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INTRA-FAMILY RELATIONS OF THE RESIDENTS OF PERTUBUHAN KEBAJIKAN WARGA TUA NURUL SAADAH, TERENGGANU: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FROM THE QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Elderly care centres primarily emphasize social and personal requirements of senior citizens. The number of elderly being sent to elderly care centres in Malaysia have increased due to the rapid growing of elderly population. Regrettably, a significant number of problems have been identified among the residents at these centres. Among the problems include children's refusal to take care of their elderly parents because of their limited abilities, time constraint, financial and health problems, as well as sheer abandonment and negligence of responsibility by their own children and next of kin. These problems are closely related to the intra-family relationship of the residents and have been identified as one of the contributing factors of the abandonment and mistreatment of some elderly residents admitted to elderly care centres. Fundamentally, Islam stresses the rights of parents to be treated with kindness, obedience, and honour as mentioned in the Qur'an (Al-Isra' 23-24), and in the Hadith, the Prophet SAW reprimanded that disobedience to parents to be one of the seven major sins. With respect to this issue, this study attempts to propose Islamic guiding principles in highlighting the roles and responsibilities of children towards their parents in elderly care centres by focusing on the residents of Persatuan Kebajikan Warga Tua Nurul Saadah, (PKWTNS), Jerteh, Terengganu as a case study. The study will employ inductive method, observation and interview as the main methods for completing the research.

Keywords: *Intra-Family, Elderly, Parents, PKWTNS*

Introduction

Islam emphasizes respect for all elders whether they are parents, relatives, or unknown old people. Being an elderly is a normal phase in the natural growing process of human life. Undergoing this phase is a matter of privilege as not everyone is promised of longevity in their lives. Death can unknowingly strike anyone regardless of their age, gender, or health condition. As reflected in the Qur'an (GhÉfir), 40: 67.

It is He, Who has created you (Adam) from dust, then from a Nutfah [mixed semen drops of male and female sexual discharge (i.e. Adam's offspring)] then

from a clot (a piece of coagulated blood), then brings you forth as an infant, then (makes you grow) to reach the age of full strength, and afterwards to be old (men and women) – though some among you die before,- and that you reach an appointed term in order that you may understand.

Islam also stresses the rights of parents to be treated with kindness, obedience, and honor, as mentioned in the *Qur'an* (Al-Isra'), 17: 23:

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honor.

Moreover, it is enshrined in the *Qur'an* that it is an obligation to treat parents kindly especially when they grow old. This is due to their reduced capacity and capability which requires further attention and care. Their sensitive feelings and emotions must also be aptly considered.

The obligation to be kind to parents is binding upon every Muslim, especially to mothers because a mother generally makes more sacrifices and endures pain than a father during her pregnancy, and provides due care to the children day and night. This is the reason why Allah commands people to be good to parents and treat them gently, patiently and respectfully particularly the mothers.

“A man came to Allah's Messenger SAW and said, "O Allah's Messenger SAW! Who is more entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me?" The Prophet SAW said, "Your mother." The man said, "Who is next?" The Prophet SAW said, "Your mother." The man further said, "Who is next?" The Prophet SAW said, "Your mother." The man asked for the fourth time, "Who is next?" The Prophet SAW said, "Your father." (al-BukhÉrÉ, al-JÉmiÑ al-ØaÍÉÍ, vol. 8, ed. 2001: 5971).

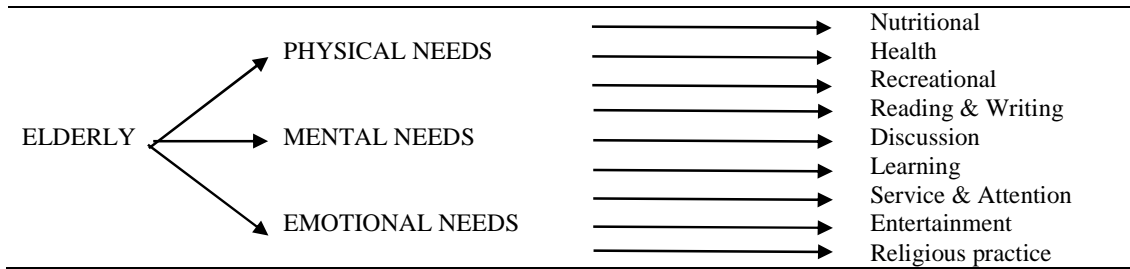
In another way, the Prophet SAW also declared disobedience to parents to be a major sin as expressly mentioned in the Hadith narrated by Ubaidullah b. Abu Bakr who said: I heard Anas b. Malik saying:

“The Messenger of Allah SAW talked about the major sins, or he was asked about the major sins. Upon this he observed: Associating anyone with Allah, killing of a person, disobedience to parents...” (Muslim, ØaÍÉÍ Muslim, vol. 1, n.d:144).

Definition of Elderly from Islamic Perspective

Some social scientists divide the elderly into three categories; the “young old” range between the age of 65 to 75 where they tend to live independently with a spouse or partner, enjoy relative good health and financial security. While the “old old”, ranging between the age of 75 to 85, suffer from many health and financial problems. The “oldest old” aged 85 and above, suffer from the most acute health and financial problems (Michael Kimmel & Amy

Aronson, 2009). A study has been done and clarified the needs of elderly into three categories (Awang Had Salleh, 1992), which include:



In the Qur'an, the word elderly has been used in different places directly or indirectly to describe the meaning of old-aged peoplesuch as the following:

1. **Ash-Sheikh:** This word has been used in the Qur'an four times. As Allah said in the *Qur'an* (Hud), 11:72:

She said (in astonishment): "Woe unto me! Shall I bear a child while I am an old woman, and here is my husband an old man? Verily! This is a strange thing!"

From this verse, it is mentioned that Sarah was at the age of 99 while Ibrahim was at the age of 100 or 120 (al-ÛabarÊ, vol. 15, 2000). The verse signifies that both of them were at very old age or are to be considered as an elderly. Another verse from *Qur'an* (YËsuf), 12: 78 explains that 'old man' means old age or weak in terms of strength (Wahbah, vol. 13, n.d.):

They said: "O ruler of the land! Verily, he has an old father (who will grieve for him); so take one of us in his place. Indeed we think that you are one of the Mu'sinÊn (good-doers).

Another verse mentioning elderly in the *Qur'an* (Qasas), 28:23 provides enlightenment about the loss of physical strength, whermost elderly cannot function the same way that young people can. For instance,the following verse informs about the father of both women who was too old and weak, and did not have the strength to water the flocks:

And when he arrived at the water (a well) of Madya (Midian) he found there a group of men watering (their flocks), and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks). He said: "What is the matter with you?" They said: "We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take (their flocks). And our father is a very old man."

Islam recognises ageing as a normal stage of life and this happens in accordance with His command, will, and decree.It is a reality that all humankind must deal with (Ibn KathÊr, vol. 8, 2003). Allah states clearly in the *Qur'an*(Ghafir), 40: 67:

...then (makes you grow) to reach the age of full strength, and afterwards to be old (men and women) – though some among you die before, - and that you reach an appointed term in order that you may understand.

2. **Al-Kibar**: This word has been used in the Qur'an six times to define the meaning of elderly or old age. For example in the Qur'an (Al-Baqarah), 2: 266, Allah explains the example of the condition of the disbelievers where he will not have any good deeds to provide an excuse when he returns to Allah on the Day of Resurrection, like the man in this verse who had no strength to replant the garden (Ibn Kathîr, vol. 2, 2003).

Would any of you wish to have a garden with date-palms and vines, with rivers flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruits for him therein, while he is stricken with old age, and his children are weak (not able to look after themselves), then it is struck with a fiery whirlwind, so that it is burnt? Thus does Allah make clear His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses) to you that you may give thought.

Ibn Kathîr defines the meaning of *al-Kibar* in the Qur'an (Ali-Imran), 3: 40, where Prophet Zakariyyâ had become an old man, his bones feeble, and his head full of grey hair (Ibn Kathîr, vol. 2, 2003). This explains the characteristics of elderly physically.

He said, "O my Lord! How can I have a son when I am very old, and my wife is barren?" (Allah) said: "Thus Allah does what He wills".

From Qur'an (Ibrâhîm), 14: 39, it is enlightened that Allah has rewarded Prophet Ibrâhîm with two sons, namely Prophet Ismâ'îl and Prophet Isâq, during his old age. Ibn 'Abbâs said: Allah granted Prophet Ibrâhîm a son Prophet Ismâ'îl at 99 years old and another son Prophet Isâq at 112 years old. Meanwhile, Sa'îd bin Jubair said Prophet Ibrâhîm received good news of the birth of a wise son, Prophet Isâq, at the age of 110 (Al-Qur'ân, vol. 9, n.d.).

"All the praises and thanks are to Allah, Who has given me in old age (Ishmael) and Isâq. Verily! My Lord is indeed the All-Hearer of invocations.

Prof. Dr. Hamka discusses in his tafsîr the meaning of *al-Kibar* as mentioned in the Qur'an (Al-â'ijr), 15: 54:

[Ibrahim (Abraham)] said: "Do you give me glad tidings (of a son) when old age has overtaken me? Of what then is your news?"

He explains that Prophet Ibrâhîm at that time was 100 years old, while his wife, Sarah, was old and barren (Hamka, vol. 13-14, 2008). Another example from the Qur'an (Al-Isra'), 17: 23 also refers to older people or elderly as follows:

...And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour.

The word *al-Kibar* in the Qur'an (Maryam), 19: 8 has been explained by Ibn Kathîr where Prophet Zakariyyâ's wife was an old woman who was barren and had not given birth to any children in her entire life. Similarly, Prophet Zakariyyâ himself had become old and advanced in years, his bones had become feeble and thin, and he had no potent semen or vigour for sexual intercourse (Ibn Kathîr, vol. 6, 2003).

He said, "My Lord! How can I have a son, when my wife is barren, and I have reached the extreme old age"

3. **Al-ÑAjËz:** This word has been used in the Qur'an two times to signify elderly or old people, for instance from the *Qur'an* (Hud), 11: 72:

She said (in astonishment): "Woe unto me! Shall I bear a child while I am an old woman, and here is my husband an old man? Verily! This is a strange thing!"

Sarah was an old woman who had never given birth to a child, and the news of her delivery of Isaac was extremely surprising. Any woman, especially a sterile one, would be overjoyed by such news (Al-ÛabarË, vol. 15, 2000). In another example from the *Qur'an* (Adh-DhËriyËt), 51: 29, Allah mentions:

Then his wife came forward with a loud voice: she smote her face, and said: "A barren old woman!"

4. **Ardhal al-ÑUmr :** this word has been used in the Qur'an two times in referring to the elderly, for example in *Qur'an* (An-Nahl), 16: 70:

...and of you there are some who are sent back to senility, so that they know nothing after having known (much). Truly! Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

The word of *Ardhal al-ÑUmr* in this verse refers to physical weakness. It is because people will reach a stage where he knows nothing because of weakness of mind due to old age and senility (Ibn KathËr, vol. 5, 2003). Another example from *Qur'an* (Al-Haj), 22: 5 reads:

...then We bring you out as infants, then (give you growth) that you may reach your age of full strength. And among you there is he who dies (young), and among you there is he who is brought back to miserable old age, so that he knows nothing after having known...

In this verse, Allah highlights the condition of people who live until old age. It is because at this stage, older people will become like children in terms of feelings, knowledge, reactions, awareness, dealings, and managements, although they are knowledgeable, wise and matured before. Nonetheless at this stage, the marked decline in mental capacity will cost their information and knowledge retrieval, worse that it will lead them to arguing about God and His existence, which is far from their consciousness (Sayyid Qutb, vol. 12, 2006).

5. **Al-ÑADam:** This word has been used indirectly in the Qur'an in referring to the physical weakness of elderly. For instance in the *Qur'an* (Maryam), 19: 4 reads:

He said: "My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, and grey hair has spread on my head, And I have never been unblest in my invocation to You, O my Lord!"

6. **Ash-Shaybah:**

Allah is He Who created you in (a state of) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave (you) weakness and grey hair. He creates what He wills. And it is He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful (i.e. Able to do all things).

Ash-Shaybah or white hair is a clear sign of ageing, and sometimes it also happens to young people. Meanwhile, in the *Qur'an* (Ar-RĒm), 30: 54, “ash-Shaybah” means people who have been growing old.

7. **Adh-Dhañf:**

“...then after strength gave (you) weakness and grey hair....”.

In this *Qur'anic verse* (Ar-RĒm), 30: 54, it is highlighted that this weakness applies to the whole human constitution. Old age is a decline into a childhood-like phase in all aspects. It may be accompanied with psychological decline due to weakness of will. An old person may have an urge similar to that of a child without having the willpower to resist it (Sayyid Qutb, vol. 13, 2006).

Meanwhile, in the Prophetic Tradition, there are many ahĒdĒth related to elderly, for instance:

1. Prophet SAW said: *“He is not one of us who does not show mercy to our young ones and esteem to our elderly.”* (al-BukhĒrĒ, al-Adab al-Mufrad, ed. 1998: 164). Prophet SAW emphasizes that paying respect to elders and honouring them are characteristics of Muslim society.

2. This has been recorded in a report when AbĒ Bakr brought his father, AbĒ Quhafah to the Prophet SAW to embrace Islam. When the Prophet SAW saw him, he said to AbĒ Bakr: *“Why didn't you leave the old man at his house and I would've gone to him there”* AbĒ Bakr said, *“You are more deserving of him coming to you than he is of you going to him”*. The Prophet SAW seated AbĒ Quhafah in front of him and honoured him. Then he passed his hand on AbĒ Quhafah's chest and asked him to embrace Islam and AbĒ Quhafah did (Al-HaithamĒ, MawĒrid al-Ūam'Ēn ilĒ ZawĒid Ibn xibban, vol. 5, ed. 1992: 1700). Prophet SAW as the best exemplary of the Ummah already showed to us how to treat the elderly with gentle and passion.

3. The Prophet SAW said: *“Glorifying Allah involves showing honour to a grey-haired Muslim and to one who can expound the Qur'an, but not to one who acts extravagantly regarding it, or turns away from it, and showing honour to a just ruler.”* (AbĒ DĒud, Sunan AbĒ DĒud, vol. 4, n.d.: 4845). This hadith emphasize that showing respect to elders in the gathering or event and being kind and gentle to them are equated with glorifying the Almighty Allah. (MuĒammad Asyraf, ŅAunul MañbĒd Ņala Syarhi Sunan Abi DaĒd, vol. 13, ed. 1994).

Issues of Elderly in Malaysia

Malaysia is expected to reach aging nation status by 2030. As in other parts of the world, the population of Malaysia also shows signs of ageing, where the older population is growing rapidly due to the declining fertility rates and mortality rates, and extended life expectancy.

The number of people aged 60 and above is projected to be nearly 2.6 million or about 9.7% in 2015 and 3.2 million or 11.3% in 2020 (United Nations, 1991).

Regrettably, a salient number of problems have been identified among senior citizens in Malaysia including welfare, financial, and health issues. Family size becomes an important issue relating to the welfare of senior citizens as nowadays, many adult children in Malaysia have migrated to urban areas and separated from their own family because of marriage, education, or economic reasons. As a result, the elderly parents are losing source of care, sustainable income, and the ability to live independently (Zainab & Wan Ibrahim, 2014). The National Population and Family Development Board's (LPPKN) Fourth Population and Family Survey, when compared with the 2010 population and housing census, showed that about 23% or 538,000 out of 2.4 million senior citizens in Malaysia faced empty nest syndrome (Bernama, 2015). Empty nest syndrome refers to the emotional feeling of the parents such as loneliness, sadness and grief when the children leave home. Worse than that, some elderly are neglected and forced to endure homelessness or stay at elderly care centers even though they have many children. The spike in elderly population has led to the establishment of elderly care centers during the past ten years in different provinces in Malaysia. It is based on the report from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) Statistics Report 2014 that the number of residents registered in elderly care centers was 5714 in 2014.

Meanwhile, the study has found that less than 10% of elderly in Malaysia live in poverty, 6% received Bantuan Orang Tua (BOT) scheme or Old Age Assistance Scheme (Saidatulakmal, 2014), and 675,000 elderly parents aged 60 and above have been abandoned and deprived from receiving financial support from their children (Syuhaeda Aeni & Azhani, 2015). This financial problem among elderly also becomes a concerning matter because of the living expenditure is burgeoning year by year. Furthermore, getting older can eventually lead to various health problems physically and psychologically. Thus, the increase in the ageing population in Malaysia is inevitable and appears to constitute a matter of deep concern from the government, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, and also the community.

Intra-Family Relations from Islamic Perspective

According to Steinberg, "intra-family relationship is a relationship that individuals experience within the family members such as the kinship relation between children with father, mother, and siblings and family environment with regards to their relationship with entire members of the family." (Steinberg, 2001).

Meanwhile, intra-family relations from Islamic perspective are mentioned in numerous places in the Qur'an as well as in the Hadith. Parents should be revered throughout all stages of their ages. In this respect, Allah declares and emphasizes the importance of being good and kind to parents (*wabilwÉlidain iÉsÉnÉ*) four times in Qur'an directly after the command to worship Him alone. This indicates that honouring and respecting parents are extremely important in Islam. The *Qur'an* (Al-Baqarah), 2: 83 says:

...Worship none but Allah (Alone) and be dutiful and good to parents, and to kindred, and to orphans and Al-Masakin.

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life,

say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour.

Ibn KathĒr remarks on this *Qur'anic verse* (Al-Isra, 17: 23, to be good to parents, not even utter "Uff" which is the mildest word of disrespect, not do anything horrible to them, and speak and behave gently, kindly, politely and with respect and appreciation (Ibn KathĒr, vol. 5, 2003). While ŅĀĪa' bin AbĒ RabĒh explained "...do not repel them..." as "do not raise your hand against parents"(Al-ŪabarĒ, vol. 17, 2000).

Imam Muslim recorded that ŅAbdullah said that the Prophet SAW said:
"The best of the deeds or deed is the (observance of) prayer at its proper time and kindness to the parent" (Muslim, vol. 1: 137).

MuĪammad FĒ'ĒdŅAbdul BĒqĒ explains kindness to the parents (*bir al-wĒldain*) as being good to parents and showing homage to their friends(Muslim).Therefore, the above revelations clearly establish the concept of intra-family relationships particularly parent-child relations from the Islamic perspective.

Intra-Family Relations at PKWTNS

PKWTNS has been registered under the Care Centres Act 1993, which is situated at Kampung Tok Dor, Jerteh, Terengganu. This organization was built in stages from 1988. At the beginning, there were only 12 residents and this numbers were increasing to 20 residents during 1989. In 1990, there were 28 houses built due to the increasing number of the residents. This organization was established to accommodate senior citizens (single mothers) aged 55 years and above, who possess an interest in learning, acquiring, and exploring religious education in more depth. In 2016, there are currently 71 residents registered at PKWTNS.

A total of 9 residents were successfully interviewed in this study. However, only 5 respondents were selected due to their clear and direct answers while others were not. This interview represents 7% from the whole residents of PKWTNS. In general, the study showed that most of the respondents in this study have to rely on non-formal financial resources because of low-level of education. One of the respondents reported that her grandchildren always come and visit her but only to ask for the pocket money. Another respondent said that she does not want to burden her son because of his unstable financial income in supporting and sustaining his own family.

One of the respondents reported that for the past few weeks, she fell down and received treatment at a private clinic nearby. She also said:

"My children called and asked if I want to go to the clinic, then they will come to PKWTNS, but I did not want to burden them because all of my children were busy working and take time to come here. So, I just said I will go by myself...after that incident, none of my children come and visit me to see my condition, but they always called and asked about my health. Once a month, my children will bring me back home for a few days."

Another respondent said:

“I have 9 children and most of them live in Kelantan...but only my daughters called and asked about me, meanwhile my sons rarely call me.”

The rest of the respondents said only during vacation that their children would come and visit them. Some bring their parents back home. The limited availability to allocate some time to be around their parents is due to changing life phase where most children migrate to urban areas and are occupied with marital, economic and education matters.

Almost all respondents stated that the main reason for them living in PKWTNS is their awareness of acquiring religious education. One of the respondents said:

“Before this, I am too busy working and take care of my family until do not have time to learn religious education and now Allah give me second chance to change for a betterment.”

Most of the respondents willingly chose to come and stay at PKWTNS because this centre systematically provides the means for them to enhance and increase their spiritual preparations for the life in the Hereafter by getting more involved in spiritual activities such as congregational prayers, voluntary night prayers (*qiyémullail*), *tajwêd* class, and many others. All these activities can be difficult to be done at home alone due to time constraint for taking care of the family and working. One of the respondents reported:

“If I stay at home, I will feel depressed because of the children are too busy working and some of them are migrated to other states due to marriage and economic reasons. However, when I came here, I can feel peacefulness.”

Hence, this study revealed that among the intra-family problems in PKWTNS were lack of care and concern by the children in the wellbeing of the parents in the time of need. Moreover, financial and economic factor contributed to the decline in the intra-family relationship where some children were unable to visit their parents regularly. In fact, some were also found to be financially dependent on the elderly despite only receiving a fixed monthly income of RM300 from Bantuan Orang Tua (BOT) Scheme.

Conclusion and Solution

Islam promotes the maintenance of a good relationship with elderly parents by honouring and respecting them as stated in the Qur'an and the Hadith. The existence of elderly care centres primarily emphasizes social and personal requirements of senior citizens, and it is not a place for children to send their parents and neglect their responsibilities towards them. The needs of the senior citizens are not the duties to be attended by the organizations only, but it should also be fulfilled by their own children. Their emotional needs require further attention and care as the elderly have sensitive feelings and emotions. It is to make sure that the elderly do not feel isolated and the relationship with their children will remain in good condition although they are living apart.

There are various ways for children to do to their elderly parents, such as call them regularly, give them present, pay them a frequent visit, among others. By doing so, elderly parents will feel more appreciated and pleased knowing that their welfare is attended by their own children. At the time as such, a simple call is valued more than anything. Therefore, in

order to preserve family ties, children must realize and fulfill their duties towards their parents despite being placed at elderly care centres.

In addition to obedience, reverence, and submission towards parents, Islam also stresses and encourages children to prioritize their parents in spending their money. It is because parents faced a lot of hardships and put more sacrifices in raising their children. Thus, being kind to elderly parents is not only about speaking and behaving well towards them, but it also includes their financial help as stated in hadith narrated by ÑAisyah, Ummul Mu'minËn:

The Prophet SAW said: "The children of a man come from what he earns, rather they are his pleasantest earning; so enjoy from their property." (AbË DËud, vol.3: 3531).

Besides that, it is suggested that the government and stakeholders should build elderly care centres with appropriate and complete facilities to fulfil the needs of the elderly such as mosque, medical services, laundry, cafeteria, recreation centre, hotel or homestay for the children and families to stay. These facilities make it easy for children especially those who are from urban areas to visit their parent regularly and do some activities together comfortably.

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