Punishment in Islamic Early Childhood Education: Harmonizing Islamic Principles and Educational Theories

Dea Nitami Br Ginting[1], Munisa[2]

[1,2]Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi Medan, Medan, Indonesia
e-mail: *[1]deaginting506@gmail.com, [2]munisa@pancabudi.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
   	This study explores the permissibility and application of punishment in Islamic early childhood education by integrating Islamic principles and educational theories. Using a qualitative library research approach, the study analyzes books and journal articles to understand the purpose, conditions, and ethical boundaries of punishment. The findings reveal that punishment is allowed in both frameworks if administered wisely—without physical or psychological harm—and aimed at behavioral improvement. Islam and modern education agree that punishment should follow love, advice, and awareness-building strategies. This study emphasizes the importance of conscious, proportional, and compassionate disciplinary practices in shaping children's moral development.

Introduction

Early childhood refers to a unique stage in human development characterized by high curiosity, extraordinary enthusiasm, and multiple developmental phases, including the exploration stage, imitation/identification stage, sensitive period, play stage, and the early

stage of defiance. Children at this age undergo rapid development and exhibit individual differences. According to research by Keith Osborn at the University of Georgia, Burton L. White in the Harvard Preschool Project, and Benjamin S. Bloom at the University of Chicago, approximately 50% of human intelligence develops between birth and the age of four, 80% by ages four to eight, and reaches its full potential (100%) between the ages of eight and eighteen (Audy & Nofianti, 2024). Therefore, this stage is often referred to as the "golden age" of children aged 0–8 years.

Early childhood is a period of unique growth and development (Rahman, 2020). The development of children at this stage should be guided to lay a solid foundation for comprehensive human development, including physical, cognitive, creative, emotional-social, language, and communication domains, in a balanced manner (Yusuf et al., 2023). During this period, children often behave unpredictably and require proper guidance and close supervision from parents. Parents play a critical role in instilling moral concepts, ethical values, and social norms, and must serve as role models for their children. Young children are not yet capable of fully understanding right and wrong; thus, they frequently make mistakes such as speaking harshly or behaving aggressively (e.g., hitting, pinching, or kicking). Although these actions may not cause physical harm, they should not be tolerated. Instead, disciplinary actions, including appropriate forms of punishment, may be applied to address such behaviors.

In early childhood, children begin to absorb behavioral patterns, habits, and values that will shape their moral foundation and character in the future (Asmidar, 2024). Humans are born in a state of natural purity (fitrah), and parents are entrusted with the responsibility to protect themselves and their families from the torment of hellfire, as stated in the Qur'an:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ قُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا ٱلنَّاسُ وَٱلْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَّا يَعْصُونَ ٱللَّهَ مَآ أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

"O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire..." (Qur'an, Surah At-Tahrim 66:6).

This verse underscores the accountability of every individual, particularly parents, in ensuring the well-being and proper education of their children. In Islamic education, punishment can be categorized into two: those that are permissible and those that are not. Permissible punishments include non-violent consequences that lead to awareness and behavioral correction, such as advice, role modeling, and explanation of wrongdoing.

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, as cited by Zainudin (in Samsudin & Asrofi, 2021), the stages of disciplining children are as follows:

a) Forgive the first mistake, giving the child an opportunity to correct it independently.

b) If the behavior continues, offer advice, gentle reprimands, and explanations.

c) If the child still does not respond, apply disciplinary measures that do not cause physical harm.

From these principles, we can conclude that Islamic education permits punishment as long as it respects the child's dignity and avoids physical or psychological harm. The primary aim is to foster awareness and improvement. Thus, the author concludes that:

a) Punishment is allowed if it is not physically or psychologically harmful.

b) Punishment should always be aimed at improvement.

c) Punishment must be applied consciously and not impulsively.

This concept is supported by a hadith narrated by Abu Dawud: "Command your children to pray when they are seven years old. If they refuse to pray at the age of ten, then (lightly) discipline them." (HR. Abu Dawud no. 494. Shaykh Al-Albani classified this hadith as hasan sahih)

The theory of punishment is one method used to increase desired behavior and reduce undesired behavior. In both Islamic and modern educational contexts, punishment is a subject of ongoing debate. Many parents justify their use of punishment as a means of helping children learn from their mistakes so they can grow into responsible individuals. However, this must be done with great care and in line with the child's developmental needs.

Parental responsibility implies that children must be educated to carry out life's responsibilities effectively and to fulfill their roles as khalifah fil ardh (stewards on earth). A child's first exposure to

education and guidance occurs within the family environment, which must be built on love, trust, and harmony between the parents. A peaceful, loving family atmosphere is crucial for a child's moral and emotional development. As stated in Article 1, Paragraph 2 of Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, child protection includes:

> "All activities that guarantee and protect children and their rights to live, grow, develop, and participate optimally according to human dignity and values, and to be protected from violence and discrimination."

Methods

This study employed a qualitative library research approach, relying on data from books and eight relevant journal articles. The method was used to examine how punishment is perceived within the context of Islamic early childhood education, particularly to help parents and educators understand whether administering punishment to young children is permissible, and under what conditions. The literature study allowed the researcher to identify and address the tensions between religious norms and educational theories by synthesizing diverse scholarly perspectives. Library research is a form of descriptive study that systematically analyzes factual information derived from the selected texts at the time the study was conducted (Utami, 2021).

Results and Discussions

This study explores the concept of punishment in early childhood

education based on Islamic principles and contemporary educational theories. A literature review of eight relevant journals reveals a convergence between Islamic approaches and modern pedagogical perspectives in the application of punishment as an educational tool.

1. The Concept of Punishment in Islamic and Modern Educational Perspectives

Etymologically, the term *punishment* in Arabic is known as **'uqubah**, derived from the word **'aqaba**, which means to respond or retaliate for a wrongdoing. In Islam, punishment is viewed as a form of responsibility and correction, not as revenge or abuse.

Several scholarly sources define and discuss punishment as follows:

- **Samsudin & Asrofi (2021)** argue that punishment is a repressive educational tool that must be applied cautiously, as it may have negative effects if misused.

- **Pascadinianti (2024)** contends that proper educational punishment can deepen children's understanding of discipline.

- **Harahap (2016)** emphasizes the importance of avoiding physical or psychological punishment due to the risk of trauma.

- **Nurjanah & Sulaeman (2021)** find that positive discipline is more effective than conventional punishment in shaping children's behavior.

- **Susanty (2021)** states that in Islamic education, punishment is not the first option but may be applied after compassion and advice have been exhausted.

- **Yuniarto et al. (2022)** highlight that punishment must be educational and proportional, not a result of emotional impulse.

- **Muzakkir (2017)** introduces the concept of *ta'dib* (moral education) in Islam, which prioritizes correction through example and meaningful communication.

- **Rozikin & Iswatiningsih (2023)** distinguish between short-term goals (to stop misbehavior) and long-term goals (to develop self-regulation) of punishment.

Based on these perspectives, it is clear that harsh punishment that violates children's dignity is inconsistent with both Islamic values and modern educational theories. Both paradigms agree that punishment must:

- Be free from physical or psychological harm

- Serve an educational purpose

- Be applied consciously and not driven by emotion

A hadith reported by Abu Dawud affirms that physical punishment may only be applied—lightly and carefully—after the age of 10, as a last resort when verbal correction fails:

"Command your children to pray at the age of seven; and discipline them (lightly) if they do not pray by the age of ten." (HR. Abu Dawud No. 494, graded Hasan Sahih by Al-Albani)

2. Objectives and Principles of Punishment in Early Childhood Education

The application of punishment in early childhood education must

consider the child's developmental stage. Many parents and educators mistakenly punish children as an outlet for frustration rather than as a constructive form of discipline.

According to Ahmadi and Uhbiyati (2001), punishment is justified when a violation occurs and must be directed toward educational improvement. Carmela and Suryaningsih (2021) stress that children, as the nation's future, deserve protection and should not suffer violence under the guise of discipline.

Additional perspectives include:

- Latifah (2023) argues that effective punishment fosters a sense of responsibility rather than fear.
- Hasanah (2022) suggests using natural or logical consequences relevant to the child's misbehavior instead of traditional punishments.

Both Islamic and modern educational theories advocate for the following principles:

- Islam emphasizes compassion, advice, and role modeling before punishment.
- Modern educational theory encourages positive discipline, communication, and reflective strategies as alternatives to physical correction.

3. Harmonization of Islamic and Educational Perspectives

From the review of eight journals, the following table summarizes the harmonized principles between Islamic teachings and educational

theories:

Islamic Perspective	Modern Educational Theory
Punishment is not the first option; advice comes first	Preventive and reflective strategies are prioritized
Child's age matters (punishment allowed after age 10)	Developmental stages must be respected
Punishment aims to educate, not to hurt	Punishment must promote responsibility, not fear
Educators/parents must act consciously and calmly	Positive discipline is preferred over physical punishment

4. Practical Implications for Early Childhood Education

In the context of early childhood education, both parents and teachers must:

- Apply punishment wisely and proportionally
- Prioritize love, personal engagement, and advice before any disciplinary action
- Ensure that if punishment is needed, it remains educational and never emotionally driven

Receive training in positive discipline and Islamic values to avoid misapplication of punitive methods

Conclusion

Punishment is referred to as such because it is a response to deviant

behavior committed by an individual. In Islamic education, the purpose of punishment is to serve as a technique or method for correcting those who violate rules or commit mistakes. From an educational theory perspective, punishment is meant to prevent inappropriate behavior and act as a reminder to students of actions that are not allowed.

Punishment is more closely related to behavior regulation and serves as a way to control children's actions. It is a deliberate measure imposed on children to guide them. However, there are conditions that must be fulfilled when administering punishment. These include:

- Punishment must be grounded in love and compassion toward the child.

- It must be administered with care and only when necessary.

- It should leave a positive impression and lead the child toward awareness and repentance.

- It must be followed by forgiveness and the restoration of trust in the child.

Islam provides several guidelines for applying punishment:

a) Forgive the first offense, giving the child an opportunity to correct their own mistakes.

b) Offer advice, gentle reprimands, and wise explanations if the first step does not work.

c) Apply punishment in a non-physical, non-hurtful manner if all else fails.

In conclusion, the author argues that punishment for children is

permissible from both Islamic and educational perspectives. However, its application must be based on clear principles, purposes, and conditions. The ultimate goal of punishment is behavioral correction and moral development.

References

Ahmadi, A., & Uhbiyati, N. (2001). Ilmu Pendidikan. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.

Audy, R. T., & Noifianti, R. (2024). Mindful Parenting: Perspektif Orang Tua dalam Pengasuhan Positif untuk Anak Usia Dini. Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran, 7(2), 3521–3527.

Carmela, H. R. F., & Suryaningsi, S. (2021). Penegakan Hukum dalam Pendidikan dan Perlindungan Anak di Indonesia. *Nomos: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Hukum,* 1(2), 58–65. https://doi.org/10.56393/nomos.v12.570

Harahap, A. S. (2016). Kekerasan Fisik Oleh Pendidik Terhadap Peserta Didik Dalam Undang-Undang Perlindungan Anak Perspektif Hukum Pidana Islam. *Mizan: Journal of Islamic Law*, 4(1). https://doi.org/10.32507/mizan.v4i1.179

Muzakkir, M. (2017). Harmonisasi Tri Pusat Pendidikan dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam. Al-TA'DIB: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Kependidikan, 10(1), 145-162. https://doi.org/10.31332/atdb.v10i1.557

Nurjanah, S., & Sulaeman, D. (2024). PENERAPAN DISIPLIN POSITIF TERHADAP KARAKTER ANAK USIA 5-6 TAHUN DI PAUD APEL. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 1(1), 23-26. https://doi.org/10.62495/jpiaud.v1i1.40

Pascadinianti, M. (2024). A Critical Analysis of Islamic Law and Human Rights in Early Childhood Protection. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini,* 8(6), 2147–2168. https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v9i4.6913

Rahman, M, H, D. (2020). Pengembangan Nilai Moral dan Agama Anak Usia Dini: Panduan Bagi Orang Tua, Guru, Mahasiswa, dan Praktisi PAUD.

Rozikin, & Iswatiningsih, D. (2025). PENDIDIKAN KERAS DI MASA LALU DAN RELEVANSI HUKUMAN FISIK DI SEKOLAH SAAT INI. *SIBATIK JOURNAL: Jurnal Ilmiah Bidang Sosial, Ekonomi, Budaya, Teknologi, Dan Pendidikan*, 4(5), 541-546. https://doi.org/10.54443/sibatik.v4i5.2715

Samsudin, S., & Asrofi, M. (2021). Hukuman dalam Pendidikan Islam: Studi atas Dampak Psikologis Anak Usia Dasar dan Citra Guru. *Tarbiyatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(2), 188–211. https://doi.org/10.36835/tarbiyatuna.v14i2.892

Susanty, F. (2021). Pola Pemberian Hadiah Dan Hukuman Dalam Mendidik Anak Menurut Pendidikan Islam. *Raudhah Proud To Be Professionals: Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah*, 6(1), 71-82. https://doi.org/10.48094/raudhah.v6i1.103

Widya,R., & S Bachtiar, R. S. (2020). Pengasuhan Penguatan Karakter Anak Dalam Islam. Edu Publisher.

Yuniarto, B., Rodiya, Y., Saefuddin, D. A., & Maulana, M. A. (2022). Analisis Dampak Reward dan Punishment Perspektif Teori Pertukaran Sosial dan Pendidikan Islam. *Edukatif : Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(4), 5708–5719. https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v44.3350

Yuniarto, B., Rodiya, Y., Saefuddin, D. A., & Maulana, M. A. (2022). Analisis Dampak Reward dan Punishment Perspektif Teori Pertukaran Sosial dan Pendidikan Islam. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan,* 4(4), 5708-5719. https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i4.3350

Yusuf, R. N., Al Khoeri, N. S. T. A., Herdiyanti, G. S., & Nuraeni, E. D. (2023). Urgensi Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Bagi Tumbuh Kembang Anak. *Jurnal Plamboyan Edu* (JPE), 1(1), 37–44. https://jurnal.rakeyansantang.ac.id/index.php/plamboyan/article/view/320