DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD’S PERSONALITY FROM THE SUNNAH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AND PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract - This paper aims to highlight the nature and objectives of development of child’s personality from the Sunnah and psychology perspectives. This study comprehensively deals with theoretical and empirical aspects from the two domains. The adequate development of child’s personality is among the hot issues of the world. Nowadays, the religious and social sciences greatly focused on the study of different developmental aspects of children in order to develop their personalities and make them good citizen for future. This paper explicitly presents the comparative and analytical view of literature on the nature and objectives of the development of child’s personality in order to integrate both schools of thought. The findings of this theoretical study, therefore, will be helpful to promote better understanding of the issue for the production of righteous and virtuous offspring.

Keywords - development, child’s personality, Islam, psychology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Children are significant figures and future generation of every society. Today, the world is facing many challenges and issues in all societies and cultures. The development of an adequate child’s personality is among these challenges and issues. Childhood is considered as an ideal period to shape and develop sound masses for future. The distinction and significance of this stage has forces the scholars of religious studies, humanities and social sciences to emphasize on its various aspects. In this paper, the nature and objectives of the development of child’s personality have been addressed from Islamic teachings and contemporary psychology. In the end, the paper is given conclusion based on similarities and differences of the issue.

II. DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMINOLOGIES

Following are the definitions of the terminologies used in this research paper:

1. The Sunnah: The Arabic word Sunnah, according to Arabic Lexicographers means, “A way, course, rule, mode, manner of acting or conduct of life.” The scholars of hadith defined Sunnah technically as,

2. Sunnah is all that has been related from the Prophet (peace be on him) from his speech, actions, approvals, physical or moral attributes, or biography, regardless of whether any of above is from the period before the first revelation or after it.”

3. Psychology: Psychology has been defined and re-defined by psychologists over time. The word psychology comes from the roots psyche, which means ‘mind,’ and logos means ‘knowledge or study.’ Technically, Dennis Coon defined psychology as, “The scientific study of behavior and mental processes.”

4. Development: According to Al-Mawrid, “The word bina means building, raising, rearing, making, forming. Ahmad al-Razi defined development as, “Bana means building the thing by combining its various parts with each other.” According to John W. Santrock, “Development is the pattern of change that begins at conception and continuous throughout the human life span.” Gray R. VandenBos states, “Development is the progressive series of changes in structure, functions, and behavior patterns that occur over life span of human being or other organism.”

5. Child and Childhood: According to the Holy Qur’an, childhood starts after birth and ends at age of puberty. Childhood starts at birth, Allah says, “And then We bring you (Human) out as infants” and ends at puberty, Allah says, “And when the children among you come to puberty, then let them ask for permission, as those senior to them (in age).” According to Ibrahim Mustafa et al., “Al-tiff means baby until soft and child until maturity, and al-tufalāh is the stage from birth to maturity.” Fakhir Aāmil writes, “In fact childhood stage not extend more than twelve years of age.” According to VandenBos childhood is defined as, “The period between the end of infancy (about 2 years of age) and the onset of puberty marking the beginning of adolescence (10-12 years of age).” We can conclude that childhood stand for age period from birth to maturity and puberty and 10-12 years of age. In general meaning, the child is denoted for human from birth to maturity.
6. Personality: According to Arabic dictionary, “Shakhshiya” means individuality, personality, distinctive way of life, and distinctive character.” Ibrahim Mustafa et al. defined personality as, “The term al-shakhshiya stands for the qualities that distinguish one person from the other.” According to the Encyclopedia of Psychology, “Personality in its broad meaning is the total quality of an individual’s behavior.” Kosslyn and Rosenberg defined personality as, “Personality is a set of behavioral, emotional and cognitive tendencies that people display over time and across situations and that distinguish individuals from each other.”

III. BACKGROUND OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD’S PERSONALITY

In the beginning of nineteenth century, special attention has been given to children and a worthy work has been done on the motivations and emotions of children, by the study and analysis of their psychology as a discipline. Children are the basic unit of human race, parents of future and figure the society. Childhood is very important stage in human life, because it works as a base for later stages. It plays a pivotal role in upbringing individuals of a society. It is like fertile land for development and growth. It is a vital, enrich, and long period, during which the educator can infuse right principles and sound directions in the personality and behavior of his children. Childhood is the stage of foundation and formation for all traits of human and organization of one’s inheritance and environment. During this stage, human’s initiation of shaping, physique, soundness, and sickness occurs.

The Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet are basic sources for human’s upbringing. Islamic upbringing emphasizes that the small child and younger should follow the personality of the Messenger (peace be on him), who is firm and stable model. The Prophetic Sunnah is an everlasting and absolute source of guidance and instruction for human development throughout his life span. The Muslim personality who has approved the Prophet (peace be on him) as a model in all aspects, is marked as the moderate in qualities, characteristics, nature, selection and stability, because it did not deform its nature and distort its disposition, and it seeks to be as Allah wanted.

The development of child’s personality has a long and rich history as it was accepted in every era. In fact, the child is an important player within the family system. The philosophers of history have speculated the nature and rearing of children. In the west, three conflicting views such as original sin, tabula rasa and innate goodness constitute the historical background for the study of childhood rearing practices. Original sin is the Christian doctrine that means children are born into the word corrupted. Tabula rasa means blank tablet according to John Locke. Innate goodness means children are inherently good in the views of Jean-Jacques Rousseau John. At present, childhood is very important and unique period of life that lays significant basis for the adult years. The development of an infant involves the study of his or her health (biosocial), curiosity (cognitive), temperament (psychological), and many other aspects from these three domains. If the developmental tasks of social competence such as trust, self-awareness, self-esteem, interpersonal communication skills, pro-social attitudes and behaviors, friendship dispositions and skills, self-discipline and self-regulation are ignored, it becomes difficult for children to develop socially adept as adolescent and adults.

The developmental scientist, at one extreme, believe that children should be allowed to grow and develop freely without any interference from science or government, but at the other extreme, they promote that extensive social planning through principles of psychology should be used to bring up children peacefully, cooperatively and cheerfully. The developmental scientists have attempted to promote a bond between valuable, unresponsive infants and their parents, help the children in learning difficulties in schools, and assist them to prevent the emotional difficulties.

Meanwhile, Muslim scholars have contributed extensively to the developmental aspects of children in their books, keeping in view the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They have emphasized religious, physical, psychological, educational, social and sexual aspects of development for sound foundations of the child’s personality. In contrast, modern psychologists have collected data about the stages of development and growth of children on the basis of their empirical researches; that they have conducted on the children. They have developed the theories of personality for children, and have focused on the stages of childhood in order to provide the practical model for sound development. Moreover, they are using their evidences to determine more reliable and appropriate methods and techniques for upbringing the children.

IV. CONCEPT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD’S PERSONALITY

In Arabic terminology, the term ‘binā al-shakhsiyyah’ (development of personality) means structure, composition, physique, formation and morphology. The development of personality refers to the adoption of all possible sources to develop and raise the individual and society so that one becomes righteous for oneself, corrector for others and obedient to Allah Almighty. The development of personality is human upbringing by doing the deeds that helps him to come closer to Allah, and by leaving the deeds with fear that put negative impact on
human and religion. In other words, upbringing is a process of development of a child gradually in the direction of the limit of rightness and brilliance. Due to this, the child devotes toward the code of Allah, cares and controls his personality, recites the Quran and follows the Shariah to develop himself. Hence, Islamic upbringing is the development of all traits of Islamic personality i.e. ideological, psychological, physical, social, and organization of behavior based on the principles and teachings of Islam. On the other hand, from psychology perspective the personality development refers to the development of beliefs, moods, and behaviors of children that differentiate them in a particular society. The main reason for partial understanding of personality development depends on the heavy reliance on questionnaires that are filled out by parents or the older children. That’s why; theories of personality development are not strong, because of less use of behavioral observations of children.

It is, therefore, concluded that child’s personality development deals with the religious, physical, cognitive, emotional, moral, social and sexual characteristics of an individual that make him distinguish from others in the society from both perspectives.

V. PROBLEM STATEMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD’S PERSONALITY

In recent time, world is facing the serious problem of developing child’s personality righteously. Children are deprived from certain family values, and various interests and charms have disorganized them. Communication media, bright civilization and culture, and character abolishing environment of schools and colleges, are responsible for destruction and disorder of morals, habits, discipline and upbringing of children. Sometime, due to improper development during childhood, children undergo psychological disorders that persist in them throughout life. When a child would not develop in a devout family and he would not found a pious teacher, he would develop ill-natured, bad-tempered, sharp-tongued, and deviat-mannered. To avoid developmental mistakes, it is necessary to understand how historical events, wealth, poverty, and family heritage would shape, guide, and assure the development of a child.

Children upbringing is an important and sensitive issue. However, most of the parents think that upbringing of children start at the age of maturity. Due to this serious mistake, they neglect children upbringing during infancy that develop deviation in their personalities and consequently the parents fail to modify this deviation. Hence, offspring grow with weak faith, poor belief, sins daring, and ill-natured.

The awareness of normal development promotes early recognition of problems and assists to prevent the deviant development. Much of the early research emphasized specific problems of the welfare of child, guided for the changes of child growth and education, and treatment of mentally retarded and delinquent children. The scientific findings on child’s development express the importance and role of parent-child relationship, home environment, peer relations and culture. These findings also demonstrate that the cultural poverty may lead to mental retardation.

It is obvious from above that due to diversity of cultures and societies children may suffer from psychological, moral, ethical, and social problems. Improper guidance and awareness of parents, disorganized family environment, bad social environment and modern media play key roles to figure the personality of children. The modernization of cultures and societies shows that there is a need of integration between the two approaches to produce socialized and educated masses with healthy physical, psychological, moral and social personality. The parents, teachers, educators, psychologists, religious scholars all over the world are still searching practical techniques and methods in upbringing the children having normal behavior and personality, preventing them from abnormalities and deviances.

VI. OBJECTIVES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD’S PERSONALITY

Children are significant figures and future generation of every society and childhood is an ideal and glorious period of life to lay foundations for later stages. Keeping in view the importance of the issue, religious sciences and social sciences greatly emphasized the various developmental issues of childhood. Islamic teachings based on the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) provide a magnificent vision of the developmental aspects of childhood, whereas contemporary psychology also discusses comprehensively the development issues of children. The both schools of thought attempted to develop child’s personality by addressing the concept and nature of childhood development for the welfare of humanity. Following are the objectives of developing children from the two perspectives:

1. Objectives from the Sunnah Perspective:

It is the distinction of Islam that it has introduced inclusive methods of growth and development for different childhood stages and has described the rights and needs of children for all stages. The Muslim child’s personality development is regarded as fundamental objective among the objectives of Islamic mission, because children are the desired future generation and the real capital of nations. Indeed, Islamic upbringing emerges the method that
affirms practical application of Islamic Shariah. According to the Sunnah perspective the development of children mainly emphasis the following objectives:

i. To help Children to achieve the Purpose of Life
Within the framework of Islam, worshipping Allah Almighty makes life meaningful and purposeful. Islamic teachings greatly emphasized the religious development of children to help them in achieving the purpose of life on earth, which is to worship Allah Almighty alone. The Holy Quran states the purpose of creation of human as, “And I (Allah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship me.” This verse shows that the foremost purpose of life is to worship Allah Almighty. In a hadith, Sabrah bin Ma‘bad Al-Juhani narrated that Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “Teach the boy Salāt (prayer) when he is seven years old, and beat him when he is ten.” The punishment is not an action of revenge for a child but it aims at upbringing the child. Hence, the foremost objective of the development of children is to help them in achieving purpose of life.

ii. To Develop the Children to do Good Deeds
Childhood is a fertile land to infuse good deeds. It is therefore very important to grow and prepare them for test and trial of life. The Holy Quran highlights this reality as: “Who (Allah) has created death and life that He may test you which of you is the best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving.” In another verse, Allah says: “Verily! We have made that which is on earth as an adornment for it, in order that We may test them (mankind) as to which of them are best in deeds.” These verses show that this life and the adornment of life are created to test mankind for best deeds. The development of children on right lines laid foundations to do best deeds in future life.

iii. To Protect the Children from Hell Fire
The protection and safety of children from the Hell Fire is also an important objective of Islam dealing the development of child’s personality. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran: “O, you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire (Hell),” Ali bin Abi Tālib interpreted this verse as, “Teach yourself and your family goodness.” This shows that protection of children from Hell Fire absolutely depends on good-ness of child’s personality. It is parents’ responsibility to develop their children, because they would be asked on the Day of Judgment. Thus, upbringing, discipline and education are the best gifts and acts of great benevolence that a father adorns to his child, which is better from this world and the things of this world.

iv. To Produce Righteous Individuals for Society
The righteous individuals are considered as backbone and essential elements of a sophisticated society. The Holy Quran explains it in the following ways: “My Lord! Grant me (offspring) from the righteous.” In this verse, the Prophet Ibrahim made supplication for a righteous child. In another verse, the Holy Qur’an mentions the following supplication: “And those who say: ‘Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring the comfort of our eyes, and make us leaders of Muttaqīn (the pious).”

v. To Produce Offspring with Good Character
According to Islamic perspective, purpose of child’s upbringing and education is to modify him into a sound Islamic personality with good character and morals, strong Islamic principles, sound Islamic knowledge, and suitable Islamic behavior. The Holy Quran elaborates: “At that time Zakariyyā invoked his Lord, saying: ‘O my Lord! Grant me from You, a good offspring. You are indeed the All-Hearer of invocation.” Shaikh Abdul Rahman writes: “Zakariyyā (peace be upon him) prayed to his Lord for pious offspring i.e. with righteous character and good ethics so that it can complete blessings of this world and Hereafter.” Children are adornment of life for parents like wealth as mentioned in the Holy Quran, “Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world.” Therefore, parents should develop them in good manners.

vi. To Protect the Children Right
The development of child’s personality is also subjected to the protection of children’s rights. Allah says in the Holy Qur’an: “The mother shall give suck to their children for two whole years, for those who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother’s food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, or father on account of his child.” This verse clarifies that mother and father role by providing the children food and other things as well.

vii. To Care and Protect the Children
Islam provides care and protection to children through the supplication of parents’. Allah says in the Holy Quran: “Your wealth and your children are only a trial, whereas Allah! With Him is a great reward (Paradise).” The Prophet (peace be upon him) stressed on the importance of supplication for children in order to provide them care in the following way: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to ‘Uqbah: “Do not pray against yourself, do not pray against your children, and do not pray against your wealth, lest that coincide with an hour when Allah is asked and He answers your prayers.” In another Hadith, narrated Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “There are supplications that will undoubtedly be answered: the supplication of one who has been wronged; the supplication of the traveller, and the supplication of a father for his child.”

viii. To Save the Children Life and Lineage
Islamic teachings do not allow harming child’s life. The prohibition of killing the children due to poverty is clearly mentioned in the Holy Quran. Allah says: “And kill not your children because of poverty. We provide sustenance for you and them.” Similarly, in another verse Allah says: “And kill not your children for fear of poverty. We shall provide for them as well as for you.” In a narration, “Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) disapproved the killing of woman and children.”

ix. To Protect Orphan Children
The Prophet (peace be upon him) highly emphasized the rights of orphan and mentioned great reward for their development and growth. Narrated Sahl bin Sa’d: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “I and the person who looks after an orphan and provides for him, will be in Paradise like this,” putting his index and middle fingers together.”

x. To Raise the Children Polite and Kindly
Narrated Abu Hurairah: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “The best women are the riders of camels and the righteous among the women of Quraish. They are very kind to their children in their childhood and very careful in guarding of the property of their husbands.”

xi. To Get Benefits of Children in this World and the Hereafter
The pious and virtuous children are not only beneficial in this world but also useful for parents after their death. The parents’ status will be raised due to the good deeds and prayers of their children. Following Hadiths demonstrate the importance of children for parents’: Narrated Abu Hurairah that … the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “A man will be raised in status in Paradise and will say: ‘Where did this come from?’ And it will be said: ‘From your son’s praying for forgiveness for you.’” In another Hadith, Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “When a man dies, all his good deeds come to an end except three: Ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous son who will pray for him.”

Similarly, the righteous and virtuous children will serve as a protection against the Hell Fire for their parents’. The Sunnah has mentioned it: narrated ‘Aishah, the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him): “A lady with her two daughters, came to me asking me (for some alms), but she found nothing with me except one date which I gave to her and (she) divided it between her two daughters and then she went away. The Prophet (peace be upon him) came in and I informed him about this story. He said: ‘Whoever in the charge of these daughters and treats them generously, then they will act as a shield for him from the Fire (Hell).’”

2. Objectives from Contemporary Psychology Perspective
In general, modern psychology deals with human life. The branches of psychology such as child psychology, developmental psychology, and personality psychology particularly deal with children issues. Child psychology stresses the empirical techniques to study children at specific stages, developmental psychology deals with the study of laws and processes of development, and personality psychology as a discipline emphasizes on the whole person, motivation and dynamics, and individual differences. According to the contemporary psychology following are the objectives of the development of children:

i. To Raise and Care Children
The psychologist Kairen Cullen states that the main aim of child psychology is to help us know how best to raise and care for our children.” Thus, child psychology specifically deals with the raising and caring issues of children.

ii. To Describe, Explain and Optimize Development
According to developmental scientists Baltes, Reese and Lipsitt the three goals of developmental psychology are to describe, explain, and to optimize development.

iii. To Grow, Maintain and Regulate Human Development
Baltes, Staudinger, and Lindenberger described that the mastery of life span involves in the three goals of human development: growth, maintenance and regulation. To grow, maintain and regulate the human life span is among the major goals of human development as discussed by these psychologists.

iv. To Solve Practical Problems of Children and Families
According to psychology, development of personality depends on the solution of the problems at different stages of life such as infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. Mavis states that developmental science introduced with the need to
solve practical problems of children and their families, and to improve their education, health, welfare, and legal status. The developmental goals for children obviously change with the stages of their growth and development. According to child psychologists, preschool years (2-5 years) are most important developmental periods for the strong foundation of children. Similarly, children ages 6-10 years involve enhancement of skills necessary for social expectations. To provide the solution of the problems of children is an important goal of the development of children.

v. To Assist Mental Health of Children

The promotion of positive mental health and the regulation of stresses of growth and development are also the objectives of children’s development. Schroeder and Gordon describe that the goal of child clinicians is to help major mental health problems and to normalize the stresses of their growth and development in order to enhance their full potential. It is obvious from the above discussion that the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and contemporary psychology greatly emphasized the issues of childhood in order to maintain the developmental tasks of child’s personality. This paper demonstrates that there is a need to emphasis on the developmental aspects of child’s personality because the children are the future generation and parents of future. The better understanding of children provides the basis for better development of children. The objectives of the development of child’s personality highlights that children should be developed with the purpose of welfare of humanity.

vi. To Measure Change and Human Full Potential

The assessment and promotion of change and development is an important objective of development of children. According to Kathleen Stassen Berger, development scientists seek to understand and measure change in human over time, and to help people through knowledge to develop human full potential.

vii. To Protect the Lineage of Human

The protection of human lineage is an important goal of children development. According to Bonanno, Wortman, and Nesse, in twenty-first century, the increasing number of older adults who will be without either a spouse or children has become a cause for child growth and development.

viii. To Produce Better Parents

John Santrock described that understanding and learning the nature of children’s development can help in becoming better parent, because parenting practices passes from parents to parents. The parents should take seriously the task of rearing children by providing them with a warm, supportive, safe, and inspiring environment so that the children would reach to their full potential as human beings. But unfortunately, both desirable and undesirable child-care strategies and parenting practices are passed from one generation to the next continuously. Hence, the development of children is helpful to produce better future parent and next generation.

CONCLUSION

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