

Raising Virtuous Children in The Contemporary Vicious World: The Islamic Paradigm

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Abstract

There are two views about children in the Glorious Qur'an. One is that children are means of prettification (ziinat) in life. The other is that children are causes of trouble (fitnah) in life. The line of demarcation between the two views is the way and manner in which a child is brought up. A child brought up in a Godly manner becomes (a means of) titivation for his parents, the society in which he lives and the world at large. One brought up in an ungodly manner becomes an (agent of) destabilization in the society and consequently a curse to the whole world. Hence, the many cases of crime experienced across countries of the world. This paper therefore makes an attempt to present the Islamic paradigm for raising children, particularly adolescents in a manner in which they become means of ornamentation in the society they live. The paper adopted an analytical method. Following the introduction, it justifies why the contemporary world is referred to as a vicious one. Thereafter, the paper looks at adolescence as the stage of human development mostly prone to risky and bad behaviours and links it with the danger that eventually pricks the society. It then discusses the western approach to child upbringing after which it presents the Islamic perspective of the adolescent child and the Islamic viewpoint on raising them (i.e., child upbringing). The paper draws its conclusion and offers a number of recommendations.

Keywords: children, virtues, vices, contemporary world, Islam

Introduction

The challenge of raising virtuous children cannot be more realized than now when the environment in which they are to be raised is becoming more dangerous and vicious than ever. To say the least is to say that the contemporary world is dangerous for raising children. This is because of the spate of crime in the modern world. Although, cases of armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, etc have been with man for a long time, they are becoming more rampant and complicated in the contemporary world. That they are shared on the social media networks as they occur, giving details of the crime was carried out makes the situation worse and gruesome than it was. It makes it worse and gruesome in that people who are not naturally inclined to crime are taught how to go about it. Amazingly, some of these crimes are committed by minors. In Nigeria, for example, the attack of a college by secondary school students with dangerous weapons and charms to protest the decision of a (i.e., Osun) state government to allow only those who passed the qualifying examination to be conducted by the state government enjoy the state government – sponsored free West African Examination Council (WAEC) registration is a case in focus here (Oyegbami, 2015). Teachers were beaten and students chased out of classrooms. Both Maduabuchi (2015) and Bohlal (2015) reported that the crisis was solely caused by some students who knew they could not pass the qualifying examination. The report further revealed that the pupils were suspected to belong to some cultist groups (Fashina, 2015). Similar cases of arson, (gang) rape and murder among others are reported about children in the contemporary society and are not limited to Nigeria or the African continent alone. They abound also in other countries. There is no doubt that some explanations for the attitude of these children can be found in what they consume from the social and electronic media. Hence, the contemporary world is said to be dangerous and vicious. The question that is however, begging for answer has to do with the type of children being raised in the contemporary world and the kind of future that we should look up to with them as leaders. This paper therefore is an attempt to provide a paradigm for raising virtuous children who will make the terrestrial world a haven for its inhabitants in the future.

The Vicious Nature of the Contemporary World

Every generation of human being is characterized by a feature. The very first generation of man is known for its non-civility. Then, people lived a life characterized by primitivism. They generated light by hitting two stones against each other, killed animals with bare hands and covered their shame with leaves (Moore,1992). Hence it is called “the stone age”. The Stone Age is closely followed by the age

of civilization. There and then, the people of the world showed some level of civility. They developed better ways of doing things (Moore,1992). Hence, their age is known in history as the age of civilization. After that came the age of colonization. This was when the more developed peoples of the world like the Britons, Portuguese and French enslaved peoples of other parts of the world. This is also called the age of imperialism. The abolition of slave trade however ushered in the era of industrialization. The socio-economic systems of those peoples were no longer based on agriculture as it were but upon the industrial production of manufactured goods. With it, the more developed peoples of the world became industrialized⁷. Over time, works done by human beings were taken over by machines. That led to what is called the scientific/technological age. This was/is an age of scientific discoveries. Man travelled to the space, discovered the number of the objects in the space, studied their movements and as well manipulated them and the entire space itself to his advantage.

The consequences of this manipulation are many as well as serious. Man began to develop instruments that can injure, maim and kill in addition to those that improve human living conditions. Man also developed machines that not only link peoples of the world together but also substances that can kill several millions of people at a goal. Soon the world became a small village on the one hand and on the other, a place where the influence of one part greatly rubs on and affects the other. The general consequence of this is that the wave of crime increased as weapons of destruction are proliferated and the knowledge of handling them easily accessible. The internet is the main instrument of communication and instruction here. The environment around the world thus becomes so vicious and dangerous that nowhere appears safe. All sorts of crime are committed by all categories of people including men in the House of God (Moore,1992). Rape, cultism, kidnapping for ransom and ritual purposes, armed robbery, terrorism etc are some of the crimes that the contemporary world experiences on large scales. To say the least is to say that the contemporary world is “a criminal and dangerous world”. Criminal in the sense that crimes are committed with impunity, and dangerous in the sense that others are unsolicitedly taught how to also commit such crimes particularly through the uncensored social media. This is because when a robbery occurs, an eye witness who has it recorded puts it on the social media network for others to see how it all went. When an accident occurs, instead of saving lives, people take pictures of the victims and upload on the social media. When a house is on fire, instead of quenching it, people around compete in taking its picture so as to be the first to upload it on the social media network! When a person loses a loved one, instead of sympathizing with the family and helping in preparing the corpse for burial, what most people do is to upload the news and perhaps the old beautiful pictures of the deceased for people’s comments. The cumulative effect of all these is that the virtues of love, good neighbourliness, respect for human lives, being one’s brother’s keeper etc all of which kept the human society safe and sane in the years gone by are disappearing. The criminals are having a free day while the younger ones are learning the trade and acting faster than one can imagine.

Ours is therefore a vicious world. Hence the contemporary world is said to be dangerous for the younger generation and consequently the need to provide a working formula for parents on how to raise their children so that, on the one hand, they are protected from the dangerous environment in which they are being raised and on the other hand, they do not partake in the crimes. This is important because youths are mainly the victims of these crimes most of the times just as they play significant roles in all of these because of the reinvigoration of physical strength and stamina which tends to make them aggressive thereby prone to greater tendencies for violence.

The Proneness of Children to Vices

The process of human development can be broadly classified into two – pre-natal and post-natal. While the former concerns the period before a child’s birth, the latter concerns life after birth. This is divided into stages, namely infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Of these stages of post-natal development, the adolescent is the most crucial as the basis of whatever description would be given of an individual later in life is said to be formed at this stage. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) quoted by Okwaraji, et al. (1988), it is the period in human development lasting between the ages of ten (10) and nineteen (19) years. Ogunlayi (2006) puts adolescence between 11 and 19/21 years while in Shehu’s (2001) view, the most important idea in the definition of adolescence is the fact of its being a stage between childhood and adulthood. Psychologists like Soares however believe that age brackets are no longer relevant in defining adolescence. To them, the age brackets are disappearing or

at least becoming increasingly blurred (Shehu, 2001). Hence, the description of adolescence in terms of its developmental characteristics. Adolescence therefore is the stage of human development that has to do with systematic qualitative changes that occur in an individual's biological, social and emotional capacities over the life span. Recent reports have, however, revealed that adolescents really constitute the largest population in the world. They are said to be over 1 billion of the 7 billion people in the world, translating to one out of every five persons in every given part of the world.

The adolescent is said to be more prone to both emotional and mental disorder. According to Ogunlayi (2006), such a development includes mentality such as intelligence, knowledge, skills; emotionality like tolerance, feelings etc and maturity such as sexual experience. This development, Utz (2011) maintains, occurs in many facets including spiritual, psychological, emotional, intellectual, social and physical. Hence, Santrock (1998) posits that adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture.

Of the four stages of human development, adolescence is considered the most dangerous stage. This is because habits either good or bad formed at this stage of life commonly stay with the human being throughout his or her life span. Many factors like parents/home, teachers/school, peer group/friends, social media, society among others influence the child's characters at this stage to be either good or bad. These socio-environmental and psychological factors (i.e., agencies) greatly influence the habits of the adolescent child. Each of these agencies is competing for the attention and adoration of the child. Most times, they present or teach conflicting theories/ideas to the child. Kassamali (2015) perhaps draws attention to the negative influence of the school environment in a very uncommon manner when he observes thus:

Just as books can be a good influence, they can also be a destructive one. A bad book can spoil the mind of a child, filling it with poisonous ideas and views. Many books for children are filled with violence, fantasies and romance. Comics and other such books may be entertaining but have little or no benefit for the child. Parents should know what their children are reading. It is not enough to encourage children to read and then leave them to choose whatever they wish. Most children will choose junk literature which has little benefit for the mind or for literary development. Children must be guided towards choosing good books.

Aside this, children easily imitate what they see others do in the society or from the social media like the television, internet or the likes. Hamdan (2009) for example, notes that research has found that children spend an average of three to four hours watching television each day and concludes that in a 65-year lifespan, that means she/he will have spent nine of those years in front of a box. With these statistics, one realizes that children spend significant amount of time in the fictional world, engaging with this virtual world often more than they do in the real world with the implication that most of the habits formed are learnt from there. Kassamali (2015) argues this point further:

There are some advantages to it. Children can learn from the television. There are some good programs and documentaries that broaden the horizons of a child's life and teach him about the world around him. However, television also has its bad side.... Children constantly watching shows begin to think that love, beauty, glamour and fun are the aims of life. Wrong messages are absorbed and learnt by the child. These messages are quite effective because they are passed through the medium of sight. Children are bombarded with images of people seemingly leading fun filled lives... The world, however, seems to admire such people and... children begin to admire them too. They wish to emulate them, and follow their way of life. This type of subtle brain washing is very dangerous and can greatly influence the mind of a child (p.15).

He continues:

Another disadvantage of television is the amount of violence it shows. It is a known fact that regular viewers of television become immune to violence. Scenes of death and gruesome violence create no emotion in them. Some viewers are even tempted to carry out what they watch. Human beings lose their gentleness and humanness when they watch a lot of violence. The result is scary. Scores of young television viewers have no concern

over the killings and murders that have become a part of life in many parts of the world (pp.15-16).

Peer group or friends also constitute another agency of child education with great influence on the life of the child. Kassamali (2015) also submits that many children stray from the straight path as a result of the negative influence of friends.

Adaptations to these factors, however, evolve around some risks. Psychologists believe that this stage is characterized by the tendency to experiment with some risky behaviours. This aspect of habit development of this stage is not necessarily a bad thing. Most adolescents however experiment with bad habits like smoking, drug use, fashion, stealing, sex etc. It is established that adolescents in schools, for instance, who are involved in risk-taking like gangsterism drug usage, cultism, sexual proximity and alcoholism failed to ascertain the dexterous impact that these variables could have on their personality and life functioning as youths or adolescents. Stanly (2006) further notes that traits such as neuroticism, higher anxiety level, depression and communication apprehension have been reported in adolescents and attributed to the intense stress and trauma experienced by them in school. It is also found by Hall and Webster (2002) that adolescents with drug abuse have more self-reported stress and more difficulty in their living. According to the World Health Organization WHO- (2008), 70% of pre-mature deaths are due to these bad risky behaviours. This scenario of deaths is one of the negative consequences which adolescents face while taking risks in as much as absolute freedom is given to them to experiment many things in the realm of risks. Miller (2009) therefore notes that adolescents fall victim of this negative result among others because they actually seek to develop their own identity, opinions and values. Ayman-Nolly and Tiara (2000) also argue that it is during this stage that impulses and unruliness manifest to a point that they turn into criminal behaviours if not checked. The difficulty that the adolescent experiences at this stage is perhaps recognized and consequently identified as the age of *identity formation* and *self-definition*.

Parenting a Child: The Western Approach

The style of parenting a child undoubtedly affects the total being of that child negatively or positively. Four basic parenting styles have been identified thus: i) Authoritarian Parenting; ii) Authoritative Parenting; iii) Permissive Parenting and iv) Uninvolved Parenting (Shehu, 2001). In Authoritarian Parenting, children are expected to follow strict rules established by the parents but failure to follow such rules results in punishment. Parents here adopt the use of physical discipline to punish their children (Alanazi, 2008). Such parents mostly have high demands from their children to follow their rules but are not responsive to their children's rights. Baumrind as cited in Undiyaundeye (2013) admits that such parents are obedient – status – oriented and expect their order to be obeyed without explanation. In the same sense, Ojo (2007) concludes that children of such parents are less self – assured, less intellectually curious, more dependent, more passive and less socially adapt. Thus, the consequence of this style may not favour the society.

Authoritative Parenting style requires parents actually establishing rules and guidelines that their children are expected to follow but are more democratic in nature. They are responsive to their children's rights and are willing to listen to their questions vis-a-vis observations or ideas. When children fail to meet these instructions, rather than punishing, they forgive and nurture them. Undiyaundeye (2013) citing Baurmind submits that these parents monitor and impact clear standards for their children conducts. This suggests that such parents are not restrictive and instructive. Alanazi (2008) therefore posits that these parents do not use physical discipline to punish their children. Ojo (2007) concludes that children raised in authoritative homes are more responsible, more creative and adaptive and are more successful in life endeavours.

Parents in Passive Parenting are sometimes referred to as indulgent parents. They make few demands from their children and rarely discipline them. This is as a result of the fact that they have low expectations of maturity and self – control. According to Undiyaundeye (2013), these parents are nurturing and communicating with their children; perhaps they often take the status of a friend more than that of parents. In this way, Alanazi (2008) concludes that children from permissive homes show low level of academic achievements. Ojo (2007) corroborates this by noting that permissive parents believe that exercising control on children is an infringement on their freedom which may interfere with

healthy development of the individual. He submits that children of such homes are less nature, more irresponsible, more conforming to their peers and less able to assume leadership role.

Uninvolved parenting, according to Undiyaundeye (2013), is characterized by few demands, low responsiveness and little communication such that the parents (here) fulfil the child's basic needs but are generally detached from the lives of their children. This reveals that in some cases, these parents may not even provide their children's needs. Ojo (2007) therefore maintains that these parents are indifferent as they neither demand nor respond to the needs of their children concluding that children raised in such homes are impulsive and are more likely to be involved in delinquent acts.

Kassim (2015) therefore submits that it has been maintained that for healthy development in children, authoritative parenting is the best style of parenting. Ojo (2007) puts up four reasons for its preference over other styles; viz:

- i. Authoritative parents are flexible in the approach to parenting.
- ii. Parents give room for family discussion where decisions, rules and expectations are explained which helps children to understand social system and relationships.
- iii. Parents promote intellectual developments that provide an important foundation for the development of psycho-social competence.
- iv. Children from authoritative homes are more likely to identify with their parents and avoid getting involved in deviant behaviours.

Children from the Perspective of Islam

Children are gifts from God. Both the Bible and the Qur'an view them as wonderful blessings of God Almighty. The Bible for example reported Jesus as loving children, bringing them closer to him thereby indicating that they are wonderful instruments that are needed to move his ministry forward. The Qur'an 16:72 also says:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَبْنَاءً وَحَفَظَهُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَقْبَالَ بَاطِلٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

And Allah has made wives for you from among yourselves and made for you out of them children (i.e., sons and daughters) and grand-children

The Glorious Qur'an also states that no personal efforts could bring one a child except and unless it pleases God to bless one with it. Qur'an 42:49-50 state:

لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنثَاءً وَيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ ۝ أَوْ يُرَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَ إِنثَاءً وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ عَقِيمًا إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ

To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows (Children) male or female according to His will. Or He bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren whom He wills; for He is full of knowledge and power.

The fact that today, causes of as high as 35 per cent of cases of infertility are still unknown despite improved scientific knowledge and technological know-how which have helped a great deal in solving infertility problems lends credence to Islam's position that God alone bestows children on whom He wills and when He desires.

As in psychology, Islam also has an idea of the stages of human development. Allah states in the Glorious Qur'an 71:13-14:

مَّا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا ۝ وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا

What is the matter with you that you are not conscious of Allah's majesty; seeing that it is He that creates you in diverse stages.

Elsewhere, He said:

لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ

[That] you will surely experience state after state (Qur'an 84:19).

A more specific classification of human development stages is presented in Qur'an 22:5-6 where Allah said:

... وَ نُفِّرُ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ... ○ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ...

... And We cause whom We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed term, then We bring you out as infants, then (give you growth) that you may reach your age of full strength. ...Such is (the cycle of life) to prove that God alone is the Truth and it is He Who brings the dead to life ... (See also Qur'an 40:67).

These verses generally indicate the stages of human development from conception to adulthood. Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad had also divided the stages of human development from infancy to 21 years (Shehu, 2001). Corroborating the above, Utz (2011) also submits that humans will experience these successive stages from prenatal to infancy, to childhood to adolescence, to early adulthood, to middle adulthood and to late adulthood.

Though all stages of human development have received adequate attention in the sources of law in Islam, the adolescence stage seems to receive a greater attention in both the Qur'an and the Hadith. This is perhaps because that stage is seen in Islam as the state in which the individual assumes moral and religious responsibilities. In other words, Islam sees it as the beginning of moral and spiritual consciousness of an individual. A number of Qur'anic verses and Ahadith allude to this. Qur'an 4:6 for example says:

وَ ابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ ءَانَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبَرُوا

And make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage; and if then you find sound judgement in them; release their property to them, but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste against their growing...

According to Shehu (2001), sound judgement in this verse refers to full intellectual development, whereas the phrase, "age of marriage" indicates psycho-sexual development. He concludes:

In essence, it is the age of adolescence that is being alluded to. If this is realized in them, the verse enjoins that they should be given full independence and freedom over their economic transactions. The verse, therefore, can be said to be a recognition of the basic need for independence, and also an attestation of the fact that, the individual, at this level of development, is capable of assuming both economic and legal responsibility (p.79).

Another Qur'anic passage indicating adolescence as the stage of moral-economic and legal –religious consciousness and responsibility in Islam is Qur'an 24:58-59 which reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَن يَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ... ○ وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ...

O ye who believe! Let those whom your right hands possess (i.e., servants) and those (children) among you who have not come to puberty ask for permission (before they come to your presence) on three occasions...But when the children among come to puberty, let them (also) ask for permission, as do those senior to them in age ...

The understanding that is penetrating from the Qur'anic passage is that children who have come of age (i.e., adolescents) are enjoined to seek permission at all times before entering unto their parents whereas, children who have not come of age (i.e., have not attained the age of puberty) can enter the house freely without seeking for permission. What this implies, as noted earlier, is that Islam takes that stage of human development as crucial to habit formation. It is in this spirit that it makes series of provisions on how the adolescent child should be nurtured as a stepping stone into life. One saying of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that is apposite here states:

مروا أولادكم بالصلاة وهم أبناء سبع واضربوهم عليها وهم أبناء عشر، وفرقوا بينهم في المضاجع

Instruct your children to pray at age seven (7), punish them if they fail to practice it at age ten and let them sleep separately from one another.

Shehu (2001) also writes:

It is believed having attained certain physico-sexual and cognitive developments, he/she should be placed under certain regulations that would usher in his/her positive and upright development as a responsible individual in the society (p.78).

Although Muslims believe that the religious rationale behind the value of children in Islam is based on some certain Qur'anic references (i.e., Q.16:72; Q.42:49-80; Q.18:46 e.t.c) and the Prophetic saying which reads:

تناكحوا تناسلوا تكثروا فإني مياہ بكم الأمم يوم القيامة

Marry and multiply for I will make a display (i.e., a pride) of you on the Day of Judgement/Resurrection (cited in Omran,1998, p. 31).

Yet, Islam insists at the same time that they should be raised correctly in accordance with the rights given to them by Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) which is automatically the duties/responsibilities of the Muslim parents. The problematic issue that may arise here is how Muslim parents raise their children in today's world as to make the Prophet (PBUH) proud of them on the Day of Judgement? Indeed, the early years of the children's life are the best periods in which the parents have the golden opportunity to mould children and their personalities (Azad, 2014). Parents should be mindful that as their children are God's gifts in trust to them, raising them to become pious, righteous and worshipful soul fetch them reward in the next world by God Who entrusted their children to them. Azam (2011) posits that by raising children in an Islamically approved way, parents are creating a continual charity (*sadaqatul jaariya*) for themselves which they would continue to benefit from after their demise. He further stressed that whatever one teaches one's child, one will receive the reward of whatever they do without it diminishing their reward in the least. Thus, parents will be held responsible for this trust (of raising their children in an Islamic ways) on the Day of Judgement (Syed, 2015).

Islamic Model for Raising Virtuous Children

Islam considers children as *amānah* - أمانة - (i.e., trust) given to the family to raise on behalf of God Almighty. Qur'an 2:30 posits that man is God's vicegerent on earth. Man's vicegerency of God on earth therefore, makes it obligatory for the family in whose care the man is kept in the world in the capacity of parents to raise him in a righteous manner so as to fulfil the divine mission for which he has been created. Parents, in this sense, are therefore charged with the responsibility of raising their children in accordance with certain provisions. These provisions, except a few, are regulated within the framework of rights and responsibilities between the parents and the children. Parents have responsibilities for and rights over their children and children have responsibilities for and rights over their parents. The rights of one are the responsibilities of the other. If parents are able to discharge this duty as expected of them by Islam, children eventually become virtuous and could be regarded as *zīnah* - زينة - (adornment). If otherwise, they become *fitnah* - فتنة - (trial). Hence, the two seemingly contradictory views of children in the Glorious Qur'an. In one verse, Allah says:

المال والبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ...

Wealth and children are allurements of the life of this world (Qur'an 18:46).

The same idea is repeated in another verse thus:

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

And know that your properties and your children are but a (means of) trial and that Allah has with Him a great reward (Qur'an 8:28).

Elsewhere however, it says;

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

Your wealth and your children are but a (means of) trial and Allah has with Him a great reward (Qur'an 64:15).

These two ideas about children are not contradictory. Each describes a situation that a child finds himself or herself after the process of upbringing the child must have been completed. Islam therefore enjoins parents to raise their children in a way pleasing to Allah. Muslim parents are thus responsible for raising their children in an Islamically approved manner (Azad, 2014). The Qur'an 8:53 says:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

... Allah never changes a favour which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition. And indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

Elsewhere again, the Qur'an 13:11 speaks:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ ...

Surely Allah changes not the condition of a people until they change their own condition

...

These verses suggest that human beings have the ability to change their negatives features (i.e., present conditions) and develop healthy behaviours for better society. Parental roles, in Islam, are also subjected to these verses in correcting the negative effects of the social agencies on the children particularly as it concerns what the child consumes in terms of education, moral ethics, social norms, etc as well as the source(s) from which those things come from. It is therefore the parent's sole responsibility in Islam to raise his/her child(ren) in a way/manner pleasing to Allah. Notably, the noble Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar to have said:

عن عبد الله بن عمر أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: كلكم راع فمسؤول عن رعيته، فلأمير الذي على الناس راع وهو مسؤول عنهم، والرجل راع على أهل بيته وهو مسؤول عنه، والمرأة راعية على بيت بعلها وولده وهي مسؤولة عنهم، والعبد راع على مال سيده وهو مسؤول عنه، فكلكم راع وكلكم مسؤول عن رعيته (رواه البخاري و مسلم).

Everyone among you is a protector and is responsible for what you are protecting. A Ruler is a protector of, and is responsible for the people he is ruling; a man is a protector of his family and is responsible for them; a woman is a protector of her husband's house and children, and she is consequently responsible for them; and a servant is a protector of his master's wealth and is responsible for it. Surely each of you is a protector and is responsible for what you are protecting [Bukhari and Muslim] (Halimah, 2012, p. 314-315).

This hadith significantly infers the sole responsibility and accountability of parents (father and mother), each as an example of a leader who owes the responsibility of raising virtuous children that will help develop a better society.

There is no clear-cut, well-stated Islamic model for raising a child. Rather, the principles are drawn from a number of verses of the Glorious Qur'an and Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). These principles are then made the responsibilities of both parents. The first principle lies in selecting the right partner with whom one will jointly produce as well as jointly raise the children. This principle is anchored on the fact that every human being is a product of a particular socio-historical context. It is called the nature- nurture controversy. By this, it is meant that both hereditary and environment interact together to determine the totality of an individual developmental process. Based on this fact of life, the Qur'an therefore requires a Muslim to choose the right person as a partner in order to produce offspring that both will jointly raise to the satisfaction of God Almighty, on whose behalf they are raising a vicegerent. Qur'an 7:58 states rhetorically:

وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبِثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا كَذَٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ

And (as for) the fertile land, its vegetation comes forth (flourishing and well) by the leave of its Lord and that (land) which is inferior, (its herbage) comes forth but scantily and (that too) defective. That is how We explain Our message in diverse ways for a people who give thanks.

The verse in unequivocal but rhetorical terms requires that adequate measures be taken in choosing a marriage partner from whom the children that the marriage will produce will inherit characters that will make them virtuous. This idea can be strengthened with the experiences of Prophets Ibrahim, Nuuah and

Luut. For example, Hajar, the obedient wife of Prophet Ibrahim (who agreed to be relocated from her matrimonial home to a place near the *Ka'bah* in accordance with the instruction Allah gave to her husband [Qur'an 14:37]) also gave birth to an obedient child, Ismail, who also agreed with his father to actualise his vision of sacrificing him to God (Qur'an 37:104-107). Conversely however Wahilah, the disobedient wife of Prophet Nuuh also gave birth to a disobedient son Kan'an, both of whom belied Prophet Nuh as a Prophet of God and consequently perished along with other disbelievers (Qur'an 11:45-47). Another example is that of Prophet Luut. Luut's wife had constituted a thong on the flesh of her husband in his struggle against sodomy and therefore could not have had children other than those that would take after her. It is in this spirit that the Qur'an sees some wives and children as enemies of the father when it says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُواهُمْ ...

O ye who believe, some of your spouses and children are enemies to you, so beware of them (Qur'an 64:14).

All these point to the fact that proper child upbringing in Islam begins with the choice of a right life partner. It is in recognition of this that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said "Make a good choice for your sperm (offspring), marry worthy women, and marry (your daughters) to them (i.e., worthy men) (Al-Jibaly, n.d.).

Muslims are however, not left unguided as to what to look for in a woman who could rightly be described as worthy. In this regard, the holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) advised Muslims as follows:

تتَّح المرأة لأربع: لمالها، ولحسبها، وجمالها، ولدينها، فاظفر بذات الدين تربت يداك.

Women are married for various reasons including these four: her nobility, her wealthy, her beauty and her religion. (I advise you my followers to secure your happiness in life by marrying the religiously conscious one) (Quadri, 1995, p. 25).

Although the hadith talks about the religiously conscious woman, it is on the assumption that such a person will take into consideration all that God orders in terms of personal moral development which she is expected to implement. Muslims are therefore enjoined to make the right choice when choosing marriage partners. Though this is the responsibility of both parents, it becomes the right of the child to proper process of upbringing in Islam.

Another principle of child upbringing in Islam is in the name a Muslim gives to his/her child. According to a number of Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), names that people bear significantly influence their lives positively or negatively. Hence, Muslims have to give names that will positively impact on the life of child. Muslims have been encouraged to give names attributed to the beautiful names of Allah and those of the prophets to their children. It is perhaps for this reason that the Prophet had to change the names of some of his followers, tribes and even one of his children. Among the names of his followers which he changed, according to Abu Dawood, are *Harb* (War) which he changed to *Silm* (Peace), *al-Mudtaji'* (One who lies down) which he changed to *al-Munba'ith* (One who stands up), and *Zahm* (Foul Odour) which he changed to *Bashir* (Glad Tidings). He also changed the names of some tribes like *Banu al-Zina* (Children of fornication) which he called to *Banu al-Rushda* (Children of those who are on the right path) and *Banu Mughwiyah* (Children of a woman who allures and goes astray) which he changed to *Banu Rushda* (Children of a woman who is on the right path). Abu Hurairah also reported that, the Prophet changed the name of his daughter, *Zainab* from *Barrah* which she used to bear before because, according to him, with her former name, "*Barrah*", which means "Righteous", she was giving herself the prestige of piety. One may argue that the name *Barrah* needed not be changed since it epitomizes righteousness. The Prophet could have changed it because it was taking her towards arrogance. The names of *al-As*, *Aziz*, *Atalah*, *Shaytan*, *al-Hakam*, *Ghuab*, and *Hubab* were also said to have been changed by the Prophet. All these go to show that names also play significant roles in what a child becomes or does. Though a responsibility of the parent, it also becomes the right of the child.

Another principle of properly raising children in Islam concerns the provision of adequate education for the terrestrial and celestial happiness of the child. Here, Islam requires that the child is provided adequate education that he needs to live a life that will bring him joy in this world and the hereafter.

The form of education required here is one that is total and comprehensive and should be given in phases and as occasions demand. Although the content of the education in question is to be determined by the socio-cultural environment of the child, the general content which constitutes the minimum benchmark is contained in Qur'an 31:12-19 which read as follows:

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝ وَصَدَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ حَمَلْتُهُ أُمَّهُ
 وَهَنَا عَلَيَّ وَهْنٌ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ ۝ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَى أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ
 لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝
 يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي سَخَّرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ
 خَبِيرٌ ۝ يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ
 ۝ وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ۝ وَأَقْصِدْ
 فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ۝

Luqman said to his son, admonishing him; 'My dear son! Do not associate any partners with God; for, to associate partners with Him is indeed a great wrong. We have enjoined upon man goodness to his parents: his Mother bore him going from weakness to weakness and his wearing takes place within two years. Be grateful to Me and your Parents. With Me is the end of all journeys. Yet should they endeavour to make you associate as partner with Me something of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them, but (even then) bear them company in this world's life with kindness, and follow the path of those who turn towards Me. In the end, it is to Me that you shall all return, when I shall inform you about all that you were doing (in life). My dear son! If there be something which is no more than the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and though it be hidden in a rock, or in the skies, or in the earth, God will bring it forth. God is Gracious, All Aware. My dear son! Attend regularly to prayer and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong and endure with fortitude whatever befalls you. These are matters that require strong resolve. Do not turn your cheek away from people in false pride nor walk haughtily on earth. God does not love anyone who is arrogant, boastful. Be of modest bearing in your walk, and lower your voice; for the most hideous of voices is the braying of the ass.

In this Qur'anic passage, a number of admonitions that will enhance the virtuousness of a child were given. Some comments may be necessary here to drive our argument home. The first admonition here is about not associating partners with God in whatever means. This admonition which puts God first in all matters will instil in the child God's consciousness with the implications that the child will realize that power, support or assistance should not be sought and cannot be gotten from any other than God. This will consequently protect the society from cases of ritual killing, kidnapping for ransom and other related matters that man engages in to prove wholesomeness. It is described as a misnomer indeed. Closely following that is the admonition to respect one's parents. Here, the Qur'an recounts the agonies that the mother went through to bring a child into this world. The scenario painted here touches the mind of the reader as to have concern for parents, and by extension, every elderly one in the society. Hence, Islam teaches further that one who insults the father of another person has insulted his own father. The admonition here will engender a sense of respect for elders in the society and generally a sense of humility in the child. It will also help create a feeling of love for the child as one realizes how painful it is to have a child born. Thus, cases of child trafficking may be addressed. Next is the issue of accountability. The relevant portion of the Qur'anic passage states: "with Me is the end of all journeys". Furthermore, it says: "In the end, it is to Me that you shall all return, when I shall inform you about all that you were doing (in life)." The Qur'an further says: "If there be something which is no more than the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and though it be hidden in a rock, or in the skies, or in the earth, God will bring it forth. God is Gracious, All Aware". All these mean that all matters will go back to God for decision. When a child grows with a sense of accountability for all his deeds, little will he be involved in crime and vices. The passage also teaches enjoining good and forbidding evil. Here, it is presumed that the one who enjoins good and forbids evil is himself an embodiment of righteousness and will therefore be an asset to and in the society he/she lives as he/she contributes to its peace and orderliness. The virtues of patience, endurance and perseverance are also taught in the passage. With those virtues, a child grows up to accept happenings as God's doing after having done within one's

capacity to achieve the best. The Qur'anic passage also teaches humility and modesty in all senses, warning against pride and arrogance. All these are virtues that a child needs in his/her developmental process to grow up into a responsible member of the society. Hence, Balaoch (2012) posits that this Qur'anic passage consists of reformative principles which can bring the best out of a child and turn him to a respectable member of the society.

These, as noted earlier constitute the basic contents of the total education to be given to the child. This general contents of the educational process of a child in Islam is, however to be balanced up with other forms of education based on and drawn from the socio-cultural environment of the child. Hence, the total form of education given to a child brought up in one environment may, in the view of Islam, not necessarily be the same as that given to one brought up in another environment, yet there is the bottom line in the two educational processes and this is what makes them virtuous and also Muslim. This exactly is the form of education received by the holy prophet Muhammad (SAW) when, as a child, he was given to Halimah from the town of Sa'ad with a view to learning the Arab traditional culture and language (Haykal, 1982).

Another principle of child upbringing in Islam is role modelling. Islam believes in role modelling as a principle of child upbringing. Apart from the first principle of choosing a virtuous partner whom the children will look after, Islam also requires that the parents deliberately and consciously act in ways that their children will take after them. This idea is anchored on the Qur'anic verse that urges Muslims to look up to Prophet Muhammad as a role model. The relevant verse of the Glorious Qur'an reads:

It is to be noted that the basic reason why the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) should serve as a role model to Muslims is, according to the Holy Qur'an, because of his noble character. The Qur'an talks about this thus:

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ مَا أَنْتَ بِمَجْنُونٍ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خَلْقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٧١﴾

The ink-stand and the pen and all that they (the owners of the pen-the scholars) write, bear witness (to the fact that) by the grace of your Lord, you are not a mad man at all...And you possess outstandingly high standard of moral excellence (Qur'an 68: 1-4).

Among the very many good qualities with which Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was described in the Holy Qur'an which every Muslim is expected to emulate with a view to transmitting to their children in the process of raising them are patience (Qur'an 6:34), selflessness (Qur'an 52:40), justice (Qur'an 5:42 & 49), kindness (9:80), and truthfulness (Qur'an 9:87) as a result of which he was given the nickname Al-Amin (Qur'an 6:33).

Islam also makes discipline one of the principles of child-upbringing in Islam. Islam believes that no amount of persuasion could make a dissident child virtuous. A child therefore should be disciplined if and when the need arises. Hence, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

Another principle of raising virtuous children in Islam is for the parents to support their efforts with prayers for the children. The Qur'an believes that no amount of personal efforts could bring one success in anything including raising virtuous children. Hence, it requires praying to God to be blessed with virtuous children on the one hand and on the other praying for the children to be virtuous. While giving a description of those He called the true servants of God, Qur'an 25: 72 & 74 write:

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا... ﴿٧٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ﴿٧٤﴾

And (the true servants of God are those) who, when spending are neither extravagant nor niggardly (but their spending follow) a middle course, ever moderate.... And who (in their prayers) say: 'O our Lord, grant that our wives and children be (a source of) comfort for (our) eyes and make us a model for those who guard against evil.

In this regard, a number of prophets were reported to have prayed for their children. This is particularly true of Prophet Ibrahim who the Qur'an reported as having often prayed for his offspring. Qur'an 2:127-128 say in this regard:

And remember when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House (with the prayer): Our Lord, accept (this service) from us for You are the All-Hearing, the All-knowing. Our Lord, make of us Muslims, bowing to Your (will) and of show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites: and turn unto us (in mercy); for you are the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

In Qur'an 14:37&40, he is also quoted as saying:

O our Lord, I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Thy Sacred House, in order, O Lord, that they may establish regular prayer, so fill the hearts of some among the men with love towards them, and feed them with (different kinds of) fruits so that they may give thanks... O my Lord, make me one who establishes regular prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring. O our Lord, and accept Thou my prayer.

However, in order to make the task of raising a child to become a responsible adult in the society easily achievable, Islam has specified the roles of both parents. For instance, in Islam, the roles of the mother in raising a virtuous child begins with pregnancy through childbirth, to child-rearing. In each of these cases, she is a major player. The Qur'an makes reference to the pregnancy and childbirth stages when it says: "in pains did his mother bear him and in pain she gave birth to him" (Qur'an 46:15). The Qur'an also makes reference to another role of the mother when it says: "The mother shall give suck to their offspring" (Qur'an 2: 233). In Qur'an 31:14 this is said to take a period of "...two years". All these make the mother the most valuable agent in the raising of virtuous children in Islam as she will raise the next generation and build a solid foundation for society. Her primary duties therefore, according to Hamdan (2009), include spending much of her time in nurturing, instructing, and guiding her children at home. Hence, the Holy Prophet said: "Those who carry children, give birth to them, feed them at the breast and treat them kindly, if they do their prayers, go to the paradise" (Al-Jayyousi, et al., 2014). It is also in recognition of these roles and the agonies as well as the difficulties attached to them that God attaches the success of those roles to the paradise of the affected child. Allah says: "Paradise is at the foot of the mother" (Bukhari, 1997).

The basic role of the father is to provide the sustenance and need for both his wife (i.e., mother) and the children. The Qur'an alludes to this when it says: "But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms" (Qur'an 2; 233). The holy Prophet also said: "Whoever performs his prayers correctly, and spends on his children in spite of his modest means, and does not speak ill against others will be in paradise as close as to me as these (i.e., two fingers of mine) (Suwayd, 2005). The trend in many parts of the world today, however tends toward the elimination of such a differentiation of parental roles as specified in Islam. This agitation to replace those traditional roles is anchored on the concept of equality/sameness in the name of justice.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, one can see that today's world is criminally inclined on the one hand and on the other, throws great challenges to the youths and their parents who are charged with the responsibilities of raising them to be responsible and virtuous members of the larger society. While it appears many realize the need to provide sound education that will make their wards and children fit into today's world, it appears many do not see the need to make them virtuous in terms of consuming the right knowledge regarding truthfulness, kindness, righteousness, generosity, humility, and other virtues, all of which are almost non-existence in the curriculum being taught to youths of today and against which contemporary thinking is working. The present effort has identified reasons and effects of this on the individual and the society and as well provided the way forward within the framework of Islam. The Islamic paradigm which the paper showcases is, in our view, worth implementing, considering its propensity regarding virtuous people in a dangerous atmosphere such as characterized today's world. All that will be required is for all concerned – parents, children, government, policy-makers etc to play their own part. While parents are expected to possess the right knowledge and display the right attitude before their children and ward so as to be able to teach the children what is right and also serve as good role models for them, government is expected to put up the right education policies that will take the

issues raised in this paper into consideration so as to help in raising virtuous youths in the society. The children on their own are enjoined to take be obedient and look up to their parents as role models.

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