



# Gender Equality in the Perspective of the Qur'an

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**Abstract.** The aim of this research is to explore various issues related to the interpretation of gender by examining the meanings within the verses of the Qur'an. Additionally, it seeks to discuss the concept of gender equality from the perspective of the Qur'an, with the intention of avoiding any potential misunderstandings of this concept. The research methodology employed in this study primarily involves library research, which includes a comprehensive review of relevant literature. The objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender equality by thoroughly examining the verses of the Qur'an. The research findings encompass a detailed discussion on the meanings of gender in the Qur'an and the concept of gender equality as delineated in its verses, which encapsulate the principles of gender equality. Through an investigation of the Qur'an, this study concludes that both men and women are fundamentally equal, and no inherent bias towards any specific gender exists.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality · Qur'anic Perspective · Library Research

## 1 Introduction

The discourse on Gender in contemporary times is a result of cultural constructs embedded within societal structures. "Social construction is the idea that facts are not found, but rather created, and this is an epistemological perspective accepted in both natural and social sciences" [7]. Its presence has been widely discussed by various sectors of society, encompassing economic, social, and educational issues. In the context of religion, it also plays a role in the discussion of this matter. Within scholarly discourse, misunderstandings often arise regarding how Islam addresses matters related to gender equality. "The perception of women as weak and less capable beings is gradually eroded by historical facts" [6]. Exploring history, in the Roman civilization, women were originally under the authority of their fathers, and upon marriage, this authority would transfer to their husbands, who had the right to sell, abuse, and even kill them. In Arab society before the advent of Islam, women's rights were abolished, and the birth of a female baby was considered a disgrace and a calamity, often leading to their infanticide. There were no laws or traditions protecting them. With the introduction of Islam to Arab society, carrying its

noble values, it opposed traditions or anything conflicting with its teachings. Stemming from the issue of injustice between women and men in the socio-cultural realm, the concept of equality emerged as an effort to counter gender inequality so that women's roles are not confined solely to the domestic sphere but can extend to the public sphere.

Muslims who adhere to the Quran consider it as a guiding principle for human life. The authenticity of the Quran as a sacred book is beyond doubt. Apart from its regulations pertaining to worship and the relationship with the Creator, the Quran also contains verses that offer interpretations concerning various aspects of human life as social beings. In this context, the Quran presents its own distinct concept in addressing matters related to gender, positioning women and men in accordance with their rights and obligations. However, during discussions on gender, several misconceptions have arisen regarding the Islamic perspective on gender. This research aims to examine the Quran's interpretation of gender by analyzing its verses, as well as to explore the concept of gender equality in Islam in a manner that is consistent with the Quran. Consequently, this study seeks to rectify any misunderstandings surrounding the concept of gender equality in the contemporary world through the lens of the Quran.

## **2 Methodology**

The research methodology utilized in this study is based on data acquisition, classifying it as a literature-based research or commonly referred to as Library Research. The researcher gathers primary and supporting data pertaining to the research topic, including books, articles, journals, and other relevant sources. Subsequently, the collected data is analyzed and described in the Results and Conclusion section of the research paper.

## **3 Results and Discussions**

### **A. Meaning of Gender in the Qur'an**

The term "gender" itself, when examined linguistically, is defined as a classification based on biological sex. The concept of gender arises from linguistic constructions found in various languages, where the term "gender" is utilized to distinguish between male and female categories. In the field of social sciences, gender is associated with introducing distinguishing factors often attributed to females and males, which are not solely determined by biology. Gender serves as a term used to refer to the social constructs that differentiate between women and men. Consequently, it suggests that the concept of gender is not an innate characteristic bestowed upon individuals by God at birth, but rather a social construct shaped by the socio-cultural environment, influencing perceptions of inherent qualities associated with each gender. "Gender is a concept used to differentiate between men and women in terms of the socio-cultural aspects of a local society" [8]. While biological sex remains unchangeable as predetermined by Allah, the context of gender itself can vary based on social conditions. Transitioning to the exploration of the meaning of gender in the Qur'an, various terms are employed within its verses to represent the male and female genders, which serve as the focal point of study. The Qur'an utilizes different words to symbolize males and females, and these terms warrant further examination.

## 1) Ar-Rijal and An-Nisa'

The first terms used in the Qur'an concerning the discussion of Gender Equality are Ar-Rijal (men) and An-Nisa' (women). The following is a discussion on the meanings of these terms.

### Ar-Rijal

The term "الرجل", when translated to Indonesian, means a mature male individual and also refers to the descendants of Prophet Adam. Al-Rajul can also be categorized as "الذكر" (Al-Dhakar), although not all instances of Al-Dhakar can be categorized as Ar-Rajul. The meaning of Ar-Rajul extends beyond just the male gender and encompasses certain criteria that lean towards masculinity. The word "رجل" (Rijal) appears a total of 73 times, with its plural form "الرجال" (Ar-Rijal) being translated as "men" or "males." In the Qur'an itself, the term Ar-Rajul appears 55 times, and from these occurrences, five different meanings and interpretations can be derived.

Firstly, Ar-Rajul denotes the male gender, as evident in Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 288 and Surah An-Nisa verses 34 and 33. Secondly, Ar-Rajul signifies "human being" and can refer to both males and females, as seen in Qur'an Surah Al-A'raf verse 46 and Surah Al-Ahzab verse 23. Additionally, Ar-Rajul can represent prophets and messengers, mentioned in Qur'an Surah Al-Anbiya verse 7 and Surah Saba verse 7. It can also be used to describe prominent figures in society, as illustrated in Qur'an Surah Ya-Sin verse 20 and Surah Al-A'raf verse 48. Furthermore, Ar-Rajul can imply a slave or servant, as found in Qur'an Surah Az-Zumar verse 29 and Surah Al-Ahzab verse 40.

### An-Nisa'

Linguistically, the term "An-Nisa" is derived from the word "nesia," which has two meanings: "to forget something" and "to leave something." An-Nisa, with its inherent meaning as "women," is used as a counterpart to the reference term "Ar-Rijal" discussed earlier, which signifies males. The word An-Nisa, in its various forms, appears in 55 verses and is repeated 59 times in the Qur'an. Out of these 59 instances, the first meaning of An-Nisa pertains to the gender of women, as evidenced in Surah An-Nisa verse 7. In this verse, gender is not limited to the biological reality of human gender but is connected to the cultural realities of local factors.

The second meaning of the word An-Nisa is "wives," which nearly encompasses the entire meaning of "wives," as Al-Mar'ah is a singular form of the word An-Nisa. In Surah An-Nisa, the opening verse pairs the word An-Nisa with the word Ar-Rijal to denote the gender itself. This indicates that there is no essential difference between male and female genders. The terms Ar-Rijal and An-Nisa also connote actions or deeds performed by individuals. Therefore, the concept of Ar-Rijal and An-Nisa relates to something inherent in their nature, how they fulfill their roles, such as men working to fulfill their needs and obligations in terms of livelihood, and women carrying out their inherent duties predetermined in terms of reproduction.

## 2) Adz-Zakar and Al-Untsa

### Adz-Zakar

The term "Adz-Zakar" originates from the Arabic word "ذَكَرَ," which means "to fill" or "to pour." In Al-Munjid, the root word for "ذَكَرَ" is defined as "to mention" or "to remember." From this root word, several derived words are formed, such as "ذِكْرٌ" which means "to study," "ذَكَرَ," which means "to remember" or "to mention," and "ذَكَرٌ," which is the plural form "ذَكَوْرٌ" and means "males" or "males." In the Qur'an, this word is primarily used in a linguistic context. It appears 18 times, and its primary meaning relates to the biological aspect of male gender (sex).

### Al-Untsa

The root word for "اُنْتَسَا" carries the meaning of softness, tenderness, and delicacy, similar to "Adz-zakar" representing the concept of masculinity. The term "Al-Untsa" signifies the biological aspect of females. In the Qur'an, it is repeated a total of 30 times, consistently referring to the female gender without any alternative meanings or connotations.

However, in Surah An-Nisa, verse 11, the term takes on a broader meaning, emphasizing the equal rights of both males and females regarding inheritance and ownership of property. Thus, examining the intended meaning of this word in its context, it can be understood that both male and female genders share the same inherent nature bestowed by God, and there are no other genders besides these two. Moreover, the literal interpretations of these two words convey strength and gentleness, suggesting a depiction of the physical and psychological aspects of both males and females.

## 3) The Terms "Al-Mar'u/Al-Imru'u" and "Al-Mar'ah/Al-Imra'ah"

The term "Al-Mar'u/Al-Imru'u" is derived from the word "أَمْرٌ," which conveys meanings of goodness, benefit, and delight. It is interpreted as representing the male gender. On the other hand, the terms "Mar'ah" and "Imra'ah" are referred to as representing the female gender. The term "Imra'ah" is repeated 26 times in the Qur'an, where 4 instances define it as "woman" and 22 instances define it as "wife." From these words, it can be understood that both males and females have respective roles and responsibilities in providing comfort.

Thus, in order to understand the Qur'an regarding gender, it is important to approach the related verses in a balanced, proportional, and integrated manner to achieve a coherent understanding. Additionally, it is necessary to comprehend the verses both comprehensively and partially in order to gain a holistic understanding.

## B. The Concept of Gender Equality in the Qur'an

To interpret gender within the framework of equality based on the Qur'an, an analysis of the Qur'anic verses can be conducted. Several aspects can be considered to analyze the principles of understanding the concept of gender equality through the Qur'an.

### 1) The principle that males and females are equal as servants

In Surah Az-Zariyat, verse 56, it is stated that the purpose of human creation is none other than to worship the Creator, Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala. From this perspective, it

can be understood that there is no differentiation in terms of worship between males and females; both have an equal share. The difference lies in their piety towards Allah, not in their gender, ethnicity, culture, or any other distinguishing factors. Everyone is equal in the way Allah has organized the creation of humans to submit and obey Him through worship, without considering their status or hierarchy.

## **2) The principle that males and females are leaders (*Khaleefa*)**

In Surah Al-An'am, verse 165, Allah states that humans are created not only as servants ('Abid) to submit and obey the Creator through worship, but also as leaders (khalifah) on this Earth, responsible for performing good deeds. The term "khalifah" in this context does not exclusively refer to one gender but applies generally to both males and females.

## **3) The principle that males and females have a primordial covenant**

In Surah Al-A'raf, verse 172, Allah states that both males and females, before they are born into this world, receive a covenant with their Creator. According to Fakhr al-Razi, no individual, regardless of their gender, is born without making a pledge regarding the presence of God. Even the angels made such a pledge, and no one deviates from it. From this, it can be understood that from the beginning of human creation, there is no discrimination based on gender; all individuals express their commitment to God in this regard.

## **4) The principle that Prophet Adam and Eve were actively involved in the cosmic event**

Verses describing the cosmic event narrate the circumstances of Adam and Eve's departure from paradise and their arrival on Earth. These verses indicate that there is no inclination to assign blame to either party involved in the incident. The following verses discuss the cosmic event:

### **Al-Baqarah, Verse 35**

This verse indicates that both Adam and Eve were created in the same place, namely paradise, and they enjoyed the facilities provided there.

### **Al-A'raf, Verse 20**

This verse reveals that Satan tempted Adam and Eve equally.

### **Al-A'raf, Verse 22**

This verse states that both Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit.

### **Al-A'raf, Verse 23**

This verse describes how Adam and Eve sought forgiveness and were forgiven by God.

### **Al-Baqarah, Verse 187**

Based on the explanations provided in these verses, it can be understood that during the cosmic event, Adam and Eve were mentioned together in the Qur'an without attributing blame to either party, emphasizing their shared responsibility for the incident.

Based on the explanations provided in the above-mentioned verses, it can be understood that during the cosmic event of Adam and Eve, as mentioned in the Qur'an, no blame is attributed to either party, and both are equally responsible for the occurrence.

### 5) The principle that males and females have the potential to achieve equal accomplishments

In Islam, there is no differentiation based on gender when it comes to achieving accomplishments. Both males and females are treated equally and have equal opportunities, as indicated in the following Quranic verses: Surah Al-Imran, verse 195, and Surah An-Nisa, verse 124.

These Quranic verses demonstrate that Islam does not support discrimination or differentiation based on gender in the pursuit of achievements. Both males and females have equal opportunities to strive for success in various aspects of life, including career and education.

## 4 Conclusion

Gender is a social construct that arises from cultural norms and perceptions of the roles of men and women. Within the Islamic context, gender is examined through an analysis of the Qur'anic terminology used to refer to male and female genders, such as Ar-Rijal, An-Nisa', Adz-Zakar, Al-Untsa, Al-Mar'u/Al-Imru'u, and Al-Mar'atu-Imra'atu. These terms offer insights into the conceptual understanding of gender equality in Islam, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to avoid misconceptions. In examining the Qur'an, it is evident that it does not differentiate between genders in various aspects, including the purpose of human creation, the primordial covenant, cosmic events, and the pursuit of achievements. The Qur'anic verses do not marginalize any gender; rather, they affirm the equality of all individuals. Thus, within Islam, guided by the Qur'an, gender is not a basis for differentiation. Instead, the focus lies on one's devotion and piety towards Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala. It is important to note that the Qur'an does not explicitly delineate the meanings of these terms in relation to gender equality. Further scholarly research and analysis are required to fully comprehend the nuanced understanding of gender within the Islamic framework, aligning it with the principles of equality and justice.

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