

<https://doi.org/10.52541/isiri.v62i2.2362>

Inclusiveness of Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Societies

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Abstract

This article engages contemporary scholarly literature on women’s empowerment in Muslim societies, examining various indicators and challenges to women’s empowerment and analyzing case studies to assess the effectiveness of different strategies and initiatives. Furthermore, the research explores the norms of women’s empowerment from the perspective of Abrahamic religions, arguing that, despite having historically patriarchal norms, these religions actively worked towards promoting gender equality. In Muslim societies, cultural practices and interpretations limited women’s autonomy. Ongoing efforts within Islamic scholarship and activism strive to reconcile these practices with Islamic values and advance gender equality. Despite notable progress in recent times, the findings highlight cultural, legal, and institutional barriers that hinder women from realizing their full potential. To overcome these obstacles, this article suggests operating within existing cultural and religious frameworks to challenge gender stereotypes and encourage fair gender relations. Ultimately, the article emphasizes the importance of increased collaboration and knowledge-sharing to prioritize women’s empowerment as a fundamental development goal. By creating an environment that fosters the full participation and inclusion of women in all aspects, Muslim societies can unlock the immense potential of their female population, leading to sustainable development and social progress for all.

Keywords

women’s empowerment, women’s rights, Muslim societies, Muslim states.

Introduction

The concept of empowering women has sparked extensive debate in contemporary times, particularly within Islamic societies. The endeavours to promote women’s rights and foster gender equality in

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Muslim communities have encountered many hurdles, from cultural and societal impediments to religious and political limitations. Nevertheless, Islamic sources endorse the notion of inclusiveness in empowering women, underscoring the significance of fair treatment and equal prospects for individuals of all genders. According to Keddie, the captivating role of women in Islamic societies has been a matter of profound scholarly fascination for centuries.¹ Extensive discussions have spanned from exploring women's rights within the Islamic faith to the profound influence of colonialism on gender dynamics. This discussion has become more relevant as the world becomes increasingly cognizant of the universal imperative nature of women's rights and the urgent call to rectify gender disparity within Muslim societies.

The Qur'ān teaches that Allah has bestowed His blessings upon Muslim men and women alike. Those who possess unwavering faith, display obedience, embrace truthfulness, exhibit patience, cultivate humility, practice charity, observe fasting, guard their chastity, and constantly remember Allah shall be graciously granted forgiveness and bestowed with a genuinely magnificent reward.² This eloquently highlights egalitarianism between men and women from the divine perspective, emphasizing the imperative for both sexes to unite in pursuing virtue and prosperity. In a Qur'ānic verse, the significance of gender equality and women's empowerment is emphasized, with the Qur'ān cautioning against the coveting of privileges bestowed upon some by Allah over others, for both men and women are entitled to a just share of their earnings.³

The diverse cultural customs and traditions that dictate the roles and responsibilities of men and women are often rooted in their biological distinctions. Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that many of these norms are biased and unjust, leading to women being relegated to a lower status and lacking authority in the social, cultural, religious, economic, and legal domains.

During the 2005 World Summit, governments worldwide acknowledged that progress for women is synonymous with progress for all. In light of this, the United Nations Millennium Project's Task Force on Education and Gender Equality formulated a comprehensive framework to empower women, defining gender equality as ensuring

¹ Nikki R. Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

² Qur'ān 33:35.

³ *Ibid.*, 4:32.

equal access to quality healthcare, education, proper nutrition, and economic opportunities.

The significance of women's empowerment in the Muslim world is that women's empowerment plays a crucial role in enhancing the progress and advancement of Muslim communities from social, economic, and political perspectives. As noted by Moghadam, promoting women's empowerment is crucial as it can result in a range of positive outcomes, such as enhanced involvement in decision-making processes, better health outcomes, and improved economic prosperity.⁴

The primary aim of this research is to thoroughly examine the extent of women's empowerment in Muslim societies and investigate the various factors that contribute to or impede this advancement. Additionally, this study seeks to reveal the specific approaches and endeavours being implemented to promote and enhance women's empowerment within the Muslim world.

Literature Review

Women's empowerment refers to granting women more control over their lives and allowing them to exercise their rights and choices, ultimately enabling them to reach their full potential. Although there is not a single definition for this term, it primarily involves empowering women by providing them with access to resources, opportunities, and positions of authority while also ensuring their active involvement in all aspects of life, whether it be economic, political, or societal. Within Islamic studies, several studies have discussed this issue, beginning with the American legal scholar Azizah Y. al-Hibri. In her article "Islamic Law and Muslim Women in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities," al-Hibri maintains that Islamic law serves as a foundation for women's empowerment, encompassing aspects such as access to education, property rights, and legal protections.⁵ She highlights how Muslim women across the globe have utilized Islamic law to progress their rights, with a notable example being the women's movement in Iran.

Leila Ahmed's book *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* acknowledges patriarchy's existence in many Muslim communities but argues that it is not an inherent aspect of Islamic teachings. She supports her claim by citing historical instances of

⁴ Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁵ Azizah Y. Al-Hibri, "Islamic Law and Muslim Women in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities," *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* 3, no. 1 (2005): 174-89.

Muslim women taking action to advocate for their rights and interests while adhering to Islamic law.⁶

In her book *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation*, the Moroccan scholar and activist Fatima Mernissi offers a feminist perspective and challenges the prevailing notion that the veil is simply a symbol of women's oppression. Instead, she presents a compelling argument that the veil can be seen as a strategic tool women employ to navigate and negotiate power within patriarchal societies. Mernissi's work sheds light on the complexities of women's empowerment within Islamic contexts, dismantling preconceived notions and encouraging a more nuanced understanding of the subject.⁷

Finally, in her book *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who*, Ruth Roded delves into the extensive biographical collections, unravelling the often-overlooked narratives of women within early Islamic society. Her book effectively showcases women's diverse roles during this era, transcending the boundaries of traditional gender roles and leaving an indelible mark on Islamic civilization.

In the realm of contemporary scholarship, most scholars maintain the belief that the principles and teachings of Islam can serve as a solid foundation for women's empowerment.

Indicators of Women's Empowerment

Within the existing literature, the following indicators of women's empowerment emerge as central: 1) Economic participation: It enables women to achieve financial independence and make decisions related to their lives. In Muslim societies, initiatives such as microfinance programmes have shown promising results in increasing women's economic participation.⁸ 2) Education: It enables women to acquire knowledge and skills, make informed decisions, and participate in decision-making processes. In many Muslim societies, women's access to education is limited, particularly at higher levels.⁹ 3) Health: It enables women to lead healthy and productive lives. In many Muslim societies,

⁶ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁷ Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1991).

⁸ Kate Grantham, Gillian Dowie, and Arjan de Haan, eds., *Women's Economic Empowerment: Insights from Africa and South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2021).

⁹ Haideh Moghissi, ed., *Women and Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2004).

women's access to health care is limited, particularly in rural areas.¹⁰ 4) Political participation: It enables women to influence decision-making and defend their rights. In many Muslim societies, women's participation in politics is limited by barriers created by men. 5) Decision-making: In many Muslim societies, women are excluded from decision-making processes and have limited influence over decisions that affect their lives at home and in their communities. 6) Legal rights: They provide a framework for protecting women's rights and ensuring equal legal treatment. In many Muslim societies, women face legal discrimination, particularly in marriage, divorce, and inheritance. 7) Violence: It undermines women's physical and mental health and limits their opportunities. In many Muslim societies, women face various forms of violence, including domestic violence, honour killings, and forced marriages. 8) Cultural and social norms: Often, cultural and social norms reinforce gender inequality and limit women's opportunities.¹¹ 9) Access to technology: It enables them to access information and participate in economic, political, and social activities. In many Muslim societies, women's access to technology is limited. 10) Role of religious institutions: Religious institutions shape attitudes towards women's empowerment in Muslim societies. In many cases, these institutions reinforce gender inequality and limit opportunities for women.¹²

Status of Women in Abrahamic Religions

Understanding the role of the Abrahamic religions (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in empowering women necessitates an examination of the historical and cultural conditions in which these religions arose. While patriarchal standards affected their early teachings, some religions have attempted to promote gender equality and empower women. For example, Jewish texts such as the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*) contain stories of powerful women like Sarah, Rebecca, and Deborah. However, in ancient Israelite society, women were primarily viewed as wives and mothers, with their tasks centred on the family. In areas such as inheritance and religious leadership, Jewish laws and practices favoured males. Current interpretations of Judaism

¹⁰ Naeem Akram, Abdual Hamid, and Muhammad Irfan Akram, "Role of Women Empowerment in Utilization of Maternal Healthcare Services: Evidence from Pakistan," *Pakistan Economic and Social Review* 57, no. 1 (2019): 93–116.

¹¹ Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*.

¹² Monika Arnez, "Empowering Women Through Islam: Fatayat NU between Tradition and Change," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 21, no. 1 (2010): 59–88, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etp025>.

advocate for more female participation in religious rituals and leadership responsibilities.¹³

Likewise, Christianity reflected the patriarchal traditions of the communities from which it arose. While the New Testament portrays Jesus as treating women with dignity and equality, the patriarchal Greco-Roman society saw women's duties as subservient, and they were barred from formal leadership positions. Despite this, prominent exceptions, like the apostle Junia and women referenced in the Pauline epistles, occupied leadership positions and were highly valued. Today, Christian denominations interpret the Bible differently, with some advocating for gender equality and women's inclusion in leadership positions.¹⁴

Islam pioneered improvements in women's rights and empowerment during its early years. Gender equality, respect for women, and appreciation of their contributions to society are central to Islamic ideals derived from the Qur'ān and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). For example, because of the cultural preference for male children, it was common practice in pre-Islamic Arabia to bury newborn girls alive. This practice violated girls' right to life and marked the low value of women in that society. This barbaric practice was specifically condemned and prohibited by the Qur'ān.¹⁵

Islam emphasizes every human life's essential value and sanctity, regardless of gender. The prohibition of female infanticide aimed to preserve the rights and lives of girls and send a strong message about the equality of men and women in God's eyes. Islamic beliefs grant women legal rights and protections in a variety of areas. For example, under Islamic law, women can own and inherit property, engage in commercial and economic activities, and pursue education. Likewise, the Qur'ānic principle of *nafaqah* (maintenance) guarantees women's right to financial support from male relatives or spouses. Furthermore, in marriage and divorce, the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions stress the notion of consent and respect.

While cultural practices and interpretations have occasionally limited women's liberty within specific areas and groups, continuous initiatives in Islamic research and activism strive to align these practices with Islamic ideals and promote gender equality.

¹³ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito, eds., *Daughters of Abraham: Feminist Thought in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵ Qur'ān 81:8-9.

The standards of women's empowerment differ among Abrahamic religions. While historical and cultural circumstances shaped their early teachings, all three faiths continue encouraging gender equality and women's empowerment. Islam, in particular, has instituted considerable changes and placed a premium on gender equality as one of its core pillars. However, obstacles persist within each faith, and more work is required to fully realize women's empowerment based on religious values.

Case Studies

To provide a more comprehensive analysis of the problem of women's empowerment in Muslim societies, the following case studies will be considered:

In recent years, the Turkish government has made tremendous headway in fostering women's empowerment. For example, Turkey's constitution provides equal rights to men and women and the government has passed laws that safeguard women's rights and promote gender equality. The Turkish Civil Code,¹⁶ for example, provides women equal rights in marriage, divorce, and child custody. In 2012, the government also approved the Law on Family Protection and Abuse Against Women, which criminalizes many types of abuse against women. In addition, the government has established several measures to encourage women's engagement in business, politics, and education. As a result, women's labour-force participation rate in Turkey is 34.2%, higher than the Middle East and North Africa average. Turkey has also made considerable progress in extending access to education for girls and women. The country's female literacy rate has risen from 57% in 1980 to over 94% in 2021, making it one of the highest in the region. Women now account for 49.9% of all students enrolled in higher education. Finally, Turkey had a female prime minister, Tansu Ciller, who served from 1993 to 1996. The female representation rate, which was 17.1% in the previous elections, rose to 20.1% in 2023.¹⁷

Despite these accomplishments, women in Turkey continue to confront hurdles regarding gender discrimination and violence. Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions. Gender

¹⁶ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services General Directorate on the Status of Women, "Women in Turkey," Ankara (2021), <https://www.aile.gov.tr/media/68105/women-in-turkey-23-02-2021.pdf>

¹⁷ Sinan Uslu, "Women's Representation in Turkish Parliament at Highest Level in History," *Anadolu Agency*, May 16, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/womens-representation-in-turkish-parliament-at-highest-level-in-history/2898863>.

stereotypes and cultural conventions hinder women's prospects for empowerment. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023 puts Turkey at 129th out of 146 nations, reflecting severe gender differences.¹⁸

Over the last several decades, Malaysia has made considerable gains in empowering women, with numerous laws and projects aimed at fostering gender equality and boosting women's involvement in business, education, and politics. For example, the National Policy on Women (2011-2020) and the Gender Equality Act 2016 seek to guarantee that women have equal access to education, work, and healthcare and that their legal rights are respected. The government has also implemented policies to boost women's labour-force involvement, including financial incentives for enterprises that hire women and a mandate that all publicly traded corporations include at least 30% of women on their boards of directors. Regarding access to primary and secondary education, women in Malaysia have attained parity with males. In postsecondary education, women outnumber males, accounting for 55% of university graduates. This has resulted in a massive rise in female labour-force participation, with women currently accounting for 46.7% of the labour force.¹⁹

However, women in Malaysia are underrepresented in leadership roles, accounting for just 14.5% of legislative seats. Women also need help with credit and finance, with just 22.4% having access to official financial services. Furthermore, Islamic ideas and cultural standards continue to shape gender roles and expectations in Malaysia, limiting women's prospects for empowerment.

Women in Saudi Arabia have historically faced considerable restrictions on their freedom, including the prohibition of driving, working outside the house, or travelling without the consent of a male guardian. However, the government has made significant advances in recent years to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. For example, the Saudi government removed a prohibition on women driving in 2018, a massive step towards women's emancipation and independence. Furthermore, the government has implemented quotas for women in leadership positions in public and commercial sectors, outlawed gender discrimination, and criminalized sexual harassment.

¹⁸ World Economic Forum, "Global Gender Gap Report 2023" (June 2023), 11, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf?

¹⁹ Aminah Ahmad, "Country Briefing Paper: Women in Malaysia" (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 1998), <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32552/women-malaysia.pdf>.

Finally, the government has developed the National Family Safety Program to safeguard women and children from domestic violence and abuse. Saudi Arabia has also achieved significant educational development in recent years, with women now constituting the majority of university students. However, women continue to encounter considerable barriers to obtaining an education and pursuing particular fields of study, notably in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).²⁰

Despite these accomplishments, Saudi women continue to confront hurdles in women's empowerment and gender equality. Women's rights and freedoms continue to be restricted, including limits on their ability to travel without the approval of a male guardian and prohibitions on their participation in some sports and cultural activities. Furthermore, cultural and religious standards limit women's prospects for empowerment.

Iran's constitution provides equal rights to men and women and the government has passed several laws to safeguard women's rights and promote gender equality. The Family Protection Act of 1967 criminalizes many types of violence against women, while the Law on Eliminating Violence Against Women of 2013 criminalizes practices such as domestic abuse, forced marriages, and honour murders. In addition, the National Plan for the Empowerment of Women (NPEW) was developed in 2007 to expand women's labour-force participation, enhance their access to education and healthcare, and encourage political involvement. Iran has made considerable progress in extending access to education for girls and women. The country's female literacy rate has risen from 36% in 1976 to over 97% in 2021, making it one of the highest in the region. Women currently account for 54% of all higher education students and 49% of the workforce.

However, women in Iran are underrepresented in leadership roles, accounting for just 6.3% of legislative seats. Women also suffer impediments to credit and finance, with just 6% having access to official financial services. Furthermore, Islamic family law frequently favours men, with women facing substantial divorce and child custody challenges.

Pakistan's constitution provides equal rights to men and women and the government has implemented several laws to safeguard women's

²⁰ Maryam Sani, "Women's Representation in STEM Related Education and Careers: A Case Study of Female University Students in Saudi Arabia" (PhD diss., Staffordshire University, 2018).

rights and promote gender equality. The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act 2006, which criminalizes many types of violence against women, and the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act 2011, which forbids practices such as forced marriages and denial of inheritance rights, are examples of these laws. In addition, the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), for example, provides financial aid to nearly five million women in Pakistan to help them overcome poverty. The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) was founded to monitor women's rights and promote gender equality. Pakistan has made considerable progress in extending access to education for girls and women. The country's female literacy rate has risen from 35% in 2000 to over 70% by 2021. Women currently account for 49% of all primary and secondary school pupils and 43% of enrolled postsecondary students. This has resulted in a considerable rise in female labour-force participation, with women accounting for 24.8% of the labour force.²¹

Despite these accomplishments, women in Pakistan continue to face problems regarding gender discrimination and violence. Women are underrepresented in leadership roles, accounting for just 20.81% of legislative seats and 17.6% in provincial assemblies.²²

Comparative Analysis of Case Studies

Turkey has made considerable strides in empowering women by enacting legal and regulatory frameworks to preserve women's rights and foster gender equality. Malaysia has prioritized economic empowerment for women via numerous efforts, yet women continue to confront cultural and religious impediments to complete equality. In contrast, despite recent improvements, Saudi Arabia and Iran maintain more restricted cultural and legal frameworks that hinder women's prospects for empowerment. Finally, while Pakistan has successfully strengthened women's legal rights and expanded women's labour-force participation, they continue to confront hurdles due to cultural norms and patriarchal views. These case studies show that women's increasing empowerment and gender equality necessitates a holistic strategy incorporating legal and legislative frameworks, cultural and social

²¹ Sakiko Tanaka and Maricor Muzones, "Policy Brief on Female Labor Force Participation in Pakistan" (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2016), <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/209661/female-labor-force-participation-pakistan.pdf>.

²² PILDAT, "Women Representation in Pakistan Parliament" (Lahore: PILDAT, 2003), <https://www.pildat.org/publications/Publication/women/WomenRepresentationInPakistanParliament.pdf>.

norms, and economic and educational possibilities. Much more work needs to be done to address the underlying causes of gender-based discrimination and violence and to guarantee that women may fully engage in all sectors of society.

Impediments to Women's Empowerment

There are several impediments to women's empowerment, including the following: 1) Gender-based violence causes bodily and mental suffering, prevents women from participating in society and fosters detrimental gender norms and prejudices while perpetuating gender inequalities. 2) The gender pay gap restricts women's economic independence and reflects and promotes prejudice based on gender, and reinforces undesirable gender stereotypes. 3) The unequal distribution of care labour hampers women's access to public life as a result of their limited time and energy. It is affected by patriarchal attitudes and practices and a lack of supportive social policies. 4) Cultural and religious beliefs and practices restrict women's access to education, employment, and political engagement. 5) Lack of female political participation limits women's capacity to influence policy choices that impact their lives. This lack of representation fosters negative gender stereotypes and encourages gender-based discrimination. 6) Lack of legal protection encourages negative gender stereotypes and perpetuates gender-based discrimination. 7) Lack of access to healthcare limits women's capacity to make decisions about their health and well-being and results in poor maternal health outcomes, high maternal death rates, and increased incidences of infectious and chronic illnesses. 8) Poverty restricts women's access to education, healthcare, and economic possibilities. Women are more likely than males to live in poverty worldwide, which can be attributed to various causes, including uneven access to education, work, and economic resources, gender-based violence and discrimination, and caregiving duties. Poverty can also result in poor health outcomes, such as malnutrition, high newborn and maternal death rates, and restricted access to healthcare.

Role of Islamic Teachings in Shaping Women's Empowerment

Many academics believe that the Qur'ān encourages women's empowerment. The Qur'ān recognizes all persons' intrinsic equality, regardless of gender, colour, or nationality. The Qur'ānic verse, "We created you from a single pair of male and female and divided you into

nations and tribes so that you may know one another”²³ demonstrates the significance of diversity and equality. Furthermore, the Qur’ān emphasizes the value of education for both men and women, saying, “Read in the name of your Lord who created; created man from a clot. Read, and your Lord is the most benevolent, who taught man what he did not know with the pen.”²⁴ These verses emphasize the significance of education and the pursuit of knowledge. Thus, Islamic beliefs encourage women’s education like men’s. This enables them to make educated decisions and play an active part in their societies.

According to Amina Wadud, the Qur’ānic teachings give a framework for gender equality. She emphasizes that “the Qur’ān contains a message of liberation for women.”²⁵ Islamic teachings also encourage women along with men to educate themselves and seek knowledge.²⁶ This emphasis on education has formed female scholars throughout Islamic history. As a result, Islamic teachings play an essential role in encouraging women’s empowerment. Gender equality and respect for women are promoted throughout the Qur’ān. Muslim scholars have strived to increase women’s empowerment in Muslim countries. However, in certain Muslim communities, patriarchal interpretations have impeded women’s education. Therefore, there is a pressing need to promote a more egalitarian understanding of Islamic teachings to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In Muslim civilization, efforts to enhance women’s empowerment have centred on reinterpreting Islamic teachings in ways that promote gender equality and reform patriarchal attitudes and practices. Islamic feminist organizations, for example, have argued for a reading of Islamic teachings that acknowledges the significance of gender equality and challenges patriarchal interpretations. Likewise, efforts have been made to improve women’s presence in Muslim leadership to encourage women’s views and perspectives in interpreting Islamic teachings.

Strategies and Initiatives to Promote Women’s Empowerment

Muslim states such as Pakistan have launched different programmes to enhance women’s empowerment and ensure the efficacy of these programmes. These include the following among others: 1) Investing in

²³ Qur’ān 49:13.

²⁴ Ibid., 96:1-5.

²⁵ Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

²⁶ Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Mājāh, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-muqaddimah, Bāb faḍl al-‘ulamā’ wa ‘l-l-hathth ‘alā ṭalab al-‘ilm, <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:224>.

women's education where organizations such as the Aurat Foundation are trying to provide education and training for women. 2) Introducing legal reforms to safeguard women's rights, such as the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act and the Acid Control and Crime Prevention Act. Providing legal aid for women who encounter prejudice and violence is also critical. The Legal Assistance Society in Pakistan is one of the country's largest legal assistance organizations. 3) Creating gender-sensitive policies that address the unique demands and obstacles women experience. In Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Program is one example of a scheme that gives financial assistance to low-income women. 4) Promoting women's health needs, such as maternity and reproductive health services. A programme that offers primary health care to women in rural regions is Pakistan's Lady Health Worker Program. 5) Supporting women's leadership and entrepreneurship. A programme that gives training and assistance to female leaders is Pakistan's Women's Leadership Development Program. 6) Enhancing media and communication, which will impact popular attitudes and views of women. The Hum Aurtein campaign in Pakistan promotes gender equality and women's empowerment through the media. 7) Growing community participation to raise knowledge about women's rights and promote gender equality through women's clubs and community education programmes. A programme that mobilizes communities to help women's empowerment is Pakistan's Rural Help Program. 8) Building capacity through knowledge campaigns to boost women's empowerment. A programme that gives training and support to women is the Women Empowerment through Capacity Building Program in Pakistan.

Effectiveness of Strategies and Initiatives

The efficacy of methods and programmes to boost women's empowerment in Islamic communities varies according to various circumstances, including the country's cultural, political, and economic setting. While some measures have proven effective in advancing women's empowerment, others have encountered problems and opposition. Affirmative action programmes, such as gender quotas, have successfully enhanced women's political representation in nations such as Tunisia, Algeria, and Pakistan.

Similarly, efforts to provide women with opportunities for education and skill development have produced promising results. In Pakistan, for example, the Benazir Income Support Program gives financial help to low-income families, particularly to encourage them to

participate in educational and training programmes. Such measures have aided women in gaining entrance to the labour force and improving their economic standing.

Efforts to combat gender-based violence, such as domestic violence and sexual harassment, have also shown some results. In Morocco, for example, implementing legislation criminalizing violence against women has resulted in more significant reporting of incidences of abuse, indicating that women are more likely to seek aid and protection.

However, some concerns exist about the efficacy of these techniques and activities. Cultural and religious standards, for example, may hinder the success of some projects. Cultural views towards women may be difficult to change in many traditional nations, making supporting efforts to promote women's rights and empowerment difficult.

Furthermore, certain efforts may be ineffective due to resource restrictions such as a lack of finance, infrastructure, and institutional support. Lack of resources, for example, may impede access to education, healthcare, and economic possibilities in many low-income nations, making it harder to meet women's empowerment goals.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates the importance of Islamic teachings for boosting women's empowerment in Muslim communities. It highlights several strategies and efforts Muslim nations, including Pakistan, used to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The findings show that Islamic teachings may help shape women's empowerment by emphasizing the value of education, social justice, and women's rights. Gender equality requires a holistic strategy that includes legal frameworks, social policies, and cultural transformation. Therefore, any practical approaches should be tailored to different nations' cultural, social, and economic situations. The study also demonstrates that the efficacy of these policies depends on various factors, including government commitment, civil society engagement, and religious leaders' involvement. It also emphasizes the importance of monitoring and evaluating these programmes to guarantee their long-term viability and impact. The study concludes that Islamic teachings provide a solid framework for fostering women's empowerment in Muslim cultures. On the other hand, effective policies and initiatives need a comprehensive and context-specific approach shared by all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and religious leaders.
