

GENDER JUSTICE FROM A QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE:
*A Comparative Study of the Authentic Qur'an and Contemporary
Thinkers*

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Abstract

The Islamic perspective on gender equality is an issue that is misunderstood not only by the Muslims who claim it is the greatest religion which would save mankind, but also by non-Muslims, who think of it as an oppressive religion. The *Qur'an* treats men and women 'in exactly the same way in life' and upholds the inherent dignity and integrity of every human being.

The Islamic laws prescribe "equality" for men and women, yet it is women who suffer from patriarchal practices. For decades, reformists have tried to present more moderate interpretations of Islamic laws and teaching. Modernization and education have opened up new possibilities for women's activism in Islamic movements. The literature review will present progressive women's and men's position in Islamic thought towards women's development, freedom and equality. Liberal scholars such as Dr. Riffat Hassan, Dr. Farid Esack, Dr. Leila Ahmed, Dr. Amina Wadud-Muhsin and Dr. Fatema Mernissi argue and call for progressive interpretations of the *Qur'an*, in order not only to highlight women's concerns and viewpoints but also to attempt to be more true to the intention of the *Qur'an* itself.

This research shows that the combination of imposed *hijab* wearing and segregation, the discriminatory laws regarding women's rights covers a wide range of areas such as leadership, prayer, marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. These policies are used to limit women's access to education, employment, sports and other facilities. These have had distressing results, causing economic deprivation and slow development.

From a development point of view, engagement of *ijtihad* has become a powerful symbol of hope in Muslim societies and a driver of theological and socio-political reform. By re-reading the scriptural sources and re-interpreting and spreading Islamic theology and religious practices, reformists are effectively resisting patriarchal ideologies, authorities and institutions that propagate gender inequality. This research study explores these ideas and investigates them in the local context.