

UTILIZATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION TO COMBAT CHILD ABUSE AMONG MUSLIMS IN OJO, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

KOLAWOLE, Hakeem Adeyinka

Department of Islamic Studies
Adeniran Ogunsanya College Ofeducation, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos
+2348052410698; abuatiyah1430@gmail.com

HASHIM, Olanrewaju Shuarau

Department of Islamic Studies
Adeniran Ogunsanya College Ofeducation, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos
+2348053411852; hos4respect@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examined the mode and practices of child upbringing among Muslim parents in Ojo, Lagos State, Nigeria. Islam had laid down principles on how parents should cater for their children. However, prevailing circumstances have made many parents to neglect their roles, leading to neglect and child abuse. This takes different dimension such as; child labour, physical and emotional assault, neglect, street hawking and even sexual abuse. From the analysis made, it was discovered that many parents are involved and responsible for the increase in child abuse. However, Islamic religion encompasses all branches of knowledge and its teachings, which if adhered to are capable of instilling sound morality to all and sundry. It is therefore recommended that; parents, community and all stakeholders should rise to the challenge and uphold Islamic teachings in order to have peace, stability and progress in our community and nation at large.

Keywords: *Child Abuse, Islamic Education, Morality, Muslim Children, Assault.*

Introduction

In Islam, a child is considered as a gift from the Creator who is the determinant of life and death. He has therefore placed man as mere custodian. Child in every culture and religion is the central focus of the family. The importance of children in the human society is borne out of the fact that the celebration of a new baby's arrival is a global practice while the childless couple, the world over, usually is an object of pity and sometimes derision (Sa'eed, 1999). It is, however, an irony that this creature that is always a source of joy is being abused the world over.

Child abuse is any act of misuse of child in any form, when a child is not being provided the much needed necessities of life. It is a situation where a child is maltreated physically, sexually or emotionally and this is detrimental to the future growth and development of such a child (Kehinde, 2012). Child abuse is the flagrant abuse of children's God-given and constitution guaranteed freedom, comfort and peace by adults in the society (Nseabasi & Abiodun, 2010). The prevalence of child abuse is alarming as it increases on a daily basis. Many people are involved in this heinous act either willfully or

unintentionally. Children are being assaulted physically, mentally, socially, spiritually and psychologically. It is a common knowledge to find children of school age roaming the streets in both rural and urban area and some of them are abused sexually and emotionally. Countries of the world have enacted various laws to protect the rights of the child. In spite of these proclamations, the abuse has prevailed unabated.

The focus of this paper, therefore, is to examine the prevalence of child abuse especially on Muslim children. It then advocates the utilization of Islamic education to combat this menace.

Child Abuse: A Cog in the Development of the Human Race

Child abuse also called cruelty to children is the willful infliction of pain and suffering on children through physical, sexual or emotional mistreatment. Prior to the 1970s, the term child abuse is normally referred only to physical mistreatment, but since then, its application has expanded to include, in addition to inordinate physical violence, unjustifiable verbal abuse; the failure to furnish proper shelter, nourishment, medical treatment or emotional support; incest and other cases of sexual molestation or rape and the use of children in prostitution or pornography. Child abuse often is overlooked, owing to prejudice, anxiety and shame. This is a form of tacit denial that actually leads to its perpetuation. Child abuse can have serious future consequences on its victims, including delays in physical

growth, impaired language and cognitive abilities and problems in personality development, learning and behavior (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009). The corollary of this action is a problem of developmental strategies of the human race. This is because the child automatically becomes the adult and since he has been abused, the development of the human species may be punctuated.

The incidence of child abuse is prevalent in Nigeria as in other parts of the world and has presently led to child labour. The increase in child abuse and child labour especially in the so-called developing nations is alarming and shocking. A visit to some areas in Lagos State for example, especially Muslim dominated areas such as *Alaba Rago* market will reveal an alarming rate of child labour activities that go on unabatedly on daily basis. This is contrary to the teachings of Islam which make education compulsory for both children and adults. On a daily basis, many abused children are denied essential care: proper medical care, good clothing, emotional support and love and not providing the affection they deserve. Many of such children who are of school age are not enrolled in schools while many are exploited and used in work or activities that are of benefit to others. It is disheartening to see some of these children being physically abused, slapped, punched, kicked and sexually harassed. Indeed, child abuse is of various forms. According to Child help (2004), child abuse includes physical injury, sexual harassment, maltreatment, deprivation of necessities or combinations of these

by an individual responsible for the child's welfare. Under these circumstances, the child's welfare is hampered or threatened (Adelusi & Akinmulere, 2008).

A situation analysis of child abuse and neglect in Nigeria, undertaken through the media of Nigerian newspapers, found that child abandonment, sexual abuse, child neglect, vagrancy, kidnapping and hawking were the most reported forms of child abuse and neglect (Ebigbo, 2003). In his study, Sulaiman (2016) identifies forms of child abuse to include physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, child labour, child marriage and witchcraft accusation against children in Africa. A comprehensive study was undertaken in Nigeria under the aegis of the African Network on Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) which was formally established in 1986 in Enugu. The survey covered three cities namely Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu. The summary of the findings as reported by Ezigbo (2003) are as follows:

1. Child abuse and neglect constitute a serious problem in Nigeria.
2. Cultural practices and traditional attitudes are to some extent contributory factors.
3. Institutions assigned the role of family and child welfare have failed to meet the challenges posed by this nationwide problem.
4. The practices of hawking, begging and abandonment all place children at extreme risk of physical danger and sexual abuse.
5. A number of handicapped children roam the streets without care.

Child abuse constitutes a cog in the wheel of progress of the human race. This assertion is premised on the fact that it is the child who eventually assumes leadership responsibilities in later life. A child that has been abused may eventually transfer aggression on the later generation; hence it becomes a vicious circle. This is why child abuse is regarded as a crime and in fact one of the greatest sins. It is sad to note that most people who indulge in the abuse of these innocent children do so for fear of poverty. Some people even kill their children in order to avert poverty. The Qur'an warns;

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. (Q 17:31)

The realization of the fact that child abuse will hinder development led various governments of the world to embark on researches aimed at combating this menace. Laws are enacted to prosecute offenders while children are taken away from the streets by government agencies for purpose of settlement. A report prepared by Archer (2012) for the Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) activity of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) indicates that child labour, as a form of child abuse, is prevalent in many African countries. The purpose of the activity was to provide technical and programme assistance to USAID in using education to combat abusive child labour. This paper, therefore, advocates the use of Islamic education to combat child abuse especially in predominantly Muslim

area. Myers (2012) summarizes the reason for child labour as coming from four primary motives which include:

- a. To ward off the worst consequences of poverty.
- b. To defray expenses needed to attend school.
- c. Because schooling is unavailable, aversive or unproductive, and
- d. To learn practical skills needed to survive and succeed in life.

For Myers, these compelling reasons explain why an estimated 250 million children under age 18 are working, often endangering their health and losing the opportunity for education. In considering appropriate action against child abuse and labour, Myer suggests that child labour interventions can be divided into three types: preventive, protective and developmental.

Preventive interventions include improving the quality and relevance of education and providing education to working children who are unable or unwilling to attend formal or non-formal education programs. Protective intervention include monitoring the working conditions of children and providing them with health care helping them protect themselves from hazardous work practice and supporting them by educating their families, communities and employers. Developmental interventions include social mobilization in favour of working children and provision of safe work opportunities for children and or their parents.

Sardar (2012) opines that child abuse is characterized by child labour and exploitation. A report posted on the

internet indicates that the prevalence of child labour is high in Pakistan. Many child labourers, notably those working as domestic servants, are completely without protection and vulnerable to a range of abuses, including sexual abuse. As part of the National Time Bound programmes, International Labour organization (ILO) conducted baseline surveys on child labour. The studies identified children working in various hazardous occupations and estimated that the highest prevalence of the worst forms of child labour for children between ages 5 – 17 years old was in the glass bangle industry followed by rag-pickers. In all sectors, the majority of children was found to be working full-time and did not attend school. The surveys showed that the main reason for parents to send their children to work was poverty (UN, 2007).

In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 40 percent of children are engaged in child labour, a form of child abuse. In most African countries, children constitute an integral part of the household economy: they help around the house, care for siblings, assist with farm chores and run errands. But millions of those children perform work that far surpasses their physical capacity, requires long hours and endangers their health, safety and well-being. Politics and poverty have placed many of these children either in, or at risk of, the worst forms of child labour. They labour as soldiers and prostitutes, in unpaid servitude and illegal activities and under abusive and hazardous conditions (Karen, 2007). This often keeps the children out of school and from enrolling in or attending school. It

prevents them from acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and limits their future livelihood opportunities and their ability to escape poverty and exploitation. Thus, education is recognized by the global community as a powerful intervention for combating child abuse as well as essential ingredient for national, social and economic development.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical viewpoint on which this research is positioned is Ecological theory. The theory was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. It targets the means through which community and larger society examine individual relationship. The study argues that numerous number of factors responsible for the abuse and neglect of children. Among these factors are: individual, family, community and culture (Craft, 2016).

Research Methods

This study employed qualitative research that uses descriptive method to elicit information for this investigation. Data for the study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. Its primary sources include personal observations and interview gotten from the victims. The secondary sources include the Qur'an, Hadith and other relevant texts.

Conceptual Clarification of Child Abuse from Conventional and Islamic Viewpoint

The protection of the children from any form of abuse according to Abdulhamid, Abdulrahim and Sanusi (2016) and in-line with Islamic Relief's Child Protection Policy (2018) is an important feature of both

religion and Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC). Article 19 requires states to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents or others responsible for the care of the child. Additionally, in Nigeria, the rights of citizens in chapter 4 section 30, 40 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees every citizen's basic and fundamental human rights. Here, the constitution does not make any distinction between the rights of adults and children. Hence it is not surprising that Islamic law pays utmost attention to securing all that is needed to guarantee a wholesome psychological climate for the rearing of children, a climate wherein they learn about the world and good Islamic and moral custom and norms.

As such Islam affirms:

- i. A child's right to good health and life
- ii. A child's right to family, kindred, name, property and inheritance
- iii. A child's right to health-care and proper nutrition
- iv. A child's right to education and acquisition of talent
- v. A child right to live in peace and security and enjoy human dignity and protection under the responsibility of the parents
- vi. The caring role of society and the state to support all rights and support families incapable of providing appropriate conditions for their children (UNICEF, 2005).

The Nigerian child in general is not exempted from the above rights and privileges. It is rather unfortunate to see that in spite of the increase of child abuse acts in the country, the children are being denied some of their legitimate rights.

Sulaiman (2018) is of the opinion that Almighty Allah created mankind and thereafter ordained the marriage of man and woman, Qur'an 4:3, 4: 22-24. He also, entrusted to each parent or caregiver definite roles for the upkeep of their children, any deviation from the roles or shirk of responsibilities of any trustee is tantamount to child abuse. This has been a phenomenon in the society today, to the extent that men of faith begin to wonder how this ugly trend could be arrested and calls for Islamic perspective to the issue. In as much as Islam is ordained by Allah, Qur'an 3:5, the faith has solutions to global problems. Thus, child abuse is viewed as the deviation or *shirks* of assigned roles and duties of parents or caretakers or trustees in the upkeep of the children.

Muslim Parents Practice and their Response to Child Abuse in Ojo, Lagos State

Parenthood requires that husband and wife should have time for their wards and satisfy their needs. Parents should be genuinely interested in their children and contribute meaningfully to their welfarism and happiness advancement. It is not uncommon nowadays that many parents are occupied with their businesses that they seem not to have time for their wards. A parent who leaves home early in the morning for work and

would not return till late in the evening just because of daily bread and making extra income is not playing role of a good parent and could not be called one of the good parents.

It is commonly practiced today that instead of having one out of the two parents at home to welcome the children home from school and to give them proper home training as suggested by Elegbede (2001), the parents now value their business mogul more than their children. The mother in particular who is expected to look after the children's cleanliness and ensure that their assignments are done before they start playing around is mostly seen leaving home before dawn and would not return home until dusk. Their precious children are left in the care of either neighbours or maid who takes little or no cognizance of the children. This is the practice of most parents across the nation today especially Ojo, Lagos State which is the focus of this paper and one of the commercial hub of the state.

As a result of failure in discharging responsibility, some parents take less cognizance of challenges facing their wards either in school, at home or among their peers because in most cases, these children must have slept before the return of the parents. Nevertheless, where they are around, instead of keeping the children close to them to elicit information from them and to make them feel sense of belonging, they believe in making them hawk to make more income. This has made it difficult for the children to express their feelings to their parents in one hand and make the

perpetrators of abuse to continue incessantly on the other hand. This has aroused the interest of the researchers to save the innocent children from any form of suffering be it psychological or otherwise.

Utilizing Islamic Education to Combat Child Abuse

The imperativeness of utilizing Islamic education to combat child abuse in Nigeria is borne out of the assertion that Muslim children are greatly affected by incessant abuse under the guise of religion. It has been observed that ill-educated Muslim parents forced their under-age children to work for the family instead of enrolling them to school. There have been several attempts at giving a definition of Islamic education. It is the fusing of the mundane and spiritual matters together to enable the child function. Islamic education within the context of Islamic heritage is all embracing. It involves the whole gamut of learning activities that take place in any institution of learning within the framework of *tawhid* (Bidmos, 2010). Islamic education includes the doctrine and pragmatic set up which emanate from and premised on the ideological framework. The framework in question entails ethics and its sustaining power, politics and its characteristics, social order and its values, economic precept while its philosophy is internationalism in all its ramifications (Ajidagba, 2011).

In 1977, as quoted by Bidmos (2010), the first world conference on Muslim education views education from the point of view of Islam as follows:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily sense.

Sarwa (1984) in Bidmos (2008) expounds the 1977 submission and defines Islamic education as follows: A system which transmits the revealed and acquired knowledge to the younger generation of Muslims in order to prepare them for life and enable them to discharge their duties as vicegerent of Allah on earth with the sole aim of achieving success here and in the hereafter.

Islamic education is a balanced system of education because it combines the mundane and the revealed knowledge. It reconciles between the spiritual and the material needs of man. It is a form of education that emphasizes strong term moral judgment. Those who engage in child abuse should be taught that there is judgment for their actions both in the grave and the hereafter. Islamic education will instill this fear in them. It will greatly enhance the understanding of dealing with children. In Islam, children are seen as precious sprouts which need tender care until adulthood. Child abuse does not have a place in the teachings of Islam. It should be noted that Muslims are enjoined to promote righteousness.

The Qur'an states:

Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining righteousness and forbidding evils. And it is they who are the successful, Qur'an 3:104

Combating child abuse through Islamic education is achievable and realistic. It requires giving adequate information on the Islamic teachings on child rearing and upbringing. Since Islamic education is not confined to the four walls of the classroom. It could be taken to the populace in the markets and on the streets through integration. It involves guiding and educating the people according to the purified teachings (Al-Jibaly, 2005).

Children are among the boundless favours from Allah so they should not be abused nor molested in any form. Islamic education guarantees human rights which are granted by Allah. Child abuse is an infringement on the divine right of the child. Human rights in Islam are permanent, perpetual and eternal. They are not subject to any alteration or modifications and there is no scope for any change or abrogation (Mawdudi, 2008). The purpose of human rights in Islam is to provide and secure the right and freedom of every individual irrespective of age, race or nationality. These rights enable the individuals to fulfill their roles and obligations in this world. Understanding the fundamental rights of the child will curb child abuse among the Muslims. On this Prophet Muhammad is reported thus:

Surely, your house helps are your brethren, Allah kept them under your care, he who his/her brethren is under his/her care, he should feed him/her from what he eats, cloth him/her from what he wears and should not place on him/her what he/she cannot bear but if such should happen,

he should then assist him/her in doing it. *Bukhari*

In our quest to eradicate, child abuse especially in Nigeria and sub-Sahara Africa, the family life should be pivoted on a sound footing. Islamic education provides a complete method of how to raise and maintain a family. This includes acknowledging the origin of man and the creation of human being in pair, choosing a spouse, roles and responsibilities of each spouse before, during and after marriage, child care and custody. Scholars have written volumes on the custody of child prior to birth and up till adulthood. Issues relating to naming, custody, education, shelter, clothing and the general well-being of the child are extensively entrenched in Islamic education. The issue of inheritance also leads to child abuse. This has been settled by Islamic education. The child either as a son or daughter has a share in inheritance and must not be deprived of this right.

Islam permits that a child could be punished or disciplined for an offence but only when other measures adopted in guiding and correcting him have failed. However, this punishment or discipline must not resort to smacking or corporal punishment (Munir, 2015). This regulation is enshrined in order to avoid child abuse. Measures of correcting a child include teaching him and admonishing him at all times, particularly whenever he is seen deviating to error. Sa'eed (1999) in accordance with Munir (2015) identifies the following measures to be applied if a Muslim child must be punished;

- i. The punishment should aim at correction and not oppression (not child abuse).
- ii. The child must be aware of the reason behind the punishment inflicted on him. \
- iii. He should not be chained like an animal and delicate parts of his body such as eyes, head, etc. must be avoided in meting out the punishment.
- iv. A Muslim child should be taught, admonished and instructed to observe the obligatory prayers and Ramadan fasting at the age of seven and punished for the violation from ten years upward.
- v. After the punishment, the child should be made to repent and resolve never to return to the offence having realized his error.

It is imperative to mention that Islamic education shall train the Muslim parents on the right attitude towards their children. If every Muslim family trains their children religiously, then the incidents of child abuse will be greatly reduced if not totally eradicated in our society. Islam teaches that children should be reared based on good morals and manners. If this is hearkened to, these innocent children will not be subject of abuse from any quarter. The golden lessons Luqman taught his son as contained in Qur'an 31:12-19 are essential ingredients to curb child abuse. The holy prophet Muhammad (SAW) is reported to have said that Allah will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to mankind (*Bukhari*, 2008). In the same vein, the prophet also said:

He is not of us, he who is not caring to our little ones and

knows not of our elder's right (*Bukhari*, 2008).

Conclusion

The incessant child abuse has been the bane of progress in most countries. This paper identified that child abuse is an aberration and infringement on the fundamental rights of the child. It examined some manifestations of child abuse such as molestation, beating, child labour, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. It advocated that Islamic education should be effectively utilized to combat the menace of child abuse in our society.

Recommendations

1. Parents should imbibe the teachings of Islam on child upbringing.
2. Parents should strive to actively monitor their children and ensure they are kept under close watch.
3. There should be *Da'wah* (evangelism) activities in the markets and places where children are being engaged in labour activities.
4. Religious education should be taught as a compulsory course in all tertiary institutions.
5. Good moral values based on religious teachings should be re-invigorated through the mass media.
6. The child right act should be amended by the National Assembly to include religious rulings and passed into law.
7. There should be a strict punishment awaiting anybody that abuses rights of children without option of fine.
8. The government should come to the aid of the masses by improving

their lots economically as this would discourage them from abusing their children.

References

- Abdulhamid, R. & Sanusi, A. M (2016). *Child abuse among Muslim families and youth development in Northern Nigeria* in Academic Research International Vol. 7(5). <https://www.journals.savap.org.pk>.
- Abdullahi, Y.A. (2007). *The holy Qur'an, translation and commentary*. Goodword books pvt ltd.
- Adelusi, J.O. & Akinmulere, A.K. (2008). A survey of the forms of child abuse in Ondo town in *Journal of Teacher Education*, Adeyemi College of education Ondo. Adeyemi College of Education.
- Ajidagba, U.I. (2011, August 12). *An overview of Islamic education in Nigeria*. <http://www.mamma.com>
- Al-Jibaly, M. (2005). Our precious sprouts, Islamic regulations for new born. Al-kitaab and As-sunah publishing.
- Archer, H. (2012, February 20). *Education to combat abusive child labor task order* <https://www.usaid/beps.com>
- Bidmos, M.A. (2008). Utilizing the potentials of Islamic education in nation building an inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Lagos. University of Lagos press.
- Bidmos, M.A. (2010). A manual for the teacher of Islamic studies. University of Lagos press.
- Bukhari, I.I. (2008). Sahihul Bukhari. Maktabatu 'ibadur-rahman wa maktabatul-'ulum wal-Hikam.
- Child abuse (2007). The new encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc.
- Child help (2004). National child abuse hotline. Child help inc.
- Craft, C. (2016, July). *Ecological theory and restoration*. <http://www.sciencedirect.com>
- Ebigbo. P.O. (2003, February 22). *Street children: The core of child abuse and neglect in Nigeria*. <http://cye.colorado.edu>.
- Elegbede, C. B (2001). Cultural education and Control of moral decadence in youths: The role of parents. In Journal of Continuing Education; A publication of School of Part-Time Studies, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos. Vol. 4, NOS. 1 & 2
- Islamic Relief's Child Protection Policy* (2018, June 19). <http://www.islamic-relief.org>
- Karen, T. (2007, February 20). *Combating exploitative child labour through education in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia together project: Regional report* <https://www.orcmacro.com>
- Kehinde, A. A. (2010, February 22). *Child abuse: Nigeria is sitting on a keg of a gun powder*. <https://www.nigeriantribuneonline.com>
- Mawdudi, A. A. (2008, June 22). *Human rights in Islam*. <https://www.dawrodibohras.com>
- Munir, M. (2015). Rights of the Child: An Islamic Perspective on Preventing Violence, Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Pakistani Law. In Rashid, S. Hamdard Islamicus. Quarterly Journal of Studies and research in Islam. Hamdard Foundation
- Myers, W. (2012, February 20). *Education to combat abusive child labor: An introductory guide to policy and practice*. <https://www.orcmacro.com>

- Nseabasi, A. and Abiodun, J.O. (2010, February 22). *The menace of child abuse in Nigeria: A case study of street hawking in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state*. <https://www.kamla-raj.com>.
- Sa'eed, A. R. (1999). *The making of a Muslim child*. Minaret books international.
- Sardar, R. (2012, February 20). *Protection of children from exploitation, abuse and violence through legal reform; The child protection bill Pakistan*. <https://www.orcmacro.com>
- Sulaiman, K. O (2018, June 19). *An Analytical Approach to the Preventing the menace of Child Abuse in Islamic Point of View*. In Sri Lankan Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Vol. 1 Issue 1. <http://seu.lk/sljais/>
- United Nations (2007, February, 20). *Awareness session among youth on combating child labour*. UN information centre, Islamabad, Pakistan. <https://www.orcmacro.com>