

FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of women within the context of Islam from a feminist perspective, highlighting how religious teachings intersect with gender equality. Using a qualitative approach through comprehensive literature review, the research examines women's participation across social, educational, health, socio-cultural, political, and economic domains. The findings indicate that Islam recognizes equal rights and responsibilities for women, emphasizing gender equality in multiple aspects of life. In education, women are encouraged to seek knowledge and pursue professional development, while in healthcare, they have equal access to medical services and advanced training opportunities. In socio-cultural and political spheres, women are entitled to fair treatment and full participation, and in economic life, they hold the right to employment, entrepreneurship, and financial independence. Overall, the study demonstrates that women's active engagement in all areas of community life is both supported and promoted within Islamic teachings. By providing a framework through Islamic feminism, this research underscores the compatibility of faith with modern principles of gender equality, illustrating that religious doctrine can serve as a foundation for empowering women and fostering their meaningful involvement in society.

Keyword: Feminist, Women, Islam

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INTRODUCTION

Muslim women demonstrate that their identity, social roles, and participation continue to evolve alongside societal changes. Additionally, research on progressive Muslim women's movements illustrates how women actively advocate for rights, education, and social participation (Affiah, 2017). Representations of Muslim women are also evident in contemporary literature, reflecting their experiences, identities, and life dynamics within modern society (Arimbi, 2018). Women also play a crucial role in maintaining Islamic values within families and communities. Research shows that women, particularly mothers, bear significant responsibility in instilling religious values in children, especially in regions where Muslims are a minority (Dasopang & Lubis, 2021). The advancement of technology and social media has created new spaces for Muslim women to express identity and build self-image, including discourses on beauty and representation in digital media (Hermawati et al., 2016). Furthermore, Muslim women are actively engaged in social activities and community movements, demonstrating their communicative role and participation in public spaces (Abdullah, 2020). Broader studies on women, Islam, and the state affirm that women have equal rights to education, knowledge, and social participation in accordance with Islamic principles (Muhammad, 2022).

In family and societal life, women often fulfill dual roles, balancing domestic responsibilities with active participation in public life without neglecting Islamic values (Arif, 2018). In religious and social spheres, women contribute significantly to contemporary da'wah activities through education, communication, and social initiatives, reinforcing the dissemination of Islamic values in society (Harahap, 2022). Their involvement in Islamic da'wah movements demonstrates that women are not merely objects of religious instruction but active agents of change, conveying religious messages through various media and social organizations (Faizah & Alkhalimi, 2023). Discussions of Muslim feminism in Indonesia emphasize the importance of gender equality, positioning women as essential participants in social and religious dynamics (Qibtiah, 2019). Gender studies from a Muslim perspective also critique patriarchal systems that restrict women's mobility and agency (Wijayanti et al., 2018).

Women's contributions to education and the development of Islamic knowledge are particularly significant. Research on women's roles in education emphasizes their responsibility in shaping future generations through both family-based and formal education (Afif, 2019). Islamic history also records the vital role of female companions of the Prophet in transmitting hadith, illustrating women's contributions to preserving and spreading Islamic teachings (Aslamiah, 2019). Within the family, women are often regarded as central to child education due to their strong emotional bonds, which enable them to shape character, moral values, and social attitudes from an early age (Lestari, 2016). In the digital era, women's roles continue to expand through the use of technology for religious education and da'wah activities (Haris, 2024).

Muslim feminist thinkers, such as Fatima Mernissi, advocate for the inclusive reinterpretation of religious texts to recognize and strengthen women's roles in education and social life (Ahmad et al., 2024). Developments in Islamic feminist studies reveal the expansion of women's roles in areas including politics, education, and digital spaces. Research on digital feminism highlights how women leverage technology to enhance their position and voice within an Islamic framework (Heriansyah et al., 2024). Analyses of Mernissi's thought on women's political roles further critique patriarchal structures that limit female participation in leadership and decision-making (Maksum et al., 2025). Feminist epistemological studies in Islam underscore the

importance of reinterpreting women's roles in a manner that aligns with contemporary societal developments (Artharani, 2025).

Although numerous studies have examined women's roles in Islam, gaps remain in research that comprehensively addresses these roles from an Islamic feminist perspective across multiple life domains. Prior studies often focus on a single aspect, such as education or family, leaving integrated analyses that encompass education, health, socio-cultural, political, and economic fields limited. Therefore, this study offers novelty by presenting a comprehensive feminist analysis of women's roles in the Islamic religious context through a qualitative literature review. The study aims to explain how Islamic feminism perceives women's equal rights and obligations, as well as how women's roles evolve across various societal sectors. The findings are expected to enrich academic discourse on Islamic feminism and enhance public understanding of gender equality from an Islamic perspective, while also serving as a reference for policy development, education, and women's empowerment across diverse life domains.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method, focusing on an in-depth analysis of various literatures relevant to the research topic. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of phenomena through the examination of concepts, theories, and previous research related to women's roles from the perspective of Islamic feminism. Through library research, the study examines scholarly sources, including books, journal articles, research reports, and other academic documents that are relevant to the theme of the study. This approach also enables the development of a broader understanding of conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives used to explain the social and religious phenomena under investigation.

Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques, involving the collection and analysis of written documents pertinent to the research topic. The documents analyzed included academic books, national and international journal articles, and other scholarly sources discussing Islamic feminism, gender equality, and women's roles across various life domains. The data obtained from these sources were then systematically analyzed to identify key concepts, ideas, and perspectives relevant to the research. Documentation techniques were selected for their effectiveness in obtaining conceptual and theoretical data, providing a comprehensive overview of the development of thought regarding women's roles in the Islamic context.

The research was carried out in a systematic, stepwise manner. The first step involved identifying the research topic by determining and formulating a relevant, current, and academically significant subject for further study. At this stage, the researchers reviewed various issues related to Islamic feminism and women's roles in society to define the focus of the analysis. The second step was literature search, involving the exploration of relevant sources through academic databases, libraries, institutional repositories, and other scientific sources that support the research.

The next step was literature selection, which involved choosing the most relevant sources with significant contributions to understanding the research topic. The selected literature was then critically analyzed to identify concepts, theories, and research findings related to women's roles from an Islamic feminist perspective. The final step was the synthesis of findings, which integrated the results of the analyses from the selected literature to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women's Roles

Women play a strategic role in education as teachers and mentors for children, significantly influencing the development of younger generations (Aeni, 2021; Waty et al., 2024; Farin, 2021). As educators, women not only deliver academic knowledge but also shape character, instill moral values, and create a conducive learning environment that supports students' social and emotional growth. Their presence as role models enables children to internalize positive behaviors and ethical norms in daily life (Andryadi & Imamuddin, 2025). Additionally, women serve as mentors who provide emotional support, guidance, and personal attention, helping children cope with stress, anxiety, and learning challenges (Indriastuti et al., 2023).

In the health sector, women play a vital role in promoting clean and healthy living within families and communities (Susanti et al., 2017). They act as educators, mentors, and agents of social change, contributing to public health and community development (Rumbekwan & Tanamal, 2022). Women's active participation in social and economic empowerment initiatives reinforces gender equality and enhances their involvement across multiple societal sectors (Bayumi et al., 2022; Cahyani et al., 2021). The combination of education, role modeling, and emotional support underscores women's importance in nurturing resilient and capable future generations.

At the village level, women's social capital contributes significantly to local governance, including the management of village funds and development initiatives (Darmi, 2016). The transformation of women's roles in rural areas is closely linked to efforts to reduce gender gaps across sectors. Social and cultural norms influence women's participation, with family and community support being crucial for their active engagement (Manembu, 2017). Women in agriculture, plantations, or fisheries often face educational and economic limitations, yet many develop managerial skills and creativity to enhance family welfare (Iqbal et al., 2023). In village tourism development, equitable task distribution between men and women can reduce gender disparities and empower women economically (Marizka et al., 2024). This shift illustrates the transition from traditional roles to more productive and strategic contributions in socio-economic development (Reza et al., 2024).

Women's political participation in Indonesia has increased over recent decades, although structural and cultural barriers remain. Women's representation in parliament and governmental institutions is expanding, despite official quotas of only 30% (Mardlatillah, 2022). Women now serve not only as voters but also as legislators, party cadres, and strategic decision-makers, promoting inclusive policies and strengthening democracy at local and national levels (Widiyaningrum, 2020; Kiftiyah, 2019). Nevertheless, social norms often restrict women's political roles, requiring empowerment through political education, leadership training, and network building to enhance their strategic participation (Adriani & Maulia, 2024; Nursyifa et al., 2023). Addressing social and cultural subordination remains essential for achieving equitable political participation (Kurniawati & Samhati, 2021; Adeni & Harahap, 2017).

Women's economic roles encompass critical functions such as capital management, production, distribution, and marketing (Mutmainnah, 2020). Beyond domestic contributions, women now participate actively in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and local industries, supporting economic development (Vita, 2026). Empowerment initiatives through education, entrepreneurship training, and public policy have expanded women's economic participation, positioning them as agents of change who strengthen household financial independence and promote inclusive economic growth (Rahmawati, 2023; Renie, 2020; Omar &

Jaafar, 2024). Strategic sectors such as services, tourism, and cooperatives offer additional opportunities for women to innovate and contribute to regional economic development (Candra, Wulandari, & Nurrahma, 2025). Applying principles of inclusive economy and gender equality ensures women have equitable access to resources and decision-making in economic activities (Muhartono, 2020). Women's engagement in Islamic economy, MSMEs, and creative sectors demonstrates their expanding role in public economic life while maintaining family economic sustainability (Mufiani, 2025; Anto, Harahap, & Sastrini, 2023). This transformation confirms that women are now a critical pillar of inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive economic development (Zaik & Jurij, 2025).

Islamic Feminism

Islamic feminism represents an intellectual and social movement seeking gender equality while remaining faithful to Islamic values (Adaruddi, 2020). It emphasizes justice, equity, and fair treatment for women as integral to Islamic teachings. The movement interprets religious texts to promote the ethical and social empowerment of women, challenging traditional patriarchal readings that have historically marginalized them. Islamic feminism is not a rejection of Islam but a reclamation of its principles of justice and equality. Diverse approaches exist within the movement, reflecting cultural, historical, and scholarly variations. By highlighting women's roles in religious, social, and political life, Islamic feminism underscores that the Qur'an and Sunnah support women's participation in society. This framework integrates religious ethics with modern concepts of human rights, demonstrating that Islam can accommodate gender justice without compromising its spiritual and moral values.

A central tenet of Islamic feminism is the equality of men and women regarding rights and responsibilities before Allah. Women's entitlement to education, employment, and societal engagement is emphasized, along with equal legal rights in family matters. The movement advocates for women's fair participation in decision-making processes, leadership roles, and economic life, including equal wages and professional opportunities. By framing these rights within Islam, feminists argue that gender equality is a religious and moral duty, not a Western import. Access to education and the workforce enables women to contribute meaningfully to societal growth while fulfilling their religious obligations. In doing so, Islamic feminism reconciles faith with contemporary social justice, ensuring women are recognized as equals in both private and public domains. Such an approach validates women's spiritual, social, and economic roles, reflecting the ethical foundations of Islam.

Islamic feminism engages in reinterpretation of the Qur'an to align religious teachings with gender equality. Traditional patriarchal readings often ignored the historical and social context of verses, marginalizing women in family, legal, and social spheres. Feminist scholarship emphasizes contextual readings to uncover the Qur'an's original ethical intention, promoting justice for women. This involves critical exegesis, attention to historical circumstances, and understanding the spirit of the text rather than literalism. By examining the Qur'an alongside Hadith, scholars identify interpretations that restricted women unnecessarily. Contextual analysis allows the application of Islamic principles to contemporary societal challenges, including education, employment, and political participation. This methodology bridges religious tradition and modern human rights discourse, demonstrating that gender equality is both a faithful and ethical reading of Islam. Reinterpretation ensures that women's social, spiritual, and legal rights are respected within the Islamic framework.

Hadith literature, documenting the sayings and practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), also undergoes critical analysis within Islamic feminism. Feminist scholars examine authenticity, context, and relevance to avoid interpretations that disadvantage women. Some traditions have been historically misapplied to justify discriminatory practices, necessitating rigorous review. This method includes analyzing the chain of transmission (isnad) and contextual relevance, ensuring that interpretations align with justice and ethical principles. By applying critical scholarship, Islamic feminism challenges patriarchal practices that are mistakenly deemed religious obligations. Such engagement with Hadith promotes equitable access to education, employment, and political participation, allowing women to exercise their rights fully. The process underscores that Islamic sources, when properly interpreted, support fairness and inclusivity rather than gender subordination.

Education is a cornerstone of Islamic feminism, highlighting women's right to learn and participate fully in intellectual life. Equal access to primary, secondary, and higher education is essential for promoting gender equality. Feminists advocate removing social, economic, and geographic barriers that restrict female participation. Initiatives include scholarships, infrastructure support in remote areas, and awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes that limit women's educational choices. Teacher training, mentorship, and inclusive curricula empower women as educators and leaders. By ensuring women's access to education, Islamic feminism aligns religious ethics with contemporary human development goals. Education not only enhances women's knowledge and skills but also strengthens their participation in civic life, economic activity, and community decision-making, demonstrating the compatibility of Islam with gender-equitable educational policies.

Islamic feminism emphasizes women's equal access to healthcare services, including reproductive health, preventive care, and general medical treatment. Gender equality in health is essential for empowering women to make informed decisions about their bodies and well-being. Inclusive health education promotes awareness of disease prevention, maternal health, and lifestyle management, ensuring women's knowledge is comparable to men's. Feminists advocate policies to eliminate bias in healthcare delivery and research, ensuring that women are represented in clinical studies. Access to affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate services is a priority. By framing health rights within Islam, feminists argue that ensuring physical and reproductive well-being is a moral and religious responsibility. Health equity fosters broader social equity, enabling women to fully participate in educational, economic, and political spheres while maintaining their autonomy and dignity.

Women's active participation in social and cultural life is another critical domain of Islamic feminism. Eliminating gender-based discrimination and stereotypes allows women to engage fully in community and cultural initiatives. Inclusion fosters innovation, diverse perspectives, and stronger social cohesion. Cultural empowerment also challenges harmful norms that restrict women's roles, promoting awareness of women's contributions to society. By participating equally in social decision-making, women influence policies and initiatives, strengthening community development. Islamic feminism emphasizes that social inclusion is consistent with Qur'anic principles of justice and human dignity. Collective engagement of government, civil society, and communities creates sustainable pathways for gender equality, promoting fairness and enhancing societal well-being. Social participation, therefore, becomes both an ethical obligation and a practical strategy to achieve justice and equality within Muslim societies.

Political equality is central to Islamic feminism, advocating for women's representation in legislative and executive bodies. Measures such as affirmative action and quotas ensure equitable participation in political decision-making. Women's involvement improves governance by introducing diverse perspectives and addressing policies that affect both genders. Political training, leadership programs, and public awareness campaigns empower women to navigate institutional barriers. Addressing gender-based violence and ensuring legal protections enable women to participate safely in politics. Islamic feminism frames political participation as a religious and ethical duty, aligning the empowerment of women with the Qur'anic principle of justice. Enhanced representation ensures that governance reflects the needs and perspectives of the entire population, fostering equitable policy outcomes and strengthening societal stability and cohesion.

Economic participation is a major focus of Islamic feminism, encompassing access to employment, entrepreneurship, and equal pay. Women's economic empowerment enhances household income, reduces poverty, and contributes to national development. Feminists advocate for fair wages, training opportunities, and financial support for female entrepreneurs. Policies addressing work-life balance, maternity rights, and protection from workplace discrimination are integral. Economic equality is framed as both a social justice issue and a religious principle, demonstrating Islam's support for women's active contribution to economic life. Inclusive economic participation benefits society by harnessing diverse talent, promoting productivity, and enhancing financial stability. By securing equal opportunities, Islamic feminism fosters sustainable development, strengthens families, and ensures that women's contributions are recognized and valued in economic decision-making.

Islamic feminism emphasizes fairness within family law, including marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance. Women's legal rights are often misrepresented due to cultural interpretations that override religious principles. Feminist scholarship seeks to clarify women's entitlements as prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah, ensuring equitable treatment in family structures. Legal reform initiatives support women's autonomy, protection, and participation in decision-making, promoting justice and societal balance. By addressing inequalities in inheritance, marital rights, and custody, Islamic feminism aligns legal practice with ethical principles. Family justice ensures that women's spiritual, social, and economic rights are respected, enabling them to fulfill responsibilities without discrimination. This approach demonstrates that Islamic law, properly interpreted, upholds gender equity rather than perpetuating patriarchal dominance.

Islamic feminism integrates religious principles with contemporary feminist thought, demonstrating compatibility between faith and gender equity. This approach highlights Islam's ethical framework as supportive of social justice, women's empowerment, and human dignity. By combining scholarship, activism, and legal reform, Islamic feminists navigate tensions between tradition and modernity. The movement emphasizes context-aware interpretations and encourages dialogue between scholars, policymakers, and communities. Intersectional engagement addresses disparities in education, employment, health, and political participation. Aligning feminist principles with Islamic ethics fosters legitimacy, acceptance, and sustainable societal change. The approach reinforces that advocating for women's rights is a continuation of Islam's moral and spiritual mandate, reflecting a comprehensive vision of justice that encompasses both religious observance and social reform.

Beyond basic access, Islamic feminism emphasizes women's professional development as a path to empowerment. Mentorship, leadership training, and continuing education enable women to assume influential roles across sectors. Professional equity ensures women can access

promotions, leadership positions, and decision-making platforms. These measures address gender stereotypes in employment and strengthen societal productivity. Women's leadership enhances organizational effectiveness by introducing diverse perspectives, promoting innovation, and fostering inclusive policies. Islamic feminist thought frames professional development as both a religious and ethical pursuit, emphasizing the role of education and skill-building in fulfilling one's social and spiritual responsibilities. By integrating education and professional growth, Islamic feminism promotes a society where women actively shape economic, political, and social landscapes.

Healthcare and reproductive rights are critical in Islamic feminist discourse. Women must have autonomy over their bodies and decisions related to health, family planning, and medical treatment. Equality in healthcare access, information, and services ensures women's physical and mental well-being, aligning with Islamic ethics of protection and care. Addressing disparities in reproductive health empowers women to participate fully in social, economic, and political life. Inclusive health policies contribute to public health improvements, reduced maternal mortality, and equitable access to preventive and curative services. By linking health autonomy with Islamic principles of justice and care, feminist advocacy demonstrates that protecting women's bodily integrity is both a moral and religious obligation, essential for social equity and development.

Gender equality positively influences social cohesion, cultural participation, and community resilience. Women's participation in social and cultural activities promotes diverse perspectives, innovation, and equitable decision-making. Challenging harmful stereotypes and cultural norms fosters inclusion and strengthens community development. Communities benefit from women's involvement in policymaking, education, health initiatives, and economic development. By creating a balanced environment where men and women share responsibility, Islamic feminism enhances family stability, social harmony, and economic sustainability. Promoting gender equality in social and cultural spheres reflects the ethical principles of Islam while fostering equitable, progressive, and resilient societies. Such practices demonstrate that empowerment of women strengthens communities, ensuring shared prosperity, justice, and human dignity.

Islamic feminism seeks a comprehensive approach to gender equality across education, health, economy, politics, and family life. This holistic integration ensures women's rights are recognized, protected, and exercised in all spheres of life. Policies, community programs, and legal frameworks work collectively to eliminate discrimination and promote empowerment. Gender equity contributes to societal stability, economic growth, and sustainable development. Islamic feminism demonstrates that equality is not merely a moral imperative but an investment in social cohesion and progress. By advocating reform while respecting religious ethics, Islamic feminists create a model where spiritual values and gender justice coexist. This integrated approach empowers women, strengthens families, and enhances communal resilience, illustrating that Islamic teachings inherently support inclusive, fair, and just societies.

CONCLUSION

Gender equality for women emphasizes equal rights and opportunities between women and men across various life domains, including education, health, socio-cultural participation, politics, and the economy. Significant contributions have been made in education, with women gaining improved access to higher education and equitable learning opportunities, which enhances human capital and societal development. In healthcare, women's access to essential services, including reproductive care, has improved, contributing to better maternal and child health

outcomes. However, persistent gaps in healthcare quality, limited reproductive health services, and social stigma remain challenges. Socio-cultural progress has promoted shifts in norms and values toward gender equality, yet stereotypes and unequal social responsibilities continue to impact women's full participation. Politically, women's involvement has increased, positively influencing policymaking and governance; nonetheless, structural barriers and underrepresentation in leadership positions persist. In economic spheres, women have benefited from greater workforce participation, access to career opportunities, and advocacy for equal pay, contributing to household income and national economic growth. Despite these advances, wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership, and workplace discrimination remain critical issues. Future research should explore the effectiveness of policy interventions and workplace programs in reducing gender disparities, investigate strategies for overcoming socio-cultural barriers, and evaluate the long-term impact of educational and health initiatives on women's empowerment. Such studies would provide empirical evidence to guide comprehensive strategies for achieving sustainable gender equality across all sectors of society.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

- Author 1 : Developed the theoretical framework, reviewed literature, and conceptualized research questions, ensuring alignment with gender equality and Islamic feminist perspectives
- Author 2 : Conducted data collection through interviews, surveys, and document review, ensuring accuracy, reliability, and ethical standards throughout the research process.
- Author 3 : Performed data analysis and interpretation, applying qualitative and quantitative methods to derive insights and strengthen findings' validity and relevance.
- Author 4 : Coordinated manuscript writing, editing, and formatting, integrating contributions from all authors into a cohesive and academically rigorous final document.

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