

## INFANT DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE FORMATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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### Abstract

Infancy is a golden as well as critical period in human life that significantly determines physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and religious development. This developmental process begins during the prenatal period and progresses rapidly within the first two years of life, marked by the maturation of the nervous system, brain, and essential bodily functions. At this stage, infants are highly responsive to environmental stimulation, particularly parental interaction, caregiving patterns, and role modeling as the first form of education. From an Islamic educational perspective, infancy serves as a crucial foundation for instilling values of faith, morality, and spirituality through habituation, a religious atmosphere, and exemplary behavior. Early Islamic education is not limited to cognitive development but also emphasizes affective and psychomotor dimensions to shape a child's character holistically. This study employs a literature review method with a descriptive-analytical approach to relevant scholarly sources on infant development and Islamic education. The findings indicate that optimal infant development requires an integrated approach encompassing physical, intellectual, socio-emotional, moral, and religious aspects. Therefore, Islamic education during infancy plays a strategic role in forming a strong foundation for a child's personality, moral character, and spiritual growth, preparing them for subsequent stages of development.

**Keywords:** Infancy Development, Islamic Education, Value Formation

### Abstrak

Masa bayi merupakan periode emas sekaligus kritis dalam kehidupan manusia yang sangat menentukan arah perkembangan fisik, intelektual, sosial, emosional, moral, dan religius. Perkembangan ini dimulai sejak masa prenatal dan berlangsung sangat pesat pada dua tahun pertama kehidupan, ditandai dengan pematangan sistem saraf, otak, serta fungsi-fungsi dasar tubuh. Pada fase ini, bayi sangat responsif terhadap stimulasi lingkungan, terutama interaksi, pola asuh, dan keteladanan orang tua sebagai pendidik pertama. Dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam, masa bayi menjadi fondasi penting bagi penanaman nilai-nilai keimanan, akhlak, dan spiritualitas melalui pembiasaan, suasana religius, serta teladan perilaku yang baik. Penanaman nilai-nilai Islam sejak dini tidak hanya berorientasi pada aspek kognitif, tetapi juga menyentuh dimensi afektif dan psikomotorik yang membentuk karakter anak secara holistik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi literatur dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis terhadap sumber-sumber ilmiah yang relevan dengan perkembangan bayi dan pendidikan Islam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan bayi yang optimal memerlukan integrasi antara aspek fisik, intelektual, sosial-emosional, moral, dan religius secara seimbang. Dengan

*demikian, pendidikan Islam pada masa bayi berperan strategis sebagai landasan pembentukan kepribadian dan karakter anak yang beriman, berakhlak mulia, dan siap menghadapi tahap perkembangan selanjutnya.*

**Kata kunci:** *Perkembangan Masa Bayi, Pendidikan Islam, Pembentukan Nilai*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Development refers to the changes that occur in an individual, involving the progression of physical abilities and bodily functions from simple to more complex forms as a result of the maturation process. During this developmental process, the body's cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems mature so that each can perform its respective functions. The early stages of a child's development during the first year are truly remarkable: a baby who is helpless at birth will exhibit a range of cognitive abilities and undergo rapid changes. While a child's developmental process occurs naturally, it is heavily influenced by the adults or parents caring for the infant (Bonita et al. 2022).

Physical and spiritual development begin while the child is still in the womb—typically lasting nine months. Thus, development does not begin at birth. At birth, 50% of the brain's capacity has already formed, and this capacity continues to grow until the age of 5. Mental development cannot be studied in isolation from physical development (Tri Wahyuni, Dinni Widya Putri 2024). Infant growth and development are full of mysteries and questions because infants appear to be creatures whose behavior generally seems disorganized; they cry when they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, and remain silent when the opposite is true. This leads people to wonder exactly what a baby is capable of doing. Even while being quiet and sleeping up to 16–17 hours a day, a baby can still see, hear, and sense stimuli from its surroundings (Tri Wahyuni, Dinni Widya Putri 2024).

Infancy is both a golden period and a critical period of human development. It is called a critical period because during this time, infants are highly sensitive to their environment, and it is called a golden period because infancy is very brief and cannot be repeated. Every infant goes through stages of growth and development throughout their life. Growth and development are continuous, ongoing processes and are integral parts of the developmental journey. It is important to understand infant development because this is the time when various basic abilities and skills develop. Infant development also influences subsequent development (Oti Aprillia, Nadia Gufran, and Linda Yarni 2023).

Human growth begins from the moment the fetus first develops in the mother's womb; during this phase, the baby is highly dependent on the mother for nutrition and other needs. An infant's intellectual development begins at age 1, and this phase is heavily influenced by the parents. Growth and development encompass two distinct yet interrelated phenomena that are difficult to separate: physical growth and cognitive development. Every parent aspires for their child to achieve ideal physical, mental, and intellectual development. Therefore, it is highly recommended that parents understand each stage of their child's growth and development. One of the most important areas of infant development is gross motor development, which involves movement and control of the body's major parts and functions—such as lifting the head, turning the head from

side to side, rolling over, crawling, sitting without support, standing, walking, jumping, climbing, running, riding a bicycle, and other activities (Sartika, Dewi, & Herlina, 2019).

Understanding infant development is of utmost importance. This period serves as the foundation upon which various basic abilities and skills are established, which will significantly influence a child's future development. Given that children are the pillars of our nation's future, it is only fitting that their basic needs be met optimally. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that a child's growth and development begin even before birth. The mother's physical, mental, and emotional condition during pregnancy plays a vital and decisive role in shaping the child's early healthy growth and development. Infancy is a critical period in human development that encompasses various important aspects, such as physical, intellectual, social, moral, and religious development. Many studies have highlighted infants' physical and intellectual development, particularly regarding motor growth and basic cognitive abilities. However, there remain limitations in research that comprehensively integrates social, moral, and religious development at this stage. Most studies tend to treat these developmental aspects in isolation without examining the interrelationships and reciprocal influences among these dimensions. Furthermore, moral and religious development during infancy often receives less attention compared to physical and intellectual aspects, even though both play a crucial role in shaping an individual's character and fundamental values from an early age. Therefore, more in-depth and holistic research is needed to understand how physical, intellectual, social, moral, and religious development interact and contribute to the overall formation of an infant's personality. With this understanding, it is hoped that more effective approaches can be developed to support infants' optimal growth and development. Based on this background, this study focuses on describing infants' physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and religious development and its implications for Islamic education.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. This method involves a critical and in-depth review of various literature sources relevant to the topics of infant development and the formation of Islamic educational values. The data sources used include scientific books, articles from reputable journals, conference proceedings, and other academic documents directly related to the study of early childhood development and Islamic education. Library research was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a comprehensive conceptual and theoretical understanding through the analysis of experts' ideas and previous research findings. As stated by Miqzaqon T. and Purwoko, a literature review is a data collection method that utilizes various written materials—such as documents, books, journals, magazines, and other scholarly sources—as the basis for analysis. (Hidayattullah et al. 2023). The data analysis technique used is descriptive-analytical analysis, which involves organizing, interpreting, and synthesizing the collected data to be presented in the form of a systematic narrative description. This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive description of the concepts and developmental stages of infancy, as well as their implications for the formation of Islamic educational

values. Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth theoretical overview of the issues under examination without involving direct field data collection.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Stages of Infant Development: Physical, Intellectual, Social, Emotional, Moral, and Religious**

Infancy lasts from birth until 24 months of age, or the first two years of life. Infancy is the period following the end of the prenatal stage and preceding early childhood. Infants at this stage undergo changes in various aspects, such as physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. An infant's physical growth occurs very rapidly, and their cognitive development continues to progress as they age. Infants also begin to develop the ability to interact with others and form emotional bonds with their parents and caregivers.

*First*, an infant's physical development. This is a key indicator for assessing a child's health and well-being from an early age. This phase encompasses two main aspects: physical growth (body weight, height, head circumference) and motor development (both gross and fine motor skills). An infant's physical growth occurs very rapidly, and their cognitive development continues to progress as they age. Infants also begin to develop the ability to interact with others and form emotional bonds with their parents and caregivers (Hidayattullah et al. 2023).

Recent research indicates that the nutritional status of infants and toddlers significantly influences the achievement of physical developmental milestones. A study in the agricultural region of Semarang Regency found that toddlers with good nutritional status (based on WHO anthropometric indices such as WAZ, HAZ, and WHZ) exhibited better gross and fine motor development compared to children with stunting or wasting. This research indicates that chronic malnutrition can directly lead to motor delays, particularly among children aged 24–59 months. These findings underscore the importance of a balanced diet and access to nutritious food in supporting children's growth and development, especially in rural areas heavily reliant on local agricultural produce (Ihza et al. 2024).

Alongside efforts to monitor infant development, technology is also being used to digitally track motor development. A study from Finland published by the *American Academy of Pediatrics* (AAP) in 2025 introduced a *wearable* system (a device worn by the infant) to detect gross motor milestones such as rolling over, sitting up, crawling, and walking. The results showed that the use of this device produced highly accurate data comparable to clinical observations—and even more objective, as it was conducted in the infant's natural home environment. This innovation is expected to help healthcare professionals and parents identify developmental delays earlier and more accurately (DSc Airaksinen, Manu, MSc; Anastesia, MSc, 2025).

*Second*, the intellectual development of infants. According to Piaget, an infant's intellectual development occurs through four stages, namely: 1. Sensorimotor stage: 0–1.5 years; 2. Preoperational stage: 1.5–6 years; 3. Concrete operational stage: 6–12 years; 4. Formal operational stage: 12 years and older. Piaget believed that we all go through these four stages, although each stage may be experienced at different times. Cognitive abilities, meanwhile, refer to the capacity to think and use the brain. Cognitive development is the development of a child's ability to use thinking skills (Ermis et al., "The Golden Age: Early Childhood Development and Its Implications for Islamic Education").

According to Piaget, each successive stage of cognitive development represents an improvement and advancement from the previous stage. Therefore, according to Piaget's stage theory, every individual will undergo qualitative changes that are invariant, consistent, and do not skip stages or regress. These changes are driven by biological factors and influenced by the environment as the individual adapts to it. Just as with the body's organ systems, the same applies to cognition. It, too, has an internal regulatory system that is subsequently influenced by environmental factors. Piaget believed that infants born into the world are already equipped with the needs and abilities to adapt to their environment (Marinda 2020).

*Third*, the social development of infants. According to Hurlock, one of the key tasks of early childhood development is acquiring the initial training and experiences needed to become a group member by the end of childhood (B. Hurlock 1998). An infant's social development occurs gradually, beginning with the closest relationship—that with their mother—as their first experience of socialization. At around 2 months of age, infants enter the *social period*, during which they begin to respond to the presence of people, rather than merely to objects or other stimuli. By the time infants reach 6 months of age, they begin to display social smiles—that is, smiles consciously directed at others, including other infants, rather than reflexive responses to physical stimuli.

Between 9 and 13 months of age, infants begin to show curiosity by touching other infants' clothing, faces, or hair, and start imitating the behaviors and sounds of those around them. Between 16 and 18 months, infants begin to exhibit negativism, such as being stubborn and refusing to follow adults' commands or requests. As infants reach 18 to 24 months of age, they become interested in playing with other infants and begin using various play materials to form social connections. By 22 to 24 months, infants are able to cooperate in routine activities such as bathing, eating, and getting dressed together, demonstrating improved social skills and cooperation (Yunita and Surayana 2021).

Socialization skills refer to a child's ability to cooperate and play with those around them. Children with good social skills are able to pay attention to adults or teachers in their environment and can transition flexibly from one activity to another. Essentially, fostering social-emotional skills in children means teaching them to understand and manage their emotions, especially when facing conflict situations. As a result, children

can interact effectively, resolve problems in a positive manner, and build healthy relationships with those around them (theAsianparent n.d.).

*Fourth*, a baby's emotional development. Emotions are feelings that arise from within a person; they can be pleasant or unpleasant, positive or negative (Onainor 2019). According to Michael Lewis, early emotional development in infants is distinguished between *primary emotions* and *self-conscious emotions*. *Primary emotions* are emotions that arise in both humans and animals. *Primary emotions* emerge during the first 6 months of an infant's development, namely *happiness, sadness, fear, and disgust*. *Self-conscious emotions* require *self-awareness*, which involves an awareness of the "self"; these include *jealousy, empathy, embarrassment, pride, shame, and guilt*. These emotions emerge between 6 months and 2 years of a baby's life. The emergence of these emotions is influenced by reactions from the environment (Qodariah, Pebriani, and Ashriyana 2022).

From 0 to 18 months of age, an infant begins to learn to understand their surroundings so they can perceive their environment as a safe and familiar place. At this stage, the child strives to develop a sense of self-acceptance and build ways to interact with others.

For example, when a baby is naturally breastfed by their parents, this makes the baby feel comfortable and safe in their environment. At three to four weeks of age, babies begin to show responses to stimulation that align with their expectations, such as expressions of enthusiasm and satisfaction. By eight weeks of age, infants begin to take notice of their surroundings by looking around and listening to the voices of people nearby. Between four and eight months of age, infants begin to express various emotions, such as sadness, anger, surprise, joy, and fear. From the beginning of the 12th to the 15th week, infants begin to feel fear when encountering people they have never seen before, which makes them feel uncomfortable. Around 18 months of age, infants begin to understand and can even respond to the various reactions shown by those closest to them. This process demonstrates that from an early age, infants undergo gradual development in understanding their environment and building social and emotional relationships (Fadhilah, S, and Irdamurni 2023).

*Fifth*, the moral development of infants. According to Hurlock (Sinta, Sabrina, and Syajaro Tuddur 2023), the development of morality in infants begins in a state where they do not yet possess a hierarchy of values or a moral compass, so their behavior is classified as non-moral. This means that the infant's actions are not yet guided by moral norms, and the infant cannot be described as either moral or amoral. Morality begins to develop gradually as the infant learns moral codes through interactions with parents, teachers, and playmates. This process of learning moral behavior is long and gradual, but the moral foundation is already being laid during infancy.

Due to the limitations of an infant's cognitive development, judgments about whether an action is right or wrong are based solely on personal experience—specifically, whether the action brings pleasure or pain to the infant—rather than on the action's impact on others. An infant only recognizes an action as wrong if they personally experience

negative consequences from it; consequently, they do not yet experience guilt due to a lack of understanding regarding right and wrong. For example, an infant does not feel guilty when taking an object belonging to someone else, as they have not yet grasped the concept of private property. Thus, moral development in infants is a long-term process heavily influenced by their immediate environment.

*Sixth*, the religious development of infants. Knowledge of religion is an essential part of early childhood education that must be guided to maximize children's development in subsequent stages. Children in the early stages of development are still highly malleable and easily guided, and they are strongly influenced by their family environment. In this regard, the family plays a primary role as the first educational institution, particularly in instilling values, beliefs, attitudes, and the process of transforming religious values that shape a child's character.

According to Arnold Gessel, from infancy, children already possess a sense of the divine that plays a crucial role in shaping their personality. This sense of the divine, which emerges during infancy, serves as the primary foundation for the development of religious faith in subsequent phases of life.

As children grow older and their cognition, emotions, and language skills develop, parents—as the first and closest environment to the child—need to provide appropriate encouragement and stimulation to support the development of the child's religious awareness.

The family environment serves as a model for attitudes and behavior, thereby setting an example for children in their moral education. Thus, the family becomes a role model for children in behaving well, being honest, acting responsibly, possessing noble character, and faithfully fulfilling their religious duties while avoiding what is forbidden. Education provided through this example will shape children to grow with good morals, as reflected by their parents. The religious and moral values taught not only form the basis for children's current behavior but also serve as the foundation for their future lives. During their early years, children are in a highly vulnerable phase and are open to various influences from their surroundings—whether from family, school, or the media. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the religious and moral values they receive are positive and constructive, so that they grow into individuals of good character and high moral standards (Yulia, Suryana, and Zulhijrah 2025).

### **The Formation of Islamic Educational Values During Infancy**

Infancy is known as the “golden age,” a period of rapid growth and development—both physically and spiritually. The ages of 0–6 years are an ideal time to instill foundational life values, as all learning during this period significantly influences the formation of a child's character, disposition, and moral conduct in the future. According to Sidjabat, the formation of a person's character and moral conduct begins at birth—and even while still in the womb—through interactions with parents via listening, observation, imitation, and identification. Yus emphasizes that every child possesses various forms of intelligence,

one of which is spiritual intelligence, which plays a crucial role in developing skills and understanding the spiritual meaning of life. Faith education and teaching about God are God's commandments to parents to guide their children in nurturing their faith from an early age. In this process, learning methods do not focus solely on cognitive knowledge but also encourage children to experience and practice the values of faith through direct parental involvement. Thus, instilling the values of faith from an early age serves as an important foundation for children to face life's various challenges with greater maturity, wisdom, and strong character (Maryam 2024).

During the child's first three years of life, both parents play a crucial role in creating a religious atmosphere in accordance with the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Steps that can be taken include: (Ilyas n.d.) First, when a baby is born, parents are encouraged to recite the adhan in the baby's right ear and the iqamat in the left ear. This practice aims to ensure that the words of tawhid and faith are the first sounds the child hears in life. Second, performing the aqiqah as an expression of gratitude for the child's birth.

In addition to being an act of worship, the aqiqah also serves as a learning tool so that the child will grow to love the practice of giving charity and become accustomed to being grateful for all the blessings in his or her life. Third, giving the child a good name. A good name reflects the parents' prayers and hopes that the child will grow into a noble and virtuous person. Fourth, shaving the baby's hair and cleansing it of impurities. In addition to being part of the aqiqah, this practice also teaches the importance of maintaining cleanliness and health from an early age. Fifth, once the child reaches the age of three, parents are encouraged to continue fostering a religious atmosphere, such as by getting the child accustomed to listening to recitations of the Qur'an and introducing values of goodness into daily life. Through these practices, the child will grow up in an environment rich in Islamic values, allowing the foundation of their character and moral conduct to begin forming from an early age.

With a religious environment and supportive parenting, parents can instill values of faith through daily habits, daily prayers, listening to the recitation of the Qur'an, explaining the meaning of creation, and serving as role models in religious behavior. Given how sensitive and receptive infants are, the role of parents in nurturing and developing a sense of the Divine is crucial as the foundation for shaping the child's religious character, love for God, and moral values in the future. Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that parents play a very important role in supporting infants' holistic development. Parents need to provide stimulation appropriate to their child's developmental stage, such as physical stimulation, language introduction, social interaction, and the instillation of moral and religious values in a simple manner. A safe, loving environment that provides sufficient individual attention is essential for every infant. Each aspect of this stimulation will support one another and contribute to the infant's development, which ultimately has positive implications for the infant's future education and life. Thus, the early education provided by parents serves as the primary

foundation for shaping a child’s character and intelligence—physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

### **Integrating the Stages of Infant Development into Holistic Islamic Education**

Physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and religious development during infancy do not occur in isolation; rather, they are interconnected and form a unified whole. From an Islamic educational perspective, human development is understood holistically as a unity of the body, mind, and spirit. Therefore, each phase of an infant’s development must be addressed through an integrated educational approach to foster the child’s balanced personality. Optimal physical development—achieved through proper nutrition, health, and motor stimulation—serves as the foundation for the infant’s intellectual and emotional growth. Infants who grow up physically healthy are better prepared to receive cognitive stimulation and form secure emotional bonds (secure attachment) with their parents. These emotional bonds play a crucial role in fostering a sense of security, empathy, and trust, which serve as the early foundation for a child’s moral and social development.

In Islamic education, the intellectual aspect is not only directed toward thinking skills but also toward understanding the meaning, values, and purpose of life. From infancy, cognitive stimulation accompanied by religious elements—such as listening to verses from the Qur’an, prayers, and kind words—serves as an early means of fostering a child’s spiritual awareness. This demonstrates that religious education does not wait until a child is cognitively mature but begins early through experience and habit formation. This integration is also evident in the formation of moral and religious values, which are heavily influenced by parental role modeling. Infants learn not through verbal instruction but through observation, imitation, and emotional experiences. Therefore, parents’ religious behavior—such as honesty, compassion, patience, and consistency in worship—serves as the most effective medium for moral and spiritual education during infancy. Thus, Islamic education in infancy requires a holistic and integrative approach, in which every aspect of development mutually supports one another. This approach aims not only to foster intellectual development but also to cultivate noble character and a sense of faith as the child’s primary foundation for navigating subsequent stages of development.

Furthermore, an integrated approach to Islamic education during infancy emphasizes the importance of balancing physical and spiritual stimulation. Islamic education views human beings as creatures of *fitrah* who, from birth, possess the potential for faith, in accordance with the Islamic concept of *fitrah*, which affirms that every child is born in a state of purity and possesses a natural inclination to recognize their Creator. This innate potential does not develop automatically but is significantly influenced by the child’s upbringing and early educational environment, particularly from parents as the primary educators. Therefore, a nurturing process that integrates love, setting a good example, and instilling religious values is a determining factor in guiding an infant’s development to align with the goals of Islamic education—namely, the formation of individuals who are

faithful, possess noble character, and maintain a balance between physical and spiritual aspects (Yus, 2011; Maryam, 2024).

In this context, warm emotional interaction between parents and infants not only serves to meet psychological needs but also acts as a medium for transmitting moral and spiritual values. When an infant feels safe, loved, and valued, they will more easily develop *basic trust* in their surroundings. This trust serves as a crucial foundation for moral and religious development in later stages, as the child will be more receptive to the values of goodness instilled in them. Islamic education emphasizes that moral and religious values are not taught solely through instruction but rather through consistent and meaningful daily life experiences. Thus, an Islamic parenting approach that integrates stimulation of physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development, as well as the early cultivation of religious practices, will shape the child's personality in a holistic and sustainable manner (Hidayattullah et al., 2023; Yulia, Suryana, & Zuhijrah, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

Infancy is a crucial period that lays the foundation for various aspects of development—including physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and religious. Infant development is a natural process that begins during pregnancy, involving the maturation of body cells, the brain, and organ systems. Infancy is also known as the “golden period” and a “critical period” because infants are highly sensitive to their environment, and this period serves as the foundation for the child's subsequent growth and development. Physical development in infants progresses rapidly and serves as a key indicator for assessing a child's health and well-being, with adequate nutrition and environmental stimulation playing a significant role. Intellectual and cognitive development, according to Piaget's theory, also occurs in stages and is influenced by the environment. Social and emotional development stems from interactions with parents and the immediate environment, fostering a sense of security, self-acceptance, and the ability to manage emotions. Moral and religious development begins in infancy through the example set by parents and the family environment, although at this stage, infants do not yet fully understand the concepts of right and wrong or religious values in their entirety. Therefore, parents play a crucial role in providing stimulation and setting examples, creating a loving environment, and guiding children through physical, linguistic, and social stimulation, as well as the gradual instillation of moral and religious values. All these aspects of stimulation support one another in the infant's holistic growth and will have a positive impact on the child's future education, character, and intelligence. Optimal early education serves as the primary foundation for a child's physical, emotional, social, and spiritual development.

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