

How do Parents Approach Children's Islamic Rights? A Sociological Study in Attock, Punjab

Muhammad Bilal^I

Dr. Akhlaq Ahmad^{II}

Kashif Mehmood Dar^{III}

Abstract

What rights Islam has given to children and how parents approach these rights in Attock, Punjab, remain the sociological examination in this article. This paper examines parents' knowledge about children's Islamic rights and how they fulfill them. Interpretive sociology guides the methodology of this study. Purposively, 19 parents were interviewed through an interview guide. The analysis revealed that many parents were not aware of the fundamental Islamic rights of their children, such as giving children Islamic names, food, health, education, socialization, and recreation. As mentioned earlier, the parents who were aware of the children's Islamic rights were ignorant about the Islamic ways of fulfilling children's fundamental Islamic rights.

Keywords: Children's Islamic rights, parent's knowledge. Islamic names, health, Education, socialization, recreation.

Introduction

Islam as a religion has given self-explanatory instructions to parents about children's rights; meeting these rights is considered fundamental religious deeds¹. These rights start from the birth of a child, such as giving them an Islamic name, rearing, caring for, and fulfilling health and education needs². The believer's parents' responsibilities regarding children's rights are undeniable in religious discourse³. Parents are responsible for giving children good food, clothes, and shelter and socializing them in a good way because they are custodians of the parents in the future⁴. Children are believed as an uncountable blessing of Allah, and parents are taught to keep them as Amanah from the side of Allah. The parents and society are also responsible for caring for children because all Muslims are considered benevolent⁵. It is believed that today's children are tomorrow's society because children are the building blocks and fundamental human capital of a society. It depends on how parents structure the foundation of human society while placing children as basic blocks. Believer parents are guided on making these blocks (children) for the rest of societal building⁶. Parents are religiously bound to raise their parents in a way that they can play a constructive role in society. Barrett (2012) argued that meeting the children's fundamental needs is the parents' moral and religious duty because they are the future of society⁷. The context of children, future society, and parents' responsibility is evident in Islam. Islam says that believer parents are

I PhD scholar, Department of Sociology, IIUI, Islamabad

II Associate Professor, Institute of Social & Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab

III Department of Sociology, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

responsible for making their children's socialization a source of their baksheesh for after-death life⁸.

The following anecdote is evidence of children's rights in Islam: once, a person appeared before Umar ibn-Al-Khattab and complained about his son's disobedience. When Umar called his son about the matter, he replied, 'O commander does a boy have rights against my father?' Umar replied, "Yes." The boy asked what these rights were. Umar replied to select a good mother for him, to give him a good name, and to teach him the Quran. The boy said; O commander of the faithful, my father has gifted me with none of these. Umar turned and told the father that he had not fulfilled his responsibilities to his son, and he came to me to complain about his son's disobedience⁹. It is evident here that violating children's rights is equal to violating Allah's law. Islamic literature revealed that Prophet (PBUH) predicted that kindness to children would give a unique identity to Muslims among all other communities¹⁰.

A sociological understanding of parenting and children's rights is not irrelevant in this discussion. Sociology considers family/parenting as one of the fundamental social institutions where parents are held as responsible stakeholders against their children's rights¹¹.

Methodology

This article is based on the data collected from tehsil *Attock*, a tehsil northwest of Punjab. The purposive sampling method was used for the selection of participants. Twenty-nine in-depth interviews were conducted with parents. The saturation point determined the number of interviews. Data collection reaches a saturation point when no more respondents are available, no more data is required for the project, or repetition starts in the respondents' opinions¹². The researchers stopped the data collection as repetition started in participants' views about the study questions. To ensure richness and diversity in the data, interviews were conducted in different parts of the district. Considering ethical standards, parents were interviewed respectfully and suitably. Both male and female parents were interviewed, but the number of females was less than that of males because females were not easily accessible. It is necessary to state that to keep confidentiality, participants' names and places are not mentioned, and pseudonyms are used where mandatory.

Respondents from different social backgrounds were contacted, such as farmers, shopkeepers, drivers, fruit and vegetable sellers, and factory workers. The participants were contacted through local contacts using one of the researchers' contacts as he belonged to the district. The data were collected in Punjabi and transcribed into English for further processing. The thematic analysis technique was used to create themes from the data in line with the study objectives. The themes that emerged from the data on parents' knowledge about and their approach to children's Islamic rights are discussed in the results and discussion section below.

Results and Discussion

Parents' knowledge about their children's Islamic rights, such as giving them Islamic names, food, health, education, socialization, and recreation, is essential in fulfilling these rights. Parents can't fulfill their children's Islamic rights if they don't know about these rights and the Islamic ways of meeting children's fundamental rights. What children's Islamic rights parents know and how they meet them using Islamic ways remains under discussion in the following themes.

Parents' Knowledge of Children's Islamic Names

Muslim parents are religiously bound to give children Islamic names¹³. However, participants' opinions in this research suggest that most parents knew this sacred responsibility but could not understand the Islamic names. They were unaware of the Islamic nomenclature of giving good names to their children. One of the participants revealed that *no one had taught me Islamic names and their meanings for my children, and I still do not know the Islamic names*. The situation is not only prevailed in the study area. Tarazi (1995) also found that most parents do not know about Islamic names for their children. One of the commonly revealed opinions of the respondents from the analysis is that *we know about our responsibility of giving children names. Still, we cannot understand the Islamic names and how these could be good in terms of meanings*. One of the participants stated that *they had been told to give Arabic names to their child but could not understand the implications of Arabic words*¹⁴.

Conversely, Munir (2014) concluded that parents are religiously bound to understand and give their children Islamic names with good meanings because names reflect an individual's personality¹⁵. Islam has given clear instructions about children's rights in which Islamic name is the fundamental right of children over parents. Arfat (2013) found that an excellent Islamic name has a good meaning for one's personality, and parents are instructed to give good names to their children. The analysis in this study revealed a different situation. Many participants have shared a common opinion that *we don't know about good names and their meanings because we are guided to give names to their children in Arabic and don't know the meanings of Arabic words*. It is confirmed from the analysis that most of the study participants were unaware of understanding and giving their children an Islamic name because they could not understand the Arabic language. The participants were mostly confused about the language the child should be named in. They claimed a non-understanding of the Arabic language, which is usually associated with giving Islamic names to children.

Children's Food, Health, and Education: Parents' Perspective

The analysis suggests that most participants knew about children's food, health, and education as fundamental Islamic rights. Still, they didn't take these rights in their natural essence because many parents claim they have always been

taught about parents' rights over children and significantly less about children's Islamic rights over parents. One of the participants stated that *I had always been listening to Masjid's imam teaching about parents' Islamic rights over children. He talks significantly less about food, health, and education as children's fundamental Islamic rights over parents. That's why we didn't focus on these children's rights that seriously.* Another participant revealed that *I know about children's food, health, and education as their Islamic rights over me. Still, due to socioeconomic crises, I cannot fulfill my children's rights.* Rajabi-Ardeshiri (2009) also found that religious leaders often talk about parents' rights compared to children's rights over parents because they are parents¹⁶. The phenomenon of children's Islamic rights is not new but recent debates focused on it as these have not received that much attention compared to parents' Islamic rights over children. Sait (2002) concluded that not only parents are responsible for meeting their children's fundamental rights, such as food, health, and education, but the state is also responsible. Unfortunately, both of these stakeholders have not focused on the issue seriously¹⁷. Sait's finding confirmed by many participants in this study that government does not have adequate policies to support us in meeting our children's fundamental rights. One of the participants revealed that *I know about children's fundamental Islamic rights, such as food, health, and education. Still, I cannot fulfill these rights due to poor socioeconomic status, and the government does not support us.*

Similarly, one of the respondents shared an interesting opinion that *my source of knowledge about children's Islamic rights is the Mulla (religious leader) because I am illiterate. Still, he does not teach us specifically about how to meet these fundamental rights of the children, especially food, health, and education.* This response confirms Monshipouri and Kaufman's (2015) study that getting knowledge about children's fundamental rights is the primary step, and most parents were unaware of this knowledge¹⁸. Religious scholars are responsible for teaching children Islamic rights, such as education, health, food, and other fundamental rights. In contrast, one of the participants in this study stated that *every parent is responsible for gaining knowledge about children's Islamic rights and understanding how to fulfill these rights.* Interestingly, another participant shared that *religious scholars are responsible for teaching us Islam, and children's rights are one of the fundamental subjects of the religion.* It is evident from the analysis in this study that parents lack knowledge about children's Islamic rights, which is one of the significant barriers to meeting children's fundamental rights, such as food, health, and education.

Children's Socialization and Recreation: Parents' Approach

Religion Islam bounds Muslim parents to understand children's socialization and recreation as fundamental rights. They are also responsible for knowing the Islamic ways of doing children's socialization and meeting recreation as children's fundamental Islamic rights¹⁹. The analysis of this stud

revealed that many parents were unaware of children's socialization and recreation as children's fundamental Islamic rights. And those who knew these rights were unaware of children's socialization and recreation in Islamic ways. One of the participants confided that *I didn't know about the children's socialization and recreation as my sacred responsibility. I know about children's food, health, and education, but I am not aware of children's socialization.* In this study, some other participants shared that *we know that children's socialization and recreation are our religious responsibility, but how to do this is unknown to us.* Another participant revealed an interesting opinion that *I am a Muslim by birth. Still, neither my parents nor any other religious scholar told me how to socialize with my children in an Islamic way.* Resa, Aulia, and Asbari (2022) also found that Islamic education is essential for children's socialization, but most parents are not Islamically educated enough about children's socialization and training²⁰. Likewise, one informant reported in this study that *I know children's socialization and recreation are my prime responsibility, but I m unable to understand the Islamic ways of fulfilling these responsibilities.* Many other participants shared similar views: *we have not noticed how children are socialized following Islamic methods. They believed that this was the responsibility of our parents and religious scholars to teach us about children's socialization in an Islamic way.* These responses conform with Santoso's (2016) study that parents are religiously bound to understand Islamic methods of socializing their children. Still, they usually don't understand the Islamic ways of socializing their children²¹. One of the parents shared a unique view that *once I asked the Mulla (religious leader) how to socialize my children in an Islamic way and provide them with proper recreational facilities. He told me that this was the responsibility of your parents to teach you how to socialize with your children.* To summarize the discussion, it can be argued that most parents were unaware of their children's socialization and recreation as their fundamental religious responsibility. And those who were aware of this were ignorant of the Islamic ways of socializing and providing recreational facilities to their children following Islamic practices.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this article appropriately highlighted the gaps between parents' knowledge about and their approach to children's fundamental Islamic rights, such as giving children an Islamic name, food, health, education, socialization, and recreation. The analysis concluded that most parents were unaware of giving their children an Islamic name. And those who were aware of children's Islamic names as their sacred responsibility were ignorant about the Islamic nomenclature of giving their children Islamic names. This study further concluded that most participants did not recognize children's food, health, and education as their fundamental Islamic compulsion. Those parents who were aware of this religious obligation could not appropriately fulfill their children's

food, health, and education needs because they were always taught by their families and religious leaders (*Mulla*) about parents' rights over children and even less about children's Islamic rights over parents.

This article also found that many parents were unaware of children's socialization and recreation as their fundamental religious responsibility. The analysis concluded that some parents were aware of children's socialization and recreational responsibilities but couldn't understand the Islamic ways of socializing their children and giving them recreational facilities.

References

- 1 Arfat, S. (2013). Islamic perspective of children's right: An overview. *Asian journal of social sciences and humanities*, 2(1)
- 2 Saeidi, M., Ajilian, M., Farhangi, H., & Khodaei, G. H. (2014). Rights of children and parents in Holy Quran. *International Journal of Pediatrics*, 2(3.2), 103-113.
- 3 Bensaid, B. (2021). An overview of Muslim spiritual parenting. *Religions*, 12(12), 1057.
- 4 Al-Uthaymeen, S. (2016). *The Rights of Children in Islam*
- 5 Omran, A. R. (1990). Children rights in Islam from the Qur'an and Sunnah. *Population Sciences (Cairo, Egypt)*, 9, 77-88
- 6 Manning, C. (2015). *Losing our religion: How unaffiliated parents are raising their children (Vol. 1)*. NYU Press
- 7 Barrett, J. L. (2012). *Born believers: The science of children's religious belief*. Simon and Schuster
- 8 Komesuor, J., Nsamenang, S. A., Salifu Yendork, J., Boadu, S. O., Osei-Tutu, A., & Worthington Jr, E. L. (2023). Forgiveness among Ghanaian children and early adolescents in the context of peer-to-peer dyads. *Personal Relationships*.
- 9 Islamic perspective of children's right: An overview. *Asian journal of social sciences and humanities*, 2(1)
- 10 Donner, F. M. (2010). *Muhammad and the believers: At the origins of Islam*. Harvard University Press
- 11 Henslin, J. M., Possamai, A., & Possamai-Inesedy, A. (2007). *Sociology: A down-to-earth approach* (p. 792). Allyn and Bacon
- 12 Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods*. Sage
- 13 Rights of children and parents in Holy Quran. *International Journal of Pediatrics*, 2(3.2), 103-113.
- 14 Tarazi, N. (1995). *The child in Islam*. American Trust Publications.
- 15 Munir, M. (2014). Rights of the child: An Islamic perspective on preventing violence, abuse, and exploitation of children and Pakistani law. *Hamdard Islamicus (October-December 2015)*, 38(4), 33-58
- 16 Rajabi-Ardeshiri, M. (2009). The rights of the child in the Islamic context: The challenges of the local and the global. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 17(3), 475-489
- 17 Sait, M. S. (2002). Islamic perspectives on the rights of the child. In *Revisiting Children's Rights* (pp. 31-50). Brill Nijhoff
- 18 Monshipouri, M., & Kaufman, C. L. (2015). *The OIC, Children's Rights and Islam*. Danish Institute for Human Rights.
- 19 Istambouli, M. (2000). An exploratory case study of religio-cultural issues in an Islamic school: Implications for socialization and enculturation. *Loyola University Chicago*

- 20 Resa, R. Z., Aulia, T. N., & Asbari, M. (2022). The Role of Islamic Education on Parenting Patterns. *Journal of Information Systems and Management (JISMA)*, 1(4), 13-19.
- 21 Santoso, M. (2016). Islamic Perspective on The Rights of Child: Their Consequences For The Roles Of State And Civil Society (Especially in Education).