

Empowering children through the lens of Islam

ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a means to bring transformation. Therefore, of the core aims of Islam is to empower individuals and societies spiritually, physically, morally and intellectually. This paper seeks to develop an understanding of empowerment of children from the perspective of Islam, i.e., the Qur'an and Hadith. The paper also describes how children should be empowered intellectually, emotionally, morally, spiritually and physically. It provides the most essential skills children need to be successful and achieve their life goals, and demonstrates how they should be developed. The paper serves as a primer to answering questions related to empowerment of children through the lens of Islam. The primary sources of this paper comprise selected verses from the Qur'an and their exegesis (*tafsir*), and Hadith. Its secondary sources consist of books, journals, proceedings of seminars, and other materials. The English translation of the selected verses is based on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* unless stated otherwise. Due to the multidimensional use of words in the Arabic language, it is difficult to translate them into one specific word, therefore, we have retained the Arabic concepts but given some of their meanings.

Keywords: Empowerment of children, skills, physical development, moral development, spiritual development, emotional development

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment of children plays an important role in the advancement of society. Part of the aims of Islam is to empower individuals physically, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and morally, and also the society. To achieve this aim, educators, parents and teachers are required to understand the meaning of empowerment from the perspective of Islam and how it is achieved; they should be able to identify the best methods and strategies for empowerment of children so as to prepare them for a bright future. They should be able to assess where the bottlenecks to empowerment are in children upbringing and develop strategies to work around these impediments. They should form a strategy for helping children pursue the pathway to empowerment.¹ They should involve children in activities that foster empowerment and lead by example or inspire them through action, that is, showing them what is expected of them by embodying those values or behaviours in everyday life. Leading by example is one of the most effective ways to empowerment of children. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) led by example which is the secret behind his success as a leader. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning), “You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah.” (Qur’an, 33:21). Here the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is described as the best example to follow in every aspect of life. When asked to describe the character and manners of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said, “Verily, the character of the Prophet of Allah was the Qur’an”² meaning, he talked the talk and walked the walk. To put it bluntly, he never acted in a way that disagreed with the things he said or the verses revealed to him.

It is worth noting that when one empowers a child, one is essentially empowering a family, community, and society, which means empowerment of community emerges from the individuals. Hence, one of the aims of empowerment of children is for them to contribute positively to family, community and society for the benefit of the *ummah* and nation, decrease obstacles to productivity, among others.

The phrase “empowerment of children” has a very comprehensive and meaningful expression that covers so many shades of meaning connected with *tarbiyah* (upbringing and development of children in various aspects). It is about “nurturing their potential and self-esteem, equipping them with knowledge, tools and the skills needed to become responsible, aware, and proactive citizens,” “shaping their attitudes, enhancing their capabilities, and enriching their understanding,” and “equipping them with the confidence they need to face challenges head-on,”³ that is, to navigate their way through the challenges in life without feeling lost.

One of the most important and defining characteristics of empowerment is that, it is, first, understanding and acting, that is, understanding one’s rights and duties, and making an effort to achieve them,⁴ second, a state of being,⁵ and third, a process, “an action that moves a group or person from a lower to a higher state of

¹ For these statements, I am indebted to John R. Dew, *Empowerment and democracy in the workplace: Applying adult education theory and practice for cultivating empowerment*, Westport, Connecticut, London: Quorum books, 1997, p.25. Hereinafter quoted as *Empowerment in practice*.

² Sahih Muslim, The Book of prayer of travellers, Chapter on the night prayer, and the one who sleeps and misses it or is sick, 746.

³ Valerie Forgeard (July 3, 2023), “Nurturing Tomorrow’s Leaders: What is Child Empowerment All About?” Retrieved August 20, 2023 from <https://brilliantio.com/what-is-child-empowerment/>

⁴ United Nations Social Development Network, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development, “Empowerment: What does it mean to you?” International Conference on “People’s Empowerment and Development”, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 5 August 2012. Retrieved on August 22, 2023 <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ngo/outreachmaterials/empowerment-booklet.pdf>

⁵ John R. Dew, *Empowerment and democracy in the workplace*, p.3.

empowerment,” and an outcome “in which a person or group enjoys a state of empowerment.”⁶ In the following paragraphs we shall delve deeper into understanding this fundamental concept especially in regard to its meaning, purpose and importance, and bring a light on the fundamentals of empowerment.

MEANING OF EMPOWERMENT

Before we dive into the benefits of empowerment and how children should be empowered, let’s first define what we mean by empowerment of children. Broadly speaking, empowerment of children is a process by which children gain power, either directly by themselves, or through the help of others. 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;”⁷ “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;”⁸ “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;”⁹ 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.”¹⁰

It is clear from the fore-going definitions that: first, empowerment is a generic term, that is, it is not specific to a particular thing, and polysemous meaning, it has multiple related meanings; second, 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

⁶ Ruth Alsop, Mette Bertelsen & Jeremy Holland, *Empowerment in practice: From analysis to implementation*, Washington: The World Bank, 2006, p.3. Hereinafter quoted as *Empowerment in practice*.

⁷ **United Nations Social Development** Network, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development, “Empowerment: What does it mean to you?” International Conference on “People’s Empowerment and Development”, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 5 August 2012. Retrieved on August 22, 2023
<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ngo/outreachmaterials/empowerment-booklet.pdf>

⁸ Ruth Alsop, et al., *Empowerment in practice*, p.1 and p.10.

⁹ Brady S, Lee N, Gibbons K, Bogossian F. Woman-centred care: An integrative review of the empirical literature. *Int J Nurs Stud.* 2019 Jun; 94:107-119; Lu H, Zhao Y, While A. Job satisfaction among hospital nurses: A literature review. *Int J Nurs Stud.* 2019 Jun; 94:21-31; Lean M, Fornells-Ambrojo M, Milton A, Lloyd-Evans B, Harrison-Stewart B, Yesufu-Udechuku A, Kendall T, Johnson S. Self-management interventions for people with severe mental illness: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Br J Psychiatry.* 2019 May;214(5):260-268.

¹⁰ **McKinsey & Company**, “Enabling people to lead and contribute to their fullest potential”, p.67.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Operations/Our%20Insights/The%20lean%20management%20Enterprise/Enabling%20people%20to%20lead%20and%20contribute%20to%20their%20fullest%20potential%20Introduction.ashx>

one ultimate goal which is to grow, to become.”¹¹ To be empowered simply means to be given power to effect a change in oneself or the community.

When people are not empowered/enabled, their “motivation flags, intellectual capacity is wasted, talent is lost, and value is forfeited.”¹²

REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPOWERMENT

There are several steps along the pathway to empowerment. These include change of one’s mental state and behaviour, education and empowering environment. The following paragraphs will briefly describe the role of each of these steps in empowering individuals.

Change of mental state and behaviours

We stand in need of a revolution of the mind—not a mere exchange of power groups—before an economic revolution can transform industry into a cooperative enterprise, before “power over” is transposed into “power with” in industry. —Eduard Christian Lindeman¹³

Revolution of the mind simply means “opening one’s mindset,” “changing one’s perception of reality,” “redefining things in one’s life,” or “broadening one’s perspective on everything in life.” A mindset is likened to “a parachute that only operates when open.”¹⁴ Opening or changing one’s mindset is hard and that is why it is called “mind revolution.”

It is worth noting that empowerment is a self-endeavour; it comes from within the individual; it is from the inside out. It is the ability to exercise power over oneself. Lindeman argues that “No human being can safely be trusted with power until he has learned how to exercise power over himself.”¹⁵ Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.” (Qur’an, 13:11). What is meant here is one’s mental state; one’s ability to perceive things as they are and as they are not. The most essential and most powerful empowerment tool ever known is one’s mind. It can be one’s ally or one’s enemy, the choice is ours.

Our life is a reflection of our views, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions, among others. All these come together to shape our mindset. According to the verse above, Allah does not change the condition of a people, e.g., from weakness or powerlessness to strength, as long as they do not change what is within themselves – their mental state. From this it is understood that empowerment requires going inwards which means, change of one’s mental state, such as feeding one’s mind with the right thoughts, or positive thoughts, and change of one’s behaviours (behavioural change). It is true that the more one goes inwards, the more one discovers what needs to be improved or changed, the more one gets to know him/herself. Knowing oneself is the first step towards changing oneself; it is key to self-empowerment.

Without the change of one’s mental state, knowledge and skills are insufficient to bring about the desired change(s) in oneself and/or in society. Sian Arulanantham writes, “No one can empower someone else; it is

¹¹ Eduard Christian Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education*, New York: New Republic, Inc. 1926, p.202.

¹² **McKinsey & Company**, “Enabling people to lead and contribute to their fullest potential”, p.67.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Operations/Our%20Insights/The%20lean%20management%20enterprise/Enabling%20people%20to%20lead%20and%20contribute%20to%20their%20fullest%20potential%20Introduction.ashx>

¹³ Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education*.

¹⁴ <https://www.businessnumberconsulting.com/mindrevolution>

¹⁵ Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education*, p.41.

something you have to do for yourself, but others can help facilitate the process or support you to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence that you need to be empowered.”¹⁶ Implied no one can force a person to do what they don't want to do. Only they can free themselves from negative thoughts, such as fear, and self-doubt. They are the ones to decide whether to accept the status quo or to create a change. True empowerment begins when intentions are converted into actions; when one starts working towards his or her dreams and goals; when one overcomes the obstacles, i.e., works through a challenge in order to achieve a goal.

To sum up, self-esteem, self-confidence or belief in one's abilities (self-efficacy), and education are very important elements and integral components of empowerment. Self-esteem refers to one's inner strengths; how one feels about his or her self. Without a belief in one's skills and abilities, and education, empowerment cannot take place. Self-empowerment is partially about gaining inner strength, peace of mind and contentment.

Education

Education is perceived as “preparation for life.”¹⁷ It is needed before, during and after empowerment. This is because education is a lifelong endeavour; the whole of life is learning; “Learning is ever in the freshness of its youth, even for the old,” said Aeschylus. “The best way to prevent empowerment” says Dew, “is to deny education, just as the best way to oppress a people is to deny them schools, literacy, and access to information that can set them free.”¹⁸ Education aims at equipping students with the necessary means for arriving at their goals. It is broadly defined as “a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training or research.”¹⁹ An empowered person is “one whose self-esteem enhances,”²⁰ is literate, educated, skilled, puts knowledge into his behaviour, etc. Illiteracy is one of the factors leading to powerlessness and inhibits individuals and communities from success and prosperity. The following are some of the important life skills individuals, groups, communities or societies need to improve their life conditions or prosper in life: creativity skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, time management and communication skills. Each of these skills is crucial to prosper in life.

Creativity skills

Creativity is a trait which sets humans apart from other living creatures. This innate skill may be stimulated both by an unstructured process such as brainstorming and a structured process such as lateral thinking or either one. It is the ability to come up with new ideas and innovate things or processes that meet human needs. In simple terms, it is a mental capacity or ability “to solve a problem in an original way. A way that isn't what's expected or has been done before.”²¹ While all people are innately creative, only a few adequately demonstrate this skill which is one of the reasons why there is less productivity and more complex societal issues such as economic inequality, climate change, immigration, pollution, unemployment, and racism. These issues are complex because: first, they do not have an immediate and simple solution. In other words, there could be multiple possible

¹⁶ United Nations Social Development Network, “Empowerment: What does it mean to you?” International Conference on “People's Empowerment and Development”, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 5 August 2012. Retrieved on August 22, 2023

<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ngo/outreachmaterials/empowerment-booklet.pdf>

¹⁷ Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education*, p.3 and p.100.

¹⁸ John R. Dew, *Empowerment and democracy in the workplace*, p.46.

¹⁹ Neelmani Jaysawal and Sudeshna Saha, “Role of education in women empowerment” International Journal of Applied Research 2023; 9(4): 08-13, p.8; PK Ojha, Role of education in empowering rural women for sustainable development in India, International Journal of Applied Research, 2016;2(5): pp.773-777.

²⁰ Heljä Antola Robinson, *The Ethnography of Empowerment: The Transformative Power of Classroom Interaction*, Washington, D.C., London: The Falmer Press, 1994, p.38.

²¹ Paul Petrone, “Why creativity is the most important skill in the world?” (December 31, 2018). <https://www.linkedin.com/business/learning/blog/top-skills-and-courses/why-creativity-is-the-most-important-skill-in-the-world>

solutions to one single issue. Second, their impacts are far-reaching; they directly affect individuals, families and communities.

Here are some reasons why creativity is a must-have skill for fostering children: first, creativity unblocks children's mind power to think outside the box or see things from broader and multiple perspectives, find solutions to everyday challenges, explore and learn new things about the world and the people around them, create and develop new ideas or improve the existing ones, "do things that have never been done before" and "turn knowledge and skills into a successful product or service;" second, creativity is an integral part of innovation, meaning there can never be innovation without creativity (and knowledge). The former involves the generation of new ideas and therefore, it is described as "an imaginative process." The latter entails "the implementation of these ideas into new products" and hence it is described as "a productive process." Third, being creative boosts children's confidence. This helps them feel ready for life's experiences and have more resilience.

Communication skills

Children should be taught the following: first, how to communicate effectively. The ability to communicate effectively, clearly, persuasively, appropriately and accurately is a very important trait and an unexceptionable requirement to achieve one's communicative goals and to get along well with others. An effective communication is that which is based on knowledge or facts rather than heavily influenced by opinion, precise, straightforward and free from misinterpretation. Among the communication skills is the ability to deliver bad news with empathy.

Second, the manners one needs to apply when communicating with people to maintain positive relationship with them. These include: politeness, sincerity and gentleness, not interrupting someone as they speak, and speaking non-judgmentally. Harmony and peaceful co-existence cannot be achieved without clear communication and interpersonal communication etiquette. This means that the key to peaceful co-existence is to first learn etiquette rules for communicate with others. The importance of communication etiquette is evident from the following Qur'anic verses:

"Invite to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." (Qur'an, 16:125).

"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents; and should both or any one of them attain old age with you, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but speak to them with respect." (Qur'an, 14:23).

"Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has truly transgressed 'all bounds.' Speak to him gently, so perhaps he may be mindful 'of Me' or fearful 'of My punishment.'" (Qur'an, 20:43-44).

"Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing." (Qur'an, 2:263).

One of the advantages of good manners is that they help make a person feel good about himself, as well as help make others feel good about him or her. Allah says,

"So, by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So, pardon them and

ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].” (Qur’an, 3:159).

It is an obligation to follow the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in his good morals, and treat all people as he used to treat them, whether they be Muslims or non-Muslims, young or old. The Prophet’s morals were tantamount to divine grace to him and the believers. It is understood from the above verse that: first, people are attracted to someone who has good morals, which indicates the status and importance of morals in Islam, and that they are the foundation of the right religion. With good morals, people are attracted to Islam, and bad morals make people alienate from religion and turn away from it; second, before embarking on any work, one should consult people with experience and competence.

Problem solving skills

Problem solving skills are essential to our day-to-day lives. They are skills that aid in one’s ability to solve problems. They include: first, the ability to identify the problem, that is, clarifying the root(s) of the problem (where the problem came about), the cause of the problem and the size of the problem; second, the ability to deconstruct the problem, meaning breaking it down into small pieces or manageable parts. According to Rafis Abazov, “When you break down a big problem into smaller elements, then you are no longer facing an impossible task, and can go about making several very concrete steps to achieve the goal and solve your problem.”²²

Thoughtful decision-making skills

The ability to make thoughtful decisions is a vital life skill that must be taught to children. It is the proficiency with which one is able to weigh options and make the best choices. The best choice could be “refraining from making a decision” and this itself is also a decision.” The key to thoughtful decision is reasoning, meaning the ability to think critically and analytically before making a decision.

Life Skills

The term ‘life skills’ means “any of the skills needed to deal well and effectively with the challenges of life.”²³ It is essential to take into consideration that trials and challenges give us an outlook that there is a greater purpose for this life. Here are some of the simplest ways to prepare a child for the brokenness of this world or trials and challenges: first, to let them see news; second, to share our challenges with them so that they will be better prepared to face their own troubles when they come;²⁴ third, to show them how we deal with these challenges in our own lives;²⁵ fourth, to inform them that trials are an opportunity for them to grow stronger and to earn Allah’s reward.

An empowering environment

There are two types of environments: the indoor and outdoor. An indoor environment is a home that is filled with *Sakinah* (calmness or serenity), and *Mawaddah* (love) and *Rahmah* (compassion) between husband, wife and children. Such an environment promotes healthy mental well-being and supports a child’s physical development.

²² Rafis Abazov, “How to Improve Your Problem-Solving Skills,” (May 10, 2022). Accessed April 10, 2023. <https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/how-improve-your-problem-solving-skills>

²³ skillsyouneed.com <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/life-skills.html>

²⁴ Michael Youssef, “Preparing your kids for trials,” (Jan 19, 2023). Accessed on May 4, 2023. <https://au.itw.org/read/my-devotional/2023/01/preparing-your-kids-for-trials>

²⁵ Michael Youssef, “Preparing your kids for trials,” (Jan 19, 2023). Accessed on May 4, 2023. <https://au.itw.org/read/my-devotional/2023/01/preparing-your-kids-for-trials>

Home is also an environment where children are instilled with a sense of responsibility to care for each other. An outdoor environment is the one where children are able to play, socialize positively, explore and discover. Socializing or interacting with others is crucial to the improvement of the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children. It helps them “build skills that will help them be confident and autonomous later in life.”²⁶ The impact of environment on children development has been adequately documented. For example, Maria Montessori writes,

“Adults admire their environment; they can remember it and think about it – but a child absorbs it. The things he sees are not just remembered; they form part of his soul. He incarnates in himself all in the world about him that his eyes see and his ears hear.”²⁷

Numerous scholars have recognized environment as a “third teacher” (parents and carers being the first two).²⁸ Meaning it impacts children. Its role in knowledge acquisition is to provide information for the senses. Friedrich Froebel (early 1800s) compared designing an environment for children to “planning an organic and ever-changing garden which can inspire and guide children’s imagination and behaviour.”²⁹

THE NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF EMPOWERMENT

Now that we understand what we mean by children empowerment, let’s examine the reasons for empowerment. To begin with, *Quwwah* as an Arabic term for strength, power, might, ability, potence, prowess, etc. constitutes one of the great foundations of Islam. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning), “So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.” (Qur’an, 3:139); “And never will Allah give the disbelievers over the believers a way [to overcome them].” (Qur’an, 4:141). The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “Islam is always superior (is to prevail) and should never be surpassed (is not to be prevailed over).”³⁰ From these Qur’anic verses and Hadith, it is understood that Islam is a religion of strength, honour and prestige, and that its followers will always prevail and occupy a high status so long as they adhere to it. Hence, it is a responsibility of parents to raise children who will foster the supremacy of Islam and ensure that Muslims have the upper-hand over others; children who have an awareness of Islam and insight into its teachings, and the strength to implement it or ability to call to it.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also said, “A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak while there is goodness in both.”³¹ The strength meant here includes both spiritual strength or strength in *iman* and physical strength. The former refers to one’s feeling of connectedness to Allah. A believer is required not only to have strong belief in *Al-Qadha’ wa al-Qadar* (the predestination of Allah), that is, to know and believe that Allah is in absolute control of everything, but also to strive for excellence and to better him/herself continuously. This is termed as “self-empowerment.” The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) advised to take benefit of five before five: One’s youth before one’s old age, one’s health before one’s sickness, one’s wealth

²⁶ Early Learning Centre (December 2016), “The Importance of Socialising for Kids”. Retrieved August 23, 2023 from <https://www.childsplayelc.com.au/the-importance-of-socialising-for-kids/>

²⁷ Oxfordshire Country Council, Creating enabling environment for young children, p.5. Retrieved July 10, 2023 from https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/childreducationandfamilies/informationforchildcareproviders/Toolkit/My_Space_Creating_enabling_environments_for_young_children.pdf

²⁸ Ibid., p.4.

²⁹ Ibid., p.4.

³⁰ Sunnah.com reference, Book 11, Hadith 54.

³¹ Sahih Muslim 2664.

before one's poverty, one's free time before one's is preoccupied, and one's life before one's death.³² Be productive instead of wasting time on idle things.³³

Physical strength refers to “the strength to carry out what Allah ordered (us) to do, and to increase upon that by doing extra good deeds however Allah likes” or “a firm will and a desire to work for (this world and) the Hereafter.”³⁴ A believer is characterised by keeping a closer watch over his/her performance of religious obligations (*al-Takalif al-Shar'iyah*), among others. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Those who are faithfully true to their *Amanat* (all the duties which Allah has ordained, honesty, moral responsibility and trusts etc.) and to their covenants.” (Qur'an, 23:8). Weakness in *iman* is blameworthy as it hinders a person from performing his/her duties and avoiding what is prohibited.

Regardless of how religious or pious one is, *iman* (faith) fluctuates meaning, every Muslim experiences increases and decreases in *iman* throughout their life. Nevertheless, according to the above Hadith, *iman* is depicted as good in its entirety, meaning there is also goodness in the weak *iman* and in a weak believer. However, the strong believer has more goodness for himself, his religion, and his fellow humans. In view of the fact that *iman* is not static, it is important to continuously assess where one's *iman* is, and make it one's responsibility to work towards improving it.

In the verses “One of the women said, “O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong (*al-Qawiyy*) and the trustworthy (*al-Amin*)”” (Qur'an, 28:26) and “[Joseph] said, “Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed, I will be a knowing guardian”” (Qur'an, 12:55), the attributes “*al-Qawiyy*”, one who has *al-Quwwah* (strength, power, might, ability, potency, prowess, etc.), *'alim*, one who has *'ilm* (knowledge, experience, wisdom and intelligence) have been combined with the attribute “*al-Amin*,” the trusted one, to indicate the relationship between *Amanah* as trustworthiness, honesty or high morals and ethics, *Quwwah* (physical strength or wellness), *'ilm* (knowledge (the obtainment of information and ideas) and experience (the application of knowledge)), and *Amanah* as responsibility; meaning, the one entrusted with *Amanah* (responsibility or power) must be physically strong, morally upright (trustworthy, honest, righteous, self-disciplined, etc.), and knowledgeable, wise and skilful.

It is worth noting here that “when Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) (peace and blessings be upon him) proposed, ‘please place all the resources of the country under my trust’, he meant, says al-‘Allamah al-Zamakhshari in his *Kashshaf*, “to get an opportunity for enforcing the Commandments of Allah and for establishing truth and justice, and to gain that power which is essential for fulfilling the Mission for which the Messengers are sent.”³⁵ From this we can infer that one who is entrusted with a responsibility should be *hafizun* (able to guard what he is entrusted with and to safeguard the rights of vulnerable people – ensure the protection of their health, wellbeing and rights).

OBJECTIVE OF CHILDREN EMPOWERMENT

There are four types of power namely, (1) power over, (2) power with, (3) power to and (4) power within. The first type of power 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.

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³³ Narrated by Ibn Abbas and reported by Al-Hakim.

³⁴ Bakkah Publications, “Who is Considered a Strong Believer”? <https://www.bakkah.net/en/the-strong-believer.htm> April 11, 2012.

³⁵ Abu al-Qasim Mahmud bin ‘Amru al-Zamakhshari, Tafsir al-Kashaf ‘an haqa’iq al-Tanzil wa ‘uyun al-Aqawil fi wujuhi al-Ta’wil, Dar al-Ma‘rifah, 2009,

In other words, it is a zero-sum game; only one person can ‘win’ in a situation and the other must ‘lose.’ The second type of power 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.”³⁶ It is built on mutual support, respect, solidarity, and collaborative decision making, among others. Among the benefits of this type of power is that, first, each person, group, community, society or country, is seen as a part of the same team; second, it helps build bridges within families, groups, organizations, and across differences (e.g., gender, culture, class) and “minimize conflict rather than create struggle;”³⁷ and third, it leads to collective action, cooperation and harmony or the ability to act together. The third type of power is “the power to make a difference, to create something new, or to achieve goals.” The fourth type of power 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.”³⁸ It describes a person’s “sense of self-worth” and “self-knowledge.” It includes an ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others.”³⁹ To have this type of power, we must connect with ourselves, stop focussing on the things around us, “giving our power away by looking for it outside of ourselves, or giving it away by blaming others and making them responsibility for our reality.”⁴⁰

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. From the following Hadith it is understood that everyone occupies a position of leadership meaning, they are empowered and are required to empower those under charge: “Leaders who empower others build more leaders who can take the vision to its fulfillment and beyond.”⁴¹ Hence, leadership is not reserved for a particular individual or group:

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his family and he is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband’s home and his children and she is responsible for them. The servant of a man is a guardian of the property of his master and he is responsible for it. No doubt, every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock.”⁴²

Empowerment is an important condition for a person’s existence. The objectives of empowering children are: to “unlock their potential and shape them into resilient, proactive members of society,” develop the family, community and society and improve their welfare, fulfil the original and primordial covenant between human beings and Allah, and achieve sustainable well-being in *al-Dunya* (this world) and success and everlasting

³⁶ Annette and Graeme, “Power Over vs Power Within,” November 23, 2016. Retrieved on August 22, 2023 from: <https://www.oztantra.com/power-in-your-relationship/>

³⁷ Annette and Graeme, “Power Over vs Power Within,” November 23, 2016. Retrieved on August 22, 2023 from: <https://www.oztantra.com/power-in-your-relationship/>

³⁸ Ragini Rao, Tapping the Power within us – By allowing our Intuition to work. Retrieved on August 10, 2023 from: <https://www.infinumgrowth.com/tapping-power-within-us/>

³⁹ Graeme Stuart, 4 type of power: What are power over; power with; power to and power within? (1 February 2019). <https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2019/02/01/4-types-of-power/>; Alison Mathie, Jenny Cameron and Katherine Gibson, Asset-based and citizen-led development: Using a diffracted power lens to analyze the possibilities and challenges. Progress in Development Studies, 17(1), 1-13. 2017 doi: 10.1177/1464993416674302 Available from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1464993416674302>

⁴⁰ Annette and Graeme, “Power Over vs Power Within,” November 23, 2016. Retrieved on August 22, 2023 from: <https://www.oztantra.com/power-in-your-relationship/>

⁴¹ Management Consulted, “Empowering Leadership: Traits & Examples,” (July 25, 2022). Retrieved on September 5, 2023 from: <https://managementconsulted.com/empowering-leadership/>

⁴² Sahih Muslim, The book on government, chapter on the virtue of a just ruler and the punishment of a tyrant; encouragement to treat those under one’s authority with kindness and the prohibition against causing them hardship 1829.

happiness in *al-Akhirah* (the Hereafter). This conception of success and well-being is referred to as *al-Falah*. It is the mutual goal of all Muslims, individuals and communities.

CONCLUSION

The key takeaway of this work is that (i) parents are duty-bound to contribute to their children's overall wellbeing, namely physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and ethical, and spiritual well-being, (ii) empowerment of children is the route to their success in this world and the Hereafter. It contributes significantly to societal progress. It is the process of preparing children to fulfil the original and primordial covenant between human beings and Allah and avoid transgression. This process is from early childhood through adulthood, (iii) the way children are raised is impactful to their spiritual, emotional and moral or ethical development and how they act when dealing with others and when facing moral problems, (iv) knowledge is a prime factor that contributes to children overall well-being, and (v) physical, spiritual, emotional, moral or ethical well-being of individuals are the four facets on which a healthy society is dependent, and (vi) overall well-being is not achieved without harmonization between physical well-being and spiritual well-being, and a good environment, both indoor and outdoor.

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