

## Comparison of The Potential Development of Early Children According to Islam with Kohlberg's Theory

\*Saiful Bahri<sup>1</sup>, Bayram Ozer<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung (UIN SATU) Jl. Mayor Sujadi No.46, Plosokandang, Kedungwaru, Tulungagung, East Java 66221, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Körfez, Ondokuz Mayıs Üniv, 55270 Atakum, Samsun, Turki  
saifulb2281@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *This research compares the potential for early childhood development according to Islam with Kohlberg's theory. This type of research is literature with a qualitative approach; the primary data source is from four main references from articles by Lawrence Kohlberg, both primary and old work up to the latest, data collection methods with documentation from various bibliographic references from books, notes, transcripts, newspapers, magazines, journals, and so on, data analysis techniques use a series of logical thinking systems that can be used to construct several concepts into propositions, data collection techniques use Miles and Huberman's theory. The results of the research are (1) the level of development of general pre-conventional potential; at this level a person assesses the morality of an action based on its direct consequences, from his feelings (authoritarianism) and from what he is most interested in (loyalty or intrinsicness) this is at the age of children and according to Islam, the golden age of cultivating manners, responsibility and care; (2) conventional level, generally found in adolescence or adulthood, at this stage assessing the morality of an action with this (interpersonal) comparison in adolescence and according to Islam the cultivation of self-reliance or self-reliance; (3) Third, the post-conventional (principled) level, wanting to be respected and appreciated and according to Islam to be social, in collaboration with the principles of the Qur'an and hadith.*

**Keywords:** *Child Development Potential, Islamic Education, Kohlberg's Theory.*

<sup>1</sup>  orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0938-9243>

<sup>2</sup>  orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4375-4104>

## Introduction

Children are not adults in small sizes. Therefore, the child should be treated according to their development stages. It is just that, in the practice of everyday education, that is only sometimes the case. Many examples show how parents and society generally treat children inappropriately in terms of their level of development (Desmila & Yaswinda, 2022). In the family, parents often force their wishes according to their will; in school, teachers often apply pressure not by the stage of child development; in various print or electronic media, this pressure is more unlimited and even tends to be extreme (Wuri Wuryandani, Bunyamin Maftuh, Sapriya, 2014).

Early childhood refers to a period when children undergo a distinctive development and growth process. This is evident in their distinct growth and development patterns, which are determined by factors such as the child's rate of development and include intelligence (including thinking ability, copyright, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence), social-emotional development (including religious beliefs and behaviours), language proficiency, and communication abilities (Hakim et al., 2021).

Early childhood is classified into three distinct stages according to the distinctiveness of its growth and development: (a) infancy, which spans from birth to 12 months; (b) the toddler period, which lasts from 1-3 years; (c) preschool, which lasts from 3-6 years; and (d) the early class period of secondary school, which lasts from 6-8 years (Ghafar, 2022). As the foundation for comprehensive personal formation, the growth and development of early childhood should be focused on establishing the proper foundations for the overall growth and development of individuals: physical development, cognitive abilities, intellectual property protection, social and emotional development, language proficiency, and balanced communication (Cekaite & Andrén, 2019).

Halvani defines early infancy as a period of profound personal growth and preparation that is pivotal to the subsequent life stage. Early childhood spans 0 to 8 years (Niloofar Halvani et al., 2021). So, early childhood growth and development play an essential role in the next life. Therefore, early childhood education should be carried out as well as possible by the development of potential experienced by the child.

Many experts have put forward theories of the potential development of early childhood, one of which is Kohlberg (Tuti &

Yudha, 2023). According to Kohlberg, moral reasoning, which forms the foundation of ethical conduct, progresses through six distinct stages. Consistent with Piaget's initial research, he examined the progression of moral decision-making, which posits that logic and morality evolve via constructive stages (Prasetya, 2020). In addition, there is also a concept put forward by Islam, which is contained in the al-qur'an and al-hadist. In his development, the child needs to be introduced to the *fitrah* so that the child returns to the *fitrah*. This is what distinguishes Western theory from Islamic theory. Therefore, the author wants to study it in an article comparing early childhood potential development according to Islam with Kohlberg's theory.

## Method

Based on the implications of the title and the issues investigated, this study can be classified as qualitative literature research, in which quantitative data calculations are not conducted (Ikhwan, 2022b). Qualitative literature research is predicated on several fundamental principles: (a) the researcher assumes the primary role in accurately examining the literature; (b) the research is conducted descriptively. It entails describing in the form of words and images rather than numbers; (c) placing greater emphasis on the process rather than the outcome since literature is an interpretive work; (d) conducting an inductive analysis; (e) the significance of the message being the primary focus.

This study's principal or primary literature is a book on moral development, such as (1) Lawrence Kohlberg. *The Claim to Moral Adequacy of a Highest Stage of Moral Judgment*. *Journal of Philosophy*, 1973. (2) Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development, Vol. I The Philosophy of Moral Development*, (Harper & Row, 1981). (3) Lawrence Kohlberg, Charles Levine, Alexandra Hewer, *Moral stages: a current formulation and a response to critics*, (Basel, NY: Karger, 1983). (4) Anne Colby, L. Kohlberg, *The Measurement of Moral Judgment, Vol. 2: Standard Issue Scoring Manual*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and others.

Documentation is the method of data collection utilised in literature research; precisely, information about variables is obtained from books, records, transcripts, newspapers, magazines, journals, and other similar sources. Descriptive analysis, which employs a sequence of logical thought systems capable of transforming various concepts into propositions, hypotheses, postulates, axioms, assumptions, or theories, has been selected as the method of data analysis. This is descriptive

thought, employed to describe data in accordance with the systematics of discussion methodically utilised in this study, and perceptive thinking, which is utilised to identify data pertinent and appropriate to the subject matter under investigation.

## Result and Discussion

### *The Concept of Child Potential Development According to Kohlberg*

As articulated by Lawrence Kohlberg, the notion of child potential development pertains to evaluating a child's aptitude in terms of its advanced moral reasoning. While studying psychology at the University of Chicago, he developed the stage based on a theory he formulated in response to children's responses to moral dilemmas and his reverence for the work of Jean Piaget. In 1958, he completed his doctoral dissertation. The phases of moral development presently referred to as Kohlberg's stages commenced at this juncture.

According to this theory, there are six discernible phases of development in moral reasoning, which is the foundation of ethical conduct. As Piaget's initial research suggested, he adhered to the developmental trajectory of moral decisions, which posits that both logic and morality progress via constructive stages. Kohlberg elaborates on this fundamental notion by concluding that a child's development is, in essence, connected to the concept of justice and that this development persists throughout an individual's lifetime. At the same time, a discourse raises doubts regarding the philosophical ramifications of his research (Bahri, 2021).

Kohlberg conducted his research using anecdotes of moral dilemmas, and he was intrigued by how individuals would rationalise their behaviour if they were in a similar moral predicament. Subsequently, Kohlberg classified and categorised the responses raised into six distinct stages. Three phases comprise the six stages: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (O.Yu. Ilyina, O.A. Rusakovskaya, L.V. Tumanova, 2022). The theoretical framework is constructed upon the stages of constructive development, wherein a more robust reaction to moral dilemmas is exhibited at each stage and level preceding it.

Kohlberg's six stages of moral development are grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Following the requirements Piaget put forward for a theory of cognitive development, it is scarce for a deterioration in these stages. However,

the function is only sometimes at its highest level. It is also impossible to jump over a stage; Each stage has a new and needed perspective and is more comprehensive, diverse, and integrated than the previous stage (Admin, 2010). The following are the stages of a child's potential development according to Kohlberg:

*First*, It is not uncommon for children to exhibit pre-conventional levels of potential development; however, adults can also observe reasoning during this phase. An individual who possesses pre-conventional reasoning evaluates the ethical worth of a course of action according to its immediate repercussions (Leung et al., 2024). The pre-conventional stage comprises two initial phases of moral development and is characterised by an egocentric focus on oneself. Initial stages are characterised by an emphasis on the immediate repercussions of one's perceived actions. An instance of an action being deemed immoral occurs when the perpetrator is punished. When the severity of the punishment is evaluated, the immorality of the action is more significant. Furthermore, he needed to be more aware of the fact that the perspectives of others diverged from his own. This phase is comparable to an authoritarian regime.

Stage two occupies the position of what is in it for me; the correct behaviour is defined by what it is most interested in. Stage two reasoning shows less attention to the needs of others, only to the stage when they also affect their own needs, such as "you scratch my back, and I will scratch your back too." In stage two, attention to others is not based on loyalty or intrinsic factors. In contrast to the social contract, there is a lack of perspective on society at the pre-conventional level because all actions are taken to serve one's own needs only. For those from stage two, the perspective of the world is seen as something relatively moral (Leung et al., 2024).

*Second*, the conventional level is typically observed in adults and adolescents. At this stage, individuals assess the morality of an action through a process of comparison with societal norms and expectations. The conventional level of moral development encompasses the third and fourth phases. A person enters society and assumes a social function during stage three. Because societal approval of one's role is reflected in the approval or disapproval of others, individuals are prone to accepting such opinions. They make an effort to be moral boys in order to meet those expectations. Because you are aware that doing that serves a purpose. In stage three, reasoning, the morality of an action is determined through an evaluation of its repercussions on interpersonal relationships. At this stage, consideration is given to concepts such as

gratitude, respect, and the golden rule. The desire to comply with rules and authorities is to support this preconceived social role. At this juncture, reasoning emphasises the intention behind an action; "They mean well."

Stage four requires strict adherence to social conventions, laws, and decisions to preserve society's efficient operation. In stage four, moral reasoning transcends the mere requirement for individual acceptability, as in stage three, the needs of others must surpass those of the individual. As with fundamentalism, conventional idealism frequently establishes moral judgements (Belayneh & Belachew, 2023). It is possible that if one person can violate the law, then others will as well; therefore, it is a responsibility or obligation to abide by laws and regulations. When an individual violates the law, they incur moral wrongdoing; therefore, at this stage, reproach assumes a crucial role as it distinguishes between the good and the evil.

*Third*, stages five and six of the progressive development of moral potential comprise the post-conventional level, also known as the principled level. Individuals' status as distinct entities from society is becoming increasingly evident. It is imperative to prioritise one's viewpoint over that of society (Ikhwan, 2020a). Due to this "self-righteous nature preceding others," post-conventional behaviour is frequently misconstrued as pre-conventional conduct.

In stage five, individuals are viewed as having different opinions and values, and they must be respected and valued impartially. Problems not regarded as relative, such as life and choice, should not be held back or inhibited. In reality, no choice is right or absolute - 'who do you decide if the others do not'? Correspondingly, the law is seen as a social contract rather than a rigid decision. Rules that do not result in social welfare must be changed to fulfil the most goal possible: This is achieved through majority decisions and compromises. In this regard, a democratic government appears to be based on stage five reasoning.

Stage six of the moral reasoning process involves the application of universal ethical principles to abstract reasoning. A law is deemed valid solely when founded upon principles of justice, and upholding justice necessitates abstaining from compliance with unjust legislation. According to Afiful Ikhwan, Immanuel Kant argued that rights, in their capacity as social covenants, were superfluous and not indispensable for deontic moral conduct (Ikhwan et al., 2019). Decisions are generated in a categorically absolute manner, as opposed to a hypothetically conditional one. One approach is to envision oneself in the shoes of another individual who similarly contemplates the actions of those who

share similar beliefs. The decision that was made is the outcome of a consensus. Thus, action is consistently a consequence rather than a means; an individual acts by reality, devoid of personal motives, as is customary, authorised, or premeditated. While Kohlberg is convinced that this stage exists, he cannot identify a consistent user of it. Challenging individuals, if any, can advance to stage six of Kohlberg's model.

### ***The Concept of Child Potential Development According to Islam***

The concept of the development of the potential of children according to Islam is taken from the hadith narrated by Anas that the Prophet said: the child in the seventh month of his birth was slaughtered, his aqiqah, and was named and removed from all his faeces. If he was six years old, he was educated in morality; if he was nine years old, he was separated from his bed; and if he was 13 years old, he was beaten in order to pray (required). If he had been 16 years old after his father shook hands with him and said: I have educated, taught and married you, I ask Allah for protection from slanders in the world and in torment in *akherat* (HR. Ibn Hibban) (Lembaga Ilmu Dakwah & Publikasi Sarana Keagamaan, 2011)

From the hadith above, it can be stated that character education can be classified into the following stages: a). adab (5-6 years); b). self-responsibility (7-8 years); c). caring (9-10 years); d). independence (11-12 years); e). community (13 years and over). Based on the above classification, children's education must be adjusted to the child's world (Idris Syahril, 2019). In other words, the child's education must be adjusted to the child's growth and development stages.

#### 1) Adab (5-6 years)

In this phase, the child is educated on ethics, primarily related to the following character values:

- (a) honest, not lying
- (b) know the right things and the wrong things
- (c) know the good things and the bad things
- (d) know the ordered things and the forbidden things

#### 2) Self-responsibility (7-8 years)

The order that 7-year-olds start praying shows that children begin to be educated to be responsible, especially for themselves. Children begin to be asked to nurture themselves and be educated to meet their needs and obligations. Educating

prayer means also building its future. A child should be taught to perform prayers when he reaches the age of 7 years. This is by the hadith of the Prophet as follows:

*“Order your children to pray when they are seven years old, and when they are ten years old, then beat them (if they do not want to pray) and separate their beds”.* (HR. Abu Dawud) (Lembaga Ilmu Dakwah & Publikasi Sarana Keagamaan, 2011)

When viewed from modern psychology, the designation of seven years in the hadith is appropriate. At the age of seven years, the child's ears have been able to capture the contents of an order or prohibition and even news delivered through speech. The development of the whole realm can be found in the command to establish prayer in a disciplined manner against children (Ikhwan, 2018). Such readiness, in general, has yet to be apparent in children aged six years and under.

The application of worship education in the form of prayer begins with preparation, namely introducing unclean objects, introducing sanctified procedures, teaching the pillars of prayer, the obligations in performing prayers and things that can cancel the prayer. Consequently, students determine the choice of the future and, at the same time, instil confidence and will achieve that ideal if the belief is based on continuous earnest efforts.

### 3) Caring (9-10 years)

The following step is for children to be educated to begin caring for others, especially peers, as association friends. Respecting others (respect for the older and loving the younger), respecting the rights of others, working together among his friends, helping and helping others, etc., are critical activities at this time.

### 4) Independence (11-12 years)

The concept of independence denotes not only the child's capacity to recognise right from wrong but also their ability to differentiate between good and evil. While understanding the repercussions of risking disobedience to rules, children reach the independence period when they can apply directives and prohibitions.



##### 5) Community (13 years and over)

This is the stage where the child is considered ready to enter the living conditions in the community; the child is expected to get along in the community armed with the experience that went before. At least children must have two essential values despite being still early or imperfect: integrity and adaptability.

A child should be of good practice where everyone who looks at him is happy with him. The good one is the one who is perfect in his faith. This is by the following hadith:

*“The most perfect of the mu'min people's faith is the most manners, and your choice is your choice for a mu'min woman with good manners”.* (HR. Tirmidzi: 1082) (Lembaga Ilmu Dakwah & Publikasi Sarana Keagamaan, 2011).

The nobleman is said to be the perfect person of his faith, for he never hurts others, which is the implication of faith in everyday life. There is a command in the corridors of morality that one should be noble and inferior in everyday life. In addition, when entering the community, a child must follow the rules or norms of society that apply and not deviate from the teachings of Islam.

The application of noble morals or *mahmudah*, among others, by spreading greetings to fellow Muslims and giving alms to those who are unable. This is by the hadith:

*“From Abdullah bin Amr, a man asked Rasulullah SAW, Which is the best Islam? Rasulullah SAW said: Give your food and your pronunciation greetings to those you know and those you do not know.”* (HR. Muslim: 56) (Lembaga Ilmu Dakwah & Publikasi Sarana Keagamaan, 2011)

From the hadith above, it can be understood that the noblest or perfect Islamic person is noble and respects fellow Muslims by saying good greetings to known and unknown people. Simple walking can be interpreted as humbling, always greeting those encountered and spreading greetings to fellow Muslims. While softening, the voice can be understood by saying politely to anyone so as not to hurt the person's heart. If someone says something loudly to others, then automatically, others will be offended and hurt.

#### **Similarities and Differences in the Concept of Child Potential Development According to Kohlberg and According to Islam**

There are several similarities and differences between the theory of child potential development according to Kohlberg and the

development of child potential according to Islam. The equation between the two theories reveals both the progression of a child's potential and the stages of infant development. Additionally, it elucidates the educational progression that should be undertaken with children so that they may mature in alignment with their innate abilities.

The difference between the two theories, when viewed from epistemology, is clear; there is a difference because one is done with research, so there is a process of reduction of theory that produces the construction of the theory. The theory of potential development according to Islam is spelt out by a pattern of deduction so that it describes the holy verses of the Qur'an and hadith of Muhammad SAW to become a theory that is ready to be used.

Another difference is that Islamic development includes spiritual aspects, namely fostering the nature possessed by humans. At the same time, Kohlberg's concept teaches moral development through reasoning starting from pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. The development of *fitrah* is very much cared for by Islam because humans are weak creatures, so he forgets the promises he made in the eternal age.

## Conclusion

Based on the discourse, the author can deduce that Kohlberg exhibits a profound interest in human development, as evidenced by his three stages of human potential development. Similarly, Islam, as a faith that emphasises "*rahmatan lil 'alamiin*," demonstrates a similar concern for human development, as evidenced by its hadith and Qur'anic concept expressions. The equation between the two theories reveals both the progression of a child's potential and the stages of infant development. Furthermore, it elucidates the educational progression that should be undertaken with children to facilitate their holistic development in alignment with their innate abilities. The distinction stems from divergent epistemologies and variations in the formulation of the *fitrah* concept.

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