FAMILY AS BEDROCK FOR SOUND MORAL UPBRINGING
IN THE SOCIETY

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Abstract
The role the family plays for us to have a balanced society cannot be overemphasized. The family as the first agent of socialization has the responsibility to instill good moral values in children. However, we have concentrated so much on formal education in recent times that we have forgotten that our children will never live right if we don’t lead right and set the pace. We are not to major on the minor. The family is the child’s first and most influential teacher. It is an error for the family to leave her responsibility to anyone to fulfil for her. If every parent will make a decision to teach the young ones right while doing what they preach, we will have a better society. This paper seeks to identify, explain why and how the family is the bedrock for sound moral upbringing in any given society under the following sub-headings: introduction, concept of morality, concept of family, concept of family from Christian perspective, concept of family from Islamic perspective, reasons why children must be taught values and summary.

Introduction
It has always been said that the family is the bed rock of the society. Is that really so? If yes, then what has happened to the family unit? Where did we all go wrong? Every time I see anything happening bad in our society, I wonder what happened. The society is full of so many ills now. People are corrupt, they cheat, they want make money without working, they pretend to serve God but don’t have the substance they profess, terrorism is now the in thing, etc. the list is endless.

It should be noted that the child’s first contact with the world is his immediate family; the parents (mothers in particular) take care of such basic socialization practices as feeding habits, toilet training, sex education and brushing of teeth. It is however sad that most parents do not play their part in raising their children in the fear of God. Most children today are left in the hands of nannies and day care centres where they learn different types of values that contradict our value system as a nation.

As families have core values that guard them, children are to be taught to imbibe them too. Excellence, integrity, leadership, respect for human person and love amongst others are examples of what should be given in any society. We have concentrated so much on formal education in recent times that we have forgotten that our children will never live right if we don’t lead right and set the pace. We are not to major on the minor. The family is the child's first and most influential teacher. It is an error for the family to leave her responsibility for anyone to fulfil for her. If every parent will make a decision to teach the young ones right while doing what they preach we will have a better society. This paper seeks to identify, explain why and how the family is the bedrock for sound moral upbringing in any given society.
Concept of Morality
Morality, derived from the Latin word *moralitas* meaning “manner, character, proper behaviour” is the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are distinguished as proper and those that are important (Long and Sydney, 1987). More also, Standard Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2011) insists that morality can be a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion, or culture, or it can derive from a standard that a person believes should be universal. Morality may also be specifically synonymous with “goodness” or “rightness.”

Concept of Family
In the context of human society, Harper (2016) see the family (from Latin: *familia*) as a group of people affiliated either by consanguinity (by recognized birth), affinity (by marriage or any other relationship like siblings, families etc.), or co-residence (as implied by the etymology of the English word “family”) or some combination of these. Members of the immediate family includes: spouses, parents, brothers, sisters, sons and/or daughters. Members of the extended family may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces and / or siblings’ in-law. Sometimes these are also considered members of the immediate family, depending on an individual’s specific relationship.

The United States Census Bureau opines that a family includes a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. All people in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family. A family household may contain people not related to the householder but those people are not included as part of the householder's family in census tabulations. Thus, the number of family household is equal to the number of families, but family households may include more member than do families. A household can contain only one family for purposes of census tabulations. Not all households contain families since a household may comprise a group of unrelated people or one person living alone.

Janet (2002) sees the family as a traditional “nuclear family” of two parents and their children, and where the parents are presumed to be acting in the best interests of their children. In such a family, there is no need to give the children their own voice— even when parents do such things as institutionalize their children. She further opines that it is an extended-kind model of family made up of a community of parents, siblings, grandparents and other relatives which should be recognized as a primary family, even if the blood-ties are not as strong as nuclear family; and an individualist model where family members are fairly autonomous and that individuality should be respected.

From the above definitions, one can categorically state that the family is a group of people related by blood that live together within a household. These people’s values
differ from one household to the other. Their values influence the way they instil good morals into their children.

**Concept of Family Christian Perspective**

A good Christian family is one that lines up with biblical principles and one in which each member understands and fulfils his or her God-given role. The family is not an institution designed by man. It was created by God for the benefit of man, and man has been given stewardship over it. The basic biblical family unit is comprised of one man, one woman—his spouse—and their offspring or adopted children. The extended family can include relatives by blood or marriage such as grandparents, nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, and uncles. One of the primary principles of the family unit is that it involves a commitment ordained by God for the lifetime of the members. The husband and wife are responsible for holding it together, the current attitude of our culture notwithstanding. Although divorce is sought and granted much too easily in our society, the Bible tells us that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

Of course, the first requirement for the members of the Christian family is that they all be Christians, having a true relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour. Ephesians 5:22-26 provides the guidelines for husbands and wives in a Christian family. The husband is required to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and a wife should respect her husband and willingly submit to his leadership in the family. The husband’s leadership role should start with his own spiritual relationship with God and the flow to instructing his wife and children in scriptural values, leading the family into biblical truth. Fathers are instructed to bring up their children in “the training and instructions of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). A father is also to provide for his family. If he does not, he “denies the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1Timothy 5:8). So, a man who makes no effort to provide for his family cannot rightly call himself a Christian. This does not mean that the wife cannot assist in supporting the family—proverb 31 demonstrates that a Godly wife may surely do so—but providing for the family is not primary her responsibility; it is her husband’s.

Woman was given to man for the purpose of being her husband’s helper (Genesis 2:18-20) and to bear children. The husband and wife in the Christian marriage are to remain faithful to one another for a life time. God declares equality of worth in that men and women are created in God’s image and are therefore are equally valuable in his eyes. This does not mean, however that men and women have identical roles in life. Women are more adept at nurturing and caring for the young, while men are better equipped to provide for and protect the family. Thus, they are equal in status, but each has a different role to play in a Christian marriage.

A Christian marriage, foundational to a Christian family, follows the biblical instructions concerning sex. The Bible counters the cultural view that divorce, living together without being married, and same sex marriage are acceptable in God’s eyes.
Sexuality expressed according to biblical standards is a beautiful expression of love and commitment. Outside of marriage, it is sin.

While children are given two primary responsibilities in the Christian family: to obey their parents and to honour them (Ephesians 6:1-3), parents are given one specific responsibility: to teach their children God’s word (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). While obeying and honouring parents is the duty of children until they reach adulthood and for a lifetime respectively, teaching children is the duty of parents until they reach adulthood.

Ideally, a Christian family will have all members committed to Christ and his services. When a husband, wife, and children all fulfil their God appointed roles, then peace and harmony reign in the home which have a positive effect on the society. But, if we try to have a Christian family without Christ as head or without adhering to the biblical principles the Lord has lovingly provided for us the home will suffer and these will have a negative effect on the society.

Concept of Family Islamic Perspective
We live in an era in which the nature, function and structure of the family have been thrown into question. Many, for example, would consider an unmarried couple, a single mother, and homosexual couples as equally legitimate expressions of the family unit. Islam takes a more conservative’s stance, arguing that the family is a divinely inspired institution, with marriage at its core. One of the most striking features of Muslim society is the importance attached to the family. The family unit is regarded as the cornerstone of a healthy balanced society (Doi, 1984). The different plane of emphasis from that found in individual-centred cultures is for many remarkable.

The traditional Muslim family is extended, often spanning three (3) or more generations (Anwar, 1994). An extended structure offers many advantages, including stability, coherence, and physical and psychological support, particularly in times of need. In Muslim culture, akin to other traditional cultures, respect and esteem increase with age. Elderly parents are respected on account of their life experiences and their hierarchic position within the family unit. The opportunity to attend to the needs of one's parents in their later years is viewed as a gift from Allah.

Islam considers children to be vulnerable and dependent beings. Therefore, Islamic law provides diverse rules for the protection of their body and property. According to these rules both parents have well-defined duties towards their children before they reach the age of maturity. The father of a child should provide the mother with the necessary material for the child’s growth and survival. The baby has the right to food, clothing, shelter (Qur'an 11:233). The father should also see to the child’s education (both secular and religious). Should the child’s father be dead or unable to provide for the child, and if the child does not have any inherited property, then
providing for the child becomes first the duty of the paternal grandfather, then other paternal relatives, and finally any other living relatives (Momen, 1985).

Awde (2000) is of the view that it is the responsibility of the mother to take care of the child during infancy. The mother must breast-feed the child at least up to the age of two (Qur’an ll: 233), although even in present-day Islamic countries breast-feeding usually continues as long as the mother has milk. If a mother is unable to nurse, it is permitted to employ a wet nurse who is in good health and of good character (it is believed by some jurists that traits are inherited through human lactation) (Qur’an ll: 233, LIV: 6). If the family cannot afford a wet nurse, frequently a neighbour or a friend who has recently given birth may fulfill the role.

The religious education of the child is the responsibility of the parents, with boys being educated by their fathers, and girls by their mothers. Through the initial rituals at birth, the child is incorporated into Islam, and the basic principles of faith are explained when the child starts talking. However, the systematic religious education of the child does not begin until the age of tamyiz. In the past, this education frequently began by sending boys to the maktab (Qur’anic school), where they learned the recitation of Qur’an and instruction on the performance of religious commandments. Female children did not go the maktab, although female maktab were available in some countries. Girls frequently received religious instruction at home from their mother and were taught household work. However, although maktab sexist in all Islamic countries today, religious instruction is also incorporated into the general curriculum of modern state education, and special religious books have been written for children. In some Islamic countries, such as Turkey, schools are coeducational, while in others, such as Saudi Arabia, any kind of schooling for girls is of recent origin, and children are taught in separate male and female facilities.

It is believed that children well taught will be able to fit into the society (Fernea, 1995).

Reasons Why Children Must Be Taught Values
Gene (2000) sees values as the seeds from which all behaviour grows. He went further to identify ten reasons why children should be taught values.

1. Values centred homes develop value centred children.
   Children who demonstrate compassion, respect, responsibility, perseverance, initiative, and integrity have parents who demonstrate these qualities on a regular basis. In value centred Homes children not only observe moral decision making but they are also taught the importance of character and ethical decision making skills. You’ll hear frequent references to “Is that the right thing to do?” Charts and posters are displayed throughout the house to remind children of what’s the right thing to do. Parents are knowledgeable about the power of the model. They know that seldom, if ever, do kids improve without a model.

Parents know the importance of finding new tools and strategies to strengthen their children. A simple mobile hanging above their bed that says “Find a Way” on one
side, and “Make Excuses” with a line through it on the other side, will help children learn the responsible way to think. A brief note in a child’s lunch box or under his/her pillow can promote a moral message that will last a lifetime!

2. **Children who are clear about their values have little or no difficulty in making decisions.**

“If a civilization does not identify and promote core ethical values and beliefs they will negate one thing after another.” Parents, who know there is a right way to behave and treat others with respect, contribute to their children’s moral development. Ants, after finding a bread crumb, don’t ask “what is the content?” or “is it white or wheat bread?”; they simply take it back to the colony. Human beings are far above the insect world. We should ask questions like “does someone need the bread more than I do?,” or “Did someone lose the food?” etc. Children who live in a climate of ethical decision makers know that “It’s not who is right, but what is right!” They work towards the resolution of problems, rather than being consumed by problems. They know that problems are merely questions that need to be solved. When there is a problem, the parents refer back to one of the family’s Core Ethical Values in order to help the children see that problems develop character. If children are taught that when there is a problem with a brother or sister, it is best to “work it out with kind words”, then seeing parents use the same principle will help them solve problems with confidence and compassion. Parents can list alternative ways of solving problems in a “Home journal”, or put up a few posters to remind children that this family always finds a way and solves problems rather than neglect them.

3. **Children learn to respect each other when there is a program on Respect.**

Homes, schools and communities will continue to fail in developing respectful citizens as long as they cry “I don’t get any respect”, “all I need is a little respect”, or “kids don’t show respect these days.” The answer lies in developing relationships where parents demonstrate consideration and hold their children in high regard. Often people who demand respect most deserve it the least! Countless hours have been wasted by parents, schools, and by individuals who merely describe all the problems our youth possess. Describing disrespectful acts people demonstrate, will never change behaviour. Effective parents not only describe what they need, but they also implement a program on respect. Invite children to fill out “Respect Reports” on their brothers and sisters, or keep a Respect Record of their own acts of respect. This will create respectful children! “Respect is… demonstrated consideration and high regard for others.”

4. **Cooperation and collaboration are paramount in a value centred home.**

Parents who promote cooperation and collaboration are well aware that the “moon doesn’t shine without the sun.” In the early years they help their children see that “one hand washes the other.” Cooperation and collaboration can be introduced to children through the example of a bee hive. Bees are one of the best examples of cooperation and teamwork! One type of bee gathers the pollen, another makes the honey, while others fan and cool the hive for the worker bees so the queen can have
a perfect climate for laying her eggs. Children can be taught that a person rarely accomplishes things by themselves, and that a family really isn’t a family unless each member gives up some comfort for the comfort of others. The word team is another way of teaching cooperation. The four letters in the word stand for “Together Everyone Achieves More.”

5. **Children learn how to become ethical decision makers when parents focus on ethics, not just rules.**

   Obedience and responsibility are two totally different concepts. Children not only need to obey their parents, but also internalize the ethics that build strong character. “Rules do not equal ethics, except in a perfect society.”

   In our imperfect world, we must make room for ethic awareness. If we only expend energy on rules, our children will not know how to handle ambiguity and situations where rules do not exist. It’s been estimated that over 80% of our choices in life, while they have definite consequences, do not have rules to regulate our behaviour. Effective parents help their children learn that rules come from ethics, not ethics from rules. Ethics are the source of all laws and rules. Ethics are not only the bedrock truths from which we build our society, but also the foundation for all relationships. “Ethics focus on the way things can be, not on the acceptance of the way things are.”

6. **A Value based home fosters personal responsibility and initiative in each child!**

   Effective parents train their children when they are young to be responsible by giving them the language of responsibility. They also give their children many opportunities to assist around the house. They also give their children many opportunities to assist around the house. They recognize that the best way to teach responsibility is to give kids responsibility. Value based families are not only great models of personal responsibility, but are also very cautious in giving their children too many things, without having them work toward different goals. Parents promote home campaigns such as “IF IT NEEDS TO BE DONE, I’LL BE THE ONE!” Children are driven to find a way, not to make excuses. If a lot of presents become a habit, it might contribute toward irresponsibility. It’s almost better for parents to receive the presents with a note which reads “when you see your son/daughter being responsible, please let him rent this toy from you for 15 minutes.” During family meetings, focus the family discussions on how the family “Finds a Way” while other families make excuses. Children then are driven to find alternatives, rather than fault themselves or others. Families that take time to look in on themselves are much more effective families. Keep a record of responsible attitudes and responsible acts, then Celebrate those attitudes and actions with your children. “Discipline is like a bridled horse with the reins held lightly.”

7. **An emphasis on bedrock ethics and values will develop an understanding and appreciation of others’ differences.**

   Effective families place emphasis on others. They have a program on others by first being kind to their own children, and by letting them know how important it is to be kind to one another. Treat others the way you want to be treated and become a great need analyst by defining what the unique needs of others are.
As violence, indifference, profanity, and abuse escalate, the need for compassion increases. Healthy families know the power of empathy and caring. They know that “love never fails” in getting results. The more you love your children, the higher you can set your expectations for each child. Homes with clear values program invite children to sit in “The Care Chair” and to describe the way compassion was shown toward each other. They encourage the giving of Care Cards to others! Posters and charts can be placed around the house which promotes compassion and kindness. “Kindness is a language the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”

8. Value Centred homes promote personal and moral integrity.
Effective families encourage learning pledges such as the following integrity creed. “You can count on me! I am a person of Integrity! Every day I will do a little bit better than I did the day before, to be more truthful to myself and then to others. I am a person of Integrity. You can count on me!” Children learn, that while they don’t live in a world that demonstrates integrity, they can help create a small island called home, where people can count on each other and trust each other. Children who demonstrate integrity will not only stand out in a crowd today, but will also be highly prized and valued in the world of tomorrow. Effective families count on each other’s commitments and promises. They learn by example never to make a commitment unless there is a plan to keep that promise. “Truth needs no memory.”

9. Value centred families develop children who demonstrate Positive Mental Attitude, or P.M.A.
Effective families promote positive energy. Their rules include such things as “If you take energy away from the family, you have a responsibility to give energy back to the family.” They learn by their parents’ example to aspire higher and persist longer. They know that failure is only a temporary setback toward achieving ultimate success. These families look for, and work for, the best possible results. They live purpose-driven lives with a driving force of determination and perseverance. They learn early in life that “Winners never quit, and quitters never win!”.

10. Value centred families have at the core of their values, spiritual principles.
They know that the major problems in life are spiritual problems and thus require spiritual solutions. They help their children know that they are an unrepeatable miracle woven together like no other person. Because of their parent’s disciplined life, children observe the principles of honour, Worship, relationship, gifts, spiritual strength, faith, hope, charity, endurance, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation. Effective Families help their children see and experience the unconditional love of God in every aspect of their lives. They help their kids see cars are not the only thing recalled by their maker.

Summary
The role of family in the development of morality in children cannot be over emphasized. If our values must be maintained in our society, we must go beyond just teaching Civic Education in our schools. We must create the consciousness in
the hearts of our parents that they have the responsibility to teach their children values that will help them develop good morals. The family, which is considered the first agent of socialization, must arise to the challenge to teach the children in a bid curb the high rate of indecency noticed in our young ones today.

References
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