


Reinterpreting gender in the Qur'an: Realizing inclusive interpretation in the modern era

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Article information	Abstract
Submitted: 2024-09-10 Revised: 2024-11-13 Published: 2024-12-30	The Qur'an has often been interpreted through patriarchal perspectives that limit women's roles. This study highlights the challenge of reinterpreting gender in the Qur'an to develop understandings that are inclusive, just, and relevant to the context of modern Muslim societies. The research aims to analyze various forms of gender discrimination in Qur'anic interpretation and to explore opportunities and challenges in reconstructing more inclusive interpretations in the modern era. This study employs gender hermeneutics to uncover gender bias in traditional interpretations of the Qur'an through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The research identifies patriarchal bias by selecting and analyzing relevant literature. The analytical process involves critically evaluating biased classical interpretations in comparison with more inclusive contemporary interpretations, using a thematic approach to understand gender discrimination within the texts. Findings indicate that inclusive Qur'anic interpretation requires critical analysis of patriarchal bias, women's empowerment, and contextual hermeneutics. Social change, education, and digital technology create opportunities to reconstruct gender-just interpretations. Through women's involvement, educational reform, digital advocacy, and international collaboration, progressive interpretations emerge that promote gender equality and social justice in contemporary contexts. This study contributes to the development of Qur'anic studies by offering a multidimensional approach to foster more inclusive and gender-just interpretations. By integrating critical analysis, women's empowerment, digital technology, and international collaboration, this research broadens the religious discourse toward progressive interpretations relevant to modern social dynamics and supportive of gender equality.
Keywords: gender interpretation, equality, reconstruction of interpretation	



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INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic interpretation has long played a significant role in shaping gender understanding among Muslims, often reinforcing patriarchal norms through readings dominated by male scholars. Classical exegetes such as Al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and Al-Qurtubi tended to emphasize men's authority in social and family structures, thereby subordinating women, a pattern highlighted by Geissinger (2015), Tasmin (2021), and Fahdzlan et al. (2023). Cook (2000) notes that interpretation extends beyond the spiritual domain to influence social and political life, including the formation of accepted gender norms. Verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa on *qiwamah* (male authority over women) is a central example, often cited, as Shomad (2022) and Begum et al. (2024) observe, to legitimize male dominance within families. Yet, in recent decades, alternative interpretations have emerged, offering more equitable perspectives on gender. Contemporary thinkers such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Fazlur Rahman, as discussed by Sya'rani (2017) and Crabtree (2022), propose inclusive hermeneutical approaches that interpret the Qur'an contextually to affirm gender equality. Such perspectives open space for more just readings that reduce discrimination and promote equality in modern Muslim societies.

Recent studies affirm that women's empowerment is a crucial factor in achieving economic and social stability. The World's Women (2022) highlights that women's empowerment positively contributes to economic growth, while the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2017) reports that women's participation in the labor force remains lower than men's, creating significant disparities. This inequality is also reflected in the limited representation of women in Qur'anic interpretation, which has the potential to hinder progress toward gender equality. UNESCO (2019) emphasizes that gender inequality in education continues to be a serious issue in many Muslim-majority countries. In this context, Supriatna et al. (2023) propose more inclusive and contextual interpretive methods to reduce gender bias, while Deroncele-Acosta et al. (2024) argue that advances in educational technology and international cooperation can help overcome these barriers and promote more equitable approaches to interpretation. This study seeks to address three key questions: what forms of gender discrimination exist in interpretation, what opportunities are available for reconstructing interpretations that are more inclusive of women, and what challenges remain in eliminating gender discrimination from Qur'anic exegesis.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of women's empowerment in socio-economic development, the low level of women's participation in the workforce, and the persistence of unequal access to education in many Muslim-majority countries. In the context of Qur'anic interpretation, women's involvement remains very limited, resulting in the continued reproduction of patriarchal bias. Some research has proposed inclusive hermeneutical approaches and emphasized the role of education and international cooperation in fostering gender-sensitive interpretations. However, research gaps remain in three key areas: the lack of comprehensive studies mapping forms of gender discrimination in both classical and contemporary interpretations, the limited integrative exploration of social, educational, and technological opportunities for reconstructing inclusive interpretations, and the insufficient analysis of practical challenges and cultural resistance in eliminating gender discrimination within Qur'anic interpretation.

This study aims to critically reveal gender bias embedded in the interpretation of Qur'anic texts, highlighting how both classical and contemporary exegetical traditions often reproduce power relations that place women in a subordinate position. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the various forms of gender discrimination within Qur'anic exegesis, whether in social, spiritual, or cultural domains, which limit women's participation in religious and societal life. The study also seeks to analyze the challenges of achieving more inclusive interpretations, including methodological obstacles, social resistance, and the limited representation of women within exegetical discourse. The significance of this research lies in its potential to provide a theoretical

contribution by enriching the field of gender studies and Qur'anic interpretation through a more just and egalitarian hermeneutical approach. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for academics, scholars, and educational institutions in developing interpretive models that are more responsive to issues of gender equality, thereby fostering inclusive, progressive, and socially relevant understandings of religion in the modern context.

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgent need to deconstruct gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation and to reconstruct more inclusive readings that affirm women's equal standing in both social and spiritual domains. By critically exposing existing forms of gender discrimination and analyzing the obstacles to inclusivity, this research highlights the importance of developing hermeneutical approaches that are contextually grounded, egalitarian, and relevant to contemporary challenges. Building upon these objectives, the study raises several key research questions: How do gender biases manifest in the interpretation of Qur'anic texts? In what ways do these interpretations contribute to forms of discrimination against women? And what methodological, social, and structural challenges must be addressed to achieve more inclusive and equitable interpretations? These questions are intended to guide further inquiry and provide a foundation for advancing scholarly discourse on gender and Qur'anic hermeneutics in both academic and practical contexts.

METHOD

This research employs gender hermeneutics as a methodological framework to analyze sacred texts and reveal implicit gender biases embedded in traditional interpretations. According to Hasan et al. (2022) and Giang & Dan (2024), gender-sensitive hermeneutics provides a pathway for reinterpreting Qur'anic verses from a more egalitarian perspective. In this context, the feminist hermeneutic approach becomes central, as it emphasizes the importance of situating the Qur'an within its social and historical context. The study relies on secondary data collected through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), as highlighted by Salama et al. (2017) and further elaborated by Mengist et al. (2020), who stress that SLR offers a comprehensive and structured method for synthesizing relevant scholarly works. The sources examined include both classical and contemporary interpretations, along with scientific studies that focus on gender issues in Qur'anic exegesis.

Among the seminal works engaged in this study are *Qur'an and Woman* by Wadud (1999) and *Believing Women in Islam* by Barlas (2002), both of whom argue for a reinterpretation of the Qur'an that dismantles patriarchal readings and supports gender justice. The literature search employed keywords such as "feminist," "Qur'anic interpretation," "patriarchy," "Islamic law," and "gender discrimination," and was conducted through multiple academic databases to ensure the inclusion of relevant and high-quality sources. As noted by Llorens et al. (2021) and Nemani et al. (2024), such an approach not only exposes the persistence of gender bias in traditional exegesis but also opens the possibility for alternative interpretations that promote fairness and equality.

In this study, data collection was conducted through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, which, as emphasized by Carrera-Rivera et al. (2022) and Rocco et al. (2023), provides a structured and rigorous framework for synthesizing existing knowledge. The process involved several systematic stages. The first stage was source identification, where predetermined keywords were employed to trace journal articles, books, and academic reports relevant to gender issues and Qur'anic interpretation. Following this, source selection was carried out by evaluating the relevance of the works to the research focus, their scholarly quality, and their potential contribution to the discourse. The selected literature was then grouped and classified thematically. Categories included comparisons between classical and contemporary interpretations, as well as examinations of patriarchal bias embedded in traditional exegesis. This thematic classification allowed for a more

comprehensive understanding of how gender has been addressed across different interpretive traditions.

The collected and selected literature was examined in greater depth during the data analysis stage. This process began with critical reading to grasp the context and core themes associated with gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation. Through thematic analysis, key themes such as patriarchal bias, gender discrimination, and feminist interpretation were identified. As noted by Liehr-Storm et al. (2023), thematic analysis is effective for uncovering recurring concepts and underlying meanings across diverse texts, while Naeem et al. (2023) emphasize its usefulness in identifying broader trends within scholarly discourse. Applying this approach enabled the researcher to recognize general patterns in Qur'anic interpretation related to gender and to highlight shifts between traditional and more inclusive readings.

The next stage involves a critical evaluation of both classical and contemporary interpretations. Classical exegeses, often shaped by patriarchal norms, are contrasted with more inclusive contemporary readings. Wadud (1999) emphasizes the importance of a Qur'anic hermeneutic that foregrounds women's lived experiences and contextual analysis, thereby challenging interpretations that reinforce inequality. In a similar vein, Barlas (2002) argues that patriarchal readings often distort the Qur'an's egalitarian message, highlighting the need for deconstruction to reveal principles of justice and equality embedded in the text. By engaging with these perspectives, the study not only identifies biases in traditional interpretations but also proposes feminist hermeneutical solutions that reinterpret verses frequently considered demeaning to women. This analytical comparison demonstrates how inclusive approaches can provide a more balanced and just framework for understanding women's roles in Islam, contributing to a reconstructed interpretation aligned with gender equality and social justice.

RESULT and DISCUSSION

Result

Unraveling gender bias in the interpretation of Qur'anic texts

Recent research has shown that interpretations of the Qur'an are often tainted by deep-seated patriarchal biases, resulting in interpretations that tend to discriminate against women and reinforce unequal social structures. Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas have played a key role in challenging this paradigm, proposing a contextual hermeneutical approach that is more just and more in line with Islamic principles of justice. Through their work, we gain insight that a more inclusive and gender-equitable interpretation is possible and essential to advancing contemporary understandings of Islamic teachings. Here is a table of the findings of this research:

Table 1
Gender Bias in Interpretation of the Qur'an

No	Findings	Description
1	Patriarchal Domination in Traditional Interpretation	This study refers to classical interpretations such as Tafsir al-Jalalayn and Tafsir Ibn Kathir, which emphasize the patriarchal interpretation of Q.S. An-Nisa: 34, this verse is often translated as a justification for male dominance, showing how the patriarchal context has influenced the interpretation (Masoud et al., 2016).
2	Reform of Interpretation by Muslim Feminists	Amina Wadud, in her book "Qur'an and Woman" (1999), and Asma Barlas, in "Believing Women in Islam" (2002), offer interpretations that question and challenge the patriarchal views underlying many traditional interpretations. Both authors argue that the term "qawwali" should be interpreted in the context of support rather than authority.
3	Hermeneutical Context and Social Relevance	Nasr Abu Zayd (2018). supports the emphasis on contextual hermeneutics in "Rethinking the Qur'an". He highlights the importance of considering the social and historical context in interpreting Qur'anic verses to avoid bias and distortion.

4	The Influence of Academic Studies on Modern Interpretation	Research by Hyder (2008) and Takim (2009) reveals that most accepted interpretations come from a highly patriarchal socio-political context. They point to reinterpreting the verse with a more inclusive contemporary understanding.
5	Global Discourse and Gender Equality in Islam	A report by the Pew Research Center (2015) highlights how the debate about the role of women in Islam is growing, with more and more.

Note: The findings in this table are derived from classical tafsir, Muslim feminist thought, contextual hermeneutical approaches, contemporary academic studies, and global reports on Islam and gender

Table 1 reviews gender bias in Qur’anic interpretation, showing how patriarchal structures have shaped the reading of sacred texts in Islam. Classical commentaries such as Tafsir al-Jalalayn and Tafsir Ibn Kathir often interpret verses like Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 as justifying male dominance, reinforcing gender inequality. In response, Muslim feminist scholars such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas propose reinterpretations that challenge patriarchal views, arguing that “qawwali” signifies support rather than authority, and call for inclusive hermeneutics. Nasr Abu Zayd further emphasizes the need to consider social and historical contexts to avoid distortion and ensure relevance to contemporary realities. Similarly, studies by Hyder and Takim reveal that dominant interpretations are rooted in patriarchal socio-political contexts, underscoring the importance of progressive reinterpretations. The Pew Research Center highlights growing global debates on women’s roles in Islam, reflecting increasing awareness of gender equality. Together, these perspectives advocate for interpretations that reduce bias and promote justice.

Forms of gender discrimination in Al-Quran interpretation

Recent research has revealed that Qur'anic interpretations are often trapped in deep-seated patriarchal structures, with specific verses used to justify male domination over women. Scholars such as Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Amina Wadud have highlighted how dominant cultural and social norms among interpreters, especially during the Abbasid era, have created interpretations that reinforce gender inequality. They argue that a literal approach to interpretation often ignores the broader historical and social context, failing to capture the principles of justice that should be at the heart of the Qur'anic teachings. Instead, a more inclusive and contextual approach is needed to overcome these biases, offering more just interpretations and in keeping with changing social dynamics.

Table 2
Forms of Gender Discrimination

No	Findings	Description
1	Patriarchal Structure in the Interpretation of the Qur'an	Historical patriarchal structures influence the interpretation of the Qur'an, especially in verses such as QS. An-Nisa: 34, which is often interpreted to justify male leadership and domination over women (Hosseini et al., 2015; Noor, 2024)
2	The Impact of Cultural and Social Norms on Gender Interpretation	Gender interpretations are often influenced by dominant cultural and social norms, reflecting social ideologies that place men in a superior position (Ahmed, 1992; Ayubi, 2020; Saffari, 2024).
3	Literal Interpretation Approach	Criticism of literal interpretations that fail to capture the broader dimensions of justice in the Qur'an, emphasizing that historical and social context are crucial in understanding the verses (Zayd et al., 2006; Hillman & Baydoun, 2020).
4	Traditional Resistance	Inclusive and contextual approaches often generate resistance from traditionalist groups who view changes in the interpretation of sacred texts as a threat to long-standing norms and traditions. They fear these new approaches could obscure understandings that have been considered final and indisputable (Wadud, 1999; Sachedina, 2009).
5	Risk of Interpretation Fragmentation	Introducing flexibility in interpretation through a historical-sociological lens can lead to fragmentation in the understanding of the people. This can lead to diverse

and often contradictory interpretations, thus causing confusion and division within the community (Rahman, 1982).

Note: The findings in this table are derived from classical tafsir, Muslim feminist thought, contextual hermeneutical approaches, contemporary academic studies, and global reports on Islam and gender

Table 2 outlines the various forms of gender discrimination that are manifested in the interpretation of the Qur'an, highlighting the complexity and persistence of deep-seated patriarchal structures in religious literature. These structures have historically crystallized in the interpretation of verses such as Surah An-Nisa: 34, which are often used to justify male dominance over women, reflecting the significant influence of the patriarchal context. Furthermore, gender interpretations are also heavily influenced by dominant cultural and social norms, which consistently place men in a superior position, illustrating how social ideology can shape religious understanding. The literalist approach to interpretation is often criticized for failing to encompass the broader dimensions of justice that should be reflected in the sacred text, emphasizing the importance of historical and social context in understanding the verses. Furthermore, attempts to adopt an inclusive and contextual approach often encounter resistance from traditionalists, who view changes in interpretation as a threat to long-standing norms and traditions, fearing that new interpretations could obscure understandings that are considered final and indisputable. The risk of interpretive fragmentation resulting from introducing flexibility through a historical-sociological lens also creates challenges, often leading to diverse and contradictory interpretations, which can cause confusion and division within the community (Rahman, 1982). These findings emphasize the need for a more dynamic and reflective approach to interpreting religious texts, which can adapt to contemporary social changes without losing the core teachings.

Challenges in realizing inclusive interpretation

Recent research has uncovered significant obstacles to efforts to achieve inclusive interpretation of the Qur'an, including strong resistance from conservative groups who see inclusive interpretations as a threat to traditional interpretations of Islam. Changes related to gender issues are often seen as unacceptable deviations. In addition, countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan use Sharia law to legitimize patriarchal interpretations, reinforcing legal and social barriers against women. This resistance often hampers efforts to reform more inclusive family law. Male dominance in religious institutions continues to perpetuate gender bias, minimize women's participation, and reduce the potential for egalitarian approaches. Women who try to contribute to theological discussions also face deep-rooted social and political barriers, demonstrating the continued influence of patriarchy on the interpretation of religious texts. Berikut adalah point-point temuan dari deskripsi tersebut dengan referensi spesifik:

Table 3
Challenges In Inclusive Interpretation

No	Findings	Description
1	Resistance from Conservative Groups	Strong resistance from conservatives who see inclusive interpretation as a threat to the purity of Islam. They argue that changes in interpretation, especially related to gender, are unacceptable deviations (Wahid, 2006; Al-Omari, 2016).
2	The Use of Sharia Law to Legitimize Conservative Interpretations	In countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, Sharia law is used to support patriarchal interpretations that limit women's rights in various aspects of life (Hosseini, 2015; Khalishah & Rosyid, 2023).
3	Resistance to More Inclusive Legal Reform	Efforts at more inclusive family law reform are often stymied by conservative groups who use Sharia law as a tool to maintain patriarchal social structures (Badran, 1995; Maslim & Bjorck, 2009).

4	Male Domination in Religious Institutions	Male dominance in religious institutions results in highly gender-biased interpretations. The lack of female participation in these institutions reduces the ability to promote a more inclusive and egalitarian approach (Wadud, 1999; Fauziyah & Farisi, 2024).
5	Social and Political Barriers to Women's Participation	Women who attempt to participate in interpretation often face significant social and political barriers, including strong gender discrimination in many Muslim countries (Ahmed, 1992).

Note: The findings in this table are derived from classical tafsir, Muslim feminist thought, contextual hermeneutical approaches, contemporary academic studies, and global reports on Islam and gender

Table 3 clearly illustrates some of the key challenges facing efforts to achieve inclusive interpretation of the Qur'an, particularly about gender. The resistance from conservative groups expressed by Wahid and Al-Omari highlights concerns that inclusive interpretations may deviate from what they consider to be the pure and authentic interpretation of Islam, with gender-related changes seen as a threat to long-standing traditions. The use of Sharia law to legitimize conservative interpretations, as noted by Hosseini, shows how this legal tool can reinforce existing patriarchal structures and limit women's rights, particularly in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan.

Furthermore, the resistance to more inclusive legal reform described by Badran and colleagues shows how legislative efforts aimed at achieving equality and justice are often hampered by conservative views that use Sharia law as a tool to defend the status quo. This problem is compounded by the male dominance of religious institutions, which, as explained by Wadud and Fauziah, results in a strong gender bias in interpretation and reduces the opportunity for a more equitable approach. Finally, the challenges faced by women seeking to participate in the interpretation process, as articulated by Ahmed, highlight significant social and political barriers, including deep-seated gender discrimination, that remain deeply rooted in many Muslim communities. These challenges reflect the urgent need for more effective strategies to overcome resistance to inclusivity and foster broader social transformation to achieve truly egalitarian and just interpretation.

Discussion

Reimagining Quranic interpretation: The contribution of inclusive interpretation

Inclusive interpretation in Qur'anic studies seeks to provide a fairer and more comprehensive representation of marginalized groups, particularly women. As argued by Darzi et al. (2021), such an approach allows the voices and experiences of women to be integrated into the reading of sacred texts, ensuring that interpretations reflect the diversity within Muslim communities. Similarly, Koburtay et al. (2023) emphasize that inclusive interpretation functions as a corrective response to gender injustices often perpetuated by traditional readings that marginalize or restrict women's roles. In line with these perspectives, Mernissi (1991) demonstrates that feminist interpretation can uncover new dimensions in verses historically considered problematic with regard to gender. Her analysis shows that by adopting a more open and critical lens, interpretations can move beyond patriarchal constraints, offering greater space for women's perspectives in engaging with the Qur'an. Together, these views highlight the transformative potential of inclusive interpretation in reshaping religious discourse toward justice and equality.

The intellectual and methodological contributions of female and feminist exegetes are crucial in reshaping Qur'anic interpretation toward greater inclusivity. Gurung (2020) argues that their perspectives provide a more balanced view by addressing interpretive gaps often overlooked by traditional exegetes. In a similar vein, Lwamba et al. (2022) highlight how feminist scholarship challenges entrenched patriarchal readings and expands the interpretive horizon. Amina Wadud (1991), for instance, emphasizes the centrality of women's lived experiences in interpretation, urging readers to approach the Qur'an not only as a normative text but also as one embedded within

power and gender relations. Her methodology involves reexamining verses commonly misread as legitimizing inequality such as those on polygamy and women's rights in marriage and reconstructing them through a more egalitarian lens. Through this approach, Wadud demonstrates that Qur'anic verses can yield meanings that are inclusive and just, thereby supporting gender equality and correcting patriarchal distortions.

Barlas (2002) makes a significant contribution by demonstrating how traditional interpretations have often been misappropriated to justify the subordination of women. She argues that many patriarchal readings fail to capture the Qur'an's inherently egalitarian message. Through a deconstructive hermeneutic approach, she illustrates that the Qur'an itself does not endorse gender hierarchy but consistently advocates justice and equality. In line with this, Rahemtulla (2023) and Kunnummal (2023) affirm that feminist hermeneutics open pathways for reinterpreting problematic verses in ways that dismantle patriarchal dominance. Methodologically, these scholars stress the importance of embedding interpretation within deeper historical and linguistic contexts to reveal overlooked dimensions of meaning. As Anwar et al. (2024) observe, this approach not only reclaims women's voices often marginalized in classical exegesis but also integrates egalitarian principles that resonate with Islam's core values of justice. Collectively, such perspectives enrich Qur'anic interpretation by offering alternatives that are both inclusive and socially transformative.

The integral approach to Qur'anic interpretation seeks to integrate linguistic context, historical background, methodological contributions, feminist exposition, and principles of gender justice to produce interpretations more inclusive and relevant to modern realities. Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) argue that attention to linguistic and historical contexts is essential for unveiling egalitarian messages within the Qur'an; however, such recontextualization often encounters resistance from conservative groups who insist on the absoluteness of the text. Similarly, Sachedina (2009) notes that feminist exposition, while valuable in exposing gender bias, is frequently viewed as controversial and threatening to traditional authority, potentially creating divisions within the Muslim community. Hosseini (2015) further emphasizes that the implementation of gender justice is constrained by entrenched patriarchal legal and social structures in many Muslim societies. From another perspective, Rahman (1982) highlights that contextual hermeneutics, though innovative, faces challenges in ensuring interpretive consistency, given the diversity of approaches. Despite these tensions, this integral model represents an important innovation in Qur'anic studies, underscoring the need to balance tradition and reform through dialogue among scholars, intellectuals, and the wider community.

Revealing and Addressing Gender Discrimination in the Interpretation of the Qur'an

Addressing gender discrimination in Qur'anic interpretation requires strategic and sustainable efforts that transform both understanding and practice. Scholars such as Hosseini et al. (2015) and Donahoe (2017) observe that classical commentaries, including *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, often reflect patriarchal socio-cultural norms, particularly in verses like Q.S. An-Nisa: 34, which has historically been invoked to justify male authority. To overcome this limitation, Abu Zayd advocates for a contextual hermeneutic that situates interpretation within its historical, social, and linguistic frameworks, allowing terms such as *qawwali* to be understood as responsibility and support rather than domination. In parallel, Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) emphasize the necessity of incorporating women's perspectives into interpretive practices, arguing that their inclusion helps dismantle entrenched patriarchal biases. They also stress the role of religious education in promoting inclusivity by equipping women to actively shape theological discourse. Collectively, these approaches highlight that reinterpretation grounded in gender justice is essential for developing interpretations that align with contemporary values of equality and social fairness.

Advocacy for reforming discriminatory Sharia-based laws, as emphasized by Badran (1995) and Hosseini (2015), is a vital step toward establishing gender-just policies within Muslim societies. They argue that dismantling legal structures shaped by patriarchal interpretations is essential to achieving substantive equality. Hyder (2008) and Takim (2009) further highlight the importance of empirical research in measuring the real impact of inclusive interpretations, ensuring that reforms respond to social realities. At the same time, Rahemtulla (2023) and Kunnummal (2023) stress the need for dialogue between conservative and progressive scholars to bridge differences and prevent fragmentation within the Muslim community. Public awareness efforts through seminars, workshops, and social media also serve as key strategies in normalizing egalitarian approaches to Qur'anic interpretation. Collectively, these perspectives demonstrate that legal reform, empirical inquiry, dialogue, and education are interdependent pillars in advancing justice-oriented interpretations of Islam.

This figure illustrates the root causes of gender discrimination in Qur'anic interpretation, including historical patriarchal norms, non-inclusive religious education, lack of female participation, discriminatory Sharia laws, weak public awareness, and limited dialogue. Hosseini et al., (2015) argue that patriarchal culture has deeply shaped Qur'anic interpretation, reinforcing hierarchical gender roles; however, they also suggest that progressive hermeneutics hold potential to dismantle these embedded biases. Wadud (1999), in contrast, emphasizes the structural problem of women's exclusion from religious institutions, noting that although some initiatives attempt to increase female participation, these efforts often remain symbolic and unsustainable. When compared, both perspectives highlight that the persistence of gender bias is not only textual but also institutional. Thus, addressing discrimination requires simultaneous reform in interpretive methodology, educational structures, and institutional inclusivity.

Hosseini (2015) argues that discriminatory Sharia laws perpetuate gender inequality, noting that reform efforts are frequently resisted by traditionalist groups who perceive change as undermining religious authority. This observation aligns with Rahemtulla (2023), who emphasizes that such resistance is rooted in power dynamics rather than purely theological concerns. The challenge is compounded by low public awareness of gender inclusivity, particularly in regions with limited literacy, a problem Kunnummal (2023) identifies as central to sustaining bias in religious discourse. Furthermore, dialogue between conservative and progressive groups remains weak, often confined to academic circles and excluding influential actors. These findings suggest that genuine transformation requires integrating reforms in religious education, enhancing women's participation, legal restructuring, and broader public awareness campaigns to foster sustainable change.

Redefining Gender: The opportunity for interpretive reconstruction in a modern context

Karimullah (2023) and Bonner (2024) emphasize that social, educational, and technological transformations in the modern era have opened new spaces for reconstructing gender interpretation in Islam, particularly through the growing global awareness of gender equality. This awareness drives the urgency to revisit classical interpretations that often place women in subordinate positions. In line with this, Wadud (1999) argues that a Qur'anic hermeneutic sensitive to socio-historical contexts can provide new perspectives on verses that have traditionally been used to legitimize gender inequality. She highlights how verses concerning women's roles in the family are frequently read literally, neglecting the complex realities surrounding their revelation. Expanding this view, Zaharin and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2020) assert that a contextual approach enables reinterpretations to return to the Qur'an's core principles of justice and equality, while also correcting patriarchal biases deeply embedded in classical exegetical traditions.

Hosseini (2015) highlights that women in various Muslim countries are increasingly active in public and political life, which generates stronger demands for renewing Qur'anic interpretation to move beyond patriarchal frameworks. This shift is exemplified in Indonesia, where the Indonesian Women's Ulama Congress (KUPI) demonstrates how female clerics are carving greater space in religious discourse and advocating for interpretations more responsive to gender equality and women's rights. In parallel, Uyuni et al. (2023) stress the central role of education in reconstructing gender-sensitive interpretations, with universities in Egypt, Indonesia, and Morocco gradually embedding gender approaches into their curricula. For instance, Al-Azhar University and UIN Indonesia have initiated reforms that reflect progressive hermeneutics. Webb (2000) and Janos & Attar (2023) further argue that these educational transformations signify a paradigm shift, aligning interpretation with principles of justice and inclusivity. Together, these developments reveal how social and educational progress reinforces women's participation in shaping religious understanding.

Education not only functions at the university level but also extends to grassroots initiatives, where women activists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in shaping more inclusive interpretations. Sands (2003) and Merry (2006) note that NGOs such as Sisters in Islam in Malaysia have become pioneering agents in advancing gender equality through education campaigns and public advocacy, showing how civil society can influence religious discourse. Mahmood (2005) further emphasizes that these initiatives highlight the need to interpret religious texts in ways that are responsive to contemporary social realities rather than confined to rigid traditions. When compared to reforms in formal academic institutions, these grassroots movements illustrate the complementary role of non-formal education in widening access to progressive interpretations. Collectively, this suggests that both formal and informal modes of education can foster shifts toward Qur'anic interpretations that embrace gender justice and inclusivity.

Technology, particularly digital media, has emerged as a crucial medium in advancing inclusive gender interpretations of the Qur'an. Gil Guerrero (2024) observes that digital platforms such as social media, blogs, and online journals dismantle geographical and cultural barriers that once restricted the circulation of progressive exegetical discourse. This shift highlights how technology enables a global audience especially younger, digitally literate generations to engage with more inclusive perspectives. The work of initiatives like Musawah illustrates this dynamic, as they strategically use online platforms to advocate gender equality and facilitate transnational dialogue among scholars, academics, and activists. Compared with traditional, localized modes of religious discourse, these digital approaches represent a democratization of interpretation, expanding accessibility and encouraging wider participation in shaping inclusive religious understandings.

Collaboration across countries has become increasingly central to advancing inclusive Qur'anic interpretations. Sardar et al. (2019) emphasize that international forums such as conferences, seminars, and joint publications provide vital spaces for exchanging strategies to challenge patriarchal readings and promote gender-just approaches. The annual gatherings of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), for instance, illustrate how cross-national dialogue allows Muslim scholars to share best practices in education and interpretation. Mahmood (2005) further notes that these collaborations can foster transformative religious discourses by situating gender justice as a shared global concern rather than a localized issue. In parallel, digital platforms have amplified such exchanges by enabling participation beyond geographical constraints. Online conferences hosted by institutions like Oxford and Georgetown exemplify how digital connectivity democratizes scholarly dialogue, making inclusive interpretations more accessible to diverse audiences. Together, these collaborative and technological initiatives strengthen a global movement toward Qur'anic interpretations that foreground justice and equality in modern Muslim societies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, efforts to realize an inclusive Qur'anic interpretation require a multidimensional approach that includes a critical analysis of patriarchal bias in traditional interpretations, empowerment of women in religious discourse, and adoption of contextual hermeneutics that consider historical and social aspects. Social change, educational advancement, and digital technology provide great opportunities to reconstruct a more gender-just interpretation. Initiatives such as the involvement of women in interpretation, gender-based educational reform, and advocacy through digital platforms can open up space for more progressive discussions. International collaboration through conferences and seminars further strengthens this movement, allowing for exchanging ideas across countries to create interpretations that support gender equality. With this combination of strategies, Qur'anic interpretation can reflect principles of justice that align with modern social dynamics, significantly contributing to more just and inclusive social change.

This research makes a theoretical contribution to the development of Qur'anic interpretation and gender studies in Islam by applying a contextual hermeneutic approach that highlights justice and equality. On a practical level, reforming religious education curricula and utilizing digital technology enable the wider dissemination of progressive interpretive narratives, particularly among younger generations. Furthermore, cross-border collaboration through conferences, seminars, and joint publications enhances the global movement to construct inclusive and contextually relevant religious interpretations. These combined efforts are expected to accelerate equitable social transformation, reduce patriarchal bias within interpretive traditions, and strengthen the role of inclusive scholarship in shaping a more just and gender-responsive Islamic discourse.

Future research should explore how inclusive approaches can be effectively applied across diverse cultural and socio-political contexts. Key recommendations include: (1) advancing academic research on inclusive exegesis to build stronger theoretical foundations; (2) promoting initiatives that empower female scholars, enabling them to play a greater role in shaping religious discourse; and (3) prioritizing gender-sensitive Islamic legal reforms that reflect justice and equality. By pursuing these directions, future studies can contribute to bridging gaps between religious interpretation and contemporary values. Ultimately, inclusive Qur'anic interpretation has the potential to inspire the development of a more just and equitable society rooted in the principles of gender justice.

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