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The Impacts of Children's Acts of Worship by Proxy on Religious Education

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Article History: Received: 16 April 2025 Revised: 10 June 2025 Accepted: 15 July 2025		SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: Educating an intact generation in line with the educational standards of the jurisprudence of the Ahlul Bayt is among the functions of the family in Islam. In this respect, verses and traditions denote imposing obligations on parents. Families' probable lack of cognition with responsibilities on this important issue is considered among the blemishes of the contemporary age. Excluding the problem from the intra-textual issues in jurisprudential books toward an independent paper is regarded as an applied, fundamental, and necessary objective.	
Key Words: Acts of Worship Acts of Worship by Proxy Children's Acts of Worship Religious Education Religious Education of Children		METHOD & FINDING: Employing an analytical qualitative method with a critical approach, this study systematically evaluates the validity of children's proxy worship, citing Qur'anic verses and traditions, within the framework of Imamiyah jurisprudence. The findings reveal a nuanced position: children's acts of worship by proxy in obligatory devotional acts are not valid for discharging the obligation of the person represented, as no decisive proof exists to extend such validity to discerning children. However, in recommended and supererogatory acts, dedicating the reward to parents is fully valid. Beyond the jurisprudential ruling, this practice carries significant educational impacts, including creating spiritual affinity, facilitating internalization of religious values, fostering responsibility, establishing emotional connections with worship, strengthening religious identity, and preparing children for direct assumption of obligations at puberty.	
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/10.22034/imjpl.2025.12062		CONCLUSION: Accordingly, children's acts of worship are legalized in Islamic Shari'a, and their performing by proxy is merely valid if done through dedicating the reward, i.e., in respect of canceling obligations, it is inadequate for one being represented. This gradual, love-based mechanism empowers parents to fulfill their duty of religious education through observation and emotional engagement. The practice cultivates stable religious identity and fortifies future generations against cultural challenges.	
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Introduction

The family has a high status in Islam. In this respect, the Holy Qur'an has explicitly introduced it as a source of affection and mercy among couples, and said: "*And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect*" (Quran, 30:21).

One of the functions of the family is to educate children (*ṣibyān*) to pave the way for the happiness of the Islamic society. According to the Quran and traditions, parents must educate their children on religious teachings (cf. Quran, 66: 6; 20: 132; Āmilī, 1988, Vol. 4, p. 19).

Ignoring jurisprudential criteria regarding benefits and harms within the family necessitates that the Islamic society be devoid of committed believers, entailing following the benefits of disbelievers. Furthermore, influenced by the promotion of pleasures with Western standards, causing a particular lifestyle within some Islamic societies, the religious education of children based on Imamiyah jurisprudence has been neglected. Thus, the main question of the research comes as follows:

To what extent do children's acts of worship performed by proxy shape their own religious understanding, personal spiritual development, and

long-term engagement with faith practices, and does this passive participation ultimately enhance or undermine their religious education?

Conceptual Framework

The lack of independent presentation and encountering indiscipline and insufficient information are found in this jurisprudential problem. Hence, excluding the issue from a jurisprudential problem for an independent study and clarifying the subject matter in the intended community are considered among the needs of the study. The research hypothesis is based on the fact that parents are obliged to educate children religiously, which traditions emphasize the realization of the act of worship, either in self-performance or by proxy (Āmilī, 1988, Vol. 4, p. 19).

Notably, children's acts of worship are legalized in Islamic Shari'a. Still, their performance by proxy is insufficient for one being represented (*manūb 'anh*) since no particular proof is found in their acting in such form. However, they will be considered valid if they are among recommended deeds performed by dedicating the reward on behalf of one being represented, specifically parents and grandparents (Muḥaqqiq Khoeī, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 9)

1. Acts of Worship by Proxy

Acts of worship by proxy is also a composition by way of the genitive

case in Arabic grammar. The term worship was examined as above, but the term proxy will be defined as follows;

It is derived from the term *nawb*, the Arabic root, which means to do an act on behalf of another one by proxy when the doer is the agent or vicegerent of *manūb 'anh* (Aẓharī, 2000, Vol. 15, p. 350)

In acts of worship, a deputy acts on behalf of another one, called *manūb 'anh*. In other words, a deputy is allowed by *manūb 'anh* to perform an act of worship on his behalf by proxy, e.g., a child performs ceremonies of Hajj on behalf of *manūb 'anh* as his representative or vicegerent.

2. Children's Acts of Worship

'Children's acts of worship' is a genitive Arabic compound:

- Worship means humility, obedience, and submission to God.
- Children refers to prepubescent children (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991).

Thus, the term denotes children's obedient worship and servitude to Allah.

3. Religious Education

It consists of two terms, namely education and religion, both of which will be lexically and idiomatically examined as follows;

- Education lexically means nurturing and guiding something toward perfection (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991).

Technically, it is the process of leading a being—human, animal, or plant—toward completeness and removing defects, whether in essence, morals, knowledge, or practice (Muṣṭafawī, 2009).

- Religion literally signifies obedience, reckoning, and submission (Aẓharī, 2000).

Thus, religious education refers to instructing children in religious duties, nurturing their spiritual interests, and shielding them from moral and legal harms (Barati, 2020). While religious education generally applies to all accountable individuals, it includes children through specific jurisprudential evidence.

Literature Review

Among the primary sources, Ṭūsī in *Al-Mabsūṭ fī al-Fiqh al-Imāmīyyah*, under the chapter 'Rules of Children in Hajj' dealt with the children's acts of worship in Hajj (Ṭūsī, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 328). However, he did not independently examine the formal typology of children's acts of worship about the outlook applied in this study.

Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī in *Al-Mu'tabar fī Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar* briefly and explicitly attributed children's acts of worship to be a practice (Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī, 1986, Vol. 2, p. 766). However, it seems he neglected the parents' responsibility for the children's religious education.

Among the contemporary jurists, Muḥaqqiq Ḥakīm in *Mustamsak al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā* and Muḥaqqiq Khoeī in *Al-Mu'tamad fi Sharḥ al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā* dealt with the children's acts of worship hereunder the discussion on the conditions of deputy in Hajj (Muḥaqqiq Ḥakīm, 1995, Vol. 11, p. 3; Muḥaqqiq Khoeī, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 9). However, it seems that the ambiguities of the issue have not been fully resolved due to its presentation in compendium form.

Despite all the efforts made by the scholars, some problems are found due to diverse opinions and the dispersion of jurisprudential writings. Hence, independently expressing itself, this study tried to solve the problem of confusion among researchers by organizing and refining the perspectives of scholars. Furthermore, it made a clear vision of the problem, i.e., it has eliminated the lack of information and inconsistencies through consideration of constraints involved in the study's title.

Worship in Religious Education of Children

Two perspectives of children's acts of worship have been examined within jurisprudential works. Some jurists believed in their legitimacy (Tūsī, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 278), while others considered them a practice (Ḥillī, 1992, Vol. 3, p. 386).

Citing the narration stated by Imam Ṣādiq: "So command your children to pray when they reach the age of seven" (Qummī, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 280), it seems that commanding to command a thing (*al-'amr bi al-'amr bi al-shai*) indicates that the object of command is desired in the view of the Lord. Hence, children's acts of worship are legitimate, but not binding as for other obliged people.

Therefore, the principle of the desirability and legitimacy of children's acts of worship would not be rejected by *Ḥadīth al-Raf'*, mentioned as proof by those who considered them as practice (cf. Muḥaqqiq Ḥakīm, 1995, Vol. 11, p. 5).

Thus, considering the legitimacy of children's acts of worship, their acts of worship might be stated in the following two ways:

1. The children themselves independently perform acts of worship.
2. The children perform acts of worship on behalf of others by proxy.

According to the proofs of these acts of worship in devotional obligatory acts and devotional recommended acts in which the intention of gaining proximity to God is required, their impacts necessitate being issued by the obligee, i.e., there is no benefit if done by others.

In this respect, the Holy Qur'an, as an example, said: "*Indeed the prayer*

restrains from indecent and wrongful conduct” (Quran, 29:45), and “Prescribed for you is fasting as it was prescribed for those who were before you, so that you may be Godwary” (Quran, 2:183).

Accordingly, and according to the primary principle in acts of worship by proxy, the impacts mentioned above denote that the actions must be principally performed by the person himself (Jurjānī, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 206). On the other hand, and in terms of the requirements of special proofs for acts of worship by proxy, according to a religious principle, if one performs devotional obligatory acts on behalf of another, no impact will be attributed to *manūb ‘anh* (one being represented). Therefore, jurists suspend the authenticity of such acts of worship on special proofs:

1. Acts of Worship by Proxy in Hajj

Concerning Hajj, the proofs authenticate performing by proxy. Based on special proofs, it is considered valid if a deputy performs Hajj on behalf of *manūb ‘anh* by proxy.

At the beginning of the Hajj chapter, Imam Khomeini presented a general outlook and inferred the following three hints out of the whole proofs:

1. Performing Hajj on behalf of a dead one by proxy is considered valid without any restrictions, i.e., in both obligatory and recommended ones.

2. Performing the recommended Hajj on behalf of a living one by proxy is considered valid, no matter whether *manūb ‘anh* is able or disabled to perform Hajj himself.

3. Performing obligatory Hajj on behalf of a living one by proxy is considered valid if *manūb ‘anh* is disabled from performing Hajj himself (cf. Khomeini, 1406, Vol. 1, p. 391).

In this regard, Muḥaqqiq Khoeī said: “Act of worship by proxy is opposed to the rule since it necessitates non-cancelation of what is obligatory for a man to do. The man’s responsibility is discharged only when he fulfills the obligatory act of worship himself. Hence, to consider performing an obligatory act accomplished through the act of another one (by proxy) is in dire need of argumentation” (Muḥaqqiq Khoeī, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 9).

2. Performing Recommended Hajj on Behalf of A Living One by Proxy

Performing the recommended Hajj on behalf of a living one by proxy is considered valid. Various authentic traditions imply that the infallible Imams have asked others to perform Hajj by proxy on their behalf, e.g., Muḥammad b. ‘Īsa b. Ubayd Yaqtīnī, a famous Shi’a transmitter of hadiths, said: “‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā sent me a bundle of clothes, a servant, a Hajj for

me, a Hajj for my brother Mūsā ibn 'Ubaid, as well as a Hajj for Yūnus b. 'Abdul Raḥmān and ordered us to perform Hajj on His behalf" (Āmilī, 1988, Vol. 11, p. 208).

Analysis of Children's Acts of Worship by Proxy in devotional obligatory acts and Recommended Acts Supererogatory Acts

1. Non-Discerning Children's Acts of Worship by Proxy

Muḥaqqiq Khoeī said: "Non-discerning children's acts of worship by proxy are inauthentic since the intentions are not fulfilled in their deeds and acts, while his condition is like animals in this respect" (Muḥaqqiq Khoeī, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 10).

In addition to the proof mentioned by Muḥaqqiq Khoeī, his argumentation seems to be improved through the words that non-discerning children cannot recognize the identity of the actions and their differences.

2. Discerning Children's Acts of Worship by Proxy

- Acts of Worship as a Practice

As fundamental proof, children's acts of worship, even the discerning ones, are not real but are considered forms of worship and practices for educating. Thus, children's acts of worship are not legitimate, i.e., God does not consider them acts of worship. Hence, when the deeds of discerning children are not considered valid as acts of worship, how are they considered valid if they do

so on others' behalf by proxy? Therefore, the illegitimacy of discerning children's acts of worship is a reason for the impermissibility of their acting by proxy (Najafī, 1983, Vol. 17, p. 361).

The problem with the mentioned argument is fundamental. Seemingly, deeds of discerning children are legitimate, considered acts of worship, and deserve to find reward as well. However, as the only difference, the obligatory acts of worship (*wājibāt*) must be performed by the obligees, but are preferred for discerning children to perform, there is no obligation for them to perform until they have matured. Therefore, discerning children acting by proxy will find no problem if the identity of acts of worship applies to the acts of discerning children.

Based on considering discerning children's acts of worship as practice, Prophet Muhammad said: "Religious duty has been absolved on three people; the sleeper until he wakes up, the insane until he becomes sane, and the child until he becomes Muḥtalim" (Maghribī, 1965, Vol.1, p. 194).

Thus, all sorts of religious duties have been absolved from children until they become mature. Therefore, they are illegitimate.

- Lack of Authenticity in the Acts of Discerning Children

Since there is no religious duty or obligation for the discerning child, *Manūb'anh* does not trust his acts. Hence, his acts of worship by proxy are not considered valid (Yazdī, 1988, Vol. 2, p. 503).

It seems the reason does not fulfill the objective since there is a "public and private I face" between trust and maturity or trust and being a discerning child (Muḥaqqiq Khoeī, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 10).

In other words, a child might be discerning, but a man trusts him or vice versa, i.e., he is mature but not trustworthy. Therefore, it would not be comprehensive proof if it is said that a discerning child cannot perform acts of worship on behalf of others by proxy (*istinābah*) due to the lack of authenticity, because customary trust is a condition for the performance of an act, no matter whether the deputy is mature or not. Thus, the argument is not specified to a discerning child.

- Citing the Principle of *Ishtiqaal* (Prudence)

The validity of *istinābah* means the adequacy of the act performed by the deputy on behalf of the one being represented (cf. Muḥaqqiq Ḥakīm, 1995, Vol. 11, p. 5), i.e., the act of the deputy has to make *manūb'anh* discharged from performing the related obligatory act of worship.

However, *istinābah* requires special proof, denoting that the act of the deputy is instead of the acts of one being represented. Notably, if such evidence is not found, the principle of prudence will imply that decisive prudence requires decisive acquittal, i.e., when I am sure that I am responsible for a religious duty, I must be sure that I have done it.

Accordingly, based on the principle of *ishtiqaal* (occupancy of liability), there must be special proof for the validity of *istinābah* (appointment of a proxy) to be performed by a discerning child (*mumayyiz*). In other words, there is certainty that the obligatory act of worship is directed to the principal (*manūb'anh*), and doubt exists regarding the discharge of the principal's responsibility if the obligatory prayer or Hajj is performed by a discerning child on behalf of the principal by proxy. In this case, the principle of *ishtiqaal* implies the invalidity and inadequacy of acts performed by a discerning child. The mentioned proof might be modified as follows:

Based on the general signification of ḥadīth *al-raḥ al-qalam* (the tradition denoting the absolution of religious duty), *al-ḥukm al-taklīfī* (defining law) and *al-ḥukm al-waḍ'ī* (declaratory law) are absolved from the discerning child, except what is excluded by special proof. Since the validity of *istinābah* is considered

among declaratory laws, the general signification of *ḥadīth al-raḥ al-qalam* implies the invalidity of a discerning child's acts of worship on behalf of others by proxy. Hence, special proof is required to attest to the validity of *istinābah* by a discerning child to make it excluded from the implication of the narration (Muḥaqqiq Khoeī, 1995, Vol. 2, pp. 10–11).

3. Evidence on the Non-Significance of a Discerning Child's Acts by Proxy in Narrations of *Istinābah*

- 1st Category: Inauthenticity of Discerning Child's Acts by Proxy

Regarding the acts by proxy on behalf of one who is obliged to perform obligatory Hajj but cannot do him/herself, one tradition among the 24th chapter from the obligation of Hajj comes as follows;

Imam Ṣādiq said: “Ali used to say that if a man decided to perform Hajj but fell ill and could not go out, he should equip a mature man from his wealth and send him instead of himself” (Āmilī, 1988, Vol. 1, p. 168).

Remarkably, the man is the subject of law, i.e., the man is versus the discerning child in the discussion. In other words, the tradition signifies that a mature man can act by proxy, not a discerning child.

The traditions concerning the *istinābah* on behalf of a dead man are also included in the chapter mentioned

above. An extension comes as follows;

Bashīr Nabbāl said, “I told Imam Ṣādiq that my mother died while she did not perform Hajj. The Imam said: “A man or a woman should perform Hajj on her behalf.” I said, “Which of the two do you prefer?” Imam replied, “I prefer a man” (Ibid, Vol. 11, p. 178).

Man is versus discerning child, Muḥaqqiq Shāhrūdī said (Muḥaqqiq Shāhrūdī, 1982, Vol. 2, p. 10)

It seems difficult to find the inauthenticity of a discerning child's acts of worship on behalf of others by proxy from such traditions. There is a sentence in the original Arabic version of the tradition, mentioning *yaḥujju 'anhā rajul* (lit: a man should perform Hajj on her behalf), considered a special expression in Arabic which means one person should perform Hajj. In other words, to expand the extensions of the object of law, the non-impactive characteristic of belonging to the law to the term a man is nullified, i.e., the infallible Imam decided that one person should perform Hajj.

Therefore, the inauthenticity of a discerning child's acts of worship on behalf of others by proxy is not comprehended through the mentioned traditions.

- 2nd Category: The Absolute Permission of *Istinābah* by a Discerning Child, At Least on Behalf of a Dead One

There is an important authentic tradition (*ṣaḥīḥah*) in this category, which comes as follows;

Mu'āwīya b. 'Ammār Kūfī, a companion and a transmitter of traditions from Imam Ṣādiq and Imam Kāzīm, said: "I asked Imam Ṣādiq: What is the reward that finds a person even after death? He replied: "He should establish a good manner that becomes common among people. When people work in that manner, the founder will find the reward without reducing the others' reward. And durable charities that will benefit people after the death of man, as well as a righteous and worthy child who prays for his/her parents after their death, performs Hajj, gives charity, frees a slave, fasts, and prays on their behalf". I said: "May I include my parents in the reward of my performing Hajj?" Imam replied, "sure" (Kulaynī, 1986, Vol.7 p.7).⁵

The phrase *al-walad al-ṭayyib* (righteous child), stated in the original Arabic version of the tradition, denotes generality irrespective of whether one is a discerning child or a mature man, whereas a non-discerning child is excluded since it is not the object of obligatory religious duty.

Thus, based on the general signification of the tradition, the

righteous child's acts of worship by proxy on behalf of his/her parents are considered valid, no matter whether s/he is a mature or a discerning child.

Therefore, this authentic tradition limits the signification of *ḥadīth al-raf' al-qalam*, i.e., religious duty is absolved from a discerning child, but one who performs acts of worship by proxy on behalf of his/her parents.

It seems serious hesitation and consideration are accounted for the generality and application of the aforementioned tradition in discerning children, since one of the prerequisites of wisdom, as examined in principles of jurisprudence, is when verified that God, the Enactor of Laws, decided to present the related purport (Khurāsānī, 1988, p. 287).

In other words, we can hold fast to the generality of the mentioned *ṣaḥīḥah* if verified that God is to state the related meaning. However, according to the questions and answers mentioned in the tradition, what is examined is whether the act of worship by proxy on behalf of the deceased is considered valid or not. Then, Imam Ṣādiq (PBUH) replied that performing by proxy is generally regarded as valid, including the acts of the righteous child, e.g., performing Hajj, giving charity, freeing a slave, fasting, and praying, by proxy on behalf of his/her parents.

However, it is not verified that God has decided to express the validity and

sufficiency of the acts of discerning children by proxy.

From the authors' point of view, neither the first category of traditions, in which the term a man was frequently stated, implies puberty as a condition, nor does the authentic tradition reported by Mu'āwīya b. 'Ammār Kūfī denote the validity of a discerning child's acts of worship by proxy.

4. Examination of Devotional Consensus on The Inauthenticity of a Discerning Child's Acts of Worship by Proxy

Some early scholars have never exposed the problem while being of which out of consensus is understood from the words mentioned by some others who dealt with the problem. Some of their words come as follows:

- Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī's: Regarding a discerning child, there is doubt as to whether Hajj is valid when performed independently by them. It appears that even if performed representatively, it may not be valid, because Hajj for a child is considered a form of training, and its validity is based on the purpose of training them, not because it affects their reward in the hereafter (Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī, 1986, Vol. 2, p. 766).
- 'Allamah Ḥillī's: In this respect, he stated two different opinions:

- I. Invalidity of Discerning Child's Act by Proxy: Regarding a discerning child, the correct view is that acting as a

proxy is also not valid for them. This is because, although their Hajj is valid for themselves, this ruling has been established as training and accustoming them to the performance of acts of worship. Therefore, the validity of their Hajj is based on the intended purpose of this training (Ḥillī, 1991, Vol. 13, p. 107).

- II. Validity of Discerning Child's Act by Proxy: It has been said that it is valid because his own Hajj is valid, and thus it is likewise valid for others (Ḥillī, 1993, Vol. 7, p. 110).

- Moqaddas Ardabīlī's: Regarding the condition of puberty for deputy in Hajj, the prevalent opinion among jurists is that a discerning non-pubescent child cannot perform Hajj on behalf of another. This is because, according to the majority, his own acts of worship are not valid; religious obligation does not apply to him, and he may abandon the act under the assumption that it is not obligatory yet still report having performed it. Thus, he is not considered reliable. However, this opinion merits further reflection, as it appears that a child's act of worship is religiously valid, and sometimes he may even be more trustworthy than others. There is also debate on whether, if the child indeed performs Hajj, it is valid and discharges the obligation of the appointing person or not. The apparent ruling suggests validity,

but prudence clearly lies in selecting a pubescent deputy (Ardabīlī, 1983, Vol. 6, p. 128).

- Fayḍ Kāshānī's: Regarding a discerning child acting as a proxy, there are two opinions. The more correct one is that it is permissible, especially in recommended acts (Fayḍ Kāshānī, n.d, Vol. 1, p. 302).

Discerning Child's Acts of Worship by Proxy in Recommended and Supererogatory Acts

According to the authors, in supererogatory and recommended acts, customary acts by proxy are achieved through two methods:

1. In many cases, although it is termed customary in wording, its essence is actually the dedication of reward; especially when several people are jointly included. Dedicating the reward is undoubtedly valid when performed by a discerning child, as his action is lawful, recommended, and merits divine reward. From the narrations, it is also understood that this action, which Allah (SWT) has graciously or deservedly endowed with reward, can indeed be interpreted as the distribution of reward, and there is no issue in this regard (Najafī, 1983, Vol. 17, p. 361).
2. Counteracting the consequences of parental disobedience and severing kinship ties: Based on the contents of the *ṣaḥīḥah* reported by

Mu'āwīya b. 'Ammār cited earlier, *walad al-ṭayyib* performs the aforementioned acts so that the effects pleasing to *Shāri'* may manifest in his life. Neglecting these acts, as mentioned in the words of the Infallible figures, leads to parental dissatisfaction.

Therefore, they can perform recommended acts by proxy and dedicate the reward to their father, mother, and ancestors. Among the effects of this practice is the removal of the consequences of parental disobedience and severing kinship ties.

The Impacts of the Acts of Worship by Proxy in the Religious Education of Children

- Creating a Spiritual Atmosphere and Religious Affinity

Proxy worship places the child in a spiritual environment from the earliest years, where religious acts are performed not only for adults but also in their name. This fosters a positive feeling, familiarity, and a foundational interest in religious rituals within the child. In other words, the child does not break "the taboo of religion" before reaching the age of religious obligation; instead, they experience religion as a natural and loving part of their family life (Amini, 2006, pp. 110–115; Bigge & Shermis, 2004, pp. 74–80).

- **Indirect Instruction of Religious Values**

Through this process, the child indirectly learns the importance and value of acts such as prayer, fasting, and Hajj through observation and symbolic participation. This indirect instruction, devoid of imposition and command, facilitates the gradual internalization of these values, integrating them into the child's belief system (Ahmadvand, 2011, pp. 145–150; cf. Kohlberg, 1984).

- **Fostering a Sense of Religious Responsibility**

When parents perform an act of worship beside the child, they effectively convey the message that these duties are important and necessary responsibilities that will, at the appropriate time, fall upon the individual themselves. This prepares the necessary psychological ground for the gradual acceptance of future religious responsibilities (cf. Makārem Shīrāzī, 2003).

- **Establishing an Emotional Connection with Religious Acts**

These acts of worship by proxy are often accompanied by the parents' sincere prayers, good intentions, and pure wishes for their parents. Therefore, the child sees and receives not merely a dry religious obligation but a spiritual gift imbued with affection. This creates an emotional bond between the child and the realm

of the divine, intertwining their perception of religion with kindness and tenderness (cf. Bāgherī, 2008).

- **Strengthening Religious Identity and Sense of Belonging to a Religious Community**

By observing and being aware of religious acts performed in their name, the child, from the very beginning, sees themselves as a member of a larger community whose members hold spiritual responsibility for one another. This sense of belonging lays the foundation for a solid, community-based religious identity (cf. Pārsānā, 2013, pp. 70–75; Erikson, 1968, pp. 122–135).

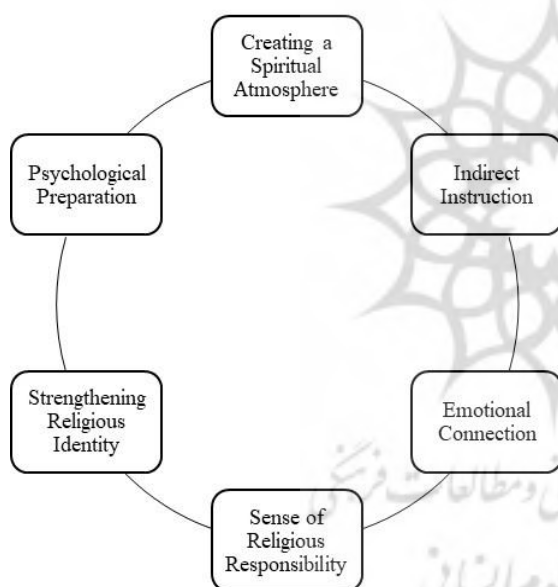
- **Psychological Preparation for Direct Performance of Religious Acts**

This process provides a gradual, non-shock transition for the child from the non-obligatory period to the age of religious obligation. Over the years, the child becomes familiar with religious concepts and practices, gradually becoming psychologically and cognitively prepared to directly undertake these duties. This prevents the sudden emergence of feelings of alienation and pressure on the threshold of puberty (cf. Berk, 2013).

Therefore, the act of worship by proxy can be considered a gradual and love-based educational strategy that, by utilizing psychological mechanisms such as indirect internalization and

creating emotional bonds, provides the groundwork for the formation of a stable and positive religious identity in the child. The success of this strategy is contingent upon its accompaniment with appropriate explanation, the creation of a coercion-free environment, and the strengthening of verbal and emotional communication between parents and the child.

The following diagram shows the six effects of Acts of Worship by Proxy:



Impacts of the Acts of Worship by Proxy in the Religious Education of Children

Conclusion

This study has endeavored to systematically analyze the jurisprudential dimensions of children's acts of worship by proxy and their implications for religious education within the framework of Imamiyah jurisprudence. Religious education, as a fundamental duty of

the family, is obligatory upon parents under Imamiyah jurisprudence. Within this educational framework, the acts of worship performed by children -both independently and by proxy- hold significant pedagogical value.

The analysis concludes that while children's acts of worship are legitimate and desirable, their performance on behalf of others in obligatory devotional acts is not considered valid for discharging the obligation of the person represented. This is due to the principle that such acts fundamentally require performance by the obligated individual themselves, and no decisive proof exists to extend the validity of proxy performance to discerning children in this domain.

However, the research identifies a vital educational and spiritual avenue in the realm of recommended and supererogatory acts. Here, the act of dedicating the reward to parents or ancestors emerges as a fully valid and impactful practice. When a child performs a recommended act and dedicates its spiritual reward, it constitutes a form of customary proxy that is not only permissible but also carries profound educational benefits.

The impacts of this practice extend far beyond the jurisprudential ruling, serving as a cornerstone for effective religious education. It functions as a gradual, love-based pedagogical

strategy that: Creates a nurturing spiritual atmosphere and affinity for religious rituals; Facilitates the indirect internalization of religious values; Fosters an early sense of religious responsibility; Establishes deep emotional connections with worship through the lens of gift-giving and affection; Strengthens the child's religious identity and sense of belonging to the faith community; and Provides psychological preparation for the eventual direct assumption of religious obligations at puberty.

In conclusion, while Imamiyah jurisprudence maintains specific constraints on proxy worship in obligatory acts, it wholeheartedly endorses and encourages the use of recommended acts and reward-dedication by children. This mechanism is not a mere legal formality but a sophisticated educational tool. It empowers parents to fulfill their solemn duty of religious education by integrating children into the spiritual fabric of family life through observation, symbolic participation, and emotional engagement.

Thus, the practice of dedicating the reward by children stands validated as a powerful means to cultivate a stable, positive, and internalized religious identity, thereby fortifying the future generations of the Islamic community against the challenges of cultural invasion and secular neglect. This

study, by extracting and synthesizing this issue from dispersed jurisprudential discussions, underscores the necessity of integrating legal insight with educational wisdom to nurture an intact generation committed to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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