

Empowering children through the lens of Islam

Kabuye Uthman Sulaiman, *PhD*

Associate Professor

Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies

**AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge
and Human Sciences**

International Islamic University Malaysia

E-mail: kabuye@iium.edu.my

Meaning of Children Empowerment

Broadly speaking, empowerment of children is a process by which children gain power, either directly by themselves, or through the help of others.

There are three types of power namely:

- 1) Power over.
- 2) Power with.
- 3) Power to.
- 4) Power within.

Power over

It is “built on force, coercion, domination and control.”

It is based on a belief that “some people have power and some people do not.”

It is the power that enables one individual or group to control circumstances to their benefit, dominate others, or make decisions affecting others; they set the rules and others feel the impact. In other words, it is a zero-sum game; only one person can ‘win’ in a situation and the other must ‘lose.’

Power with

It is “shared power that grows out of collaboration and relationships.”

It is about “being inclusive, finding common ground and building together through a collective strength.”

It is built on mutual support, respect, solidarity, and collaborative decision making, among others.

Power to

It is the power to make a difference, to create something new, or to achieve goals.

Power within

It is one's inner power; the power that can drive a person toward profound change; the power that enables a person to "imagine, visualise, act and create."

It describes a person's "sense of self-worth" and "self-knowledge." It includes an ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others."

The aim of empowering children

The aim of empowering children is about nurturing power with meaning, creating the conditions whereby power can be shared, power to and power within. It is not about exercising or maximizing their power over others.

In Islam everyone occupies a position of leadership meaning, they are empowered and are required to empower those under their charge: “Leaders who empower others build more leaders who can take the vision to its fulfilment and beyond.” Hence, leadership is not reserved for a particular individual or group.

Specific meanings of empowerment

In a narrow manner, empowerment refers to:

An ongoing process through which individuals, communities, or organizations are imparted with knowledge and skills that will allow them achieve sustainable development and other vital goals;

The process of awakening the potentials needed for individuals “to play a meaningful role in their own or their community/society’s development success;”

Giving people or groups the strength and knowledge needed to help them overcome their obstacles;

The process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes;

Increasing the capacity of individuals, groups, communities or societies to transform themselves, live productively in a society, and make the best of their own lives; endowing individuals with the power, confidence, ability, and qualities they need to alter the conditions of their lives; enabling and inspiring someone to fulfil his or her intentions or realise their dreams; granting individuals, families and communities the opportunities they need to live better lives in dignity and security;

Coming out from limited boundaries into broad opportunities; enabling people to lead and contribute to their fullest potential through job creation, social integration, creation of a strong culture based on mutual respect, collaboration, and common purpose, policy formulations and their enforcement through constitutional laws and rules, and public services such as education, better health care, etc;

The interpersonal process of providing the proper tools, resources, and environment to build, develop, and increase the ability and effectiveness of others to set and reach individual goals;

Liberating mankind from enslavement by other than Allah, or from oppression or bondage of any kind; and last but not least, facilitating people in their efforts “to overcome structural and social disadvantage.

Some of the skills required for empowerment

- 1) Creativity skills.
- 2) Decision-making skills.
- 3) Problem-solving skills.
- 4) Time management.
- 5) Communication skills.

Requirements for empowerment

- 1) Change of mental state and behaviours
- 2) Education
- 3) An empowering environment

Defining characteristics of empowerment

It is, first, understanding and acting, that is, understanding one's rights and duties, and making an effort to achieve them,

Second, a state of being, and third, a process, an action that moves a group or person from a lower to a higher state of empowerment, and an outcome in which a person or group enjoys a state of empowerment.

Third, it is a means and not an end in itself. It is a means to growth and becoming. Lindeman wrote, “Growth is the goal of life. Power, knowledge, freedom, enjoyment, creativity – these and all other immediate ends for which we strive are contributory to the one ultimate goal which is to grow, to become.”