

Mirror Neurons and Children's Moral Character Development: An Uswatun Hasanah Perspective

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Abstract: In neuroscience, mirror neurons constitute a specific neural system in the human brain that significantly influences Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence in interpersonal relationships. This concept aligns closely with the modeling framework in Albert Bandura's social learning theory. Consequently, this research seeks to advance mirror neuron theory in relation to children's moral character development, specifically through the *uswatun hasanah* (exemplary modeling) methodology. This study constitutes library research employing a qualitative approach, with data analysis conducted using descriptive-analytical methods. Research findings reveal that mirror neuron mechanisms strongly underpin the *uswatun hasanah* approach to moral character formation in children. This is evidenced through mirror neurons' inherent capacity for imitative learning. Through the mirror neuron system, individuals can replicate others' actions and emotions vicariously. Continuous implementation of *uswatun hasanah* with positive reinforcement strengthens neural circuit connections, including mirror neurons, thereby consolidating memories into enduring internalized values. Aligned with its theoretical foundation, exemplary modeling remains the most efficacious method for cultivating children's moral, spiritual, and social development. Thus, the *uswatun hasanah* method effectively guides children toward consistently virtuous behavior and noble character.

Keywords: Mirror Neurons, Children's Moral Character, Uswatun Hasanah.

Introduction

The discussion regarding children's moral character remains a compelling subject for scholarly examination, as morality constitutes an essential and inseparable component of human life, particularly within the family context. Fundamentally, parents aspire for their children to develop and mature into individuals of good character, possessing the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, and demonstrating resilience against engaging in behaviors that may prove detrimental to themselves.

Moral character constitutes one of the foundational components of Islam, encompassing teachings related to behavior and etiquette. In other words, moral character can be defined as the

dimension of Islamic teachings that governs human conduct. Within the discourse on moral character, distinctions are established between behaviors classified as virtuous and those deemed reprehensible.³ Moral character represents a crucial element within Islamic teachings, as human behavior constitutes the primary focus of Islamic doctrine. Indeed, the fundamental purpose of divine revelation is to guide human attitudes and conduct in accordance with their innate nature (*fitrah*). Numerous verses in the Qur'an address moral character or concepts pertaining to morality, underscoring the paramount importance of moral education within Islam.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that one of the fundamental objectives of education is to cultivate a noble moral character that

³ Asmaran, *Pengantar Studi Pendidikan*, (Jakarta: Ilmu Grafindo Persada, 1994), h. 2.

maintains steadfast faith in Allah SWT. Consequently, from a conceptual perspective, education plays a strategic role in developing children into high-quality individuals, encompassing not only excellence in skills, cognitive abilities, and affective dimensions, but also spiritual aspects. Character refers to disposition or temperament, with some scholars equating it with habitual patterns of behavior. Additionally, certain perspectives associate character with belief systems, and in some contexts, it is considered synonymous with moral character (akhlak). Character can be defined as the distinctive manner of thinking and behaving that characterizes each individual in living and collaborating within familial, societal, national, and state contexts.

An individual possessing good character is one who demonstrates the capacity to make decisions and accepts accountability for the consequences arising from those decisions. Jarot Wijanarko⁴ posits that character is synonymous with personality. Personality is conceptualized as "the distinctive traits, characteristics, style, or inherent qualities of an individual, originating from environmental influences received during formative years, such as familial socialization during childhood, as well as innate predispositions present from early development."

From a psychological perspective, humans fundamentally require role models to develop their inherent traits and potentials, a process facilitated through education via exemplary behavior.⁵ The family serves as the foundational institution for children's educational development. Islamic teachings emphasize that parents bear responsibility for equipping their children with provisions for both worldly and spiritual life. Within the family unit, children represent the primary recipients of education. Consequently, during interactions, parents must demonstrate positive behavioral patterns, as these serve as stimuli for children's development, particularly in communication ethics, conduct, and related behaviors. Children inherently internalize, imitate, and replicate observed behaviors. Therefore, parents must embody religious teachings

authentically and correctly, commencing with interpersonal interactions within the familial context.

The family constitutes the primary educational institution for children, representing their initial social environment that contributes fundamentally to their mental and physical development. Through familial interactions, children not only develop self-awareness and establish relationships with their parents but also acquire understanding of societal norms and their surrounding environment. Parents, as primary educators, function as the architects of children's foundational personality structure. This foundational personality framework exerts enduring influence throughout an individual's lifespan. Within the family unit, children emerge as the initial learners. Consequently, parental interactions must exemplify positive behavioral patterns that serve as developmental stimuli for children, particularly regarding communication ethics and behavioral conduct. Children inherently internalize, imitate, and replicate observed behaviors. Therefore, parents must authentically embody religious teachings, initiating this demonstration through intrafamilial interactions. Parental presence significantly influences children's social and psychological development. Parental discourse and habitual behaviors become observational learning material that children closely monitor and emulate. Children are born in a state of vulnerability and complete dependency. Consequently, parental failure to fulfill their responsibilities inevitably results in inadequate guidance for children's development. Thus, parents cannot evade this fundamental responsibility.

Exemplary modeling constitutes a pivotal method in the character formation process among children, as the implementation of exemplary behavior—whether direct or indirect—inevitably generates interactions between parental and child personalities. This method encompasses elements of mutual observation, imitation, and reciprocal following within social interactions, characteristics that align with the fundamental properties of mirror neurons. However, it is equally critical to ensure that what is processed by mirror neurons—what is

⁴ Jarot Wijanarko, *Mendidik Anak: untuk meningkatkan kecerdasan emosional dan spiritual*. (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama. 2005) h. 9.

⁵ Tamyiz Burhanudin, *Akhlak Pesantren Pandangan KH. Hasyim Asy'ari*, (Yogyakarta: Ittaqa Press, 2001), h. 55.

observed, imitated, and enacted by children—comprises beneficial and constructive behaviors rather than detrimental influences that may compromise a child's developmental potential.

Within neuroscience, there exists a brain region known as mirror neurons, a discovery that has generated considerable excitement in recent decades. Subsequently, mirror neurons have been found to exert influence on Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence in interpersonal relationships. This is evidenced by Goleman's inclusion of mirror neurons as a pivotal component in his work entitled "Social Intelligence: The Science of Human Relationships". Given the potential of mirror neurons, the tendency to learn through imitation is an inevitable phenomenon. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, also referred to as Observational Learning Theory, similarly posits that humans, as social beings, acquire knowledge by observing and emulating the behaviors of others within their environment. The consequence of this phenomenon is that the learning process within social environments—whether in educational institutions, particularly within the family context, or in broader community settings—becomes a critical determinant of children's competencies. These competencies encompass attitudes, behaviors, and social conduct that align with religious norms, legal frameworks, moral principles, cultural traditions, and other normative standards regarded as guiding principles of righteousness and virtue within children's societal contexts.⁶

Normatively, there are numerous approaches that can be employed in character formation to develop children's brain potential. However, considering the characteristics of mirror neurons and the human learning pattern that involves observation and imitation, the modeling method emerges as one of the most appropriate approaches. In Islamic teachings, modeling has been articulated through the term *uswatun hasanah* (exemplary model). The current challenge lies in implementing character formation patterns that enable the

optimization of the entire brain, including mirror neurons. Based on this premise, research on mirror neurons needs to be further developed and examined in depth to optimize children's brain potential development, ultimately enabling them to position themselves positively within their social environment. Similarly, the concept of modeling or *uswatun hasanah*, which has long been recognized as a crucial method in character formation, must continue to receive attention, as it demonstrates influence on and alignment with human brain development, particularly mirror neurons. This research in psycho-educational neuroscience is expected to contribute novel insights and perspectives while providing support for understanding children's behavioral and skill development from the perspective of human brain nervous system structure and function.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature review approach. According to Sukardi, literature studies aim to collect and analyze data or information available in libraries, including journals, research reports, scientific magazines, newspapers, relevant books, seminar proceedings, scholarly articles, and other scientific data related to a particular research topic.⁷ The literature review serves as an approach to obtain conceptual information regarding the concepts of mirror neurons and *uswatun hasanah* (exemplary model) in shaping children's moral character. Data collection in this study was conducted through a literature-based method, drawing from books, journals, and other scholarly papers.

The research approach utilized is qualitative in nature. Data analysis in this study involves a systematic process of searching for literature, reading, comparing, analyzing, and drawing conclusions. The data analysis method employed in this research is descriptive-analytical, aimed at providing a systematic, factual, and accurate

⁶ Qumruin Nurul Laila, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Moral Albert Bandura", *Modeling: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI* 3, No.1 (2015), h. 23.

⁷ Sukardi, *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan: Kompetensi Dan Praktiknya* (Jakarta: PT. Bumi Aksara, 2003), h. 53.

description of the characteristics and relationships between the phenomena under investigation.

Results and Discussion

1. *Mirror Neurons*

According to Stemmer and Whitaker, mirror neurons are visuomotor neurons that become active when an individual performs an action and when that individual observes the same action being performed by another individual.⁸ It can be said that mirror neurons function like mirrors; however, these neurons are not only active when observing actions but also when imitating the actions of others. In line with this, Goleman and Iacoboni state that these neurons not only function to imitate the actions of others but also to interpret intentions, read emotions, and extract the social implications of someone's actions.⁹

However, it is important to understand that mirror neurons are not limited to merely imitative functions or action replication. Rather, they also play a role in reading emotions and interpreting the intentions behind social interactions. Goleman reveals that the mirror neuron system not only facilitates individuals in understanding actions but also enables them to comprehend the emotional states of others through empathy.¹⁰ Similarly, Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia mention that the mirror neuron system process allows individuals to replicate the actions and emotions of others in the same manner as if they themselves were experiencing those emotions and actions.¹¹ From this perspective, it can be understood that mirror neurons can make emotions contagious merely through observation. An individual begins to "feel" that another person's actions are occurring within themselves. One can come to follow the feelings,

movements, sensations, and emotions of the observed individual.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that mirror neurons represent neuronal potential in the human brain that becomes activated when observing or performing an action. These neurons are critically important as they form the foundation of social intelligence and empathy. Specifically, Goleman notes that an individual's social skills are highly dependent on these mirror neurons.¹² Language ability also exemplifies mirror neuron function, as these neurons are believed to underlie communication by activating tongue and lip movements for speech and sentence formation. Mirror neurons are also associated with autism, schizophrenia, and other neurological disorders characterized by impaired social interaction.¹³ Consistent with this, Perkins et al. explain that the mirror neuron system plays a role in imitation, empathy, theory of mind, and language.¹⁴

Learning is viewed as a process that produces changes in individuals, whether in knowledge, actions, or behavior. The Indonesian Dictionary defines learning as striving to know something, acquiring knowledge (competence, skills).¹⁵ Meanwhile, Purwanto defines learning as behavioral change occurring through experience, emphasizing that learning must be relatively permanent and encompasses various aspects of personality.¹⁶

Bandura's theory, as mentioned above, is known as social cognitive theory. As cited by Laila, this theory encompasses three assumptions. First, individuals learn by imitating what exists in their environment, particularly the behaviors of others (these behaviors are termed model behaviors or exemplar behaviors). If the imitation receives reinforcement, that behavior becomes part of the individual's own behavioral repertoire. Second, there exists a close relationship between learners

⁸ Rafika Dwi Rahmah MZ and Suyadi, "Strategi Pembelajaran PAI Pada Autisme Dengan Pendekatan Mirror Neurons", *Lebaran Ilmu Kependidikan* 48, No. 2 (2019), h. 49.

⁹ Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence: Ilmu Baru Tentang Hubungan Antar Manusia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2006), h. 55. dan Amir Faisal and Zulfanah, *Membangkitkan Gairah Anak Untuk Berprestasi* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2011), h. 34.

¹⁰ Goleman, *Social Intelligence: Ilmu Baru Tentang Hubungan Antar Manusia*, h. 65.

¹¹ Rafika Dwi Rahmah MZ and Suyadi, "Strategi Pembelajaran PAI Pada Autisme Dengan Pendekatan Mirror Neurons", h. 49.

¹² Goleman, *Social Intelligence: Ilmu Baru Tentang Hubungan Antar Manusia*, h. 55.

¹³ Kris H. Timotius, *Otak Dan Perilaku*, (Yogyakarta: CV. Andi offset, 2018), h. 76.

¹⁴ Rahmah MZ and Suyadi, "Strategi Pembelajaran PAI", h. 49.

¹⁵ Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT. Balai Pustaka, 2018), h. 169.

¹⁶ Ngalm Purwanto, *Prinsip-Prinsip Dan Teknik Evaluasi Pengajaran* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2013), h. 85.

and their environment. In this context, the learning process occurs through the interplay among environment, behavior, and personal factors. The third assumption states that learning outcomes constitute visual and verbal codes manifested in daily behavior.¹⁷

From these three assumptions, it can be stated that in Bandura's theory, the individual plays a pivotal role in learning, and the learning process occurs due to social environmental influences. This process takes place when individuals observe behaviors in their environment, then imitate them until these behaviors become internalized. To achieve learning, the process itself occurs through several stages. Based on the explanations by Laila and Tarsono, the learning process in Bandura's theory comprises several sequential stages.¹⁸

2. The Concept of Uswatun Hasanah

Etymologically, the term "al-uswah" signifies a person who serves as an example or role model. The plural forms of this term are "usan" and "isan."¹⁹ Meanwhile, the word "hasanah" carries a positive or good connotation. Consequently, "uswatun hasanah" can be interpreted as a good example or exemplary model.²⁰ The exemplary method refers to demonstrating commendable actions to children, with the expectation that they will emulate such praiseworthy conduct.²¹

The term "uswatun hasanah" in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 21 refers to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), while the same term in Surah Al-Mumtahanah verses 4 and 6 refers to the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and his family. Textually, the meaning of "uswatun hasanah" in these three verses may appear identical, namely "a good example."²² However, when examined contextually—that is, considering the circumstances surrounding the revelation of each verse—the meaning of "uswatun hasanah" may differ. Interpretation that limits itself solely to textual

content without considering the background and historical setting behind the text will inevitably lead to inaccurate conclusions.

Uswatun hasanah represents a key term in Islam that encompasses several meanings. From an etymological perspective, uswatun hasanah means "a good role model," referring to a way of life blessed by Allah SWT as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). According to terminological definition, as articulated by Al-Ragib in Tafsir Ruh Al-Bayan, uswatun is equivalent to al-qudwatun (something to be followed), referring to qualities possessed by individuals that can be emulated by others, whether good or bad. Hasanah, meanwhile, signifies a good example and noble tradition. In educational contexts, exemplary modeling constitutes the most influential method and has proven most effective in preparing and shaping children's moral, spiritual, and social ethos.

The concept of uswatun hasanah is widely recognized in Islamic literature, particularly in education. An examination of the Quran reveals that the term uswatun hasanah appears three times, referring to Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and believers who maintain steadfast faith in Allah SWT.²³ In Islamic literature, the term uswatun hasanah can be found in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 21, Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 4, and Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 6.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Quthb asserts that among the numerous teaching methods in Islamic education (*wasā'il al-tarbiyah*), one particularly worthy of attention is the exemplary method (*at-tarbiyah bi al-qudwah*). Similarly, Nasih Ulwan explains that exemplary modeling in character formation constitutes one of the most effective pedagogical approaches. This method significantly influences the internalization of moral values and shapes children's emotional and social personalities. This is attributed to the educator serving as an ideal

¹⁷ Qumruin Nurul Laila, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Moral Albert Bandura", *Modeling: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI* 3, No.1 (2015), h. 23.

¹⁸ Qumruin Nurul Laila, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Moral Albert Bandura", h. 27.

¹⁹ Ahmad Musthafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al- Maraghi* (Semarang: CV Toha Putra, 1996), h. 104.

²⁰ Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panji Mas, 1988), h. 97-98.

²¹ Departemen Pendidikan Indonesia, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2008), h. 1025.

²² Yunan Yusuf, *Metode Dakwah* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2003), h. 198.

²³ Ali Mustofa, *Metode Keteladanan Perspektif Pendidikan Islam*, *CENDEKIA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 5.1 (2019), h. 71.

figure whose behavior and character are consistently emulated by children, both consciously and unconsciously. Indeed, from psychological and emotional perspectives, parental exemplary conduct—whether verbal or behavioral, concrete or abstract—becomes imprinted consciously or unconsciously.²⁴

In Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) educated others by employing his own characteristics as the paramount example of Islamic methodology. His purpose was to serve as a living model for subsequent generations, embodying extraordinary character and universal magnanimity. For instance, when Sayyidah Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was asked about the Prophet Muhammad's character, she responded that his character was a reflection of the Qur'an.²⁵

In this regard, Islamic education encompasses various components that play a role in fulfilling the aspiration to become the ideal Muslim individual. Islamic education is education grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. It is important to note that the exemplary approach represents one of the methods advocated in the Qur'an. Consequently, educators play a crucial role in determining how to become an ideal Muslim.

The fundamental principle of emulating the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), whether in words, actions, or behavior, is reflected in this verse. This verse also constitutes Allah's command to humanity to follow the example of the Prophet. Essentially, the verse relates to the characteristics of the Prophet's personality. Therefore, educators must adopt the personality of Prophet Muhammad, which reflects the paramount importance of the educator's or guardian's role in shaping the inner essence of children. Patience, steadfastness, and moral character are qualities that parents must instill in their children. Thus, they will possess strong mental resilience and positive attitudes.

From Ibn Khaldun's educational perspective, learners are more readily influenced and receptive to noble values through examples and role models they observe. This is more effective than influence

through advice, instruction, or mere commands alone. In his view, an educator's exemplary conduct can be demonstrated through attitudes and behavior characterized by compassion, gentleness, mutual understanding, and the absence of harsh or rough treatment. If educators display negative attitudes and harsh, rough behavior, this will be detrimental to learners themselves, potentially damaging their mental state, manifesting in laziness, foul language, and tendencies toward pretense or dishonesty due to fear of reprimand.²⁶

Thus, "keteladanan" or "uswatun hasanah" refers to positive behaviors or characteristics that are emulated or modeled by an individual from another person. Consequently, the concept of exemplary conduct (uswatun hasanah) discussed here refers to positive role modeling that serves as an instrument of Islamic education—namely, exemplary behavior that aligns with the authentic meaning of "uswatun hasanah."

3. *Mirror Neurons in the Application of the Uswatun Hasanah Concept and Their Implications for Children's Moral Character Development*

The fundamental concept of mirror neurons regarding learning through observation and imitation has long been recognized in education and is even considered a primary pathway for child development. This pattern demonstrates that the mirror neuron concept bears similarity to the concept of *uswatun hasanah* (exemplary modeling method). This aligns with Taklimudin and Saputra, who explain that in Islamic education, exemplary modeling is psychologically grounded in human nature (*fitrah*), which possesses the characteristic of *gharizah*—the tendency to imitate others.²⁷

From a neuroscientific perspective, Snell explains that emotions are regulated by the limbic system, and individuals who successfully regulate their emotions consequently optimize the performance of the prefrontal cortex. According to McKlveen, Myers, and Herman, the prefrontal cortex is a brain organ responsible for critical

²⁴ Milica Krivokapic, *Imitative Learning: The Teacher as a Role Model, Education and Self Development*, 13.4 (2018), h. 14.

²⁵ Yusuf, *Perintah Menguasai Dunia; Kiat Sukses Rasulullah* (Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka, 2001). H. 67.

²⁶ Muh. Barid Nizaruddin Wajdi, *Pendidikan Ideal Menurut Ibnu Khaldun Dalam Muqaddimah*, *Jurnal Lentera: Kajian Keagamaan, Keilmuan Dan Teknologi* 1, no.2 (2015), h. 76.

²⁷ Taklimudin dan Febri Saputra, *Metode Keteladanan Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Quran*, *BELAJEA: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no.1 (2018), h. 5.

thinking, analytical reasoning, decision-making, and future planning. The prefrontal cortex is often referred to as the higher brain function because it exists only in the human brain, whereas the brains of other species (such as primates and canines) lack this structure.²⁸ As discussed previously, the prefrontal cortex serves as one of the primary locations of mirror neurons. This indicates that exemplary modeling or *uswatun hasanah* in psychological and emotional aspects also influences the mirror neuron system..

The presence of the mirror neuron system in individuals enables them to replicate the actions and emotions of others as if they were experiencing them firsthand. Exemplary education serves as a foundational pillar in efforts to correct moral and behavioral deviations in children.²⁹ Indeed, exemplary modeling constitutes a fundamental principle in enhancing children's quality toward nobility, virtue, and proper social conduct. Consequently, parental exemplary behavior within the family becomes a determining factor in children's positive or negative development. When parents, as educators, demonstrate honesty, trustworthiness, and noble character, children are more likely to develop virtuous attributes. Children raised in environments characterized by criticism and hostility learn to insult and engage in conflict. Conversely, when children are raised in secure, affectionate, and friendly environments, they learn justice and discover love in life.

Parents play a highly significant role as role models for their children. Children, whether consciously or unconsciously, tend to imitate everything they observe from their parents, including actions and behaviors. This imitation extends to verbal expressions, physical actions, and psychological manifestations such as emotions, sentiments, and sensitivity.³⁰ When children identify someone as a role model who captures their attention, they develop a desire to emulate that

person. To encourage children to follow positive examples, it is essential for parents to cultivate their own moral development. The more children are attracted to and inspired by an individual, the stronger their desire becomes to replicate that person's behavior and attitudes.³¹

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that exemplary conduct, or *uswatun hasanah*, from educators plays a crucial role in shaping the mirror neuron system pathways. Essentially, mirror neurons forged through positive behavioral patterns result in the development of healthy emotional and social attitudes, one of which is manifested through empathetic behavior. An educator who demonstrates positive exemplary attitudes—such as showing care, giving attention willingly, and being ready to help others (their students)—serves as a blueprint for building empathy in students.

According to Bandura, humans live within social environments where most human learning occurs through imitation and behavioral modeling.³² In social interactions, individuals engage in reciprocal observation of one another, a process termed modeling or observational learning. Subsequently, within this modeling process, imitation of the model occurs.³³ This suggests that a learner can modify their behavior solely through witnessing or observing behavioral examples of others in their surroundings, such as teachers or parents.

In this context, the authors conclude that exemplary behavior constitutes the most crucial aspect in shaping an individual's character and disposition. From an Islamic perspective, providing positive role models is regarded as the most effective pedagogical method in educating students. When parents aspire for their children to develop into honest and trustworthy individuals who abstain from actions that displease Allah SWT, they must serve as exemplary role models and provide appropriate examples with compassion. Both

²⁸ Suyadi dan Mawi Khusni Albar, *Budaya Ngrowot Dalam Kajian Neurosains Di Pondok Pesantren Luqmaniyah Yogyakarta*, Ibd: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya 16, no.1 (2018), h. 133.

²⁹ Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, *Pendidikan Anak menurut Islam, Kaidah-kaidah Dasar*, terj. Khalilullah Ahmad Masjkur Hakim, (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 1992), h. 44.

³⁰ Tamyiz Burhanudin, *Ahlak Pesantren (Yogyakarta: Ittaqa Press, 2011)*, h. 55.

³¹ Dindin Jamaluddin, *Pendidikan Anak Dalam Islam* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2013), h. 71.

³² Qumruin Nurul Laila, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Moral Albert Bandura", h. 33

³³ Tarsono, *Implikasi Teori Belajar Sosial (Social Learning Theory) Dari Albert Bandura Dalam Bimbingan Dan Konseling, Psymphatic, Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi III*, no.1 (2010), h. 31.

parents must demonstrate consistent exemplary conduct, including: consistently performing good deeds, avoiding wrongdoing, refraining from disgraceful behavior, adhering to righteousness, and eschewing impropriety.

Bandura's theory, as mentioned above, is known as social-cognitive theory. As cited by Laila, this theory encompasses three assumptions. The first assumption is that individuals learn by imitating what exists in their environment, particularly the behaviors of others (these behaviors of others are termed model behaviors or exemplary behaviors). If the imitation receives reinforcement, then that behavior will become part of the individual's own behavioral repertoire. Second, there is a close relationship between learners and their environment. In this regard, the learning process occurs through the interconnection among environment, behavior, and personal factors. The third assumption is that learning outcomes constitute visual and verbal codes that are manifested in daily behavior.³⁴

Exemplary behavior in education plays a crucial role, particularly as Allah SWT has entrusted children to parents to provide them with good examples. Parents and educators need to serve as ideal role models for children, becoming positive exemplars that they can emulate throughout their lives. Exemplary conduct constitutes a primary focus in educating the younger generation. The implementation of this exemplary approach requires that parents and teachers become figures worthy of emulation by children, wherein their behavior, appropriate attire, good manners, and polite and affectionate communication with children must be carefully attended to. When executed properly, children will readily emulate the behavior demonstrated by their parents.³⁵

Conclusions

Islamic education is a form of education that adheres to the principles of Islamic religious teachings. These principles are derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, scholarly opinions, and Islamic historical heritage. Education in Islam plays a vital

role as a means of achieving moral perfection. In other words, Islamic education functions to develop character and cultivate a sense of responsibility, making education an extraordinary instrument for humanity that provides strength, well-being, and growth. Through this education, the younger generation is prepared to lead successful and efficient lives while achieving their life goals effectively.

The exemplary method refers to demonstrating commendable actions to children, with the expectation that they will emulate such behavior. This pedagogical approach through example and role modeling has a profound influence and yields significant results in preparing and developing moral, spiritual, and social aspects in children. In Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) educated through his character as the primary exemplar of Islamic methodology. His purpose was to serve as an enduring living example for future generations, embodying exceptional moral character and the universality of his noble qualities.

In the process of character formation in children through exemplary methods, mirror neurons provide the potential to observe and imitate others' behavior, which has implications for human tendencies to learn through imitation. This also impacts the human need for role models or exemplars (modeling). In relation to Islamic education, this carries the consequence that educators must embody *uswatun hasanah* (excellent exemplar), serving as role models who provide exemplary conduct for children."

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³⁴ Qumruin Nurul Laila, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Moral Albert Bandura", h. 27.

³⁵ Abidin Rf Rusn, *Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Tentang Pendidikan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009). 70.

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