Examining Gender Roles and Professional Realities: Stereotypes Against Women in Islamic Societies

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Abstract: Women have long been a topic of discussion throughout history. There are numerous questions and issues surrounding women’s existence, particularly their rights and roles as members of society. Discussions frequently revolve around women’s professional careers. In this paper, we will examine women's roles in the workplace, as well as their positions in various religions prior to the emergence of Islam. This study aims to determine Islamic perspectives on the career woman stereotype. This study utilized a literature review, citing primary sources such as the Qur’an, Hadis, fiqh books, scientific journals, and relevant social works. Women are allowed to work in Islam as long as they follow sharia. Women are categorized as God’s servants and may contribute to society in a variety of ways. In practice, many women decide to work to help their husbands with family responsibilities. The Qur’an teaches that all believers, men and women, are equal before Allah. As a result, they should have equal standing in regards to God, and they have both been declared equal in their ability to receive His grace. As a result, women face no barriers to employment as long as the work is done in a respectful and polite environment, and they can practice their religion without negatively impacting themselves or the environment.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Women have always been a theme that continues to be discussed throughout history. There are many questions and issues surrounding the existence of women, generally relating to their rights and role as members of society (Husniyati, 2021). Conversations also often include topics regarding women's careers in the world of work. We will explore women and their role in the world of work, while at the same time we will discuss the position of women in various religions before the emergence of Islam.
Apart from that, we will also investigate how Islam respects women. It is important to note that this view differs from the perception of some people who may argue that Islam degrades women. Islam never forbids women from being involved in business, pursuing higher education, or even becoming leaders of a country. However, the traditions of Islamic society itself sometimes encourage the view that women should only focus on their household duties (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021; Yenti, 2011). Discussions about the role of women are spread across various countries without clear boundaries (Nawaz et al., 2021). The role of women is an interesting topic because their existence and position in this world often causes controversy (Yuzar et al., 2023). History shows that the position and status of women, especially at the national level, varies greatly from classical times to today.

Prior to the arrival of Islam, Arab culture was generally characterized by poor treatment of women. A woman who marries a man is considered property, which her children can inherit after her husband's death. This concept fostered the notion that women were heritable property. In addition, in Arab society at the time, the birth of a daughter was frequently met with disappointment, shame, and even unhappiness. On the other hand, the birth of a boy is met with joy and pride. Some parents go to extreme lengths, such as killing or burying baby girls alive, because they believe it is a disgrace. Women held very low positions in religions other than Islam, as well as prior to the arrival of Islam (Sidani, 2005). Women are viewed as despicable, shameful, despicable creatures, and mere tools for satisfying lust (Midesia & Nadilla, 2022).

According to Islam, a woman holds a high position and has a significant impact on the lives of all people. The presence of a woman will serve as the first madrasa or school in the establishment of a righteous society (Abu-Nimer & Hilal, 2016). The Qur'an also emphasizes the importance of a woman's role as a mother, wife, sister, daughter, and member of society (Ali et al., 2019).

Wardiono et al. (2019) explain that the human position consists of several levels, with men having a higher job role than women. In terms of social positions, women and men are the same, with the only difference being obedience to Allah SWT; aside from that, women and men are equal in education, politics, economics, and other areas. Allah has bestowed upon women just as he has given men sufficient potential and ability to assume
responsibility and enable both sexes to carry out general and specific activities.

The Al Qur’an praises Ulul Albab who makes dhikr and thinks about the events of heaven and earth. Dhikr and thoughts regarding this matter lead humans to know the secrets of the universe (Hanafi, 2019). Those who are called ulul albab are not limited to men only, but also women. This is evident from the continuation of the verse above which describes the characteristics of ulul albab, Ali Imran verse 195.

“So, their Lord responded to them: “I will never deny any of you – male or female – the reward of your deeds. Both are equal in reward”.

However, there are those who still position women as weak creatures and forbid them from doing activities outside the home on the pretext that wherever women go, they must be accompanied by a mahram, even for the purpose of seeking knowledge (Rahman et al., 2022). On the other hand, there are also those who believe that women should not work but should be at home taking care of the house and educating their children (Hanapi, 2015).

In fact, without realizing a woman's creative ability in building a business, she has indirectly opened up job vacancies which can reduce unemployment and increase the country's economic income (Nasution, 2022). Therefore, Islam does not prohibit a woman from having a career and seeking knowledge as high as possible as long as the woman remains aware of her nature and does not deviate from the provisions contained in Islamic law, and does not use it as a weapon to degrade men.

Islam views women as not only domestic (home) creatures who are not permitted to enter the public area. As a creature of Allah SWT. Equal before Him, men and women are given the same rights in all fields, whether social, political, legal, technological development, and the like. “This also includes the right to a career in the economic sector In Al-Nahl (16): 97

“Whosoever acts righteously – whether a man or a woman – and embraces belief, We will surely grant him a good life; and will surely grant such persons their reward according to the best of their deeds”.

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In another verse, Allah SWT also says

“Do not covet what Allah has conferred more abundantly on some of you than others. Men shall have a share according to what they have earned, and women shall have a share according to what they have earned. Do ask of Allah His bounty. Allah has full knowledge of everything”. (An-Nisa : 32).

Basically, Islam never forbids women who want to work outside the home. The verses above explain that women and men have the same right to work and to enjoy the fruits of their labour. Islam also let women shape their own individual personalities, and it became a road to liberation – to becoming free from the burdening stereotypes that accompanied them in their daily lives before. Owing to the religion of Islam, muslim women acquired a high social position, in particular in the fulfilment of their basic roles of daughters, mothers, and individuals active in the particular areas of social life (Abubaker et al., 2022). Since then women became equal to men in broadly understood social, economic, and political rights. Islam destroyed the heretofore existing sense of injustice and oppression in relation to women in the social sphere.

In various historical records, working (career) women have been widely discussed. Many strong female figures appear in religious texts everywhere, both in the Samawi (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) religion and the earth religion. However, as time progressed, civilization and based on political interests and high egoism, these texts were later removed and interpreted according to the needs of the time (Sari, 2020).

This research aims to examine the position of working women from an Islamic perspective. Women, specifically housewives, may emerge and find roles in the community and micro households as their competence grows. Housewives can achieve independence by participating in empowerment programs and receiving ongoing guidance in business development.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The objective of this study is to ascertain the Islamic perspectives on the stereotype of women in professional careers. This study involves conducting a comprehensive review of existing literature. This study is a literary analysis in which researchers assess various written sources, including books and articles, that offer evidence to support this research (Mohamed Shaffril, 2021).
The primary sources consulted encompass *Al-Qur’an*, *Hadith*, and *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) literature, alongside scientific journals and other pertinent social publications pertaining to the research topic. In this research, the researcher adopts a normative approach to examine the values, norms, and teachings of the Islamic religion, with a particular focus on those found in the Koran and Sunnah. The employed data analysis approach is descriptive qualitative, wherein the researcher thoroughly examines specific sources, gathers information, and organizes it into comprehensible research.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Women in Islamic Perspective**

In Islamic teachings, work is not the only goal of human existence in this world. On the other hand, work is considered a means (wasail) to achieve an honorable life, namely living without begging, being able to fulfill one's own and family's needs, helping to lighten the burdens of others, and doing good deeds. In various instructions, both from the *Al-Qur’an* and *Al-Hadith*, it is emphasized that Islam encourages its followers to be independent and not be a burden on others.

In Islam, women are considered as creatures who have souls and have the right to experience the pleasures of heaven, indicating that there is equality between men and women in Islamic teachings (Zikriati & Marhamah, 2022). The implementation of the pillars of Islam is required equally for every Muslim and Muslim woman, without any difference in giving compensation to both. This includes permission to work, which is also permitted in the Islamic context.

Women in the Islamic view are stated in Surah Al Ahzab : 35

“Indeed, Muslims and Muslims, the believers and believers, obedient men and women, righteous men and women, patient men and women, humble men and women, men and women who give alms, men who men and women who fast, men and women who take care of their private parts, men and women who often mention (the name of) Allah, for Then Allah has prepares forgiveness and a great reward”.

Working and pursuing a career has various benefits for women (Aini, 2018). Individuals who work can earn income that allows them to be independent (hifdz nafs), provide benefits to others, and can give charity
according to the teachings of their religion (hifdz ad-din). People who do charity by giving alms and doing good deeds will gain honor in the eyes of society (hifdz al 'ird). This independence and honor have high values, as reflected in various verses of the Al-Qur’an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. The recommendation to work to meet life's needs and keep the soul healthy (Hifdz Nafs) is contained in Ihya Ulumuddin Imam Al-Ghazali (Al Ghazali, 2016), as follows:

“Oh my son, do halal work, so that you can fulfil your needs and not fall into poverty. Because, if someone falls into poverty he will experience three things: weak religion, short-sightedness and loss his honor. more than that, he will be looked down upon by other people”.

Every individual certainly wants a life that is honourable, sufficient, and has the ability to give charity and do good deeds with the wealth he has. Likewise, if a woman works and earns an income, she will feel the benefits for her life. By working, he can achieve prosperity for himself and his family, as well as achieve independence and respect.

Rahman (2021) emphasized that the difficulty of realizing equality for men and women in Muslim society is basically based on three basic assumptions in religion, namely; first, dogmatic assumptions that place women as complements; second, the dogmatic belief that women's ethical moral talents are lower than men's; third, the materialistic view, namely the ideology of pre-Islamic Mekkah society which looked down on women in the process of (re)production. These three assumptions conflict with Islam as a religion of rahmatan li al-alamin (Mercy for All) which positions women as honourable creatures like men.

Principles of gender equality in the Al-Qur’an

Men and Women are Equally Servants of Allah SWT

In human capacity as servants, both have the same potential and opportunity to become ideal servants, which in the Koran are called devout servants. In their capacity as servants, men and women will each receive rewards from Allah according to the level of their devotion, as mentioned in the Al-Quran (An-Nahl: 97):
“Whosoever acts righteously – whether a man or a woman – and embraces belief, We will surely grant him a good life; and will surely grant such persons their reward according to the best of their deeds”.

Men and Women are Equally Khalifah on Earth

The aim and purpose of creating humans on earth is not only to be servants of Allah, but also to be khalifah (the leader) on earth, and not to either male or female gender as stated in the Al-Quran surah Al - An'am verse 165.

“It is He who made you successors on the earth and raises some of you above others in rank, to test you through what He gives you. [Prophet], your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is most forgiving and merciful”.

Men and Women Equally Have the Potential to Achieve Achievements

There is no distinction between men and women in the opportunity to obtain maximum achievement, as in the Quran: An-Nisa' verse 124:

“When a revelation is brought before them they say, 'We shall not believe unless we ourselves are given a revelation as God’s messengers were.’ But God knows best where to place His messages: humiliation before God and severe torment will befall the evildoers for their scheming”.

These explanations and verses demonstrate the idea of gender equality which is considered ideal and firmly state that individual achievement, both in the spiritual and career dimensions, does not have to be the exclusive right of one particular gender (Hisyam et al., 2019; Rahman, 2021). Men and women have the same opportunity to achieve optimal performance (Van Es, 2019).

Career Women In Islamic Perspective

According to Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardawi, several conditions have been set for a woman to be allowed to work.

Let the work itself be prescribed. This means that work is not haram or can bring about something that is haram, such as women working to serve single men, or women being special secretaries for a director who for reasons of their activities often secluded (together), or being dancers who stimulate lust just for the sake of earning money (Nasution, 2017; Nurliana, 2017).
Worldly gain, or working in a bar to serve liquor - even though the Messenger of Allah, has cursed the person who poured it, carried it, and sold it or being a flight attendant on an airplane by serving intoxicating drinks, traveling long distances without a mahram, spending the night in a foreign country alone, or carrying out other activities that are prohibited by Islam, either specifically for women or specifically for men, or for both (Wagner et al., 2012).

_Fulfill the etiquette of Muslim women when leaving the house, in dressing, walking, talking and making movements._ “Thou, tell the believing women that they should lower their glances, guard their private parts, and not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal; they should let their headscarves fall to cover their necklines and not reveal their charms except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands’ fathers, their sons, their husbands’ sons,... (An-Nur: 31)”

_Do not let your work or duties ignore other obligations that should not be ignored_, such as obligations to your husband or children, which are your first and main obligations.

According to the Syafi-iyah’s mahzab, when a woman has a career, it means that a woman plays two roles in two lives, namely in family life and community life (Aulia et al., 2021). When a woman plays the role of a wife and mother for her children, then at that time a woman is acting in accordance with her natural function, whereas when a woman participates in work in household life, then at that time a woman is playing her human function as a servant of Allah (Andriana, 2021) in the public, in order to contribute to efforts to develop and advance society.

Work and a career for a woman are influenced by several things including the background of the need to help the economy family. because work and a career for a woman require it he left his house is a complex problem (Nasution, 2017; Nurliana, 2017). Thus, this problem raises issues of authority, motive, compliance and non-compliance, work and the need to leave and tools women's transportation. Each of these problems is truly dependent on time and place, which determines what behaviour should or may be performed, and there is no point in seeking absolute certainty of answers (Widiyanti & Firdaus, 2023).

The woman who worked was the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, namely Fatimah, the daughter, who was married to Ali bin Abi Talib. History
records that he lived in poverty, so he had to work hard to do all the household work. Abu Daud narrated how Ali told this story about his wife, "Once Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet SAW, was near me. She spun the mill until it hurt her hands, she carried water girders until it hurt her shoulders, and she swept the house until her clothes were dusty." In Abu Daud's history another addition was added; "Fatimah made bread so that the colour of her face changed (exposed to the charcoal)."

The fatwa regarding women leaving the house show a sequence of attitudes, even though they originate from basic views in Islamic morality. Morality can maintained, elevated, or degraded by the behaviour of women. In choosing a job or profession, women must have certain boundaries in accordance with her feminine characteristics, such as having a career with the type of work appropriate, maintain a good and polite appearance, always remember the obligations of a woman, and also the obligations as a congregation in worship (Nour, 2021; Labib, 2011).

By considering the restrictions that exist for women who pursue careers, it can be concluded that a career woman is actually protected by certain factors that will keep her from taking actions that could affect her moral integrity.

CONCLUSION

Islam is a religion that absolutely respects and respects women and men. Basically, Islam never forbids women who want to work outside the home. Islam views women not only as domestic creatures (at home) but also have role in social activities. Islam allows women to work as long as they comply with the sharia agreed upon by the ulama. Because women are servants of God to advance society through various efforts that they are able to contribute. In practice, many women choose to work to help their husbands meet family needs.

The Qur'an teaches that the position of believers, both men and women, is equal before Allah. Therefore, they should have equal status in the eyes of God, and both have been declared equal in receiving God's grace. However, a woman's departure to study, even without a mahram, can be justified as long as her honor and safety are guaranteed and do not result in immorality. Women have the right to work as long as they need it or the job requires it, as
long as they comply with religious and ethical norms. Therefore, there are no obstacles for women to work, as long as the work is carried out in a respectful and polite atmosphere, and they can maintain their religion and avoid negative impacts on themselves and their environment.

REFERENCES


