

**Islamic Theocracy and Child Development in Ilorin: Challenges and Prospects**

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## **Abstract**

1. Marginalization of the children in Nigeria with particular reference to their inalienable rights has been one of the most serious threats to representative and responsible governance in Nigeria. The problem has taken different dimensions especially since May 1999 when the nation returned to democratic rule. Radical group especially the Boko Haram brain washed children and young men to perpetrate violence. Ignorance of Islamic teachings in the area of study makes children more susceptible and inclined to recruitment into hoodlums and thuggery. Children with difficult upbringings are more vulnerable to extremist views. The growing number of children without adequate parental guidance is a societal condition that has contributed to the problem of youth radicalization in Northern Nigeria. Children who lack a protective social environment are more likely to be exploited. Across the states in Nigeria, especially in the north, millions of school-age children are not enrolled the school, exacerbating illiteracy levels in the country and vulnerably to manipulation by extremist groups. Widespread poverty in northern Nigeria has contributed to a growing population of destitute children. The children's alienation from home and society provides the cognitive opening that extremist ideologues exploit in the process of recruitment and radicalization. It is against this backdrop that the study employs crical approach to assess the scenario. The paper examines Islamic theocracy and child development in Ilorin: Challenges and prospects. That is, application of Islamic theocracy in child development could serve as panacea in halting hoodlums and thuggery. The paper concludes that, the ideals of child rights constitute one of the fundamental values of Islamic human rights. Recommendation includes Qur'anic school teachers should be oriented towards the need for Islamic upbringing of the children as part of integration Strategy.

**Key Words:** Theocracy; Child Rights; Development; Rights

## Introduction

Islam recognizes the family as one of the most potent institutions that enhance the Islamic *Ummah*. Islam has comprehensive legal codes which address the issue of protection, children as well as responsibilities of the family, government and the society. The responsibilities are virtually synonymous from one arm to the other. It is important to note that Islam considers a child (newly born) to be pure, a state to maintain at his parents mercy:

Narrated Abu Hurairah (RA), said: The prophet of Allah (SAW) said “Every child is born with pure and sinless nature. It is the parents that make him up a Christian or Jew... (Bukhari Vol 2, Babu Ma giila fi aolaad 1385).

According to Ahmed (2011), children are deemed to have been born innocent and Muslims are urged to undertake measures to ensure that conflict and viciousness of adulthood not contaminate them. Indeed, several rights have been identified as belonging to child in the context of the Qur’an and the *Hadith* of the Prophet (SAW).

The issues of human rights, women and child rights are topics that always generate heated debates in Nigeria contemporary society which is yet to be approved in some state house of assemblies especially the Muslim dominated States. This is because of the fact that the contents of the proposed Act contravene the provision of the *Shar’iah*.

These arguments further strengthen the contention of some non-Muslims that the Islamic law is rigid and cannot go with modernity. There is no gain saying in the fact that all the facets of human life are interdependent and interconnected, which makes life only holistic and consistent. Islam regulates the aspect of man’s endeavours this is why it is an absolute way of life.

### Conceptual clarifications

**Theocracy** is a form of government in which a religious institution is the source from which authority is derives.

**Child Rights** are the human rights of children with particular attention to the rights of special protection and care afforded to minors and these rights cover their developmental and age-appropriate needs that change over time as a child grows up.

**Development** is a normative concept referring to a multidimensional process. Some people argue that development must be relative to time, place and circumstance, and dismiss any universal formula.

### Child as a Concept

The world ‘child’ could be defined as unborn or newborn human being, boy or girl or daughter, (Hornsby, 2002). Encarta Dictionary (1998) defines child as young human being

between birth and puberty. According to Anthony (1980), a child is part of the social institution that is associated with schooling and segregated from the adult World. In traditional and in contemporary Africa various ethnic groups see one as a child so far as he/she cannot contribute (due to their age) to the development of the society.

Similarly, UNICEF (1995) describes childhood period as the period when minds, body and personalities are being formed and during which even temporary deprivation is capable of inflicting lifelong damage and distortion on human development, that child has only one chance to develop normally and this is only through proper upbringing devoid of any form of abuse.

Centuries before the appearance of modern democracies, the idea of child rights have been clearly expounded in the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an and the precepts of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). What distinguishes Islamic concept of child rights is that these rights were not granted under any threat of political agitation or popular revolt. They were freely and willingly given by Allah (SWT) Who had nothing to fear from His followers.

The Islamic social structure in Nigeria is rapidly deteriorating due to the adoption and adherence of the western lifestyle. Nowadays, some Muslims are sunk into a state of general neglect in the observance of commandments of Allâh (SWT) and have become bold in disobeying Him (SWT) by deliberately indulging into activities that are tantamount to the neglect of rights of children. The abandonment of children was so rampant and these abandoned babies are mostly newly born and the rest within the age range of one to three years. Most of them were dumped in the gutters, pit-latrines, rubbish dump, bush or pathways near the bush while some were abandoned near places like police stations, hospitals, school premises, and orphanage houses perhaps they might be found and taken care of by other people.

Moreover, it is noticed that one of the factors contributed to this act and other child abuses such as child trafficking, child labour is economic factor whereby some parents find it difficult to take care of their born babies. However, Muslim parents who are ignorant of the Islamic teachings are so careful about guarding their wealth to the extent that they are extremely concerned about their businesses, work and otherwise.

The rights of child therefore begin even before his birth and continue throughout the period of childhood. In view of this, the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) makes it obligatory on every Muslim to be careful in selection of partner. Hence, there are certain prerequisite conditions, which man is required to observe before going into marriage life. The Prophet expatiates thus: "A woman may be married for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religious commitment". He gave preference to religion over every quality at the time of marriage. Perhaps, religion of a person can assist him in guiding the rights of children, which are products of marriage.

Islam recognizes formation of family as one of the most important factor in safeguarding the rights of a child. This is because the rights of a child are not detached from the family. The nature of family has a significant impact on the right and life of a child. The following *Hadith* substantiates the statement:

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet (SAW) said, "Every child is born with natural disposition to acknowledge Allah (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone) but his parents convert him to Judaism or to Christianity or to Magainism, as an animal delivers a perfect baby animal. Do you find it mutilated?" Then Abu Hurayrah recited the Quranic verses: "The pure Allah's Islamic nature (true faith i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone), with which He has created human beings. (*Bukhari: Vol.2, Baabu Ma qiila fi Aolaad*, No 1385).

The above *Hadith* explains that every child is born as a Muslim, which is one of his basic rights, however, the activities of the parents either maintain or deprive him such right. It also implies that for a man to have a well behaved, faithful and righteous child who will be ready to accept all the qualitative trainings, which may be impacted into him or her, there must be a woman (wife) who possesses such qualities and who helps him in making his dream a reality. It is very uncommon seeing the children of righteous becoming rogues or children of pious ones growing up as pirates except in some occasion. In an attempt to develop a nation and make it a better place to live, the effort must begin from bachelors who are due for the marriage and spinsters whose hand will be sought in marriage by going for pious and righteous individual as wife and husband in laying solid and reliable foundations for the society.

A child in Islām is a source of joy and pride if upheld in accordance with the stipulations of *Shari'ah*. Al-Qur'an explains that children are among the greatest desire of man on earth thus:

Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's live; but in nearness to God is the best of the goals (to return to). (*Sūrat Al-<sup>c</sup>Imran*, 3:14).

In view of the important position children are occupying in the religion of Islam, Islam prohibits any act that could lead to the termination of their life in this world. The following Qur'anic verse buttresses the point:

Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you: verily the killing of them is a great sin. (*Sūrat al-Isra'i*, 17:31).

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had demonstrated to the world love of child especially daughters when they were buried alive out of hatred and fear of poverty in the *Jahiliyyah* era. In this challenged period, the Prophet (SAW) withholds his female daughters with esteem and warned from killing them. He (SAW) said:

Anas Ibn Malik (RA) narrated that the Prophet (SAW) said: Whosoever sponsors two girls (daughters) until they grow up, he will be with me in Paradise like this (bringing two of his fingers close together), {*Tirmidhi, Baabu man ja'a fi Nafaqah*, volume 4, No 1914}.

Inspite of numerous guidance to the child rights provided in *Shari'ah*, yet some parents vehemently violate right of their children with impunity. Some children are made hawkers as source of livelihood to their parents instead of attending schools for intellectual empowerment.

Some children are used for crimes and evils because their rights are neglected by their parents, while some have turned to begging with all humiliations. In view of this, the research has an analytical discourse of child rights in Islam.

### **Children in Pre-Islamic Era and Reformation brought by Islam**

Notions of false pride and fear of poverty and hunger had introduced the abominable crime of female infanticide. In some tribes among the Arabs before Islām, the birth of a daughter was considered as a calamity and opprobrium. Rahim (2001) says, the birth of a female child was considered as a great curse and she was even buried alive by the heartless father. Parents killed their female daughters for fear of poverty and when they grow up, they could bring shame on their families by committing adultery (Kutaiba, 2004).

Mustafa (2002) submitted that, the custom of killing daughters was rampant between the Banu Tamim and the Quraish. They took pride in killing their daughters and it was a status of symbol. This heartlessness reached such a height in some tribes of Arab before Islām that when the daughter became five or six years of age and start uttering sweet words, the stoned-hearted father would take her in beautiful garments to a place outside his settlement where he had already dug a deep ditch. He would then make his daughter stand beside the ditch and then push her into the ditch stoning her to death while she calls for her father's help. He further said: no screaming and crying could melt his heart and he would return after filling the ditch. They took pride in burying their daughters alive. Qais bin Ashim, a man from banu Tamim buried his ten daughters alive in this manner. Similar to this is happening in this community to the extent that some parents formed habit of selling their wards or using them as a slave under unrelated master.

Maududi (nd) opined that for the Prophet (SAW) to uproot this pre-Islamic practice from those weak souls, he gave the girls a special mention in his sayings, and ordered the fathers and guardians to treat them well, care for them, so that they may qualify for Allah's blessings, and enter Paradise.

### **The Status of Children in Islam**

Children are gifts from Allāh (SWT) and are considered as precious and very special under high rank. They are worldly treasures, which a Muslim is highly encouraged to seek. Allāh (SWT) describes children as the adornment of the life of this world by saying:

Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world: but the things that endure Good Deeds are best in the sight of thy Lord as rewards and best as (the foundation for) hopes. (*Sūrat Kahf*, 18:46).

Ali (1979) commented on the above verse by saying that: 'other things are fleeing: but God Deeds have a lasting value in the sight of Allah. They are best as (or for) rewards in two ways: {1} they flow from us by the grace of Allah and are themselves rewards for our faith: {2} they become the foundation of our hope for the highest rewards in the Hereafter'.

If the parents fail to impact the fear of Allāh (SWT) in their children from the start, because of their negligence, then, they cannot expect to receive any righteous gratitude from them. Hence, Allāh's (SWT) severe warning in the Qur'ān as:

O You who believe! ward off from yourselves and your families a fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from

executing) the commands they receive from Allâh, but do that which they are commanded. (*Sūrat at-Tahrīm*, 66:6).

Marcus Tullius Cicero (a great Roman Philosopher) in Sobian (2004) agreed with Islamic point of view ‘of all nature’s gift to the human race, what is sweeter to man than these children?’ By implication, the parents should reciprocate and cause the child no harm. Thus, Islam sees child upbringing to be a source of pleasure in the world and reward in the hereafter. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) reported to have said: “Any house where there are no children has no blessing of Allah (SWT)”.

### **Child Rights in Islām**

In Islam, child rights originated from Allah (SWT). He (SWT) has granted these rights, they have not been granted by any king or by any legislative assembly. Therefore, no any legislative assembly in the world, or any government on the earth has right or authority to make any amendment or change in the rights conferred by Allah (SWT). No one has right to abrogate or withdraw them. Nor are they basic human right, which are conferred on paper for the sake of show and exhibition, and dined, in the actual life when the show is over. Nor are they like philosophical concepts that have no sanction behind them (Maududi, 1982).

Child belongs to humanity, and is a treasure whose custodial care and protection principally lies with his or her biological parents, neighbours, community and the society at large. Children have been also described as ‘the living messages we send to times we will not see’ (Fatima, 2004). Every Muslim has to accept, recognize, and enforce child rights according to Qur’an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (SAW). If parents fail to enforce them, and start denying the rights that have been guaranteed by Allah (SWT) or make amendment and changes in them, or practically violate them while paying lip service to them, the verdict of Qur’an for such individual is clear and unequivocal.

The main cause of children being spoiled is the parent’s lack of interest in their education. A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of the mother. She is like a school (*madrasah*) she and the father are accountable. The child is constantly with her until he attains manhood. A woman is the keeper of the house of her husband. She will be questioned about her subject. The father must give a helping hand to her in rearing their children (Habibullahi, 2010). Allah (SWT) and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had ordered that children and the family be taught not to associate anything with Allah (SWT) and they should be taught how to pray and exercising good manners thus:

Behold Luqman said to his son by way of instruction: "O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing. (*Sūrat Luqman*, 31:13).

"O my son! Establish regular prayer enjoin what is just and forbid what is wrong: and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs.

"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men nor walk in insolence through the earth; for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster. (*Sūrat Luqman*, 31: 17 and 18).

Ali (1979) commented on the above verse thus: ‘verses 14 to15 are not the direct speech of Luqman but flow by way of commentary on his teaching’ he was speaking as a father to his son, and he could not very well urge respect for himself and draw the son’s attention to the

limitation of filial obedience. These verses may be supposed to be general directions flowing from Luqman's teaching to men, and not directed to his son; though as Luqman got wisdom from Allah (SWT), it is divine principles that are enunciated.

Generally, the westerners and their advocacy group alliance concept of human rights were only written on papers, but not given to the people in real life. In addition, they were designed to serve the interest of the colonial masters and such western countries and their allies are not bound on them. Moreover, they limited their activities with only women and children because they want to get chance for inculcating their culture to these groups, if their parents and husband have no power over them (women and children).

The ideals of child rights constitute one of the fundamental values of Islāmic human rights. The central elements of Islamic values are to protect human freedom against slavery and other forms of exploitation (Alanamu, 2009). According to Hassan (2008), the Qur'ān is the Magna Carta of human rights and that a large part of its concern is to free human beings from the bondage of traditionalism, authoritarianism, tribalism, racism, sexism, or anything that prohibits or inhibits human beings from actualizing the Qur'ānic vision of human destiny embodied in the classical proclamation. Yoruba adage said: *Agbara kan koni sope ohun oni Ile wo, onile ni ko ni gba fun. Meaning: Flood would not say it will not a house but the owner of the house will not permit it.*

### **Right to Legitimacy and Paternity**

The child in Islām has the inalienable right to legitimacy (the state of being legitimate – born to parents who are legally married to each other in accordance with Islamic injunction. Islam chooses what may be termed the “principle of legitimacy” which in the summary words of Rose Coser, “holds that every child shall have a father and only one father” (Aliyu, 2011). Islām put an end to the Arabian practices that left individual sometimes without any secured identity.

Therefore, it is not permissible for the husband to deny the paternity of any child born to his wife as long as they are married to each other. Such a denial would bring the ugliest shame imaginable upon both the wife and the child. Nobody is allowed to deny the paternity of any child based on a mere suspicion, a sudden notion, or an evil rumor. If however, on the basis of evidence which has come to his attention, he is convinced that his wife has betrayed him, the *Shari'ah* has no desire to force him to raise a child whom he believes not to be his own or to let the child be his heir, or to allow him suffer from suspicion and doubt the rest of his life, (Mustafa, 1992). Some parent had left their responsibilities in terms of child upbringing.

### **Right to be given a Good Name**

This is one of the most important rights accruable to a child. It is the procurement of this right that integrates the child in to the society, and makes him or her identifiable. Islam made it a right on the parents to select good names for their children. It recognizes the effect of name on the person since it will be associated with him throughout his lifetime and will be carried on by his descendants (Ibn Qayyim, 1999).

Child should be given name such as Abdullahi and Abdur-Rahman. Ibn Umar (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAW) said:

Abi Wahb ai-Jishmi (RA) related that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: Name (children) names of the Prophets, and most loved names before Allah (SWT) are Abdullahi and Abdur-Rahman. (Abu Daud, Baabu fi Taghyirl al-Asmai, Volume 4, No 4950).

The Prophet (SAW) has instructed that a child be given a good and pleasant name by seventh day of his/her birth. The birth of a child should be celebrated with festivities (in the intimate family circle) not in contrary to Islam, and the slaughtering of at least a ram. On the seventh day the head of the baby should be shaved. One of the Prophetic traditions on this is as follow:

Samrah bn Jundub (RA) said that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: Every child is repose on sacrifice made on its behalf on the seventh day of his birth and it is on that day he is named and shaved. (Abu Daud, *Baabu fi al-Aqiqah*, Volume 3, No 2840).

Islam admonishes Muslim to give good names to their children from the name of Almighty Allah (SWT), the name of the Prophets, names of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and other good names. Unlike the practices of some Muslims in this contemporary who pick names from the films they watch or look at the beautiful sound of a name without considering its meaning. It is prohibited in Islam to give a name, which denotes a slave or worshiper of someone than Allah (SWT). For instance *‘Abdun-Nabiy*, *‘Abdul-Masih*, and alike, not the one that can cause him embarrassment when he becomes matured.

This provision of Islamic law is a step beyond what is provided by International law and Child Right Acts that just enjoin the naming of the child. The *Shari‘ah* recommended names that will enhance the dignity of the child and discouraged those names that will cause him harm and any inconveniences. Islam prohibited the giving of names that are bad or likely to affect the honour and personality of the child. Where for whatever reason a father give such name, it must be charged (Ulwan, 2004). Example of such bad name that were changed by the Prophet (SAW) is:

Ibn ‘Umar (RA) related form Ibnat ‘Umar who said to her ‘Asiyah and the Messenger of Allah (SAW) renamed her Jamilah. (*Ibn Majah, Baabu Taghyir al-Asma’u*, Volume 2, No 3733).

Parents are also warned not to give their children the names that are exclusively reserved for Allah (SWT), such as *Ahad*, *Samad*, *Razzaq*, *Ganiy*, and a host of others. The saying of the Prophet (SAW) condemns this:

Abi Hurairah (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: The one that Allah will be displeased with on the Day of Resurrection is he who is given the name, the master of master because there is no master except Allah (SWT). (Muslim, *Baabu Tahrim Tasamah bi Malaki*, volume 2, No 243).

It is unlawful to give a child a name that signifies worship of things besides Allah (SWT), such as *Abdul-Uzzah* (the servant of *Uzzah*), *Uzzah* is an idol, or *Abdul-Kaaba*, *Abdun-Nahi*, etc (Ulwan, 2004). He is also to avoid names derived from pessimistic meaning for protecting the child from harm of such names, for instance, *Hazan* (rough and hard). In addition, to avoid sadness that may result from using the names in a negative structure. The Prophet (SAW) used to change some names to better ones. He ones changed *Harb* (war) to *Silm* (peace). The bad names or a bad nickname given to a child is going to have impact in his life and Allah (SWT) shall resurrect him with that name in the Day of Judgment. This could be seen in one of the Prophetic sayings:

Ibn al-Musayyib narrated that his grandfather said: “I went to the Prophet (SAW) and he asked me: ‘what is your name?’ I said *Huznu* (sadness, difficulty, hardship, etc), then the Prophet said:

stop bearing that name, you should be called *Sahl* (ease, comfort, softness, etc), then my grandfather said: ‘I will not change the name given to me by my father’. Ibn Musayyib said: that sadness, difficulty, hardship, etc remain with us till date” (*Sahih Bukhari, Baabu Ismul Huzn*, Volume 8, No 6190).

However, the meaning of the names given to the children plays a significance role in determining how the bearers are going to lead their lives. Section 5 of the Child Right Acts of 2003 provides that a child has a right to be given a name at birth or any other time recognize by the culture of the child’s parent or guardian and to register him. In this regard, it is the duty of parent or guardian of a child to give name (good name is required by the *Shari<sup>c</sup>ah*) to the child at birth or at seventh day.

The parent/guardian of child is also required to register the child at recognized centre at the early days of the child’s life in accordance with the provisions of the Birth, Death Compulsory Registration Act, 1992. The registration normally required that the parent give registration officer at the center data on the child, which include the name, address, state or nation of origin and date of birth of the child and his parents. The child is issued with a birth certificate containing child’s full names and the date of birth.

The provision for naming and registration is to give the child an identity. It also serves to consolidate the child’s personhood and to find his family status and dignity. The birth certificate continues to remain an identity for himself, name and evidence of date of his birth. This right is essentially to prevent concealment of births and to alert health authorities to the newborn existence and need for care. Inadequate data on the number of births in a region may prevent government from allocating resources appropriately (Badmasiuy, 2009). Children of today in Ilorin community do change the name given to them by their parents to name of an area, animal, and host of others which has adverse effect on these children. For instance: Go-Slow, aye, and host of others.

### **Right to Nurture, Life and Survival**

The modern pediatrician as new discovery opined that a child should not be given any food other than milk until is teething. This idea for several years was upheld by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (751 CE). More so, the physical touch of the baby with the mother during breastfeeding creates a strong relationship between the two. This helps create a life-long love between mother and child. However, it is completely acceptable for mothers to hire or utilize foster mother to suckle the child (Muhammad, 2002). Allah (SWT) emphasized that:

The mothers shall give such to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child. Nor father on account of his child, an heir shall be chargeable in the same way. If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. If ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered, on equitable terms. But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what ye do. (*Sūrat a- Baqarah*, 2:233).

Some parents do drop unwanted child by the side roads, pit toilet, road side and other places.

## Children's Right to Education

In Islam, this is a very delicate and significant responsibility. It is the duty of the parents to educate their progeny and to equip them with knowledge and culture to bring out natural capabilities. There will be an increase in grace. This also opens up intellectual powers. The Qur'an puts the highest emphasis on the importance of acquisition of knowledge. That knowledge has been at the core of the Islamic world-view from the very beginning is attested by Allah (SWT) saying:

Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher Who created. Created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful He Who taught (the use of) the Pen. Taught man that which he knew not. (*Surat al-'Alaq*, 96:1-5).

Hence, in Islām, education is not limited to *bookish* knowledge but includes moral, religious training and all-round growth of child's personality. It is an indivisible legacy and the only equal inheritance that could be given to children (Shittu, 2008). Parents must not only provide for children's education in schools and colleges but should also take personal interest in their studies, helping them if they can because the future of any country lies more in its children and youths than in any natural resources. Most of the countries that have developed pay extra attention to total upbringing of their children educationally. In Nigeria, we talk about availability of resources that we have but our tomorrow is really the Nigerian child and that is why education ought to be our paramount focus according to the dictates of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Parents should bear it in mind that: *Omo tao ko ni yio gbe Ile taba ko ta*. Some children today are not ready to learn and ever before, what was paramount to the inhabitants of Ilorin is learning Islamic education which used to create fear of Allah in them, but today western education is given priority and this is causing a lot of calamity to the people of Ilorin. Some parents ignored giving their wards Islamic education.

## Right to Equal Treatment

Children's Right is protected on equal treatment especially in the matter of giving gifts. On that basis, parents are prohibited from bestowing more favors on some of their children than on others without any necessity or valid reason. This act can initiate jealousy and enmity or hatred among them. The Prophet (SAW) said:

An-Nu<sup>c</sup>man bin Bashir (RA) said: "My father gave me a gift but Amra bint Rawaha (my mother) said that she would not agree to it unless he made Allah's Apostle (SAW) as a witness to it So, my father went to Allah's Apostle (SAW) and said. "I have given gift to my son from Amra bint Rawaha, but she ordered me to make you a witness to it, O Allah's Apostle (SAW)! Allah's Apostle (SAW) asked: "have you given (the same) to every one of your sons? He replied in negative. Allah's Apostle (SAW) said: "fear Allah, and be just between your children. My father then returned

and took back his gifts”. (Muslim, Volume 3, *Baabu Karahat Tafdiil Ba'ad li aolaad fil hibah*, (13) 1623).

It is not permissible to show preference to females over males or males over females. Parents should treat all his children equally in the matter of giving gifts. As stated in the following tradition thus:

Nu'umaana son of Bashir (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allâh (SAW) said: “Do justice among your sons and repeated it thrice”. (*An-Nisaai: Baabu Dhikir Ikhitilaaf al-faasi Li khabari Nu'umaana*, Vol. 6, 3687).

Most Parents love their children. Some children may be more beloved to parents than others, as was in the case of Prophet Ya<sup>c</sup>qub (AS) and Prophet Yusuf (AS). However, parents must be balanced and fair in dealings with and upbringing of their children. As conscious slaves of Allah (SWT), they must play the role of *Murabin* in emulation of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The Prophet (SAW) reported to have said:

Ibn Abbas narrated that: the Messenger of Allah Said: “Do justice among your children in giving out gift, if am to rank one above the other I could have rank women”. (*Masnad al-Harith, Bābu Taswiyati*, Volume 1, No 454).

It is unIslamic to discriminate negatively between a boy and a girl. The gender of a child should not bother parents, as Allah (SWT) decides it. Sons and daughters must be treated equally in terms of affection. In pre-Islamic Arabia and some other ignorant societies, daughters were symbols of embarrassment and were treated in a shameful manner. It is an irony that many societies even today do not welcome the birth of daughters in the same way they do their sons. Islam has put an end to this shameful and discriminatory custom. Unfortunately, this pagan custom of killing daughters is now practiced in a different manner – some modern parents do this through abortion of fetuses, dumping new baby on the pathway, in sock-away, by the side of the road, and host of others. Allah (SWT) says:

And they assign daughters for Allah! Glory be to Him! and for themselves (sons the issue) they desire! When news is brought to one of them of (the birth of) a female (child) his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt or bury it in the dust? Ah! what an evil (choice) they decide on! (*Sūrat an-Nahl*, 16:57-59).

Obviously, during their formative years as females and males, mother and father should respectively address specific issues. Conscious parents carefully watch out for the developmental phases of their children and make sure that equity is maintained. Boys and girls are not the same, but no one is superior to other except in *taqwah*. On the day of Accountability, human beings are accountable to Allah based on their actions, not gender. The teachings of the Prophet (SAW) on this are manifest in many traditions. As he did not have any surviving son, his behaviour with his daughter Fatimah, and his other daughters (RA) was exemplary (Muhammad, 2002).

## **Children's Right to be Loved and to be shown Affection**

Love is a strong feeling of positive emotion towards oneself, another person or thing. In addition, it could be said to be a feeling and an activity in what we feel love for, we usually act towards in a loving manner (Albert, 2011). He also gave kinds of love as follow: Liking, infatuation, romantic love, compassionate, fatuous love, consummate love, empty love and non love

Therefore, it is natural for the parents to love their children, to look after them and to be kind and compassionate to them. They are a determining factor in their guidance and training, care and nourishment. Without this motivation, human beings could have been wiped off the face of the earth. The Glorious Qur'an has described children as the adornment of the world:

Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world: but the things that endure Good Deeds are best in the sight of thy Lord as rewards and best as (the foundation for) hopes (*Surat Kahf*, 18:46).

Another type of mercy that could be shown to a child is placing the child on one's lap. Usamah bn Zaid said that Allah's apostle used to put me on (one of) his thighs and put al-Hassan bn Ali on his other thigh, and then embrace us and said: "O Allah please be merciful to them, as I am merciful to them".

Love of children, affection and kind feelings for them are unique sentiments. They are determining factor in their guidance and training, care and nourishment. One who is bereft of mercy has the characteristics of a surly, stonehearted, cruel person. Such attributes have an adverse effect on children. Therefore, Islam urges us to develop the sentiment of love and mercy (Habibullahi, 2010).

## **Recommendations**

In view of the findings of this study the following recommendations are hereby put forward concerning child rights in Islam and contemporary child abuse.

2. Parents should desist from using their children to source for funds and be productive and be able to cater for their children by having the number of children they can conveniently cater for.
3. Islamic right on children should be adopted by the government since the religion (Islam) is universal and unique.
4. Serious efforts should be made by Islamic scholars through organizing seminars and enlightenment programmes for Muslim parents on the dangers of child abuse and the attendant behavioral problems.
5. The law enforcement agencies need to be resuscitated on relevant enlightenment and orientation with a view to maintain supervisory legal responsibilities on Muslim children hawkers. This is believed to drastically check the ugly trend in child abuse.
6. Government should make education totally free at primary and secondary school levels for children.
7. Qur'anic school teachers should be oriented towards the need for Islamic upbringing of the children as part of integration Strategy.

8. Muslim parents should train their children in Islamic way so as to have compassion on their fellow beings. This will prevent them from becoming nuisance in the society.
9. Children should be exposed to good habits, in manners and behaviour. They should be protected from anything negative, especially in their early life. Parents need to sacrifice their own bad habits for their children.

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