



Components of Children's Citizenship Rights in the Conduct of Imam al-Rida*

Ali Gholamalipour¹ , Afshin Jafari² 

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Abstract

Citizenship rights constitute a universal and comprehensive concept encompassing political, economic, social, cultural, and civil dimensions, and they extend to all age and gender groups. Children, as an essential segment of society, also possess specific rights, which are recognized in international instruments, most notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this regard, certain aspects of children's rights in Islam may be understood in terms of citizenship rights. The primary objective of this study is to examine the components of children's citizenship rights within the conduct (*sīra*) of Imam al-Rida. The central question is: What are the manifestations and components of children's citizenship rights in the Imam al-Rida's conduct? This investigation demonstrates that children's rights—including health (through principles of nutrition, personal hygiene, and family hygiene), the provision of tranquility and comfort in the home, religiosity and emphasis on spiritual and religious dimensions in child-rearing, rational education and training of children, and affectionate and compassionate treatment—are all evident in the practical conduct and hadiths narrated from Imam al-Rida. The Radawi tradition's emphasis on children's specific rights may be regarded as a model for Islamic approaches to citizenship rights, which can also be articulated within binding legal instruments.

Keywords: conduct of Imam al-Rida, citizenship rights, Imam al-Rida, children's rights

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1. Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Teachings, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.
(Corresponding Author) (aligholamalipour@pnu.ac.ir)
2. Associate Professor, Department of Law, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.
(jafari.afshin@pnu.ac.ir)

1. Introduction

Today's children are the builders of tomorrow's society, and in this respect, the recognition and consideration of their rights within the framework of citizenship rights play a vital role in their growth and upbringing. Attention to their rights, therefore, is closely linked to the condition of human society as a whole. Various schools of thought and religions, shaped by territorial, social, and doctrinal circumstances, have devised different programs in this field; however, these programs have not accorded children an equal status or equal rights. Moreover, the issue of children has given rise to an accumulation of diverse topics concerning children's rights in both national and international legal systems. It has become one of the primary concerns of responsible and committed individuals, and accordingly, the global community and international institutions have introduced numerous directives and regulations in this regard.

In jurisprudential teachings grounded in the conduct (sīra¹) of the Shi'i Imams, numerous rights have been recognized for children, and any violation or infringement of the rights of this vulnerable group has been explicitly prohibited by the Lawgiver (shāri') (Fasih Ramandi 2019, 88). In this context, by examining Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and the conduct of the Shi'i Imams, one can discern signs and elements of citizenship rights that contribute to the development and education of children throughout different stages of life.

In general, Islam pays particular attention to matters concerning children. It introduces parents as trustees of the child, obligated to diligently strive for his or her spiritual and physical education. In this regard, the Prophet of Islam emphasized preserving the dignity and honor of children, declaring: "Love children and show them mercy and compassion" (Kulayni 1980, 6: 49). Likewise, Imam 'Ali stated: "Honor your children and educate them properly so that you may be granted forgiveness" (Hurr al-'Amili 1989, 21: 476). These instances represent only a portion of the strategies outlined by Ahl al-Bayt concerning respect for the child's dignity, love, kindness, and a sense of responsibility toward them. They demonstrate the extent to which children's rights have been defended in the hadiths, and they suggest the possibility of formulating a charter to guarantee children's rights within the framework of citizenship rights.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the components of citizenship rights in the conduct of Imam al-Rida?
- To what extent can Islamic teachings on citizenship rights, based on this conduct, contribute to the realization of children's rights in contemporary

society?

The methodology employed in this research is descriptive-analytical, relying on Qur'anic verses, hadiths, particularly the conduct of Imam al-Rida, as well as the views of jurists and Islamic scholars in order to collect and analyze data.

1.1. Literature Review

The following introduces some of the most significant works written in Persian on children's rights within the framework of international instruments and Islamic law:

Fasih Ramandi (2019), by examining the Imam al-Rida's conduct regarding the naming of the child, demonstrates that the emphasis on the clarity of lineage and the child's religious affiliation clearly represents instances of the child's spiritual rights. He therefore considers the conduct of Imam al-Rida as a complete model of the child's spiritual rights.

Sharifi and Lotfi Ghadikolaei (2018), in their paper, address the lifestyle practices prior to the birth of the child. According to the authors, matters such as choosing a worthy spouse, observing rules of social interaction, prenatal care, selecting a good name, performing the *'aqīqa* ritual², and reciting the call to prayer (*adhān*) in the infant's ear are among the features of the Radawi upbringing style.

Another study is the paper by Zarneshan and Rezvani Mofrad (2017), which stresses that although the international community, states, and human rights treaties emphasize the importance of breastfeeding in infant nutrition, there is no binding instrument in this regard. Similarly, the Islamic legal system has also set forth valuable provisions in this area, yet they too remain at the level of non-binding legal documents.

Mir-Mohammadi and colleagues (2014), in their collection of papers, address the protection of children's rights in various areas, including the right to health, the right to development, and the right to education. They argue that both Islamic law and international law generally emphasize securing the best interests of children and reducing violent conflicts against them. However, Islamic teachings provide more detailed emphasis on these rights.

Each of the aforementioned studies addresses certain aspects of Islamic law and international treaties concerning children's rights. In this respect, the present research aligns with them. Nevertheless, because it examines the conduct of Imam al-Rida from both theoretical and practical perspectives in relation to children's citizenship rights, it adopts a new approach.

1.2. Theoretical Foundations: The Child and Its Characteristics

Childhood refers to the age range extending from birth to puberty. In developmental psychology, childhood is divided into four stages of maturity: toddlerhood (learning to walk), early childhood (the age of play), middle childhood (the age of schooling), and adolescence (the transition through puberty and the attainment of maturity). The child leads a dependent life, is under the custody and guardianship of others, is newly entering life, and is profoundly influenced by the suggestions and inculcations of others. The child has no recognized and coherent plan, thought, or perspective of his own; is highly impressionable; extremely flexible; and is in the process of forming and shaping personality. Such a person falls within the age range from birth to approximately eleven years. At this stage, the child actively seeks role models, and the influence of models is extremely powerful. If someone occupies the child's heart as a hero or superior human being, he or she will attempt to align his or her behavior with that person (Qaemi 2009, 16).

Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and law, under the rubric of *ṣaghīr* (minor), state:

A boy or girl who has not reached religious puberty (*al-bulūgh al-sharʿī*) is considered legally incapacitated (*mahjūr*). Upon attaining puberty, his or her incapacity is lifted without the need for a ruling from the religious authority. If before puberty the child attains discernment, he or she is called a *ṣaghīr mumayyiz* (discerning minor). (Langroudi 2002, 3: 2352)

In the nature of the child lies creativity, spontaneous impulses, attraction to pleasure and play, the capacity to manage play, a sense of beauty, and aversion to coercion. The child is filled with creativity and spirituality, possesses a pure spirit receptive to clarity, and—without intention—inclines toward nature, resembling the primordial human being (Kianush 2011, 17).

From the perspective of Islamic jurists, a child is one who has not reached the stage of puberty. In legal terminology, the offspring of a human being is considered a child from birth until the onset of puberty. This expression appears frequently in different discussions. For instance, in the matter of a child's adherence to the parents in the ruling of Islam, some jurists have stated:

The ruling concerning a child who has not reached puberty, whether male or female, is that in matters of being Muslim or non-Muslim, the child follows the parents; in rulings such as purity (*tahāra*) and impurity (*najāsa*), the child likewise follows them. (Shahid al-Thani 2001, 4: 140)

Shaykh Muhammad Hasan al-Najafi³ defines puberty as follows: "Puberty is the

termination of the stage of childhood (*ṣighar*) and the entrance into the stage of legal responsibility (*taklīf*)” (Najafi 2000, 26: 54).

Furthermore, in Islamic jurisprudence, children are divided into discerning (*mumayyiz*) and non-discerning (*ghayr mumayyiz*). A discerning child is one who can distinguish between good and evil, benefit and harm, and who can understand the basics of transactions and dealings (Hilli 1980, 7: 306). Signs of the attainment of puberty may be qualitative (such as nocturnal emission (*iḥtilām*)) or quantitative (such as age). Thus, while the maximum age of puberty is the same for all, its minimum age differs among individuals. In addition, the attainment of maturity (*rushd*) is considered necessary for legal competence in certain matters.

Children in Iranian law also possess specific characteristics and markers. Different legal systems define childhood according to different criteria. In most modern legal systems, the definition of a child is based on age, and age alone is the decisive factor distinguishing childhood from adulthood. In Islamic jurisprudence and law, however, the end of childhood corresponds to puberty, which marks the beginning of a new stage of life characterized, on the one hand, by physical changes such as the emergence of sexual instinct and reproductive capacity, and, on the other hand, by the growth of intellectual, cognitive, and psychological faculties. Puberty, therefore, is the criterion marking the transition from childhood to adulthood, with age serving merely as one indicator among others (Emami 1993, 5: 244). According to Iranian law, a child is one who has not yet reached full physical and mental maturity for participation in social and even familial matters. Hence, the basic principle is that upon reaching a certain age, the child naturally experiences intellectual and physical development and becomes prepared to take part in social and family life. This demonstrates the centrality of puberty as a criterion (Fasih Ramandi 2019, 88).

2. Components of Children’s Citizenship Rights in the Conduct of Imam al-Rida

Today, children’s rights in their various dimensions constitute one of the central issues addressed in both international and domestic legal instruments. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocols—namely, the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict—as well as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990), are all directly related to children’s rights. From these instruments and declarations emerge such entitlements as the right to

health, the right to education, the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to favorable economic and social conditions.

The most important convention that specifically addresses children's rights, and from which children's rights as human beings and citizens may be extracted, is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention was adopted in November 1989 in fifty-four articles, and—similar to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted in 1959—it emphasizes the comprehensive protection of children, especially with regard to education. Article 28 of the convention expressly affirms this right. Moreover, paragraph 2 of article 3 places the primary responsibility of care and protection of the child upon state parties, while adding that states must also respect the rights and duties of parents, legal guardians, and others legally responsible for the child. Article 5, without explicitly mentioning the state, speaks of the responsibilities, rights, and duties of parents, legal guardians, and the family (in its extended sense) in guiding and directing the child in the realization of the rights set forth in the convention. Article 18 likewise places the principal responsibility for the child's growth and development upon parents and legal guardians (Cullen 1993, 154–55).

The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified several important human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), all of which contain provisions aimed at promoting and teaching human rights. It has also accepted membership in many human rights instruments, such as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), which strongly emphasizes human rights education (Mehrpur 2013, 14). For this reason, and at a general level, the Islamic Republic of Iran has to a large extent adhered to international treaties and declarations concerning children's human rights. Moreover, government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations within the country are engaged in activities related to children's rights.

Nevertheless, religious teachings, jurisprudential principles, Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and the perspectives of Islamic scholars have always constituted a key factor in shaping the roadmap of children's rights in Iran. More specifically, the conduct of Imam al-Rida is one such source, and several of its essential components regarding children's rights will be addressed here.

2.1. Religion-Centeredness and the Teaching of a Religious Approach

Citizenship rights in Islam differ significantly from those in the West. In the Western context—or rather, within the framework of international law—citizenship rights are

based on equality before secular law and encompass political, economic, social, cultural, and civil dimensions. As expressed in this regard, becoming a citizen means acquiring a legal status equal to other citizens, enjoying rights alongside them, and bearing common responsibilities (Gaille-Nikodimov 2011, 31). According to this definition, citizenship is a concept closely tied to the nation-state, for citizenship is meaningful only insofar as individuals live in a society with equal rights and obligations. In its simplest form, citizenship means active participation in politics and society, which never allows for a passive or detached role (Bosniak 2008, 21).

In contrast, citizenship rights in Islam transcend these concepts and components, with particular emphasis on spiritual and religious dimensions. Moreover, in Islamic citizenship rights, the fundamental principle is the inseparable relationship between religion and politics (Misbah Yazdi 2015, 49). These broad and comprehensive rights are also applicable to children as members of society.

The first component of children's citizenship rights derived from the conduct of Imam al-Rida is attention to being God-seeking and movement along the divine path. Seeking God and God-centeredness form the foundation of human life, and the absence of this orientation means abandoning monotheism and falling under the banner of Satan and tyranny (*tāghūt*). In Imam al-Rida's conduct, religion-centeredness becomes possible only when one resists inner and satanic temptations and, from the outset, paves the way for raising righteous children. One of the essential conditions for achieving this goal is to avoid the path of Satan. In Islam and in the conduct of Imam al-Rida, this issue receives considerable attention.

In this regard, two paths are set before human beings to shape their children's lives according to religious teachings: the teaching of prayer (*ṣalā*) and reliance on the Qur'an, the word of God. Imam al-Rida stated: "Boys should be instructed to pray when they are seven years old" (Ibn Babawayh Qummi 1992, 3: 436). Thus, one of the rights of children as citizens is that parents should teach them prayer and perform it themselves in practice. Although performing prayer at the age of seven falls below the age of puberty, this emphasis highlights its positive and constructive effects in preparing children for adolescence and beyond. Furthermore, learning prayer at this age habituates the child to virtuous actions and distances him from practices that might lead him away from the divine path.

Alongside the teaching of prayer, learning the Qur'an and its illuminating teachings constitutes the next step in children's education. Imam al-Rida said:

Assign a share of the Qur'an to your homes (through recitation). For whenever the Qur'an is recited in a house, ease and comfort are bestowed upon its inhabitants,

blessings and joy in life abound, and its residents experience an increase in divine bounty. Conversely, when the Qur'an is not recited in a house, hardship and difficulty befall its inhabitants, and the goodness, blessing, and prosperity therein diminish, leaving the residents in scarcity. (Ashtiyani 1984, 2: 109)

Moreover, in another hadith, Imam al-Rida narrated from Imam al-Sadiq, who was asked:

What is the secret behind the fact that the Qur'an, despite the passage of time and repeated recitation, only grows fresher and newer?

He replied:

Because the Qur'an was not revealed for a specific time or a specific people; rather, it was revealed for all times and for all humankind. Therefore, God Almighty revealed the Qur'an in such a manner that it surpasses times and ideas, and in every era new insights into its lofty teachings are discovered. (Mohammadi Reyshahri 1998, 8: 70)

Thus, the message of Islam is rooted in human nature and innate disposition (*fiṭra*). For this reason, it remains enduring, expressing the universal needs of humanity, and plays a significant role in ensuring children's access to their citizenship rights.

2.2. The Right to Education and the Cultivation of Children's Rationality

What distinguishes the Islamic model of rational education is its recognition of reason (*'aql*) as a religious source and its opening of a wide avenue of rational values to human beings (Khatibi 2012, 5). Rational values in Islam extend far beyond mere intellectual notions, encompassing practical rational values as well. For this reason, one of its fundamental principles is that children must be treated in a manner appropriate to their age, character, and position within the family and society, and that their education, correction, and behavioral reform must be carried out in accordance with educational and juristic-legal models. More broadly, education must bring about changes in knowledge, attitudes, and the improvement of interaction with others (Hashemi 2015, 6)—a principle that also applies to children. In international instruments, this right is not confined to a specific age group but extends to all human beings regardless of age, gender, or socio-economic class (United Nations 1966, art. 13(1)). It thus appears that considering the right to the education and cultivation of children's rationality constitutes one of the elements of citizenship rights in the conduct of Imam al-Rida. Imam al-Rida is reported to have said: "Speak to people according to their level of understanding and knowledge, and refrain from what they

cannot comprehend" (Atarodi 1986, 2: 456).

In addition, another important principle in this regard is the cultivation of a rational spirit and courage in children, which can only be achieved with the support and backing of families. Here, too, one can refer to the conduct of Imam al-Rida, which emphasizes rational argument as an essential means for advancing children's development even in early childhood. In this respect, Banan b. Nafi⁴ narrates that one day al-Ma'mun⁵ passed by a place where Imam al-Jawad, while still a child, was playing with other children. The children fled out of fear, but Imam al-Jawad⁶ stood firm. Al-Ma'mun asked: "Why did you not run away with the others?" He replied: "I did not commit a sin to fear punishment, nor is the road too narrow for me to make way for you. You may pass wherever you wish." Surprised, al-Ma'mun asked: "Who are you?" He answered: "I am Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Musa b. Ja'far b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib" (Mozaffari n.d., 211).

The recourse of Imam al-Rida's children to reasoned argument and the expression of their views demonstrates that they were raised in an environment where, instead of resorting to violence or fleeing, they courageously defended their actions and articulated their perspectives. In the conduct of Imam al-Rida, the growth of understanding and reasoning in children requires the simultaneous use of both religious and rational teachings.

Attaining such a level of thought and reasoning necessitates fostering a spirit of inquiry and critical engagement. Imam al-Rida also stated: "Seek understanding (*tafaqquh*) in religion, otherwise you will be like the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance" (Majlisi 1983, 78: 364). Furthermore, the inability of human beings, including children, to achieve righteous actions on their own compels them to turn to those with deeper knowledge of religious teachings. In another hadith, Imam al-Rida said: "The position of the one deeply versed in religion (*faqih*) in this age is like that of the prophets among the Children of Israel" (Majlisi 1983, 78: 65). The *faqih* is thus the one who ensures the teaching of citizens' rights, here with particular reference to children. This narration elevates the status of the one who gains deep understanding of religion to a rank comparable to that of the prophets of the Israelites. It becomes clear that religious education is among the rights of the child, and this matter remains one of the foundational elements of Islamic citizenship rights today.

2.3. The Right to Care and Comfort of the Child

Within the framework of citizenship rights emphasized by Imam al-Rida, the care of children—as human beings who lack the full capacity to distinguish between good and

evil—is of great importance. One instance of this right is the child's right to health care. On this matter, Imam al-Rida stated regarding child hygiene: "The Messenger of God said: Wash and cleanse your children from the filth caused by fat, for Satan smells the odor of fat and frightens the child in sleep, and the angels assigned to him are harmed by it" (Majlisi 1983, 101: 91). Such recommendations, both general and specific, may serve as a foundation for understanding children's citizenship rights.

In addition to the right to health and care, the right to tranquility and comfort within the family is another essential need and a recognized right of children as citizens. This right derives directly from the behavior of parents within the household. When family members treat one another with beautiful speech and pleasant demeanor, such conduct itself fosters the child's serenity and behavioral well-being. This principle also has Qur'anic roots, as certain verses liken the family environment to a place of comfort and tranquility, emphasizing its formative role in raising righteous offspring: "And among His signs is that He created for you, from yourselves, spouses that you might find rest in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. Truly in that are signs for a people who reflect." (Qur'an 30:21)⁷.

For this reason, in the conduct of Imam al-Rida, moderation and good behavior were among the essential characteristics required of parents in nurturing and raising children. Imam al-Rida stated:

If a believer becomes angry, his anger does not lead him away from the path of truth; if he experiences joy, his happiness does not cause him to fall into falsehood; and when he attains power, he does not take more than what is rightfully his. (*Fiqh al-Rida* 1985, 14)

Both in his words and actions, Imam al-Rida emphasized the importance of tranquility and comfort in the family as a fundamental right of children.

It is narrated that he, in strengthening affection and honoring the dignity of those present in the home, always acted with kindness toward them. Ibrahim b. 'Abbas⁸ said: "I never saw anyone superior to Imam al-Rida. He never stretched out his legs in front of his companions, nor reclined before them. He never insulted his servants, never laughed loudly, and always sat at the table with his slaves and subordinates" (Arbili 2000, 2: 247). It appears that cultivating virtuous conduct among family members and establishing comfort, tranquility, and respectful interactions can provide a model for shaping children's behavior toward a life of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect with others.

2.4. The Right to Affectionate and Dignified Treatment

Affectionate and loyal behavior is one of the essential needs recognized in Islamic citizenship rights for children, and this responsibility can primarily be fulfilled by parents. To explain: sometimes parents respond harshly when children persistently demand something unreasonable or impossible; yet even in such situations, an affectionate response is more suitable and effective.

Umayya b. 'Ali⁹ narrates: In the year when Imam al-Rida performed the *hajj* and then traveled to Khurasan, I was with him in Mecca, and Imam al-Jawad accompanied him. Imam al-Rida bade farewell to the Ka'ba. After completing his circumambulation (*ṭawāf*), he went to the Station of Abraham and prayed there. Imam al-Jawad, who was still a child, was carried on the shoulders of Muwaffaq, the Imam's servant, during the *ṭawāf*. Imam al-Jawad then went toward the Hijr of Isma'il, sat there, and remained for a long time. Muwaffaq said to him: "May I be your ransom, rise." He replied: "I will not rise until God wills," and sorrow appeared on his face. Muwaffaq came to Imam al-Rida and said: "May I be your ransom, al-Jawad is sitting in the Hijr and refuses to rise." Imam al-Rida went to Imam al-Jawad and said: "Rise, O my beloved." Imam al-Jawad replied: "How can I rise when you bade farewell to the Ka'ba as if you will never return to it!" [For the third time] Imam al-Rida said: "Rise, O my beloved." Then Imam al-Jawad rose (*Fiqh al-Rida* 1985, 415).

From this narration, filled with patience and composure, it is clear that Imam al-Rida never treated Imam al-Jawad harshly, even when the latter persisted. Instead, through his gentle invitation to what was best, he taught his young son lessons of courtesy and civility. The repeated use of affectionate phrases such as "Rise, O my beloved" and his emphasis on patience and forbearance educated the child to respond to the resistance of others with dialogue and respect.

Furthermore, it is beyond doubt that every human being, regardless of age, perceives his or her own value and dignity, and desires to be respected by others. Even children and adolescents—though lacking full social and intellectual maturity—seek respect. Hence, the respectful behavior of parents and educators plays an effective role in their upbringing and development.

Majlisi narrates in *Bihar al-Anwar*¹⁰:

Imam al-Rida held great respect for al-Jawad and frequently relied on this effective method in his son's upbringing. Muhammad b. Abi 'Abbād, who was entrusted by al-Fadl b. Sahl with managing Imam al-Rida's correspondence, recounted: Imam al-Rida always addressed his noble son Muhammad with the *kunya*¹¹, saying, 'Abu Ja'far wrote to me such and such, and I wrote to Abu Ja'far such and such.' Although Imam

al-Jawad resided in Medina and was still only a child, Imam al-Rida showed him great respect, and the letters from Imam al-Jawad were answered with eloquence and beauty. (Majlisi 1983, 12: 456)

From the perspective of citizenship rights and the moral recommendations concerning children, Imam al-Rida's culture is a culture of love and respect. Imam al-Rida said: "Associate kindly with both the young and the old" (Nuri 1986, 8: 354). He also narrated from his forefathers that the Messenger of God said: "Five things I will never abandon until death: ... and [the fifth] greeting children so that it becomes a tradition after me" (Ibn Babawayh Qummi 1991, 54).

2.5. Teaching Friendship and Hope for the Future

Instilling hope in human beings and orienting them toward a desirable and prosperous life in the future is one of the prominent features of Islamic and Radawi teachings. Cultivating this spirit in children can help make their citizenship rights attainable in various domains and encourage them to strive courageously to achieve their entitlements. In this regard, the words and conduct of Imam al-Rida may be noted, as he described ten practical attributes that complete one's intellect:

The intellect of no Muslim is perfected until he possesses ten traits: people have hope for his goodness; others are safe from his harm; he considers a small act of kindness from others as great; he regards his own abundant goodness as small; he does not tire of meeting people's needs; he never wearies of seeking knowledge throughout his life; poverty in the way of God is more beloved to him than wealth; humiliation before God is dearer to him than honor before the enemies of God; obscurity is more desirable to him than fame; and the tenth—do you know what it is? It is that he does not see anyone except that he says: 'He is better and more pious than I am.'" (Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani 1984, 443)

Affection and its manifestations—such as friendship and love—form an essential part of this hopefulness and of a life characterized by good moral conduct. Similarly, Imam al-Rida's behavior reflects affection in other ways, such as maintaining many friends and interacting cheerfully within society. When asked, "What is the best comfort in this world?" he replied: "A spacious house and many friends" (Majlisi 1983, 71: 177).

In this connection, hope for the future and the cultivation of a spirit of expectation (*intizār*) are among the bright and promising aspects of Radawi culture, which also addresses the future rights of citizens. On various occasions, Imam al-Rida inspired his companions with thoughts of the future and faith in a brighter tomorrow, saying:

"The proof (*ḥujja*¹²), the *Qā'im*¹³, for whom expectation is maintained during his

occultation (*ghayba*) and who will be obeyed at his advent—if but a single day were to remain in the life of this world, God would prolong that day until he appears, filling the earth with justice just as it has been filled with oppression. (Ibn Babawayh Qummi 2005, 2: 372)

3. Conclusion

Citizenship rights in Islam possess distinctive features that set them apart from the notions of citizenship rights articulated in Western and secular frameworks. Reliance upon revealed teachings, the emphasis on divine unity and worship of God, spirituality, and the integration of ethics with human education together form a unique conception of citizenship rights. Although “citizenship rights” is a modern concept, identifying its elements in the Qur’an and hadith is not difficult. Emphasis upon justice, freedom, equality, and civic responsibilities can be found throughout the Qur’anic verses, the conduct of the Prophet of Islam, and the practice of the infallible Imams, including Imam al-Rida.

The present study has demonstrated that dignity-centeredness, the right to respect and affectionate treatment, the right to health and bodily well-being, attention to virtuous qualities and friendly, kind behavior, and the fostering of love, friendship, and hope for the future all permeate Imam al-Rida’s conduct. Accordingly, when a normative framework is founded upon religion, grounded in divine revelation, and derived from the words and actions of the Infallibles, it considers the rights of children comprehensively—from pregnancy and infancy to childhood, adolescence, and even adulthood. Such a framework can be regarded as a complete model of citizenship rights, one that may be employed in binding legal instruments and in Islamic declarations of citizenship rights concerning children.

From this perspective, children’s citizenship rights in Islam, as reflected in the tradition of Imam al-Rida, possess both theoretical and practical elements. Unlike international instruments, which tend to address such matters in general terms, the Radawi tradition presents them in concrete detail and through demonstrable practices.

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Notes

1. In Islamic jurisprudence and hadith studies, *sira* denotes the conduct of the Prophet Muhammad, Lady Fatima, and the Imams, which is considered an authoritative source for understanding religious norms. It is traditionally analyzed in three components: sayings (*qawl*), actions (*fi'l*), and tacit approvals (*taqrir*)—that is, what they said, what they did, and what they silently endorsed. This tripartite framework allows jurists to derive legal and ethical principles not only from explicit teachings but also from practical demonstrations and approvals of the infallibles.
2. An Islamic ritual performed on the seventh day after a child's birth, in which an animal (usually a sheep or goat) is sacrificed. The practice symbolizes gratitude for the child and is associated with seeking divine protection and blessings for the newborn.
3. Muhammad Hasan al-Najafi (d. 1849 CE) was a prominent Shi'i jurist of the nineteenth century. His

monumental work, *Jawahir al-Kalam fi Sharh Shara'i' al-Islam*, is among the most comprehensive commentaries in Imami jurisprudence and remains a central reference for later scholars.

4. Banān b. Nāfi' is mentioned in Shi'i biographical and historical sources as a transmitter of hadiths concerning the Imams. He is cited in narratives about the childhood of Imam al-Jawad and his interactions with al-Ma'mun, highlighting the precocious wisdom attributed to the Imam.

5. Al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–833 CE) was the seventh Abbasid caliph, noted for his political rivalry with his brother al-Amīn and for appointing Imam al-Rida as his crown prince. His reign is remembered both for its patronage of scholarship and for its tense relations with the Shi'i Imams.

6. Imam al-Jawad (d. 835 CE), also known as Imam al-Taqi, was the ninth Shi'i Imam and the son of Imam al-Rida. Noted for his early assumption of the Imamate, he was recognized as an Imam while still a child, and his life and teachings are often cited in discussions of precocious rationality and leadership in Shi'i thought.

7. All Qur'anic translations cited in this article are taken from *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (New York: HarperOne, 2015).

8. Ibrāhīm b. 'Abbās al-Sulami (d. 860 CE) was a scholar, poet, and court official during the Abbasid era. He is known in Shi'i sources as a transmitter of reports about Imam al-Rida, particularly regarding the Imam's personal conduct and character. His accounts are often cited to illustrate the Imam's humility, generosity, and ethical behavior within the household.

9. Umayya b. 'Ali is mentioned in Shi'i hadith and historical sources as a transmitter of narrations concerning Imam al-Rida and Imam al-Jawad. His narrations, particularly regarding the hajj journey of Imam al-Rida and episodes from the childhood of Imam al-Jawad, are often cited to illustrate the affectionate conduct of the Imam toward his son.

10. *Bihār al-Anwār* ("Seas of Lights") is the encyclopedic hadith collection compiled by the Shi'i scholar Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi (d. 1699 CE). Comprising over one hundred volumes, it gathers Qur'anic exegesis, narrations of the Prophet Muhammad, and hadiths concerning the Imams, and remains one of the most influential and frequently cited sources in Shi'i scholarship.

11. An honorific appellation in Arabic formed with "Abu" (father of) or "Umm" (mother of) followed by the name of a child, often the eldest son. Beyond indicating parentage, it functions as a mark of respect and esteem, and was traditionally used even for children or unmarried individuals to bestow dignity and social recognition.

12. In Shi'i thought, *hujja* ("proof") designates a divinely appointed authority who serves as God's conclusive proof over humanity. It is most often used as a title for the Imams, indicating their role as the ultimate guides and guarantors of divine guidance on earth.

13. *Al-Qā'im* ("the one who rises") is a messianic title in Shi'i Islam referring to the al-Mahdi, the twelfth Imam who, according to Shi'i belief, will reappear at the end of time to establish justice and eradicate oppression.