



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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The Myths and Facts about Islamic Culture and Child Abuse and Protection

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The myths and facts about Islamic culture and child abuse and protection

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Arab Peninsula Fertile crescent North Africa



Main objectives

- **Identify the challenges of child abuse in Arab culture.**
- **Recognize the role of culture in harmful practices and child abuse and protection.**
- **Know what Islam states about child discipline and child rearing & protection.**

CAN in Arab world

- **Data: what do we know?**
- **Discipline and corporal punishment**
- **Infanticide**
- **Harmful Practices**
 - **FGM**
 - **Child marriage**
 - **Cauterization**
- **Gender and CAN**

CAN in pre-Islamic era in Arabia

- Lawless land
- Uncountable marriages
- Slavery
- Constant wars
- No inheritance for women
- Children as fathers' property
- Infanticide was widespread

Infanticide

Pre-Islamic Arabia practiced infanticide

- Out of poverty (males and females).
- As sacrifices to gods, or
- As disappointment and social disgrace felt by a father upon the birth of a girl.

Infanticide & Islam

- was regarded as a grave sin
- implicitly denounced in the story of Pharaoh's slaughter of the male children of Israelites
- Qur'an "when the girl-infant that was buried alive is asked: for what sin she was killed"

The right for survival

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- When if one of them receiveth tidings of the birth of a female, his face remaineth darkened, and he is wroth inwardly. (58) He hideth himself from the folk because of the evil of that whereof he hath had tidings, (asking himself): Shall he keep it in contempt, or bury it beneath the dust. Verily evil is their judgment. (The Bees, 59)

Corporal Punishment

- Widely used at home and schools
- Research is limited
- No laws banning CP

Rates of **harsh forms of physical punishment in the previous 6 months as reported by mothers, WorldSAFE study - 2002 (%)**

<u>Severe physical punishment</u>	Chile	Egypt	India	Philippines	USA
Hit the child with an object (not on buttocks)	4	26	36	21	4
Kicked the child	0	2	10	6	0
Burned the child	0	2	1	0	0
Beat the child	0	25	— ^b	3	0
Threatened the child with a knife or gun	0	0	1	1	0
Choked the child	0	1	2	1	0

Rates of **moderate** forms of physical punishment in the previous 6 months as reported by mothers WorldSAFE study – 2002 (%)

<u>Moderate physical punishment</u>	Chile	Egypt	India	Philippines	USA
Spanked buttocks (with hand)	51	29	58	75	47
Hit the child on buttocks (with object)	18	28	23	51	21
Slapped the child's face or head	13	41	58	21	4
Pulled the child's hair	24	29	29	23	— ^b
Shook the child ^c	39	59	12	20	9
Hit the child with knuckles	12	25	28	8	— ^b
Pinched the child	3	45	17	60	5
Twisted the child's ear	27	31	16	31	— ^b
Forced the child to kneel or stand in an uncomfortable position	0	6	2	4	— ^b
Put hot pepper in the child's mouth	0	2	3	1	— ^b

- In the year 900, the Rhazes, the eminent physician from Baghdad, attributed the prominence of umbilicus and hernia in children to “the child may be intentionally struck.”

Harmful practices

Cauterization



FGM

- FGM in North Africa + Arab peninsula
- Muslims and Christians
- 50-85% of females in Egypt/ Sudan
- “There is no single verse in the Quran that relates explicitly or implicitly to female circumcision”.

Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, 2009

FGM

- Nawal El-Saadawi, a writer MD victim of FGM, stated:
- "The importance given to virginity and an intact hymen in these societies is the reason why female circumcision still remains a very widespread practicebehind circumcision lies the belief that, by removing parts of girls' external genitals organs, sexual desire is minimized. "

Early Marriages and age gap



Divorced Yemini girls celebrate Freedom



Another forced child marriage in Yemen



Elham, died 3 days after marriage

Early Marriages

- In Yemen early marriage is a custom (50% below 18)
- Reference to early marriage can be found nowhere in Quran
- Recent scholars' research: The prophet marriage to Aysha at 18 & not 9.




[http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=447
IssueID=0_SecID=137_88](http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=447IssueID=0_SecID=137_88)

Gender & CSA

	Females victims of CSA %
Western countries	60-80
Bahrain (Almahroos et al, 2010)	45-49
Lebanon (Usta et al, 2010)	46
KSA (Al-Eissa et al, 2010)	47
Turkey (Bahali et al, 2010)	56

Religion

- Misinterpretation or misuse of religious texts.
- Nothing in Quran advocates spanking a child.
- Attributing a single Hadith to PM
“spank kids at 9 when they refuse to pray”.
- Countless hadiths preaches the opposite.

- Literal interpretation of texts  Child obedience  Physical Discipline  potential for CPA
- Extrinsic religious orientation is linked with increased risk of CPA.
- Intrinsic religiosity orientation is linked with reduced risk of CPA

Child Protection in Islam

Sharia's main Objectives

The safeguard of

- Progeny
- Life
- Sanity
- Property
- Faith

Legislations in Islam

- from the womb to adulthood.
- Based on
 1. Quran
 2. Sunna

Orphans in Quran

The Qur'an in 19 verses

- forbids harsh and oppressive treatment of orphan's children while
- urging kindness and justice towards them.
- reprimand those who do not honor the orphans and encourage feeding them.

Orphans in Quran

- The Qur'an speaks of the reward waiting for those who feed orphans, poor and the prisoner for the love of God ([76:8-9](#)). It also warns those who wrongfully consume the property of orphans that they will be punished for this sin.

Do not betray the trust!

—

- “Come not near the wealth of the orphan save with that which is better till he come to strength; and **keep the covenant**. Verily, the covenant it will be questioned.” (Night journey, verse 34)

Home-work in a cold evening in a street in Damascus



Breast-feeding

- “Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years; (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling”. Al-baqara-233

Prophet Mohammed (PM) Hadiths (sayings)

- “It is a grave sin for one to neglect a person whom he is responsible for sustaining”. PM
- “Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is accountable for his or her flock” PM

PM

“Honor your children and give them good names”

“He is not one of us who does not show mercy to youngster”

Aysha: Mohammed never hit a child or a servant or a woman.

The rule of harm prevention

- “They should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm” PM
- Nondiscrimination:
 - “Fear god and be fair to your children” PM
 - Humans are equal just like the teeth of the comb”.
PM

Discipline

- “Nothing a parent may award to his child is better than a good upbringing”. PM
- May god have mercy on a parent who helps his (or her) child be grateful and kind to him (or her). PM
- “With the child, play for seven, discipline for seven, accompany for seven and then let go to lead his/her own life”. PM

The Right for Education

“The seeking of knowledge is an obligatory on every Muslim”. PM

“Teach your children differently from your style, they are created for a time different from yours”

Forbidding Incest

Alnisa Sura - verse 23

Forbidden unto you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your father's sisters, and your mother's sisters, and your brother's daughters and your sister's daughters, and your foster-mothers, and your foster-sisters, and your mothers-in-law, and your step-daughters who are under your protection (born) of your women unto whom ye have gone in - but if ye have not gone in unto them, then it is no sin for you (to marry their daughters) - and the wives of your sons who (spring) from your own loins. And (it is forbidden unto you) that ye should have two sisters together, except what hath already happened (of that nature) in the past. Lo! Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. (23)

- Nothing in Quran or sunna allows corporal punishment of children.
- “It is not permissible to incur harm, no parent (or teacher or employer) has the right to smack a child; this would inevitably inflict psychological as well as physical damage”. Al-Azhar, *children in Islam*, 2009.

Other challenges

- Culture of secrecy (no see, hear, talk)
- Privacy / girl's future!
- Protect the families from scandals rather than protect the child from abuse
- Policy of prof. silence (confidentiality): protect from accountability

Breaking silence

Gazi Al-Qosaibi memoir “Alzheimer” 2010

“Memoir is not a justification to go naked and hurt others...the writer who frequently saw his father (Mosque Imam) embracing a beautiful boy” Page 30

Breaking silence

“How could a victim of child sexual abuse forget the incidence?... How could children forget the humiliation by adults?” Page 95.

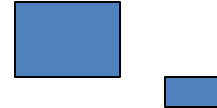
“Imagine waking up one morning and not remembering the humiliating comments by the family. Not remembering the sadistic school teacher who used to enjoy abusing me” Page 96. [Gazi Al-Qosaibi memoir “Alzheimer” 2010](#)

Breaking silence

Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, KSA, Lebanon, Morocco,
Oman, UAE, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen

**Arab Professional Network for the prevention
of Violence against Children-2004.**

Bahrain Center for Child Protection



Conclusion

- Across cultures; misinterpretation or literal interpretation of religious texts is used to justify CPA. **It is culture not Islam teaching**
- Protective texts predominate in all religions
- Cultures norms and values are dynamic with risk and protective factors interact in complex ways.

Conclusion

- Child rearing practices is changing & what was acceptable 1500 years ago are no longer acceptable

**CAN is not acceptable in
any culture or under
any context.**

Thank you

