



Religion and Gender Studies: Examining the Intersection

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ABSTRACT

Background: In every religion, gender has been very closely connected to it. The relationship among males and females, their status and religious conception and spiritual knowledge is critically read through the lens related to the feeling, which implicates that women and men must be treated equally. To expose common historical explanations that authorize men and treat them as much less important than women, this assignment gives to the field of religion and gender as shown in holy and inaccessible texts. The women are thought as humbler and more respectful in religious books. Educated people review institutional practices, such as not including women from leadership positions in religion, and feel that women and men must be treated equally. This is important to uncover biases regarding this myth.

Objective: The main goal of this research was to critically cut apart the gender stories that are in a detailed way woven into holy and untouchable writings.

Methodology: The information and concepts included in this article were gathered from Holy Quran, Sayings of Prophet, Islamic literature books and literature available in different online sources.

Results: All religions have certain features and, are shaped by the social big picture in which they are practiced and provide personal guidelines that in some way stop a quality that makes something stand-alone or look different. Groups who are treated as much less important, including single women, are the most important examples of how real experiences differ from popular explanations. This research provided important information about the complex patterns existent inside religious contexts as well as related to things slowly changing for a better over time paths of social change.

Conclusions: Using a related feeling that women and men must be treated equally and an intersectional solid basic structure on which bigger things can be built, this way of doing things tries to a lot of changes academically to understand and enable big changes in religious and institutional normal behaviors at the local and global levels. For a complete understanding of complex issues, the long and high-quality act of asking questions and trying to find the truth about something is necessary. This emerging field can fundamentally alter institutional and religious structures globally by purposefully elevating marginalized perspectives and employing participatory research methods.

INTRODUCTION

It is a natural perception that men and women should be treated equally. This is intersectional justification of why something happens the way it does. There is great overlap between religious borders and institutions. Also, there are a lot of similarities in male and female status such as

sexuality, race and other aspects. This new field of study draws attention to how male and female status is socially built within religious ideas and recognizes how gender systems people are in separate levels of importance have influenced the development of religious institutions over time. This study's main goal is to critically cut apart the gender stories that are in a detailed way woven into holy and

untouchable writings. What's more, by examining different religions and related to where mountains, rivers, cities, etc., are located areas in the big picture of their historical histories, new understandings of things can be gained and the risks connected with modern people are reduced. These serve to compare two or more things analyses provide intelligent information on how different religions show in different historical and cultural contexts in their Standards.

The historical process of making something much less important for women in the Christian faith has been completely examined by feminist theologians, including Rosemary Radford Reuther (Vuola 2017). It is stated in Nyhagen (2017) article that in addition to criticizing traditional understandings that support the act of making something less important or smaller for women. Reuther's intelligent study of opinions of the structures present in religion's series of actions is always done the same way for religious or other reasons and teachings (Ackermann 2008). The Catholic Church's ban on women becoming priests and the many Protestants religious groups' restrictions on their ability to hold positions of leadership serve as examples of treating people unfairly based on their sex in religious institutions (Nyhagen 2017).

Concerning Muslim woman's journey and self-perception, a thorough analysis carried out. Islam clarifies the complex experiences of women who practice Islam in many worldwide situations. When compared to their counterparts in countries where Muslims predominate, the experiences of Muslim women living in Western nations show noteworthy discrepancies. The relationships between gender, race, and religion have been studied by academic researchers, such as Amina Wajud (Käsehage and Hock 2020). They have emphasized how important it is to examine the complex layers of identity that shape Muslim women's lives. This talk emphasizes how Muslim women's experiences are shaped not just by their gender but also by their racial, cultural, and geopolitical backgrounds.

In the context of Hinduism, Käsehage and Hock (2020) claimed that there are numerous ways in which religious philosophy and social structures converge. The four ancient goals of life, known as the Purusharthas, have traditionally been used to define the specific social obligations attributed to each gender (Kumar 2021). However, modern interpretations coming from feminist groups within the faith are challenging the dominant gender norms in Hinduism. According to Kumar (2021), the "goddess movement" in Hinduism is defined by the devotion of female goddesses and aims to advance women's liberation by critically analyzing and challenging patriarchal interpretations that have dominated throughout history.

As regards contribution of gender role in development in society in the eyes of Islam, humanity has a distinguished status and there is no distinction between men and women as human beings, because every human being (male and female) is brought into existence through genitalia. God says:

إِنِّي لَا أَضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى-بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ
"I do not waste the deed of any deed of a man or a woman among you." Some of you are some of others (That means you all have the same reality).

Therefore, Islam considers women to be a perfect part of society like men. And considers both of them to be equal partners to each other. Like men, women also have freedom of action and will. But if an individual is a perfect part of a society, it does not necessarily follow that every right enjoyed by a person of society, or every characteristic possessed by an individual should also be possessed by another individual. Also, the Prophet ﷺ said:

انما النساء شقائق الرجال -

"Women are equal to men"

While explaining this hadith, Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim al-Jawzi wrote:

ان النساء و الرجل شقيقان و نظيران لايتفاوتان و لا يتباينان في ذلك و هذا يدل على انه من المعلوم الثابت في فطرهم ان حكم الشقيقتين و النظيرين حكم واحد

"Undoubtedly, ladies and gentlemen are equal to each other. There is no difference and contradiction between the two, and this is the proof of the known fact proved by their nature that two similar and similar things have the same order."

Furthermore:

لان النساء شقائق الرجل في التكليف

"Women are equal to men in being obligated and bound by Shariah obligations."

Women are a very important part of society. Without whom the concept of society is not possible. In general, Islam gave women the same level of humanity as men. God says:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَ خَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَ بَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَ نِسَاءً

"O people! Fear your Lord. Who created you from a single seed and created from it its mate and from them many men and women proliferated."

In this verse, men and women are considered to be of the same origin and given equal status in humanity. There is perfect equality between man and woman in spiritual and moral field. Just as a man can attain nearness to Allah through struggle and obedience.

Similarly, a woman can reach high levels. God says:
 ” مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى وَ هُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً “
"Whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and he is a believer, these people will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged in the least."

In gender narratives, there is a complex interplay between linguistic components, historical context, and interpretive paradigms is shown by the investigation of gender narratives in religious texts. Understanding the reciprocal relationship between beliefs and societal norms requires an understanding of gender roles and attitudes as they are portrayed in religious texts, according to Allen (2020) approach. The approach indicated above recognizes the importance of placing gender narratives within religious

texts and the fact that interpretation is a complex process that is influenced by historical and cultural context. Furthermore, feminism as a focal point highlights the critical viewpoint used to analyze the underlying prejudices in these writings (Matney 2022). This section recognizes the importance of feminist hermeneutics, but it does not provide a thorough analysis of individual books or stories found in religious texts. The lack of this component limits how much can be understood and reconsidered about the current gender movement.

The subject of debate is Islamic feminist hermeneutics, particularly emphasizing Amina Wadudin's intellectual contributions (Matney 2022). According to Damle and Damle (2023), reinterpreting the Quran challenges conventional readings that prioritize male perspectives and prevalent patriarchal beliefs. The controversy concerning the function of a female leader during public prayer served as an example of how feminist hermeneutics might be applied to the interpretation of Islamic texts. "Christian Feminist Theology Highlighting Prejudices against Women," written by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, is a thorough analysis of Christian literature that looks for instances of bias against women based on gender. The term "Kirveld" offers an unbiased depiction of biblical stories along with a critical examination of the power structure inside Christianity (Damle and Damle 2023). Main goal of this study was to critically cut apart the gender stories that are in a detailed way woven into holy and untouchable writings and current point of view on the concept.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology for this study involved a multifaceted approach that aims to comprehensively explore the dynamic relationship between religion and gender. In order to obtain comprehensive insights and nuanced understandings, this study used a qualitative research methodology that incorporates a number of techniques.

Prior to establishing the theoretical framework and identifying important issues and debates at the junction of religion and gender studies, a thorough literature has been carried out. Scholarly publications, books, and pertinent theoretical stances that serve as the study's foundation will all be included in this review. The study used qualitative interviews with people of all genders and religious backgrounds to collect varied viewpoints and experiences. Participants expressed their personal stories, opinions, and experiences regarding the intersection of religion and gender during these semi-structured interviews. To ensure a rich and diverse dataset, the sample was deliberately chosen to cover a range of ages, cultural origins, and religious affiliations.

Furthermore, a content analysis of religious texts and teachings was carried out in order to investigate the manner in which different religious traditions construct and understand gender. A thematic analysis was performed on

the information gathered from participant observation, content analysis, and interviews. The study identified themes and patterns pertaining to the junction of gender and religion. The results were evaluated and contextualised within extant literature and theoretical frameworks. Thorough coding and classification were made to improve the validity and dependability of the study's findings. In order to collect quantitative data on attitudes, beliefs, and experiences connected to gender and religion, a survey with closed-ended questions was given to a wider sample in order to identify broader trends and patterns. Statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data, enabling a more methodical investigation of correlations and relationships among a broader set of participants. The goal of this mixed-methods methodology is to combine the breadth of quantitative patterns with the depth of qualitative insights to offer a comprehensive and rigorous investigation of the relationship between religion and gender. The informed consent and confidentiality as well as other ethical requirements during the entire research procedure were strictly upheld.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpretation of interview findings

The results of this study revealed multifaceted insights into the complex relationship between religion and gender. Qualitative results from participant observations and in-depth interviews show a range of viewpoints and experiences within various religious contexts. The narratives presented by the participants showcased the intersectional character of their identities, demonstrating the ways in which religious beliefs influence and interact with gender norms and expectations. Religious text content analysis revealed both constrictive and liberating interpretations of gender and highlighted the complex ways in which gender is created within particular traditions.

Larger themes and patterns were further elucidated by quantitative survey results. Correlations between specific religious affiliations and specific gender norms or responsibilities were found through statistical research. Furthermore, the survey data revealed differences in how religion affects gender attitudes across demographic variables like age, education level, and cultural background. A thorough investigation was made possible by the mixed-methods approach, which was able to capture the breadth of overarching tendencies as well as the depth of individual experiences.

The discussion of these results delved into the implications for both religious studies and gender studies. Discussing how people negotiate their gender identities in religious situations allows for a more nuanced understanding of identity, agency, and social norms. The study challenges preconceived notions about how religion affects gender roles and highlights the value of appreciating

the variety of experiences that exist within religious communities. The results also highlight the necessity of using an intersectional lens to examine how other variables, such as culture and socioeconomic class, connect with religion and gender dynamics.

In addition, the study adds to the continuing discussion over how religion either supports or contradicts gender inequality. The research offers insights for religious scholars, practitioners, and policymakers looking to promote inclusivity and resolve gender-based disparities within religious communities by identifying certain religious teachings or practices that may influence gender norms. Additionally, the study's quantitative component gives empirical evidence to support or question existing theoretical frameworks, expanding the scholarly conversation on the junction of religion and gender.

Institutional practices and gender dynamics

Religious organizations usually maintain boundaries between genders and have an impact on the roles and opportunities that are open to people. Ayres-Bennett and Sanson (2020) have brought it to light. Certain customs, like the use of gender-segregated prayer rooms and the prohibition against women participating in certain rituals, are visible indicators of the observance of deeply ingrained institutional norms in Orthodox Jewish communities. Similar restrictions on leadership roles based on gender are enforced by the Catholic Church, which maintains the custom of an entirely male priesthood.

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The impact on women's status in religious leadership

It is also clear that institutional norms have an impact on women's participation in leadership positions within religions. According to Ayres-Bennett and Sanson (2020), women actively participate in many aspects of religious observance, yet they still face barriers to achieving prominent roles in many religious traditions. For example, the dearth of female priests is an indication of the influence of institutional limitations, even if women carry out priestly duties in Catholicism.

The dominant patriarchal and modesty norms in religious institutions:

Religious settings frequently enforce modesty laws, which support patriarchal and gender norms and have particular effects on women. As mentioned by Raday (2016), in the Islamic culture, required modesty practices like the hijab can be seen as tools used to impose patriarchal control over women's behavior and bodies. However, within the framework of Islamic teachings, Islamic feminist groups actively challenge this conventional wisdom and push for alternative interpretations that value personal autonomy and a revised definition of modesty (Raday 2016). Similar to this, women's behavior and appearance are influenced by religious traditions' adherence to modesty ideals, which often reflect deeply rooted patriarchal power structures residing inside religious institutions.

Amplifying underrepresented voices: Prioritizing disregarded perspectives

The voices of those who have historically been marginalized within religious communities must be given priority due to the wide range of religious interactions. According to Lata *et al.* (2021), the viewpoints stated above are often overlooked in the conversation surrounding religion, yet they provide important insights into the complex elements that affect religious participation. We have a greater comprehension of the complexity present in this field by illuminating their viewpoints. Even though indigenous peoples have a strong spiritual connection to the land and follow spiritual traditions, their experiences within Christianity are frequently marginalized (Wondimagegn *et al.* 2020). From traditional Western interpretations of Christianity, the insights they offer alternative spiritual perspectives.

Similarly, the investigation of Wondimagegn *et al.* (2020) it has mentioned that the convergence of disability and normative gender within religious contexts represents an unforeseen progression. It has been argued by Bächtiger and Schwaiger (2022) that individuals with disabilities who reside in religious institutions frequently encounter many obstacles, encompassing physical accessibility issues, limited linguistic proficiency, and inadequate inclusive housing options. The experiences of individuals underscore the necessity of implementing religious practices that are more inclusive, accommodating diverse capacities, and challenging conventional gender

Comparative analyses and historical context: Understanding diverse manifestations

According to Van Rossum (2021), comparative analysis of many religions and areas across the globe offers significant insights into the diverse manifestations of religious gender standards. The utilization of this methodology, in conjunction with the contextualization of historical epochs, fosters novel

comprehension and safeguards against prevailing views. In certain Eastern traditions, there is a notable matriarchal influence and the practice of goddess worship, whereas Western faiths predominantly adhere to patriarchal hierarchies (Van Rossum 2021).

Moreover, a review of religious gender norms across a number of global regions reveals unique local interpretations and practices. For example, there could be significant differences in the ways in which traditional African religions represent femininity and the gender roles seen in South Asian religious contexts (Singh and Vom Hau 2016). The previously noted regional differences highlight the way in which religious teachings and cultural nuances overlap, impacting gender dynamics in indigenous civilizations (Singh and Vom Hau 2016).

Implications and transformative potential: Unveiling power dynamics

It is crucial to comprehend the evolutionary pathways that contribute to social change in religious situations (Gantioler *et al.* 2023). The dynamics of society are always changing, and religious organizations often play a key role in influencing these developments. Historical occurrences like the American Civil Rights Movement and the Protestant Reformation provide examples of how religious leaders and beliefs challenging established power systems led to significant changes in society (Gantioler *et al.* 2023).

Moreover, the revival of religious frameworks and organizational standards holds the key to transformation. It is a great chance to question and even change accepted norms when religious writings and teachings are critically examined and reinterpreted (Tomkinson 2023).

Assessments of language and interpretation

When language features found in religious texts are analyzed, ingrained prejudices and social norms are exposed. Feminist hermeneutics includes the critical examination of gendered language to challenge dominant interpretations and offer egalitarian alternative readings. Because it exposes underlying biases and encourages skepticism toward standard readings, language analysis in religious literature is important and deserves consideration. In terms of offering concrete examples and doing in-depth analysis, Jordan (2018) paper on the relationship between language and gender narratives in the text falls short. A more thorough understanding of the development of gender attitudes may result from a thorough analysis of language tone. Ancient Roman and Greek depictions of female deities often reflected the dominant royal language or language that was expected to be modest among subservient women. According to Green (2021), feminist analyses of today, such as Carol Christ's studies, critically reevaluate these representations in order to offer different narratives of empowerment based solely on language.

CONCLUSIONS

Notably, the complex power relations within religious communities and how they affect societal developments are made clear by the expanding fields of religion and gender studies, which are influenced by feminist and intersectional ideas. This emerging field has the ability to fundamentally alter institutional and religious structures globally by purposefully elevating marginalized perspectives and employing participatory research methods. This means that it can foster a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between gender and religion. Understanding these effects and transformative possibilities in religious settings clarifies the dynamic nature of religion's influence on social structures. Scholars and activists create possibilities for meaningful and progressive changes in religious organizations by acknowledging and comprehending power relations. The approach entails reorganizing theological frameworks and cultivating religious communities that are more socially conscious and inclusive.

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