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Early Childhood Education Based on the Qur'an: An Analysis of the Pedagogical Values in Surah Luqman Verses 12–19

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ABSTRACT. This study examines the pedagogical values of Surah Luqman 31:12–19 and develops a critically bounded framework for their application in early childhood education. An interpretive library-based design combines close reading of the eight verses with a targeted narrative synthesis of 33 journal articles published within 2017–2024. The analysis distinguishes textual meanings, developmental evidence, and proposed educational practices. Five connected domains are identified: theological orientation and accountability; gratitude and care; relational guidance; worship and perseverance; and respectful social conduct. The findings are presented in a verse-to-practice matrix and a framework for formative observation. Contemporary research supports responsive relationships, guided activity, and social-emotional learning, but does not validate the effectiveness of the proposed Qur'anic framework. Particular attention is given to the limits of parental obedience in verse 15, the unspecified age of Luqman's child, and the risks of equating religious understanding with visible compliance. The study concludes that the passage can inform developmentally sensitive Islamic education when theological meanings are preserved and pedagogical applications remain open to empirical evaluation.

Keywords: *Early Childhood Education; Surah Luqman; Qur'anic Pedagogy; Responsive Parenting; Character Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education establishes conditions in which children learn to participate in relationships, regulate emotions, communicate, and develop an initial sense of responsibility. These capacities develop through interactions among the child, caregivers, and the wider learning environment, rather than through instruction alone. Developmental research therefore places responsive relationships and opportunities for learning alongside health, nutrition, and protection within a broad account of early development (Black et al., 2017; Britto et al., 2017). This perspective supports an educational approach that connects moral learning with everyday care. It does not establish that one religious curriculum produces superior developmental outcomes. For Muslim families and institutions, the Qur'an provides a normative orientation for deciding what education is for and how people ought to relate to one another. Surah Luqman 31:12–19 is especially relevant because it brings gratitude, monotheism, parental relationships, accountability,

worship, patience, and social conduct into a compact passage. However, an educational reading must distinguish the ethical meaning of the text from psychological explanations of how children learn. Islamic education scholarship calls for this distinction while encouraging dialogue between theological reflection and educational inquiry (Sahin, 2018; Ulfat, 2020). The present study accordingly treats the passage as a source of educational values and contemporary research as a basis for examining possible, developmentally appropriate applications.

The passage should not be treated as a preschool lesson plan. It does not specify the age of Luqman's child, the duration of instruction, or a sequence of activities for an early childhood classroom. Moreover, verses 14–15 contain a divine injunction concerning parents within the surrounding discourse, so the entire passage should not be presented as uninterrupted speech by Luqman. Its relevance to early childhood is an interpretive extension that requires justification. An account of critical Islamic religious education is useful here because it raises questions about understanding, judgement, and participation beyond the reproduction of devotional formulas (Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Contemporary evidence can inform this extension without functioning as proof of the Qur'an's authority. Parenting interventions have improved several developmental outcomes in randomized studies, and preschool social and emotional learning programmes have shown benefits across multiple domains (Blewitt et al., 2018; Jeong et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the outcomes, ages, settings, and intervention components differ substantially. Research on positive parenting, for example, found stronger evidence for general cognitive abilities and language than for executive functioning or pre-academic skills (Prime et al., 2023). Such distinctions prevent a broad claim that affectionate religious instruction automatically improves every dimension of development. The contribution of this study is an explicit connection between textual interpretation and pedagogical design. It asks which educational values can be identified in Surah Luqman 31:12–19, how these values can inform early childhood learning, and where the proposed applications exceed the available evidence. The analysis develops a verse-to-practice matrix and identifies observable learning opportunities without claiming that they constitute validated measures of faith or character. The resulting framework is intended for critical adaptation by Muslim parents and early childhood educators, followed by empirical evaluation.

METHOD

This study uses an interpretive library-based design combining a close pedagogical reading of Surah Luqman 31:12–19 with a targeted narrative review. It is not a systematic review, a comparative tafsir study, or an evaluation of a classroom intervention. The distinction matters because an interpretive synthesis develops an argument through the relevance and critical comparison of sources rather than estimating an exhaustive pooled effect. Methodological guidance on literature reviews supports making the purpose, selection logic, and limitations of a review explicit (Snyder, 2019). The unit of textual analysis is each verse, read with the surrounding passage rather than as an isolated instruction. The primary corpus consists of the eight Qur'anic verses. Canonical verse references identify this corpus independently of the publication-date restriction applied to contemporary research. The secondary bibliography contains 33 unique journal articles published in 2017–2024: 28 selected from journals screened as Scopus Q1–Q2 and five from the Sinta 1 journal Cakrawala Pendidikan. These groups are counted separately even where indexing overlaps. Publication years follow the final journal issue where available, rather than the year embedded in a DOI. Journal standing is a source-selection condition, not a substitute for evaluating research design or relevance.

Secondary sources were located through targeted scholarly web searches, publisher pages, DOI records, and reference follow-up. Search concepts included Islamic religious education, early childhood development, responsive parenting, emotion socialization, gratitude, guided play, self-regulation, character education, and digital media. Sources were retained for an identifiable contribution to a textual interpretation, pedagogical mechanism, implementation issue, or

methodological limitation. Article identity and bibliographic metadata were checked against DOI records and publisher information; accessible abstracts and available article text informed the synthesis. There was no exhaustive database search, preregistered protocol, or independent dual screening, and no screening totals are claimed.

Analysis proceeded through four linked operations: identifying the explicit ethical content of each verse; grouping related concepts; proposing age-sensitive educational applications; and comparing those applications with relevant research. The resulting categories are interpretive constructions, not statistically discovered factors. A distinction was maintained between textual observations, analogies with developmental research, and proposed practices. Reflection on the analyst's role is important because thematic categories are shaped by questions and assumptions rather than simply found in a text (Braun & Clarke, 2021). No inter-rater reliability coefficient or expert validation is reported because neither procedure was documented for this study. Three safeguards guided interpretation. First, evidence concerning adolescents or primary-school pupils was treated as indirect support rather than proof of preschool effects. Second, observational associations were not described as causal intervention results. Third, negative cases within the passage were considered, particularly the boundary on parental obedience in verse 15. These safeguards reduce confirmation bias when contemporary educational concepts appear similar to Qur'anic values. They cannot eliminate the limitations of a selective literature base or establish that the proposed framework will work across all Muslim communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Educational values across the passage

The textual analysis identifies five connected domains: theological orientation and accountability; gratitude and care; relational guidance; worship and perseverance; and respectful social conduct. Their relationship is substantive rather than a developmental sequence. Gratitude appears in verse 12 before the advice against associating partners with Allah in verse 13, while responsibility and social behaviour become explicit in verses 16–19. Thus, tauhid is interpreted as a theological foundation, not as evidence that the passage prescribes a fixed order of preschool lessons. The affectionate address yā bunayya in verses 13, 16, and 17 is a salient feature of the parental advice. It conveys relational closeness alongside clear moral expectations. However, the passage does not record the child's replies, so it cannot by itself demonstrate a fully reciprocal teaching method. Inviting children's questions is an educational application proposed here, not an interaction directly observed in the verses. Table 1 keeps this distinction visible by separating textual content from suggested activities and interpretive limits.

Table 1 Verse to practice matrix

Verse	Textual focus	Proposed educational application	Interpretive boundary
31:12	Wisdom and gratitude to Allah	Identify a benefit and express appreciation in a shared routine.	An interpretation of gratitude education, not an evaluated intervention.
31:13	Rejection of shirk; affectionate address	Use simple stories connecting belief, care, and responsibility.	The child's age and theological comprehension are unspecified.
31:14	Parental care and gratitude	Recognize caregivers' effort through familiar examples.	Do not turn gratitude into guilt or a debt demanded from the child.

Verse	Textual focus	Proposed educational application	Interpretive boundary
31:15	Limits to obedience; good companionship	Practise respectful disagreement and seeking adult help.	The direct context concerns shirk; safeguarding is a proposed application.
31:16	Accountability for even small actions	Discuss returning an object or repairing a small harm.	Avoid fear-based surveillance or claims to measure inner faith.
31:17	Prayer, good action, and patience	Invite participation, supported waiting, and cooperative help.	Religious practice is not evidence of improved executive functioning.
31:18	Rejection of arrogance and contempt	Model inclusion and respect during peer interactions.	Do not moralize disability, gaze, gait, or temperament.
31:19	Moderation in conduct and voice	Explore context-sensitive speaking and listening in play.	Moderation should not silence questions, distress, or requests for help.

Source: *authors' interpretive synthesis of Qur'an 31:12–19. Activities are proposals, not observed research findings.*

The matrix shows that educational adaptation requires more than listing virtues. The requirement to be grateful does not specify a validated gratitude intervention; the instruction to establish prayer does not demonstrate an executive-function effect; and moderation of voice does not authorize silencing a child. These are separate propositions requiring separate forms of justification. The framework therefore retains the religious meaning of the passage while identifying practices that can be examined educationally.

From ethical meaning to observable practice

The central result is a conceptual framework in which adult relationships mediate the movement from ethical meaning to learning opportunities. Parents and teachers interpret a value, model a relevant action, support a child's attempt, and discuss its meaning in a familiar situation. The proposed feedback process allows the adult to revise the activity in response to the child's understanding, language, and emotional state. It is a design proposition derived from the synthesis, not an experimentally established causal model.

Table 2 specifies how this framework could be observed without reducing religious development to visible compliance. A child's willingness to share can depend on fatigue, language, familiarity, and the availability of materials; one episode cannot establish a stable virtue. Likewise, a child who speaks loudly or moves differently should not be classified as morally deficient. Observations should describe context, adult support, and change across time. The proposed indicators are therefore prompts for formative documentation rather than standardized scores.

Table 2 Proposed formative observation framework

Focus	Learning opportunity	Possible observation	Interpretive safeguard
Gratitude	Discuss who helped during a shared meal.	Names an act of help with or without prompting.	Record language support; do not demand a feeling.
Responsibility	Help repair a disrupted shared activity.	Participates in returning or repairing materials.	Record adult assistance and the situation.

Focus	Learning opportunity	Possible observation	Interpretive safeguard
Patience	Use a short turn-taking game.	Uses a supported strategy while waiting.	Adjust duration; distinguish distress from refusal.
Respect	Discuss a conflict over play materials.	Acknowledges a peer's need through words or action.	Allow alternative communication and repeated attempts.
Religious participation	Invite brief participation in a familiar routine.	Shows interest, asks a question, or joins appropriately.	Participation is not a score of faith or moral worth.
Safe disagreement	Model saying no and asking for help.	Signals discomfort or seeks a trusted adult.	Do not classify self-protection as disrespect.

Source: *authors' proposed framework. Indicators require piloting and are not a validated assessment scale.*

Discussion

Tauhid and moral accountability without premature abstraction

Verse 13 locates the rejection of shirk within a moral judgement about injustice. This relationship suggests that religious education can connect belief with the seriousness of one's actions, rather than limiting learning to verbal identification of doctrines. Verse 16 extends the theme through the image of an act as small as a mustard seed that remains known to Allah. Read together, the verses support an orientation towards responsibility beyond public recognition. They do not provide evidence about the age at which a child understands abstract theology or invisible accountability.

For preschool children, the proposed application begins with concrete experiences: caring for living things, acknowledging help, returning an object, and repairing harm. Adults can relate these experiences to a Muslim understanding of responsibility to Allah in simple language. This preserves theological meaning while avoiding an expectation that young children reproduce mature doctrinal explanations. Sahin's discussion of Islamic education supports an educationally reflective engagement with religious tradition, while Ulfat argues that empirical inquiry is necessary to understand actual religious learning processes (Sahin, 2018; Ulfat, 2020). Neither article establishes the effectiveness of the present Luqman-based framework.

Play and narrative provide possible methods for connecting values with experience. Guided play preserves children's agency while allowing adults to introduce a purpose, question, or challenge; its effects vary across the outcomes assessed (Skene et al., 2022; Zosh et al., 2018). Shared storybook reading also provides evidence for vocabulary learning, which is relevant when children need language for gratitude, fairness, or repair (Flack et al., 2018). The inference is that these methods may make ethical discussion more accessible, not that vocabulary gains demonstrate moral internalization. Stories should be accompanied by opportunities to explain, question, and act, rather than followed only by recall questions.

A further distinction concerns accountability and fear. Awareness that actions matter can be taught through reassurance, explanation, and repair instead of threats that portray ordinary mistakes as evidence of a bad child. Critical Islamic religious education provides a rationale for considering reflection and judgement within religious learning (Saada & Magadlah, 2021). In practical terms, an adult might explain why taking a peer's toy causes difficulty, help the child return it, and allow another attempt. Whether such an approach improves moral reasoning in a specifically Qur'anic programme remains an empirical question.

Gratitude and care as relational learning

Verses 12 and 14 relate gratitude to Allah and to parental care. The reference to pregnancy and weaning gives the discussion a concrete account of dependence and effort, rather than treating gratitude as politeness alone. A pedagogical application can help children notice who contributed to a benefit, how that contribution affected them, and how they might respond. Thanking a caregiver, helping to tidy shared materials, or acknowledging a friend's assistance becomes meaningful when connected to the action being appreciated. These practices should invite understanding rather than compel an emotion.

Research portrays children's gratitude as a developing socioemotional process supported by adult modelling, conversations, and everyday opportunities (Hussong et al., 2021). A review of gratitude and parent–child relationships also identifies relational pathways and reciprocal influences, indicating that the quality of relationships matters alongside verbal instruction (Obeldobel & Kerns, 2021). This evidence supports discussing gratitude through lived interactions. It does not warrant assuming that the routine repetition of alhamdulillah is sufficient evidence of a mature disposition. A child may know the expression while still needing support to understand another person's effort.

Developmental scope is particularly important when drawing on gratitude research. A longitudinal study linked changes in gratitude with changes in adolescents' social behaviour, but its participants were substantially older than preschool children (Bono et al., 2019). That finding suggests questions for future research rather than an effect size that can be transferred to early childhood. In a preschool setting, a modest objective is to help children recognize specific acts of care and offer an age-appropriate response. Adults should also respect children's right to express disappointment or discomfort, since gratitude should not become a requirement to deny unpleasant experiences.

Affectionate guidance and the limits of parental obedience

The address yā bunayya supports a reading of moral guidance within a caring relationship. This is compatible with developmental evidence on responsive parenting, but compatibility does not mean that the verse describes all components of a modern parenting intervention. A global meta-analysis found benefits across several early developmental and parenting outcomes, while a separate synthesis found that positive-parenting effects differed between cognitive domains (Jeong et al., 2021; Prime et al., 2023). The practical implication is to specify what adults do: respond to signals, explain expectations, attend to emotional needs, and provide repeated opportunities for participation. General appeals to affection are insufficient if everyday interactions remain harsh or inconsistent.

Emotion socialization provides a more precise account of this relational process. Research distinguishes adult modelling, responses to children's emotions, and discussion or coaching of emotional experiences (Zinsser et al., 2021). These practices can inform the way a teacher responds when a child becomes frustrated during a religious activity. The adult can acknowledge the feeling, support a pause, and explain how to rejoin the activity without treating distress as disobedience. Evidence on parenting styles and externalizing behaviour further indicates that dimensions of parenting need to be examined separately rather than grouped under a single cultural label (Pinquart, 2017).

Verse 15 is essential to the interpretation because it places a boundary on obedience while maintaining the requirement of good companionship. The immediate subject is pressure to associate partners with Allah; the verse does not directly articulate a contemporary child-protection curriculum. Nevertheless, it challenges an educational interpretation that makes parental authority unconditional. A proposed application is to distinguish respectful disagreement from contempt and to teach children to seek help when an interaction is unsafe. Evidence linking physical punishment with adverse child outcomes supports rejecting the assumption that harsh treatment is necessary for discipline (Heilmann et al., 2021).

Indonesian evidence adds contextual relevance but also requires restraint. A study of parents of Muhammadiyah elementary-school pupils examined relationships among positive parenting, agreeableness, religiosity, and parental engagement in character education (Diana et al., 2021). Its setting and correlational model do not establish preschool causality. It nevertheless points to the importance of studying family practice and religious orientation together. Parenting-programme research also indicates that concrete components matter for disruptive behaviour outcomes, reinforcing the need to move beyond broad labels when developing parent guidance (Leijten et al., 2019).

Prayer and patience as supported participation

Verse 17 brings prayer, social responsibility, and patience into the same ethical frame. Prayer has a religious purpose that should not be reduced to a technique for improving executive functioning. Its educational application in early childhood can involve observing adults, joining brief routines voluntarily, learning through imitation, and receiving explanations suited to the child's understanding. The verse does not justify evaluating young children against adult standards of religious performance. It also does not establish a particular duration or frequency for classroom activities.

Patience can be translated into supported opportunities to wait, cope with disappointment, and try again. Such translation requires adult co-regulation: the child receives help to identify the difficulty and select an action before being expected to regulate independently. Meta-analytic evidence supports some self-regulation interventions across children and adolescents, but differences in age and programme design limit direct transfer to preschool worship routines (Pandey et al., 2018). The early childhood social and emotional learning literature provides more age-proximal support for structured practice and emotional guidance (Blewitt et al., 2018). The proposed mechanism is supported participation, not silent endurance of distress.

This distinction also prevents inflated claims about later success. A review of early non-cognitive skills identified heterogeneous evidence and potential small-study bias, cautioning against treating self-regulation or perseverance as simple explanations for future outcomes (Smithers et al., 2018). A child's persistence also depends on task difficulty, disability, fatigue, and available support. Educators should therefore adjust the task and document the assistance needed rather than use patience as a fixed personality judgement. The framework should be evaluated through changes in specific activities, not promises of lifelong achievement.

Humility and social responsibility through shared activity

Verses 18–19 address arrogance, manner of walking, and moderation of voice. Their educational significance lies in consideration for others, not in requiring one posture, communication style, or level of verbal expression from every child. An inclusive application should distinguish deliberate contempt from differences associated with temperament, language development, sensory needs, or disability. A child can learn to respect another person without being required to maintain eye contact or suppress all energetic movement. The moral focus is the quality of the relationship and the consequences of behaviour.

Shared activities create opportunities to practise this focus. Turn-taking games, collaborative construction, and supported conflict repair allow children to experience fairness and discuss why another person's needs matter. Social and emotional learning syntheses report benefits across multiple outcomes, while also showing that programme content and implementation affect results (Cipriano et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2017). Much of this evidence covers school-age populations, so it supports a broad pedagogical rationale rather than validating a preschool Qur'anic curriculum. Activities should remain short, comprehensible, and responsive to the group.

Studies from Indonesia illustrate both the opportunities and the implementation problems. Teachers' accounts of character education in physical education identify uncertainty about translating curriculum aims into classroom practice (Muhtar & Dallyono, 2020). A development study of traditional games using a Socratic approach offers a design example, but its small primary-school trial does not establish effectiveness for younger children (Hafina et al., 2022). These findings support explicit teacher guidance and cautious piloting. They also suggest that familiar local games may provide a useful setting for moral discussion when adapted to children's developmental capacities.

Motion and sound activities offer another possible route to participation. An Indonesian early childhood development study reported promising cognitive applications while calling for continued refinement of the activities (Sriwidaningsih & Friskawati, 2022). This supports considering active, culturally familiar learning experiences, but it does not demonstrate that movement games cultivate humility or religious commitment. Such outcomes require separate operational definitions and observation. Adults should use activities to open meaningful encounters rather than assume that enjoyment alone produces a targeted virtue.

Contemporary implementation across home and early childhood settings

Digital media provides a contemporary setting in which relational quality and adult modelling become relevant. Longitudinal research has associated screen exposure with later developmental screening performance, while a meta-analysis indicates that language associations vary with the quantity and characteristics of screen use (Madigan et al., 2019, 2020). These findings do not justify a general claim that technology causes moral decline. A more defensible application is to consider what media use displaces, whether adults and children engage together, and whether content supports meaningful conversation.

An Indonesian kindergarten-parent study found associations involving family cohesion, interpersonal communication, smartphone use, and emotional dysregulation (Rachmat et al., 2021). Because the evidence was based on parental questionnaires, causal explanations and the influence of shared reporting require caution. The Luqman-based framework would respond by protecting opportunities for attentive conversation and shared activity rather than treating device restriction as a complete educational strategy. Families can select a consistent period for storytelling or discussion of an everyday experience. The proposed benefit depends on the interaction created during that period, not merely the absence of a screen.

Teacher capacity is equally important. A meta-analysis of social and emotional learning interventions for teachers reported benefits alongside heterogeneity and publication-bias concerns (Oliveira et al., 2021). Adults who are expected to model calm communication need practical training, reflective support, and workable classroom conditions. The evidence on play further argues against replacing a balanced early childhood programme with prolonged moral instruction (Yogman et al., 2018). Values can be integrated into care routines, free and guided play, shared stories, and peer encounters without requiring every activity to become a lecture.

Implementation should begin with a small, clearly defined pilot. For example, educators could select one value, specify an activity, document adult support and child participation, and examine whether the activity is understandable and acceptable to families. Subsequent research could assess feasibility, cultural interpretation, and outcomes using age-appropriate measures and a suitable comparison design. Empirical religious-education scholarship supports this movement from theoretical proposals to investigation of actual learning processes (Ulfat, 2020). No conclusion about effectiveness should precede that work.

Limitations and contribution

The study's main limitation is the distance between textual interpretation and empirical validation. It contains no child interviews, classroom observations, intervention trial, or

comparison of named tafsir works. Its secondary sources were purposively selected, and the 28-plus-five composition reflects an editorial source requirement rather than a measure of evidence saturation. Relevant scholarship outside the date range or journal categories may therefore be omitted. The analysis should be understood as a reasoned conceptual synthesis rather than an exhaustive account of Qur'anic pedagogy.

The framework also brings together research from different countries, ages, disciplines, and outcome domains. This diversity makes comparison possible but limits transferability. Positive findings from general parenting or social and emotional learning programmes cannot be attributed to Qur'anic content, and journal quartiles do not resolve that problem. The contribution is a transparent articulation of values, proposed practices, and evidential boundaries. Future research can test this framework precisely because its interpretive and empirical claims have been kept distinct.

CONCLUSION

Surah Luqman 31:12–19 offers an interconnected ethical orientation encompassing tauhid, gratitude, parental care, accountability, worship, patience, and respectful social conduct. Its relevance to early childhood education is strongest when these values are translated into responsive relationships and concrete opportunities for participation. The affectionate form of address supports caring guidance, while verse 15 prevents a reading of parental obedience as unconditional. Neither feature eliminates the need to adapt learning to children's developmental and individual differences.

The study proposes a verse-to-practice matrix and formative observation framework informed by contemporary research. These tools clarify how parents and teachers might connect religious meaning with modelling, conversation, play, and supported practice. They remain conceptual proposals, not validated instruments or evidence that a Luqman-based programme improves developmental outcomes. The next step is culturally sensitive feasibility research followed by appropriately designed evaluation of specific educational practices.

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