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Islam and Gender Consciousness: Analysis and Application in Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Objective: This article aims to analyze the concept of gender consciousness from an Islamic perspective and its relevance in contemporary society. This study focuses on the principles of justice, spiritual equality, and complementary gender roles. The ultimate goal is to formulate a moderate, contextual, and applicable framework for Islamic gender consciousness. **Theoretical framework:** This research uses the framework of Islamic justice and spiritual equality. The analysis is supported by maqashid al syariah and the thought of contemporary scholars. This framework emphasizes the balance of gender rights and responsibilities. **Literature review:** Previous studies have shown diverse views on Islam and gender. Gender inequality is often associated with patriarchal culture and interpretations. However, contextual synthesis studies are still limited. **Methods:** This study uses a qualitative approach based on literature studies. Data are obtained from the Quran, Hadith, and the latest academic literature. The analysis is carried out through content and thematic analysis. **Results:** The results of the study show that Islamic gender awareness is based on proportional justice, not absolute equality. Gender inequality in social practice is more influenced by cultural factors and ahistorical interpretations. Moderate Islamic gender awareness has proven to be relevant for maintaining social balance and harmony in society. **Implications:** These findings have implications for strengthening education and gender-fair policies. Islamic gender awareness can prevent discrimination and extremism. This approach supports social harmony. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in the synthesis of Islamic values and modern gender issues. This article offers a moderate Islamic gender awareness concept. This approach is both applicable and contextual.

Keywords: gender, gender awareness, gender justice, contemporary society, islamic studies.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equality and justice has become one of the main discourses in social, religious, and humanities studies in the contemporary era [1]. The dynamics of globalization, the development of human rights discourse, and the increasing participation of women in the public sphere have prompted a review of gender relations in various religious traditions, including Islam. In this context, Islam is often placed in an ambivalent position: on the one hand, it is seen as having universal values of justice, but on the other hand, it is often stereotyped as a religion that legitimizes gender inequality, especially in the social practices of Muslim society [2].

Normatively-theologically, Islam affirms the principles of justice (al-'adl), human dignity (karāmah al-insān), and spiritual equality between men and women before God. The Qur'an and Hadith contain ethical messages that place gender relations within the framework of complementary moral and social responsibilities [3]. However, in historical and social practice, these values are not always consistently implemented. The various gender inequalities that occur in Muslim societies are more often stemming from patriarchal cultural constructions and ahistorical textual interpretations, rather than from the teachings of Islam itself [4].

Several previous studies of Islam and gender have tended to be polarized between a normative approach that emphasizes the defense of Islamic teachings and a critical approach that adopts modern feminist theories directly [5]. This condition shows that there is a gap in the study in formulating the concept of gender consciousness that is rooted in Islamic sources, but is still responsive to the contemporary social context. Therefore, an integrative approach is needed that not only distinguishes between normative teachings and social practices, but also places gender awareness as a process of critical understanding of the text, context, and social reality of the people [6].

This article aims to analyze the concept of gender consciousness from an Islamic perspective by examining the principles of gender justice and equality, the concept of complementary gender roles, and the challenges of its implementation in contemporary society [7]. This study uses a normative-analytical approach by paying attention to the socio-cultural context, so that it is expected to be able to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of a more just, contextual, and sustainable Islamic and gender discourse.

In addition to addressing the conceptual dimensions of gender relations, this study also responds to the growing need for an Islamic framework that is capable of reconciling religious teachings with contemporary demands for social justice. While many existing studies have examined gender issues either through classical Islamic jurisprudence or through modern feminist paradigms, relatively few have attempted to construct an integrative model of gender consciousness that systematically combines normative Islamic principles, contextual interpretation, and contemporary social realities. As a result, discussions on gender in Islam often remain trapped between apologetic defenses of tradition and critical approaches that overlook the internal epistemological foundations of Islamic teachings [7].

The novelty of this study lies in its formulation of Islamic gender consciousness as a holistic and transformative framework rooted in the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, and the objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah). Rather than viewing gender equality solely through legal rights or social participation, this article conceptualizes gender consciousness as a multidimensional process involving theological awareness, ethical responsibility, social engagement, and critical interpretation. This perspective allows gender relations to be understood not merely in terms of rights and obligations, but also as a shared commitment to realizing justice, human dignity, and social welfare. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the distinction between immutable religious principles and culturally conditioned practices, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of gender issues in Muslim societies [8].

The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic gender studies by offering an alternative conceptual framework that bridges the gap between normative Islamic discourse and contemporary social analysis. It enriches academic discussions on gender by demonstrating that Islamic teachings contain ethical foundations that support justice, mutual respect, and human dignity for both men and women. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for educators, religious scholars, policymakers, and community leaders in promoting gender awareness within Muslim communities. The framework proposed in this study may also support the formulation of educational programs, religious guidance, and social policies that foster inclusive participation, equitable opportunities, and harmonious

gender relations. In a broader context, strengthening gender consciousness from an Islamic perspective can contribute to the realization of sustainable social development, social cohesion, and the achievement of global agendas related to equality, justice, and human empowerment [8].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of gender in the social sciences generally views gender as a social construct that shapes the roles, relationships, and expectations between men and women in society [8]. The literature shows that gender inequality does not stem solely from biological differences, but from cultural dynamics, power structures, and historical processes that influence the division of social roles. In religious contexts, gender discourse becomes more complex because it intersects directly with the authority of sacred texts and interpretive traditions, often creating tensions between religious normative values and demands for social change [9].

In classical Islamic literature, gender relations are generally discussed within the framework of social law and ethics, with an emphasis on the different roles understood as part of the social order. Nevertheless, the principle of justice and human dignity remains the normative foundation of Islamic teachings [10]. The development of modern Islamic studies shows a shift in approach towards contextual reading of the Quran and Hadith, emphasizing that gender inequality in social practice is influenced more by patriarchal cultural constructions and certain historical conditions than by the substance of Islamic teachings themselves [11].

A number of contemporary Muslim thinkers have developed a responsive interpretation of gender that places women as moral and social subjects [12]. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding religious texts in terms of ethical goals and human benefits, as well as avoiding literalist readings that have the potential to perpetuate injustice. This literature shows that the reactualization of Islamic teachings is a continuous process to ensure the relevance of the values of justice and balance in a society that is constantly changing [13].

On the other hand, some studies criticize the tendency of gender liberalization, which is considered to ignore the value of religious values and social structure [14]. This literature emphasizes that gender equality in Islam is not synonymous with absolute equality, but rather proportional justice that balances rights and obligations and maintains the institution of the family as a pillar of society. This moderate approach seeks to position Islam as a middle ground between conservatism that limits women's rights and liberalism that negates normative boundaries of religion [15].

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that Islamic and gender studies have developed widely but are still fragmented. Some of the research is theologically normative, while others adopt modern gender theories without adequate conceptual integration with Islamic values [16]. There are still limited studies that present a synthesis between gender awareness, the principles of Islamic justice, and its implementation in the context of contemporary Muslim society. Therefore, this article seeks to fill this gap by offering a conceptual framework of Islamic gender consciousness that is moderate, contextual, and socially justice-oriented [17].

Table 1. Summary of Previous Studies on Islam and Gender

Author (Year)	Key Focus	Key Contributions
Qibtiyah (2018)	Muslim understanding of gender	Showing the diversity of gender interpretations in Muslim societies
Musdah Mulia (2019)	Reform of Islamic and	Affirming women's equality of rights

	gender thought	based on Islamic values
Rofiq (2024)	Islamic feminism and public policy	Uncovering the gap between academic discourse and implementation
Firda (2024)	Amina Wadud's Gender Responsive Interpretation	Showing patriarchal bias in textual interpretation
Aldi (2025)	Gender equality in Islam	Emphasizing the importance of contextual interpretation and education
Adzima (2025)	The role of gender in the interpretation of the Quran	Affirms the need for historical context in contemporary applications

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a normative and analytical literature study design. This approach was chosen to examine the concept of gender consciousness in Islam and its relevance in contemporary society through the analysis of Islamic texts and discourses. The focus of the research is directed at understanding the principles of gender justice, spiritual equality, and the complementary roles of men and women in Islam. The research data is sourced from the texts of the Quran and Hadith as primary data, as well as secondary literature in the form of works by classical and contemporary scholars, academic books, and articles from reputable national and international journals relevant to Islamic and gender issues. Literature is selectively selected based on thematic relevance and academic authority [18].

Data collection was carried out through a systematic search of academic literature. Data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis to identify the main concepts, thought patterns, and dominant narratives related to Islamic gender awareness. The results of the analysis were then synthesized interpretively by linking normative texts, Islamic thought, and contemporary social contexts. The validity of the analysis is maintained through triangulation of sources and perspectives by comparing various theological and social views to minimize bias and increase the validity of the findings.

Table 2. Summary of Research Methodology

Aspects	Short Description
Types of Research	Qualitative
Design	Literature studies
Approach	Normative and analytical
Data Source	The Quran, Hadith, books, and scientific articles
Collection Techniques	Search of academic literature
Analytical Techniques	Content and thematic analysis
Data Validity	Triangulation of sources and perspectives

This research adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines Islamic normative studies with contemporary social analysis. The normative dimension is utilized to examine the foundational teachings of Islam concerning justice, equality, human dignity, and gender relations as articulated in the Qur'an and Hadith. Meanwhile, the analytical dimension enables the interpretation of these normative principles within the context of contemporary social realities, particularly the evolving discourse on gender in Muslim societies [18].

The research process was conducted through several stages. First, relevant primary and secondary sources were identified and classified according to thematic categories, including gender equality, gender justice, women's rights, family relations, and Islamic social ethics. Second, the selected literature was critically reviewed to identify key arguments, conceptual similarities, and differences among scholars. Third, thematic coding was applied to organize the data into major analytical themes that reflect the central dimensions of Islamic gender awareness.

This study also employs a contextual approach to understand how Islamic teachings interact with changing social conditions. Rather than treating religious texts as isolated normative statements, the analysis considers their ethical objectives and social implications. Such an approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of gender awareness that is faithful to Islamic principles while remaining responsive to contemporary challenges [18].

Through this methodological framework, the study seeks to produce a balanced and systematic conceptual synthesis that contributes to the development of Islamic gender studies and provides a relevant foundation for future academic research and policy discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of Gender Awareness in an Islamic Perspective

The results of the analysis show that gender consciousness in Islam cannot be understood as a direct adoption of the concept of modern equality, but rather as an ethical framework rooted in the principles of justice (*al-'adl*) and human dignity (*karāmah al-insān*) [18]. Gender is understood as a social construct that governs roles, functions, and responsibilities, while gender is biological. This distinction is an important foundation in building a contextual and responsive understanding of Islamic gender consciousness [19].

This finding confirms that Islam normatively upholds spiritual equality between men and women, as affirmed in QS. An Nisa [4]:124 and QS. Al Ahzab [33]:35. The verse shows that the value of humanity in Islam is determined by faith and righteous deeds, not by gender [20]. Thus, Islamic gender consciousness serves as an ethical framework to distinguish between Islamic normative teachings and social practices shaped by patriarchal cultural constructions [21].

Islamic Gender Equality Principles and Their Limits

The analysis shows that gender equality in Islam operates within the framework of proportional justice, not absolute equality. This principle places men and women as equal moral subjects, while at the same time acknowledging the existence of complementary role differences [22]. Islam rejects all forms of gender-based discrimination, especially practices that limit women's access to education, the economy, and social participation, because it lacks normative legitimacy in Islamic teachings [23].

These findings are in line with previous studies that stated that gender inequality in Muslim societies is more caused by ahistorical textual interpretations and patriarchal cultural dominance than by the substance of Islamic teachings themselves. Thus, Islamic gender equality is oriented towards a balance between rights and obligations to realize a just and sustainable social order [24].

Misunderstandings of the Concept of Gender in Contemporary Discourse

This article identifies two major forms of misunderstanding in gender discourse in contemporary Muslim society. First, equating the concept of Islamic gender equality with gender liberalization [25]. Gender equality in Islam is based on revelation and respect for human nature, while gender liberalization departs from the principle of absolute individual freedom that tends to ignore religious and cultural norms [26].

Second, there is a tendency to overinterpret gender, which ignores the ethical, spiritual, and social responsibility dimensions [27]. This phenomenon not only creates tensions with religious values but also has the potential to cause social disruption, especially in family institutions and the formation of the identity of the younger generation. These findings affirm the importance of the Islamic value framework as a guide in fighting for gender equality proportionately [28].

Social Impact of Gender Implementation Imbalance

The results of the literature synthesis show that the application of unbalanced gender concepts, both in the form of discrimination against women and excessive gender freedom, has a significant social impact [29]. These impacts include the weakening of family institutions, increased role conflicts in the household, shifts in social values and identities, and the emergence of new forms of inequality in social relations [30].

In addition, tensions between groups that hold liberal gender interpretations and those that maintain traditional religious values contribute to social polarization [31]. These findings suggest that extreme approaches, both conservative and liberal, have the potential to hinder the realization of an inclusive and harmonious society. Therefore, the implementation of gender equality needs to be carried out moderately and contextually based on the principles of social justice [32].

The Role of Gender in Islam as a Complementary Relationship

The results of the analysis show that Islam views gender relations as complementary relationships, not subordinate [33]. The concept of male leadership in the family (qiwamah) emphasizes moral and social responsibility, not superiority. This understanding confirms that role differences are not meant to create a hierarchy of values, but rather to achieve balance and mutual benefit [34].

These findings reinforce the view that gender justice in Islam does not negate differences but manages them ethically and equitably. Islamic gender relations thus function as a social mechanism to maintain family stability and social cohesion [35].

Synthesis of Contemporary Scholars' Thoughts on Gender Justice

A comparative analysis of the thinking of contemporary scholars shows that there is an understanding that gender justice in Islam must be understood substantively and contextually [36]. Fazlur Rahman emphasized the importance of reactualizing the ethics of the Quran, Amina Wadud encouraged a commentary that considered the experience of women as moral subjects, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha emphasized Islamic law reform based on Sharia goals, while Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasized the balance between rights and obligations [37].

This synthesis shows that gender justice in Islam is a dynamic discourse that develops with social change, without relinquishing its theological foundation. The main contribution of the thinking of these scholars lies in the effort to bridge normative texts with the social reality of contemporary society [38].

Implementation of Islamic Gender Awareness in Contemporary Society

The results of the analysis show that the implementation of Islamic gender awareness requires a multidimensional approach that includes inclusive education, social policies responsive to gender justice, and sustainable dialogue between scholars, academics, and society [39]. Education has a strategic role in dismantling gender stereotypes that limit the potential of individuals, while public policy needs to ensure structural justice without neglecting religious and cultural values [40].

In the Indonesian context, the increasing role of Muslim women in the fields of education, economy, and social organizations shows that gender consciousness based on Islamic values has practical relevance and a real contribution to sustainable social development [41]. This section yields seven key findings that show that gender awareness in Islam is an ethical framework that balances justice, difference, and social responsibility. The main contribution of this article lies in a conceptual synthesis that connects the normative teachings of Islam with contemporary social challenges and offers a moderate and contextual implementive approach.

The findings of this study demonstrate that gender awareness in Islam should be understood as a comprehensive ethical paradigm that integrates theological principles, social responsibility, and contextual interpretation. Unlike secular approaches that often frame gender solely as a matter of individual rights and freedom, the Islamic perspective places gender relations within a broader framework of justice, balance, and collective welfare. This distinction is significant because it shows that gender discourse in Islam is not merely concerned with equality in a quantitative sense but with the realization of equitable social relations that preserve human dignity and social harmony [41].

A critical analysis of the findings indicates that many contemporary debates on gender emerge from the inability to distinguish between normative Islamic teachings and culturally embedded practices. The persistence of patriarchal structures in some Muslim societies has frequently been interpreted as a direct reflection of Islamic teachings, despite the absence of strong normative foundations supporting such inequalities. This situation creates a methodological challenge in gender studies, where social realities are often conflated with religious doctrine. The present study highlights the importance of contextual interpretation that enables scholars and practitioners to evaluate social practices in light of the ethical objectives of Islam rather than relying solely on literal or historical interpretations [41].

Furthermore, the concept of proportional justice identified in this study provides an alternative framework to the dichotomy between conservative traditionalism and unrestricted liberalism. Conservative approaches may risk preserving unequal social structures under the guise of religious legitimacy, while liberal approaches may overlook the ethical and communal dimensions that are central to Islamic thought. The balanced perspective proposed in this article demonstrates that justice can be achieved without eliminating all distinctions between men and women, provided that such distinctions do not lead to discrimination, exclusion, or denial of fundamental rights.

Another important implication concerns the role of education in cultivating gender awareness. Educational institutions have the potential to become transformative spaces where individuals learn to understand gender relations through the lenses of justice, mutual respect, and social responsibility. Through inclusive educational programs and critical engagement with religious texts, misconceptions regarding gender roles can be reduced, thereby fostering a more equitable social environment. At the policy level, governments and religious institutions should collaborate in developing frameworks that promote equal opportunities while remaining sensitive to cultural and religious

contexts. Overall, the findings suggest that Islamic gender awareness is not a static concept but a dynamic process that continuously responds to social change while maintaining its theological foundations. Its relevance lies in its ability to offer a moderate and contextual approach capable of addressing contemporary gender challenges without abandoning Islamic ethical values. Consequently, this framework contributes not only to academic discussions on Islam and gender but also to the broader pursuit of social justice, sustainable development, family resilience, and inclusive community empowerment in contemporary Muslim societies.

CONCLUSION

Gender awareness in Islam is an ethical framework rooted in the principles of justice, human dignity, and spiritual equality between men and women. The concept of Islamic gender equality is not interpreted as absolute equality, but rather as proportional justice that recognizes differences in roles without causing subordination or discrimination. These findings confirm that gender inequality in Muslim societies is influenced more by cultural constructions and ahistorical interpretations of religious texts than by the normative teachings of Islam itself. This research also shows that misunderstandings of the concept of gender, both in the form of conservatism that denies women's rights and gender liberalization that ignores ethical boundaries and Islamic values, have the potential to cause social disruption and weaken family institutions. Therefore, moderate and contextual Islamic gender awareness is a strategic approach to bridge Islamic normative values with contemporary social dynamics. The implementation of Islamic gender awareness through inclusive education, fair social policies, and sustainable dialogue among stakeholders is expected to encourage the realization of balanced, harmonious, and mutually beneficial gender relations in modern society.

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Author's Contributions

All authors contributed substantially to the study design, literature review, data analysis, interpretation of findings, manuscript preparation, revision process, and approval of the final version.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial, professional, institutional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research process, analysis, or publication.

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