

Maintaining Positive Relationships with Non-Muslim Family Members

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the concept and implementation of maintaining positive kinship ties (*silaturrahim*) with non-Muslim family members from an Islamic perspective. The focus is on the obligation of performing good deeds (*ihsan*) and acting justly (*al-qist*) in interactions, based on textual evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Problem Statement of this study is the existence of a misconception among some Muslims who equate having good relations with non-Muslims as *wala'* (absolute loyalty) which is prohibited. This confusion may lead some to be negligent in fulfilling their familial duties towards non-Muslim family members, particularly parents, to the extent of neglecting the responsibility of maintaining kinship ties and providing financial support (*nafaqah*). This study aims to: (1) Clarify the concept of relationships with non-Muslims based on textual evidence (*dalil naqli*), (2) Elaborate on the obligation of maintaining kinship ties and providing financial support to non-Muslim family members, and (3) Distinguish between the enjoined good conduct (*birr*) and the prohibited *wala'*. This study employs a qualitative methodology in the form of library research with a textual content analysis approach. Data was collected from primary sources, namely verses of the Qur'an and Prophetic hadiths, as well as secondary sources such as books of exegesis (*tafsir*) (like Ibn Jarir al-Tabari) and hadith commentaries (*sharh*) (like al-Khattabi, Ibn Hajar, and Ibn al-Qayyim). Thematic analysis was conducted to derive clear principles. The study finds that Islam places great emphasis on preserving family relationships (*silaturrahim*) and the obligation of being good and just to non-Muslim family members, especially parents, as long as they do not wage war against Muslims. The obligation to provide financial support and interact kindly (*ma'ruf*) is absolute and not restricted by religious difference. The prohibition in Islam is against *wala'* (loyalty in matters of creed and warfare), not against humane and familial relationships characterized by *ihsan* and justice. In conclusion, maintaining good relations with non-Muslim family members is a religious requirement (*tuntutan syarak*) and a manifestation of true Islamic tolerance.

Keywords: Relationship, Muslim family, Non-Muslims

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a complete and perfect religion, providing comprehensive guidance for all aspects of human life, including familial and social relations. In the context of plural societies, the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially with close family members who adhere to other religions, often raises questions and confusion from legal and practical perspectives. To what extent should a Muslim maintain kinship ties (*silaturrahim*) with a mother, father, or relatives who are not Muslim? Does providing financial assistance (*nafaqah*) and interacting kindly constitute a form of prohibited loyalty (*wala'*)? (Harun, U. A., & Kusrin, Z. M., 2020)

This issue is not merely theoretical, but highly practical and touches the reality of many Muslims worldwide. Confusion in understanding the boundary between the obligation of performing good deeds (*ihsan*) and the prohibition of *wala'* can lead to two dangerous extremes: either neglecting the familial responsibilities

entrusted by Islamic law (*syarak*), or falling into relationships that may threaten the firmness of one's creed (*aqidah*) (Baharudin, M. F., & Kusrin, Z. M., 2021).

Therefore, this article aims to examine and elaborate on this issue comprehensively based on authoritative Islamic sources, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as interpreted by reputable scholars. The focus is on the concept of maintaining good relations with non-Muslim family members, emphasizing that Islam not only permits but enjoins good conduct, justice, and the fulfillment of familial rights towards them. This article will analyze clear textual evidence and the interpretations of classical scholars to unravel the confusion, affirm the obligations, and simultaneously clarify the boundaries distinguishing between enjoined *silaturrahim* and prohibited *wala'* (Erna, E., 2022).

Through this discussion, it is hoped to provide an accurate, balanced, and practical understanding for the Muslim community in maintaining harmonious family relationships without compromising creedal principles, thereby reflecting the true beauty and tolerance taught by Islam (Meerangani, K. A., Johar, M. H. M., & Hamid, M. F. A., 2022; Gintari, A., & Rivaie, W., n.d.).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a Qualitative Methodology that is descriptive and analytical. The specific research design chosen is Library Research employing a Textual Content Analysis Approach. The following is a detailed description of its implementation.

Research Design: As library research, this study relies entirely on textual data and written materials, without involving fieldwork, surveys, or interviews. Source materials were collected from physical and digital libraries, covering classical texts (*turath*), academic books, journals, and scholarly articles related to the topic. Analytical Approach: Textual Content Analysis. This approach focuses on "reading" and interpreting the meanings contained within authoritative religious texts.

The analysis process was carried out systematically with the following steps:

1. **Data Collection:** Data was collected from two categories of sources:

- **Primary Sources:** Foundational and primary texts, i.e., Qur'anic verses discussing relations with non-Muslims (such as Surah al-Mumtahanah: 8-9 and al-Baqarah: 83) and relevant Prophetic hadiths (such as the hadith of Asma' bint Abi Bakr).
- **Secondary Sources:** Works of scholars interpreting and elaborating on the primary sources. These include:
 - **Books of Exegesis (Tafsir):** Such as *Tafsir al-Tabari* by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, used to understand the context, reasons for revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), and early scholars' views on the meanings of verses.
 - **Books of Hadith Commentary (Sharh):** Such as works by al-Khattabi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (e.g., *Fath al-Bari*), and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, used to delve into the explanations, rulings, and lessons derived from the hadiths.

2. **Data Analysis:** After data collection, analysis was performed using:

- **Thematic Analysis:** Identifying recurring main themes in the textual evidence, such as the concepts of "*al-birr*" (good conduct), "*al-qist*" (justice), "*silaturrahim*", and "*wala'*". These themes then formed the framework for discussing the research findings.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing the perspectives and emphases given by various scholars (such as al-Tabari, Ibn Hajar, and Ibn al-Qayyim) in understanding the same textual evidence, to obtain a comprehensive and balanced understanding.
- **Contextual Analysis:** Understanding the text not only literally but also by considering the historical and social context when the text was revealed or stated, to derive universal principles applicable today.

3. **Interpretation and Formulation:** The results of the analysis from various sources and viewpoints were then interpreted and formulated by the researcher to address the study's objectives, namely, to clarify the concept, obligations, and boundaries in relationships with non-Muslim family members.

Rationale for Methodology Selection: This methodology is highly suitable because the research question is normative-doctrinal in nature, aiming to understand a religious teaching based on its authoritative sources. The textual analysis approach allows for an in-depth and detailed study of the meanings, nuances, and implications contained in the sacred texts. Library research enables the researcher to refer to the rich and authoritative Islamic intellectual heritage built by scholars throughout history.

In brief, this methodology forms a robust chain of scholarly analysis: starting from the primary texts (Qur'an and Hadith), elaborated by authoritative classical interpretations (reputable scholars), and analyzed thematically by the researcher to produce a clear, accurate formulation grounded in strong textual evidence.

FINDINGS

Maintaining good relations with non-Muslims is not forbidden in Islam. What is forbidden is having *wala'* or loyalty to them. Allah (s.w.t) explains the concept of this relationship in the Qur'an (al-Mumtahanah 60:8):

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

Meaning: Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and justly with those who have not fought you on account of religion nor driven you from your homes. Indeed, Allah loves those who are just. (Qur'an 60:8)

According to Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, through this verse Allah does not forbid Muslims from doing good, establishing relations, or acting honestly with all parties who adhere to a religion other than Islam and who do not fight Muslims because of religion. This is because the verse states: "those who have not fought you on account of religion nor driven you from your homes," meaning Allah intended to encompass all groups possessing these characteristics without specifying any party. A Muslim is not forbidden from doing good to a disbeliever (*kafir*), whether related by lineage or not, if it does not compromise the dignity of Islam or strengthen the position of that disbeliever. This is exemplified by the incident narrated by al-Zubayr regarding Asma' and her mother (al-Tabari, 1984, 14:66).

Asma' (r.a.) said: "During the time of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), my mother came to me while she was a polytheist, so I sought a verdict from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), saying: 'My mother has come to me desiring [to see me]. Should I maintain kinship ties with her?' He replied, saying: 'Yes, maintain kinship ties with your mother.'" (al-Bukhari, 1989, 10:506)

According to al-Khattabi, from this hadith it can be concluded that non-Muslim parents are entitled to financial support (*nafaqah*) from their Muslim child.

Ibn Hajar further states that benevolence and acts of *ihsan* do not include the affection and intimate friendship prohibited in the words of Allah (s.w.t.) (Qur'an, al-Mujadalah 58:22):

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ

Meaning: You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger. (Qur'an 58:22)

Ibn al-Qayyim emphasizes that supporting one's parents financially is obligatory even if they are of a different religion, because Allah (s.w.t.) says (Qur'an, Luqman 31:14-15):

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفَصَّالَهُ فِي سَامِيٍّ أَنْ أَشْكُرَ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ. وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَى أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا

Meaning: And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination. But if they strive to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. But accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness. (Qur'an 31:14-15)

It is not considered good and proper (*ma'ruf*) conduct for parents to be left in hardship and dire need while their child is in comfort and ease. Indeed, Allah (s.w.t.) condemns those who sever kinship ties and belittle the matter.

Similarly, Allah (s.w.t.) mandates the protection of the rights of kinship even if the relative is a non-Muslim. The words of Allah (s.w.t.) state (Qur'an, al-Nisa', 4:1):

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ

Meaning: And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another [for your rights], and [honor] the wombs [i.e., kinship ties]. (Qur'an 4:1)

In a hadith, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said (al-Bukhari, 1994, 10:508):

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ قَاطِعُ رَحِمٍ

Meaning: The one who severs kinship ties will not enter Paradise.

Maintaining kinship ties is an obligatory matter even with non-Muslim relatives. This is because the bond of kinship is not invalidated by religious difference. Analogizing the giving of financial support with inheritance is an incorrect and inaccurate analogy. This is because inheritance is based on support and *muwalah* (alliance/following), while providing financial support is part of kinship relations.

Allah (s.w.t.) has made kinship a right even if the relative is a non-Muslim. This is because disbelief does not negate worldly kinship rights. Furthermore, Allah (s.w.t.) says (Qur'an, al-Nisa', 4:36):

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تَشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ

Meaning: Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. (Qur'an 4:36)

From this verse, it can be concluded that all the mentioned groups should be cared for, even if they are from among non-Muslims, as long as they do not wage war against Islam.

The attitude of Islamic tolerance is also clearly evident in matters such as exempting the elderly, children, and women from fighting in war, as has been proven in Islamic history.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study clearly demonstrates that Islam is a religion that highly upholds human and family values. Maintaining good kinship ties (*silaturrahim*) and performing acts of kindness (*ihsan*) and justice towards non-Muslim family members is not only permitted but is a religious obligation (*tuntutan syarak*) that must be fulfilled. This duty is absolute, especially in the context of relationships with parents, where a Muslim child is obliged to provide financial support (*nafaqah*) and interact kindly (*ma'ruf*) even if they are of different religions. Examination of the textual evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah successfully distinguishes firmly between two key concepts: 1) Good conduct (*al-birr*) and justice in familial and humane relationships, which is enjoined, and 2) *Wala'*, which is deep-seated loyalty in matters of creed and politics leading to hostility against Islam, which is prohibited. Confusion in understanding this distinction can lead to extremist attitudes, either by severing obligatory familial ties or falling into loyalty that corrupts one's creed (*aqidah*). Therefore, Muslims must adhere to a clear principle: Familial rights are not invalidated by religious difference, while

creedal boundaries cannot be compromised in the name of kinship. It is this balanced attitude that reflects the true beauty and tolerance of Islamic teachings, simultaneously building a harmonious society without sacrificing religious principles.

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