
Child Upbringing in Islam and the Challenges of the Modern Time

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Abstract

The universal phenomenon of love for children is an indisputable fact of human existence. This is because the child in every culture and religion is the central focus of the family. Therefore, the parents hold a great deal of responsibility in terms of what they teach their children and accordingly how their children grow up as adults. This paper adopts a qualitative and descriptive methods using literature, personal interviews and observation. It also discusses the rights of children on their parents in Islam, it analyses based on Islamic ideals the role of the family in instilling good character and morals in the Muslim child and examines the challenges of child upbringing. The major findings include the effects posed by social media, peer group influence, ignorance and parental negligence. The work concludes that, for successful child upbringing parents should be role models by providing proper guidance and setting standards based on the teaching of Islam.

Keywords: Child-upbringing, Family, Training, Islam

Introduction

It is an established fact upheld by both religion and the philosophy of behavioral sciences, that parental factor is the most influential of all factors which go into making the child the kind of person he grows up to be in life. Raising a Muslim child is very challenging and one of the most difficult responsibilities for the parents. However, this is the age of establishing permanent habits. Most parents do not pay necessary attention required for the proper upbringing of their

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children. They postpone accurate training at tender age, thinking it is too early. The characteristics developed of this age last forever. This is the time to correct morals and strengthen their thoughts Islamically. Children therefore have the rights to be raised as responsible Muslim adults and parents must ensure those rights appropriately. Parents must be conscious and take an active role in guiding their children and families in the path of truth. Abdullah ibn Umar reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his family and he is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband's home and his children and she is responsible for them. The servant of a man is a guardian of the property of his master and he is responsible for it. No doubt, every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock (Al-Bukhari 9:7138).

Child's Rights in Islam

Allah has given children rights over their parents, just as parents have rights over their children. The rights of a child in Islam begins even before the birth of the child, with the choice of a righteous wife and righteous husband who could in turn become a good mother and father respectively. The prophet is reported to have said: "*A woman may be married for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her religious commitment. Marry the one who is religiously committed*" (Bukhari 7:27).

Among such rights of children upon parents include:

1. Right to Pure Lineage

Islam not only designates rights of children after they are born, but also, they have rights before their births. It is their right to have a legitimate birth (being born from parents who are legally married). Those who give birth to children out of wedlock, deprive these children from their rights and commit a heinous act of oppression upon them. The prophet of Islam taught us to choose righteous spouse. He (SAW) told young men to give preference to women who are pious and told guardians of young girls to give preference to their character. Thus, a man chooses

beforehand who shall be the mother of his children, by choosing a good mother for his children, he fulfills a right of his children even before they are born and vice versa.

2. The Right to Life

As a fundamental principle, Islam has guaranteed the right to life for all human beings, except for clearly defined crimes in the *Shari'ah*, due to which a person loses his or her right to live. Allah (S WT) says: “*And do not kill that soul that Allah has sanctified except for justice legislated by the Shari'ah*” (Qur'an 17:33).

Therefore, Allah (SWT) has strongly prohibited killing children due to fear of poverty (Quran 17:31). He (SWT) reminds us that He is the provider of all including the new born and the old. The right to life includes having proper care and nourishment so that the child may grow up healthy in body and with sound mind. The right of life is a fundamental right bestowed by the Creator to all creation. He (SWT) has revealed divine guidance where He (SWT) precisely defines death penalty as a capital punishment of some specific crimes apart from that, anybody who deprives someone of the fundamental right stands accountable in front of Allah (SWT) (Chaudry 19).

3. Right to Proper Education and Upbringing

One of the most important facts of raising children is for the parent to provide them with the right training. According to Islamic tradition, the best gift that parents can provide to their children is training that can help them live as responsible Muslim adults fulfilling the rights of Allah and others. The prophet is reported to have said: “*Nothing a parent may award his or (her) child is better than a good upbringing*” (Al Tirmizi 4:1952).

Educating children in such a way that they can be successful both in this life and the hereafter should be the supreme responsibility of parents. In today's world, while it is common for parents to focus on the kind of education that can help them towards building the right careers and making a living. Islam education rarely gets its due. Deprivation of proper Islamic teaching can prevent children from building close relationship with their creator, Allah, which is the cornerstone of all success in this life and in the hereafter. Proper religious education grounded in love can help children live a more peaceful life, deal with life's challenges easily

and maturely, fulfill the rights and obligations of all around them (including the parent themselves), leading the children to grow up as better citizens of their communities and making them an indispensable part of the overall Muslim *Ummah*.

There are also some rights of the child which are required of the parents at birth they include:

i. Adhan and Iqamah

Once a baby is born, the *Adhan* should be pronounced in his/her right ear and the *Iqamah* on the left. This is done so that the first words the baby hears is the glorification of the almighty Allah and the testimony of Islam. On the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA), he said: “*The day Hassan Ibn Ali (RA) was born, the prophet (SAW) pronounced the adhan in his right ear and the Iqamah in his left ear*” (Tirmidhi 4:97).

ii. Tahneek

It is established in the Sunnah to take some chewed pulp of date and rub it softly on the baby's palate. Nana Aisha (RA) said: “*New born children were brought to the prophet (SAW). He used to bless them and do Tahneek on them*” (Muslim 2:560).

iii. A Good Name and Aqeeqah

Every Muslim child reserves the right to have a sweet sounding and meaningful name. The prophet (SAW) said: “*it is the child's right upon the father to teach him/her good manners and give a good meaningful name.*” The prophet also said: “*Every newborn is tied to the act of Aqeeqah. So, you slaughter an animal for them and shave their hair*” (Al Bukhari 1:5467).

Roles of Family in Child-Upbringing

The family home is a microcosm of society in which the children's mentality, intellect, attitudes are formed when they are still very small and ready to receive sound words of guidance. Hence, the parents, important role in forming the minds of their sons and daughters and directing them towards truth and good deeds is quite clear. The following are some of the roles the family plays in child training and upbringing:

1. Sound Islamic Faith

Clearing the heart of all bad intentions provides man with psychological balance and leads him to love his community and practice benevolence with its members. Hence, it follows that, paradise and the company of the prophet (SAW) will be the reward of those who clear their hearts of fraud, grudge, envy and villainy. Good faith is vertically a noble decency seriously needed in most societies today. It is partly due to lack of such good faith that there are numerous religious and ethnic crises all over the globe. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the family to rain the child to acquire this character and more for the sake of this worldly life as well as the life to come (Liman 83).

2. Self-Organization

Self-organization ensures that children are made to handle responsibilities. It provides them with more freedom to select an efficient path and prove their ability to be independent and self-sufficient. It enhances steadfastness and promotes productivity. Highly organized children have the mental strength to create solid, motivating core beliefs, from that comes identity-based habits.

3. Instilling the Virtue of Truthfulness

Adhering to right and truth must be maintained even in the most insignificant affairs as the warning against telling lies is harsh even against small lies. Every parent or family member must never tell his/her children lies to make them stop crying, attract them to something or appease their anger etc. if parents and other family members are not committed to truthfulness, they make their children to get used to this despicable act through inspiration, imitations and bad example (Abdul-Muti' 17). Similarly, the Qur'an has laid much emphasis on truthfulness in speech and activities, truthfulness in action and sincerity of purpose in order to improve the condition of mind, which eventually enhances the person.

4. Decency

Decency is an important value that children must be taught right from their tender age; they should not be exposed to seeing parts of their parents bodies, nor any other member of the extended families' body that must be covered, as these can affect their minds negatively. It is

unfortunate that our societies are now infested with nudity on the streets and through the internet, television and satellites. For such it has become very difficult for the family to restrict their children to only decent viewing. That notwithstanding, parents must try to engage their children in some other modesty activities like learning doing those chores and any other activities that engage them and keep them away from these devices as much as possible. Thus, the Quran teaches its adherents not only to refrain from unethical conduct but also to disassociate themselves from those immoral conducts (Q12:11).

The Challenges of Child-Upbringing among Muslims

Many families today are witnessing many challenges within and outside their homes in bringing up their children. These challenges arose as a result of the socialization process under the name of social change which has swept through the entire world. They include:

- i. **Information Technology:** This includes the internal GSM, E-mail. etc. Through which wrong information could be sent to children. The Internet is so free that whatever type of information could be sent into it. These could corrupt the minds of the young ones who have free access to them and assume some of these evils as a normal part of life. Also, through the GSM, so much such wrong information could be sent to children.
- ii. **The Media:** The media, especially electronic media, is the fastest way in which a child could be corrupted. It is full of programs which portray the wrong behaviors that are anti-Islamic and immoral in a positive trend, and hold them to be praiseworthy and desirable. Examples of this include advertisements of alcohol and beauty competitions in which women dress carelessly and are aired on the Television. The parents are saddled with the challenging role of making the child realize the exact advantages and enormous disadvantages of watching Television programs.
- iii. **The Peer Group:** The peer group has a lot of impact on the child. He/she is very close to them, imitates them and is influenced by them. The parent, especially the mother, has to be able to assess when the child has started getting a bad influence. The parent should encourage his/her child to relate with good friends and discourage his/her child as much as possible from relating with bad friends.

- iv. **The School:** The school where the child receives modern education has a lot of influence on the character formation of the child. The child is taught a lot of things that are contrary to the principles of Islam. First and foremost, the parent must identify the school to which he sends his child. It must be a school which will not introduce anything that will offend the fundamental principles of Islam. The mother should always be vigilant in knowing what is taught at school. Western education allows male and female children to intermingle freely contrary to the provision of Islam. Parents should try to avoid taking their children to such schools or at least try to correct such attitudes as anomalies.
- v. **The Society:** The present society is undergoing a decline and decay in its moral values. The society at large does not attach any importance to what is moral and proper. It has reached a stage where one does what he or she likes in the name of freedom. Therefore, setting standards is very important as regards to what is right and what is wrong. After setting the standards, the parent must continuously make sure the children meet these standard and do not fall short of it.
- vi. **The Home:** The most difficult challenge which is faced by parent is how to make the home conform with the standard set by the Shari'ah, making it conducive and creating an atmosphere that makes children grow as responsible personalities as required by the *Shariah*. This is the crucial area that Muslims need to address with all seriousness while addressing the problem of parenting. The economic situation, especially in our society today, has forced both parents to go out in search of money for their enormous financial needs of the family. The mothers especially are faced with the problem of balancing their time and energy between home and the work place. In most cases, the children are left in the hands of the house help who knows very little or nothing of the provision of Islamic laws on child upbringing. There is the tendency the children will not be given the proper guidance to know the right and wrong. Parents need to prioritize their time and financial spending in the way that will suit the Islamic provisions and that which will give them the opportunity to set the appropriate standards in the home.
- vii. **Lack of Knowledge:** Some families today are ignorant of the most basic spiritual knowledge and as a result of this, they become lost and misguided in their thinking, not

being aware that there is a divine instruction book containing all the vital information necessary for child upbringing. The divine guidance, that is the glorious Qur'an and the Sunnah of the noble prophet (SAW) contained all the necessary information needed for proper upbringing of a child.

- viii. **Poor Parental Discipline:** For example, beating instead of punishing the child promotes poor parental ties and predicts the child's future behaviors, as a result, the child loses self-esteem and adapts withdrawal behavior. It should be mentioned at this juncture that, the values of children reduce considerably due to the various factors mentioned above. In contemporary Nigerian society for instance, the reliance on children at old age as security among elderly people has declined considerably. This may not be unconnected with the anti-social behaviors developed by the children as a result of faulty socialization process in the name of social change which has swept through the entire continent in the recent time.

Recommendations

For successful parenting and upbringing according to Islamic ideas, the following are some suggestions that will assist the parents based on the provisions of the Shari'ah:

- a. The parents should be role models for the children. In other words, the parents should try as much as possible to be morally upright themselves.
- b. Proper guidance: the parent should always be there to guide the children; give all necessary resources and facilities that will assist the children to be able to distinguish between right and wrong. The child should be given the chance to develop his/her own characters while the parents alongside guide, pray and resort to disciplinary measures where necessary.
- c. Parents should set standards for the children, teaching them to follow strictly the dictates of Islam and teachings of prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the rightly guided caliphs and the path of all pious predecessors.
- d. Children should be given responsibilities at home such as the household chores, teaching them to look after their siblings etc. which will give them the ability to be able to handle their responsibilities when they grow up as adults.

- e. Commendation: parents should always try to recognize the positive attitudes of their children and commend them. The parent should not always criticize as it will bring down the moral of the child in question.

Conclusion

The work appraises the Islamic framework for the upbringing of children which no doubt is the only universal remedy for the moral decadence facing the Muslim Ummah. It provides that an individual is molded into an actor and agent of peace in the family right from the preliminary stage of his/her life as a child. Thus, the Islamic family system provides supreme ethics and high morals which formulate a great Muslim generation.

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