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Book reviews, adverts of new books, conferences, workshops, research notes and Ph.D. theses are also welcome.

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2. A RE-ASSESSMENT OF THE NATURE AND APPROACH OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS IN CHURCHES: T. M. OBAMUYI 27
3. THE HISTORY AND EFFECT OF MADRASAH EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: F. T. LATEJU 35
5. SOLUTION TO POVERTY: OYEDEPO’S PROPHETIC AND HEALING MISSION IN NIGERIA: S. A. OWOEYE 58
6. MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE QUAGMIRE OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIANITY AND TAOISM: S.A. LALEYE 71
7. THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE RETURN OF MISSION SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE: W. E. EHIANU 81
8. ORACLE CONSULTATION: ITS ROLE IN THE DÉNOUEMENT OF NINE YORUBA PLAYS: O.O. ALABI 92
9. INCARNATION AND THE SCIENCE OF EUGENICS AND HUMAN CLONING: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS: C. P. OLATUNJI 100
10. GENDER, SEX AND THE DIALECTICS OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP TOLERANCE: IRENE OMOLOLA A 115
11. CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN FUTURE NIGERIA: F.A. AKINSEYE (REV. FR.) 125
12. CHILD ABUSE IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: K.A. ADEGOKE 133
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>YOUTH AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIOETHICAL REGENERATION FOR OUR PRESENT AGE</td>
<td>S. AWONIYI</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>THE UTILIZATION OF MUSIC FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF ISLAMIC MESSAGE IN YORUBALAND</td>
<td>R. I. ADEBAYO</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ARABIC AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES IN NIGERIA: TOWARDS A SOLUTION</td>
<td>K. S. WAHAB</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLES OF INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN NIGERIA</td>
<td>A. R. OGUNLEYE</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>THE PLACE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN LEARNING ISLAMIC STUDIES</td>
<td>M. A. AYUBA</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>REINCARNATION: THE GRAIL MESSAGE'S POSITION AND THE BIBLICAL IMPLICATION</td>
<td>L. O. EKUNDAYO</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>NIGERIA MUSLIM WOMEN AND EMPOWERMENT PHENOMENON</td>
<td>A. S. AGBOOLA</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHILD ABUSE IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY:
AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

K.A. ADEGOKE (Ph.D)

Abstract
The popular notion that child is the most precious gift that God can give to man cannot be de-emphasized in the African society. Despite this, there are still various child abuse going on Nigeria society due to parent’s nonchalant attitude towards their duties. It is in the light of this undesirable development that the paper aims to examine child Abuse in Nigeria society: An Islamic perspective. In order to achieve our aim, the paper looks into the definition of child abuse for more clarification of the term, then the paper highlights various types of child abuse existing in Nigerian society. The implication of these child abuses on the Nigerian children are examined while the solution are provided in the light of Islam.

Introduction
The problem which has posed a great challenge to Nigeria as a nation is the issue of child abuse which is obvious and manifested in every nook and cranny of Nigeria. Right from the military regime of Nigeria at the National State and local levels, their first project which they embarked upon was the upliftment of women Status and eradication of life abuse in the Nigerian society through their various programmes such as Better Life for Rural women, Family women Trafficking and child labour Eradication foundation and various family upliftment foundations, there are also some international organization s such as United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United nation International Education and scientific fund (UNICEF) who are making every effort to eradicate the problem of child abuse in all society but to no avail. The reason for this development is the poverty, greediness for materialism and Cultural Values. This is the reason it is necessary to use Islamic spectacler as a paradigm of solving child abuse in Nigerian society.

Definitions of Terms
The term ‘child’ could be defined as unborn or newly born human being, boy or girl, son or daughter. In reference to the contextual meaning of the term
to our paper, child means a human being of under-age, irrespective of his sex and who should be under the care and protection of the adult race in the society.

The term "Abuse" simply means wrong use and ill-treatment. Hornby defines Abuse as an act of making bad or wrong use of something. In the light of this, child abuse could be defined as an infamous acts of ill-treating, wrong handling and wrong training of a child. It is simply one of the ways of placing the duties and responsibilities of the parents (who are adult) on the child’s shoulder without considering his or her capacity in bearing of such burden.

**Forms of child Abuse in the Contemporary Nigerian Society**

There are several forms of child abuse in the contemporary Nigerian society. The paper shall examine only five of them which are as follows; Child marriage, Child Neglect, Child Labour, Child Prostitution and Child Hawking.

**Child Marriage**

Some Nigerian tribes in Northern Nigeria (Hausa-Fulani) and some part of Eastern Nigeria (Ibo) have culturally entrenched the child marriage into their societal norms. These Nigerian tribes see nothing wrong in depriving their girl-child of her right to education commensurating to her capability. Nigerian government inaugurates several mass literacy programmes through which they are campaigning for the equal opportunity to education for the Nigerian child irrespective of their sex. These mass literacy programmes are not going down well with some Northerners and Easterners who see it as alien to their cultural values of marriage which encourage early marriage.

**Child Hawking**

Child hawking is an act of involving a child in petty trade. This is found within the market areas, motor parks, commercial areas and residential areas. In fact, it has become a normal habit across the several tribes in Nigeria society as some families depend to a large extent on the effort of their children to make extra sales in order to make end meet. Thus some parents in Nigeria prefer stopping their children schooling or education to hawking of their ware. They argue that schooling or education would not fetch them immediate benefit needed for the sustenance of their poverty-stricken families. Adesope in her own view lamented that Nigerian child, being a member of the larger African population, has been incapacitated by the very fact that he or she is a child. She added that the Nigerian child has been overwhelmed by the selfishness of the average adult, who would necessarily and always want to involve their children into child labour in every facet of his or her natural resources exploration and exploitation.

**Child Neglect**

Child neglect is a nonchalant attitude on the welfare of child or act of shirking parental care and responsibility. This form of child abuse is very rampant in
almost all the Nigerian tribes. It is due to the consequence of poverty, economic incapability of some families and irresponsibility of some Nigerian families. The Northern Nigerian people (Hausa-Fulani) do not see anything wrong in sending their little children between the ages of four and ten years to beg for their living. There is no community in Nigeria where one would not notice child beggars begging for money, food, clothes and other material needs from the passers-by. Also the South-Eastern people of Nigeria (Ibo, Ijaw, Ogoni, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Edo and others) are also noted for sending out their children to some Nigerian metropolitan cities in searching of their daily bread and butter. Like the people of Northern Nigeria, there is no Nigerian commercial center that one will not see the South-Eastern people of Nigeria selling snacks, fairly used clothes (Bosikoro), electronic gadgets and electrical appliances. This unwarranted habit of these two sets of Nigerian tribes responsible for their being Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS) as specified by the brochure of Joint Admissions and Matriculation Boards.

Similarly, some South-Western people of Nigeria (Yoruba) are also finding guilty of child neglect as a result of their habit of marrying more wives than their financial capacities or having more children than their normal income and broken home. Consequently, these children are abandoned to their mothers for their parental caring, training and education or left these children to fend and cater for themselves. There are so many instances where the parents withdrew their children from the school or apprenticeship center on the excuse of poverty and such parents would leave no stone unturned to get money for burial ceremony of their dead parents.

Child Labour

Child labour is an act of putting an under-aged child into labour or work for material benefit of his or her parent. Child labour is an attitude of some Nigerian parents to engage their under-aged children in the labour for just no reason rather than the selfish interest of materialism. Some Nigerian parents prefer their child labouring for them to sending him or her to school or apprenticeship center where he or she can learn any type of skill/profession. Hardly you observe any home in urban area that does not have a house-girl or house-boy who are rendering child labouring service in lieu of wages on monthly or yearly basis on the agreement of the child's parent. Hardly, one passes on Nigerian streets without seeing some of the under-aged children as; bus conductor and pure water seller at the expense of gang to school. It is also learnt during our data collection that are some Nigerian parents who deliberately encourage their children to enter into the contract of the child labour with somebody in order to make more money. At the end of the show, they collect all money made by their children from child labour for their own advantage.
Child Prostitution

Child prostitution is an act of putting a female child of adolescent age to the business of prostitution or body hawking for the material benefit of her parents.

Some Nigerian parents in both South-Western and South-Eastern part of the country used to send their female adolescent children out to engaged in prostitution out of which she would be catering for herself. As if this is not enough, some parents, even used to encourage their female children to travel to some Western Nations in Europe for prostitution business ranging from prostitution with man, lesbianism (homosexual) and with animals such as horse, dog, (bestiality) et cetera for the sake of material benefit.

Implication of Child Abuse on Nigerian Children

The Implication of child abuse on Nigerian children is nothing to write home about when considering its negative effect on the general Nigerian society.

High Rate of Delinquency in Society

Child abuse is an avenue or a means of creating the nuisance for the Nigerian society. Hardly could one move on Nigerian urban streets and motor parks without coming across various hooligans and gangsters popularly known as “Area boys” extorting money from the passers-by under threat. These are the group of Nigerian children using as political thugs by some Nigerian urban streets and motor garage without coming across various hooligans and gangsters popularly known as “Area boys” extorting money from the passers-by under threat. These are the group of Nigerian children using as political thugs by some Nigerian politicians for their political ambition and interest, through which so many of them lose their life during the process or land themselves in jail. It was discovered in our finding that majority of these Nigerian children who have become nuisance in the society hail from the family that is guilty of child abuse.

Increment of Crime rate

There is also high increment of crime rate in Nigerian society day by day. Almost everyday, there would be an information from the media sources on cases of armed robbery and assassination recently taking place. It could be rightly said that majority of armed robbery and assassination recently taking place. It could be rightly said that majority of armed robbers and hire assassins are the products of child abuse from some families guilty of child neglect. Majority of Nigerian children move into the criminal activities right from their childhood due to the Shirking of parental responsibility and child neglect from their families.

International Blacklisting of Nigeria as an Indisciplined Nation

The image of Nigerians has been blacklist and dented on international level due to the various nefarious activities involved by the Nigerians abroad.
such as robbery, impersonation, prostitution, forgery, fraud drug trafficking, certificate racketeering et cetera. As a result of this adverse development, Nigerians used to be exposed to shameful and ridiculous search by the custom and immigrants officials of the European embassy before they could be granted visa to enter their countries. Majority of the Nigerians involving in the above mentioned nefarious activities are children from the families guilty of child abuse due to their parental child neglect. Thus, they lack moral education as they could giving not give to their image and name above the material benefits that they get from these nefarious activities in foreign land.\textsuperscript{15}

**Increased Child Beggary**

There is also an alarming rate of increment in child beggary on the Nigerian streets in the both rural and Urban Centers of the Country. Almost, average Nigerian children have been turned into professional beggars on the streets due to child abuse from their families. In the Northern Nigeria, hardly could one passes on the street without coming across group of children popularly called almajiri, ranging from the age of four to ten years, dressing in dirty and tattered clothes with plastic bowls in their hands begging for food and money. Similarly, in Southern Nigeria, hardly could one go to market and commercial places without seeing some children asking for money assistance or some mothers of twin child (Ibeji) using them for begging by referring to them as beggary twin (Ibeji Alagbe).\textsuperscript{16}

**Educational Backwardness**

Majority of Nigerian children are deprived of having education in Nigerian society due to their parental child abuse and irresponsibility. Majority of them are withdrawn from the schools for the child labour, child hawking and child prostitution. Even some of them who used to engage in child labour and hawking after their school hours could not be able to perform well in their school subjects they could not prepare for the next day school work. As a result of this, many Nigerian children could not go far in their studentship to higher institutions of learning. Thus, there is level of illiteracy in the country as more than eight percent of Nigerian children are dropping out of school right secondary education.\textsuperscript{17}

**Child is subject to Harassment**

Some Nigerian children exposed to child abuse from their parent usually fall victim to dangerous people in Nigerian society such as kidnappers, ritualists and rapists who use them for their inordinate ambition. There are also a lot of teenage pregnancies in the Country by unmarried teenagers from the irresponsible men who are not in any way compatible to the teenagers in all ramifications. He only takes the opportunity of getting the teenagers in cheap way due to the child abuse from their parents. There are also some men who would even deny the paternity of the pregnancy.\textsuperscript{18} James made it known that sixty five percent of teenagers' mothers are unmarried and their kids are...
already destined to spend lifetime in a cycle of poverty and welfare dependency, which is another form of child abuse. In order to avoid this shame, some Nigerian children take the option of pregnant abortion that always resulted into their death. In order to avoid this shame, some Nigerian children take the option of pregnant abortion that always resulted into their death.19

Islam regard the child bearing as a precious gift and trust from God to the race of mankind for the procreation of human beings in the universe. Child bearing is not an individual sole right but a privilege from God because it is not every couple that are blessed with child. The Qur’an says:

To God belongs the kingdom of the heaven and earth. He creates what he pleases. He bestows daughters upon whom He pleases and he bestows sons upon whom He pleases. Or He mixes them, males and females, and He makes whom He please barren. Surely, He is all knowing, powerful. 20

Islam assigns the role and responsibility of the parents towards their children. The parent must be able to provide food, cloth and shelter for their children. Apart from these basic necessities of life, they must also educate his children on moral and good characters to the society. He must also teach him or her to be self-dependent and self-reliance by training or teaching him the means of getting their living 21. Finally, he should guide him to know that only god should be worshipped. Despite the fact that Islam permits man to marry more than one wife up to the maximum of four, it discourages it if this will debar man from rendering his parental role and responsibility to his children. 22 It is this parental role and responsibility that God, Himself, refers to as justice (Adl) in the Qur’an which goes thus: “Marry women of your choice, two, three or four. And if your fear that you cannot do justice them married one.”23

Sambo and Higab observed that parents are responsible for the possibility of the child to receive further training in the school and the mosque so that by the time the child attains age of maturity, he would have been guided along the way to a true understanding of Islam and be useful to himself, his family and his society.24 In discharging parental responsibility to one’s children, Islam does not make distinction between male and female children, as both of them deserved equal right from the parent. On this Prophet (S.A.W) said:

Whoever has daughters or sister and teaches them manners and is affectionate to them will be recompensed with paradise. 24

He also said:

Be careful of your duty to Allah and be fair and just to your children26

On the issue of giving moral training to one’s children, Prophet (S.A.W) was reported to have said:

No father can give anything better to his child rather than good manner27

Referring to the kind of moral training and religious training of Prophet Luqman on his child, Qur’an enjoins man to follows the same suit. Qur’an analyses the content of moral and religious training of Luqman on his children,
which goes:

My son, be steadfast in prayer, enjoin virtue and forbid evil. Endure with fortitude whatever befalls you. That is a duty incumbent on all. Do not turn away from people with scorn, nor work proudly on the earth. God does not love the arrogance and the vain-glories, rather let your gait be modest and low your voice, the harshest of voices is the braying of the asses.

Oloyede in his analysis of lessons from the advice of Prophet Luqman on his child, blankly pointed out that this advice places high premium on five ethics which are necessary and essential for the development of child in the secretly. They are as follows:

i. Promotion of virtuous acts.
ii. Prevention and shunning of vices
iii. Inculcation of endurance, patient and preserverances during adversity
iv. Inculcation of humility in inter-personal relationship.
v. Maintenance of courtesy and moderation in human emotion.

Conclusion

Within the limited space, we examine the problem of child abuse and its negative implication on Nigerian children out of which solution is procured in the light of Islam. For the society to be peaceful, moral training and education of the children is very vital as the children population used to be more than that of adults in any given society. The future of a society depends on kind of children such a society is producing. Thus, in the aim of ensuring the societal peace and unity, the children have to be carried along since they are the leaders of tomorrow. This is the situation in the developed nations in Europe where every facility and opportunity is given to their children to discover and develop their potentials and talented gifts which could be used for the development of their nation.

It is discovered in the paper that various forms of child abuse is going on in Nigerian environs by almost all ethnic group in the country due to excessive poverty and nonchalant attitude of some parents. The paper also reveals that the child abuse in the Nigerian environs could be minimized if not totally eradicated, if the Islamic concept of child upbringing which lays emphasis on parental dutiful responsibility, spiritual development and protection of family dignity.

Thus, the paper recommends that the government should advocate for the educational approach of solving the problem of child abuse in Nigeria by giving orientation to people at urban and rural areas on the evil consequences
of this problem on child, family and Nigerian society at large. It recommends
that the government should embark upon taking a legal process on the people
found guilty of child abuse in Nigeria as it is done in some European nations.
It also recommends that the aims and objectives of various Poverty Alleviation
programmes organized by the government should be vigorously pursued
in order to make it possible for financially handicapped parents to reasonably
cater for their children.

Finally, the paper recommends that Nigerian government should adopt
Islamic method of training of their children which places premium on
character formation and spiritual development that are deeply rooted in solid
discipline and self-restraint.

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