

## Islamic Traditions on Elderly Care

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### Abstract

In the Muslim family, it is the responsibility of the children to make sure that the parents or elders are highly regarded and that their privileges are fully cared. The Quran and the Hadith have provided guidelines and instructions on how parents and the elderly should be treated. The responsibility of the children especially the adult ones for taking care of the well-being of their parents is emphasized by Allah SWT repeatedly in the Quran. From an Islamic perspective, taking care of the elderly is the responsibility that the children must fulfil. Therefore, it is incumbent upon adults to provide care for the elderly for the duration of their lives. Hence, this study aims to discuss the Islamic traditions on elderly care and also elder abuse and neglect. Through teachings found in the Quran and Hadith, Muslims are encouraged to treat their elderly with respect, compassion, and kindness, reflecting the values of filial piety and societal cohesion. Islamic teachings stress the provision of physical, emotional, and spiritual support for the elderly, promoting a sense of dignity and fulfillment in their later years. By upholding these traditions, individuals and communities can foster environments that prioritize the well-being and inclusion of older generations, enriching society.

**Keywords:** Islamic, Traditions, Elderly Care

### Introduction

Elderly refers to ages nearing or surpassing the lifespan of people in general. Each of us will face different stages of age. As the body ages, it becomes prone to medical conditions. Nowadays, the importance of taking care of the elderly is commonly unnoticed. In the U.S. alone, more than a half million reports of elder abuse reach authorities every year, and millions more cases go unreported (Lawrence et al., 2019). Globally, the number of elder abuse cases is projected to extend as several countries have speedily ageing populations whose desires might not be absolutely met because of the resource constraints. Elder abuse includes physical, emotional, or sexual harm inflicted upon older adults, financial exploitation

towards them, or neglect of their welfare by people who are directly responsible for their care. The purpose of this study is to create and raise awareness among the community about the importance of parenting. As people get older, there are many things changing. The structure of your life changes, and probably even the things you used to be able to do before. According to one study, one in five people in the UK experiences anxiety or depression later in life. Yet, according to this study too, the detection of such stressors goes unnoticed in the elderly (Kingstone et al., 2017). This marks the importance of taking care of our elders and parents. A must in caring for older people includes having time to listen, to share, and to give. There are many reasons why we should always take care of the loved ones as they are aged. Certain studies have shown that stressors like anxiety tend to increase as we become older. As these stressors increase, it is necessary to combat them with amendments that bring comfort and ease in life. Ageing cannot be prevented; however, we are able to find out how to deal with arising conditions for great health of our loved ones. Most health concerns of the elderly are memory loss, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease among others. This proposed study will create a website that can benefit the elderly and at the same time giving awareness to the community about the importance of taking care of the elderly.

Elderly can be considered as a period when people reach a certain age limit. United Nation (PBB) defines elderly as individuals that reach 60 years old and older according to International Conference rules (United Nations, 2019). It also refers to ages nearing or surpassing the life expectancy of human beings and is thus the end of the human life cycle. The number of elderly citizens in the country is increasing as life expectancy increase. Nowadays, most people are not aware and even ignore about the elderly care that should be important to their parents. This is due to many people who are too eager to chase progress and neglect the elderly who are already helpless and consider it is a poor thing to take care of them. To make it worse, there are even cases of elderly people who have been neglected or abused in their lives. In a systematic review concerning the prevalence of elder mistreatment, researchers concluded that about 20% of all dependent older adults suffer from neglect (Cooper et al., 2008). It is possible that they are from a minority whose life is without family, or they are ignored by their families. There are eleven million women in this country who are sixty-five years of age and older. They are being ignored by the women's liberation movement (Lewis et al., 1972). Among the issues of women's liberation are the issues of the young and middle aged-day-care centers, abortion reform, and educational discrimination. The factor of "ageism" has influenced these old women being neglected by the women's liberation. Ageism can be described as a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin color and gender. Ageism allows all of us to see old people as "different" from those who are younger. This clearly indicates that the elder people are being ignored due to their inability and weak because of age. The neglected elderly people are found sent by their families to the nursing home, living alone in a difficult life, staying at the hospitals without family care or visit and suffering from chronic illness without proper treatment and care. According to Doctor Tanya Gure, there were about 1.4 to 1.5 million of elderly living in nursing homes in 2019 (Elaine, 2019). Abuse of elders takes many different forms, some involving intimidation or threats against them and financial trickery. The most common types of abusing on elderly are physical, emotional, sexual, financial exploitation and others (Lawrence et al., 2019).

Therefore, showing respect and good attitude or manner to older people should be a good practice in our lives. In the Muslim family, it is the responsibility of the children to make

sure that the parents or elders are highly regarded and that their privileges are fully cared. The Quran and the Hadith have provided guidelines and instructions on how parents and the elderly should be treated. The responsibility of the children especially the adult ones for taking care of the well-being of their parents is emphasized by Allah SWT repeatedly in the Quran. From an Islamic perspective, taking care of the elderly is the responsibility that the children must fulfil (Alavi et al., 2010). Hence, adults need to take care of the elder people as long as they are alive. The responsibility that the adults need to take on requires a great deal of commitment (Alavi et al., 2010). This care usually requires adjustment in the children's way of life. The aims of this study are to instil a sense of responsibility and love towards the elderly as well as to create and raise the awareness among the community about the importance of parenting by giving an exposure from an Islamic perspective. In addition, this study is also conducted to motivate people to pay more respect towards the elderly and thus can help to improve the quality of life among the elderly. It is because, motivation is the main key for changing the individual's view about an issue (Miller, 2000).

Islamic traditions emphasize the importance of caring for the elderly as an act of respect, duty, and kindness. The principles guiding elderly care in Islam are deeply rooted in the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Here are some significant aspects of Islamic traditions on elderly care: (i) Respect and Honor, (ii) Duty towards Parents, (iii) Financial Support, (iv) Physical and Emotional Care, (v) Patience and Compassion and (vi) Reward and Blessings.

- Hence, this study aims to discuss the Islamic traditions on elderly care and elder abuse and neglect.

### **Islamic Traditions on Elderly Care**

From an Islamic point of view, responsibility means that every individual of Islamic society and all men in authority are collectively responsible to see that nobody, regardless of caste or creed, should remain unfed, unclad, and uncared for in sickness. Besides, if anybody dies in a state of helplessness because of old age and disability, then all the members of the society would be implicated and held responsible for his death before God. The limitation of the study is focusing on the aspect of Islamic society towards all classes in Quran and Hadith. In addition, it is found that Islamic society provides security to all classes and determines the rights and duties of each group separately. Result from this study is the duty of all members of the society that after meeting their own needs moderately, they should fulfil the rights of the needy, especially the old and disabled. Older people's health is not considered to be an important problem in developing countries. Mother and childcare hold the first place on the agenda. Recent investigations, however, indicate that adult and older people's health will deserve more attention soon (Feachem et al., 1992; Martin & Kinsella, 1994). To estimate the current and future need for medical and nursing care, each of the countries concern should be investigated in detail. This study aims at exploring the present situation in Egypt. Its results can help to identify existing problems in the provision of health care and provide suggestions for further planning.

In addition, opportunities and vulnerabilities that are embedded between the profound traditions of Islamic codes of conduct and the challenges of the modern world are to be explored too. The religious commandments engage believers in a clear child parent code of behaviour by emphasizing the duty of children to obey their parents, and to provide support and shelter for them when they are old (Akhtar, 2010). Islamic teachings emphasize affection, honour, and respect for parents and older members of the family, comparing respect for

elders to the honour offered to God (Mehdizadeh, 2002). Because this moral code has impregnated the social culture and influenced the patterns of old-age care. Next, the study is focusing on creating an awareness regarding the Islamic health practices, health behaviours, code of ethics and the framework of Islamic perspectives of caring and spirituality. According to Salleh (1994) caring is an attribute in Islam, a religion of peace, from all individuals not only towards human beings but also towards the fauna, flora, and non-living things. For the Muslim countries' tradition, respect towards the elders has been commonly stated as "water belongs to the younger, word belongs to the older." This is a frequent saying that summarizes the relationships between people, where water symbolizes humanity and care, and word symbolizes decision making. It is inappropriate to talk about older individuals outside of the family without using a title of respect. Islam preaches affection and responsibility among members of the Muslim family.

The care towards older Muslim in the above context is in reference to kinship care in Islam and its practice among Muslim communities. An ideal Islamic care of older people is based on the main religious texts in Islam, the Qur'an (Abdel-Haleem, 2005), the collected narrations of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (hadith) and the Islamic law (shari'ah). An overview of challenges faced by the Muslims communities in the care of older people make it difficult to fully adhere to the Islamic ideal follows. Within the context of this study, older people are defined as those aged 60 years and above. This is consistent with the United Nations age indicators for older persons (Rowland, 2009: 38). The extension of care networks to community levels in which social and communal support systems are established for older people is another suitable response to support the needs of older people, even more so for those who have limited immediate or extended family available to assist them. Communal networks are opportunities to connect socially and reduce isolation and loneliness among older people (Al-Dhafiri, 2014; Al-Kandari, 2011). Caring for older people is influenced by several factors, such as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the students (Celik et al., 2010). Negative attitudes can result in ageism, which is the process of discriminating and stereotyping older adults Islam (2016), and negatively affect elderly care. Faronbi et al (2017) stated that the religious beliefs and practices of nursing students provide a means for coping with the stress of their work and comfort while in the presence of suffering, terminally ill old patients. Hence, attending religious services appears to be an important prerequisite for scaling up elderly care and supervision. It has been argued that Islamic culture includes certain values that may make it difficult for Muslim women workers to provide care services in Western/European cultures (Siddiqui, 2012; Yosef, 2008). Other than that, the study will also provide information regarding the experiences of Muslim women healthcare professionals who adhere to their religious values while working at service centres and hospitals providing care for older adults in Finland. The growing number of the elderly population has caused a shift in the cultural context in Malaysia. The changes are due to the growing percentage, education level and aspiration of the ageing population. These changes need to be adhered to ensure the quality of life for this population in their golden age. All elderly care centre should adhere to the requirements and standards determined by Care Centre Act (1993); Care Centre Regulation (1994) to protect the interest of older people. This study aims to investigate the issue of the ageing population and to provide necessary facilities for the elderly according to their needs. It is the objective of this paper to deliberate on the contributing factors in stages. Due to the scarcity of elderly care facilities for Muslims and to support cultural sustainability, adequate and dignified professional elderly care gains its importance because of demographic population developments and the assumed fragmentation of traditional

family caregiving among this population (Ahaddour et al., 2016). To explore the Islamic perspective on old age and elderly care, this study discusses in-depth the concepts and characteristics of old age considering the Qur'an, hadith reports, Qur'anic exegesis, and the held views of Islamic jurisdiction. This conceptual framework is necessary for a substantive discussion of the religious, spiritual, and socioeconomic implications of ageing in Islam. The rights of the elderly in the Arab Middle East, where the issue of a better care for its elderly has received little scholarly attention. The cultural teaching of Islam directs those children to take care of their aged parents. This prevents many from sending relatives to nursing homes. The conservative tradition of caring for one's parents, however, can be costly for families.

### **Elder Abuse and Neglect**

The problem of neglecting the elderly is becoming more common in this era. In fact, there are elderly people who are abandoned by their families and end up living in poverty. Thus, the issue of the elderly care must be given a serious attention by all parties because they need help and attention from us. If these elderly are not taken care of, there is a possibility that Muslim elderly end their lives in a state of no longer apostasy (Baharuddin & Ismail, 2013). Therefore, there are several definitions of the elderly according to Islam that should be considered by the community to provide awareness and take note of the importance of caring for the elderly. According to the term elderly in Islam, it is defined as a sweetener and complement to the success of human life in the world. They need to be respected and well taken care of. The words of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Israa 'verse 23: -

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِآلِهِ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۚ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٌ وَلَا تُنْهَهِمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

The interpretation:

“And your Lord has commanded that you should not worship except Him alone and that you should do good to your parents. If one or both reach old age in your care and upbringing, then do not say to them any harsh words even the word 'ah' and do not insult them but say to them a noble and polite word”.

In addition, the elderly will face various challenges in life, as interpreted in surah al-Nahl verse 70: -

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ وَمِنكُمْ مَن يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ

The interpretation:

“And Allah created you and then He will cause you to die; and among you there are some who are sent back to senility, so that they know nothing after having known (much). Truly, Allah is Knowing, capable of all things”.

Hamka (1999) explained that the elderly is those who are 50 years old and there is a gradual change to the mental and physical states at the age of 75 years and above. In addition, he also stated that the elderly at that age will return to the child's mind with a memory that is functioning poorly. This condition is caused by health problems and weakness of the body and illness.

So, here is a Dua' taught by the prophet to us to prevent us from being easily forgotten.

"أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْبُخْلِ وَالْكَسَلِ، وَالْهَرَمِ وَأَزْدَلِ الْعُمُرِ، وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ، وَفِتْنَةِ الدَّجَالِ، وَفِتْنَةِ الْمَحْيَا وَالْمَمَاتِ"  
(Narrated Iman Al-Bukhari)

The interpretation:

I seek refuge in You from greed, laziness, senility, the weakest age, the torment of the grave, the slander of the Dajjal as well as the slander of life and death.

Furthermore, Abu Hayyan (1993) stated that the elderly refer to those who have weak senses which is marked by weakness in their words and thoughts, especially on their memory of something. Then, according to an Islamic figure, Mansur (1990), elderly is defined as people who are old and have grown gray hair on their hair. While Al- 'Alūsī (1994) defined elderly as those who have weak physical strength, have damaged the senses as in their childhood. While al-Tabarī (1992) highlighted that the elderly are those who have reached the age of 75 and above and will gradually become stupid as in childhood. Meanwhile, Ibn Jauzi has divided old age into 2 stages, the first is between 50-70 years (old age) and the second is between 70-end of life (very old age). Firstly, believers at this age, need to self-reflect themselves (self-introspection). They also need to do more acts of worship to prepare for death, always remember death, and soon. Secondly, in this phase, those who are pious, and believers should increase their istighfar (ask for forgiveness) and their repentance to Allah SWT, increase their deeds of worship, and ask to get husnul khatimah (the end of a good life).

Besides that, Al-Razī's (2000) view of old age is the transfer of human beings from perfect to weak, from strong to weak, young to old, from healthy to sick and from perfect mind to forgetful. However, there are also great old people and always think far in old age. They are constantly thinking to cause their minds, emotions, and spirituality to maintain at a good condition. Despite that, according to Islam, old age is a bonus for the elderly to continue to do good deeds even better. Rasulullah SAW has said about old age by classifying those who have reached the age limit of 60 years which is a gift of Allah SWT so that they continue to do good deeds and being a devoted Muslim. This is clearly stated in the proposition narrated by Imam al-Bukhārī:

عن أبي هريرة، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: أعز الله إلى امرئ آخر أجله حتى بلغه ستين سنة

Meaning: From Abu Hurairah, from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: Allah has given ample opportunity to people who are extended up to 60 years (Al-Bukhārī, 2000).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Islamic traditions emphasize the importance of caring for the elderly as a fundamental duty ingrained within the fabric of society. Through teachings found in the Quran and Hadith, Muslims are encouraged to treat their elderly with respect, compassion, and kindness, reflecting the values of filial piety and societal cohesion. Islamic teachings stress the provision of physical, emotional, and spiritual support for the elderly, promoting a sense of dignity and fulfillment in their later years. By upholding these traditions, individuals and communities can foster environments that prioritize the well-being and inclusion of older generations, enriching society.

Recommendations for advancing Islamic traditions on elderly care involve both individual actions and community initiatives:

- i. **Education and Awareness:** Encourage educational programs within communities to promote understanding of Islamic teachings on elderly care. This includes seminars, workshops, and religious classes to emphasize the importance of respecting and caring for the elderly.
- ii. **Family Values Reinforcement:** Promote family values that prioritize the care of elderly relatives. Encourage families to create nurturing environments where elderly members feel valued, respected, and included in daily activities.
- iii. **Social Support Networks:** Establish support networks within communities to assist elderly individuals who may be isolated or in need of assistance. This can involve organizing regular visits, providing transportation to appointments, or offering emotional support through companionship.
- iv. **Healthcare Services:** Develop healthcare services tailored to the needs of the elderly population, incorporating Islamic principles of compassion and dignity into medical care. This may involve training healthcare professionals on culturally sensitive practices and fostering partnerships with Islamic organizations to provide holistic care.
- v. **Interfaith Collaboration:** Foster collaboration with other religious and community groups to promote shared values of elderly care. By working together, diverse communities can amplify efforts to support elderly individuals regardless of their religious backgrounds.
- vi. **Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for policies that support the rights and well-being of the elderly within Islamic frameworks. This includes lobbying for legislation that ensures access to healthcare, social services, and protection against discrimination based on age.
- vii. **Resource Allocation:** Allocate resources within mosques and Islamic institutions to support programs and initiatives focused on elderly care. This may involve dedicating funds for outreach efforts, establishing volunteer networks, or creating spaces for intergenerational activities.
- viii. **Elderly Empowerment:** Empower elderly individuals to remain active and engaged members of society by providing opportunities for lifelong learning, mentorship, and participation in community events.

By implementing these recommendations, communities can uphold and advance Islamic traditions on elderly care, fostering environments where older generations are valued, supported, and honored.

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