

Women's Contribution in Society: An Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The concept of gender equality in Islam is often misunderstood, either by those who believe that Islam restricts women's roles or by those who demand absolute equality without considering inherent differences. This article explores the active roles of men and women in Islam using a thematic exegesis approach to QS. An-Nisa (4): 32 and QS. At-Taubah (9): 71, based on Fathul Karim Mukhtashar Tafsir. The analysis reveals that Islam emphasizes equality between men and women in faith and rewards for deeds while guiding them to fulfill roles in accordance with Islamic teachings. Women are provided with opportunities to contribute to various aspects of life, including social and da'wah activities, without violating religious principles. This study also identifies challenges in implementing this concept due to the strong influence of patriarchal culture. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding based on authoritative exegesis, along with supportive policies, is necessary to ensure the just implementation of Islamic values.

Keywords: Gender equality; thematic exegesis; women's roles in Islam.

ABSTRAK

Konsep kesetaraan gender dalam Islam sering kali disalahpahami, baik oleh kalangan yang menganggap Islam membatasi peran perempuan maupun oleh mereka yang menuntut kesetaraan absolut tanpa mempertimbangkan perbedaan kodrat. Artikel ini membahas peran aktif laki-laki dan perempuan dalam Islam dengan pendekatan tafsir tematik terhadap QS. An-Nisa (4): 32 dan QS. At-Taubah (9): 71 menggunakan Tafsir Fathul Karim Mukhtashar. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa Islam menegaskan kesetaraan laki-laki dan perempuan dalam keimanan dan balasan amal, sekaligus mengarahkan mereka untuk menjalankan peran sesuai dengan ketetapan syariat. Perempuan diberikan ruang untuk berkontribusi dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan, termasuk sosial dan dakwah, tanpa harus menyalahi aturan

agama. Studi ini juga mengidentifikasi tantangan penerapan konsep ini akibat pengaruh budaya patriarki yang masih kuat. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pemahaman yang komprehensif berbasis tafsir otoritatif serta kebijakan yang mendukung implementasi nilai-nilai Islam yang adil.

Keywords: Kesetaraan gender; tafsir tematik; peran perempuan dalam Islam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in society has long been a subject of scholarly debate, encompassing legal, social, and religious perspectives. In the Islamic context, the discussion becomes even more critical, as it intersects with interpretations of sacred texts and traditional practices. Some argue that Islam imposes limitations on women's participation in public life, while others demand a form of equality that ignores the different yet complementary roles assigned by religion. These competing views often result in misunderstanding both the textual teachings and the lived realities of Muslim women (Tahergholi et al.). Islam, however, offers a comprehensive framework that upholds justice and dignity for both men and women. Throughout Islamic history, women have made significant contributions in various sectors including education, business, and religious scholarship. The example of figures such as Khadijah (RA) and Aisha (RA) reflects a tradition of female agency and intellectual involvement. Yet, in many contemporary Muslim communities, patriarchal culture continues to obscure these ideals, limiting women's roles in the name of religion rather than its authentic teachings (Stear et al.).

The Qur'an provides essential guidance regarding the role and status of women, not only in terms of faith but also in their social contributions. Qur'anic verses emphasize moral, spiritual, and societal responsibilities shared by both genders. For instance, QS. At-Taubah (9): 71 clearly articulates the partnership between believing men and women in enjoining good and forbidding evil. Likewise, QS. An-Nisa' (4): 32 reminds believers to appreciate their individual efforts rather than covet what has been divinely apportioned (Zenudin). To investigate these issues methodically, this article adopts a thematic interpretation approach (tafsir maudhui), which analyzes verses on similar topics collectively to produce a more coherent understanding. The selected verses, QS. An-Nisa' (4): 32 and QS. At-Taubah (9): 71, directly engage with the themes of women's roles, rights, and social participation in an Islamic framework. Tafsir Fathul Karim Mukhtashar is employed as the main exegetical reference due to its concise yet authoritative interpretations (Farid et al.).

Previous interpretations have often been influenced by contextual biases or cultural lenses that diminish the Qur'an's universal and ethical vision. By returning to the textual foundations through a thematic exegetical lens, this study aims to clarify misconceptions and offer a more just framework for understanding women's roles. The Qur'an's call for justice, mutual responsibility, and moral accountability transcends gender, pointing instead to individual piety and effort as the ultimate criteria (Nur)(It). This study thus seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of the selected verses to explore how Islam envisions gender relations and women's contributions in social spheres. Special attention is given to how religious interpretations can support equitable policies in Muslim societies. The ultimate goal is to bridge the gap between scriptural ideals and lived experience by presenting a reading rooted in Qur'anic authority and contemporary relevance.

By revisiting these foundational texts and placing them within the modern context, this article contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations on gender and social justice in Islam. It

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aims to reinforce the idea that Islamic teachings not only allow but encourage women's participation in society, provided it is framed within ethical and spiritual boundaries consistent with the objectives of the Shari'ah (Amanda; Abdullah and Mazahir). Several studies have attempted to analyze the status of women in Islam from both feminist and Islamic frameworks. Lone (2023) explores the shift in women's status between pre-Islamic and post-Islamic Arabia, emphasizing that Islam granted unprecedented rights such as ownership, education, and legal standing. Çakın (2022), on the other hand, examines the portrayal of women in the Qur'an, concluding that Qur'anic narratives consistently acknowledge women as moral agents equal to men. These works support the view that Islam is not inherently restrictive but has often been misapplied due to external cultural factors (Lone; Çakın).

Other scholars focus more directly on Qur'anic exegesis. Zenudin (2019) compares verses such as QS. At-Taubah (9): 71 and QS. Ali Imran (3): 195, revealing that women are consistently positioned as active moral and social beings in the Qur'an. Similarly, Farid et al. (2023) highlight the holistic nature of thematic tafsir in building a consistent framework for gender analysis in the Qur'an. Their research supports this article's approach by showing how interrelated verses must be studied collectively to avoid fragmented or biased interpretations. Despite these contributions, many interpretations of gender-related verses remain limited by traditional or cultural assumptions. Nisa (2021) observes that Islamic movements across different regions often differ in how they apply gender justice principles, depending on socio-political contexts. This confirms the need for Qur'anic studies that not only return to the original texts but also consider how interpretations can be applied justly and realistically in contemporary societies (Nisa)

2. METHOD

This article employs a qualitative method with a thematic interpretation approach (*tafsir maudhui*), focusing on the analysis of Qur'anic verses that discuss the active role of women in society. This approach was chosen because it allows for a systematic study of a specific theme in the Qur'an by connecting various verses with similar meanings. The primary source used in this study is *Tafsir Fathul Karim Mukhtashar*, which provides explanations of the verses relevant to this theme (Kitto et al.).

In the preparation of this article, two main verses analyzed are QS. An-Nisa' (4): 32 and QS. At-Taubah (9): 71. These two verses were selected because they highlight the role of women in social life and affirm that men and women share equal responsibility in promoting goodness in society. *Tafsir Fathul Karim Mukhtashar* is used as the main reference to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of these verses, both in the context of revelation and their relevance to social life (Miles, M.B. & Huberman).

The analytical method used in this article is descriptive, aiming to explain the meaning of the verses based on the chosen tafsir and relate them to the concept of women's contributions in Islam. Through this method, the article seeks to provide a clear and systematic understanding of how the Qur'an positions women in social life, without extending the discussion to more complex social or cultural aspects (Monsen)

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings reveal that the equality in reward for deeds and the prohibition of envy in QS. An-Nisa (4): 32 emphasize that Islam upholds the principle of

justice for both men and women in terms of deeds and rewards. According to *Tafsir Fathul Karim Mukhtashar*, this verse responds to the feelings of envy that arose among men and women regarding the different roles assigned by Islamic law. Islam does not measure a person's merit based on gender but rather on their efforts and piety. Therefore, women should not feel inferior because they are not involved in warfare, and men should not feel superior because of certain roles assigned to them. This verse also instills the principle that each individual should focus on their respective roles and responsibilities and seek Allah's grace rather than comparing themselves with others.

QS. At-Taubah (9): 71 affirms that men and women share equal social responsibilities in *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil), performing prayers, and giving zakat. *Tafsir Fathul Karim Mukhtashar* explains that this verse indicates that the role of women in society is not limited to domestic affairs but extends to various aspects of life, including da'wah (Islamic propagation) and social welfare. Islam does not marginalize the role of women in building a better community. This principle reinforces the idea that women are not merely companions to men but are also active partners in upholding Islamic values within society.

In a broader context, the implementation of this concept still faces challenges, particularly due to the deeply rooted patriarchal culture in some societies. Although the Qur'an clearly provides equal standing for men and women in terms of faith and righteous deeds, social realities often limit women's opportunities and participation. Therefore, a deeper understanding of Qur'anic interpretation is essential to ensure that Islamic values are applied fairly and without deviation from the principles of Sharia. Policy support and education based on a correct understanding of Islamic teachings are also crucial factors in realizing equality in accordance with Islamic teachings.

3.1. Analysis of QS. At-Taubah (9): 71 in the Context of Women's Role in Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

Allah SWT says in QS. At-Taubah (9): 71:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, establish prayer, give zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is they upon whom Allah will have mercy. Indeed, Allah is Almighty and Wise.” (QS. At-Taubah [9]: 71)

According to *Fathul Karim Mukhtashar*, this verse appears after Allah describes the negative traits of the hypocrites in the preceding verses. As a comparison, Allah then mentions the praiseworthy qualities of the believers, both men and women (Yasin). This verse emphasizes the equality between men and women in terms of faith and social roles. Allah states that believing men and women are allies (*awliya'*) of one another. This concept reflects the balance and cooperation within the Muslim community, where

women are not only confined to domestic roles but are also active participants in social affairs and da'wah (Yasin).

In this interpretation, the Prophet conveyed two important hadiths to explain the meaning of this verse:

“A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts support each other.” (HR. Bukhari & Muslim)

“The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body: when any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever.” (HR. Bukhari & Muslim)

These two hadiths demonstrate that the relationship between men and women in Islam is one of mutual support rather than domination or belittlement. This verse affirms that the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil is not limited to men; it is also a responsibility for women. In some societies, there remains a belief that women have no role in da'wah or social reform. However, this verse clearly shows that women have an equal responsibility to uphold good and prevent wrongdoing (Yasin).

This interpretation also underscores equality in worship obligations, such as establishing prayer, giving zakat, and obeying Allah and His Messenger. This shows that acts of worship and devotion are not exclusive to men but are equally applicable to women. The verse concludes with Allah's promise that believing men and women who possess these qualities will be granted His mercy. This commentary explains that Allah does not differentiate in rewarding deeds based on gender but rather based on obedience and the quality of one's actions (Yasin).

This concept is highly relevant to discussions about the role of women in Islam, where misunderstandings often arise regarding women's position in worship and spiritual rewards. However, in this verse, Allah confirms that men and women have equal status in receiving His mercy, as long as they fulfill His commandments (Nur).

This verse provides a strong foundation for women's active participation in social, educational, and da'wah fields. In a modern context, Muslim women can contribute to various aspects of life, including:

1. Education: by becoming teachers or educators who instill Islamic values.
2. Healthcare: by becoming medical professionals who help the ummah maintain health and well-being.
3. Social and Da'wah Work: by actively participating in social institutions, da'wah communities, and religious movements.

Islam does not restrict women's involvement as long as they remain within the boundaries of *Shari'ah*. Women are not only permitted but also encouraged to actively contribute to building society while upholding Islamic values (It)

3.2. Analysis of QS. An-Nisa' (4): 32 in the Context of Women's Role

Allah SWT states in QS. An-Nisa' (4): 32:

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۚ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبْنَ ۚ
وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

"And do not covet what Allah has given some of you more than others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah for His bounty. Indeed, Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing." (QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 32)

In *Fathul Karim Mukhtashar*, this verse was revealed in the context of certain women expressing a desire to receive the same virtues as men in specific matters, such as jihad and inheritance. This is based on a narration from Umm Salamah, who asked the Prophet about the differences between men and women in terms of inheritance and the merit of participating in jihad for the sake of Allah. In response to this inquiry, Allah revealed this verse to clarify that every individual, both men and women, has their own rights and shares according to Allah's decree (Yasin).

According to As-Suddi, this verse also relates to the statement of men who wished to receive greater rewards because they participated in battles, while women hoped to receive the same merit as the martyrs. However, Allah explains that each person will receive compensation according to their deeds and that the best course of action is to seek Allah's bounty rather than merely desiring someone else's position or virtue. Ibn Abbas interpreted this verse as a prohibition against envying what Allah has ordained for each individual, whether in worldly or spiritual matters. Instead of focusing on differences, people are commanded to pray and ask for Allah's blessings according to His will (Yasin).

This verse emphasizes that justice in Islam does not mean uniformity but rather the granting of rights according to the capacity and role of each individual. Men are given certain privileges in specific aspects, such as jihad and family leadership, while women have excellence in other areas, such as nurturing and motherhood. However, regarding the reward for good deeds, both men and women have equal opportunities to attain Allah's pleasure. This concept is reinforced in the tafsir, which states that each person's efforts and deeds are valued based on their quality rather than their gender. Allah affirms that everyone has their own share of what they have earned, ensuring that no one is treated unjustly in His divine justice.

From this verse, it can be concluded that Islam does not restrict women from contributing to society as long as it remains within the boundaries of the Sharia. Women's active involvement in various fields such as education, economics, and social work is not in conflict with Islamic teachings. On the contrary, women are encouraged to develop their potential and contribute to society according to the abilities that Allah has bestowed upon them (Yasin).

In the modern era, many women have proven their capabilities in various aspects of life without sacrificing their Islamic identity (Nisa). Islam provides space for women to contribute based on their natural disposition and abilities rather than based on

disproportionate demands for equality. By understanding this verse, the concept of women's roles in Islam can be positioned more fairly and in line with Islamic values.

3.3. Implementation of Equality in Social and Islamic Contexts

The concept of equality between men and women in Islam is not merely a theoretical idea found in religious texts but also has tangible implications in various aspects of social life (Lone). Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, women have been granted rights that they previously did not have in the pre-Islamic Arab society, such as the right to own property, access education, and participate in social life. Today, this principle of equality continues to evolve in various fields, including education, economics, and politics (Amanda).

In the field of education, Islam emphasizes the importance of knowledge for every Muslim, whether male or female. This is reflected in many hadiths of the Prophet that encourage Muslims to seek knowledge without gender discrimination. In Islamic history, we find many female figures such as Aisha (radhiyallahu ‘anha) who became leading references in the fields of hadith and fiqh. In the modern era, Muslim women have made significant progress in various academic disciplines, including medicine, science, and technology (Jawed and Sikka).

In the economic sector, Islam grants women the right to work and own property while maintaining ethical conduct and fulfilling responsibilities in accordance with Islamic teachings. The story of Khadijah (radhiyallahu ‘anha), a successful businesswoman during the time of the Prophet ﷺ, serves as evidence that women have had active roles in the economy. Today, many Muslim women are excelling as entrepreneurs, professionals, and workers in various sectors, demonstrating that Islam does not restrict their roles as long as they remain within the boundaries of Islamic principles (Ridley).

However, in practice, there are still challenges and barriers to implementing this principle of equality. Some deeply rooted patriarchal cultures in certain Muslim societies often restrict women's access to rights they are entitled to, such as access to education and employment. Additionally, there is also a misunderstanding of the concept of equality, which is sometimes misinterpreted as erasing the natural differences between men and women. In reality, Islam emphasizes balance in roles rather than absolute uniformity.

To address these challenges, a balanced approach is needed — one that involves a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings and strengthening education within society. Equality in Islam does not mean eliminating the natural differences between men and women, but rather placing them in fair positions according to their respective potential and responsibilities (Abdullah). Therefore, raising awareness about the active roles of women in society while remaining faithful to Islamic values is an essential step toward building a harmonious and just society.

4. CONCLUSION

In Islam, gender equality does not mean making men and women identical in their roles, but rather placing them in a fair position according to their respective capacities

and responsibilities. Qur'anic verses such as QS. An-Nisa (4): 32 and QS. At-Taubah (9): 71 affirm that both men and women have equal opportunities to earn rewards and the fruits of their deeds. Islam provides space for women to contribute in various aspects of life, including faith, da'wah, social, and economic fields, without negating their natural dispositions. However, in practice, challenges still exist due to patriarchal cultural influences and misunderstandings about the concept of gender equality in Islam. In some societies, women's roles are still restricted under the pretext of religion, even though Islam has clearly defined their rights. Therefore, it is essential to return to the correct understanding of Islam so that the principle of justice can be applied without violating Islamic values.

To strengthen the understanding of gender equality in Islam, it is necessary to enhance Islamic literacy through scholarly studies and academic discussions based on authoritative interpretations of the Qur'an. Moreover, Islamic educational institutions must ensure that both men and women have equal access to education and the opportunity to develop their potential. Stigma and misconceptions that limit women's roles in society should also be addressed through da'wah and regulations that uphold justice. The government and relevant institutions can formulate policies aligned with Islamic values to ensure that the rights and obligations of men and women are maintained proportionally. On the other hand, Muslim women need to be supported so that they can contribute more broadly in social, economic, and da'wah fields, while adhering to Islamic principles. With these measures, the implementation of gender equality in Islam is expected to be successfully realized in harmony with Islamic values.

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