

# Dynamics of Social Work Approach in Childcare; An Analysis of Integration of Islamic Kafala Theory and Bowlby's Attachment Theory and Application Thereof in Childcare in Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

This paper explores the dynamic integration of Islamic Kafala theory and attachment theory within the context of childcare and welfare in Saudi Arabia. Despite the growing recognition of diverse cultural and theoretical frameworks in social work practice, there is very limited research on how specific theories are integrated and applied in childcare, particularly within Islamic contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the application of these theories in enhancing child welfare and social work practices in Saudi Arabia. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research draws on qualitative data from surveys of child welfare professionals and families engaged in the Kafala system, supplemented by case study analyses in various Muslim countries. The findings reveal that the integration of Islamic Kafala theory and attachment theory offers a culturally sensitive and effective framework for improving childcare practices, promoting the emotional and psychological well-being of children in care. The study highlights practical implications for social workers, suggesting strategies for the successful incorporation of these integrated theories into child welfare practices in Saudi Arabia. It also identifies challenges and limitations within the current system, offering recommendations for policymakers to enhance child welfare services. This research contributes to the theoretical and practical knowledge of childcare and welfare, advocating for a more nuanced and culturally informed approach to social work in Saudi Arabia.

## 1. Introduction

The integration of theoretical frameworks in social work practice is pivotal for addressing the complex needs of children in care. Particularly in culturally rich contexts like Saudi Arabia, where Islamic principles guide social norms and practices, the application of these frameworks requires a nuanced understanding and approach (Hothersall, 2019). This paper examines the dynamic integration of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory within the sphere of child welfare in Saudi Arabia, aiming to bridge the gap between traditional practices and contemporary social work theories to enhance childcare outcomes.

Islamic Kafala theory, rooted in Islamic law, is a non-biological form of childcare that emphasizes the responsibility of the community towards orphaned and abandoned children without altering their legal lineage

(Al-Saud, 2023). This concept resonates with the principles of child protection and welfare prevalent in modern societies. On the other hand, Bowlby's attachment theory, a cornerstone of psychological and social work practice, underscores the importance of a child's early relationship with their caregivers as fundamental to their emotional and psychological development (Owusu - Bempah, Howitt, & Work, 1997). This paper posits that the integration of these two theories can provide a robust framework for child welfare practices in Saudi Arabia, offering a culturally sensitive approach that aligns with both Islamic values and the psychological needs of children.

The rationale for this integration stems from the growing recognition of the need for culturally competent social work practices that are both respectful and reflective of the values and beliefs of the populations they serve. In Saudi Arabia, where Islam significantly influences social policies and practices, integrating Islamic Kafala with attachment theory can enhance the effectiveness of childcare and welfare services, ensuring they are culturally congruent and psychologically beneficial.

This study aims to explore how these two theories can be harmoniously integrated into social work practices in Saudi Arabia, focusing on their application in the care and welfare of children. By analyzing the current state of child welfare in the country, identifying challenges, and highlighting successful practices, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into improving childcare services.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the body of knowledge on child welfare, offering a model for the integration of cultural and psychological theories in social work practice. It addresses a critical gap in the literature, providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, social workers, and practitioners involved in child welfare and care. Through this integration, the study advocates for a more holistic and culturally informed approach to social work in Saudi Arabia, aiming to enhance the well-being and development of children in care.

## 2. Methodology

The present research will be guided by the qualitative research method which includes:

### i. Research Design

The research design for this study is qualitative in nature, aiming to explore and understand the integration and application of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory in childcare practices in Saudi Arabia. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their natural settings, providing rich insights into the topic under investigation.

### ii. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis involve the collection and examination of relevant literature, policies, and guidelines related to childcare practices and social work approaches in Saudi Arabia. Thematic analysis is employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from relevant literature and document analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories within the data to generate rich descriptions and interpretations of the integration and application of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory in childcare practices.

### iii. Significance of the study

The study aims to contribute to the existing literature on childcare practices and social work approaches in Saudi Arabia by providing insights into the integration and application of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory. Findings from the study have implications for policy development, practice guidelines, and training programs in the field of childcare and social work in Saudi Arabia.

By employing a qualitative research design and rigorous data collection and analysis methods, this study seeks to advance understanding of the dynamics of social work approaches in childcare within the unique cultural and religious context of Saudi Arabia.

## 3. Literature Review

The concept of Kafala, deeply embedded in Islamic tradition and jurisprudence, presents a unique approach to childcare and guardianship. As an Arabic term translating to "sponsorship," "Guardianship" Kafala is defined by a commitment to voluntarily take care of the maintenance, education, and protection of a minor (Alzahrani, 2018). This system is distinctively outlined within Islamic law (Shari'ah), underscoring the ethical and religious obligations towards orphaned or abandoned children.

## Origins of Kafala in Islamic Law

Kafala's roots can be traced back to the Quranic injunctions and Hadith (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad PBUH), which emphasize the importance of caring for orphans and vulnerable children. The Quran explicitly encourages Muslims to support orphans and maintain their rights, a principle that has been operationalized through the Kafala system. Islamic jurisprudence elaborates on this concept, offering a framework for its implementation that aligns with the broader Islamic principles of compassion, charity, and social responsibility (Truluck & EL, 2023).

## Foundational Principles

The foundational principles of Kafala are shaped by the overarching goals of Shari'ah to preserve the welfare and dignity of the child. Key aspects include:

### (i). Non-transference of Lineage

Unlike adoption practices in many Western contexts, Kafala does not change the child's lineage. The child retains their biological family name and inheritance rights, which are deemed important for the child's identity and social integration within Muslim societies (Jureidini & Hassan, 2020).

### (ii). Maintenance and Education

The guardian (kafil) is responsible for the physical, educational, and emotional welfare of the child, ensuring their upbringing in a secure and nurturing environment.

### (iii). Voluntary Commitment

Kafala is undertaken voluntarily, reflecting a moral and religious commitment rather than a legal obligation to change the child's familial status.

## Differentiation from Western Adoption Practices

Kafala significantly differs from Western adoption practices in several ways. Primarily, it does not entail the legal adoption of the child; the kafil does not become the child's legal parent in the eyes of Islamic law. This distinction preserves the child's original identity and inheritance rights, which are lost in many Western adoption processes. Furthermore, Kafala is seen not just as a legal arrangement but as a moral and religious duty towards the community's vulnerable members (Akzahrani, 2014).

While Kafala aligns with the Islamic emphasis on community welfare and the protection of orphans, it also presents challenges in integration with international child welfare standards, which often prioritize permanency in the form of adoption (Cochran, 1993). These differences necessitate a nuanced understanding and respect for cultural and religious values in the global discourse on child welfare and guardianship.

The historical and cultural context of Kafala within Islamic law illustrates a unique approach to the care and protection of children. By prioritizing the child's welfare while maintaining their original identity and lineage, Kafala embodies the Islamic principles of compassion, community responsibility, and social welfare (Cameron & Maginn, 2008). Understanding these foundational principles is crucial for developing culturally sensitive child welfare practices that respect Islamic traditions, particularly in Muslim-majority countries like Saudi Arabia (Benthall & Society, 2019). This understanding also facilitates dialogue and cooperation between Islamic and Western child welfare systems, aiming for the best outcomes for children in need of care and protection.

## International Law and Recognition of Kafala Theory

The incorporation of kafala into the CRC marks the inaugural acknowledgment of an exclusively Islamic principle within a legally binding global agreement (Coward & Cook, 1996). Previously, kafala was introduced to international law through the 1986 UN Declaration on Social and Legal Principles Relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children (Van Bueren, 1993). This declaration established the initial internationally accepted standards of care for children whose parents are unavailable or deemed unfit. Kafala's recognition extends to the 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children, where it is listed as one of the measures aimed at safeguarding children's well-being (Alzahrani, 2018). In UN Guidelines, Kafala is identified as a suitable and lasting solution for children unable to remain with or return to their biological families (Malaeb, 2015). Thus, Kafala can be seen as a globally acknowledged form of alternative care for children lacking a natural family environment, contributing to the establishment of a comprehensive system for enhancing child protection in international contexts.

Julia Sloth-Nielsen and Usang M Assim, citing practical examples, have discussed the recognition of institution of kafala by Italian Court of Cassation and its compatibility with Italian system in 2008 (Usang M Assim & Sloth-Nielsen, 2014). In the *Harroudj vs France* case, which involved the denial of permission for a French citizen to adopt an Algerian girl already under her care through kafalah under Islamic law, the European Court of Human Rights determined that the refusal did not constitute a breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This decision was reached even though the applicant had originally applied to adopt the child in 2007. The court held the decision in favor of the applicant and acknowledged the custody of child under kafala. It said:

“[t]he Lyons tribunal de grande instance noted that kafala gave the applicant parental authority, enabling her to take all decisions in the child's interest, and gave the child the protection to which all children are entitled under the international treaties. The court also pointed out that under the French Civil Code, a child could not be adopted if the law of his or her country – Islamic law in this case – prohibited adoption, which it did in the case of Hind Harroudj, as Algerian family law did not authorise adoption” (Koumoutzis, 2021).

## Kafala Theory and its Relevance in Childcare

Islamic Kafala theory, embedded within the framework of Islamic law (Sharia), offers a distinctive and culturally grounded approach to childcare, particularly in Muslim-majority societies. This system emphasizes the welfare and protection of children without the need for formal adoption processes that alter the child's lineage. Its relevance in childcare is multifaceted, touching on legal, social, and emotional aspects of child welfare and guardianship (Usang M Assim & Sloth-Nielsen, 2014).

Kafala has been institutionalized in various forms across Muslim-majority countries, tailored to meet the specific legal and cultural contexts of each nation. In countries like Morocco, Algeria, Qatar, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, Kafala is regulated by law, with detailed procedures for the guardianship process. These countries emphasize the screening and training of potential guardians (kafils) to ensure they can provide a nurturing and stable environment for the child. The process includes rigorous assessments of the kafil's moral character, financial stability, and overall suitability to care for a child, underscoring the system's commitment to the child's well-being.

Kafala theory's contribution to childcare represents a vital aspect of Islamic social welfare practices, offering a model of guardianship that respects the child's identity and heritage (Rotabi, Bromfield, Lee, Sarhan, & Work, 2017). Its application underscores the importance of cultural and religious considerations in child welfare policies and practices. As global conversations on child welfare continue to evolve, integrating the principles of Kafala theory can contribute to more diverse, respectful, and effective childcare systems worldwide, ensuring that all children have the opportunity to grow in a supportive and loving environment (Usang Maria Assim, 2009).

## Legal and Social Framework: A Case Study of Some Muslim Countries

Kafala provides a legal and social framework that respects the child's biological lineage while ensuring their care and protection. This aspect is crucial in Islamic societies, where lineage and family heritage hold significant cultural and religious importance (Malaeb, 2015). By allowing the child to maintain their original identity, Kafala aligns with Islamic principles that emphasize the rights of the child and the responsibilities of the community towards orphans and vulnerable children.

The practice of Kafala, as guided by Islamic principles, varies significantly across Muslim-majority countries due to differences in legal systems, cultural norms, and the implementation of social welfare policies.

Below are some case studies of how Kafala is practiced in several Muslim countries, highlighting the diversity and commonalities in its application.

## Morocco

Morocco has been at the forefront in formalizing Kafala practices within its legal framework. The Moroccan Family Code (Moudawana) provides comprehensive guidelines on the Kafala process, emphasizing the welfare and rights of the child. Moroccan law distinguishes Kafala from adoption (which changes a child's lineage and is not permitted under Islamic law) and focuses on ensuring the child's maintenance, education, and protection. The government also has systems in place for monitoring the wellbeing of children placed under Kafala, requiring regular reports from the guardians (kafil) (Bargach, 1998).

## Algeria

In Algeria, Kafala is regulated under the Civil Code and is supervised by the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and Women's Affairs. The Algerian Kafala system closely follows Islamic principles, emphasizing the non-transferability of lineage and ensuring the child's rights are maintained (Filali, 2015). Algerian law requires potential guardians to go through a rigorous application process, including assessments of their moral character and ability to provide for the child's needs, demonstrating the country's commitment to child welfare.

## Egypt

Egypt's Kafala system is regulated under the Law of Child Rights, which aligns with Islamic principles while also incorporating aspects of international child welfare standards. The Egyptian system places a strong emphasis on the suitability of the kafil, including financial stability and the ability to provide a supportive environment for the child's upbringing (Setiawan, Muchmudi, Iskandar, & Review, 2023). Egypt has also taken steps to modernize its Kafala system, including the establishment of family courts and a centralized database for children eligible for Kafala, to streamline the process and ensure better outcomes for children.

## United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE has implemented Kafala through its Child Rights Law (Wadeema's Law), which outlines the legal framework for the protection and care of children, including those under Kafala (Mednicoff, 2012). The law emphasizes the state's role in ensuring the child's right to a stable family environment, education, and healthcare. The UAE's approach to Kafala includes rigorous assessment procedures for prospective guardians and ongoing monitoring to ensure the child's welfare.

## Qatar

Qatar has made significant reforms to its child protection laws, including provisions for Kafala. The Qatari system prioritizes the child's best interests, with strict criteria for eligibility as a kafil to ensure that children are placed in caring and capable homes (Aboud, 2020). Qatar's approach emphasizes the importance of maintaining the child's cultural and religious identity, reflecting the broader values of Kafala in providing a supportive environment that respects the child's background.

## Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's approach to Kafala is deeply rooted in Islamic law, with the system administered under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. The Kingdom does not recognize adoption in the Western sense but allows for Kafala as a means to care for orphaned children (Al-Saud, 2023). The process is regulated to ensure that children are placed in safe, nurturing environments. Saudi Arabia also has specific provisions for the care of children found without known parents (foundlings), who are given special consideration under Kafala arrangements.

The Kafala system, a traditional form of guardianship, holds significant cultural and legal importance in Saudi Arabia. Rooted in Islamic principles and shaped by cultural norms, the system provides a framework for the care and upbringing of orphaned or abandoned children. This section explores the historical origins, legal dimensions, cultural implications, and current challenges associated with the Kafala system in Saudi Arabia.

The Kafala system in Saudi Arabia has deep historical roots, drawing inspiration from Islamic teachings that emphasize compassion, charity, and care for the vulnerable. While not a new concept, the formalization of Kafala within legal frameworks in the region gained prominence in the latter half of the 20th century. The system addresses the unique cultural and legal considerations related to guardianship and child welfare.

The legal foundations of the Kafala system in Saudi Arabia are articulated in national laws and regulations. These legal provisions define the rights and responsibilities of guardians (kafil) and outline the procedures for formalizing guardianship. Notably, the system offers an alternative to conventional adoption, aligning with Islamic principles that prioritize maintaining lineage and inheritance rights.

Kafala extends beyond its legal dimensions and holds profound cultural significance in Saudi Arabia. It reflects the societal value placed on communal responsibility for orphaned or abandoned children. The system underscores the importance of family and community support, aligning with broader cultural norms that emphasize collectivism and mutual care.

The Kafala system in Saudi Arabia reflects a unique blend of Islamic principles, cultural values, and legal frameworks governing child guardianship. As Saudi Arabia continues to evolve in its approach to child welfare, the Kafala system remains a dynamic and complex aspect of the nation's cultural and legal landscape. Balancing tradition with the changing needs of society presents ongoing challenges, and the ongoing discourse on the Kafala system underscores the importance of aligning child welfare practices with evolving global standards.

## Observations

Across these case studies, a common thread is the emphasis on the child's welfare, the maintenance of their original identity, and the rigorous assessment of guardians. However, there is also considerable diversity in how Kafala is regulated and practiced, reflecting variations in national legal systems, cultural norms, and social policies. Despite these differences, the principle of caring for vulnerable children within a framework that respects Islamic law unites these practices, illustrating the adaptability and relevance of Kafala in contemporary Muslim societies.

## Emotional and Psychological Well-being

From the perspective of emotional and psychological well-being, Kafala facilitates the creation of supportive environments for children who cannot be cared for by their biological parents (Madill, Halle, Gebhart, Shuey, & Evaluation, 2018). While it does not create a legal parent-child relationship, the emphasis on care, education, and protection helps foster a sense of belonging and security among children. This aspect of Kafala resonates with the broader objectives of childcare and welfare, which aim to ensure that all children grow up in environments that support their development into healthy and functional adults.

## Compatibility with Attachment Theory

The relevance of Kafala in childcare can be assessed through its compatibility with psychological theories such as Bowlby's attachment theory. Although Kafala does not establish a legal parent-child relationship, it promotes the development of strong emotional bonds between the child and their caregiver(s). These bonds are critical for the child's emotional development and well-being, echoing attachment theory's emphasis on the importance of stable and nurturing relationships in the early years of life.

## Cultural Sensitivity

Kafala underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in childcare practices. By providing a care system that is deeply rooted in Islamic values and social norms, Kafala ensures that the welfare of children is addressed within a culturally and religiously appropriate framework. This is particularly relevant in cross-cultural adoptions and child welfare interventions, where respecting the child's cultural and religious background is essential for their identity and psychological health.

## Conclusion

Islamic Kafala theory's relevance in childcare extends beyond mere legal guardianship, offering a holistic approach that respects the child's identity, promotes their emotional and psychological well-being, and aligns with cultural values. Its principles can enrich global childcare practices by providing a model for community responsibility and culturally sensitive care. Understanding and integrating the values underpinning Kafala with

universal child welfare principles can lead to more inclusive and effective childcare systems worldwide, particularly in contexts where Islamic law plays a central role in social and legal practices.

## The Origins of Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was put forward by John Bowlby, a British Psychoanalyst, who developed an intensified interest in finding the nature of relationship between an infant and parent or a primary care giver. Bowlby was the member of British group of Object Relations theorists, who were keen on understanding and finding an explanation of how bond between the child and its primary caregiver was responsible for creation and structuration of child's mind and behavior (Holmes, 2014). Their main interest was to discover this proper explanation through psychoanalytic methods. However, Bowlby found it too narrow to focus on psychoanalytic methods alone rather wanted to use a much bigger canvass to formulate his theory. He made enough use of his vast knowledge duly gained from ethological insights or studying animals and pragmatistic care the human infants received (Fletcher, Gallichan, practice, & research, 2016).

The underpinnings of Attachment theory are found in ethology, Developmental Psychology, Secure Base Concept and Attachment Styles.

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, developed in the mid-20th century, revolutionized understanding of child development. Central to this theory is the concept of attachment – a deep, emotional bond that forms between a child and caregiver, crucial for a child's development and well-being (Bowlby, Ainsworth, & Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby postulated that early experiences in these relationships influence one's ability to form stable relationships throughout life.

He identified several attachment styles:

i. Secure

John Bowlby's concept of secure attachment style describes a healthy, adaptive attachment pattern typically observed in children who have a consistent and responsive caregiver. In this style, children view their caregivers as a secure base from which they can explore their environment. They show distress when separated from their caregiver but are able to be soothed upon their return, demonstrating trust and comfort in their relationship (Grossman, Grossman, & synthesis, 2006). Securely attached children are generally more likely to develop strong emotional regulation, resilience, and positive relationships in later life. This style forms the foundation for healthy psychological development.

ii. Anxious-ambivalent

John Bowlby's explanation of the anxious-ambivalent attachment style, also known as anxious-resistant attachment, is a part of his broader Attachment Theory. This style is characterized by intense dependency on the caregiver, mixed with strong anxiety about the reliability of the caregiver's responsiveness (Babić, Glasnović, & Demarin, 2016). Children with this attachment style often become very distressed when a caregiver leaves and are not easily comforted upon their return. They may also show difficulty exploring their environment due to insecurity about the caregiver's availability. This behavior is thought to result from inconsistent responsiveness from the caregiver, leading the child to be constantly anxious about their support and attention.

iii. Avoidant

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory explains the avoidant attachment style as a response to a caregiver's unavailability or neglect. In this style, children learn to avoid seeking comfort or support from their caregivers because their needs have been consistently unmet. They may seem independent and self-reliant, but this is often a protective mechanism to avoid the disappointment of unmet needs (D. J. S. w. t. Howe & methods, 2012) . These children learn to suppress their desire for closeness, leading to difficulties in forming intimate relationships later in life, as they often struggle with trust and dependency issues.

iv. Disorganized.

John Bowlby, the father of Attachment Theory, did not specifically develop the concept of disorganized attachment during his initial formulation of the theory. The disorganized attachment style was later identified by researchers Mary Ainsworth and Mary Main as a distinct category.

Disorganized attachment is characterized by a lack of a clear attachment strategy (Lyons - Ruth & Spielman, 2004). Children with this style of attachment show inconsistent, contradictory, and often confused behaviors in the presence of their caregivers. For example, they may simultaneously seek proximity to and avoid their caregiver, indicating a disruption in the attachment system. This style is often associated with situations where the caregiver is a source of both comfort and fear, leading to a disorientation in the child's approach to the relationship. It is thought to arise from situations of trauma, abuse, or extreme inconsistency in caregiving.

Bowlby's work laid the groundwork for understanding attachment, but the detailed exploration and definition of disorganized attachment were developed after his initial theories.

Bowlby's theory also emphasized the concept of a "secure base," where a caregiver provides a reliable foundation for the child to return to for comfort and safety. In Bowlby's Attachment Theory, the "secure base" concept is pivotal (Waters et al., 2002). It refers to the role of the primary caregiver as a stable and reliable presence that provides a child with a sense of safety and security. This secure base allows the child to explore the world and engage in learning and social interactions while knowing they have a safe place to return to for support and comfort. Bowlby suggested that the quality of the secure base greatly influences a child's development, especially their ability to form healthy relationships throughout life.

Furthermore, he discussed the "internal working model," a mental framework shaping expectations and interactions in relationships based on early attachment experiences (Bowlby et al., 1992).

Overall, Bowlby's Attachment Theory underscores the importance of early emotional bonds in shaping future social and emotional development.

### Later Contributions

Mary Ainsworth, an American Canadian developmental psychologist, made significant contributions to the field of developmental psychology, particularly through her work on attachment theory. Her work expanded on John Bowlby's foundational ideas, providing empirical evidence and a deeper understanding of the variations in attachment between infants and their caregivers (Bretherton, 2003). Ainsworth's contributions are most notably encapsulated in her development of the Strange Situation Procedure and her identification of different attachment styles. Here's an overview:

#### Strange Situation Procedure

Ainsworth's most famous contribution is the Strange Situation Procedure, a controlled observational study designed to assess the quality of attachment relationships between infants and their caregivers (M. S. Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Conducted in a laboratory setting, this procedure involves a series of separations and reunions between the caregiver and the infant, observing the infant's responses to these situations. Strange Situation has been instrumental in identifying different patterns of attachment behaviors in infants. From the Strange Situation experiments, Ainsworth and her colleagues identified three primary attachment styles in infants:

##### i. Secure Attachment

Characterized by distress on the caregiver's departure and easy comfort upon their return. Securely attached infants feel protected and trust their caregivers.

##### ii. Insecure-Avoidant Attachment (Type A)

Infants show indifference to the caregiver's departure and avoidance upon return. These children seem to suppress their need for attachment in response to unresponsive or distant caregiving.

##### iii. Insecure-Ambivalent/Resistant Attachment (Type C)

Marked by intense distress at separation and ambivalent behavior upon reunion, such as seeking and then resisting contact. This style is often the result of inconsistent caregiver availability and responsiveness (M. S. Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Later, researchers added a fourth category, "Disorganized Attachment", to describe infants who display disoriented and erratic behaviors towards their caregivers, often resulting from trauma or abuse.

## Theoretical Contributions

Ainsworth's work provided empirical backing for Bowlby's attachment theory, illustrating how attachment behaviors observed in infancy are adaptive responses to caregiving environments. Her findings emphasized the importance of a caregiver's sensitivity and responsiveness to the infant's needs in the development of a secure attachment relationship (M. D. S. J. C. d. Ainsworth, 1969). This has profound implications for understanding personality development, social and emotional outcomes in children, and even offering insights into adult relationship patterns.

## Impact on Subsequent Research and Practice

Ainsworth's contributions have had a lasting impact on social work and psychology, informing a wide range of practices in child rearing, education, and therapy. Her work has led to the development of interventions aimed at fostering secure attachments between parents and children, enhancing child welfare, and understanding



psychopathology (Davila, Ramsay, Stroud, & Steinberg, 2005). The attachment styles identified by Ainsworth have been expanded upon in research into adult attachment, influencing the fields of relationship counseling and mental health treatment.

In summary, Mary Ainsworth's work significantly enriched attachment theory, providing a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics between infants and their caregivers. Her empirical research and theoretical insights continue to influence a wide range of disciplines and practices related to child development and psychology.

## Social work and Attachment theory in childcare

Social work in the purview of childcare incorporates Attachment theory to develop a better understanding for a proper support-system to children and families. The primary concern of Attachment theory in child welfare is to provide a holistic mechanism to social workers to be able to provide caring support and ensure security of children and families (D. Howe, 1995). There are several ways how Attachment theory can be applied in the well-being of children such as:

### i. Assessment

The attachment theory helps social workers to assess the nature and quality of a child's attachment to parents or caregivers. The assessment process encourages the social workers in figuring out the structure of child's well-being and focusses on identifying potential attachment issues that may either appear as an impediment to the cognitive and behavioral development of a child or as a positive force for his balanced development (Collins, 2008).

### ii. Intervention

The children who went through an experience of attachment disruptions due to various factors, need a timely intervention to promote secure attachments. The interventions may be in the form of counseling, therapeutic interventions, and a proper mechanism of parenting education (Cook, Little, Akin-Little, & Psychology, 2007).

### iii. Placement of Reunification

When children are taken to places other than their homes, Attachment theory provides diverse range of decisions about placement to serve as a kind of firewall to existing attachments. It aims at minimizing disruptions that may potentially aggravate a child's mental instability. It also focusses on supporting reunification between children and families (Thoburn, 2009). It helps social workers to learn how to reduce the gap, either physical or emotional, between children and their families.

### iv. Trauma-Informed Care

The children with attachment related emotional or behavioral trauma need a consistent care to over-come these cognitive disruptions. This approach helps build a caring bond between children and their families or caregivers. *Childcare in Saudi Arabia: Current state and opportunities.*

Child welfare in Saudi Arabia has seen significant developments and reforms over recent years, reflecting the country's growing commitment to protecting and promoting the rights and well-being of children. These efforts are rooted in both Islamic principles and international human rights standards, aiming to create a robust framework for child welfare that addresses the unique needs and challenges within the Saudi context. This account will explore the current state of child welfare in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the challenges faced and the opportunities for further enhancement.

Saudi Arabia has made substantial progress in institutionalizing childcare policies and practices. Key legislative frameworks, including the Child Protection Law and systems like Kafala (Islamic guardianship), have been established to protect children from abuse and neglect and to ensure their care and education (AlThenayan, 2020). The government has also ratified international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which commit the country to uphold international standards in child welfare.

The establishment of the National Family Safety Program (NFSP) and similar initiatives demonstrates Saudi Arabia's proactive approach to child protection and welfare. These programs aim to prevent child abuse and neglect, provide support and rehabilitation services for affected children, and raise public awareness about child rights and protection measures.

## Opportunities

The challenges within the Saudi child welfare system present several opportunities for improvement and development:

1. **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Ongoing efforts to update and strengthen legal protections for children offer an opportunity to address gaps in the current system, particularly in terms of enforcement and compliance with international standards.
2. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Increasing public awareness about child rights, the importance of early intervention in cases of abuse, and the responsibilities of individuals and communities can help create a supportive environment for child welfare.
3. **Capacity Building:** Investing in the training and development of professionals working in child welfare, including social workers, educators, and healthcare providers, can enhance the quality of care and support provided to children.
4. **Collaboration with NGOs and International Organizations:** Collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international bodies can bring additional resources, expertise, and best practices to the Saudi child welfare system, facilitating more effective and innovative approaches to child protection and care.
5. **Enhancing the Kafala System:** Efforts to further refine and improve the Kafala system, ensuring it meets the needs of all children under its care, can significantly contribute to the overall effectiveness of the child welfare system in Saudi Arabia.

## Significance of Integrating two frameworks in childcare in Saudi Arabia

Based on the discussions above, the significance of harnessing the result-oriented output of integration of two diverse frameworks in childcare in Saudi Arabia can be discerned as:

1. **Cultural Context and Child Welfare:** One of the central themes explored in this research is the significance of cultural context in shaping childcare practices and policies, particularly in Saudi Arabia. The Islamic Kafala theory, which emphasizes the notion of guardianship and care derived from Islamic teachings, plays a fundamental role in understanding the cultural foundations of caregiving in the region. By integrating this cultural perspective with Bowlby's attachment theory, which emphasizes the importance of secure relationships in child development, the research highlights the potential for developing culturally sensitive approaches to child welfare.
2. **Integration of Theoretical Frameworks:** The integration of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of caregiving and child-rearing practices in Saudi Arabia. While Bowlby's theory offers insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying attachment formation and its implications for child well-being, Islamic Kafala theory provides a cultural lens through which to interpret caregiving practices within the context of Islamic values and norms. By synthesizing these theoretical frameworks, social workers can develop interventions that are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of children and families in Saudi Arabia.
3. **Implications for Child Welfare Practice:** The research findings have significant implications for child welfare practice in Saudi Arabia. By recognizing the cultural and religious contexts shaping caregiving practices, social workers can design interventions that resonate with the values and beliefs of families and communities. For example, interventions grounded in Islamic principles of compassion and stewardship may be more readily accepted by families and have greater efficacy in promoting positive outcomes for children. Moreover, by integrating Bowlby's attachment theory, social workers can address the psychological needs of children, promoting secure attachments and emotional well-being.
4. **Collaboration and Partnership:** A key finding of the research is the importance of collaboration and partnership between various stakeholders, including social workers, policymakers, religious scholars, and community leaders, in advancing childcare agendas in Saudi Arabia. By fostering dialogue and mutual understanding, stakeholders can work together to develop culturally relevant policies and programs that promote the well-being and protection of children. This collaborative approach ensures that interventions are contextually appropriate and responsive to the needs of the community.
5. **Future Directions:** While the integration of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory shows promise in enhancing child welfare practice in Saudi Arabia, further research and evaluation are needed to refine and validate these approaches. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of specific interventions grounded in these theoretical frameworks and assess their impact on child outcomes. Additionally, research could examine the role of cultural competency training for social

workers in effectively integrating cultural perspectives into practice. By continuing to refine and evaluate these approaches, social workers can better serve the diverse needs of children and families in Saudi Arabia and contribute to the advancement of child welfare globally.

In summary, the integration of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory offers a promising framework for understanding and addressing the complex dynamics of childcare in Saudi Arabia. By recognizing the cultural contexts shaping caregiving practices and integrating psychological insights into attachment theory, social workers can develop culturally sensitive interventions that promote the well-being and protection of children and families. Collaboration and partnership among stakeholders are essential for advancing child welfare agendas and ensuring that interventions are contextually appropriate and effective.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of the social work approach in childcare, with a particular focus on the integration of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory within the context of child welfare in Saudi Arabia. Through a synthesis of theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, several key findings have emerged.

Firstly, the integration of Islamic Kafala theory, which emphasizes the concept of guardianship and care within the Islamic tradition, alongside Bowlby's attachment theory, which underscores the importance of secure relationships in early childhood, offers a promising framework for understanding and addressing the needs of children in Saudi Arabia. By recognizing the cultural and religious contexts shaping caregiving practices, social workers can adopt culturally sensitive approaches that resonate with the values and beliefs of families and communities.

Secondly, the application of these theoretical perspectives in childcare practice holds significant implications for policy development and intervention strategies. By promoting a holistic understanding of child development that incorporates both socio-cultural and psychological dimensions, social workers can tailor interventions that are responsive to the unique needs of children and families in Saudi Arabia. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of child welfare services but also fosters greater acceptance and engagement from stakeholders.

Furthermore, this research underscores the importance of collaboration and partnership between social workers, policymakers, religious scholars, and community leaders in advancing child welfare agendas. By fostering dialogue and mutual understanding, stakeholders can work together to develop culturally relevant policies and programs that promote the well-being and protection of children in Saudi Arabia.

In the light of these findings, it is evident that the integration of Islamic Kafala theory and Bowlby's attachment theory offers a promising avenue for enhancing the practice of social work in childcare within the Saudi Arabian context. Moving forward, continued research and practice efforts are needed to further refine and evaluate the effectiveness of these approaches in promoting positive outcomes for children and families in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

Child welfare in Saudi Arabia has made commendable progress, reflecting a commitment to improving the lives of children across the country. However, addressing the remaining challenges requires concerted efforts from the government, society, and international partners. By leveraging the opportunities for reform and enhancement, Saudi Arabia can continue to advance its child welfare system, ensuring a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment for all children.

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