

AN EXAMINATION OF THE POSITION OF ISLAM ON CHILD ABUSE

BY

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Abstract

Child abuse is generally known to be one of the social ills playing human society. Whether in advanced or developing nations, the trend has received global notice leading to promulgation of several laws act with a view to protecting and safeguarding child rights. The present paper however is an attempt to examine the Islamic viewpoints on the issue of Child abuse. It discusses Islamic concern for human dignity generally, the phenomenon of child abuse in human environment. Islamic principles on protection of child rights are examined and some recommendations are given for amelioration. The paper is concluded with expression that Islam has positive concern for child's personality and frowns at his abuse in any form

Introduction

The history of human race lends a credence to the fact that human nature sometimes is dominated by aggressive impulses. Invariably, this creates social disturbance that adversely affects socio cosmological orderliness. These impulses could be of selfish motives or oppressive tendencies. Based upon this proposition, it has been a popular belief that tendencies based upon this proposition, has been a popular belief that injustice is ubiquitous, and it is inextricably linked with abuse in one form or the other. As a result, human abuse is a global phenomenon that many Religious bodies and international organizations have made serious efforts to reduce its occurrence to a minimal level.

However, historical accounts abound to show that different kinds of human abuse are committed in terms of brutal wars, savages slavery, raping, exploitative means of devouring human and natural resources. Child abuse in this respect, it an aspect of human abuse that tends to receive much more attention, probably because it is the most common feature of human abuse. On this note, this would be justify and examine the Islamic points of view on child abuse. It is our hope that this approach to the topical issue of human abuse would create more awareness to the audience about the sanctity of child right and humanity in general.

Islamic Consideration of Human Dignity

The Qurān confirms that the purpose of human existence on earth is to play the role of vicegerence with the ultimate aim of rendering *ibādah* (worship) to Allah. (Quran 2:30). It is therefore, considered in Islam a gorse human abuse to coerce human beings to pay servitude to humanity or any other creatures inferior human beings. For the realization of this objective, Islam strikes to at the root of any human culture that could promote it, such as prostration to human beings in greeting and blind obedience to authority at the expense of Allah's displeasure (Qur'ān 9:62)

Similarly, Islam lays down moral sanctions and principles that ensure peaceful co-existence and social relationships. It enjoys Muslim to show kindness, sympathy, and extension of generosity to the kith and even near and distant neighbors irrespective of religious affiliation. (Qur'ān 60: 8 -9). Thought, Islam allows Muslims to wage war against aggressive people that threaten their existence, it however shuns against strangulation of the fundamental rights and freedom of the conquered militants (Assibi, 1984: 73) and it is also regarded human abuse to kill non-combative group like women, children hermits in their hermitage except in matter of connivance. (AbdurRahman, 1975 p. 52).

Closely related to this point is the recognition of individual right to life, property and reputation established by the religion of Islam. Islam urges Muslim to develop and nurture the moral value of scrupulous consciences in dealing with fellow human beings. That is why the prophet (peace be upon him) was reported to have said as cited in the Islamic literature. (An Nawawi, p. 36-37).

I have been ordered to fight against people until they testify that there is no god to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah and until they perform the prayers and pay the zakat, and if they do so, they will have gained protection from me for their live and property, unless (they do acts that are punishable) in accordance with Islam and their reckoning will be with Allah, the exalted. (AI Bukhari and Muslim).

It should be understood from the context of the hadith that the Prophet was not ordered to force or kill people till they embrace Islam. Rather, the clause "fight against people" refers to his use of moral persuasion and conviction including wisdom and good admonition to deliver the divine message as attested to in the (Qurän 16:125).

Preservation of human dignity from Islamic concept is not limited to the existence in the world. Even, after the death of Muslim, he or she should the Spoken ill of the misdeeds committed during the life. This is considered a form of human abuse by the Prophet of Islam because the deceased is in need of dividend forgiveness and mercy. Aishah reports the Hadith thus:

The Messenger of Allah said: Do not abuse the deed because they have attained that which they has forwarded (i.e. their deeds good or bad) (Riyadu Salihin).

The Hadith quoted above is an indication that the concept of human abuse from Islamic perspective is comprehensive. Simply put any act that can interfere with the welfare of the members of the society in an unfair manner is an abuse, must especially when this negatively affect the weak members such as the poor, orphan, widow, physically and mentally.

Members challenged and other of their sort. It is in this respect that we consider to examine the issue of child abuse since it is one of the weak members of the society.

The Islam Viewpoint on Child Abuse

The word “abuse” is lexicographically defined as the use of something in a way that is wrong or harmful. It also includes unfair, cruel or bad treatment of somebody and by extension, rude and offensive remarks usually made in the mood of anger (Oxford Advanced Learner 1 Dictionary 2005). Child abuse however according to Nasir (2007: p.8) is defined as the wrong use of a child especially for one’s own advantage.

Child abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional or by neglect. Physical abuse of the child could be informed of inappropriate punishment by flogging, hitting with hard objects. Sexual abuse refers to any act that could lead sexual gratification of the abuser or any form of sexual dealing with a minor. Nasir asserts that sexual abuse is far more common than is generally believed because the act is mostly shrouded in secrecy (Nasir 2007 p.8). He added that risk factors for sexual abuse include single parenthood syndrome, poverty, ignorance, hawking, working in a restaurant or beer parlor, early dating behavior, dropping out of the school, family or community activities. This position of Nasir is seen to correspond with that of Abdus-Salam (1995 pp. 27-33) when he states that the most recent studies suggest that children in one parent families are more prone to various forms be of delinquency.

Emotional abuse though not discussed by Nasir, could be understood in terms of causing psychological assault to a child. This may take the form of giving preference to a child over one another. It was reported that the Prophet scolded the father of Nu'man bn Bashir for offering gifts to some of his children without consideration of others (Riyadu Sahihi 2006: p. 862). By expatiation, emotional abuse could be in terms of harsh statements, torrential insults, painful mocking and sarcasm directed to a child. Though the abuser might have good intention of using them as corrective measures, they can be however counter productive.

Abuse through child neglect includes an extreme failure to provide children with adequate clothing, food, shelter and medical attention, Nasir (2007: p. 9) puts it that the incidence of child abuse through neglect is the most common form, as it is estimated to be about three times that of physical abuse and seven times that of sexual abuse. Based on this, it is clearly stated in the Qur'ān that children are not to be neglected. Qurān established that parents fathers especially, have the responsibilities to cater for the basic necessities of their children (Qur'ān 2:233). Related to this is the Qur'anic fact that children must not be killed for the fear of poverty (Qurān 6:151). Al Ilori (1979: p. 50) in this respect, expresses the modern form of killing them is through abandoning the children. Particularly female by not acquiring them qualitative education. Masud Oredola (2008: pp. 148 - 154) relatively stresses that the reason for child neglect is gender, as most family prefer the boy-child at the expense of girl child, and it is common to find that female children are educationally disadvantaged and are neglected on the basis that they will bear another name after marriage; even though it is not Islamic.

The effects of child abuse, as observed by Nasir cannot be over emphasized. He states that sexual abuse can leave emotional scars that make it difficult to establish meaningful relationship with opposite sex in later life. Abused children are

more likely to develop childhood depression. Research studies often point to the fact that abuse children are more likely to grow up to be child-abusers than non abused children. They are more likely to suffer from poor educational performance, increase health problems and low level of overall achievement. Abused children suffer from symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder such as bed wetting or nightmares and are at greater risk than their peers to suffer from allergy asthma and gastro intestinal problems (Nasir 2007 p.9).

As a matter of fact, numerous Muslim scholars have discussed in great length the rights of children in the light of the Qurān and sunnah. These rights are thus seen as a guarantee against any kind of child abuse Masud Oredola pp. 148-154) while examining the issue of child rights from Islamic perspective maintains that the child's rights Act 2003 was passed from into law by the National Assembly of Federal Republic of Nigeria contains some rights which are not at variance with those established by Islam among such among such rights are: right to good name, education, training and sound education of disabled or handicapped children, right to sustenance and maintenance, separate bedrooms for the genders, good examples from parents among others. He adds that e section genders, 17 of the 1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly outlined the right children and young persons to be protected against any exploitation sound religious upbringing, protection from sexual harassment and including moral and material neglect. (Masud Oredola: 2008 pp. 148-154).

Based on the discussions above, it is crystal clear that Islam does not Support child abuse in the strictest sense of the word. It is depicted from Islamic viewpoint, a taint of wickedness and moral aberration to indulge in child abuse in any case it may be.

Recommendations

The dangers inherent in child abuse cannot be exaggerated. This is due to the fact that children represent the future of any nation. It is on this basis that we recommend that government should continue to intensify efforts in creating more awareness about the sanctity of human rights generally, and child's rights in particular.

Secondly, the religious bodies have enormous roles to play in educating the congregation about leading a moral life and giving respect to the individuals. Moral instructions and religious teachings are as important as other conventional disciplines. The religion leaders in collaboration with government should promote the value of religious education from primary schools to tertiary institutions.

Similarly, parents, teachers and educators need to sensitize the general public about the significance of protecting child's rights. This could be inform of organizing educative for a symposia and seminar and other means of reaching public awareness.

The government should lay down stringent policies and deterrent punitive measures against child abusers. It is believed that if this approach is taken by the government, the high rate of child abuse could be minimally reduced to a barest minimum.

Conclusion

The paper, as we believe, has discussed some relevant points on the issue of child abuse. Succinctly, our findings strongly reveal that it is an act of inhumanity to abuse children. Islamic injunctions abhor the practice and thus, affirm basic rights which children are entitled to them. Muslim scholars are unanimous in their position that child abuse is alien to Islamic culture and civilization and that Muslims are to uphold the Islamic guidance enshrined in the various sources of Islamic law.

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