

The Conceptual Framework of Spiritual Role Model of the Muslim Mothers

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Abstract

Mother's spiritual practice will influence child spirituality and well-being. Therefore, the research aims to understand how the Muslim mother portray spiritual role model to their children using Grounded Theory approach in qualitative research method. Data were collected by in-depth interview with 4 prominent Muslim mothers and 6 of their children. Finally, six major themes were emerged: Strong faith towards God, consistent obligatory and supererogatory prayer, obligatory fasting during the month of Ramadhan & supererogatory fasting, reciting al-Quran, inculcate knowledge culture, and practice good ethics of conduct. The finding could become the benchmark of Muslim parenting spiritual role model.

Keywords: Spirituality, Parenting, Role Model, Family Well-being

Introduction

Life without spirituality is like an empty vessel. Meanwhile, parental role model is one of the most influential role models to the children's spirituality. Thus, the research aims to explore on how the Muslim mother show spiritual role model to their children. Spirituality is the basic need of human being. It is a human connection with God or something superior (Sharma & Sharma, 2016). Spirituality positively correlates with happiness among 150 dentistry students in Isfahan, Iran (Hatami & Shekarchizadeh, 2022). In research among 300 university teachers in India, stress negatively correlated with with six dimensions of workplace spirituality. The six dimensions are karma capital (all action will affect one's joy or sorrow in the future), authenticity, sense of community, *lokasngraha* (other's orientation), *swadarma* (teaching, guiding, counselling & enlighten the student) & gratitude (Garg et al., 2022). In Al-Ghazali's Parenting Attributes Model (Manap & Baba, 2018) (Chart 1), knowledge is the core element of parenting. With knowledge, parents show positive role model to their children in their relationship with Allah, relationship with their children and relationship with others.

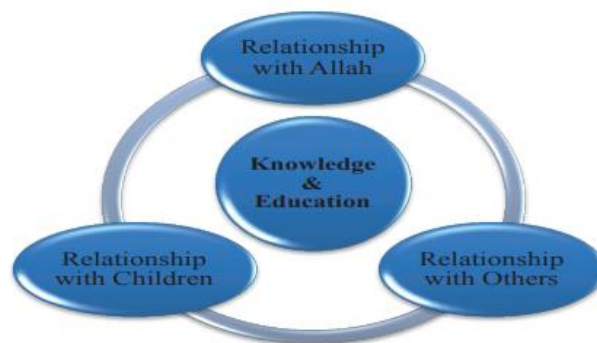


Chart 1: Al-Ghazali's Parenting Attribute (Jamiah Manap & Sidek Baba, 2013).

Research Method

Research was administered using Grounded Theory approach in qualitative research study. Semi structured in-depth interview was conducted with 4 prominent Muslim mothers. They won a special award name as *Ibu Mithālī*. It is a national award for the Muslim best mother. The words *Mithālī* literary means example in Arabic language. Meanwhile, *Ibu* means mother in Malay language. Thus, *Ibu Mithālī* in this study means exemplary mother or the best practice of excellent mothers. Data were also triangulated with seven sessions of interviews with six of their children and document analysis. The thick data then analyse using thematic analysis. At open coding level, around 70 codes were emerged. At axial coding level, the codes merge into 6 categories. Finally, at selective coding, the categories were intertwined with each other to build new paradigm of spiritual role model concept among the Muslim mothers.

Finding & Discussion

Research found 6 main spiritual role model exemplified by the mothers to their children: strong faith, prayer, fasting, reciting al-Quran, inculcate knowledge culture & practice good ethics of conduct.

Strong Faith

Ibu Mithālī could be described as a person who had a strong faith in God. This could be seen from their attitude toward each of the hit test. They were always patience, delighted, had never despaired regardless any problem that might come in the way, and always believe in the mercy and love of God. This attitude was the testament from the bottom of their heart, which were strong and trust on a total dependence on God.

"Surrender only to Allāh... Acceptance and patience with each decision from Allāh..."

(Madam Alang Kamariah, the 8th Ibu Mithālī).

According to Imam al-Ghazali, the perfection of human faith is achieved when people believed that the occurrences in the world would happen only with the permission of Allāh. Madam Awiah always believed that fortune and fate of every human being had been pre-determined by Allāh. This meant that she uphold and recognized the *qaḍā'* and *qadr* of Allāh, and this enhanced the attitude and fortified her firm belief that she would never worried about the sustenance of the world. Instead, she firmly believed in performing the utmost to achieve what Allāh prescribed upon her. Moreover, such conviction had also made her calm and

surrendered the trust to Allāh in all of her dealings. This belief made her strong and steadfast in educating and nurturing the nine sons. This is in line with the word of Allāh in *Sūrah Yūnus*, verse 107 that reflect the power of Allāh over all things. Only Allāh is powerful to afflict harm, remove harm or confer a benefit to anyone He wills.

“Our destiny is depending on Allāh, from the beginning to the end, if Allāh commanded our fate to be good, we need to just put an effort, no need to worry... tranquillity, we pray for Allāh’s love and mercy in the world and the hereafter, every day I never miss, if there’s a children challenge, it is ok, had many children were also challenging, so Alhamdulillah, I just be patience..”

(Madam Awiah, the 10th Ibu Mithālī).

Despite full submission to Allāh, that does not mean *Ibu Mithālī* accept fate as determined without any attempt to make it better. Their attitude in this scenario mirrored the notion that Allāh will not change fate of a person until they change it themselves as prescribed in *ar-Ra’d* verse 11. The parents also must not cease from reciting *du’ā* or supplication as Allāh is always listening to their supplication. Furthermore, it is in their faith that the grace and love of Allāh is always abundance, and it will only be felt for those who believe in Him.

“She faced difficult situations or stress in life with a lot of work, patience and supplication to overcome the problems.”

(Dr. Ahmad, Dentist, Madam Ayot’s son).

Ibu Mithālī firmly believed on the faith and sustenance for each of her children. Therefore, they strived to be very patience and survived with anything that has been determined. This is consistent with the command of Allāh to the believers that they must not murder their children in fear of poverty. Allāh has guaranteed a certain income for each child being born (*al-‘Isrā’*: 31). This belief had made *Ibu Mithālī* a fearless person and had little worry about having more children. In fact, it encouraged them to be more creative, prudent, and work hard to support their children. They also believed that every child is a trust from Allāh. Subsequently, the *Ibu Mithālī* carried a noble responsibility to nurture, support, educate and develop the optimum potential of each child.

“Children are sustenance from Allāh, and Allāh has provided sustenance for each child. We only need to be patience and work hard to realize the sustenance.”

(Dr. Ahmad, Dentist, Madam Ayot’s son).

Ibu Mithālī had a strong belief that religion is fundamental to the success and blessings in life. A blessing of life in this context signified the ability to enrich in a prosperous life of a lawful source, adequate living condition and beneficial to the family. In line with this belief, *Ibu Mithālī* noted that to succeed they must always adhere to the religion and always ensure the family's way of life is in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

“She said it is the bless from the religion... bless meant that even if we have a little income, but if it is permissible, and provide from it a lot of benefit... it is called as blessing... she raise her children... the children becomes good children...”

(Ustaz Ashraf, Lecturer, Madam Kalsum’s son).

Ibu Mithālī believed in the hereafter. As a testament to this belief, they made a through preparation to meet the creator and enter the *barzah* phase. This remembrance further encouraged them to sacrifice their whole life for the sake of Allāh, which translated into the nature of sincerity, generosity and care. This has also demonstrated that the firm belief in the life after death or hereafter associated in the *Ibu Mithālī’s* vision that is beyond the life in this mortal world. Madam Wan Mas for example, chose to donate her land and her money to build a mosque for the community even though the money could be used to decorate her old house. As a matter of fact, the researcher had gotten the chance to perform ^ᶜAṣar prayer in the mosque. The mosque is big, clean and comfortable. It also provides free lodging for the visitor. Her vast contributions to the communities could be aligned with the character of the generous believer in *al-Baqarah*, verse 274. These attitudes and noble act eventually bring tranquillity and prosperity in life to everyone.

“Three things are brought upon death, it is ᶜibādah or any good deed to worship Allāh, alms given to the needy, and supplication of pious children. This is the strong belief of this couple. Endowment of the land for the mosque is for a supply for (the life in) hereafter.”

(Nik Safiah & Rokiah, 2004).

The remembrance of death also gives high impact to Madam Awiah’s attitude and behaviour. It encouraged her to maintain the good relationship and perform numerous contributions to charity. It is in line with Allāh command to the believer to provide alms a part of their wealth (*al-Baqarah*: 267) and keep the tie of relationship (*an-Nisā’*: 1, *al-ʿAnfāl*: 1) which will definitely develop the quality of *muttaqīn* or people with high God-consciousness.

“What is the role of the candidate to maintain the relationship between her husband and his parent: Always remind each other to remember the death and do charity.”

(Madam Awiah nomination form, YADIM, 24 May 2010).

Prayer

Prayer or *ṣalāh* is the act that begins with *takbīratul-ʿihrām*, and ends with *salām*. The act of performing prayers five times daily will purify the sins, as pristine as clear water that cleanses the body from all impurities (Al-Ghazali, 1988). Perfection in prayer sanctifies human life and spirit in peace and serenity. Those who keep his prayers will be protected from depression, fear and anxiety. *Ibu Mithālī* had always been very stern in daily prayers. This has resulted in the acquisition of internal strength which had been useful when facing the difficulties in life and they went through it with fortitude and wisdom. *Ibu Mithālī* stressed that the importance of prayer as the basic of religious practice. This is strengthened with the status of prayer as the pillar of religion and the key to paradise. Madam Esah for example religiously maintained

her prayer and fasting. It was not a surprise that she had tremendous wills and strength in raising 17 children. As a loving mother, she always reminded her children to take good care of their religious prayers and fasting. She was very concerned about these two things despite her limited knowledge in Islam. She practiced from what was learnt and later trained the children to follow suit in order to get Allāh's bless.

"... with regard to prayer, she memorize all of it, she just memorize... never fail to perform prayer... prayer, fasting... she (Madam Esah) definitely kept doing it... she tells her children too..."

(Mrs. Rosilah, Teacher, Madam Esah's daughter).

Ibu Mithālī consistently performed the five daily prayers. They even prayed at dusk. Madam Awiah for example, performed her prayer together with the husband right after the call of prayer. This practice began since the early days of their marriage and she is fortunate as her husband has strong religious background. At the same time, as a faithful wife, she always celebrates good practice and applied it in the families. Such practice would be the act of praying together. As a result, it has become a culture in her family and continues to this day by their children.

"Previously, because of my husband, if it's time to pray, the call to pray will be done at home and indeed, we would pray together. Last time after the call of prayer, together with Pakcik, after the call of prayer we quickly pray..."

(Madam Awiah, the 10th Ibu Mithālī).

Similarly, Madam Kalsum consistently looked after her prayers. She would perform it in the earliest time of each prayer despite her busy schedule raising fifteen children. This might be due to the location of her house, which is facing the mosque. Thus, the sound of *'adhān* or call to prayer and the reciting of the Qur'ānic verse by the *imām* (a person who lead congregational prayer) during prayers could be heard clearly from her house. Indirectly, this spiritual environment endeavoured positive effect which led to the appreciation of Islam. However, she could not perform the prayer in the mosque due to the impending responsibilities in taking care of her baby. Her decision is noble. The task to take care and nurturing her children were more important than joining the congregational prayer in the mosque. This is aligned with the priorities for women to pray in her house than in public as stated in *Sunan Abu Daud*:

"A woman's prayer in her house is better than her praying in her courtyard, and prayer in her bedroom is better than praying in her house."

Nevertheless, Madam Kalsum took the opportunity to pray in the mosque only on special days such as during the night of *Ramaḍan*. This is consistent with the order to turn to the mosque, especially during the last ten nights of *Ramaḍan* on every other time, she would take care of the children. This showed that she understood what is important in religion. Here, it conceded that the children upbringings were more important than attending the mosque for women.

“Sembahyang di awal waktu... walau sibuk... cuma dia tak pergi masjid sebab ada baby... pergi masjid saya ingat boleh kira... sebab anak-anak ramaikan... jadi orang perempuan tak wajib... tak fardu kifayah pergi masjid. Dia pergilah dalam waktu-waktu macam Ramaḍān...”

“Pray on time... even busy... only she do not go to the mosque because had a baby... going to the mosque, I think can be count... because (she had) many children... so women are not compulsory... it is not fardhu kifayah to pray in the mosque. She went at certain time such as on Ramaḍān...”

(Ustaz Ashraf, Lecturer, Madam Kalsum’s son).

According to Mrs. Azizah, Madam Maimon had consistently looked after her prayer in a strict manner, obligatory or supererogatory prayer. In her lifetime, Madam Maimon consistently performed *Taḥajjud* prayer even though she was tired. It demonstrated that she was steadfast and consistent in observing Allāh's commandments. Adherence in performing the prayer at night had demanded *Ibu Mithālī* to sacrifice their leisure time and this tied in with the key characteristics of believers; those who are willing to leave the comfort of their bed to please Allāh (as-*Sajdah*: 15-16).

“She never fails to pray... night Taḥajjud even too tired.”

(Mrs. Azizah, Former Headmaster, Late Madam Maimon’s daughter).

Normally, she would perform *Ḍuhā* prayer around ten to eleven o’clock in the morning as disliked the idea of delaying the time of prayer. These practiced had a profound impact on her personality. Among which, she became a very punctual person.

“At 10-11 she likes to perform Ḍuhā... she did not want to be too late...”

(Mrs. Azizah, Former Headmaster, Late Madam Maimon’s daughter).

Madam Wan Mas performed *Tasbīh* prayer since she was young as she became older, the *Taḥajjud* prayer was deemed as an additional act of worship (*al-‘Isrā’*: 27). This had demonstrated that her religious practices significantly increased over the years. It also showed that *Ibu Mithālī* constantly reinvent themselves. This is consistent with the teachings of Islam to its followers to always improve and be better than yesterday.

“Taḥajjud prayers just recent but last time pray Tasbīh.”

(Mrs. Nik Mastura, Former Educational Officer, Madam Wan Mas’s daughter).

Prayer becomes their weapon not only to shield but most importantly to nurture their children especially in handling difficult situation. This also indicates the *Ibu Mithālī* fully dependant and submitted her life to Allāh with patience and prayer (*al-Baqarah*: 45).

“They were also always performed Ḥajat prayer for their children’s welfare especially when the children got any problem.”

(Nik Safiah & Rokiah, 2004).

For Madam Awiah, she was greatly influenced by her husband. However, the practiced of supererogatory prayer only began later in her adult life. This is because; Madam Awiah only then she had free time than ever before. Her children were grown up and her financial burden had finally been reduced. This opportunity was fully used to devote herself entirely to Allāh by increasing the practice of *‘ibādah khusus* and all good deeds.

“Isrā’ supererogatory prayer Makcik performed indeed since young, if fail to perform, feel regret. Makcik really keep (the prayer) for about 20 years.”

(Madam Awiah, the 10th Ibu Mithālī).

Fasting

Fasting during the month of *Ramaḍān* is cemented as the third pillar of Islam. The essence of fasting is to develop the quality of *muttaqīn* (pious) in the heart of every Muslim as stated in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse 183. Significantly, fasting becomes *Ibu Mithālī’s* routine. Fasting is not as easy as it appear. It requires patience and practice, which is a part of faith. Through patience in fasting, it proved that *Ibu Mithālī* would always strive to strengthen their relationship with Allāh.

Fasting require great sacrifice. A person who is fasting offers total submission to Allāh when he refrains from eating, drinking, and all activities that invalidate the fast in the name of Allāh the Most Merciful. Proper fasting allows people to manage their desires, defeat the evil, and cleanse their soul. In lieu, Al-Ghazali (1988) associated fasting with a special relationship with God. Apart from the obligatory fasting, *Ibu Mithālī* also performed supererogatory fasting. For example, Madam Maimon performed the Six Day Fasting and *Rajab* fasting throughout her life. Meanwhile Madam Kalsum, practiced the Monday-Thursday fasting. The ability to strictly and continuously fasting indicated that *Ibu Mithālī* are capable to control their desires, defeat the evil, and possessed honest traits. In other words, they won the great battle; the battle against lust.

“My mum diligently performed Rajab fasting, another one Six Day fasting...”

(Dr. Aminah, Medical Doctor, Late Madam Maimon’s daughter).

“Mom practiced Monday-Thursday fasting...”

(Ustaz Ashraf, Lecturer, Madam Kalsum’s son).

In the case of Madam Wan Mas, she performed supererogatory fasting since young. Even now that she is 93 years old and until this review was written, she maintain in performing the supererogatory fasting. This shows that, Madam Wan Mas has a high resistance. Fasting has been a part of her life and she does not look at it as a burden.

“She still can perform supererogatory fasting ever since she was young...”

(Mrs. Nik Mastura, Former Educational Officer, Madam Wan Mas’s daughter).

Adversely, the situation was different for Madam Maimon where she had to leave supererogatory fasting on medical grounds as fasting proven to be harmful in certain situation

For example, diabetic patience is at risk to complication during fasting and this include hypoglycaemic. While she was small, supererogatory fasting became a part of her childhood norm and reached to the stage where it became her favourite. It was the teachings from her religious teacher at the mosque near her residence that could be the reason behind this noble act. This also showed that a religious preaching during early childhood had high impact towards human attitude and behaviour. It is like craving on the surface of the stone. The effect could still be influential even at the adulthood phase.

“She did not perform supererogatory fasting because she had a problem... in her childhood she like to do supererogatory fasting... after delivering babies she is not well... she suffered from gastric... and if continues fasting... she would do the obligatory one only...”

(Dr. Aminah, Medical Doctor, Late Madam Maimon’s daughter).

Similarly, Madam Awiah too practiced supererogatory fasting at young age. But lately, she had to stop the practiced due to health problems. It was a great loss for her because she had discovered the great wisdom behind fasting and this too indicated that there is a significant increase in her knowledge of fasting in tandem with her increasing age. Apparently, it also signalled the importance of knowledge towards human attitude and behaviour. The benefit of knowledge is what made us more aware towards certain practice and this will eventually heighten human relationship with Allāh.

“Fasting ok, she performed Six Days Fasting, but lately when it comes to supererogatory fasting, she will be lacking of water, finish, cramp,(but) during youth (she) always practiced supererogatory fasting, (and) never fail to fast, except when giving birth, it’s normal for a women, always ensure the regular supererogatory fasting are performed such as the Six Days fasting, Monday-Thursday fasting, last time the many thing that (I) miss to do, ok (I) did, now if (I) want to perform fasting if the water is not sufficient, the children really understand, the ustaz said, don’t do it Mak, it is only supererogatory, feel a great lost because during the old time do not perform fasting, today, last time ignorant, not educated.”

(Madam Awiah, the 10th ‘Ibu Mithālī).

Reciting al-Qur’ān

Ibu Mithālī loves to read Qur’ān. They are like the citron, which smell well and taste well (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Volume 6, Book 61, Number 538*). Madam Wan Mas recited the Qur’ān every day, especially after performing obligatory prayer. At the age of 93, she still continues reading the Qur’ān. She will read more during the month of Ramaḍān that she is able to complete reading the Qur’ān twice. Continuous reading such of Qur’ān will stimulate brain cells and prevent dementia (Santrock, 2008). Not surprisingly, she has strong memory and brainpower at twilight age.

Madam Wan Mas on the other hand would always read *Yāsīn*. In fact, she was able to memorize the *Yāsīn* in detail and precise. The ability to memorize these verses indicated that all verses in the *Qur'ān*, especially *Yāsīn* was synonymous in her life. This is in line with the summon to continue reading the *Qur'ān* as these words of Allāh could easily forgotten from human hearts and it is liken with the speed of camel that has been released from the tying ropes (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Volume 6, Book 61, Number 550 & 552*). In this regards, even though she could memorize the *Qur'ān*, Madam Wan Mas was still reading the *Qur'ān* with reference to the book. This further showed that she was very thorough and careful when reading the *Qur'ān*.

“My mother, she (would) read Qur’ān non-stop... (even until) now, she continuously read Qur’ān... she is now more than 90 years old... this Fasting Month, she completely reading the whole Qur’ān two times.”

(Mrs. Nik Mastura, Former Educational Officer, Madam Wan Mas’s daughter).

Physical illness did not become the obstacle for *Ibu Mithālī’s* to continue reading the *Qur'ān* where most of them consistently read two chapters a day. This is aligned with Rasūlullāh’s encouragement to recite the whole *Qur'ān* within one month but not less than seven days (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Volume 6, Book 61, Number 574*).

“Health issues are only a physical illness, because her memory is still functioning well. (The) Only her matter that she admitted, her eyes is not as clear anymore and (this) disturb her Qur’ān reading which usually done two chapters per day.”

(Nik Safiah & Rokiah, 2004).

Madam Awiah also read *Yāsīn* at dusk and dawn. The practiced of reading *Yāsīn* was heavily influenced by her late husband. It showed that she was brilliant to take advantage of the relationship with her husband to emulate the good qualities in him. It also showed that a good pair selection is important because it gives a great impact on the lives of another partner. Now, even though her husband had passed away, the practice of reading *Yāsīn* had never ceased. This has proven that the reading of *Yāsīn* became a part of her life. It was so influential that she would felt her day would not be completed without reading *Yāsīn*. It also shows that practicing it every day can form good habits.

Besides reading *Yāsīn* since 20 years ago, Madam Awiah also recites *as-Sajdah, an-Nūr, al-Ḥadīd, al-Wāqī'ah* and *al-Mulk*. The increasing number of verses read by her is in tandem with the free time when they have all grown up. As a matter of fact, she also recites a *ḥadīth* together with her children. This shows, *Ibu Mithālī* managed to take advantage of their spare time to fill the spiritual needs and bring them closer to Allāh.

“(The recital of) Yāsīn is a must, It is a practiced that I have always observed, (especially during) Maghrib (sunset) and Ṣubuh (dawn). Plus my late husband had made it a customary practiced, so (I) follow. Accustomed to, so if we leave a sense of ah! There is unfinished work. Uncle did not come out from the room before 7:30. When the children are still going to school, we had to get up at 4:30, make

breakfast, and make the entire thing. But if Yāsīn, Makcik read it, read after dawn, read after dusk, followed the footsteps, if miss feel... ish! Fātīhah I understand. The one that Makcik practices for years were the 7 chapters: Sūrah as-Sajdah, Sūrah Yāsīn, Ḍuhā, al-Wāqī'ah, al-Ḥadīd and al-Mulk. Can say (I) could memorize it. When people read, we can (check). From after Maghrib to 'Ishā'. Always open the ḥadīth read... revise... becomes our practiced."

(Madam Awiah, the 10th Ibu Mithālī).

Late Madam Maimon also read Qur'ān.

"She read Qur'ān..."

(Dr. Aminah, Medical Doctor, Late Madam Maimon's daughter).

Madam Kalsum recited the Qur'ān and performed prayer as her daily routine. Her religious practiced and contribution to the society was primarily based on her knowledge. Ustaz Ashraf opined that his mother could give more benefit to the society as his father did if she is more educated.

"Dia banyak Qur'ān dengan ṣalāh... ṣalāh... baca Qur'ān... ṣalāh... baca Qur'ān... sebab ilmu dia terbatas."

"She is more on Qur'ān and prayer... prayer... reading Qur'ān... prayer... reading Qur'ān... because her knowledge is limited."

(Ustaz Ashraf, Lecturer, Madam Kalsum's son).

Madam Kalsum had a beautiful voice. She recited Qur'ān for special occasion during her teenage years. Nowadays, her talent was passed down to her children. All of them could read the Qur'ān very well and four of them are *huffāz* (ability to memorize the whole Qur'ān).

"Formerly, she was a qariah... her voice is beautiful... that's why it was inherited by her children... I... four people (can) memorize Qur'ān... my brother, which is Dato' Firdaus... I... then, my younger brother, number 15... and my younger sister, number 14..."

(Ustaz Ashraf, Lecturer, Madam Kalsum's son).

Madam Kalsum continued her daily routine even after she relocated to Selangor from Kedah. She continued reading Qur'ān and served the community by teaching it. The practice of reading Qur'ān nurtured the character of generosity among the believers. According to Abu Huraira (*Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Volume 6, Book 61, Numbers 519*), *Rasūlullāh* becomes more generous during Ramaḍān compare to the other months because the Qur'ān was revealed to him every night during Ramaḍān. This is also similar with *Ibu Mithālī* such as Madam Kalsum. More details description of *Ibu Mithālī's* generosity will be discussed in *Ibu Mithālī's* ethic of conduct later in the chapter, as well as how *Ibu Mithālī* combat deviant behaviour by strengthening her children's relationship with others.

“Even after she migrates here... she still read the Qur’ān and teaches the Qur’ān.”

(Ustaz Ashraf, Lecturer, Madam Kalsum’s son).

Nevertheless, the situation is a bit different for Madam Esah. At her golden age, she takes an effort to sharpen her skills in reading the Qur’ān from her mother in-law. She did not have the opportunity to learn the Qur’ān properly because the time she was married and later raised the children, she was still very young. She has also been tried rigorously with a difficult life to support 17 children. Thus, most of her young age was spent in various jobs and taking care of the children. Only now, at the age of 72, she had a plenty of time for herself. She used the time to learn and make good deeds. Recognizing her weaknesses in reading the Qur’ān, she is now trying to learn the Qur’ān step by step. The willingness of *Ibu Mithālī* to learn the Qur’ān even at the twilight age showed that there is a presence of lifelong learning process.

“In the village... (I) learn to recite Qur’ān... learn Muqaddam just near completion... (and I) learn from mother in-law.”

(Madam Esah, the 9th Ibu Mithālī).

Inculcate Knowledge Culture

Research has revealed that *Ibu Mithālī* uphold and valued knowledge very highly. The love and realization on the importance of knowledge to the family brought significant changes on how they value life. They were always eager to learn and pass on the knowledge to other people. They encouraged their children to attain the education as much as they could. This was also the reason *Ibu Mithālī* positioned their child education as the top priority in family budget. Madam Alang Kamariah perceived knowledge as education. She firmly believed knowledge is pertinent for human survival. Meanwhile, Dr. Ahmad found her mother (Madam Ayot) value knowledge so much.

“She would always prioritize this matter (knowledge) above all.”

(Dr. Ahmad, Dentist, Madam Ayot’s son).

Ustaz Ashraf too understood her mother intention in ensuring the children become a knowledgeable person. Ustaz Ashraf narrated his mother’s attitude towards knowledge:

“She doesn’t want her children to become ignorant...”

(Ustaz Ashraf, Lecturer, Madam Kalsum’s son).

Mrs. Rosilah also discovered the same attitude in her mother.

“My mom (Madam Esah) gives priority (to education)...”

(Madam Rosilah, Teacher, Madam Esah’s daughter).

Ibu Mithālī’s never ending interest towards knowledge had further encouraged them to seek learning experiences. Since childhood, *Ibu Mithālī* viewed the learning process with full enthusiasm. They declared to continuously seek for knowledge until the end of their life. This

noble act fitted exquisitely with Islamic teaching that encourages Muslim to learn from the cradle to the grave. In other words, *Ibu Mithālī* viewed education as a lifelong process, an important phase for child development.

Good Ethics of Conduct

Good character is a symbol of the perfection of faith (Al-Ghazali, 1988). *Ibu Mithālī*'s strong faith in God and towering sincerity in obeying Islamic teaching resembled a noble character. They had been consistently hard-working, sincere, generous, punctual, brave, patience, friendly, had a healthy life style, loving and caring, maintained cleanliness, grateful, and illustrated exemplary financial management.

Conclusion

The finding is aligned with Al-Ghazali's Parenting Attribute Model. Chart 2 portray the Muslim mothers (*Ibu Mithālī*) spiritual role model conceptual framework. Based on the research, the Muslim mothers in the study showing positive spiritual role model via 6 main elements. The positive role model begins with their love and passion towards knowledge. From here, they develop strong faith which is translated in their practice of life especially when handling adversity. The strong faith remains stronger when they consistently perform the prayer, commit fasting and recites the Quran. The strong commitment towards these five pillars of Islamic spiritual core sparks good ethics of conduct in their relationship with Allah, their children and others. This cycle is moving dynamically in producing the best Muslim mother which passing the best role model to their children.

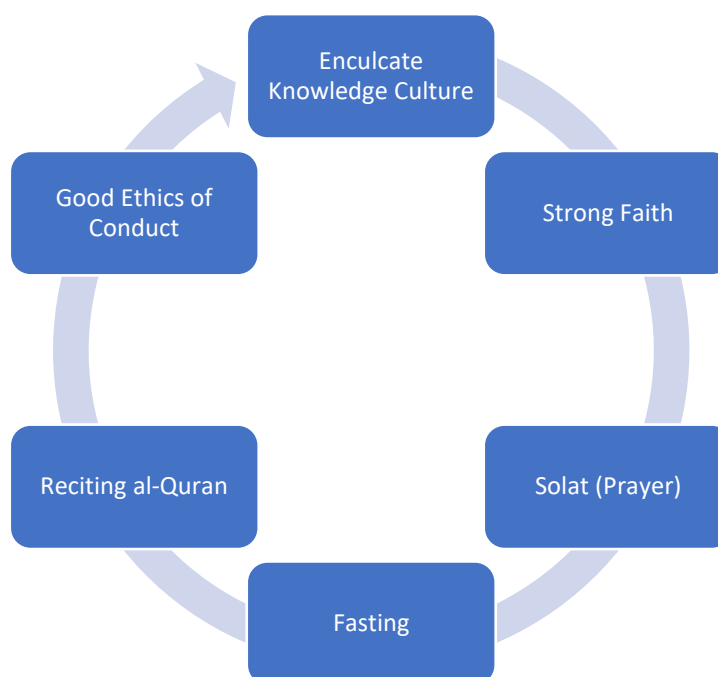


Chart 2: Conceptual Framework of The Spiritual Role Model of The Muslim Mothers

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