



THE CONCEPT OF *USWAH HASANAH* AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN ISLAMIC FAMILY EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study examines *uswah hasanah* as a pedagogical model in Islamic family education and addresses a recurring gap in prior discussions that often emphasize exemplary conduct as a moral ideal without offering an operational framework that parents can apply in everyday family life. Using a descriptive qualitative approach through a literature review, this article synthesizes peer reviewed studies and scholarly sources published between 2016 and 2025 that discuss *uswah hasanah*, exemplary education, and Islamic family education. The analysis was conducted through close reading and thematic coding to identify recurring concepts, implementation mechanisms, and educational outcomes associated with exemplary education in the family context. The findings indicate that the family as *madrasah al ula* is a decisive setting for character formation because children internalize values primarily through repeated observation of parental conduct. The synthesis further shows that the implementation of *uswah hasanah* can be organized into five interrelated dimensions, namely *tarbiyah bi al qudwah*, *tarbiyah bi al adat*, *tarbiyah bi al mau idzah*, *tarbiyah bi al mulaahadzah*, and *tarbiyah bi al uquubah*, which together form a coherent sequence from modeling and habituation to guidance, supervision, and responsible discipline. This article contributes a structured conceptual framework that links Islamic educational thought with practical parental strategies for character formation in the home and provides a foundation for future empirical studies across diverse family settings.

Keywords: *Uswah Hasanah; Islamic Family Education; Madrasah Al Ula; Exemplary Education; Character Formation*

A. Introduction

Education is a fundamental human endeavor that goes beyond knowledge transfer. It is a continuous effort to cultivate moral, intellectual, and physical harmony in learners and to shape ethical awareness in the use of knowledge (Damon, 2013; Eryong and Li, 2021; Swargiary, 2024). In the Indonesian context, Ki Hajar Dewantara framed education as a process that nurtures *budi pekerti* as an integrated unity of character, intellect, and inner strength that forms human dignity (Muthoifin, 2024; Wijayanti, 2018). This orientation is consistent with philosophical views that emphasize integrity and moral consciousness as outcomes of education rather than merely cognitive achievement (Mason, 2001; Mustakova Possardt, 2004).

Education also operates as a comprehensive system that begins in the home, is reinforced by schools, and is sustained by social life (Gordon and Rebell, 2007; U. Hasanah et al., 2022). Among these environments, the family is the earliest setting where children encounter values, norms, habits, and emotional guidance that later influence their moral development (Mundiri et al., 2022). Classical and contemporary discussions of family education underline that parents are natural educators who shape early character through daily example and religious routines. In this stage, children tend to imitate what they repeatedly observe, which makes parental modeling central to religious and moral education (Afriana and Sutrisno, 2022). At the same time, social change and the growing complexity of knowledge have encouraged many families to shift educational responsibility to schools, even though schools are meant to complement rather than replace parental roles (Yuningsih, 2024).

This article is positioned within the field of Islamic family education, which views the family as *madrasah al ula* and as a primary institution for building children's character and morals. In this tradition, family life is not only a space of care but also a structured educational arena where responsibilities and authority shape the formation of personal conduct and religious orientation (Al Nashr, 2016). Empirical and conceptual works also emphasize that parents cultivate children's emotional regulation and moral readiness through patient guidance and consistent interaction, which supports long term character formation (Mardianto et al., 2024; Mundiri et al., 2022). These insights provide a foundation for focusing on the pedagogical quality of what parents do in everyday life rather than limiting discussion to general claims about the importance of the family.

Although many studies discuss family education and parental roles in shaping children's character, there remains a clear gap in studies that systematically formulate *uswah hasanah* as a pedagogical model within the family context. Existing discussions often highlight moral ideals or general behavioral virtues, yet they rarely translate the concept into an implementative framework that parents can apply consistently in everyday parenting practices (Yuningsih, 2024). In Islamic education, *uswah hasanah* refers to exemplary conduct rooted in prophetic guidance and is presented in the Quran as a model worth following, which makes it a strong candidate for a practical approach to family education (Wardati et al., 2024). Conceptual studies also explain *uswah hasanah* as role modeling that becomes meaningful when it is expressed through observable conduct and internalized through repetition and guidance, not only through verbal instruction (Iwan Sanusi et al., 2024; Ruswandi et al., 2022).

Based on this gap, this study aims to conceptualize *uswah hasanah* as a structured pedagogical approach for Islamic family education through a qualitative literature review of relevant academic sources published between 2016 and 2025. The study is guided by three questions. The first examines how *uswah hasanah* is conceptualized in Islamic educational thought when situated within the family context. The second identifies implementative dimensions synthesized from the literature that enable *uswah hasanah* to function as practical parental strategies at home. The third examines educational outcomes consistently associated with the implementation of *uswah hasanah* in family

education. This article argues that *uswah hasanah* can be operationalized as an integrated family education model through five interrelated dimensions that form a coherent educational sequence from modeling and habituation to guidance, supervision, and responsible discipline.

B. Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a literature review method to examine the concept of *uswah hasanah* and its implementation in Islamic family education (I. Hasanah, 2024). A literature review was selected because it enables systematic collection and organization of academic information through library based activities, including reading, recording, and synthesizing research materials to build a coherent conceptual account (Abdullah, 2025; Zakiah and Nursikin, 2024). The analysis was conducted to develop interpretive clarity and to construct a framework that addresses the focus of the study in a structured manner (Wulandari and Husni Hoer, 2025).

The data sources consisted of peer reviewed journal articles and other scholarly references discussing *uswah hasanah*, exemplary education, and Islamic family education published between 2016 and 2025. Literature was identified through searches in academic databases and journal portals using relevant keywords, then screened through title and abstract review followed by full text eligibility checks based on thematic relevance and the presence of conceptual or implementative discussion. Data were analyzed through close reading and coding to identify recurring concepts and mechanisms, which were then grouped into categories and refined through comparison across sources to produce an integrated synthesis that answers the research questions on conceptualization, implementative dimensions, and educational outcomes.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Concept of *Uswah Hasanah* in Islamic Education

Uswah hasanah refers to exemplary conduct that can be followed and internalized through sustained practice. Etymologically, the term is derived from *uswah*, which denotes an example or model, and *hasanah*, which denotes goodness and worthiness, so the combined meaning points to a good model of conduct that brings benefit (Ruswandi et al., 2022). In Indonesian usage, the concept is closely related to *keteladanan*, which refers to attitudes and actions considered worthy of imitation, and to *peneladanan*, which refers to the act of providing an example in real behavior (Iwan Sanusi et al., 2024). This linkage is important because it indicates that *uswah hasanah* is not only a moral label but also a practical educational mechanism that works through observation and imitation.

The literature positions the *Uswatun Hasanah* model as an educational approach grounded in Islamic teachings with broad aims that include strengthening faith in Allah, faith in the Messenger, and faith in the Last Day. The model also carries specific aims that emphasize emulation of the Prophet Muhammad and the Prophet Ibrahim as exemplary figures. Several principles are repeatedly associated with this approach, including steadfastness in truth, patience, fortitude, courage, reliance on Allah, and

disciplined guidance that remains compassionate. In learning practice, this approach relies on modeling as an instructional strategy and highlights remembrance of Allah as a means of nurturing obedience to Allah and commitment to follow the Messenger (Wardati et al., 2024).

Further elaboration is found in the work of Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, who classifies exemplary education into several forms of *qudwah* that represent domains of personal formation. These include *qudwah* in worship, simplicity, humility, noble morals, courage, physical strength and active living, and civic conduct that reflects religious values. This classification clarifies that exemplary education operates across both spiritual and social dimensions, and it provides a conceptual bridge for understanding how parental conduct can function as a comprehensive educational instrument in the family setting (Wardati et al., 2024).

2. Educational Meaning of Exemplary Method in Islamic Education

Education is a continuous process that guides learners toward maturity and moral responsibility while supporting intellectual, emotional, and humanitarian development (Besari, 2022; Horban et al., 2024; Yuliana et al., 2023). In Islamic education, this orientation is closely connected to character formation because educational success is measured not only by mastery of knowledge but also by the internalization of values that shape conduct in everyday life (Zakiah and Nursikin, 2024). This emphasis makes the exemplary method central, since values are more effectively learned through direct observation of actions than through verbal instruction alone.

The exemplary method in Islamic education is commonly discussed through the concept of *uswah hasanah*, which functions as a practical mechanism for transmitting noble values through observable behavior. The literature highlights that role modeling is persuasive because learners imitate conduct that is repeatedly seen and socially validated, so exemplary practice becomes a concrete channel for moral learning (Sodikin, 2025). This is particularly relevant in contexts where learners require strong moral guidance and emotional security, such as the education of orphans, because consistent role models help cultivate confidence, stability, and commitment to life values (Sodikin, 2025). In this sense, exemplary education is not an additional technique, but a core pedagogical strategy that makes moral teachings visible and credible.

Islamic sources position the Prophet Muhammad as the primary reference of *uswah hasanah* and describe prophetic conduct as an authoritative model for educational imitation. The Qur'an presents the Messenger as a good example in *Al Ahzab* verse 21, which supports the view that learning involves following a lived model of faith and conduct rather than relying only on abstract instruction. Prophetic guidance also reinforces this logic by reminding believers to learn through emulation of balanced worship and disciplined living, so that religious commitment is practiced with moderation and consistency (Sodikin, 2025). These foundations strengthen the argument that exemplary conduct is an educational pathway that links belief to practice and transforms moral ideals into habitual behavior.

In practical educational settings, the exemplary method is described as an approach in which educators embody moral values through speech ethics, interpersonal interaction, emotional restraint, and consistent discipline. When learners observe *husnul khuluq* in educators, they are more likely to reproduce similar manners because they see the values enacted in real life rather than merely described in words (Sodikin, 2025). Therefore, the educational meaning of the exemplary method in Islamic education lies in its ability to translate moral principles into visible conduct that can be imitated, internalized, and sustained, which also provides a conceptual bridge to the next sections that discuss the family as *madrasah al ula* and the role of parents as the most immediate models in children's moral formation.

3. Family as *Madrasah al Ula*

The family is the earliest and closest educational environment in a child's life and it provides the first experiences of affection, care, and guidance that shape personal development. Within this environment, parents hold primary responsibility for children's education, particularly in building moral readiness and preparing children to face future social life (Mundiri et al., 2022). Family education traditions also emphasize nurturing relationships and sustained guidance, because these interactions help children develop emotional regulation and psychological resilience during the gradual process of growth (Besari, 2022). This role is strengthened by the reality that children learn through daily interaction, so the quality of parental attention, communication, and example becomes a key factor in shaping character.

The family also functions as a social institution whose internal relationships influence broader social conditions. When relationships within and among families in a community are healthy, social life tends to be more stable and constructive, whereas fragile family relations can contribute to social problems (Al Nashr, 2016). In addition, family life naturally contains a structure of roles and responsibilities that forms children's early understanding of authority, respect, and mutual care. In this structure, parents guide children through routines and expectations, while other family members also contribute to an atmosphere of belonging and shared responsibility (Al Nashr, 2016).

From the perspective of Islamic education, the family holds a distinctive position as *madrasah al ula*, meaning that the earliest character formation begins at home and continues through consistent guidance over time. This view implies that educating children is not an incidental activity but a core family responsibility that shapes religious orientation and moral conduct. Discussions on Islamic family life also underline that preparation for children's character development begins even before birth through careful family planning and the cultivation of a supportive religious atmosphere that encourages children to grow into a pious generation (Al Nashr, 2016). These arguments confirm that the family is not only a biological unit but an educational institution that carries long term consequences for personal formation and social life.

4. Islamic Family Education and Parental Responsibility

Family education is the first and most fundamental form of education, with parents functioning as the primary educators responsible for guiding children's growth and development (Besari, 2022). This responsibility is not situational, but inherent to the parental role, because children depend on parents for moral direction, social learning, and early intellectual formation. When family education is carried out well, children are more likely to develop into individuals who contribute positively to their community and society (Mundiri et al., 2022). In practical terms, the literature identifies several basic educational domains that families cultivate, including moral education that shapes norms and views of life, social education that supports manners and interaction, intellectual education that develops early communication skills, habit formation that nurtures discipline and cleanliness, and civic education that provides an initial foundation for love of community and country (Besari, 2022).

Family education is also understood as a continuous process of positive support that establishes a foundation for later educational stages and helps children adapt to increasingly complex challenges (Yanti and Aida Hayani, 2023). In this process, parents often apply educational values through habituation and daily practice even when they do not explicitly conceptualize their actions as educational theory. This reality suggests that family education is inseparable from implementation, because values become effective when they are embedded in routines, guidance, and consistent interaction (Besari, 2022).

Within Islamic discourse, family education carries a distinctive moral and spiritual mandate. The literature emphasizes that children are born with an innate disposition toward faith in Allah, and parents are entrusted with maintaining and nurturing this disposition through guidance and protection (Yuningsih, 2024). This responsibility becomes especially salient in the digital era, when learning and social exposure increasingly occur at home and parents must actively manage influences that shape children's character. Islamic teachings frame family education as an effort that aims not only at worldly wellbeing but also at safeguarding the family's spiritual future. This orientation is expressed through the injunction to protect oneself and one's family from the fire of hell as stated in *At Tahrīm* verse 6 (Yuningsih, 2024).

Islamic educational terminology further clarifies the scope of family education. Education is understood through the concept of *tarbiyah*, which includes nurturing, guiding, protecting, and developing children's potentials in stages. It is also understood through *ta'lim*, which emphasizes teaching and the transmission of knowledge and responsibility, and through *ta'dib*, which emphasizes the cultivation of good manners and moral integrity. Together, these concepts highlight that Islamic family education is not limited to information delivery, but focuses on forming complete personal integrity grounded in Islamic values. This framework provides a direct bridge to the discussion of implementation, because exemplary conduct becomes one of the most practical means through which parents integrate *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib* into everyday family life (Yuningsih, 2024).

The discussion on Islamic family education and parental responsibility indicates that moral formation in the home is not achieved through instruction alone. It requires a pedagogical process that integrates values into daily interaction and makes guidance visible in parental conduct. For this reason, *uswah hasanah* becomes central because it provides a practical mechanism through which *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib* are embodied in the family context. The following section synthesizes implementative dimensions identified in the literature to explain how *uswah hasanah* can be operationalized as a coherent approach in family education.

5. Implementation of *Uswah Hasanah* in Family Education

The reviewed literature positions the Prophet Muhammad as the primary reference of *uswah hasanah* and emphasizes that exemplary conduct functions as a practical educational method because children internalize values through observation and repeated exposure. In family settings, parents are the most frequently observed figures, so parental conduct becomes the most immediate channel through which values are translated into daily behavior. This understanding supports the argument that *uswah hasanah* is not only an ethical ideal but also a pedagogical mechanism that can be operationalized through implementative dimensions in the home (Wulandari and Husni Hoer, 2025; Yuningsih, 2024). Figure 1 in this article summarizes the implementative dimensions that can be used to apply exemplary education in family life.

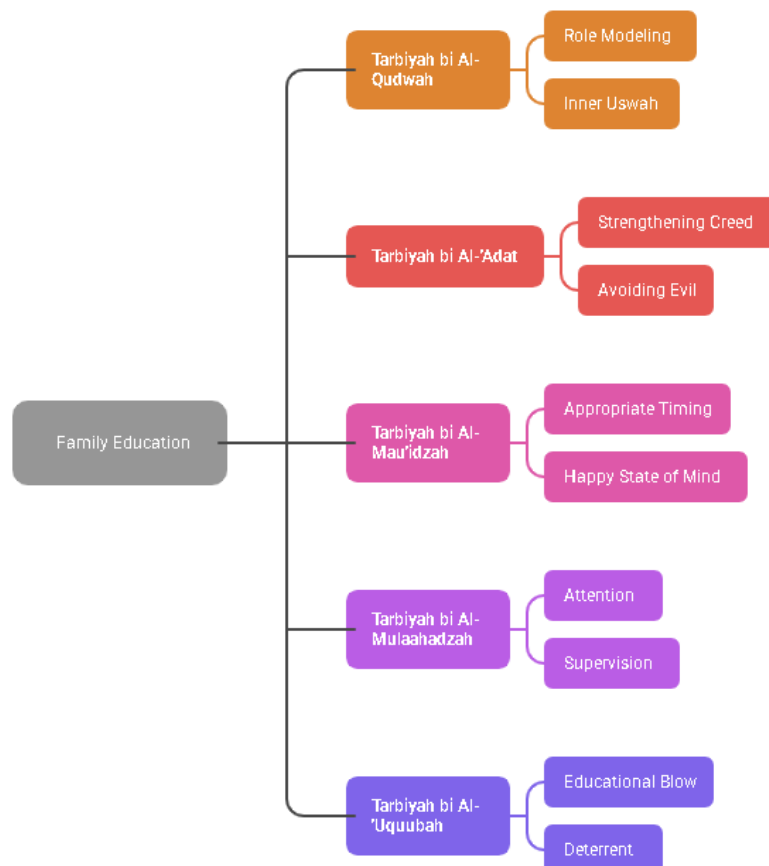


Figure 1. Implement the Concept of Good Manners in Family Education

First, *tarbiyah bi al qudwah* refers to educating through example. The literature consistently underlines that example has a strong influence on children's hearts and dispositions because children readily imitate what they see, especially in the early developmental stage when reflective control is not yet mature. In Islamic education, the Qur'an presents the Messenger as a model worth following for those who hope in Allah and the Last Day and who remember Allah often as stated in *Al Ahzab* verse 21 (Yuningsih, 2024). In family education, this principle means that parents need to embody the values they ask children to follow, whether in worship routines, speech ethics, daily discipline, social interaction, or emotional restraint. When instruction is aligned with visible conduct, moral messages become credible and easier for children to internalize. The literature also connects this principle with the view that the piety and moral consistency of parents are among the strongest predictors of moral learning in children because children learn piety by seeing it practiced in ordinary life (Yuningsih, 2024).

Second, *tarbiyah bi al adat* refers to educating through habituation. In this dimension, moral and religious conduct is not treated as a one time performance but as a repeated practice that gradually becomes stable behavior. The literature explains that habituation supports faith formation and self control because routines shape children's preferences and automatic responses. In family education, habituation includes routines that strengthen belief and worship, reduce exposure to harmful behavior, and cultivate discipline through consistent schedules and expectations. The reviewed sources also stress that habituation works best when the home environment supports it, because repeated practice requires a setting that reinforces the same values and discourages conflicting cues (Yuningsih, 2024). In this sense, habituation links directly to the family's role as *madrasah al ula* because the home becomes the first arena where religious routines and moral habits are formed.

Third, *tarbiyah bi al mau idzah* refers to educating through advice that builds awareness and inner enlightenment. The literature frames advice not as repetitive lecturing but as value clarification that helps children understand why certain behaviors are expected and why certain actions are harmful. This dimension is effective when advice is delivered wisely and with sensitivity to the child's emotional condition, because receptivity strongly influences whether children will reflect on guidance. The sources describe that advice should be timed when the child is open, calm, and able to listen, so that the message strengthens inner motivation rather than provoking resistance (Yuningsih, 2024). In family education, advice also functions to interpret experiences, correct misunderstandings, and connect daily events to moral principles, which supports the broader educational definition that learning involves reflection on experience.

Fourth, *tarbiyah bi al mulaahadzah* refers to educating through supervision and attentive care. This dimension emphasizes that moral formation requires not only guidance but also consistent monitoring and protection. The literature connects parental supervision with the moral mandate to guard the family as emphasized in *At Tahrir* verse 6, which is often interpreted as commanding families to promote good, prevent harm, and educate dependents so they are protected from destructive outcomes (Yuningsih, 2024).

In practice, supervision includes parents paying attention to children's social circles, media use, daily routines, worship consistency, and emotional wellbeing. Supervision also means parents respond to early signs of problematic behavior with calm correction and supportive direction rather than neglect. This dimension strengthens the coherence of the model because habituation and advice become more effective when parents remain attentive to continuity and follow through.

Fifth, *tarbiyah bi al uquubah* refers to educational discipline. In the reviewed sources, discipline is framed as a corrective educational step that aims to deter repeated wrongdoing and reinforce responsibility, and it is discussed as a measure that follows earlier approaches such as example, habituation, advice, and supervision (Yuningsih, 2024). For an academic article, it is important to state this dimension in a manner that is ethically responsible. The purpose of discipline in this framework is not harm, intimidation, or the release of parental emotion, but moral correction that remains proportional, controlled, and accountable. When the literature references classical texts that include physical correction, the educational interpretation that can be defended in contemporary academic writing is that any corrective action must prioritize the child's safety, dignity, and wellbeing, and it must be consistent with compassionate parenting principles discussed in the same sources (Yuningsih, 2024). This positioning keeps the discussion aligned with educational ethics and prevents the text from being read as promoting violence.

These five dimensions clarify how *uswah hasanah* can be operationalized as a coherent family education model. The model begins from visible example and is strengthened through habituation, then supported through advice and supervision, and finally reinforced through educational discipline when necessary and ethically justified. This synthesis aligns with the earlier discussion that Islamic family education integrates *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib* as practical processes in daily life, and it also supports the article's central argument that parents function as role model educators whose conduct becomes the primary medium for character formation in the home.

D. Conclusion

This article concludes that *uswah hasanah* is best understood not only as a moral ideal in Islamic education, but also as a pedagogical approach that can be systematically applied in the family context. The literature synthesis confirms that the family as *madrasah al ula* provides the most influential environment for character formation because children internalize values primarily through daily interaction and repeated observation of parental conduct. In this sense, parents function as the closest educators whose consistency determines whether moral messages become lived practices.

This study also demonstrates that *uswah hasanah* can be operationalized through five interrelated implementative dimensions, namely *tarbiyah bi al qudwah*, *tarbiyah bi al adat*, *tarbiyah bi al mau idzah*, *tarbiyah bi al mulaahadzah*, and *tarbiyah bi al uquubah*. These dimensions form a coherent educational sequence that begins with modeling and habituation, is strengthened through advice and supervision, and is reinforced through

responsible discipline when necessary. This framework responds to the gap in prior discussions by offering a structured and applicable model that translates exemplary ideals into concrete parental strategies for Islamic family education. Future research may extend this conceptual model through empirical studies that examine how these dimensions are practiced in diverse family settings and how contextual factors, including parenting style and the digital environment, shape implementation and outcomes.

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