

Conclusion

In conclusion, we refer to the precepts of Chapter three verse 104 of the glorious Qur'an,

“Let emerge from you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islam); enjoining 'Al-Ma`ruf' all that Islam orders, and forbidding Al-Munkar all that Islam has forbidden. And it is they who are the successful.” (Q3:104).

The Imams are expected to utilize their vast knowledge for the spread of awareness and sensitizing fellow worshippers on maternal and child health care that can help enhance sound upbringing and wellbeing of every child, and as well lead to healthy Muslim youths; the incontrovertible future of the Muslim community (*Ummah*). Family Planning (FP) or Childbirth Spacing (CBS) is good for the health of the mothers and wellbeing of the family and the Community (Ummah) at large.

Finally, let us all keep abreast with the Noble Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) admonitions:

“Take benefit of five before five: Your youth before old age, your health before sickness, your wealth before poverty, your free time before preoccupation, and your life before death.” - The Hadith was reported by Imam Al-Hakim, Ahmad, and Baihaqi; Saheehul Jami' 1077.

Allah is the All-Knower.

Alhamdulillah.



ISLAMIC SERMON NOTE ON CHILDBIRTH SPACING (CBS) IN NIGERIA



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Introduction

“On daily basis, Nigeria loses almost Two Thousand, Three Hundred (2,300) under five-year-old children. It similarly loses nearly one Hundred and Forty-five (145) women of childbearing age. That makes the country, the second largest contributor to the death of the under-five-year-old children and maternal mortality rate in the world.” (UNICEF Nigeria Publication 2017).

It is certain that the Muslim community 'Ummah' has a great share of this problem. It is also important to note that wide regional disparities exist in maternal and child health indicators; with the North-East and North-West geographical Zones of the country reporting the worst figures. It is indeed a pity that should be the case, despite the fact that we have Allah's injunction:

“... if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder or checking the spread of mischief in the land - it would be as if he had killed all mankind; and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. . . .” (Q5:32).

In effect, it means that whoever kills another person, except as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land, it will be written in his book of deeds, as if he had killed all the human beings on earth. And whoever saves a life shall be regarded as if he has secured and given life to all human beings on earth. In view of that, the protection of human lives, particularly women and children, is an obvious religious duty in Islam. Hence, it should be upheld by every Muslim. As regards saving the lives of women of reproductive age and their children, Childbirth Spacing has become a necessity.

What is Childbirth Spacing (CBS)?

It is a means by which couples regulate or space childbirth so as to achieve spacing of their children and effectively helping mothers to properly recover in between pregnancies. In accordance with the Islamic teaching, Allah (SWT) has shown us the way to space childbearing where He says in the Glorious Qur'an,

“The mothers should suckle their children for two whole years. That is for those parents who desire to complete the term of suckling, . . .” (Q2:233). This indicates that, in Islam, the period of breastfeeding a child is two years, for those who want to complete it. This is the best for the health of both the mother and her child.

The Bases of Childbirth Spacing in Islam

Allah says:

“And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship. And she delivers him with hardship. And (the period of) his gestation and the weaning is thirty months...” (Q46:15).

“And among His signs is that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect” (Q30:21).

“And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years -- give thanks to Me and to your parents. Unto Me is the final destination...” (Q31:14).

A similar injunction from 4:29 says, *“And spend in the cause of Allah and do not throw yourselves into destruction, and do good. Truly, Allah loves Al-Muhsinin (those who do good.”* (Q2:195).

In Islam, the concept of Family Planning or Childbirth spacing does not and should not be meant for economic reasons. At the same time either by omission or commission, individuals should not contribute to his own personal destruction. All should work for the safety of themselves and the communities.

Importance of spacing...

- It is following the Divine Guidance, (Q2:233).
- It promotes and safeguards the health of the mother, full recovery from the hardship of childbearing, (Q46:15).
- It allows for the proper care of the children if they are more than one.
- It allows the mother to comfortably do her acts of worship (*Ibadah*) like fasting and Hajj.
- It allows the woman to pursue her education in order to be able to contribute positively to her community and this will result in an ideal Islamic community (Ummah), where a woman will attend to another woman in hospitals, schools and other places that their services are needed.

Adverse Effects of not Spacing...

- It may affect the health of the mother adversely, through frequent child bearing and the accompanying loss of blood.
- The children may not be healthy too, for lack of adequate attention and care.
- The upbringing (*tarbiyyah*) of the children will be hampered due to lack of health on the part of the mother or if the mother dies at childbirth.

Acceptable Methods

Withdrawal (Azl) Method:

A Prophetic Tradition (*Hadith*) narrated by Muslims says: *“We use to perform withdrawal (Azl) during the days of the Messenger of Allah, (PBUH). That reached the Messenger of Allah, (PBUH) and he did not prohibit us from so doing”* {Bukhari da Muslim 694}.

By analogical deductions '*qiyas*', “withdrawal (azl)” means that all the barrier methods and any other methods that prevent conception are allowed.

Therefore, the most important thing is for people to return to Allah's injunctions; all should repent and change their lifestyle for good. Allah does not change the condition of a people except they change what is in themselves.

“Verily, Allah will not change the (good) condition peoples are in as long as they do not change their state of goodness, themselves by committing sins and by being ungrateful and disobedient to Allah.” (Qur'an, 13: 11).

By virtue of this noble verse of the Noble Qur'an (Q13:11), one can easily conclude that, while Allah (SWT) is Omnipotent, there is still the need for the human agency to realize one's Divinely ordained earthly mission. That is, "Allah helps those who help themselves," as the popular saying goes. All should endeavor to know and practice the relevant provisions in the family health care guide and related dictates of Islam. The three tiers of governments; local, state and federal governments, through their agencies provide appropriate health care facilities to every community, they should ensure continuous provision of quality services. Suitable attention should be accorded to any reported family health matters, particularly the ones that are relevant to women of reproductive age and their children.