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Research Article

Quranic Analysis: A Critical Examination of Gender in Islamic and Western Paradigms

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Abstract. The modern era epitomizes a period of profound transformation across diverse spheres including science, technology, politics, and warfare, characterized by discovery, innovation, and globalization. European powers and their colonies spearheaded a comprehensive colonization endeavor encompassing politics, economics, and culture, shaping what we recognize today as the modern world. This era heralded the ascendance of capitalism, liberalism, materialism, and globalization, predominantly led by Western hegemony, notably post-Cold War American capital, extending its influence globally. Modernity, with its core tenets of moral autonomy, human rights, civil equality, consumerism, market freedom, and secularism, presents a formidable challenge to traditional religious frameworks, particularly within the Abrahamic Faiths. The secularization of society,

relegating religion to the private sphere, prompts shifts within religious communities, including Islam, regarding values, ethics, and gender roles. Muslims navigate a complex landscape, torn between adherence to Islamic principles and the pervasive secular worldview propagated by the modern West. Despite maintaining Islamic beliefs and practices, individuals are inevitably influenced by the dominant secular paradigm, shaped by Western education systems and cultural norms. This convergence engenders a tension wherein Islamic principles are often interpreted through a liberal and secular lens, leading to internal conflicts, doubts, and confusion. This article endeavors to establish a framework for understanding gender within Islam, rooted in the foundational texts of the Quran and Sunnah. While acknowledging the potential contributions of sociology, anthropology, and gender studies to the discourse, the focus remains on traditional Islamic scholarship, drawing insights from Islamic jurisprudence and theology to elucidate gender roles and relations. By grounding the discussion in Islamic principles, the aim is to reconcile contemporary understandings of gender with the enduring teachings of Islam, offering clarity amidst the complexities of modernity. **The research methodology** for this article is primarily rooted in Islamic Hermeneutics or Islamic Textual Analysis that involves a systematic examination and understanding of scripture to derive meaning and guidance. The complexity of the topic also demands a nuanced exploration of the intersections between religion, culture, and modernity, with a specific focus on the evolving understanding of gender within the Muslim community. **The research explored two questions:** How does scripture define, discuss, and describe gender, and what implications does the Islamic paradigm of gender hold for contemporary societal attitudes and practices? **As a result**, the text highlights how society, media, literature, and culture heavily influence how we perceive ideas and process information, including our understanding and application of Islam. This can lead to conflict within ourselves, especially when we interpret Islamic texts and guidance through the prism of modern liberal thought or other ideologies. As Muslims, we need to remain grounded in our teachings and understanding that are rooted in the words of God and the example of His Prophet ﷺ. Our morals, values, ethics, and principles should not be shaped by the changing standards of society around us.

Keywords: Gender, Islamic, Western, Universal-Law, Society, and Modern-World

INTRODUCTION

The modern era is a period of significant development in the fields of science, technology, politics, and warfare. It is the age of discovery, invention, advancement, and fierce globalization. During this time, the European powers and later their colonies began a political, economic, and cultural colonization of the rest of the world. "It's a period marked by a questioning or rejection of tradition; the prioritization of individualism, freedom and formal equality; faith in inevitable social, scientific and technological progress and human perfectibility; rationalization and professionalization; a movement from feudalism (or agrarianism) toward capitalism and the market economy; industrialization, urbanization and secularization; the development of the nation-state and its constituent institutions (e.g. representative democracy, public education, modern bureaucracy) (Sargiacomo, 2009)." It is what gave birth to the Modern world as we know it. We've seen capitalism, materialism, liberalism, and globalization spread across the world and impose itself on other cultures led by Western political and economic powers (Robert, 2004), specifically post-Cold War American capital. So much so that you can be sitting in a fast food chain in the city of Karachi, eating a burger while listening to the latest rap song (Alberts & Papp, 1997).

Modernity with its goal of institutionalizing (Haslanger, 1995) a number of evolving principles such as moral autonomy, human rights, civil equality, consumerism, freedom of the market, and secularism (Khan, 2016) has proven to be a great challenge to various religious traditions and communities particularly the Abrahamic Faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the modern secular world, religion should have no influence in the public sphere (Habermas, 2015). As a result of this secularization of society, within the Muslim community we are witnessing a number of shifts in the way people view certain ideas, concepts, values, morals, ethics, and accepted religious tenets and practices. One of those shifts is how the concept of gender is understood (Roy, 2013).

A powerful reason for these changes is that as Muslims we live torn between two distinct worldviews, value systems, and ways of life: that of Islam and that of the contemporary, secularized world created by the modern West. Although we believe in and practice Islam, we live in the midst of an alternative – and very powerful – intellectual, social, and moral paradigm (Oswald A. J. Mascarenhas, 2019) that constantly imposes itself on us and seeks to mold our views, judgments, and personalities in its own image (Oswald A. J. Mascarenhas, 2019).

Whether we admit it or not, we are heavily influenced by the society and culture we live in, specifically the western education system of public and private schools and universities that most of us are products of. We have knowingly or unknowingly adopted a value system and way of life that is based on modernity, liberalism, and secularism. For example, our understanding of the concepts and ideals of freedom, justice, liberty, equality, mercy, and fairness are informed through a very liberal and secular lens that refuses to acknowledge the Divine. Because of that we impose our understandings of these concepts onto verses of the Quran and aḥādīth of the Prophet ﷺ and end up finding certain verses or aḥādīth to be "problematic". There ends up being this internal conflict that leads to doubts and confusion (Mansouri, 2017).

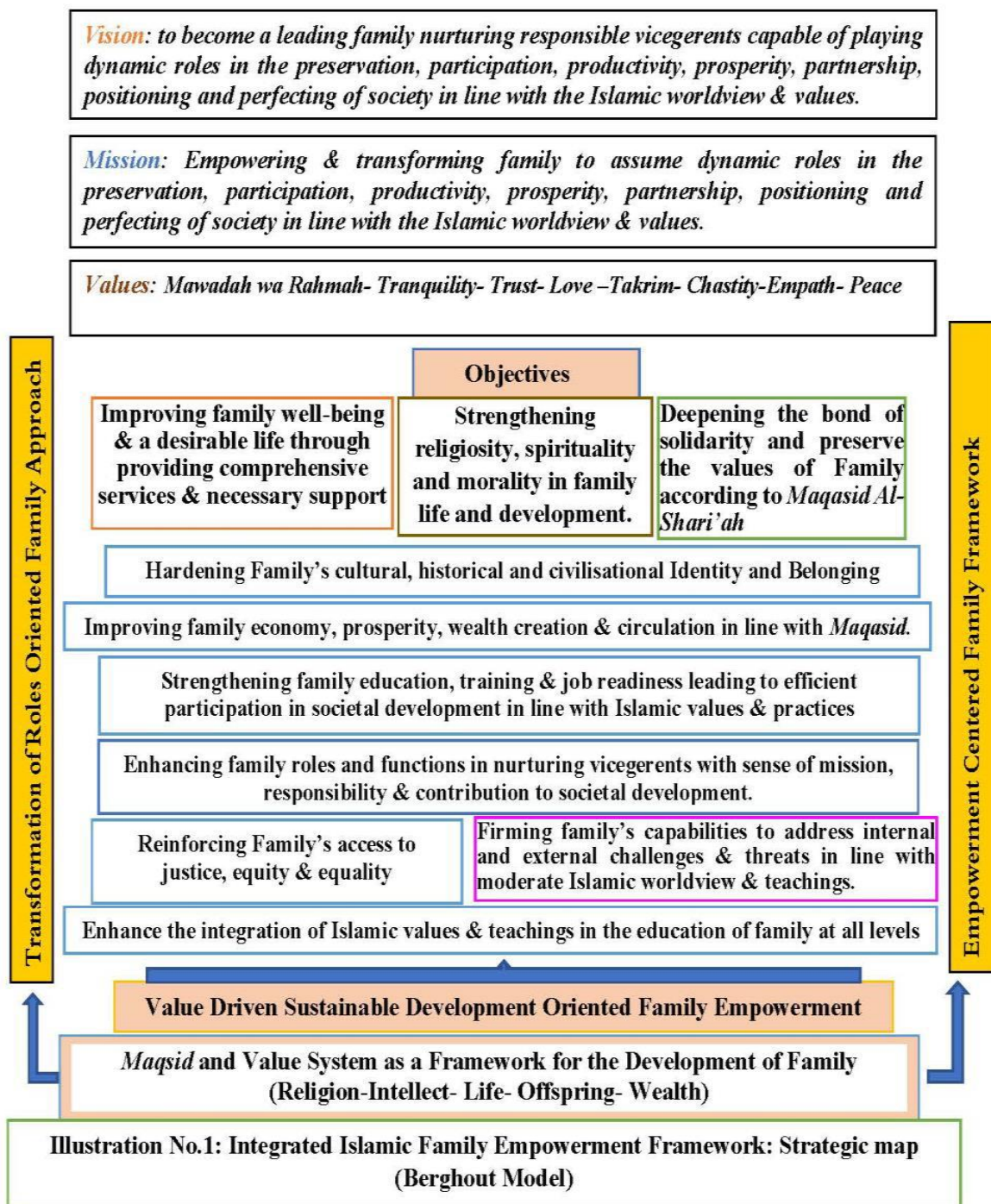
The purpose of this article is to help develop and shape a framework for understanding gender rooted in revelation; the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. The researcher is not trained in sociology, anthropology, or gender studies, but is certain that each of these areas of study can add value, depth, and nuance to the discussion. This article provides a clear Islamic framework for understanding gender through an analysis of the Quran and Sunnah. It articulates an Islamic understanding of gender that helps distinguish it from the modern western liberal understanding of gender as fluid.

METHOD

The research article adopts a methodology rooted in Islamic Hermeneutics or Islamic Textual Analysis that involves a systematic examination and understanding of scripture to derive meaning and guidance. The research methodology employed for understanding the concept of gender through the Quran and Sunnah within the framework of Islamic Hermeneutics involves a multifaceted approach aimed at extracting nuanced insights while remaining faithful to the original texts. Initially, the methodology entails an in-depth examination of Quranic verses related to gender,

utilizing traditional exegetical methods (Tafsir) to unpack layers of meaning, linguistic nuances, and historical context. Concurrently, the study involves a meticulous analysis of relevant hadith collections, scrutinizing the authenticity and content of narrations pertaining to gender roles, responsibilities, and relations. Drawing upon the principles of Usul al-Fiqh, the research methodology incorporates the synthesis of legal maxims and interpretative tools to derive broader ethical implications regarding gender within Islam. This approach also involves engaging with contemporary scholarship and interdisciplinary perspectives to address pressing gender-related issues faced by Muslim communities today, ensuring relevance and applicability in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Overall, this methodology of Islamic Hermeneutics serves as a robust framework for comprehensively understanding and interpreting the concept of gender through the lens of Quranic teachings and Prophetic traditions. The author, who has a background in Islamic studies, will chiefly scrutinize Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions associated with gender. Furthermore, they will investigate both classical and contemporary Islamic commentaries to comprehend interpretations and determine potential areas of disagreement with modern viewpoints. This textual analysis will provide a basis for creating a gender framework rooted in Islamic revelation (Allan J. Jacobs, M.D., J.D. Kavita Shah Arora, M.D., 2019).

Table 1. A model on Value Devine Sustainable Oriented Family Empowerment



Source: (Berghout Abdelaziz, 2022)

Berghout Abdelaziz (2022) stresses the importance of developing an integrated Islamic framework to direct family empowerment policies in Islamic societies. The Islamic worldview should play a crucial role in designing family empowerment plans. The article concludes that Muslim societies must enhance family roles and build balanced and productive families that ensure well-being and quality of life standards in line with Islamic principles. This will nurture future generations of responsible

individuals who can contribute to sustainable societal development. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of well-being. This includes the principle of freedom, allowing girls to receive an education just as boys do. Moreover, in Islam, every person, regardless of gender, is required to obtain an education. Equality is also central to Islamic belief and practice, with no gender distinctions made. Allah said in the Qur'an, "And whoever does righteous virtuous deeds — male or female and is a true believer in the Oneness of Allah, such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a Naqira (speck on the back of a date-stone), will be done to them" (Qur'an, 4:124).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing Gender in Islamic and Western Paradigms

The concept of gender, especially as it is understood within the humanities and social sciences, is a relatively recent invention in human history (Holmes, 2012). Historically gender was a grammatical term used to refer to masculine and feminine words and started being used to refer to a social construct in the 1950's and 1960's (Holmes, 2012). Sexologist John Money introduced the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955. He coined the term gender role, and was the first to use it in print in a scientific trade journal. In a 1955 paper, he defined it as "all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman" (MONEY et al., 1955).

Psychologists in the 1960s were the first to use the word gender to distinguish biological differences from social/psychological ones. In order to explain why some people felt that they were trapped in the wrong bodies, Robert Stoller began using the terms "sex" to distinguish biological traits and "gender" to highlight the amount of femininity or masculinity a person exhibited. Separating these terms made theoretical sense allowing Stoller to explain the phenomenon of transsexuality: transsexuals' sex and gender simply don't match (Clement, 2019).

Feminists took hold of Money's and Stoller's ideas and found it useful to distinguish sex and gender allowing them to argue that many differences between men and women were socially and culturally produced and could be changed. For example, Kate Millet, in her book *Sexual Politics*, wrote that there are no differences between male and female sexes at the moment of birth because psychosexual personality (a term taken from Money) is something that is learned after birth (Millett, 2014). French writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 1949) laid the groundwork for feminists' theories about gender. In her book she famously claimed that "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman" and that "social discrimination produces in women moral and intellectual effects so profound that they appear to be caused by nature" (Bullock & Henry-Tierney, 2023).

According to her gender is a constructed category and a woman becomes a woman under the pressure of cultural surroundings. Feminists suggest that gender differences are a result of cultural practices and social expectations and in modern discourse it is more common to simply say that gender is socially constructed. This means that genders and gendered traits are the "intended or unintended product[s] of a social practice" (Haslanger, 1995). But which social practices construct gender,

what social construction is and what being of a certain gender amounts to are major feminist controversies. There is no consensus on these issues (Mikkola, Mari, 2021).

Gender studies theory developed within alongside and emerged out of Women's Studies the feministic and LGBT field of studies in the 1970s, and was later accepted by other disciplines within the arts and social sciences. Today it is studied as an interdisciplinary science. Gender theory has developed a system of values from which it follows that sex as a biological determinant does not have a major influence on gender; moreover, it is created through the process of socialization and cultururation, often due to pressure from a patriarchal society. Thus, gender is a malleable social construct, not a fixed biological condition (Rosik, 2016).

This has become the dominant narrative regarding gender, especially here in the United States, as evidenced by how organizations such as the World Health Organization and Planned Parenthood define and differentiate sex, gender, and gender identity. According to the Planned Parenthood website: Sex is a label — male or female — that you're assigned by a doctor at birth based on the genitals you're born with and the chromosomes you have. It goes on your birth certificate. Gender is much more complex: It's a social and legal status, and set of expectations from society, about behaviors, characteristics, and thoughts. Each culture has standards about the way that people should behave based on their gender. This is also generally male or female. But instead of being about body parts, it's more about how you're expected to act, because of your sex. Gender identity is how you feel inside and how you express your gender through clothing, behavior, and personal appearance. It's a feeling that begins very early in life (Stein, 2012). In the last two decades Judith Butler, a famous feminist theorist, has contributed to the advancement and acceptance of gender theory through her work *Gender Trouble*. According to Butler, gender should be seen as fluid, variable, and "free-floating" rather than fixed (Özkazanç-Pan, 2015).

Gender is Real

According to the Islamic narrative, Allah ﷻ created Adam (as) as the first human being and from him created his spouse and partner Ḥawā. Allah ﷻ says at the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā, "People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide; be mindful of God, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: God is always watching over you." The "single soul" is Adam (as), "its mate" is his wife Ḥawā, and from them, humanity spread through the birth of "countless men and women far and wide". Allah ﷻ in His infinite and divine wisdom has created human beings in two distinct biological sexes and genders; the male and the female. Every single human being traces their origin back to this original pair of Adam and Ḥawā; the "parents" of humanity. An interesting point to note about this verse is the usage of the word "soul"; Allah ﷻ is saying that He created Adam from a single soul and then He ﷻ created his wife from that same soul. Syed Quṭb writes, "God, who has created mankind, is the One who has made duality part of man's nature, as it is indeed ingrained in all creation: 'And of everything We have created pairs, so that you may bear in mind [that God alone is One].' He then willed to make the human pair two halves of the

same soul. Part of His purpose behind the meeting between the two halves of the same soul is that it should lead to peaceful existence and be a comfort to body and soul” (Rock-Singer, 2020).

Similarly, Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt, “O mankind, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and tribes, so that you may identify one another.” In Sūrah al-Naba’a Allah ﷻ says that He has created us in pairs, “And We have created you in pairs.” Allah addresses humans as males and females. He ﷻ says, “Whoever, male or female, does good deeds and is a believer, then such people shall enter Paradise, and they shall not be wronged in the least.”

According to the normative mainstream position of Islam, as is understood from texts of the Quran and Sunnah, gender is of two discrete types: male and female. There is no third gender or neutral gender in Islam. Classical books of Islamic Jurisprudence discuss legal rulings related to individuals that are born with physiological ambiguities, such as hermaphroditism and genital agenesis, and discuss methods by which gender can be established. Based on these methods individuals with physiological ambiguities are also classified as being male or female. A person’s gender is in accordance to their biological sex. Gender is normatively presumed on the basis of unambiguous biological constitution. If a person has a male private part they are considered to be a male and if they have a female private part they are considered to be a female. This is not to say that culture, society, and tradition play no role in shaping certain behaviors within each gender. Culture, society, and tradition are powerful factors that shape and influence the way a person thinks, behaves, and speaks. Islam recognizes these external factors that influence behaviors and attitudes within both genders but they do not determine one’s gender (Koburtay et al., 2023).

The Male is Not Like the Female

When speaking about the birth of Maryam (as) Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, “But when she gave birth, she said, ‘My Lord! I have given birth to a girl’- God knew best what she had given birth to: the male is not like the female- ‘I name her Mary and I commend her and her offspring to Your protection from the rejected Satan.” In this verse Allah ﷻ mentions an absolute, observable, and undeniable truth; the male is not like the female. Men and women are not the same at multiple levels; molecular, chemical, biological, physiological, emotional, and physical (Iftekhar Jamil Fuad, 2022).

At the most basic level, differences between men and women are an observed physiological reality. Men and women are fundamentally different in ways that affect biology (Goldman, 2019), behavior (Ngun et al., 2011), thoughts (Roothman et al., 2003), and expression (Park et al., 2016). These biological differences lead towards different behavioral and emotional inclinations and dispositions. There is currently a significant amount of research being conducted to pinpoint differences between men and women and the way they think, emote, and experience life (Samantha Marton, 2016).

Revelation takes these differences in biology, behavior, inclinations, and tendencies into account and provides gender-specific instruction and guidance. That is why there are some instances where instructions, rules, and regulations may be different for men and women. Natural God-given predispositions incline men and women to take on certain characteristics, qualities, and traits. The Quran and Sunnah recognize these natural predispositions and provide guidance accordingly. Who best to provide that guidance than Allah ﷻ the Creator of the heavens and the earth and everything they contain. As Allah ﷻ Himself says, “How could He who created not know His own creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the All Aware?”

Moral Equality

Despite these natural differences that exist, men and women are moral equals in the sight of Allah ﷻ and are expected to fulfill the same duties of faith, submission, servitude, obedience, prayer, charity, fasting, and ḥajj. They are held to the same moral and ethical standards outlined by the Quran and Sunnah. Both men and women are mukallaf, legally responsible in front of Allah, for fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities and will be held accountable for their speech and actions on the Day of Judgment (Samadi, 2021). They are equal in terms of receiving the same amount of reward for good deeds and the same amount of punishment for bad deeds. There is equality in terms of reward and punishment, rights and responsibilities, and rulings that are in accordance with natural tendencies and inclinations (Kamali, 1993).

Regarding this reality Syed Quṭb writes, “Because the two mates are two halves of the same soul, they stand in the same position in God’s sight. Since God has given mankind a position of honor, He has honored women, assigning to them the same reward for their good deeds, the same rights of ownership and inheritance, and the same rights of independence.” In essence, Islam has established true equality between the genders not a false and presumed sense of equality based on liberal assumptions that seek to do away with any differences between the genders whatsoever. Equality through a secular lens is based on a certain understanding of what it means to be a human being and a person rooted in alternative metaphysical realities divorced from any sort of metaphysical reality. Equality in Islam is not seen through the lens of material qualities or attributes of an individual confined to the limits of the present world. Equality in Islam transcends the material and gives consideration to the equality of souls in front of God. As Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt, “In God’s eyes, the most honored of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware (Shaykh Zubairi Furhan, 2022).

There is an interesting and beautiful incident from the life of the Prophet ﷺ that highlights the moral equality of men and women, which is also the cause of revelation for verse 35 from Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. Umm Salamah (ra), the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, narrated that she asked the Prophet ﷺ, “Why is it that we women aren’t mentioned in the Quran like men are mentioned?” She continues, “Then one day without my realizing it, he was calling from the pulpit and I was combing my hair, so I tied my hair back then I went out to my chamber in my house, and I started listening out, and he was saying from the pulpit: ‘O people! Truly Allah says, ‘Surely, Muslim

men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, devout men and devout women, truthful men and truthful women, patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, and the men who give charity and the women who give charity, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard (theirs), and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember (Him) - for them, Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.” Every individual, male or female, has an equal opportunity to earn the forgiveness of Allah ﷻ and gain entry into Paradise.

Men and Women Complement Each Other

Islam is not limited to ritual and devotional acts of worship. Islam is not simply a creed or a theology. Islam is a complete way of life. One of the major components of Islamic teachings is social behavior and interaction. There is a lot of emphasis placed on family, community, and community building. Islam is not an individualistic or self-centered religion; rather, it is communal and selfless. Muslims are taught to treat others with respect, kindness, care, sympathy, compassion, generosity, love, mercy, and forgiveness. There is guidance on how to live as parents, children, spouses, in-laws, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and any other relationship one can think of. The goal of these teachings is to produce healthy, productive, and vibrant families and communities that live their lives in a manner that is pleasing to Allah ﷻ. Practically working towards building healthy families and communities is a priority of every Muslim (K. Ahmad, 1980).

In order to achieve that goal of building healthy families and communities, men and women are meant to complement each other and not be in a state of constant conflict and competition. Men and women are both equally essential components of a healthy family and community. The relationship between them can be described as one of mutual support, help, aid, assistance, love, and comfort. Allah ﷻ describes men and women as being garments for each other. He ﷻ says, “They are [close] as garments to you, as you are to them.” One of the many possible meanings of this verse is that men and women are a source of comfort, protection, and cover for each other. Allah ﷻ also says, “The believers, both men and women, support each other; they order what is right and forbid what is wrong; they keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; they obey God and His Messenger. God will give His mercy to such people: God is almighty and wise.” Commenting on this verse Imām al-Qurṭubī (r) writes that men and women support each other “means that their hearts are united in good terms, mutual love, and sympathy” (Akbarnezhad et al., 2020).

Caretaker (Qawwām)

Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Nisā’, “Husbands should take good care of their wives, with [the bounties] God has given to some more than others and with what they spend out of their own money.” The beginning part of this verse has been translated in several different ways. Mufti Taqī Usmani translates it as “Men are caretakers of women”, The Study Quran translates it as “Men are the upholders and maintainers of women”, and Yusuf Ali translates it as “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women”. Allah ﷻ describes men as “qawwāmūn” and each of these translations is

trying its best to convey a comprehensive meaning of the word. “Qawwāmūn” is the plural of “qawwām”, which is translated as caretaker, custodian, or guardian. Similar to other words in the Arabic Language, these translations don’t capture the actual essence of the word as they are all under-inclusive. al-Wāḥidī (r) writes, “al-qawwām means one who does their utmost to provide and support.” A man is expected to exert their best effort in providing and taking care of the affairs of the women in their family. Ibn ‘Āshūr (r) writes, “The qawwām is the one who supports, takes care of, looks after, and rectifies the affairs of something” (N. Ahmad & Rasheed, 2018).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Islamic Worldview on Genders

The discourse surrounding gender and what it really means to be a man or a woman is constantly changing and evolving. That is one of the major issues with theories that are built off man-made ideologies and philosophies, particularly those that are born from a secular worldview with a completely different ontology, epistemology, and teleology than Islam. They will constantly change and adapt to fit the dominant social, political, economic, and philosophical norms. Since these ideologies are man-made, there is no deeper cosmological purpose or origin for existence and that all values are completely separated from God and religion.

While discussing the concept of believing men and women supporting each other, ibn Kathīr (r) brings a few aḥādīth of the Prophet ﷺ describing what this relationship is supposed to look like. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Truly the believer for another believer is like a building; they provide support to one another.” In this ḥadīth the Prophet ﷺ is giving a very beautiful and profound example. The entire Muslim community is like one building and each believer is a brick in that building providing support and strength to one another. In another ḥadīth the Prophet ﷺ said, “The example of believers in regard to their mutual love, affection, and fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole-body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.” The Prophet ﷺ also said, “Women are the counterparts of men.”

Islam is not limited to ritual and devotional acts of worship. Islam is not simply a creed or a theology. Islam is a complete way of life. One of the major components of Islamic teachings is social behavior and interaction. There is a lot of emphasis placed on family, community, and community building. Islam is not an individualistic or self-centered religion; rather, it is communal and selfless. Muslims are taught to treat others with respect, kindness, care, sympathy, compassion, generosity, love, mercy, and forgiveness. There is guidance on how to live as parents, children, spouses, in-laws, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and any other relationship one can think of. The goal of these teachings is to produce healthy, productive, and vibrant families and communities that live their lives in a manner that is pleasing to Allah ﷻ. Practically working towards building healthy families and communities is a priority of every Muslim.

It is very important to note that just because men and women are different doesn’t automatically mean one gender is better than the other or that one gender is inferior to the other. Within the framework of Islam one gender is not intrinsically

better than the other. Nobility and being beloved to Allah ﷻ is based on internal factors such as faith, taqwā, sincerity, and righteous deeds. Allah ﷻ says, “In God’s eyes, the most honored of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Truly Allah doesn’t look at your appearances and your wealth; rather, He looks at your hearts and your deeds.”

Being the “qawwām” is not some sort of right or privilege that gives man unjust and unfair authority or power over women or that a man is somehow inherently better than a woman, as mentioned above. It also does not mean that a woman cannot take care of herself. Rather it is understood as a huge responsibility that a man is required to assume within the structure of a family. That is why scholars conceptualize being a “qawwām” as a right woman are entitled to within a relationship and not a male privilege. A man is required to take care of those under their care financially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “A man is responsible for his family.” Being the “qawwām” is not some sort of right or privilege that gives man unjust and unfair authority or power over women or that a man is somehow inherently better than a woman, as mentioned above. It also does not mean that a woman cannot take care of herself. Rather it is understood as a huge responsibility that a man is required to assume within the structure of a family. That is why scholars conceptualize being a “qawwām” as a right woman are entitled to within a relationship and not a male privilege. A man is required to take care of those under their care financially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “A man is responsible for his family (Shaykh Zubairi Furhan, 2022).

Islam is a religion that is deeply rooted in Divine revelation, with every aspect of life being connected to God and religion. According to Islamic teachings, Allah ﷻ created the universe with a specific purpose, and all universal truths come from God. A believer's faith is a living and organic expression manifested through actions. This faith, known as iman, comprises three significant aspects. Firstly, believing in the existence of Allah ﷻ is the cornerstone of Islamic faith. It is a belief held with absolute certainty and expressed inwardly and outwardly through one's actions. This belief is what defines a person as a Muslim. Secondly, Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the final Messenger of Allah ﷻ. This belief is also expressed through one's actions, as Muslims follow the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ in both their personal and public lives. Lastly, the testimony of faith, known as the Shahada, is the affirmation of one's belief in Allah ﷻ and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Muslims recite it with their tongues, and it declares their faith and commitment to the Islamic belief system. Overall, Islam is a way of life that is based on the belief in one God and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It is a faith that guides its followers daily and helps them become better versions of themselves.

Society, education, media, literature, art, TV, movies, and music shape our understanding of Islam. Muslims should ground their values in Divine revelation, not society's changing standards. Western-influenced education can create conflicts when interpreting Islamic scriptures from a modern, liberal perspective. We must develop an Islamic framework for understanding gender that is rooted in traditional scholarship.

CONCLUSION

Society, our education system, the mainstream media, literature, art, popular culture, TV, movies, and music heavily influence how we perceive ideas and process information. Because of that, we project these influences upon our understanding and application of Islam. We look at Islamic rulings and guidance through the prism of modern liberal thought or other philosophies and ideologies, which can lead to conflict within ourselves. As the discourse regarding gender and identity continues to evolve, develop, and change, we as Muslims need to remain grounded in our teachings and understandings that are rooted in the words of God and the example of His Prophet ﷺ. Our morals, values, ethics, and principles are derived from Divine revelation and should not be shaped by the changing standards of society around us.

Islamic teachings and the dominant secular worldview create significant conflicts for believers (Rock-Singer, 2020). Education systems, heavily influenced by Western ideologies, contribute to the assimilation of secular values, leading to conflicts and confusion when interpreting Islamic scriptures through a lens shaped by modern, liberal perspectives. The author develops a framework for understanding gender based on Islamic teachings, drawing from the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The focus remains rooted in traditional Islamic scholarship to address the pressing challenges presented by modernity in interpreting gender within Islamic contexts. While acknowledging the potential contributions of disciplines such as sociology and gender studies, the author seeks to navigate the complexities of contemporary gender discourse from the perspective of traditional Islamic studies (Koburtay et al., 2023).

In conclusion, it is evident that society, education, media, and culture exert a profound influence on our perception of Islam, shaping our understanding and application of its principles. As we navigate through the complexities of modernity, it becomes imperative for Muslims to anchor themselves in teachings firmly rooted in the words of God and the example set by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The infiltration of Western ideologies into education systems underscores the need for vigilance in interpreting Islamic scriptures, as conflicts arise when attempting to reconcile traditional teachings with modern, liberal perspectives. In response to these challenges, the author has developed a framework for understanding gender based on Islamic teachings, drawing from the Quran and the Prophetic traditions. This approach, firmly grounded in traditional Islamic scholarship, offers a pathway to address contemporary gender discourse within Islamic contexts while maintaining fidelity to divine guidance. By recognizing the impact of societal influences and prioritizing adherence to Islamic principles, Muslims can navigate the complexities of modernity with confidence and integrity.

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