

Administrative Protection of Children from Violence in the United Arab Emirates, A Sharia and Legal Perspective

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the administrative protection of children from violence in the United Arab Emirates through a dual approach that integrates legal and Sharia dimensions, considering it a core issue related to societal security, family stability, and human capital development. The study is based on the assumption that administrative protection is no longer merely a regulatory measure or an emergency response to individual cases, but has evolved into a strategic option reflecting institutional maturity and the state's capacity to manage social risks through a sustainable preventive approach. The study adopts a descriptive analytical methodology. It examines the conceptual framework of administrative protection, clarifying the fundamental distinction between administrative and criminal protection, with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention rather than subsequent punishment. The study also reviews the legal foundations of administrative protection in the UAE, particularly legislation granting competent authorities' proactive powers to intervene upon suspicion of child abuse, while maintaining proportionality and respecting family privacy. It further highlights the competent administrative bodies and their operational mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of institutional integration and the multiplicity of roles among social, educational, health, and security institutions. The study discusses preventive administrative measures and early intervention as the cornerstone of the protection system, given their effectiveness in reducing violations before their psychological and social consequences escalate. From a Sharia perspective, the study examines the Islamic vision of child protection and demonstrates the compatibility of administrative protection with the objectives of Sharia, particularly the preservation of life, lineage, and intellect, and the prevention of harm. It also addresses key administrative and Sharia related challenges, such as tensions with family privacy, weak community reporting, and the risks of misuse of discretionary authority.

Keywords: Child Protection, Administrative Protection, Violence Against Children, United Arab Emirates, Legislation Sharia and Legal Perspective

Introduction

Protecting children from violence is one of the fundamental indicators of institutional maturity and a state's ability to manage its human capital from the earliest stages of life. A child is not merely a vulnerable individual in need of care, but a strategic asset that determines the quality of a society's social and economic future. From this perspective, protection is no longer solely a moral or humanitarian concern, but has become a governance issue linked to societal security, family stability, and long-term sustainable development. In the United Arab Emirates, administrative protection of children from violence has emerged as a key pillar of public policy. The state has adopted a preventive approach based on early intervention and risk management rather than relying exclusively on reactive measures after violations occur. This orientation reflects a modern administrative mindset that recognizes prevention as significantly less costly than later remediation, both socially and economically. Administrative protection is founded on an integrated system of legislation and executive procedures that grant competent authorities the power to intervene immediately to protect children, while ensuring coordination among security, social, educational, and health institutions. This institutional integration constitutes a major strength of the Emirati model, as it reduces decision duplication and enhances response speed and effectiveness. At the same time, this system is inseparable from the society's value framework, as it is grounded in the Islamic Sharia vision that prioritizes the protection of life and lineage and assigns shared responsibility to guardians, society, and the state to safeguard children from all forms of harm. Accordingly, administrative protection in the UAE represents a model that combines Sharia reference, legal regulation, and administrative efficiency, aiming to create a safe environment for children while achieving a balanced relationship between state authority and family rights.

The study pursues the following objectives

- To examine the conceptual and legal foundations of administrative child protection in the United Arab Emirates.
- To analyze the preventive governance mechanisms adopted to address and mitigate risks of violence against children.
- To evaluate the degree of institutional integration among relevant authorities in implementing protective measures.
- To explore the relationship between Sharia based normative principles and contemporary administrative regulation in shaping child protection policy.
- To assess the extent to which the Emirati model achieves a balanced alignment between state authority, family rights, and long term sustainable development objectives.

Conceptual Framework of Administrative Protection from Violence Against Children

The conceptual framework of administrative protection from violence against children constitutes the theoretical and methodological foundation upon which public policies, legislation, and executive procedures are built. The absence of a clear framework leads to conceptual confusion, overlapping competencies, and fragmented responses that lack efficiency and sustainability.

Administrative protection of children refers to a set of preventive and regulatory measures undertaken by competent administrative authorities to prevent violence against children or mitigate its effects before it escalates into a fully constituted criminal offense. This form of protection differs fundamentally from criminal protection, which intervenes only after a crime has occurred. Administrative protection is based on the logic of social risk management rather than punishment.

Violence against children is understood broadly, encompassing not only physical abuse but also psychological violence, neglect, exploitation, and all behaviors or omissions that harm a child's physical, psychological, or moral integrity. This comprehensive definition aligns with contemporary approaches that view child safety in an integrated manner, encompassing psychological and social development alongside physical wellbeing. Administrative protection rests on several key pillars, prevention through early intervention, regulated discretionary intervention that allows rapid decision making within clear legal boundaries, and institutional integration among social, educational, health, and security authorities. The UAE experience reflects this advanced conceptual understanding by embedding child administrative protection within a broader framework of family and community protection.

From a Sharia perspective, this framework aligns with Islamic principles that emphasize the preservation of life and lineage and assign collective responsibility for protecting the vulnerable, particularly children. Sharia emphasizes preventing harm and blocking harmful means before damage occurs, thereby providing strong religious support for administrative protection.

Legal Foundations of Administrative Protection in The UAE

The legal foundation of administrative protection for children from violence in the UAE is based on a clear legislative vision that treats the child as a priority stakeholder in public policy. UAE legislators have approached child protection as an issue of social security and institutional stability, resulting in a legal framework that grants administrative authorities proactive intervention powers before harm escalates.

The Child Rights Law, known as Wadeema's Law, constitutes the cornerstone of this framework. It provides a comprehensive definition of abuse and violence against children and extends protection to physical, psychological, and moral dimensions. Its significance lies not only in criminalization but also in granting administrative authorities the power to adopt urgent preventive measures upon suspicion of risk, even in the absence of a fully established offense.

From an administrative law perspective, protection in the UAE precedes judicial intervention without replacing it. Administrative measures complement judicial processes by preventing harm while legal procedures are underway. The framework also enshrines shared responsibility for child protection, obligating educational, health, and social institutions to report suspected abuse.

The law authorizes a range of preventive measures, including social follow up, family guidance, and temporary removal from sources of danger, when necessary, all governed by

proportionality and the best interests of the child. This balance reflects legislative maturity and avoids both excessive intervention and neglect. The framework also aligns with international child rights standards while respecting cultural and social values.

Competent Administrative Authorities and their Operational Mechanisms

Administrative authorities responsible for child protection form the backbone of the protection system, bridging the gap between legal texts and practical application. The UAE has adopted an institutional model based on role distribution, functional integration, and rapid response.

Government entities play a leading role in policy formulation, oversight, coordination, and the development of executive regulations, procedural manuals, and data systems. Child protection units and specialized committees serve as the primary operational bodies handling reports and assessing risks through multidisciplinary teams.

Security agencies, particularly community policing, act as supportive partners rather than purely criminal enforcement bodies, contributing to protection and coordination with social authorities. Educational and health institutions serve as the first line of detection and are legally obligated to report suspected cases.

Operational mechanisms follow a clear procedural pathway, starting with reporting, followed by risk assessment, and then the adoption of appropriate administrative measures based on proportionality and gradual escalation. Institutional coordination and information sharing are central features that enhance efficiency and prevent overlap.

Preventive Administrative Measures and Early Intervention

Preventive administrative measures and early intervention constitute the cornerstone of child protection in the UAE, reflecting a shift from reactive to proactive governance. Violence against children is typically preceded by identifiable behavioral and social indicators that can be addressed administratively before escalation.

These measures are grounded in the principle of collective responsibility and early reporting. Risk assessment by social and psychological specialists' guides decision making and determines the nature and intensity of intervention. Early intervention may include family counseling, social support programs, or temporary administrative supervision, aiming at correction rather than punishment.

In cases of serious or imminent danger, authorities may adopt urgent measures such as temporary removal to a safe environment, justified legally and religiously by the best interests of the child and harm prevention. Continuous follow up and evaluation ensure effectiveness and adaptability of interventions. From a Sharia perspective, these measures align with the principles of prevention and blocking harm.

Sharia Perspective on Child Protection from Violence

The Sharia perspective on child protection provides an authentic value-based framework that precedes and supports positive law. Islam views the child as an entrusted being whose care

entails religious, moral, and legal responsibilities shared by individuals, families, society, and the state.

This perspective is grounded in core objectives of Sharia, particularly the preservation of life, lineage, intellect, and human dignity. Violence against children, whether physical or psychological, is strictly prohibited. Guardianship is conditional upon serving the child's best interests and is not absolute. When guardianship becomes a source of harm, societal and state intervention becomes legitimate.

Sharia emphasizes gentleness and mercy in child upbringing and rejects cruelty as a means of discipline. It also prioritizes harm prevention over waiting for damage to occur, thereby legitimizing early administrative intervention. In the UAE context, these principles are translated into practical policies that integrate Sharia values with administrative governance.

Compatibility of Administrative Protection with the Objectives of Sharia

Assessing the compatibility of administrative protection with the objectives of Sharia is essential for determining its legitimacy and effectiveness. Administrative protection aligns closely with Sharia objectives, particularly the preservation of life, lineage, intellect, and human dignity.

Preventive measures and early intervention reflect Sharia's emphasis on preventing harm and addressing its causes. Protecting children from violence contributes to social stability and safeguards future generations. The principle of preventing harm takes precedence over preserving family privacy when the child's safety is at risk.

Administrative intervention does not undermine parental authority, as guardianship in Sharia is conditional upon achieving welfare. When guardians fail, the state's general guardianship becomes operative. The UAE model exemplifies this alignment by integrating Sharia objectives into a balanced administrative framework.

Administrative and Sharia Challenges In Implementation

Despite its strengths, administrative protection faces several challenges. The most prominent is the tension between administrative authority and family privacy, which may lead to hesitation or delayed intervention. Weak community reporting, driven by social stigma and misconceptions about family autonomy, undermines early intervention.

Another challenge lies in the potential misuse of discretionary authority, where flexibility may result in inconsistent or excessive interventions if not properly regulated. Balancing firmness and compassion also require high professional competence. These challenges do not indicate failure but reflect the complexity of the social and cultural environment in which protection operates.

Future Prospects for Developing Administrative Child Protection in the Uae

Future development of administrative child protection requires moving beyond diagnosis toward value creation. Strengthening institutional integration, unifying databases, and adopting shared intervention protocols are strategic priorities.

Developing administrative competencies through continuous training in legal, psychological, social, and Sharia dimensions is essential. Enhancing public awareness of administrative protection as a supportive rather than punitive tool will increase early reporting and societal trust.

Deeper alignment between Sharia and law will further enhance social acceptance, while continuous performance evaluation using clear indicators will ensure adaptability and effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study confirms that administrative protection of children from violence has evolved into a strategic choice reflecting state maturity and effective social risk management. The UAE legal framework provides a solid foundation for preventive intervention while maintaining a balance between child protection and family privacy.

The study demonstrates that administrative protection aligns deeply with the objectives of Islamic Sharia, particularly the preservation of life, lineage, and intellect, and the prevention of harm. Although challenges remain, addressing them through institutional integration, capacity building, and societal engagement will enhance effectiveness.

Ultimately, administrative protection of children represents a long-term investment in societal security and stability. The UAE model illustrates an advanced approach that integrates law, Sharia, and modern administration, affirming that a strong state is measured by its ability to protect its most vulnerable members above all else.

This study makes both theoretical and contextual contributions to the existing body of knowledge on administrative child protection and governance frameworks in Islamic and contemporary state systems. Theoretically, it advances the conceptual understanding of child protection by situating it within a governance paradigm that integrates preventive administration, institutional coordination, and Sharia based normative foundations. In doing so, it moves beyond conventional legalistic or welfare centered analyses and proposes a multidimensional model that connects child protection to public administration theory, risk management, and sustainable development discourse. Contextually, the research provides an in-depth examination of the United Arab Emirates as a case study, offering empirical insight into how preventive governance mechanisms operate within a hybrid legal and value-based system. This contributes to comparative policy scholarship by presenting an applied model that may inform other jurisdictions seeking to reconcile cultural, religious, and administrative dimensions within modern protection systems. Accordingly, the study strengthens existing knowledge by bridging theoretical abstraction and institutional practice, while positioning the Emirati experience as a relevant reference point in global discussions on child protection governance.

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