for delving into the text as carefully as possible in order to reveal the meaning of the description offered. This method is utilized to discover the underlying meaning of children's moral instruction, as detailed in 'Ulwan's book.

The following are the next steps taken by researchers in data processing: The description step, which entails describing or describing the principles contained in Ulwan's books about children's moral education in their current form. The stage of comparison, in which Ulwan's concepts or ideas are aligned and compared with numerous general conceptions concerning moral education and child education in Islam; The interpretation step, in which researchers analyze the results of the comparison of Ulwan's views with general theories in order to get new formulations concerning children's moral education and their applicability, In the conclusion stage, the researcher summarizes the results of the previously explained data presentation and analysis.

Results and Discussion

A. Moral Education According to Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan

Moral education is the process of fostering children's character so that they become noble characters (*akhlaq al-karimah*). The process is inseparable from fostering the religious life of students in totality (Syafri, 2018). Moral education prioritizes universal values and fitrah that can be accepted by all parties. Allah sent the Prophet to perfect human morals. Some of the morals that are exemplified include kindness and compassion. With the position of the Prophet Muhammad as a messenger and *uswatun hasanah* (good example), Islam today is the only religion or civilization that has a model that is eternal throughout the ages (Husaini, 2005).

According to Sofyan Sauri (2011), morals as "science" discusses actions that are considered good or bad, concerning certain values, laws, and principles to know with certainty the good, right, and main characteristics, as well as knowing with certainty the bad, wrong, and despicable characteristics to be shunned with the aim of

cleansing the soul (*tazkiyāt al-nafs*) and clearing the heart (*tashfiyāt al-qalb*) to achieve Allah's pleasure. Whereas "charity" is a guide to behavior in worshipping God whose name is Allah, in introspection and self-evaluation, in getting along with the family (parents, children, and wife/husband, including the whole house and household helpers), society, and the state, as well as a uniquely Islamic in *ittiba'* (believing, obeying, and emulating) Rasulullah (Sauri, 2011).

As with all Islamic teachings, the source of moral teachings is the Qur'an and hadith. The two sources of teaching become a measure of good and bad, or noble and despicable (Syafri, 2012). The Qur'an is used as a source of Islamic morals, which are good and which are not. The Qur'an is not the result of human musings but the word of God. Every Muslim believes that the contents of the Qur'an cannot be made and matched by the human mind. If the Qur'an is a guide to life that is the basis for every Muslim, then it is clearly a source of *akhlāq al-karīmah* in Islamic teachings (Abdullah, 2007). While the Hadith includes the words and behavior of the Messenger of Allah, which is seen as an explanatory attachment to the Qur'an, especially in matters that are explicit in principle. The Prophet Muhammad as *uswatun hasanah*, can be used as a figure or role model (QS. Al-Ahzab: 21), because his speech and behavior received guidance from Allah (QS. An-Najm: 3-4) (Abdullah, 2007).

Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan, with his famous book *Tarbiyāt al-Awlād fī al-Islām*, is one of the educational figures who incorporates al-Qur'an and Hadith in every scientific study. In his work, he emphasizes the importance of moral formation and character development in Muslim children from an early age. Using the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as al-Ghazali's Revival of the Religious Sciences (*ihyā' ulūm al-dīn*) framework, he emphasizes religious discipline, spiritual education, and intellectual development in the process of learning and teaching children (Abdullah, Hassan, Abdelmagid, Ali, 2020).

In *Tarbiyāt al-Awlād fī al-Islām*, there are many meaningful discussions about child education that become a reference for Islamic education practitioners. The book is the result of his thinking by taking the approach of Islamic Sharia from the angle of *fiqh* discussion. The book is widely considered to contain educational values because every Islamic teaching contained in the Qur'an and hadith has educational values. Because indeed Allah revealed His book, which was clarified by the *sunnah* of the Prophet and followed by the generations of companions and *tabi'in*, to provide education to mankind.

Although moral education is explicitly mentioned in the discussion in *Tarbiyat al-Awlād fī al-Islām*, moral education implicitly colors all forms of child education expressed by 'Ulwan in the book. Because the purpose of child education in general, according to 'Ulwan, is to form a generation that is perfect in personality, morals, and good thinking and can avoid psychological harm. With the education of children, it is hoped that they will become the next generation of quality. The next generation of

quality is a generation that has a good personality, understands, practices religion, and also avoids things that deviate. With education that is in accordance with Islamic methods and systems, it will be able to change the generation that comes from a bad environment into one that lives a decent, noble life and has good morals ('Ulwan, 2018).

Education according to 'Ulwan has many aspects, including individual education, family education, community education, and humanitarian education. As for moral education, it is part of individual education that seeks to prepare and shape him to become a useful member of society, a useful human being and a righteous human being in this life. 'Ulwan said that moral education in children must be given until they are able to live in the midst of society as pious and noble people. According to him, a child is born with the *fitrah* of tawhid and faith in Allah and on the basis of purity. So, if there is a good education in the family, good social interaction, and a comfortable learning environment, the child will grow up with solid faith, noble morals, and a good education ('Ulwan, 2018).

Specifically, child education is a form of parental responsibility for their children. The purpose of children's moral education from 'Ulwan's perspective has three objectives: first, so that children understand the pillars of faith and Islamic law. Later, adults become people whose faith is strong, obedient to worship, and always *muraqabatullah*. Second, so that children are able to distinguish between good morals and bad morals, praiseworthy traits and despicable traits that can raise and lower human degrees, dignity, and honor. In the future, they will grow up to have an Islamic personality. Third, so that children understand the rights of parents or older people, the rights of relatives, the rights of teachers, the rights of siblings, and the rights of neighbors. They will grow up to be people who can interact, communicate, and get along well with others.

According to 'Ulwan, the material for children's moral education has three discussions, namely:

1. Moral Education to Allah; includes the Pillars of Faith (faith in Allah, the angels of Allah, the book of Allah, the Messenger of Allah, the Day of Judgment, and faith in destiny). Planting strong faith that benefits, *mudharat*, and *rizqi* are in the decree of Allah, strengthening love for the Prophet Muhammad and his family, and love for the Qur'an and love to read the Qur'an; Pillars of Islam (shahada, prayer, zakat, fasting, hajj). The wisdom, benefits, and conditions of worship that are accepted by Allah include Islamic law, the basics of sharia law, halal haram issues, the importance of religious knowledge, the problem of obedience and sin, *taqwa*, and *muraqabatullah*.
2. Moral education for oneself; includes the basis of moral goodness, moral formation (honesty, *istiqomah* in goodness), prevention of bad morals (lying, denouncing, insulting, and all things that cause moral damage), deterioration of education, and dropping authority, glory, and honor.

3. Moral education for others; includes the basics of noble psychology, Islamic brotherhood, compassion, helping, putting the interests of others first, forgiving each other, firm and courageous attitudes in the social life order of society, and maintaining the rights of others (the rights of parents and elders, the rights of relatives, the rights of teachers, the rights of siblings, and the rights of neighbors).

The method of moral education is used to educate children in order to achieve the goals of children's moral education. These methods are educating by example, educating by habit, educating by advice, educating by attention or supervision, and educating by punishment.

B. The Dynamics of Singaporean Muslim Children

Singapore, as it is commonly known, is a secular state that does not emphasize religion and nation as its core, even though it is dominated by the Chinese as the majority group; moreover, they also embrace Buddhism as a religion and belief. Under these circumstances, Islam and Malay came to be part of the groups that make up Singapore's identity, which is recognizable today. The Muslim community in Singapore is a minority group. Data in 2010 showed that the Muslim population aged 15 years and above in Singapore amounted to 457,435 people, namely 8,332 people of Chinese origin, 382,017 people of Malay origin, 57,546 people of Indian origin, and 9,540 people of other nationalities (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2020). Most Muslims in Singapore follow the Shafi'i school of thought, some follow the Hanafi school of thought, and there are Shia Muslim groups (Siddique & Abdullah, 1986).

The early history of the emergence of Islamic education in Singapore is said to have developed since the early arrival of Islam in Singapore itself. Islamic education in Singapore was delivered by scholars who came from other countries in Southeast Asia or from West Asian countries and from the small continent of India. These scholars include Shaykh Khatib Minangkabau, Shaykh Tuanku Mudo Wali Aceh, Shaykh Ahmad Aminuddin Luis Bangkahulu, Shaykh Syed Usman bin Yahya bin Akil (Mufti Betawi), Shaykh Habib Ali Habsyi (Kwitang Jakarta), Shaykh Anwar Seribandung (Palembang), Shaykh Mustafa Husain (Purba Baru Tapanuli), and Shaykh Muhammad Jamil Jaho (Padang Panjang). The potential for Muslim improvement began clearly with the strengthening of education in madrasas and mosques and the establishment of non-royal government (NGO).

The development of Islamic education in Singapore came to light when the Majelis Pendidikan Anak Islam (MENDAKI) took up the issue of education for Muslim children. Malay-Muslim leaders managed to attract great support among Malay-Muslim groups and the government until the Assembly was transformed into Yayasan Mendaki (the Council for the Development of the Singapore Malay/Muslim Community) in 1982. The foundation empowers the community through brilliance in education in the context of Singapore, which is made up of various peoples and religions. In 2002, the MENDAKI Foundation was harmonized and focused on four key areas: education, youth, family, and employment. 30% of MENDAKI's programs

target the Malay/Islamic population and subsidize prevention and development programs. MENDAKI joins forces for mutual support and encouragement with government agencies, schools, mosques, Malay and Islamic congregations, employers, community centers and MAECs, and family and student service centers (Yayasan Mendaki, 2014).

Despite living in a developed secular country, accompanied by freedom in practicing religion, the facts and data show that Muslim children in Singapore are still shackled with various problems related to morals. Harun Gani (1994), a Malay/Singapore Muslim community leader, made a statement in the form of a paper published by the National University of Singapore (NUS) with the title: *Challenges Faced by the Singapore Malay Community in Social Development*. Among the problems that continue to shackle Singapore Muslims are education, economic, social, and political. Similarly, Hussin Mutalib (2015), a professor from NUS, wrote openly with the title *Malay Singaporeans as Minorities and Muslims in a Global Country*. He observed that the Malay/Muslim community of Singapore is shackled by socio-economic problems and social diseases. In terms of socio-economics in the form of lagging behind in terms of education and lagging behind in terms of economy. In terms of social health diseases in the form of drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, high divorce rates, and health problems.

The condition of humanity in the modern era, the digital era, and the era of the massive industrial revolution has created various problems that must be resolved as soon as possible. If we look further, the current condition actually stems from the development of human thought itself. Behind the greatness of technological progress, it actually has the potential to destroy human character and good values. Various children's problems in Singapore today are more likely to be psychological problems, which are more inclined to the problem of silencing human character as a result of modern scientific and technological products that cannot be controlled (Ismail & Daud, 2014). The reality of the denial of faith, the denial of character, the loss of self-esteem, and the future of children today is homework that must be resolved as soon as possible.

For the Singaporean Muslim community, the issue of Islamic education is on the agenda. This is because the Singapore government chose to eliminate religious studies in the national education system. Therefore, Singaporean Muslims conduct Islamic education through madrasahs and mosques to balance their needs as Muslims. For Muslims, including Singaporean Muslims, religion has a very important role in their lives. Religion becomes a guide in an effort to realize a meaningful, peaceful, and dignified life.

This indirectly affects the education of Singaporean Muslim children. Islamic upbringing and education of children is carried out in madrasahs and mosques. Madrasahs in Singapore function as formal educational institutions that systematically plan various educational environments that provide various

opportunities for students to carry out various learning activities in order to introduce Islam to Singaporean Muslim children. This madrasah concept is known as the full-time madrasah.

Meanwhile, Islamic education in Singapore mosques is more creative and innovative because it has gone through many changes to raise the level of its learning system. The learning concept uses an informal education system, or weekend learning. The management of mosques under the supervision of MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapore) has received much attention from the local Islamic community. The concept of learning in this mosque is known as half-time Madrasah (*Madrasah Separuh Masa*) or Mosque Madrasah (*Madrasah Masjid*).

Most Singaporean Muslim children attend full-time madrasahs. Others attend national schools, which means they receive no Islamic education at all. Instead, the children who go to National schools will attend Islamic education in mosque madrasah or half-time madrasah. Seeing this, most of the process of guidance and education of Singaporean Muslim children is mostly done at school, considering that almost half of the children's time is spent at school. The rest, coaching is done in the family.

For the middle- to upper-class Muslim community, the process of guidance in the family is not too much of an obstacle. They mostly come from educated and materially well-off families, so they can maximize the coaching process at home, such as holding a small library as a means of seeking knowledge, creating a prayer room in the house, paying attention to incoming halal food, choosing clothes that are in accordance with Islamic guidance, and so on.

In a study conducted by Hamidah Binte Mohamed Yasin (2020), three factors were mentioned that caused the weak development and education of Singaporean Muslim children, especially those related to the family. First, there is the poverty factor. This poverty problem is quite influential in the process of Islamic education for children in the family. With limited material resources, parents cannot provide maximum Islamic education to their children. Although the government provides subsidies and assistance for the poor, the implementation of Islamic education for children cannot run optimally; instead, it seems just. This is because the Muslim parents of underprivileged children are mostly from less educated families, so they do not understand the teachings of Islam. As a result, they are unable to apply Islamic values to themselves. Of course, this has an impact on the lack of parental guidance for their children. Those who do not understand religion cannot provide a conducive home atmosphere for children by providing Islamic values.

Secondly, the lack of space given by grandparents to educate together with the families of young couples who are newly married also affects the guidance of Singaporean Muslim children. Because of these grandparents, advice and admonitions for the good of educating children are expected to complement the

weaknesses of young parents who do not have time or lack understanding of religious knowledge. Third is the single parent factor. With only one parent, due to divorce or death, the guidance of Islamic education for Singaporean Muslim children becomes less balanced in the family. The Islamic education received by children is only obtained from schools, but there is a lack of guidance in the family. Finally, they tend to just do the routine without really understanding what they learn and get in religious schools (Yasin, 2020).

C. The Concept of Moral Education for Singaporean Muslim Children

Singapore, as a secular country, has largely taken a hands-off approach to religion (Mutalib, 2015). However, character education remains one of the objects of education in the country. Through the Ministry of Education, the Singapore government pays attention to character education. This can be seen from the statement of Singapore's Minister of Education, Heng Swee Keat: "Our education system must nurture Singapore citizens of good character so that everyone has the moral resolve to withstand an uncertain future and a strong sense of responsibility to contribute to the success of Singapore and the well-being of fellow Singaporeans.". The core values of character instilled by the Ministry of Education are six points (MoE, 2014);

1. Respect, a person who shows respect is if he believes in his own dignity and the dignity of all people.
2. Responsibility, a responsible person who realizes that he/she has duties towards himself/herself, family, community, country and the world and fulfills his/her responsibilities with love and commitment.
3. Resilience (joy), a joyful person, has emotional strength and resilience in facing challenges. He always shows courage, optimism, adaptability and resourcefulness.
4. Integrity, a person who upholds ethical principles and has the moral courage to stand up for what is right.
5. Care, a person who is caring by having kindness and compassion. He/she contributes to the good of society and the world.
6. Harmony, a person who strives for harmonious values of inner happiness and promotes social cohesion. He values the unity and diversity of a multiethnic society.

In Islam, there are three fundamentals of education that must be taught to Singaporean Muslim children. These three fundamentals are creed education, moral education, and worship education. This concept is in line with the thoughts of Abdullahh Nashih Ulwan in his book *Tarbiyatul Aulād fī al-Islām*. Creed education is education that must be provided continuously throughout life. Character or moral education: to strengthen the creed, moral education must be adequate by providing examples, habituation, and being shown how to be well civilized to others

continuously. Meanwhile, worship education should be started from an early age to foster piety for Allah by carrying out all commands and prohibitions ('Ulwan, 2018).

When viewed from the perspective of the condition of humanity in the modern era, the digital era, and the era of the industrial revolution, there are various problems that must be resolved as soon as possible. Behind the greatness of technological progress, it actually holds the potential to destroy human character and good values. The various problems of children in Singapore today are more likely to be psychological problems, which are more inclined to the problem of silencing human character as a result of modern scientific and technological products that cannot be controlled. The reality of the denial of faith, the denial of character, the loss of self-esteem, and the future of children today is homework that must be resolved as soon as possible.

To solve the problems of children in Singapore, the intensity and continuity of moral education are needed on an ongoing basis that is introduced and built at an early age. This theory is recognized by any part of the world: that to improve the quality of children, we must start by raising awareness of the importance of character education, ethics, and morals in the development of science and technology. Even a liberal country like the United States has a "moral guardian" institution as a bastion of character for people who are developing science and technology. So, today, the whole world has one voice: science and technology must be based on ethics and morals.

For Muslim communities, the character education that is explored must be sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith and is certainly in line with Islamic education itself, which prioritizes morals as the main portion of child education. This is relevant to the principles of moral education put forward by 'Ulwan, so that as early as possible, children are kept away from the attitude of disintegration of knowledge, so that the knowledge they have is based on character, ethics, moral humanity, and divinity. This will also be useful to keep children from anomalous acts of knowledge and technology. Moral education, which is actually the basic principle of morals and character, must be habituated in children during their lifetime.

'Ulwan based his thoughts on child education on the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as the good behaviors and habits of the *salāf al-shālih*. In addition, he introduced his concept of education based on the values of faith in Allah, so that children can grow and develop based on faith in Allah. They are educated to fear, remember, surrender, and ask for help only from Allah. In terms of moral education, 'Ulwan encourages children to get used to the attitude of moral *mahmudah* and noble character during their lifetime. According to him, moral teachings based on faith in Allah can keep people away from wavering faith.

'Ulwan's perspective on moral education directs humans not to pursue the pleasures and pleasures of the world at all costs, even though morality is at stake.

Children with progressive types will become arrogant and arrogant children with fellow humans. Therefore, to prevent these actions, the concept of education is very relevant to prevent humans from doing despicable acts and being hated by Allah. So, in fact, 'Ulwan's concept of moral education is very relevant to what is intended for the younger generation of Muslims in Singapore, who really need faith as a foothold in their lives in this modern era.

'Ulwan is very concerned about children's education from the aspect of morality and provides very meaningful guidelines in the formation of morality for parents and educators. In this case, Singaporean Muslim children really need guidance from the people around them to realize noble morals and have implications for achieving high self-esteem in the future. Therefore, the moral formation described by 'Ulwan is very relevant in answering the future problems experienced by many modern humans, including the younger generation in Singapore.

In this paper, the author tries to develop a concept of moral education for Muslim children in Singapore by basing the concept on the thoughts of Abdullah Nashih Ulwan in the book *Tarbiyāt al-Awlād fī al-Islām*. The book states that the purpose of moral education is to prioritize the attitudes and dispositions that children will have. These attitudes and dispositions will become his habits from *tamyiz* to *baligh*. This continues in the adult phase until the child actually navigates life. Therefore, the concept of moral education focuses on the formation of good morals.

1. *The Foundation of Moral Education*

The foundation of this moral child education takes one of the verses of the Qur'an, namely QS. Al-Tahrim verse 6 and the hadith of the Prophet as the philosophy of the concept, namely:

- a. QS. Al-Tahrim [66]: 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ
 اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from the fire of Hell, whose fuel is man and stone; its guardians are angels who are harsh, hard, and do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and always do what is commanded.

- b. Hadits of Rasulullah

From Ibnu Abbas ra., "*Honor your children and improve their manners*" (HR. Ibnu Majah).

2. *The Purpose of Moral Education*

The purpose of this moral education is tailored to the needs of Muslim families in Singapore, namely: "Educating children in goodness and shaping children's morals with the basics of Islamic morals that have implications for becoming good citizens in the pluralistic Singaporean society."

3. The Programme of Moral Education

Moral education is one of the fruits of faith that is firmly planted in the growth of true religion. This education program contains materials on moral principles and moral values that must be instilled in children so that they can become habits from an early age—puberty—to adulthood, as well as monitoring children against reprehensible morals, bad actions, and bad traits.

4. The Process of Moral Education

In practice, these materials are carried out by parents, teachers, and all educational components. In this case, all three are fully responsible for supervising and controlling children's behavior and attitudes. Some steps that should be taken so that the program runs well are as follows:

- a. Not letting children hang out with bad friends on their own without supervision and questioning.
- b. Not allowing children to watch romantic and erotic movies that lead to freedom and perversion; as well as action movies that can influence children to do evil.
- c. Not allowing children to watch television shows full of bad programs, including erotic dances and advertisements, which can lead to children being educated in freedom and will slowly become wild.
- d. Not allowing children to buy obscene magazines, read erotic stories, and look at pornographic pictures that could lead to children walking on the path of sin and disobedience.
- e. Making hijab easy for his family members and daughters, not allowing them to travel alone and dress up, neglecting to accompany and interact with them, and allowing them to go out of the house in revealing dresses.
- f. Supervising boys and girls when they go to school and return home so that children do not feel neglected.
- g. Monitoring children's reading rooms and supervising them when they are looking for reading materials so that they do not deviate in choosing pictures and readings.

The methods that can be used in this education and coaching process are:

a. The Exemplary Method

Parents, teachers, and educational components play a central role in this method. Because they become role models who become the main example for children in shaping their morals.

b. The Habituation Method

The habituation method is important because every program that has been prepared must be made a habit for children in their development process at home or school.

c. The Advice Method

This method of advice is the spearhead in the process of fostering and educating Muslim children. This is because children's nature often neglects and forgets their duties and obligations. Therefore, fathers, mothers, and educational components should not get tired of advising children.

d. The Attention and Monitoring Method

The method of attention and monitoring is needed as a form of supervision of children because of the tendency of children who can be exposed to bad influences from outside the home. In this case there should be no neglect of children.

e. The Punishment Method

The method of punishment carried out must fulfill the rules in religion. This method of punishment can be of various kinds, adjusted to the age level of the child. It is best to avoid spanking, unless it is necessary. Even then, there must be limits and conditions so that the beating does not get out of its purpose to deter and correct, not to vent anger.

5. The Evaluation of Moral Education

The evaluation of moral education is fully based on what is the subject of 'Ulwan's educational evaluation. This evaluation is to see the extent of the achievements that have been obtained by children in preparing their morals, intellect, and mentality, as well as shaping their physical, behavioral, and social sense, so that children have good morals and are able to become useful members of society. The measurement tools that can be used to measure the success of this moral education are as follows:

- a. If the child's education is far from the creed, religious guidance, and relationship with Allah, the child will grow up in a world of crime and deviation.
- b. If the child's character is quiet and resigned, later the child will live with negligence and ignorance.
- c. If the child's soul is dominated by the *heani* side, the child will one day live behind lust and worldly pleasures.
- d. If the child's character is aggressive, then the child will be proud and arrogant, arbitrary to the weak, and proud of his words and actions.
- e. If the satanic side dominates the child's soul, the child will become a drummer of hostility and hatred for fellow human beings.
- f. If the child is properly educated, then the child can become a light for society, like an 'angel' walking on the face of the earth.

Conclusion

As a contemporary scholar, Abdullah Nashih 'Ulwan is one of the scholars who is concerned to restore the purity of Islam to the Qur'an and hadith, because Islam for him is the savior of mankind. His extensive knowledge, strong intellectual power, and warm and kind personality make him known as one of the reference scholars in the approach to sharia law, especially in the field of child education. His

commentaries are firm and clear. Even to fellow scholars, he conveyed Islam with wisdom and good advice. He dislikes divisions, groups, and always campaigns for unity in the name of Islam to foster the waning strength of the ummah.

The concept of moral education in the perspective of Adullah Nashih 'Ulwan uses five methods, namely habituation, exemplary, advice, giving attention, and giving fair punishment. This method is very appropriate to do as early as possible to children in order to become their future character. The characteristics of children in Singapore who easily imitate the behavior of others without being able to filter good and bad, is actually a field to instill the five ways described by 'Ulwan in children, so that they can grow into Muslim individuals who have good morals, have strong faith, so that they can give goodness to the people around them. In addition to moral education, there are also several other materials to complement the education process, namely faith education, moral education, physical education, intellectual education, mental/psychic education, social education, and sex education. The seven materials are an integrated and interrelated unit in realizing Islamic moral education for children in Singapore.

Moral education according to 'Ulwan's concept, is still very relevant in solving the character problems of children in Singapore, who tend to lead to psychological problems that still really need faith as a foothold in their lives in the digitalization era. In addition, the concept of moral education with habituation, exemplary behavior, advice, giving attention, and giving punishment to Islamic education materials, namely belief, worship education, and moral education, is still relevant if applied to help solve problems in Singapore in order to realize a generation that has noble character from an early age, so that they are characterized and knowledgeable.

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