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Contributions of Abdulhamid Ahmad Abusulayman on Child Development

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Abstract

Muslim parents play a central role in shaping the intellectual, moral, and psychological development of their children. Many Muslim parents suffer from illiteracy, ignorance, and apathy that affect effective child upbringing and learning opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills. In response to the challenges, this paper examines the intellectual biography and scholarly contributions of AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman (c.1936-2021) in the field of child development. To achieve the objective, this study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the original writings of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman. Accordingly, it is a form of library research involving the collection and analysis of relevant scholarly materials aligned with the research objectives. The findings reveal that AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's insights into an integrated model of holistic child development are based on Islamic principles that support the child's intellectual, spiritual, and psychological development. This framework presents a balanced approach that nurtures morally responsible and socially engaged individuals. The study also highlights a comprehensive Islamic educational framework that reflects an integrated Islamic worldview and is consistent with AbuSulayman's educational reform agenda.

Keywords: Abdulhamid AbuSulayman, Child Development, Integrated Model, Islamic Education

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1.0 Introduction

The family is the first source of education for children as they become acquainted with the world. Khurshid Ahmad (1974) stated that the family structure is threefold. The first and closest members are the husband, wife, children, parents who live with them, and any servants. The next group, the central fold, consists of several close relatives (Ahmad, 1974). Within the family, a child grows and develops for the first time before encountering the outside world. In this regard, the family plays a crucial role in shaping and developing a

child's personality. Everything parents do is imitated by their children (Adililham, 2023).

Child development is the process and mechanisms that act during a baby's physical and mental growth before adulthood. Childhood is divided into early, middle, and late childhood. Hisham Altalib, AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman, and Omar Hisham Altalib (2013) divided the phases of child development as follows: Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers (ages 0–7); pre-teens (ages 8–11); young teens (ages 12–14); and young adults (ages 15–22). In each stage, children require different physical, emotional, social, and psychological resources from their parents (Altalib et al., 2013a).

A child's development cannot be forced or controlled beyond their natural pace. A child can grow according to the level of age at a self-determined rate without compulsion to achieve a growth level. This means that the rate at which a child grows cannot be compelled if the brain, tissues, nerves, and limbs are not ready to perform a specific skill. Their behaviour influences children's growth. Adibah Sulaiman (2014) defines growth as a systematic and orderly process of change that enables a child to reach maturity. Child growth reflects both physical development and progress in learning. Therefore, parents and teachers must understand child development psychology to support children's growth (Sulaiman et al., 2014).

However, many Muslim parents suffer from illiteracy**,** ignorance, and apathy. Many Muslim children are stifled in their efforts to acquire knowledge and skills. Some Muslim societies suffer from oppressive, tyrannical governments. Many Muslims face the following problems:

i. Limited freedom to think, due to oppression and indoctrination
ii. Limited freedom to question, inquire, and speak
iii. Limited freedom to do business and prosper, due to corruption and mismanagement
iv. Limited freedom of women, due to ignorance and male oppression
v. Limited freedom of citizens to choose their leaders, due to suppression and tyranny

Muslims cannot address all these factors overnight; however, they can begin with what is within their control, namely, practicing effective and responsible parenting. To raise righteous, successful children and ultimately good citizens, Muslims need to change the authoritarian and oppressive styles of parenting currently in vogue in their countries and seriously reform their parenting practices (Altalib et al., 2013a). In this context, the paper aims to highlight the concept of child development in Islam, focusing on the thought of

the prominent Muslim scholar AbdulHamid AbuSulayman. The study further investigates the intellectual biography of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman and the conceptualization of child development within an Islamic educational framework.

2.0 Objectives

i. To examine the intellectual biography of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman in relation to child development.
   a) To explore childhood experiences of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman within an Islamic environment.
   b) To examine childhood experiences of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman based on Islamic education.
ii. To investigate AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's contributions to the field of child development.
   a) To explore an integrated and value-based holistic child development model based on Islamic principles.
   b) To articulate an integrated Islamic educational framework that supports holistic child development.

3.0 Literature Review

Muslim scholars have written much Islamic literature on the development of various aspects of a child's personality. They highlight children's rights, Parenting skills, knowledge and education, religious guidance, behaviours and attitudes, cognitive growth, moral, social, and sexual development within Islamic thought. Al-Ghazali's Model of Parenting Skills Attributes consists of four crucial elements that call upon parents to nurture their children. These elements encompass (a) knowledge and education, (b) relationship with Allah, (c) relationship with children, and (d) relationship with others. He provided from the Hadith and Qur'anic verses in '*Ihya Ulum al-Din*' (Manap & Baba, 2016). Imam Ghazali further conceptualizes child development through four domains: Faith, Morality, Intellect, and Social (Arlisa, 2018). Meanwhile, Naser Huda (2002), in his book '*Dalil tarbiyah al-atfal wa al-awlad*', presents a practical developmental framework from infancy to six years, highlighting children's intellectual, emotional, moral, and social growth (Huda, 2002). Similarly, Norma Tarazi (1995) emphasizes in her book '*The Child in Islam*' that Islamic identity is achieved through sound parent-child relationships, effective parenting practices, and the cultivation of Islamic manners and values (Tarazi, 1995).

The literature also explores child development through juristic, educational, and psychological perspectives. Abdul Ma'bud (2006), in his book '*Tarbiyyat-e-Aolad ka Islami Encyclopedia*', discusses childhood development from the viewpoint of Muslim jurists, covering marriage, prenatal and postnatal

care, breastfeeding, children's rights, character formation, social ethics, and moral development (Abdul Ma'bud, 2006). Likewise, Hasan Mulla Usman (1982), in *al-Ṭafulah Fi al-Islam*, elaborates on children's rights and responsibilities based on the Qur'an and Sunnah while addressing educational principles, physical health, social development, and teacher-student ethics (Usman, 1982). In addition, Malik Babikr Badri Mohammed wrote for a course in general education, '*Child Development in Islam*' for child psychology, and 'The Social Structure of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement' for a course in social movements (Khan, 2015). He emphasizes that child development should focus on physical and cognitive growth and nurture the spiritual and moral aspects of a child's life. He advocated teaching children Islamic values and fostering a sense of accountability to Allah from a young age (Badri, 1998).

However, existing studies on child development in Islam mainly focus on parenting skills, moral and spiritual upbringing, children's rights, emotional and social development, and educational guidance from classical and contemporary Islamic perspectives. However, there remains a lack of comprehensive research that critically integrates these dimensions within an Islamic psychological framework. Moreover, limited studies have examined how Islamic concepts of child development can address contemporary social and educational challenges faced by Muslim societies. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by critically examining AbuSulayman's concept of child development and evaluating its relevance in modern Islamic educational and psychological discourse.

4.0 Research Methodology

The qualitative method is applied to investigate child development in Islam through a critical examination of the thought of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman. The research is fundamentally based on library research, relying on the systematic collection and analysis of primary and secondary textual sources. Primary sources include AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's original writings and work related to Islamic thought. Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, and prior studies on child development, Islamic psychology, and educational philosophy. This qualitative methodology enables an in-depth understanding of child development.

5.0 Abdulhamid Abusulayman and His Thought

Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr. AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman (1936–2021) was born in Mecca, a city of profound significance in Islamic history and civilization. Growing up within the sociocultural and religious environment of Mecca, AbuSulayman developed a strong sense of Ummatic consciousness and awareness of Islamic civilization during his early school years between 1942 and

1955 (Berghout, 2022). Based on the childhood experiences of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Wa Ode Adinda Nurfarahim et al. (2025) explain that child development is shaped by three major environmental contexts: the family, school, and community. These environments significantly influence a child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. From early childhood, children are highly sensitive to the quality of their surroundings, including family life, access to education, and relationships with caregivers and society (Nurfarahim et al., 2025). Moreover, child development in Islam is nurtured through the integration of religious and worldly knowledge guided by Islamic principles. The Qur'an and Sunnah encourage curiosity, critical thinking, and wisdom, while parents and educators are responsible for creating an environment that supports learning, reflection, and understanding of Allah's signs (Karimullah, 2023).

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman went on to obtain the degrees of Bachelor of Arts in commerce in 1959 and Master of Arts in political science in 1963 from Cairo University. He obtained his Doctor of Philosophy degree in international relations from the University of Pennsylvania in 1973. From an early age, he developed a habit of reading and an inquisitive nature. These habits accelerated his intellectual journey, producing the sharp, critical, and analytical mind and personality of AbuSulayman as we later came to know him. On one occasion, AbuSulayman mentioned that he read the book "The Fall of Al-Andalus," by Muhamed Abduallah A'nan, in his very young days. Imagine reading such a book and being conscious of the deep crisis of Islamic civilization from an early age. Such exposures undoubtedly accelerated his intellectual maturation process.

AbuSulayman developed a habit of reading during childhood, which strengthened his analytical and critical thinking skills. In this regard, Abdelaziz Berghout (2022) explains AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's vision of Islamic education as a holistic process that integrates intellectual, emotional, spiritual, moral, psychological, and social development. AbuSulayman advocates a value-based education that nurtures balanced personalities and contributes to the renewal of the Muslim Ummah and the rejuvenation of the Muslim mind (Berghout, 2022). As an educator, he emphasized the value of education in encouraging social growth and positive intellectual behaviors in Muslim society. He held several leadership positions during his academic career, including serving as Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia, where he promoted educational reforms aligned with Islamic principles (Ahmed, 2025). Therefore, the biography of AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman provides a valuable example of how an Islamic environment, intellectual exposure, and early education contribute to the development of a thoughtful and reform-minded individual.

5.1 Education and Intellectual Reform

To further draw the bigger picture of AbuSulayman's child development within his broader vision of intellectual reform, it is worth highlighting the focus of his book 'Crisis in the Muslim Mind' (1993), which analyzes the intellectual crisis of the Muslim ummah. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman highlights the need for Muslims to move beyond imitating Western or outdated solutions and instead develop relevant approaches grounded in authentic Islamic sources to preserve their identity and address current challenges (AbuSulayman, 2004).

The idea of Islamic education by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman was articulated at the level of lower, preschool, primary, and secondary education. He made tremendous efforts to establish a model internationally integrated school that would later become the International Islamic School as part and parcel of the project of the International Islamic University Malaysia. In this school, academic programs, co-curricular, and related developmental and social activities are all integrated and value-based. The school aims to strengthen not only the cognitive aspects of learners but also the spiritual, psychological, emotional, and moral aspects. Secondly, at the family and parenting levels, AbuSulayman emphasizes the need for parenting and family management. The emotional and psychological education and formation of children in the family, as well as in schools, is crucial for any balanced development of the Muslim personality (AbuSulayman, 2009).

In this regard, the conceptual framework of the crisis of the Muslim Ummah may also be applied to child development. The challenge of child development is more frequently rooted in a crisis of thought than a crisis of faith itself. Accordingly, child development practices should be grounded in authentic Islamic principles rather than Western approaches. Parents and teachers can more effectively nurture children by addressing intellectual and systemic limitations while preserving the identity and values of the ummah.

5.2 Islamic Worldview and Islamization

In "*Civilizational Worldview*" (2009) and "*Quranic Worldview*" (2011), AbdulHamid AbuSulayman emphasizes the importance of an Islamic worldview in guiding epistemological understanding within the ummah. This worldview provides a comprehensive framework of vision, principles, and values for addressing life's issues, offering answers about God, humanity, and existence (AbuSulayman, 2009; AbuSulayman, 2011). Hence, an Islamic worldview guides a comprehensive framework for child development. It promotes Islamic principles and values, thereby supporting the acquisition of knowledge and fostering the child's holistic growth and transformation.

In "*Islamisation: Reforming Contemporary Knowledge*" (1994), AbdulHamid AbuSulayman examines the question of reform from a profound intellectual perspective, emphasizing the need to restore the Muslim community's capacity for creative ijtihad as the foundation for contemporary intellectual renewal. The book explores key epistemological issues, including the relationship between knowledge, revelation, and reason, as well as the primary sources of Islamic knowledge, namely the Qur'an, Sunnah, ijmaʿ, qiyas, and other recognized principles. AbuSulayman also critically discusses the concepts of education, revelation, and values from both Islamic and Western perspectives. Furthermore, he demonstrates the practical application of the Islamization of knowledge framework to the social sciences, with particular emphasis on political science (AbuSulayman, 1994).

In this context, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman emphasizes the need to foster originality and creative ijtihad in education. He highlights the importance of integrating sources of knowledge such as the Qur'an, Sunnah, ijma', and qiyas, while also considering both Islamic and Western perspectives on education, revelation, and values. This approach promotes the balanced and holistic development of children by nurturing their intellectual capacities.

5.3 Islamic Parenting

AbuSulayman made a significant contribution to the field of Islamic parenting through "*Parent-Child Relations: A Guide to Raising Children*" (2013), authored jointly with Hisham Al-Talib and Omar Al-Talib. This work serves as an important guide to parenting from a holistic perspective, integrating Islamic values and teachings with contemporary knowledge in this field. Parents need to fill children's brains with "good thinking" and occupy them with moral and intellectual "food for thought." He also emphasizes the necessity of the family for human beings to realize their full psychological development. However, there exists a crisis in the Muslim mind and in the psychological and emotional upbringing of Muslim children. The lack of a coherent methodological approach and the fragmentation and compartmentalization of knowledge are responsible for the distortion of Muslim culture and thought. The lack of attention given to skilled parenting is equally responsible for the serious emotional and psychological deprivation of young children. The current approach of many Muslims toward parenting does not incorporate the Qur'anic vision of 'imrān (creating and developing a civilization), itqān (perfection), and tafakkur (exploration); rather, it is literal, slavish, and imitative. Instead of being scientific, objective, and methodical, Muslims are superstitious. They are overwhelmed with the idea of jinn and magic and miss out on the fruits of a scientific mentality (Altalib et al., 2013a).

AbdulHamid Ahmad AbuSulayman also paid particular attention to marital discord and approaches to resolving family conflicts based on love and tranquillity. In his writings, he presented Islamic principles for addressing such challenges within the family and explained Qur'anic guidance on managing domestic conflict (AbuSulayman, 2008). Furthermore, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman contributed to another book, "*Sex and Sex Education: What Do We Tell Our Children*?" that most parents are rightly alarmed by the increasingly controversial nature of the information being fed to children and how age-appropriate it is. This publication makes it easy for parents to understand and broach the sensitive topic of sex education. The authors use a holistic approach to include what morality requires of humanity in this regard, and also focus on the issues of healthy relationships, responsibility, emotional well-being, and good physical health. The publication is intended to give parents practical advice, using clear and precise information, to address some of the most common issues parents are likely to encounter and questions they are likely to face (Altalib et al., 2013b).

In conclusion, the intellectual legacy of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman offers a coherent and comprehensive framework of child development in Islam. He emphasizes that addressing the crisis of the Muslim Ummah requires a transformation of thought grounded in authentic Islamic sources. Through his Qur'anic worldview, he provides a strong epistemological foundation for education that supports the holistic development of children across spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions. Finally, he emphasizes the central role of family and educational institutions in shaping well-rounded Muslim personalities through an integrated approach to educational and intellectual development. Overall, his ideas present an integrated and value-based model of holistic child development in Islam.

6.0 Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Parents should move beyond the imitation of Western models and adopt an integrated, value-based, and holistic approach to child development based on Islamic principles.
ii. Muslim families should be trained in structured and intentional parenting with clear family goals that support children's intellectual, spiritual, and psychological development.
iii. Educational institutions should reflect an integrated Islamic worldview, consistent with AbuSulayman's educational reform agenda.

iv. Parents should foster originality and creative ijtihad by integrating primary Islamic sources of knowledge.
v. Children should be encouraged to participate in community activities to develop social responsibility, public awareness, and Ummatic engagement.
vi. Parenting must be recognized as a central pillar of societal change. As AbdulHamid AbuSulayman emphasizes, reform begins at home; therefore, strengthening parenting skills is essential for raising future generations.

Overall, these recommendations reflect AbuSulayman's vision that meaningful child development requires an integrated system combining family responsibility, educational reform, and a strong Islamic worldview.

7.0 Conclusion

The intellectual legacy of AbdulHamid AbuSulayman offers a comprehensive and transformative framework for rethinking child development. His works collectively demonstrate that the challenges facing Muslim societies, particularly in raising children, are not just due to weak belief but to deeper crises of thought. This paper shows that parenting and education are not just private matters, but key forces for improving society. He promotes a holistic approach by grounding development in an Islamic worldview that places the central role of parents and institutions. Moreover, AbuSulayman's practical contributions to child development include an integrated education model and detailed guidance on parenting, family relations, and social issues. He focuses on the family and the key role of parents in developing children's character, responsibility, and awareness. He also advocates value-based parenting as the cornerstone of a renewed and vibrant ummah, arguing that meaningful societal reform begins with the child through faith, knowledge, and social responsibility.

Authors' Declaration

We declare that the submitted manuscript is our original work and has not been published, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. All sources have been appropriately cited, and the work is free from plagiarism, falsification, and fabrication. Any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in preparing this manuscript has been transparently disclosed, and full responsibility for the content rests with the authors.

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