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Navigating Muslim Ethics: Feminist Waves and the Argument for Recognizing Compensation for Household Activities

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Abstract

This paper critically examines evolving issues of gender justice in Islamic contexts, focusing on the connections between Islamic ethics, feminism, and specifically the argument of "unpaid domestic work". It explores the historical context of Islamic feminism, identifying key figures and movements that reinterpreted Islamic texts to advocate for gender equality. This article explores contemporary debates about women's unpaid domestic work, examining arguments for and against wages in feminist and Islamic circles. It also examines the role of Islamic rights in shaping women's rights, the complexities of patriarchal interpretations, and their impact on changing family and social norms. While supporting traditional values and contemporary women's movements, this study highlights the challenges and possibilities of achieving gender justice while remaining true to Islamic teachings. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for ongoing discussion and research to bridge the gap between traditional and modern understandings of gender equity and to promote gender roles and equitable treatment of women in Muslim societies.

Key Words

Islamic Feminism, Gender Justice, Unpaid Household Labor, Islamic Ethics, Patriarchal Interpretations

Introduction

In the intricate framework of Islamic tradition, feminist interpretations argue that patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an have historically influenced Muslim women's roles in both public and private spheres. Nevertheless, the Qur'an emphasizes the principle of equality among all individuals, offering alternative interpretations that challenge narratives supporting male dominance.[1] This nuanced discourse establishes a foundation for critically re-examining Muslim women's roles, including hijab requirements and their implications in daily life, spanning family law to public interactions. The emergence of female scholars reinterpreting

[1] https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/five-things-you-need-to-know-about-women-in-islam-implications-for-advancing-womens-rights-in-the-middle-east/

religious texts marks a transformative shift toward Islamic feminism, advocating for gender equality and challenging traditional norms surrounding modesty and women's participation in Islamic jurisprudence.[2] This article examines key debates on unpaid household labor and gender justice within Islam, offering a nuanced analysis of discrimination against women, public interests, and the need for religious reform.

The Historical Context of Muslim Ethics and Feminism

Islamic feminism, embedded in the wider discourse of the equality of gender within an Islamic paradigm, supports social justice & equal rights while opposing conventional patriarchal standards. Drawing from diverse feminist discourses, including secular and Western perspectives, it situates itself within a global feminist context, enriching its approach to reform in Muslim societies.[3] Both early reformers and modern advocates have addressed issues such as educational rights, polygamy, and gender asymmetries, persistently reviewing the standing of women in Islam

Islamic feminists infer the Islamic injunctions as backing for the equality of gender, a view supported by scholars who argue that the text while acknowledging human differences, affirms the inherent equality of all individuals. The roots of Islamic feminism trace back to the nineteenth century, with pioneers like Aisha Taymur and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain championing women's rights and education. The movement gained further momentum in the twentieth century through the works of scholars such as Fatema Mernissi and Amina Wadud, who critically examined patriarchal interpretations of the Quran to advance women's rights.

Recently, the momentum of scholarly and activist efforts has continued into the twenty-first century, exemplified by initiatives such as the Declaration of Reform and the Muslim Reform Movement, which aim to uphold women's rights while remaining faithful to Islamic teachings..[4] The ongoing development of Islamic feminism is characterized by a thorough engagement with the Quranic text, with the goal of fostering reinterpretations that align with contemporary concepts of gender equality. This process of reinterpretation, though facing resistance from traditionalist perspectives, reflects a determined effort to reconcile faith with freedom, ensuring that Islamic feminism continues to be a significant contributor to the broader global feminist movement.

[2] https://sites.bu.edu/pardeeatlas/advancing-human-progress-initiative/back2school/women-and-the-quran-feminist-interpretive-authority/
[3] Ali, F., Ahmad, H., & Salahuddin, A. (2022). Christian Feminist Theology in Pakistan. Feminist Theology, 31(1), 9-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/09667350221112871
[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_feminism

The Rise of Feminist Waves in Muslim Societies

The emergence of feminist waves in Muslim societies has seen a significant transformation since the late 20th century, marked by a robust intertwining of religious discourse and gender equity. In the 1980s, a pivotal shift occurred as reform-oriented religious scholars began interpreting religious sources in a gender-equitable manner, paving the way for the rise of Islamic feminism in the 1990s.[5] This period witnessed the establishment of foundational groups and movements, such as Musawah in 2009, which have played a critical role in advocating for legal and social reforms across Muslim-majority countries.[6]

Islamic feminism has a distinctive approach, incorporating the Qur'an as its primary text and using interpretation as its primary method. The movement defends the full equality of all Muslims, men and women, either in public or in private spheres. It encounters old patriarchal interpretations by empowering women to participate in public debates and reinterpreting Islamic injunctions in a woman-friendly way. Particularly, local variants of feminism have led to important social changes, such as the promotion of women to judicial positions in Egypt and the sharing of mosque spaces in Africa.

The impact of this women's movement was far-reaching and diverse. In Malaysia, for example, organizations such as Sisters in Islam[7], founded by Zainah Anwar in 1988, worked with Islamic scholars to produce educational materials that combat patriarchal misunderstandings of Islamic scriptures. Similarly, in Afghanistan, although social norms are prevalent, there have been significant efforts to improve the situation of women, with the success of the Afghan Girl Robot Team and a higher proportion of women in parliament than the global average.[8] These examples underscore the dynamic and evolving nature of feminist movements within Muslim societies, demonstrating their critical role in shaping the discourse on gender equality and justice.

Unpaid Household Activities: A Point of Contention

In societies around the world, the division of household labor reflects social and economic conditions. For example, in the suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, women are responsible for domestic chores, this trend shifts as they enter the labor market, leading to an increase in men's participation in household tasks.[9] This dynamic is not isolated; similar patterns are observed in Bangladesh where women dedicate an average of 13 hours per day to unpaid household work, starkly contrasting with the

[5] https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/45743998.pdf
[6] https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/rise-islamic-feminists/
[7] http://www.sistersinislam.org.my/
[8] https://www.quora.com/Are-there-feminist-movements-in-Muslim-majority-countries
[9] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1828214/

1.2 hours contributed by men.[10] These disparities highlight a global issue where the burden of domestic chores disproportionately falls on women, regardless of their participation in paid employment.

In Islam, the duty of looking after the family is viewed from a spiritual perspective and is not only considered a duty but also a sacred gift. The Quran promotes justice and equality between spouses and encourages cooperation in running the family. This morality is supported by the historical narrative that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was involved in household chores, setting a precedent for gender roles in the home environment.[11]. Despite these teachings, cultural understandings can vary substantially, shaping the division of labor in Muslim households across different regions.[12]

Developing trends in Muslim populations, specifically among the younger generations in the Malay-Muslim community, show a shift in attitudes towards unpaid care work. This change is partly due to increased educational opportunities that alter perceptions and expectations of gender roles within the household.[13] However, despite these positive shifts, the narrative that women are inherently more adept at chores or childcare persists. Studies debunked this notion, arguing that skill in these areas is acquired through experience and practice rather than innate ability.[14] This ongoing debate about the distribution of household labor in Muslim societies continues to evolve, reflecting broader changes in social, religious, and economic contexts.

However, let's have a detailed overview of this claim or argument "Do women deserve to be paid for housework?" Today's mass media, under the influence of feminism, often seem to propagate that men in traditional religious societies do not do their fair share of housework. Feminist experts say that in a patriarchal society, men not only do not do housework but also take unfair advantage of their spouse's work.[15] Women are brutally exploited and not paid for childcare and domestic work.[16]

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[10] https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/we-must-recognise-silent-struggle-women-741246

[11] https://medium.com/@akazi/sunnahchallenge-fd6d81efdf1d

[12] https://www.quora.com/How-do-Muslim-couples-usually-divide-their-housework-and-household-duties-if-they-live-where-they-have-the-freedom-to-choose

[13] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/generational-shifts-unpaid-care-work-amp-singapore-5zxwc?trk=organization_guest_main-feed-card_feed-article-content

[14] https://themuslimwomentimes.com/2020/12/04/closing-the-domestic-gender-gap-in-muslim-families/

[15] https://tribune.com.pk/article/64679/international-womens-day-what-if-women-started-getting-paid-for-household-work

[16] https://unherd.com/2024/01/should-women-be-paid-for-housework/

Under the influence of this propaganda, women complain that they work more at home and their husbands do not do their share, but when the same women use cars and other luxuries with their husbands, the husbands ask them.[17] They do not complain that they also contribute equally to the purchase of these items or clean the car with them, puncture it, polish it, shine it, etc.

Similarly, Wendy McElroy writes in her book 'Mother's work doesn't warrant paycheck' that housewives and mothers provide services to themselves and their families and not to market customers. Just as you do not deserve to be paid for making your own breakfast, mothers who prepare food for their children do not deserve to be paid.[18]

Is housework performed only for men?

All the work done by a woman in the house is not for the benefit of the man, it is also for the benefit of the woman and the children, but feminism alleges that only husbands benefit from the domestic work of wives and that they are used as domestic servants or slaves. On the face of it, this accusation of feminism seems appealing, but if you think about it, its superficiality becomes clear. The bathroom where a woman cleans or makes the bed is used by her husband and children as well as herself. Even if she were living alone, she would have to do all these tasks for herself, but living with her husband and children, she can at most say that they benefit from some of her work. Now, if she wants to be compensated for that part, she will have to compare her work with the part of her husband's work that he does for the benefit of the woman and the family apart from himself. A man does more outside work than a woman, spends more at home but does not demand compensation.

Overall, who does more work, men, or women?

Warren Farrell writes in his book 'Does Feminism Discriminate Against Men: A Debate' that "According to a report in the Journal of Economic Literature, a woman spends an average of seventeen hours per week at home than a man." While a man works outside the home for an average of 20 hours a week more than a woman. In addition, men travel on an average two hours more than women. If all these figures are examined, men work five hours more than women.

Furthermore, Warren Farrell identifies 54 types of work around the home that are usually performed by husbands rather than wives but are often overlooked by

[17] https://www.kcl.ac.uk/wages-for-housework-a-step-towards-equality-at-first-glance-a-step-away-at-second
[18] McElroy, Wendy, (2006) 'Mother's 'Work' Doesn't Warrant Paycheck', https://www.foxnews.com/story/2006/05/09/mother-work-doesnt-warrant-paycheck/

feminists in 'housework studies'. These include a broken arm, leg, or neck bone, skull fracture, heart attack, hernia while lifting heavy weights, etc.[19]

The fact is that feminism is completely wrong about the assumption of women's unpaid labor. When a housewife marries a rich man, the work is not 'unpaid' but actually 'overpaid'. Housework and outside work may be similar in terms of effort, responsibility, or activity, but the difference between them is that housework does not deserve compensation. Housework and child rearing etc. if performed by someone else outside one's own home is compensable as a domestic worker even if the salary is low and of an unskilled and low-key nature. Reflects. Compared to many types of work outside the home, domestic work is easier, safer, and less stress-free, but still pays less than other skilled jobs. This work does not require physical labor like coal mining or construction work. When a woman does her own work at home, she is in a very calm state and no employer, supervisor, or manager is constantly behind her to tell her what to do, how to do it, and how quickly. The real issue is not what the nature of domestic work is, but whose place it is where it is done, and who benefits from it.

Is it permissible to charge for work done for one's entertainment?

People who work for someone as a domestic worker, be it childcare or any household work, are entitled to compensation because it is not their own house, nor is it theirs from the owner of the house. There is a relationship. Any activity that is called work if the same activity is done voluntarily without any pressure or immediate gain is often called a hobby or hobby. Growing plants in your garden, running on a treadmill, exercising, traveling miles on a bicycle, running horses, climbing mountains, etc. If done, compensation has to be paid.

When a homeowner or mistress does work of a different nature than they want, they do not expect to receive any compensation because it is done for their own benefit. Not only in our homes, but we also clean our bodies on a daily basis to keep it healthy, take a bath, cut unnecessary hair and nails, brush our teeth, and eat medicines and special foods to prevent diseases. , spend lakhs of rupees on our education and training, and entertainment but we do not expect any compensation in return. It is absurd to pay yourself for your own work, but if a nurse does the same work for us, she deserves to be paid.[20]

[19] Farrell, Warren "Does Feminism Discriminate Against Men: A Debate" https://www.amazon.com/Does-Feminism-Discriminate-Against-Men/dp/019531283X

[20] Twain, Mark (1984) "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" https://www.gutenberg.org/files/74/74-h/74-h.htm

If we don't ask for cleaning our body after the necessary needs, how can we ask for cleaning the place where we live? When we build a luxurious house for our living, the purpose is to have comfort and wealth there. If we do not expect compensation from someone else at the time of construction of this house, how can we expect compensation for keeping the environment of this house clean? Yes, if someone other than our family wants to take advantage of this house for a long time or permanently, then we will be entitled to get compensation from him.

According to Kingsley Browne, a law professor, unmarried single women have to work one-third more than single men to run the household.[21] Similarly, Catherine Hakim (Catherine Hakim) cites some other studies according to which single women spend 50% more and sometimes three times more time than men because they have more time to make up, groom, and get ready. is required. It is not difficult to conclude from this that women use most of their work for their own benefit and not for their husbands, so it is not correct to accuse men of exploiting them.[22]

According to Professor Brown's statistics, married men do as much housework on average as they did if they were single, although in some cases only one hour less is confirmed. But this thing should also be kept in mind that after marriage, men add many hours of outside work to support their wives and children. Men are also legally bound to support their families and even in case of divorce, the law obliges them to pay alimony to their wives, but there is no such legal restriction on women.[23]

Who has real control over the man's earnings?

The objection of feminism that men benefit greatly from women's work after marriage is not true at all. It is true that men and women have different work priorities and for men, housework is at the bottom of this priority. Economist Jennifer Roback admits that 'If I wanted my husband to do half the housework, that would mean I wanted him to spend half his time on everything on my priority list,

[21] Browne, Kingsley R. "Biology at Work: Rethinking Sexual Equality". https://www.amazon.com/Biology-Work-Rethinking-Equality-Evolution-ebook/dp/B000SPCVQI

[22] Hakim, Catherine (2004) "Key Issues in Women's Work". https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Key_Issues_in_Women_s_Work.html?id=ESNZSof2lrQC&redir_esc=y&hl=en

[23] Browne, Kingsley R. "Biology at Work: Rethinking Sexual Equality". https://www.amazon.com/Biology-Work-Rethinking-Equality-Evolution-ebook/dp/B000SPCVQI

but It's not possible because he has his own list of work priorities, and I can't do half of it.[24]

The general public is brainwashed by feminism that housework is a more selfless and valuable activity than the male outside work, but the reality is that extraordinary home renovations are tailored to women's tastes and the action of men in it is equal to non-interference. Esther Villar (Esther Villar) says that 'Most men are simple in their lifestyle and prioritize work. They are not interested in decorative showpieces, colorful curtains, artificial rubber plants, expensive furniture, silk and velvet cushions, wall mirrors and flowers. They have no place to keep their razors while shaving in the bathroom because every cupboard and shelf is full of women's creams, lotions, perfumes and cosmetics.[25]

If men liked to live like this, they would decorate their rooms while being alone before, but the facts are the otherwise. This environment is against the general mood of men and created by women and men bear it as the price of marriage. A man spends less time at home and spends more time outside, so women enjoy the comforts of home more. In the presence of existing laws, there is also a strong possibility that in case of separation or divorce, a man will lose the right to live in the house he has worked hard for day and night. As Villar describes her observation and says that "man is, in fact, a homeless creature, who constantly moves between office and home". Warren Farrell says that "from a woman's point of view, a house is a man's castle, but from a man's point of view, a married man's house is not his own, but a mortgage with the woman".[26]

Who plays an important role in child support?

Now it remains to talk about the tasks and responsibilities regarding the upbringing and care of children, which cannot be called the personal tasks of men and women. In this passage, it is said that if a woman gives more time, she should be compensated otherwise it will be unfair. There are two main points in response to this argument. First, the objection does not make it clear that women do more childcare than men. The point is simply that the nature of the responsibilities of women and men regarding the care and upbringing of children is different. Women

[24] Roback, Jennifer (1994) “Beyond Equality” https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/glj82&div=24&id=&page=

[25]Vilar, Esther Margareta (1971) “The Manipulated Man”. https://dontmarry.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/the_manipulated_man.pdf

[26] Farrel, Warren (2001) “The Myth of Male Power”. https://www.amazon.com/Myth-Male-Power-Warren-Farrell/dp/0425181448/ref=pd_sim_b_6

provide services directly in this process while men indirectly. The importance of men providing financial support cannot be understated. In this financial rush, the man not only spends more time away from home but also misses spending time with his children.

The second thing is that in this regard, women have the freedom of choice, if they want, they can play the responsibility of raising children and if they don't want, they can withdraw from it, but legally, men cannot be absolved from this responsibility. He is obliged to support them until they are young. Among unmarried couples in the United States, even if the man does not have a long-term relationship or desire to have children, he is legally responsible for supporting the child until the age of eighteen.

Married or cohabiting women receive a portion of their husband's salary separately, which can be considered as compensation or payment for some household work. According to Warren Farrell, a married man's income is not for himself but for the family. House rent or installments, garden, cars, doctors, insurance, medical bills and other necessities usually exceed his income, and he is always burdened with debt.[27]

A woman has the right to give birth to an abortion. The male is bound and powerless to retain or abort the embryo. When women choose to have children of their own free will, the purpose is also to have fun. This decision today is similar to whether you buy a pet or spend money on expensive cars and luxury equipment. Women who do not enjoy having children do not even decide to have children. The availability of effective methods of contraception and abortion in Western societies helps to make this decision. In such a situation, the decision to have children is less akin to employment and more a means of obtaining entertainment, and seeking compensation for the hobby is not a right.

Childcare cannot be called unpaid labor because women voluntarily opt out of the labor force and bear and raise children for their own pleasure and entertainment. After the birth of a child in Western societies, if women feel that it was their wrong decision, i.e. they are not getting the happiness they thought of, then there are many agencies that adopt the child and then it is handed over to parents who are desirous of children and do not have any children. In the West, there is no compulsion on a woman to have children, so no compensation can be expected for raising a child born of her own free will.[28]

[27] Farrel, Warren (2001) “The Myth of Male Power”. https://www.amazon.com/Myth-Male-Power-Warren-Farrell/dp/0425181448/ref=pd_sim_b_6

Who empty's men's pockets?

Men are said to be financially better or richer than women. The reason for this is that they spend more time in their profession, job or business and work hard, but a large part of their earnings is spent by their wives. In case of divorce and separation, they also have to give a part of their wealth to their ex-wife or girlfriend. Market researchers acknowledge that women dominate men in daily spending. According to Bernice Kanner, 88% of shopping in modern America is done by women.[29] According to Marti Barletta, women are responsible for 80 percent of household expenses.[30]

In the United States, wives, ex-wives, and mothers of children, even if they are not married to the father of the children, receive two types of payments, one for childcare and the other for welfare payments. A man cannot refuse to pay, whether he wishes to be a father or not, and even ordinary taxpayers have an obligation not to refuse the state's decision to support single mothers and their children. In this whole process, women use children as tools to line the pockets of men. Esther Vilar writes in her book 'The Manipulated Man' that this act of women is similar to child kidnappers who take children as hostages and rob their parents.[31]

In America, masculinity practically ends with paying the bills and reaping the benefits of femininity. Historian Martin Van Creveld (Martin Van Creveld) says that 'Men are apparently quite different creatures from charities, NGOs, welfare organizations and the welfare state, but if one considers the principles that are designed to operate them all. If it has been done, it is how to transfer all the resources from the hands of men to women.[32]

Islamic Jurisprudence and Women's Rights

After having a detailed overview of the available data of the surroundings where all the feminist demands are endorsed and achieved the so-called freedom it is evident that the grey areas still exist. The Islamic jurisprudence, or Sharia, rooted in the Qur'an and supplemented by the Sunnah and Ijtihad, forms a comprehensive

[29] Kanner, Bernice (2004) "Pocketbook Power: How to Reach the Hearts and Minds of Today's Most Coveted Consumer – Women" p 5. https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071418601/ref=cm_cr_asin_lnk

[30] Barletta, Marti (2007) "Marketing to Women" p 6. https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0793159636/ref=cm_cr_asin_lnk

[31] Villar, Esther Margareta (1971) "The Manipulated Man". https://dontmarry.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/the_manipulated_man.pdf

[32] Creveld, Martin Van (2013) "The Privileged Sex" p 137. https://www.amazon.com/Privileged-Sex-Martin-van-Creveld/dp/1484983122/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1395951866&sr=1-1&keywords=the+privileged+sex

framework for understanding women's rights within Islam. The Qur'an promotes gender equity, emphasizing the spiritual equality of men and women[33], which is a cornerstone for advocating women's rights in various Muslim societies.[34] This foundational principle serves as a cornerstone for advocating women's rights in both theoretical and practical dimensions of life. However, despite its robust framework, the practical application of these principles often reveals significant grey areas, particularly when juxtaposed with contemporary feminist demands and societal shifts.

Rights in Practice: Property and Marital Relations

One of the most prominent rights accorded to women in Islamic jurisprudence is property ownership. Women are entitled to full property rights before and after marriage, ensuring financial independence and security through marital gifts (mahr) and inheritance.[35] This provision underscores Islam's recognition of women's economic agency, a revolutionary concept in the historical context of 7th-century Arabia. However, disparities in inheritance laws—such as a woman inheriting half the share of a male counterpart—have sparked debates among scholars. While some argue that these laws reflect a balance of responsibilities within the family unit[36] critics contend that such provisions may require reinterpretation to align with modern understandings of gender equality.[37]

In marital relations, the Qur'an advocates fairness and mutual consent.[38] Women retain autonomy over their earnings, which remain exclusively theirs, irrespective of marital status.[39] This stipulation not only highlights economic independence but also reinforces the idea that financial provision is traditionally the husband's responsibility. However, the implementation of these principles varies widely across Muslim-majority regions, influenced by local customs and patriarchal interpretations that sometimes deviate from the original intent of Sharia.[40]

The role of women in family and society is deeply intertwined with Sharia's guidelines. Traditionally, men are seen as financial providers, while women often assume caregiving roles. Despite this, Islamic jurisprudence does not restrict women to the domestic sphere. The Qur'an and Hadith highlight examples of women

[33] Qur'an 4:1, 33:35
[34] https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/articles/genderequityinislam.html
[35] Qur'an 4:7, 4:32
[36] Esposito, J. L. (2001). *Women in Muslim Family Law*. Syracuse University Press.
[37] Wadud, A. (1999). *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. Oxford University Press.
[38] Qur'an 2:187
[39] Qur'an 4:32
[40] Hefner, Robert W. *Shari'a Law and Modern Muslim Ethics*. Indiana University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2005t30.

participating in trade, politics, and community affairs. Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) wife and a successful businesswoman, stands as a powerful example of economic and social leadership.[41] This underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of Islamic jurisprudence, which must contend with both religious texts and socio-cultural influences.

The application of Islamic jurisprudence on women's rights presents significant challenges due to the interplay between religious principles, cultural practices, and modern societal demands. While Islam advocates for spiritual and practical equity between men and women.[42] societal interpretations have often led to imbalances that contradict this inclusive vision. The roles assigned to men and women in Islam are complementary, designed to facilitate mutual support rather than competition or opposition.[43] However, patriarchal readings of Islamic texts have sometimes skewed this balance, leading to restrictions on women's education, employment, and participation in public life.

Reinterpretation through ijtihad offers a way to address these societal imbalances without compromising the foundational principles of the Qur'an or denying the views of the majority. For instance, inheritance laws, and unpaid labor must be grounded in authentic Islamic teachings that emphasize justice and cooperation between genders. It is essential to counter the societal imbalance by revisiting practices that hinder women's contributions while respecting the Qur'anic framework, which assigns roles not as limitations but as means of fostering harmony within the family and society. Efforts to reinterpret the Qur'an should focus on challenging cultural distortions rather than the divine text itself.[44] By engaging with the Qur'an holistically, the goal should be to highlight the inherent equity in Islam while ensuring that reformation aligns with the collective values of the Muslim community

Radical Islamic feminism is reshaping traditional norms by advocating for women's roles as heads of state and even imams, challenging the conventional male authority over females in both marriage and family settings.[45] This movement is part of a broader push within Muslim communities to redefine gender roles and increase female agency in religious spaces. One of the most notable examples of this shift is

[41] Abbasi, Muhammad Umar. (2020). Islam, Modernity, And Justice For Women And Role Of Women Leaders Of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.A.W) Era. 19. 1381-1394.
[42] Qur'an 33:35, 4:1
[43] Engineer, A. A. (1992). *The rights of women in Islam*. C. Hurst & Co. Publishers.
[44] An-Na'im, A. (2002). *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia*. Harvard University Press.
[45] https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/how-islamic-feminism-could-shape-gender-equity

the establishment of Mariam Mosque in Denmark by Syrian Finnish female imam Sherin Khankan. As Europe's first mosque led by a woman, it stands as a significant symbol of Islamic feminism's commitment to deconstructing traditional hierarchies and challenging male dominance in religious settings Khankan's efforts underline a growing trend where women are not only participating but leading mixed-gender prayers, a practice that remains controversial and is met with mixed responses from Islamic scholars.[46] Which is again another extreme.

Balancing tradition and progress require a dual approach. On one hand, Islamic teachings must be upheld, ensuring that reforms do not contradict the principles of Sharia or alienate the majority of the Muslim community.On the other hand, there is a pressing need to address systemic inequalities that have emerged from societal misinterpretations. Addressing these issues requires promoting awareness and fostering an environment where men and women collaborate as partners, reflecting the Qur'anic ideal of mutual support.

The balance lies in adhering to the timeless values of equity and justice while evolving with the needs of modern Muslim societies. This approach not only rectifies societal imbalances but also strengthens the relevance of Islamic teachings in addressing contemporary challenges. Ultimately, progress must be guided by the principles of the Qur'an, ensuring that reforms foster unity, harmony, and a just society where both men and women thrive in their divinely assigned roles

Conclusion

This article critically examines the evolving discourse on gender justice within Islamic contexts, focusing on the principles enshrined in the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence rather than adopting an exclusively modern feminist approach. The Qur'an establishes an inclusive framework of equity and justice, assigning distinct yet complementary roles to men and women. These roles are not meant to create opposition but to facilitate mutual support and harmony within the family and society. The challenges explored in this study reveal that societal misinterpretations, rather than Islamic teachings, have often resulted in imbalances that undermine the Qur'anic vision. Issues such as unpaid household labor, women's participation in social and economic spheres, and debates over gender roles highlight the need for a return to authentic Islamic principles. Efforts must focus on countering these imbalances without altering the divine guidance of the Qur'an or denying the majority view within Muslim communities. While Islamic feminism has brought attention to certain inequalities, its radical interpretations risk departing from the foundational tenets of Islam. This article advocates for a measured approach rooted in ijtihad (independent reasoning) and the rich legacy of Islamic scholarship, ensuring that reforms align with Sharia while addressing contemporary societal needs. Such an approach maintains the timeless values of Islam, which emphasize

[46] https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/muslim-feminism-womens-rights

justice, fairness, and mutual respect, offering a path forward that is both authentic and transformative.

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