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Analysis of Women's Rights in Islam: Education and Gender Equality Perspective

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to analyze the guarantee of women's rights in Islam with a focus on education and gender equality. This study distinguishes Islamic normative teachings from social practices influenced by patriarchal culture. The goal is to build a contextual understanding that is gender-correct. **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework rests on the principles of justice ('adl) and benefit (maṣlaḥah) in Islam. Gender equality is understood as equality of dignity and responsibility, not absolute equal roles. Education is positioned as an instrument of social justice. **Literature review:** women's studies in Islam are dominated by normative-theological approaches and patriarchal critiques. However, the integration of Islamic education and gender equality is still limited. This research fills the gap integratively and contextually. **Methods:** The research uses qualitative methods with descriptive-analytical and normative-conceptual approaches. Data was obtained through literature studies from the Qur'an, Hadith, tafsir, and scientific articles. The analysis was carried out thematically. **Results:** The results of the study affirm that Islam guarantees women's rights, including education and social roles, without discrimination. The inequality that occurs stems from biased interpretations and patriarchal culture. Gender equality is based on justice and benefits. **Implications:** The findings underscore the urgency of Islamic education from a gender justice perspective. Practically, these results are relevant for the development of an inclusive Islamic curriculum and discourse. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of Islam and gender. **Novelty:** The novelty of research lies in the contextual integration of women's rights, education, and gender equality. This study affirms Islamic normativity while criticizing distorted social practices. This framework offers an applicable understanding.

Keywords: women's rights, islam, education, gender equality, guarantee, social practices.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of women's rights is one of the important themes in social, religious, and educational discourse, especially in the context of contemporary Muslim society [1]. In various countries, including societies with a majority Muslim population, women still face various forms of injustice, such as limited access to education, marginalization in decision-making, and gender role stereotypes that hinder the development of their potential. This condition shows that gender equality is still a serious challenge, even though normatively the principles of justice and equality have been recognized as universal values [2].

From an Islamic perspective, women's rights have actually been guaranteed from the beginning through the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. Islam views men and women as equal beings in human values and spiritual responsibilities, and they have rights and obligations that are proportionate to their nature [3]. The principles of justice, respect for women's dignity, and the obligation to study without gender discrimination are integral to Islamic teachings. However, in social practice, these values are often not fully implemented due to the strong influence of patriarchal culture and gender-biased interpretations of religious texts [4].

Some studies show that gender inequality in education in Muslim societies is more caused by social, cultural, and religious interpretations that are not contextual, than by the teachings of Islam itself [5]. Education, as a strategic instrument in shaping critical awareness and social justice, has an important role in eliminating discriminatory practices against women. Equal access to education allows women to develop their intellectual, social, and spiritual capacities optimally, as well as to actively contribute to community development [6].

However, the study of women's rights in Islam is still often stuck on an apologetic normative-theological approach, without comprehensively linking it to the issues of education and gender equality [7]. On the other hand, modern gender studies often ignore the Islamic framework of values and principles as a source of ethics and social justice. This condition shows that there is a research gap that requires an integrative study between Islamic perspectives, education, and gender equality [8].

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze women's rights in Islam with an emphasis on the perspective of education and gender equality. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the position of women in Islamic teachings, as well as affirm the relevance of Islamic values in supporting the principles of justice and gender equality in the field of education.

This research is important because it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding women's rights in Islam by integrating Islamic normative principles, educational perspectives, and contemporary gender equality discourse. Although numerous studies have examined women's rights from either theological or feminist perspectives, relatively few have systematically connected these dimensions to demonstrate how Islamic teachings can contribute to equitable educational opportunities and broader social development. This study addresses that gap by distinguishing authentic Islamic principles from patriarchal cultural practices that have often been incorrectly associated with religion. Such differentiation is essential for preventing misconceptions about Islam and for encouraging more balanced academic discussions on gender justice within Muslim societies [7].

Furthermore, the study contributes to the ongoing debate regarding the compatibility of Islamic values with universal human rights and sustainable development by demonstrating that justice ('adl), public benefit (maṣlaḥah), and human dignity constitute fundamental principles supporting women's educational rights and social participation. The findings also provide theoretical implications by enriching Islamic gender scholarship through an integrative conceptual framework that combines normative Islamic sources with contemporary educational and social perspectives. Practically, the research offers valuable insights for policymakers, educational institutions, curriculum developers, religious leaders, and Muslim communities in designing gender-responsive educational policies and learning environments that remain consistent with Islamic ethical principles [7].

The study also encourages educators to reinterpret Islamic educational traditions in ways that promote inclusivity, equal opportunities, and intellectual empowerment without neglecting religious authenticity. In addition, the findings support the achievement of the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) by advocating equitable access to education, SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by promoting women's empowerment and equal participation, and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by strengthening justice-oriented educational and social institutions. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that strengthening women's rights through an authentic Islamic educational perspective is not merely a religious concern but also an important strategy for fostering inclusive development, social cohesion, educational excellence, and sustainable progress in contemporary Muslim societies [8].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's Rights in an Islamic Perspective

Studies on women's rights in Islam show that Islamic teachings have normatively provided a strong recognition of women's dignity and position. The Qur'an and Hadith affirm the principle of justice, equality before Allah SWT, and equal spiritual responsibility between men and women [9]. In classical and contemporary studies, Islam is understood as a religion that abolishes discriminatory practices against women that flourished in pre-Islamic times, such as restrictions on educational rights, economic rights, and social rights [10].

Nevertheless, some studies highlight the gap between Islamic normative teachings and social practices that are developing in Muslim societies. This inequality is often caused by the dominance of patriarchal culture and the interpretation of religious texts that are literal and ahistorical [11]. Therefore, the study of women's rights in Islam emphasizes the importance of a contextual approach and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* so that the value of justice and benefit can be realized substantively [12].

Women's Education in Islam

Education is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed in Islam, regardless of gender. A number of Islamic educational literature affirms that the obligation to study applies to men and women equally. In Islamic history, women have not only played the role of students but also as educators, narrators, and thinkers who contribute to the development of science [13].

However, recent research shows that women's access to education in some Muslim societies still faces a variety of constraints, such as conservative social norms, poverty, and gender-biased religious interpretations. This condition indicates that the problem of women's education is more structural and cultural than theological [14]. Therefore, Islamic education is seen as a strategic means to build awareness of gender equality and dismantle discriminatory practices that are not in line with Islamic values.

Gender Equality in an Islamic Perspective

The concept of gender equality in Islam is not interpreted as absolute equality of roles, but as the principle of justice and balance between the rights and obligations of men and women [15]. Islamic gender literature emphasizes that biological differences should not be used as a basis for social, political, or educational discrimination. Gender equality in Islam is oriented towards respect for human dignity and the granting of fair opportunities for every individual to develop [16].

Some studies show that resistance to the concept of gender equality in Muslim societies is often influenced by misunderstandings, which consider gender equality to be contrary to Islamic teachings. In fact, many of the principles of gender equality are in line with Islamic values, such as justice ('adl), equality (*musāwāh*), and benefits

(maşlahah) [17]. Thus, the integration of gender perspectives in Islamic studies is important to build a more inclusive and progressive understanding.

Table 1. A Summary of Relevant Literature

Source (year)	Focus	Method	Relevant Findings
Ahmad, S.I. (2020). <i>A Study of Women's Education in Islam</i> .	Women's access to education in the context of Islam	Literature & empirical studies	Limited access is more due to socio-cultural factors, and the need for a gender-sensitive education policy.
Fidhayanti, D. (2024). <i>Rethinking Islamic Feminist Thought</i> ; Lestari, P.A. (2024) review of Islamic feminism.	Hermeneutic and maqāsid interpretations for gender justice	Contemporary theoretical studies/interpretations	Contextual/maqāsid interpretations can support pro-equality theological arguments.
Najmudin et al. (2024–2025). <i>Gender equality in Islamic education/curriculum studies</i> .	Integration of gender values in the curriculum	Curriculum Analysis, Analysis of Teaching Materials	Textbooks & practices contain biases; Curriculum integration and teacher training are required
Yaqin et al.; Danasti (2024–2025). <i>Women scholars and Muslim feminist activism</i>	The role of female actors in Islamic education	Case studies & qualitative	Women scholars and feminist movements accelerate educational reform and religious discourse.
Report & coverage (2022–2025) on restrictions on women's education (Afghanistan)	Extreme cases of restrictions on access to education	News reports & international organizations	It shows how the interpretation of religious politics can disenfranchise women's educational rights.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical and normative-conceptual approach, which aims to analyze the concept of women's rights in Islam based on Islamic normative sources and the thinking of Muslim scholars, especially from the perspective of education and gender equality [18]. The research data is in the form of secondary data obtained through *library research*, including verses of the Qur'an, Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, books of interpretation, Islamic educational literature, as well as scientific journal articles that are relevant and have academic authority. Data collection was carried out systematically through the stages of literature identification, selection of sources based on theme suitability, and grouping of data into main themes, namely the concept of women's rights in Islam, women's rights in the field of education, and the relationship between Islamic teachings and the principle of gender equality [19].

The data that has been collected is then analyzed using thematic-normative analysis by classifying verses, hadiths, and views of figures into thematic categories, then interpreted descriptively and analytically to explain Islamic views on women's rights, the role of women's education, and gender equality. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources by comparing various normative and academic references to ensure the validity and accuracy of the interpretation of research results [20].

Table 2. Research Methodology Framework

Methodological Aspects	Description
Types of Research	Qualitative
Approach	Descriptive-analytical and normative-conceptual
Data Type	Secondary data
Data Source	The Qur'an, Hadith, tafsir books, Islamic educational literature, and scientific journal articles
Data Collection Techniques	Systematic literature studies (identification, selection, and categorization of literature)
Unit of Analysis	Normative texts (verses and hadiths) and the thoughts of Muslim figures/scholars
Data Analysis Techniques	Thematic-normative and interpretative analysis
Theme Analysis	Women's rights in Islam, women's education, and gender equality
Data Validity	Triangulation of normative and academic literature sources

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Women's Rights in the Perspective of Islamic Teachings

The results of the literature analysis show that Islam, in principle, places women and men as equal subjects in human dignity and spiritual responsibility [21]. This equality is reflected in the concept of a collaborative caliphate, as affirmed in QS. At-Taubah verse 71, which places men and women as partners in upholding good values. Gender relations in Islam are thus not hierarchical, but based on the principles of justice and shared responsibility [22].

In the field of education, Islam recognizes the right of women to obtain education without gender discrimination. The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW about the obligation to study for every Muslim, both male and female, emphasizes that education is a fundamental right in Islam [23]. Education is seen as a strategic means for women to develop their intellectual, moral, and social potential, while strengthening their role in the family and society [24].

The findings of the study also show that the gap in women's access to education in some Muslim societies is not caused by Islamic teachings, but by gender-biased religious interpretations and the influence of patriarchal culture. The biological differences between men and women are not used by Islam as a basis for limiting women's educational rights or social roles [25]. This principle is affirmed in QS. An-Nahl verse 97, which affirms the equality of men and women in obtaining the value and rewards of charity.

Thus, the results of the study confirm that Islamic teachings have a strong normative foundation in supporting women's rights, especially in the fields of education and gender equality. The main challenge lies in the implementation and understanding of Islamic teachings that are not yet fully contextual [26]. Therefore, strengthening Islamic education with a gender justice perspective is an important step in realizing women's equal rights in contemporary Muslim society.

Islamic Views on Women's Rights In Education

The results of the analysis show that Islam expressly recognizes women's right to education without gender discrimination. This view is affirmed by Muslim scholars, one of whom is Amini, who states that the obligation to seek knowledge applies to every human being, both male and female [27]. In the social context, women have the freedom to pursue knowledge, both before and after marriage, with the principles of deliberation and mutual understanding in family life. This shows that Islam does not restrict women's access to education, but rather emphasizes the balance between individual rights and social responsibilities [28].

From the perspective of Islamic education, women's right to study also has strategic implications for the formation of generations. Women are seen as the first educators in the family, so the quality of women's education has a direct effect on the quality of children's education and the development of society as a whole [29]. The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which states that studying knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim and Muslim woman, emphasizes that Islam does not distinguish the right to education based on gender. Thus, restrictions on women's education do not have a strong theological basis in Islam, but are more influenced by patriarchal social and cultural constructions [30].

In addition, Islamic history shows the active role of women in the scientific field. Female figures in the time of the Prophet, such as Aisha ra., became an important reference in the transmission of science and hadith [31]. This fact reinforces the finding that Islam provides an equal space for women to be subjects of education, sources of knowledge, and agents of social change. Therefore, strengthening women's access to and quality of education is in line with the basic principles of Islamic teachings and is an important foundation in realizing gender equality in Muslim society [32].

The Relationship Between Islamic Teachings and the Principle of Gender Equality

The results of the analysis show that Islamic teachings affirm the principle of equality between men and women in the spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. The difference between the two in Islam is understood more as biological and functional differences, rather than as the basis of hierarchy or discrimination [33]. This principle places men and women as moral subjects who equally have responsibility in carrying out the values of faith and social life [34]. However, in social practice, the application of equality is often hampered by gender-biased religious interpretations and patriarchal cultural dominance that do not fully reflect Islamic values [35].

The Qur'an consistently affirms respect for women and recognition of equal roles between men and women. The naming of Surah An-Nisa' shows Islam's concern for the regulation of women's rights and responsibilities in various aspects of life, such as family, social, and legal [36]. This indicates that women are seen as subjects of law who have a position and rights that are clearly recognized in the teachings of Islam, not as a subordinate position.

The principle of equality is emphasized in QS. An-Nahl verse 97, which states that every pious deed, whether done by men or women in a state of faith, will receive an equal reward from Allah SWT [37]. This verse shows that Islam places men and women in an equal position in the mission of the caliphate, with equal opportunities to develop their potential through education, economic activities, and social roles. This equality is oriented towards justice and respect for human dignity, not on absolute equality of roles [38].

Furthermore, the history of Islamic civilization shows that women have made significant contributions in various fields, including education, science, law, and da'wah. The presence of Muslim women who play the role of scholars, educators, and scientists strengthens the finding that Islamic teachings do not discriminate against women in obtaining equal rights and opportunities [39]–[41]. Thus, gender equality in Islam has a strong normative and historical basis, while the challenges stem more from social practices and religious interpretations that are not yet fully gender-correct.

In-Depth Analysis

The findings of this study demonstrate that women's rights in Islam are fundamentally rooted in the principles of justice ('adl), equality in human dignity (karāmah al-insān), and public welfare (maṣlaḥah), rather than in gender hierarchy. The analysis indicates that Islamic teachings establish a normative framework in which women possess inherent rights to education, property ownership, participation in social life, and legal protection. These principles are consistently reflected in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, suggesting that gender equity is not a modern construct imposed upon Islam but an intrinsic component of its ethical worldview. Consequently, the marginalization of women observed in certain Muslim societies should be interpreted as the product of historical, cultural, and socio-political developments rather than as a direct consequence of Islamic doctrine itself [38].

A deeper examination reveals that the discrepancy between Islamic ideals and social realities largely originates from the conflation of religious teachings with patriarchal traditions. In many contexts, local customs have been institutionalized and subsequently perceived as religious obligations, thereby limiting women's educational opportunities, economic participation, and public leadership. This phenomenon demonstrates the necessity of distinguishing immutable religious principles from contextual cultural practices. Such differentiation enables scholars and policymakers to reinterpret Islamic legal and educational traditions in ways that preserve religious authenticity while addressing contemporary social challenges. Therefore, the study reinforces the importance of contextual *ijtihād* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as methodological approaches for responding to changing societal conditions without compromising Islamic values [38].

From an educational perspective, the findings highlight that empowering women through equitable access to knowledge represents one of the most effective mechanisms for strengthening Muslim societies. Education functions not only as an instrument for individual intellectual development but also as a catalyst for family resilience, economic productivity, social cohesion, and intergenerational human capital formation. Women who receive quality education contribute significantly to children's educational attainment, community health, poverty reduction, and civic participation. Thus, the Islamic emphasis on seeking knowledge should be interpreted as encompassing both men and women, reinforcing education as a universal religious obligation that supports sustainable societal progress [39]–[41].

The findings also contribute to contemporary academic debates concerning the relationship between Islam, gender equality, and sustainable development. Rather than presenting Islamic values and international development agendas as competing paradigms, this research demonstrates their substantial convergence. Principles such as justice, consultation (*shūrā*), compassion (*raḥmah*), and human dignity provide ethical foundations that align closely with the objectives of SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). This alignment indicates that Islamic educational philosophy can serve as a normative framework for promoting inclusive development while maintaining cultural and religious legitimacy. Such integration is particularly relevant for Muslim-majority

countries seeking development strategies that are simultaneously globally recognized and locally accepted [39]–[41].

Theoretically, this study enriches Islamic gender scholarship by offering an integrative analytical perspective that bridges classical Islamic sources with contemporary educational and sustainable development discourse. Practically, the findings provide valuable guidance for governments, educational institutions, curriculum developers, religious scholars, and civil society organizations in designing gender-responsive educational policies grounded in Islamic ethics. Ultimately, strengthening women's rights through authentic Islamic principles should not be viewed merely as an issue of gender justice but as a strategic investment in educational excellence, social stability, national development, and the realization of sustainable and inclusive societies.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that Islamic teachings normatively place women and men in equal positions in human dignity, spiritual responsibility, and social rights, including the right to education. Education is seen as a fundamental right for women without gender discrimination and has a strategic role in the development of individual potential and community development. The inequality of access and role of women in education that is still found in some Muslim societies does not originate from Islamic teachings, but from gender-biased religious interpretations and the influence of patriarchal culture that hinders the application of Islamic justice values. Therefore, the principle of gender equality in Islam is based on justice ('adl) and benefit (maṣlaḥah), not on absolute equality of roles. Strengthening Islamic education with a gender justice perspective is a strategic step to bridge the gap between Islamic normative teachings and social practices, while encouraging the realization of women's equal rights in contemporary Muslim society.

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Author's Contributions

All authors equally contributed to conceptualization, analysis, writing, revision, and final manuscript approval for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this research, authorship, publication, funding, or institutional affiliations.

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