

Differently Abled Children: Fostering Empathy and Social Responsibility Through an Islamic Psychological Lens

By: Qazi Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany al-Waleed

PhD. (USA), NDI, Shahadat al Aalamiyah (Al Hawzah, Najaf, Iraq), M.A, LLM (Shariah)

Musheer: Fed. Shariat Court of Pakistan

Member: Ulama Council of Pakistan

Chairman: The Guardian Pakistan

The Writer is an Attorney at Law and a Religious Scholar

Website: www.durrenajaf.com

Academia: <https://durrenajaf.academia.edu/QaziBorhany>

Contact for spiritual help: najafspiritualcenter@gmail.com

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Abstract: Differently-abled children are a truth of society and cannot be ignored. Their disability is beyond human control and sometimes is caused due to human negligence. Irrespective of the cause, it is the duty of the entire society to facilitate and accommodate them in public and private life. A good education is a birthright of every human being and is a mandatory obligation on every person who follows the religion of Islam. Those amongst us who are physically challenged must be helped in every possible way to exercise this right to quality education. Efforts should be made to establish schools for differently abled children and afford them due care so that they too can become productive members of society and benefit themselves and their families. According to the Talim of Islam, these people are sources of Dua and blessings. A Hadith says: "You are given sustenance and victory for the virtue of those who are weak amongst you." Hence, we should treat the differently-abled with kindness, care, and dignity for the sake of both Islam and humanity. Children with physical deformities or disabilities—whether by birth, accident, or hidden structural weakness—face profound emotional and social challenges. These challenges, if unaddressed, may develop into inferiority complexes, mental distress, and social isolation. This paper explores the ethical, psychological, and religious imperatives for society, especially within an Islamic framework, to support differently abled children. The discussion highlights the importance of empathy over sympathy, the critical role of parents in nurturing and discovering the hidden talents of such children, and the responsibility of society to create inclusive opportunities. A case study of a young girl's journey from despair to fulfillment illustrates both the destructive consequences of neglect and the transformative power of love and acceptance. Drawing from Hadith, that honoring and uplifting differently abled individuals is not merely a moral duty but a spiritual obligation. The study concludes by emphasizing that respecting and empowering these individuals is essential for both their psychological well-being and the moral fabric of society.

Keywords: Differently abled children, Inferiority complex, Empathy vs. sympathy, Islamic perspective on disability, Parental responsibility, depression, Social inclusion, Psychological well-being, Human dignity, Hadith on mercy, Special education

Some children are deformed by birth, while some are handicapped due to various accidents. A number of children are physically perfect by appearance but imperfect in structure and fitness. As the ones created, they are not responsible for their weaknesses. It is also a fact that the system of creation is perfect in its order. The deformed are quite conscious of their physical shortcoming(s) which is why the emotions of sorrow and grief along with a sense of inferiority occupy them. If this problem is not dealt with, it spreads like cancer and the personality of the child is damaged.

And once inferiority complex strikes any special child, it makes them mentally disturbed. They ignore social life and functional responsibilities in society. In other words, he runs away from all his abilities and even ignores the small responsibilities that he otherwise would be able to undertake as any other person. Differently abled babies deserve our empathy, not sympathy. It is the responsibility of society to work around their physical limitations and provide them with opportunities to function properly. Even to cast an eye upon these special children with an unfair gaze is below humanity. All religions unanimously agree on the issue that it is a sin to tease them in any way. Rasulullah (S) said:

"You should not gaze upon those who are handicapped. Due to your cast, their pain may intensify. Do not leave them in grief by any of your actions."

The responsibility of parents of special children becomes greater in this regard. Every chance to develop and grow should be provided to them. Similarly training them properly is vital. It is necessary that parents should investigate and discover their talents. It is healthy for us all if the less fortunate get their due respect and position in society. It is highly recommended by psychologists that these children be treated as normal and healthy. Acknowledging and appreciating helps them accomplish things in life. Parents should realize the weaknesses that a child has and feels. In any case, the advice of a good consultant will be helpful.

In this regard, an incident comes to mind. Once a differently abled girl wrote a letter to the women's rights institution which was sent to me. In that she explained that when she was thirteen, she fell from the roof which damaged her spinal cord thus rendering her handicapped. She spent a long time in the hospital as a result. Frustrated by the unbearable pain and her extensive stay in the hospital, she came to the conclusion that she would pass a much better time with her family and came back home. To her disappointment, she did not get the love and care that she had hoped for. Her family made her feel as if she was a burden and didn't pay attention to her needs even though she contributed to the household chores.

They used to taunt her all the time instead of showing sympathy. In this unfortunate situation, she pleaded to Allah multiple times a day, asking that she be relieved from her parents' lives and this world. She passed her early period of life in pain, grief and sorrow. Time passed away and she resembled an elderly woman at the prime age of twenty-five. Parents died and her brothers and sisters who had already rejected her never cared for her. At last, she got married and Allah bestowed a loving and kind husband who was also handicapped. It was only then that she got a shelter of love. It was the time that all her lost vigor and health revived and in that lovely and kind atmosphere, she felt herself to be a healthy and psychologically normal woman. Now she is

happy and pleased with her family but constantly thinks of the people in situations such as what was previously hers.

Study history and you will find many inspiring examples of personalities who achieved prestigious positions in society and have become successful despite their physical misfortunes. Allah has given us the ability to understand and not ignore the disabled. They should be received by society with open arms and be dealt with in the kindest manner. It is the cardinal responsibility of the intelligentsia to establish schools for special children and provide them due care. Isn't it a duty of the Muslims to shoulder the responsibility of such people, in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

A Hadith says:

"You are given sustenance and victory for the virtue of those who are weak amongst you."

In Islam, we are directed to demonstrate Raham (mercy) to everything in this world. I conclude the discussion on the following Hadith:

"Show Raham (mercy) to those on Earth so that He [Allah] who is in the heavens bestows Rahmah (mercy and forgives) upon you."

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