



# The Power of Character in the Life of Imam Al-Bukhari: A Perspective in Positive Psychology

Khairul Nizam bin Zainal Badri<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Madrasah Pra Tahfiz Al Mansoorah, Selangor Darul Ehsan Malaysia, MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT

The study of positive psychology was first introduced by the American psychologist Seligman in the early 2000s. Included in this study is the role of parents in instilling positive emotions and character strength to children. In addition to parents, teachers also play a role in developing positive psychological behaviors, especially in terms of motivation. This study focuses on the research of Imam Al-Bukhari, a great figure in the field of hadith in the context of whether the family and the education system in his time has had a great influence on his character and psychological behavior to succeed as a leading figure in the field of hadith. This qualitative pattern study successfully finds spiritual function, in triggering internal motivations that can be harnessed for the strengthening of positive character and emotions in the field of modern psychology.

**Keywords:** positive psychology, positive emotions, Imam Al-Bukhari, internal motivation, character strengthening

## INTRODUCTION

In modern psychology, the study of positive psychology began to gain attention after being promoted by American psychologist Martin Elias Pete Seligman (born 1942) in the early 2000s. One of Seligman's focus areas of study is parenting psychology. He noted that family institutions starting from parenting that have positive emotions, will influence and interact with the external environment such as employment, education, interests, marriage and social relationships. The mutually positive nature between family institutions and this environment will then result in well-being in life [1].

Seligman's definition of positive parenting psychology is focused on parenting which is the center of goodness in life. Brilliant parents will strive to enhance their children's positive emotions and identify the strengths of their children's character. From there, it will strive to build domain capabilities to develop the character of their children to successfully adapt to life.

The positive psychological model of parenting as conceived by Seligman is divided into ten movements as follows[2]:

1. Parents should emphasize the effort to increase positive emotions to their children from infancy. Unconditional positive emotional overflow needs to be poured out on children.
2. An unconditional emotional overflow means that the effects that the children will have become very widespread. With it, they are able to explore, be creative and have a variety of skills.
3. Exploration adds positive emotions and affects the development of creative skills and abilities.
4. Parents set an example to their children and praise their children if they show positive inspiration and strength. The process if continued shall enabling children to master skills and strengthen their character thus producing constructive values.
5. Children will see the praise of parents as a relationship of love and affection. With that, they will repeat the same process to receive a positive signal from his parents. This ongoing process will strengthen his character consistently.
6. The process of continuous reinforcement does not necessarily develop all the characters that are in the children. Some are experimental. Only compatible characters will succeed
7. However, the trial of the failed character continues because the attempt will develop their psychological strength to connect the failed character with the successful character.
8. When a successful character repeatedly appears along with the value of the character then it becomes a signal of the placement of the real strength of the children.
9. The psychological strength and tendencies of children are then coordinated with the education, skills and activities introduced by parents so that they are able to achieve good in life.
10. Positive emotions poured out by parents in the early stages of children are like fuel that ignites the strength of children's character so as to restore happiness to parents.

These movements are actually based on two main pillars; positive emotions and character strength. The positive emotions that children have are the main pillars while the strength of the character includes values in life such as activities, games and education [2].

Coordination of children's inclinations with the education system means that parents have left the matter of supervising their children to the school. Thus, teachers have a key that can influence the psychology of children when they are in school. A positive-minded teacher will build a positive relationship with his students. An open-minded teacher will build trust so that internal motivation can be developed [3].

Teachers who always respond to students will allow them to quickly master learning, thereby building competence [4]. Similarly, energetic and enthusiastic teachers will quickly affect student motivation [5].

When teachers play a role in creating an atmosphere that supports learning and gives autonomy to students, then students will feel fun and free to choose areas that affect their lives. Indirectly, students will be motivated to learn without stress due to the very conducive atmosphere [6]. Thus, motivation in education is in fact a reference to the conceptualization of high skills, which directs individuals to engage in activities because there is satisfaction in them [7].



Figure 1. Positive psychology based on a parenting development model

Going back to the positive psychological theory initiated by Seligman earlier, focusing on the cognitive components that are in a positive emotional environment will create social well-being that includes inter-personal relationships, social contributions, community integration and healthy growth [8].

In the history of Islam, famous figures in their respective fields of knowledge have shown extraordinary strength of character and spirit from an early age. One of the most prominent figures is Imam Al-Bukhari who revealed extraordinary intelligence in the field of hadith since childhood. In contrast to other figures, the study of these figures is based on two factors

1. He mastered a field that required a high level of knowledge of the Arabic language while he was not an Arab.
2. He consistently mastered the field of hadith and was able to identify the errors found in a narration from a young age.

Thus, this study seeks to examine whether the family and the education system in his time has given a great influence on his character and psychological behavior to succeed in becoming the best figure in the field of hadith whose name is mentioned to this day.

### **Research Objectives**

- 1) Investigate the life story of Imam Al-Bukhari from a young age, including the environment in his life.
- 2) Identify the factors that promote the growth of intelligence and psychological behavior of Imam Al-Bukhari.
- 3) Know the significant strength of Imam Al-Bukhari's character towards the development of modern psychology.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This study uses a fully qualitative method. The approach used is a literature study by analyzing the content related to the biography of Imam Al-Bukhari. Content analysis is focused on historical, phenomenological and sociological methods because the things to be

studied involve the chronology of Imam Al-Bukhari's life, the development of Imam Al-Bukhari's character and Imam Al-Bukhari's relationship with his environment and life.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

Imam Al-Bukhari or his full name Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail ibn Ibrahim ibn Al-Mughirah ibn Bardizbah Al-Bukhari Al-Ju'fi was born on Friday 13 Syawal 196 Hijrah (810 AD) in Bukhara [9].

His father, Ismail ibn Ibrahim as narrated by Ibn Hibban in his book, *Al-Thiqaat* was a hadith scholar who once narrated a hadith from Hammad ibn Zaid. The narration then goes on to the Iraqi scholars. The matter was also explained by Imam Al-Bukhari in his book *Al-Tarikh Al-Kabir* that his father had heard a hadith from Hammad ibn Zaid. He also heard a hadith from Imam Malik, even befriended Ibn Al-Mubarak who was a disciple of Imam Abu Hanifah. Thus, according to Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani, there is no doubt that the father of Imam Al-Bukhari was in fact a great scholar and muhaddith who was famous in his time [9].

His father is narrated to have taken knowledge in the Hijaz while performing Hajj around the year 179 H, which is about 15 years before the birth of Imam Al-Bukhari. He met many figures at that time, among them was Imam Malik, the author of the famous book *Muwatta*. The journey from its original land, Bukhara to the Hijaz is not close as it is thousands of miles away. The spirit of traveling to gain knowledge was then passed on to his son, Imam Al-Bukhari who had spent his life exploring many countries, especially in the Middle East until his number of teachers reached around 1080 people [10].

In addition to being a scholar, his father was also a very pious man so that the nature of knowledge and piety was accumulated in him. As narrated by Ahmad ibn Hafs, Imam Al-Bukhari's father once told him when he was about to die, that all his property was not included in haram or suspicious matters [9].

Perhaps on that basis, Imam Al-Bukhari has been endowed with a bright heart, sharp intellect and inspiration to memorize knowledge with extraordinary strength from an early age. When he was 11 years old, he corrected the error of the narration of the chain which was heard by his teacher, Al-Dakhili. At the age of 16, he had memorized the books of hadith scholars such as Ibn Al-Mubarak and Waki 'and was able to recognize the words of their debate. At the age of 18, he began to compile the history of the companions, *tabi'in* and gather their views [9].

Imam Al-Bukhari is said to be able to remember a million hadiths complete with chain and content of hadith (*matan*) as a result of his travels met with more than 90,000 narrators. His sharp intellect allowed him to identify complex hadith defects [11].

Through his bright heart, he did not write what he heard on paper for days while gaining knowledge with the teachers (*masyaikh*). The matter caused a strange feeling among his friends who thought he was not serious in his studies. Imam Al-Bukhari seemed to be able to dive into their hearts, then asked them to remove all the written notes, which included 15,000 hadiths. He then read it without looking at the notes while asking his friends to correct any readings they had mistyped. Since then, they no longer said anything bad to Imam Al-Bukhari, and acknowledged the great memorization of Imam Al-Bukhari [9].

Returning to the pious nature of his father, that nature was later continued by Imam

Al-Bukhari when most of the property left by his father had been spent on the path of knowledge and welfare of scholars either openly or secretly. However, he prefers to contribute without anyone knowing [9]. In fact, he also did not want to get involved in any business directly, for fear of being consumed with results that are mixed with dishonest or fraudulent transactions [9].

Imam Al-Bukhari's father died when he was a child, about 5 years old. However, his father had prepared enough equipment either outwardly or inwardly for Imam Al-Bukhari. Outwardly, he had bequeathed a lot of property to Imam Al-Bukhari while inwardly, he had left many books to his son. With that property, Imam Al-Bukhari lived his life in the path of knowledge while the books left by his father were used as the main reference for him to memorize until he reached the age of 10 years [12].

After his father died, his mother played a role in raising and nurturing him. Following in his father's footsteps, Imam Al-Bukhari has shown tremendous interest in the field of knowledge. Until a moment, he experienced pain in the eyes and lost sight. Seeing the situation, his mother did not stop praying to the Divine presence. Finally one night, his mother dreamed of meeting Prophet Ibrahim AS by stating to him that Allah SWT had restored the sight of Imam Al-Bukhari because of the many cries and prayers that were shed. So when it was morning, it was found that Imam Al-Bukhari's vision had recovered as usual [13].

Apart from being raised in a family that prioritizes knowledge and education, the atmosphere of knowledge in the hometown of Imam Al-Bukhari also contributes a great deal to the intellectual development of Imam Al-Bukhari, especially in the field of hadith. The city of Bukhara is known as a very beautiful city adorned with orchards and fresh fruit. Bukhara is included in the list of one of the most beautiful old towns in the country Behind the River (Transoxiana). The city, which was opened during the reign of the Bani Umayyah Caliph, immediately became the focus of students of knowledge either in religious studies, or science and social sciences, perhaps because of its very refreshing atmosphere and conducive to educational progress. When Imam Al-Bukhari was young, Bukhara was inhabited by great figures in the field of hadith such as Al-Dakhili, Muhammad ibn Salam Al-Bikandi, Muhammad ibn Yusuf Al-Bikandi, Abdullah ibn Muhammad Al-Musnidi, Ibrahim ibn Al-Asya'ath and many more. Most of them have narrated hadith from previous great figures such as Abdullah ibn Mubarak, Fudhail ibn Iyad and Ibn Uyainah. So it is not surprising if Imam Al-Bukhari himself also has a deep interest in the field, because from an early age he has been exposed to it [14].

After gaining knowledge to a large number of masyaikh in his own area, Imam Al-Bukhari was allowed by his mother to gain knowledge outside of his homeland. After performing Hajj in Makkah with his mother and brother in 210 H, he embarked on his journey of knowledge in Makkah and Medina, Syria, Egypt, Jazirah, Basrah, Kufah, Baghdad, Balkh, Marw, Naisabur and Al-Ray [9].

Thanks to the blessings of his mother, his knowledge journey was liked by many parties, including his own teachers. His teachers who recognized his position as a scholar was Abu Mus'ab Ahmad ibn Abi Bakar Al-Zuhri stated that the sharpness of Imam Al-Bukhari's view in the field of hadith exceeds Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal who was also one of his teachers. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal as his teacher has also acknowledged the superiority of Imam Al-Bukhari when stating that his student is an extraordinary figure who was once born from the land of Khurasan. His teacher named Qutaibah ibn Sa'id also described Imam

Al-Bukhari as Saiyiduna Umar in the time of the Companions [9].

The vastness of Imam Al-Bukhari's knowledge has caused him to be highly trusted by his teachers to complete a given task. For example, his teacher named Abdullah ibn Yusuf Al-Tunisi Al-Bukhari has asked Imam Al-Bukhari to review the books he wrote and tell him if anything is missing. Another of his teachers, Muhammad ibn Salam al-Bikandi, also asked Imam Al-Bukhari for the same thing, which is to examine the errors in the book written by his teacher. In another situation, Imam Al-Bukhari was asked to solve a hadith problem between his teacher, Al-Humaidi and his teacher's companions. After hearing from both sides, Imam Al-Bukhari then gave his views so that he managed to satisfy his teacher and his companions. When his teacher, Ali ibn Al-Maldini wanted to narrate a hadith, he would turn to Imam Al-Bukhari who was sitting to his right, because of the greatness radiating from Imam Al-Bukhari, and looked up at him. Once upon a time his friends, Amru ibn Ali met Imam Al-Bukhari to ask about a piece of hadith but he did not answer. Amru ibn Ali said, if Imam Al-Bukhari states that he does not know then be sure that the verse is not a hadith [9].

Due to the superiority of Imam Al-Bukhari in the field of hadith, most of his teachers were afraid or embarrassed by his presence in their classes. Until one moment, they hesitated to deliver the narration, for fear of an error in front of him [14].

For that reason, some of his teachers asked students to take advantage of him. For example, Ishaq ibn Rawahaih advised the existing hadith scholars at that time to take knowledge from Imam Bukhari, because of the breadth of hadith knowledge and fiqh he had [14].

Imam Al-Bukhari was entrusted to conduct the study at a very young age. When he was asked to teach at the house of Muhammad bin Yusuf Al-Firyabi, he was still a teenager. This is because when Al-Firyabi died in the year 212 AH, Imam Al-Bukhari was only 18 years old. When he reached the pinnacle of wisdom in the field of hadith, his study council was attended by no less than 90,000 people including among his own teachers who are also the great Imams in the field of hadith. Among them are Abdullah ibn Muhammad Al-Musnidi, Abdullah ibn Munir, Ishak ibn Ahmad Al-Surmari and many more [1].

The extraordinary excellence of Imam Al-Bukhari from a young age was admired by his teachers so that they did not lose their memory of him. Even his teachers had prayed for him when he realized the extraordinary advantages he had. For example, Ahmad ibn Hafs, his teacher in Naisabur and Sulaiman bin Harb, his teacher in Basrah after seeing his face stated that indeed his student will be a famous person whose name is mentioned by people. Abdullah ibn Munir when together with Imam Al-Bukhari once prayed for his student by stating that he would be a gem to the people. Although Abdullah ibn Munir was a teacher to Imam Al-Bukhari, but he considered himself a student to his students because of the greatness of Imam Al-Bukhari who he described as the greatest figure after the death of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal [9].

The largest book produced by Imam Al-Bukhari is Al-Jami 'Al-Musnad Al-Sahih min Hadith Rasulullah SAW wa Sunanihi wa Ayyamihi or better known as Sahih Al-Bukhari. This book has been written as a result of the narration of hadiths that he has done for 16 years during his travels to several countries. His main motivation for writing the book was because his teacher Ishaq ibn Rawaih expressed his desire that some of his students be able to collect hadith in a book that contains the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet SAW [9].

The book was then presented to his teachers Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (died 241 H),

Imam Ali ibn Al Madini (died 234 H) and Imam Yahya ibn Ma'in (233 H). The effort not only got a good view from his teachers, but also sparked a very systematic method of hadith research, especially in determining the quality of hadith [9].

### **Discussion**

Imam Al-Bukhari was raised in two circumstances that greatly affected his entire life; family support and environmental culture. The support from family members turned out to greatly influence his interest and character development. The personality of his father who was very interested in science, especially in the field of hadith, and the pious in his life was later followed in the footsteps of Imam Al-Bukhari. If viewed from the point of view of his father's pious; it is divided into two parts; a careful attitude in property management and eating and drinking, and living in a state of piety that is doing acts of worship and charity. His father's meticulousness in property management and eating and drinking had a profound effect on the psychological growth of Imam Al-Bukhari, especially in the illumination of inspiration, and the clarity of heart and mind. This matter is in line with the words of the Prophet SAW to Sa'ad Ibn Abi Waqqas with the meaning, "Choose halal food, your prayers will be answered". As explained by Imam Al-Haddad in his book *Al-Nasaih Al-Diniyyah Wa Al-Wasahaya Al-Imaniyyah*, that the forbidden or suspicious food will harden and darken the heart, restrain the whole body from worship and obedience and make it always love world [15].

A pure heart allows Imam Al-Bukhari to concentrate fully on the field of knowledge so that most of the wealth left to him has been spent on the path of knowledge and financed the needs of knowledge students and the poor. His interest in the field of hadith is engraved because his own father was a hadith scholar who had met some great hadith figures in his time. The books left behind are also quite numerous so that it gives space to Imam Al-Bukhari to study and memorize it. Thus, Imam Al-Bukhari has gained a strong foundation before setting foot in the formal learning system.

His mother's attitude which is open and often encourages him to acquire knowledge has increased the development of his intelligence in the field of knowledge and the development of his character in the field of hadith. So it is not surprising that when he began to follow the formal education system, his mastery in the field of hadith exceeded the peers who studied with him and even managed to correct the mistakes of his teacher's narration. The attitude of Imam Al-Bukhari who practiced his knowledge has accelerated his mastery in the field because it is a sign of the acceptance of the knowledge in the sight of Allah SWT in accordance with the words of the Prophet SAW as quoted by Imam Al-Haddad, "Learn the knowledge you want! By Allah, He will not accept from you, until you do good deeds with what you learn" [14].

The culture of Bukhara environment is very encouraging and conducive to the advancement of knowledge. On that basis, Imam Al-Bukhari was surrounded by friends who were interested in the field of knowledge, especially in hadith. Even in the city there are many hadith scholars who are used as a reference point for lovers of knowledge. This situation influenced the intellectual development of Imam Al-Bukhari and his attention to the narration of hadith. After successfully narrating hadith and gaining knowledge with local scholars, Imam Al-Bukhari was allowed by his mother to travel outside Bukhara. It is true as the Prophet SAW said that the companions will shape one's thoughts and actions. In other words, a good friend will influence good character and vice versa [16].

Throughout his journey of knowledge, his teachers praised his intelligence and the breadth of his knowledge. The increase in his knowledge in fact coincides with the words of most scholars such as Al-Imam Al-Suyuti who stated that the discipline of knowledge will not be achieved by fantasies, except those who are serious and earnest, who are willing to part with their families, tighten his cloth, wading through the ocean, mingling with the dust, back and forth coming to the door in the darkness of night and fulfilling priorities [16].

He started composing and holding classes after getting inspiration from his teachers. Both of these jobs played a major role in developing his field of knowledge, until he gained recognition among scholars including his teachers at that time. The benefits of writing as stated by Khatib al-Baghdadi are to strengthen the mind, purify the heart, hone habits, refine the explanation, and allow the writer to have a good name and great eternal reward, as long as it is needed by human beings. While the advantage of teaching is that Allah SWT together with the angels and all the inhabitants of heaven and earth pray for goodness to him. Therefore, his knowledge continues to increase, so that the goodness in him increases and then spread to others. The spread of knowledge also makes a person generous, as that is the routine of Imam Al-Bukhari's life. The generous nature of Imam Al-Bukhari actually coincides with the hadith of the Prophet SAW which states that the most generous human being among the ummah is someone who knows knowledge and then spreads it, the result of which will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment like a ummah (group) [16].

In the context of modern psychology, Imam Al-Bukhari's extraordinary spirit in the field of science is triggered by three main factors; the influence of parents, teachers and the environment. His parents injected interest and provided a clean source of food both outwardly and inwardly. This factor not only cleansed the soul and heart of Imam Al-Bukhari, but far more important than that is the effect of the overflow of inspiration that illuminated himself until he was endowed with extraordinary intelligence. Emotions radiating from within are the result of a balance of cognitive and affective domains. The interest and source of clean nutrition is the most important input of Imam Al-Bukhari's growth until he succeeds in developing his intellectual power to a higher level.

The autonomous power given by his mother and the conducive learning environment allowed Imam Al-Bukhari to strengthen his interest in the study of knowledge, especially in the field of hadith. His intellectual power was then polished and expanded with encouragement from teachers and his direct involvement in scientific work such as teaching and writing. Yet the uniqueness of Imam Al-Bukhari's achievement in the psychological context is the spiritual element that is always accompanied by his success in the field of hadith; Mother's blessings and prayers from the teachers. Both are closely related to consent which means to be pleased, and to bless what is done. Permission is a form of internal motivation that is able to move a person's psychological behavior to a higher level because it is triggered by the impetus to achieve success as expected by the group that gives the permission. In the life journey of Imam Al-Bukhari, he became a superior personality because the inner motivation that was in him was triggered by the hopes of his mother and teacher who always accompanied every step he took. Consent is encouragement in the form of openness and encouraging the interest that has been nurtured. Openness does not mean without limits because Imam Al-Bukhari grew up in the realm of sharia with a deep tendency towards the field of hadith. Thus, the openness meant here is the freedom for Imam Al-Bukhari to continue to deepen the field. Blessings, prayers and praise give birth to manifestations of motivation in the form of character strengthening and development of



psychological behavior in terms of accuracy and strength of intellectual power. A conducive environment will apply the character and values found around it. Good character and values will strengthen the positive character in the self and produce a positive superior personality in life.

Table 1. Character construction based on external influences

Influence	Input	Impact	Output
Parent	Openness, Pious and Blessing	Clarity of heart and deep interest	Intelligent and generous attitude
Teacher	Encouragement, Praise and Prayer	Inspiration	Quality of work
Environment	Application of character and values	Character strengthening	Positive in social contributions

## CONCLUSION

The life of Imam Al-Bukhari in general clearly shows that the positive psychological theory introduced by Seligman in the early 2000s has long been entrenched in the intellectual history of Muslims. The role of parents and teachers as well as the symbiosis of the environment based on the culture of knowledge is deeply rooted in the early journey of Imam Al-Bukhari giving an extraordinary impact to the superior character of Imam Al-Bukhari in the field of hadith. If positive psychology in the modern psychological mold emphasizes the emotional overflow aspect, the development of psychological behavior in Imam Al-Bukhari's life line is marked by spiritual elements involving a combination of blessings, healing, praise and prayer. Regardless, these two forms of psychological behavior development revolve around love in life. What needs to be emphasized in modern psychology is the application of spiritual elements in the form of blessed consent. This is because the application of this element is able to trigger extraordinary motivation in human beings due to the existence of shared hope which is then fulfilled in the form of character strength as experienced by Imam Al-Bukhari in his life journey.

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