Research Article

The Role of Men in Islamic Society: Analysis of the Roles and Responsibilities of Men in Islamic Society

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Abstract

Gender discourse in Islam has tended to focus on women's issues, while comprehensive analysis of men's roles and responsibilities is still limited. This study aims to examine how men's roles are constructed, interpreted, and transformed in the context of contemporary Islamic society. The research methodology uses textual analysis of primary Islamic sources, as well as a literature review of current research on gender and Islam. The results of the study indicate that Islam establishes the position of men based on the principle of spiritual equality with women, but provides a special role in family and community leadership. The concept of male qawwamah (leadership) in the family is interpreted not as patriarchal domination, but as a mandate that demands material and spiritual responsibility. Contemporary social transformations, including urbanization and increasing participation of women in education and the economy, according to a more flexible reinterpretation of gender roles without sacrificing fundamental Islamic values. This study recommends the development of further interdisciplinary studies on gender dynamics in contemporary Muslim societies to support the creation of a gender-just society based on Islamic values.

Keywords: Islamic, Men, Responsibility

INTRODUCTION

Gender discourse in Islam has been a topic of intense debate in recent decades. Although much research has focused on women in Islam, analysis of the construction and interpretation of men's roles in Islamic tradition has received less attention. This analysis is important for a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in Islam and how Islamic values are applied in the changing realities of society (Döğüş, 2022; Mohammed, 2013).

Historically, the construction of men's roles in Islam has evolved from the early days of Islam to the contemporary era.(Abou-Bakr, 2014). During the time of the Prophet Muhammad sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, the role of men was demonstrated through his example as a husband, father, spiritual leader, and community leader who prioritized the values of justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity (Maliki dkk., 2023; Moussa-Mahmoud, 2024). The period of the Khulafa ar-Rasyidin and subsequent dynasties witnessed the formalization of the role of men in more complex political, legal and social structures (Kasapoğlu Çengel, 2020; Metcalf, 2022). During the golden age of Islam, Muslim men contributed significantly to various fields of science, art, and the development of civilization, while still carrying out their traditional functions in the family and community.

In the Islamic view, men have a position and role that has been determined based on religious values and is believed to form the foundation of a harmonious Islamic societ. This role covers various aspects of life from the family to the wider community. A comprehensive analysis shows that Islam views men as having leadership responsibilities that are balanced with the obligation to protect and fulfill the needs of the family, but still within the principle of spiritual equality with women (Bowen dkk., 2011; Kanwal & Mansoor, 2024). This position does not contradict modern science which recognizes the biological and psychological differences between men and women, and even complements each other in building a holistic understanding of gender roles in Islam.(Maulida, 2021).

The debate on gender roles in Islam cannot be separated from the historical, social, and political contexts that surround it. The social construction of masculinity in Muslim societies is influenced not only by theological interpretations of religious texts, but also by factors of colonialism, modernization, and globalization that have fundamentally changed the social structure of Muslim societies. A comprehensive analytical framework is needed to understand how gender categories, including men's roles, are negotiated and reconstructed in changing contexts.

Academic research on the role of men in Islamic societies has tended to be fragmented into various disciplinary approaches, theological studies that focus on textual interpretation, socio-anthropological studies that emphasize cultural practices, and gender studies that often see men in relation to women's issues (Gonzalez-Carballo dkk., 2010; Tsafrir, 2021). Interdisciplinary approaches that integrate these perspectives are still relatively limited, especially those that discuss the transformation of men's roles in the context of contemporary social change.

This gap in the academic literature provides the basis for this study to comprehensively examine how men's roles are constructed, interpreted, and transformed in contemporary Islamic societies (Sadik, 1990; Samani, 2016). By adopting a balanced perspective between respect for Islamic tradition and awareness of contemporary social

dynamics, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexity of men's roles in Islam and its implications for efforts to realize a gender-just society.

A. Discussion

1. Basic Concept of Men's Position in Islamic Perspective

The basic concept of the position of men in the perspective of Islam is based on theological foundations that affirm the spiritual equality of men and women before Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala. The Qur'an explicitly states in Surah al-Hujurat verse 13 that humans are created in pairs and the noblest among them is the most pious, indicating that the primary value of an individual is not determined by gender but by the quality of piety and good deeds (Anwar dkk., 2024; Tabei & Zarean, 2021). This fundamental principle forms a conceptual framework in understanding the position of men which cannot be separated from their relationship with women in a complementary social system (takafuliyah) and not an oppressive hierarchy.

Islam begins the narrative of the role of men from the creation of Adam as the first human and vicegerent on earth. The Qur'an, Surah al-Baqarah, verses 30-34, tells how Adam was created with divine wisdom that reflected the great responsibility given to him. This concept of the vicegerent becomes an important theological foundation in understanding the role of men as leaders and guardians on earth.

The position of men in Islam is based on the principles of justice and balance. Islam views men and women as having different but complementary roles (Demirbilek, 2020; Pieri dkk., 2014). Although there are differences in roles, rights and obligations between the two, Islam emphasizes that men and women have equal value and dignity before Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala. This difference is not a form of discrimination, but rather an effort to create social harmony and justice in community life.

In a spiritual context, the Qur'an emphasizes that the purpose of the creation of humans, both male and female, is the same, namely to worship Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala. This is reflected in Surah Adz-Dzariyat verse 56 which states that Allah did not create jinn and humans except to worship Him. This spiritual equality is an important basis for understanding that differences in roles do not reduce a person's value in the eyes of their creator.

However, Islam also gives a special position to men in several aspects of life. In the Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa, verse 34, men are referred to as "qawwam" (leaders) over women, which indicates their role in maintaining the stability of the family and society (Ma'mun, 2023; Nora & Ananda, 2020). This concept is often debated in gender discourse, but needs to be understood in the context of responsibility and not domination (Ahmedin, 2019; Bahmani & Hosseini, 2025). In Islam, male leadership is always associated with the responsibility to protect, care for, and fulfill the needs of the family.

2. The Role of Male Leadership in the Family

In the Islamic family structure, men as husbands are appointed as leaders who are responsible for all members of their family. This position not only gives special privileges, but emphasizes more on the responsibilities that will be held accountable by Allah in the hereafter.

The role of the husband is very important in creating a sakinah, mawaddah, warahmah family, in accordance with the husband's position in the household. In this context, the husband has the responsibility to provide a halal livelihood for the family, provide

religious education to his wife and children, protect the family from various physical and moral threats, and create a peaceful and loving atmosphere at home.

This responsibility must be carried out with full sincerity and earnestness so that the husband does not feel like the head of the household who has the right to do anything to his family according to his wishes. On the contrary, the husband must be able to protect and care for all members of his family, educate them, so that family members feel at ease in the family (Ayoub, 2021; Azid & Ward-Batts, 2020)

The position of men as imams in the family is manifested in the responsibility to guide family members in spiritual and moral matters. The Prophet Muhammad Shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam emphasized this role in the hadith which states that every individual is a leader, and will be held accountable for his leadership (Atci, 2024; Evstatiev, 2013). This leadership position, in Islamic tradition, is not intended to legitimize patriarchal domination, but rather a mandate that must be carried out with full justice and compassion. The Prophet's example in treating his family with gentleness and consultation is an ideal paradigm for the implementation of male leadership in Muslim families.

Islam views the position of men in terms of duties and responsibilities (taklif) that are balanced with the rights they have. The obligation of men to provide sustenance, protection, and education to the family is a manifestation of the concept of qiwamah which is not only in the form of authority but also sacrifice and devotion. The importance of this role is reflected in various verses of the Qur'an and hadith that emphasize the virtue of men who fulfill their responsibilities to their families.

The concept of family leadership is also an important aspect of the role of men. However, contemporary interpretations emphasize that qiwamah means more responsibility to protect and maintain the welfare of the family, rather than absolute authority (Parvaiz, 2015; Ullah dkk., 2023). A study of the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) shows a participatory and consultative leadership model in the family. In the household, the Prophet often consulted with his wives and respected their opinions.

The hadiths that emphasize the importance of education and affection for children show that the role of the father is not only limited to the economic aspect, but also includes the emotional and spiritual dimensions in raising children. The responsibility of educating children in Islamic values is a shared obligation of both parents, but the father has an important role in providing an example. Recent research shows that the absence of a father's role or the phenomenon of "fatherless" has a significant impact on the psychology of children. The presence of a father is very important in creating a harmonious family based on Islamic values.

The absence of a father's role can cause psychological development disorders in children, including identity problems, self-confidence, and social skills. As a solution, it is important to have an active contribution from the extended family and society to support the psychological development of children in families without a father. Families need to instill Islamic teachings that emphasize compassion and justice to support children's mental health, while still being based on Islamic principles.

3. The Role of Men in Society and Public Space

In the social and public dimension, the role of men in Islam also has various aspects. In Islamic tradition, men dominate positions such as prayer leaders, preachers, qadis

(judges), and political leaders. Men are expected not only to focus on their own family interests, but also to be active in creating positive changes in society. Men have an important role in maintaining social cohesion and ensuring that Islamic values are respected in the social order.

In the fields of politics and government, men often hold strategic positions such as the classical caliphate system or modern government (Kumo dkk., 2018). However, Islam emphasizes that leadership must be carried out with the principles of shura (deliberation) and justice, not authoritarianism according to the Qur'an, Surah asy-Shura verse 38. In the contemporary context, the biggest challenge is to ensure that male leadership does not perpetuate gender inequality or exclude women from public participation.

In the public sphere, Muslim men are faced with the challenge of balancing religious values and the demands of modernity. The gender equality movement and criticism of toxic masculinity encourage a reinterpretation of the role of men that is more just and humane.(Hikmatur Rahmah, 2020). However, before this long debate about gender equality rolled, Islam had actually offered the concept of mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf (good association) between men and women in the an-Nisa verse 19 which emphasizes collaboration, not competition or domination.

In Muslim society, men have an important role in the public sphere, both as leaders, educators, public servants, and guardians of Islamic values. This role is not only authoritative, but also carries a great responsibility to create justice, welfare, and social order. Men are expected to take roles in political, social, and religious leadership based on knowledge, justice, and noble morals. Men also have the responsibility to spread religious knowledge and guide society.

The transformation of gender roles in the family also has significant implications for the role of men in the public sphere. Changes in family structure from the traditional extended family model to the nuclear family, increasing participation of women in education and the labor market, and urbanization have changed the dynamics of gender roles in Muslim families. Contemporary Muslim men face sometimes conflicting expectations, maintaining their traditional roles as primary breadwinners and family leaders, while adapting to socio-economic realities that demand a more flexible division of roles. Negotiating the demands of public work with family responsibilities is a particular challenge for Muslim men in the modern context.

Muslim men must protect orphans, widows, the poor, and oppressed minorities in their leadership in the public space. Men are also required to play a role in building the economy of the people through halal work, entrepreneurship, and management of zakat/waqf. Although men have a large role in the public sphere, Islam does not ignore women's rights to participate. Men must support women's contributions in education, social, and economic matters according to Islamic law. Male leadership is not to dominate, but to serve and prosper society based on the principles of piety, justice and mercy. Thus, the role of Muslim men in society and the public sphere is to be agents of change who bring welfare, justice, and exemplary behavior according to Islamic guidance.

The unclear roles between men and women in society can cause various social problems, such as discrimination, oppression of women, sexual harassment, prostitution, and various other social ills. Therefore, the clarity of the role of men in Islamic society is very important to create a harmonious social order.

B. Conclusion

Analysis of the role of men in Islamic society shows that Islam has established a special position and role for men that includes aspects of leadership, protection, and responsibility. This role includes the scope of the family as husband and father, as well as the wider scope of society as a member of the Muslim community.

In the context of the family, men have the responsibility as leaders that must be carried out with full justice and wisdom. This role is very important to create a sakinah, mawaddah, warahmah family. The absence of this role has been proven to have a negative impact on the psychological development of children.

In a social context, Muslim men are expected to be agents of positive change and maintain Islamic values in society. The social system in Islam that regulates interactions between men and women aims to create harmony and prevent various social problems.

The responsibility of men as leaders in the Qur'an and hadith is comprehensive, covering material and spiritual dimensions. Qawwamah is not a privilege, but a mandate that demands accountability in the world and the hereafter. Its implementation must be adaptive to the context of the times, adhering to the principles of justice and universal goodness. A holistic understanding of this concept will prevent deviations and ensure the realization of a balanced family and society without feeling that anyone is better or superior.

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