

Caring for the elderly psychologically in the Islamic religion



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It is widely known that there exists a prevalent negative perception held by the elderly about themselves, which greatly influences their relationships within the family and community. Consequently, their interactions with family members and social circles play a significant role in determining their adaptation and social standing in society. Moreover, Islamic teachings exert a substantial influence in this regard, consistently advocating for the well-being and support of the elderly. Accordingly, adhering to these teachings brings rewards, whereas neglecting them leads to a sense of loss and disillusionment.

key words: The elderly; Psychology; Islamic teachings; Positive care.

1. Introduction

The elderly have become a very important category of the most important components of civil society. Aging also occupied a high place in the list of concerns of European as well as developed countries

.However, the Arab and Islamic countries did not pay much attention to this category - I mean: from a legal point of view, and they did not develop or suggest sufficient solutions that would solve their issues and concerns. Perhaps the reason for turning away from them and not paying attention to their issue is what they find in Islamic legislation of the necessity of care, respect and care for them, as well as the customs and traditions that glorify them and call for their respect .

But in recent days, we have noticed a move away from this path by the new generations who see old age as the stage of real family exemption in a person's life when he reaches a certain age, and accordingly he should abandon some of his responsibilities involuntarily, given the overall weakness of his physiology. , psychological, behavioral, cognitive, mental and so on; But the truth is otherwise, especially with regard to psychological and cognitive aspects, as they are not affected by the age factor, but by genetic and environmental factors surrounding the individual himself and others - as we will explain, in this research paper. On the other hand, it is no secret that the beliefs related to the elderly are mainly related to the

existence of a negative view which the elderly have about themselves. So this view represents the mainstay on which the relationship of the elderly with others in the family or community framework is based. Then, the families and kinships to which they belong or interact with, come to form an important feature of adapting the elderly, and indicating their place and status in society. Also Islamic teachings represent a highly influential factor in this field, and they are always supportive of the elderly . thus who ever followed these teachings will be rewarded and whoever did not followed them will be lost and disappointed .

The elderly in the Arab and Islamic world are on an infinite increase, and this varies and differs according to the diversity of societies, So the current study attempts to answer the following question: In accordance with Islamic teachings, what measures were adopted to address the psychological well-being of the elderly?. Several sub-questions emerge from this main question, most of which lead to the essential problem, and they are also inspired by the dictates of the plan followed in it.

According to Islamic teachings, what level of significance is attributed to the elderly?

What is the role of psychological care in maintaining a balanced life for the elderly?

Research aims :

This study sought to achieve a number of objectives, the most important of which are :

-First, an attempt to reveal the circumstances of a socio-religious psychological issue related to one of the important groups of Muslim society which is: the elderly.

-Second: it provides important steps towards encouraging and improving the work that would fulfill the needs of the elderly and achieve their integration into contemporary Muslim societies.

- Third: it Establishes controls to guide the Muslim person to overcome the various obstacles that make the elderly person an outcast within his family and society. On the other hand, it reinforces his leadership role.

Research methodology :

In this research, I followed the descriptive and inductive method ,through deducing the means employed by the Quran to safeguard the elderly, by referring to books of jurisprudence, exegesis, and other relevant sources.

2. The psychology of the elderly and the mechanisms of adaptation:

2,1. Definition of the elderly:

«Elderly is defined as a chronological age of 65 years old or older, while those from 65 through 74 years old are referred to as “ early elderly” and those over 75 years old as “ late elderly” » (Ormio, 2006 p:149) .

However psychological and physiological studies confirm that aging has no time limits related to the age stages that a person goes through. An individual may reach a stage that people are familiar with as an aging stage, but the health status and mental and cognitive abilities are good, so it is a phenomenon linked to many environmental, psychological and social dimensions. (El kandary; 1992 p: 57).

2.2. The conditioning mechanisms of the elderly category in Sharia from the social aspect:

Conditioning is the initial procedure that social researchers take to determine the correct description of the phenomenon of aging, or any other fact that is in dispute.

1- a subjective feature

The talk about this dimension comes from a basic axiom, related to the necessity of having a view and an attitude for the elderly from themselves, because the elderly in this age stage feels the beginning of the end - that is: he feels very close to parting, and moving to the home of the hereafter, so he had to deal realistically and exemplarily To be emulated, so any view - whether negatively or positively - represents the mainstay on which his relationship with others is based in the two frameworks: family and societal. (Shadly, 2007 p:76)

2- a family feature

After the self-circle: the families and kinships to which they belong or interact with, come to form the next feature of adapting the elderly, and to indicate his place, position and centrality in it, as the family and relatives represent a highly influential factor in this area, and may be supportive and certain to them or vice versa. (Shadly, 2007 p:77-78)

Therefore, Islamic Sharia obligated the members of the Ummah to honor their parents and be kind to them. Perhaps this helped to enhance his self-confidence and preserve his family leadership role. Allah said: (Your Lord has ordered you to worship none except Him, and to be good to your parents. If either or both of them attain old age with you, do not say: "Fie on you", nor rebuke them, but speak to them with words of respect. And lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy and say: 'My Lord, be merciful to them, as they raised me since I was little.' (24)) (Quran, israa :23,24)

Third: a social feature

Society represents the largest circle or dimension in which the elderly category revolves, and the society's position on the elderly is determined through a set of legislation, facilities and organizations that are provided to them.(Shadly,2001 p:77) .

Therefore, God commanded to pay attention to the reverence and veneration of the elderly. Our prophet (pbuh): « Among the glory of God is honoring the elderly Muslim» (Abu Dawud, volume 2,p:677). And he said also: « If a young man honors an old man for his age, God will appoint for him at his age who will honor him » (Attarmidi, 1975, volume 4 p:372) .

In general, Islam paid great attention to this age stage, and made it a place of reverence, honor and benevolence, because its owner had reached a very old age, and what he used to do of great deeds became difficult for him, so he became characterized by weakness and the need for those who support him and serve him, so Its teachings are explicit with regard to the forms of the elderly and the manifestations and mechanisms of their care, while not negating the interests of others, all through a comprehensive, homogeneous and integrated system of commands and prohibitions derived from the Holy Book and the purified Sunnah of the Prophet.

3. Changes experienced by the elderly and the relationship of other age groups and their attitudes towards them:

3.1. The Changes experienced by the elderly:

3.1.1 physiological change

Despite scientific and medical progress and the rise in the average human lifespan, the elderly suffer from some shortcomings in public health as their chronological age increases, and perhaps the most health problems they have are osteoporosis, heart attacks, frequent infections, lack of endocrine activity, and changes in skin sensitivity.. etc. (maamria and kharaz, 2009, p : 78) .

Aging - as you can see - is associated with the gradual weakening of the organs, so the physiological changes that occur in the body appear at this late stage. Allah said: « Allāh is the one who created you from weakness, then made after weakness strength, then made after strength weakness and white hair. He creates what He wills, and He is the Knowing, the Competent» (Quran, Ar rum:54) .

Also, aging diseases are considered more dangerous, Because the elderly's body's resistance is weak and they are severely affected, which reduces the chances of performing surgeries necessary for his health, and he may show delusion of disease, and an excessive focus on health, as he considers the simple presentation as dangerous. Allah almighty said:« He said, "My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white » (Quran, Mariam: 4). (Al-jundi, p:155)

Islam has imposed health care through medical and periodic examination, to detect any health problems at their inception before their exacerbation, in order to prevent infection. The prophet (pbuh):« God did not create a disease without making a cure for it, whether people knew it or not, except death » (Al-bayhaki,1994, volume:9,p:343)

Hence, the importance of developing new systems to follow up on the health problems of the elderly, especially if we know that many diseases are exacerbated by the ignoring of the elderly or his family to the danger of these health symptoms.

3.1.2 Psychological change :

Psychological studies about the elderly, with regard to this aspect, indicate that they are self-centered, and tend to be selfish, as a result of feelings of anxiety, threat, increased fears and a lack of confidence in others. It also weakens their control over emotions with their

strangeness and emotional rush, with negativity and indifference to what surrounds them, because they feel useless or disconnected from the world of the new generation as well as mocking them, as well as their rigidity, fanaticism, and stubbornness in opinion to assert oneself, and to hide feelings of weakness, in return for the desire for flattery, encouragement and non-acceptance of criticism. They are also characterized by rigidity, fanaticism and stubbornness in opinion to assert themselves, and to hide feelings of weakness, in exchange for the desire for flattery and encouragement and not accepting criticism. « And he to whom We grant long life We reverse in creation; so will they not understand» (Quran, Ya-sin, 68). (Young, p:32-33)

Therefore, mental health in Islam aims from the practical side to pay off the remnants of that by essentially resolving the problem, that is: before its symptoms appear.

3.1.3 Behavioral change:

Psychological and social studies confirm that there are a number of changes in the general life of the elderly, represented by a decrease in the level of realism and ambition, and this results in the emergence of feelings of social isolation. And the absence of a sense of psychological security, in order to generate problems of immigration of children, and the shrinking of the bond of those around, especially from family members, and here psychological symptoms such as anxiety and depression appear, as indicated by studies issued by the American Psychological Association. Therefore, the degree of depression has often been linked to the desire for death in the elderly, especially those who do not have a social network.

The members of the Islamic Ummah should contribute to finding a solution to these problems by trying to give them a space of attention, especially in terms of raising them in rank, and this will also be a great deal of reverence and respect. The prophet (pbuh) said: «He is not one of us who does not have mercy on our young and does not honor our elders. » (Al-hakem, 1990, volume:1, p: 131)

3.1.4 Intellectual and cognitive change :

Anatomical studies reveal that most mental functions exhibit relative stability until around the age of fifty. However, after this stage, a gradual decline becomes evident, particularly in cognitive abilities, memory, and inductive reasoning, which are referred to as fluid intelligence. Similarly, there is also a noticeable impact on motor skills and response speed.

for social knowledge, language ability, and mathematical reasoning—all of which are crystallized intelligence—they are affected little by the aging process. Thus the deterioration in it does not appear until the late seventies of a person's life. (Sadek and Abou hatab, p:558).

3.2. The relationship of other age groups and their attitudes towards the elderly

There are many ideas or even sayings that are repeated and automatically raised about the elderly by other age groups, such as: throwing them with dementia, rigidity, stubbornness, and clinging to opinion, and that most of them lack creativity and productivity, and as they age, they become cranky and insane .

The aforementioned concepts may represent false beliefs and unscientific perceptions, commonly used and accepted by the vast majority of individuals, and we will now discuss them in some detail.

3.2.1 Accusation of dementia.

The clumsy behavior is synonymous with the behavior of the elderly, and the origin of this link is the belief that aging in itself constitutes this type of disease. (Al Ashoul, p:674)

Of course, this belief is wrong, as dementia is not an accepted clinical or diagnostic term, but rather a term that has been widely used to describe certain pathological cases of brain dysfunction, as its primary manifestations are confusion, forgetfulness, and the inability to focus for a long period of time. With the possibility of the emergence of some hallucinations and delusions, such a sick brain with dysfunctional function falls under the category of the so-called: Syndrome of organic cerebral symptoms. (Al Ashoul, p:671)

Syndrome of functional cerebral symptoms is not a situation, condition, or mirror of normal aging. Behavior characterized by dementia can lead to many physiological or psychological shocks, and all age groups can be vulnerable to such shocks and disorders, so it's not just for the elderly. (Al Ashoul, p:671)

Therefore, it was necessary to take care of the elderly in terms of using him to solve dilemmas and problems related to others, or to correct himself and his functional structure, such as setting up a program of physical and mental activity for him, to help him in a spirit of optimism, to live his old age with the best and most complete thing possible; It is also good to encourage him to search and learn, so that his memory remains vigilant. The prophet (pbuh) said: « The best of you is the one who has a long life and good work» (Al-tarmidi, 1975, volume:4, p:565) .

3.2.2 rigidity and inflexibility :

Rigidity and inflexibility refer to a psychological tendency that is characterized by rigid resistance to change, and inability to adapt to new situations or circumstances; Some elderly people are really stubborn, and they are difficult to handle, and their behavioral patterns are characterized by rigidity and inflexibility, and resistance to change strongly. Nevertheless, it is also fair to say: that some children and adolescents and those in their middle ages are also characterized by rigidity, inflexibility and stubbornness. These two characteristics refer to a personality trait that may appear in individuals during their development, that is, at a very early age. (Khalifa, p:184)

In an attempt to reduce this, attention should be paid to compatibility and social relations between equals in age and culture, while not neglecting the relationship with members of other generations to remove such barriers and also achieve the desired social and religious mix. Among the Islamic concepts that help the elderly from this aspect is that his children and children of his companions honor him, The prophet (pbuh) said: « the most honorable way to honor the father after he dies is to pay visit to his companions » (Muslim, volume:4, p:1979) .

3.2.3 Lack of innovation and production

It seems that the third accusation related to the lack of creativity and productivity in old age stems mainly from the society's tendency to link productivity and innovation with functionalism. (Dychtwald, 2000, p: 49-50)

In an attempt to dispel this, we must look at the large number of individuals who have innovative and productive contributions to society, while they are in their seventies, eighties or nineties, and there are also people who begin to discover and develop their own abilities and talents for the first time in an advanced stage of life. (Dychtwald, 2000, p: 49-50)

Conversely, in contemporary times, being absent from work contributes to an amplified negative perception of aging as both a psychological and social issue, as stopping work includes the interruption of important social roles, a decrease in income and a decrease in opportunities for social communication, in contrast to the increase in loneliness and emptiness, and this is what was found Sociologists generally agree that retirement is a negative thing, and therefore it is commanded from an islamic point of view to fill this gap. The prophet (pbuh) said: « There are two blessings that many people miss: health and free time » (Al-boukhari, 1987, volume:5,p:2357).

3.2.4 Eccentricity :

Research results have shown that the proportion of individuals who have reached the stage of old age who are characterized by strangeness, irritability, and deviation in mood, is not significantly different from the proportion of such individuals who can be included in any other age group. (Khawla Ahmed, 2000,p:35)

To foster a harmonious society encompassing diverse segments and age groups, it became imperative to reinforce and deepen the values stipulated within the social teachings of the Islamic religion.:

-First: the family relationship; The good use of this term the reality of the nation contributes greatly to the development of the level of care for the elderly from two aspects: mental and external.

-Second: Cooperation in righteousness, piety and solidarity, and among its branches: caring for people with needs, and on top of these are: the elderly.

-Third: Mutual respect, because the arbitration of such values in social relations reduces the space and criminality of the cycle of negative manifestations towards the elderly. Our prophet in the matter said: « honor your fathers so that your children may honor you» (Al-mondhiry, 1997, v:3 p:218).

4. CONCLUSION

The study gave a very important findings :

Firstly, aging recognized as a phase of life, independent of specific age stages. Secondly, the social changes in many countries have led to negative manifestations in muslim societies, resulting in the neglect of some elderly individuals. Thirdly, it is the responsibility of the broader muslim community to ensure the rights of the elderly in terms of their human, social, and religious aspects. Moreover, islam emphasizes the importance of honoring and revering the elderly, offering guidance to address the challenges they face. Additionally, the proper understanding and application of the concept of kinship within the community significantly contribute to improving care for the elderly, both mentally and externally. Furthermore, fostering mutual respect between different generations plays a crucial rôle in reducing negative attitudes and behaviors towards the elderly. In muslim societies, aging is often viewed as a deficiency or a sign of weakness ; thus, it is important

to emphasize social connections within one's age group while maintaining relationships across generations. Lastly, the centrality of ageing in society necessitates that the elderly adopt a realistic and exemplary approach to their own aging, highlighting their importance and position within society.

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