



Prophet's Legacy and Women's Dignity in Islam: Exploring Concepts of Equality and Justice in Islam and Addressing Violence Against Women

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ABSTRACT

Background: The life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is central in understanding equality and justice in Islam. It has deep notions regarding the rights of women. It reflects the significance of Islam in upholding the dignity of all persons, particularly women.

Objectives: This study aims at reintroducing Islamic principles into contemporary discussions of gender equality in Muslim-majorities. This study highlights how the Islamic context and teachings play a key role in addressing violence against women.

Methodology: A multi-method research strategy was employed to study the ethical and historical dimensions of the *Seerah*. This qualitative study seeks to determine how cultural practices influence Islamic teachings regarding gender equality in societies in which Muslims constitute majority of the population.

Results: Islamic theology reminds the value of justice and equality. Through careful analysis of the primary Islamic context and its interpretations, this article demonstrates that Islam elevated women's status from the degraded position they held in pre-Islamic societies to one of dignity and respect. While cultural practices in some Muslim majority regions have sometimes diverged from these teachings, however, foundational Islamic texts and *Seerah* themselves offer a framework of gender justice, equity, and women's empowerment.

Conclusion: There is a need to judge historical accounts in the context of the times they were written and sift them to discover solutions to contemporary social problems. Moreover, it is important to restate these fundamental principles to safeguard women's dignity and their rights for a safe and equitable life.

INTRODUCTION

Investigation of the relationship between human rights, women's dignity, and Islam's *Seerah* is a fundamental necessity to resolve the current violence against Muslim women. Critical analysis of historical contexts, Islamic ideology, and current problems provides a framework for upholding the dignity and respect for women. The *Seerah*, which chronicles the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), provides in-depth knowledge of social justice and gender equality principles of Islam. It enables mankind to relate the *Seerah's* central values to gender equality and human rights. Prior to Islam, repressive patriarchal norms brutally restricted women in pre-Islamic Arabian society (Ćustović 2025). Female infanticide was

among the notorious practices of this period, when women were treated as little better than property. However, with the advent of Islam in the 7th century CE, society changed dramatically. The Quran explicitly writes, "*and for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women*" (Quran 2: 228). This strong verse forms the foundation of gender equality, which is strongly evident in the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He uttered in his final sermon, "*O people! It is true that you have certain rights over your women, but they also have rights over you*" (Sahih Al-Bukhari 6130). Scholarly explanations of the *Seerah* elucidate the Prophet's liberal position on women's rights. As noted by influential feminist scholar Fatima Mernissi, "Islam did not come to oppress women; it came to liberate them from oppressive traditions" (Mernissi 1991).



Her observations lead us to interpret the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) as liberative, not restrictive. She urged that all must see how the *Seerah* contributes to modern gender inequity, particularly in Muslim societies where culture tends to override Islamic scriptural teachings. While women's equality is clearly articulated in Islamic scripture, however, there are gaps between the implementation of these principles in many Muslim-majority nations. Majority of the cultural norms, more commonly falsely described as religious mandates, fuel the continuum of violence against women.

Leila Ahmed asserts that Muslim women's violence is largely a result of "historical and cultural practices that are mistakenly interpreted as Islamic" (Ahmed 2021). The misinterpretation warps the true nature of Islam and makes normality out of violence towards women. Scholars such as Ziba Mir-Hosseini asserted that the Islamic legal framework needs to be reinterpreted and reformed at an urgent rate. Mir-Hosseini believes that "we must approach the texts in a manner that is respectful of their ethical and moral imperatives and yet can speak to contemporary realities" (Mir-Hosseini 2006). An effort must be made to reconcile the interpretation of the *Seerah* with contemporary notions of gender equality and human rights. Reinterpretation is required to counter the root causes of violence against women, including harmful cultural practices and poor legal safeguards (Orr 2020).

Most Islamic cultures are still unable to incorporate equality and justice into their core values despite the advancements made by women's rights in Western legal systems. The US Violence Against Women Act is an example of a commitment to preventing domestic abuse and violence against women. Sadly, most Muslim-majority states fail to protect women's rights because of patriarchal interpretations of Islamic law. As Kecia Ali asserts, women's rights in Islam and advocating for legislative reforms consonant with the Quran and modern human rights principles necessitate a feminist interpretative approach to Islamic texts (Ali 2024).

In addition, gender and violence sensitivity in culture have increasingly come to matter in international human rights forums. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind. Yet the implementation of these ideas is frequently at odds with native customs and religious beliefs. It is difficult to balance promoting universal women's rights and respecting cultural traditions. This equilibrium is particularly important in Muslim societies, wherein the *Seerah* may be a potent historical basis for advocating women's rights and dignity (Assembly 1948; Forouzanfar *et al.* 2016). Islam's intricate tapestry of religious, cultural, and historical factors is echoed in the dynamic interplay between the *Seerah*, human rights, and women's dignity (Nasir 2020). The *Seerah* and Quranic teachings emphasize women's dignity, protection from harm, and providing justice, but the gap between these principles and current social practices in

Muslim majority societies is significant.

The *Seerah's* fundamental concepts regarding social justice and equality has much potency to assist in resolving the immediate issue of violence against women today. This study reintroduced Islamic principles into contemporary discussions of gender equality in Muslim majorities, and highlights how women's dignity and rights are respected by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and promotes a new understanding of Islamic scriptures.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This qualitative study seeks to determine how cultural practices influence Islamic teachings regarding gender equality in societies in which Muslims constitute the majority of the population. It highlights the contrasts between Islamic teaching and social custom in a literature review and scholarly analysis. For this purpose, Amnesty International and UN Women reports and feminist accounts by scholars Tariq Ramadan, Fatima Mernissi, and Leila Ahmed were used as the primary sources of information, while first-hand data were collected using semi-structured interviews of activists, legal professionals, and Islamic feminists. It also discussed historical documents and present-day legal frameworks. This research also acknowledged potential biases, limited generalizability, and difficulty in gaining diversified views in conservative settings. This research proposed to clarify the complex interrelation between cultural norms and Islamic principles, offering pragmatic solutions for enhancing gender equity based on the Quran and the *Seerah* (Koburtay *et al.* 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research demonstrates a complex interrelation among cultural norms, Islamic doctrine concerning gender justice, and the dreadful reality of gender violence in Muslim society. While the dignity and safety of women are prioritized in the Quranic message and the *Seerah*, most Muslim societies continue to present a stark contrast between these ideals and current social mores. Islamic feminism is an immense force against patriarchal interpretations and retrieving the gender-equitable principles within the Quran and the *Seerah*. Scholars argue that Islamic history has been influenced by centuries of male-centric interpretations, and Islam is not patriarchal. This perspective challenges traditional paradigms and demands a reassessment of Islamic law that does not overlook the historical and contextual circumstances. Islamic feminist approaches showed that contemporary gender relations must be patterned considering *Seerah*. The verses in the Holy Quran that identify with equality and justice are often excluded in support of interpretations that promote male hegemony. Women's rights have nevertheless been undermined by historically patriarchal approaches of Islamic law; however, gender-based violence has been aggravated by the misuse of Islamic scriptures (Bakar and Sahman 2024).

The present study highlights the role of cultural norms in perpetuating violence against women, particularly in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Egypt. Honour-based values often clash with Islamic principles that prioritize women's dignity and autonomy. For example, honour killings in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Egypt are justified as protecting family honour, which contradicts the Quran and *Seerah*. The verse (4:34) shows clearly that the privileged position of men over women is a condition related to the support of women. However, some men tend to hold the view that the influence of men over women is unconditional because women are inferior to them and possess a lesser position than men (in reason of strength). This interpretation does not hold a strong position as the verse (4:34) does not mention or imply that the privileged position of men is purely materialistic. Intersectional influences like socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographical location play a major role in determining violence against Muslim women. Despite this, in Muslim countries, many women suffer from restrictions and physical and mental abuse. Furthermore, the challenges that women face differ from one country to another because each country laws and governments are not the same. In rural communities, poverty and lack of access to legal services, women more likely to become victims of violence and face limited access to justice. Failure to implement existing legislation further fuels violence. The enforcement agencies do not take violence against women seriously in the light of entrenched cultural biases. This is more common in societies where women experience cultural stigma and social impediments in reporting violence. Scholars have highlighted the need for social reforms aimed at strengthening legal mechanisms and initiating gender sensitive training of security personnel and the judiciary laws (Mojahed *et al.* 2022; Baryar 2023). In cultures where honour is an important value, men will be the honour providers. Therefore, if family honour has been lost due to a female member of the family, there will be a desire for instant action for the retrieval of the family honour. In most of nations in the world, women are killed to save the family honour. However, Islamic concepts of equality and dignity for women are mismatched with honour-based killings (Yousaf *et al.* 2025). This is one part of our patriarchal culture that views women's bodies as repositories of honour or as men's property. Religion and culture, then, just become tools to maintain these roles and to enforce compliance. Law, then, must play a larger role in protecting women from honour killings (Huda *et al.* 2025).

This study highlights the need to empower women against violence and suggests the incorporation of Islamic scholarship on women's rights, legal reform, and education. Moreover, it demands the prohibition of gender-sensitive interpretation of *Seerah* and Quranic ideals. This would lead to the creation of new models of legislation that depict the actual context of Islamic ideology and promote justice and equity of Muslim women. Community action should also be undertaken to eradicate cultural factors leading to violence against women. Educational campaigns on the values of

compassion, justice, and dignity, as interpreted from *Seerah*, can also effectively curb gender-based violence. Islamic scholars and leaders should take the initiative to create interpretations of the Islamic context that are non-violent and positive of women's rights.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study shows Islamic values can transform gender justice by prioritizing the context of *Seerah*, human rights, and women's dignity in Islam. Islam has faith in gender equality and respect, but these are generally replaced with patriarchal ideology and cultural practices. Islam does not allow violence against women in the name of family honour. The practice of justice and mercy of the Prophet (PBUH) is in contrast to honour killings and forced marriage. Radical legislative change and religious scholar backing are required to realize gender justice. For the awareness of equity and to empower Muslim women, the training of society, legal and police personnel is required urgently. This sensitive analysis shows that the true teachings of Islam represent a high-level framework of rights, equality, and protections, when applied in apt ways, can provide women's dignity and empower them to participate fully in religious, family, economic, and social life. Effort to reform and implement these teachings is one of the major needs in Muslim-based culture.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

AQG and ZH wrote and reviewed and approved final draft.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors affirm that they possess no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data will be made available on a fair request to the corresponding author

ETHICS APPROVAL

Not applicable

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