

Volume 21, No. 2  Special Issue 2024

JOURNAL OF

Islam in Asia

A Refereed International Biannual Arabic – English Journal

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

إِنَّمَا
يَنْشِئُ
اللَّهُ
مِنْ
عِبَادِهِ
الْعُلَمَاءَ



Journal of Islam in Asia

EDITOR-in-CHIEF

Abdul Salam @ Zulkifli bin Muhamad
Shukri

EDITOR

Noor Azlan bin Mohd Noor

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Homam Altabaa

GUEST EDITORS

Khaliq Ahmad Bin Mohd Israil
Berghout Abdelaziz
Nurul Ain binti Norman
Nik Md. Saiful Azizi Bin Nik Abdullah

COPY EDITOR

Nur Mashitah Wahidah binti Anuar

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

LOCAL MEMBERS

Abdel Aziz Berghout (IIUM)
Muhammed Mumtaz Ali (IIUM)
Nadzrah Ahmad (IIUM)
Rahmah Bt. A. H. Osman (IIUM)
Saidatolakma Mohd Yunus (IIUM)
Thameem Ushama (IIUM)

INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS

Abdullah Khalil Al-Juburi (UAE)
Abu Bakr Rafique (Bangladesh)
Anis Ahmad (Pakistan)
Muhammad Al-Zuhayli (UAE)

Articles submitted for publication in the *Journal of Islam in Asia* are subject to a process of peer review, in accordance with standard academic practice.

© 2024 by *International Islamic University Malaysia*

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.



E-ISSN: 2289-8077

JOURNAL OF ISLAM IN ASIA

Vol. 21, No. 2, Special Issue 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31436/jia.v21i2>

المقالات العربية

- 1 نظرية الأهلية عند الأصوليين وعلاقتها بالأمراض النفسية في علم النفس: دراسة تحليلية
(The Theory of Legal Capacity According to Scholar of Uṣūl
and Its Relationship with Mental Disorders in Psychology:
An Analytical Study)
أكمى مارياني بنت تون محمد
- 42 أهمية منهج ابن تيمية في الجمع بين النقل والعقل لتنسيق العلاقة بين الوحي والعلم
الحديث
(The Significance of Ibn Taymiyya's Method in
Harmonizing Between Reason and Revelation to Regulate
the Relationship Between Revelation and Modern
Sciences)
محمد عصري بن صبري، محمد شهر الدين بن تيتيه، الأستاذ المشارك د. نعي محمد سيف
العزيزي بن نعي عبد الله
- 68 المعوقات النفسية لنهوض الأمة الإسلامية عند مالك بن نبي: (دراسة تحليلية)
(Psychological Obstacles to the Advancement of the
Islamic Nation According to Malek Bennabi (Analytical
study))
حاشور إدير، عبد العزيز برغوث، نعي محمد سيف العزيزي

English Articles

- Muslim Women's Perceptions of Barriers to Sectorial Participation: Insights and Clarifications from an Islamic Perspective Based on a Qualitative Study in Ampara District, Sri Lanka** 92
Mohamed Sulthan Ismiya Begum, Indriaty Ismail and Zul' Azmi Yakoob
- Anders Breivik's Manifesto: Measuring Violence Indicator in Anti-Islamic Extremist Discourse** 115
Mariet Rosnaida Cabrera Cusi and Abdelaziz Berghout
- Representation of Islamic Thought and Civilisation at International Islamic University Malaysia Through Semiotics: An Analysis** 142
Mehwish Riaz and Thameem Ushama
- Transhumanism – Old Challenges in a New Garb?** 172
Anke Iman Bouzenita
- SDGs for Gender Equality: Is there a Clash between the Western and Islamic Perspectives** 194
Iffat Ara Nasreen Majid
- Balancing Tradition and Technology: Islam's Approach to Modern Healthcare Across All Ages** 220
S. S. Meraj, Mohamad Fauzan Bin Noordin and Asadullah Shah
- Modes of Green Resistance in Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry of Exile** 243
Hamoud Yahya Ahmed Mohsen, Tanja Jonid and Homam Altabaa

Muslim Women's Perceptions of Barriers to Sectorial Participation: Insights and Clarifications from an Islamic Perspective Based on a Qualitative Study in Ampara District, Sri Lanka

Persepsi Wanita Muslim Mengenai Halangan dalam Sumbangan Sektorial: Pandangan dan Penjelasan daripada Perspektif Islam Berdasarkan Kajian Kualitatif di Daerah Ampara, Sri Lanka

Mohamed Sulthan Ismiya Begum*, Indriaty Ismail and Zul' Azmi Yakoob

Abstract

Women's educational attainment and participation in the workforce have increased significantly. However, in the Sri Lankan context, Muslim women often encounter barriers to engaging in professional fields. Although Islam acknowledges the importance of women's contributions within its ethical framework, many eligible and skilled Muslim women refrain from pursuing careers in essential sectors such as healthcare due to various interpretations of Islamic teachings. This study aims to clarify the historical contributions of Muslim women to professional fields and to investigate the reasons for their current underrepresentation from an Islamic perspective. Using a qualitative research design, purposive sampling was employed to select participants, including housemaids and women in diverse professions from the Ampara District. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using content analysis methods. The findings offer valuable insights for women seeking a better understanding of Islamic teaching, academic researchers, advocates for the proper

* All authors are from University Kebangsaan Malaysia. Corresponding author's email: izzahis123@gmail.com, ismiyams@seu.ac.lk

©International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

Article received: October 2024
Article accepted: November 2024
Publication date: December 2024

Journal of Islam in Asia
Special Issue, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2024
E-ISSN: 2289-8077

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31436/jia.v21i2.1254>

Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara District, Sri Lanka **93**

implementation of Islamic principles, and future generations interested in the roles of women within the community.

Keywords: Islam, Muslim Women, Islamic History, Islamic Perspective, Sectorial Contribution, Qualitative Study.

Abstrak

Penyertaan wanita dalam pendidikan dan dunia pekerjaan telah meningkat secara signifikan. Namun, dalam konteks Sri Lanka, wanita Muslim sering menghadapi halangan untuk terlibat dalam bidang profesional. Walaupun Islam mengakui kepentingan sumbangan wanita dalam batasan etika, banyak wanita Muslim yang layak dan berkemahiran enggan mengejar kerjaya dalam sektor-sektor penting seperti penjagaan kesihatan akibat pelbagai tafsiran ajaran Islam. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan sumbangan sejarah wanita Muslim kepada bidang profesional serta menganalisis sebab-sebab yang menyumbang kepada kurangnya penyertaan mereka pada masa kini dari perspektif Islam. Dengan menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kualitatif, kaedah pengambilan sampel bertujuan digunakan untuk memilih peserta, termasuk pembantu rumah dan wanita dalam pelbagai profesion dari Daerah Ampara. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara separa terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan kaedah analisis kandungan. Penemuan ini akan memberikan pandangan berharga bagi wanita yang ingin memahami ajaran Islam dengan lebih mendalam, penyelidik akademik, penyokong pelaksanaan ajaran Islam yang betul, dan generasi akan datang yang berminat dengan peranan wanita dalam masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Wanita Muslim, Sejarah Islam, Perspektif Islam, Sumbangan Sektor, Kajian Kualitatif.

Introduction

Throughout history, women have faced marginalization, subjugation, and denial of their rights.^{1 2 3 4} This is evident in various ancient civilizations, including Babylonian, Greek, Egyptian, and Roman societies, where women were often viewed as subordinate and treated as objects to satisfy male desires, leading to a significant infringement of their fundamental rights. In pre-Islamic Arabia, women were denied property rights, and practices such as the burial of female infants and the forced self-immolation of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres were tragically common in India.^{5 6 7 8}

However, with the advent of Islam, there was a profound transformation in the recognition of women's rights. The Qur'an and Hadiths explicitly affirm the dignity and equitable rights of women, with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) embodying these principles throughout his life. During his time, women experienced enhanced freedoms and actively participated in various social and political domains.⁹ Their contributions extended to education, business, scientific

¹ Badawi, J. *Women Rights of Islam*. Qatar:Doha:s.l. (1980)

² Galloway, S. D. *The Impact of Islam as a Religion and Muslim Women on Gender Equality: A Phenomenological Research Study*. Doctor of Philosophy, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Nova Southeastern University. (2014)

³ Qazi, M. S. & Din, B. U. "Islamic Concept of Gender Equality: Origins and Signs." *Al-Qawārīr* 1(3), (2020): 1-11.

⁴ Sajo and Muhammad, A. "An Islamic Perspective on Gender Equality Controversy in Nigeria". *African Scholar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (JHSS-6)* 15(6) (2019): 27-34.

⁵ Alfitri, A. Women's Rights and Gender Equality Issues in Islamic Law in Indonesia: The Need to Re Read Women's Status in the Islamic Religious Texts. *Mazahib* 13(1), (2014): 23-38.

⁶ Galloway, S. D. *The Impact of Islam as a Religion and Muslim Women on Gender Equality: A Phenomenological Research Study*. Doctor of Philosophy, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Nova Southeastern University, (2014)

⁷ Qazi, M. S. & Din, B. U. "Islamic Concept of Gender Equality: Origins and Signs." *Al-Qawārīr* 1(3), (2020): 1-11.

⁸ Sajo and Muhammad, A. "An Islamic Perspective on Gender Equality Controversy in Nigeria". *African Scholar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (JHSS-6)* 15(6) (2019): 27-34.

⁹ Qardawi, Y. *Islam oru Nadunilaya Maarkam (Islam is a neutral Religion)*. (Chennai: Islamic Foundation Trust, (2017).

95

**Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka**

endeavours, and social welfare, including roles in charity, Hadith studies, fiqh, nursing, and other community activities.¹⁰

In the contemporary era, Wise, Raheema, and Omar (2017) note that women have the autonomy to pursue their interests, including professional careers and social engagements.¹¹ Today, women continue to excel in the nursing profession and constitute a significant portion of the healthcare workforce in Malaysia, serving as doctors, pharmacists, radiologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, lab technicians, and more.¹²

Educated Muslim women are increasingly engaging in various professional fields, including teaching, engineering, law, and even roles in the army and police forces. Pio and Syed (2013) highlight that India boasts a significant number of professional women, particularly in biotechnology and high-tech sectors. Despite variations in educational attainment, the overall growth of South Asian women in the workforce remains slow and unremarkable.¹³ Assi and Marcati (2020) reference a report by McKinsey & Company indicating that the female-to-male ratios in professional and technical jobs are particularly low in the UAE (0.22%), Saudi Arabia (0.31%), Oman (0.35%), and Jordan (0.44%). Furthermore, Farook (2019) notes that in Punjab, Pakistan, the percentage of males employed in professional fields was 2.38%, while the female percentage was only 1.52%.¹⁴

Sri Lanka, as an Asian country, reflects similar trends. Women entering the public and private sectors may perceive equal opportunities

¹⁰ Akhmedshina, F. A. The Role of Muslim Women in the Development of Science, Culture and Education in the period of Early Islam. *Science and Innovation: International Scientific Journal* 2(5), (2023): 17-24.

¹¹ Raheema, C. C. & Omar, M. M. M. The status and Rights of Women mentioned in Islam. *International Journal for Studies on Childrens, Women, Elderly and Disable* 1, (2017): 135-141.

¹² Saidun, S., Akhmetova, E. & Rahman, A. A. Muslim Female Healthcare Personnel Dress Code: A Proposed Guideline *IMJM* 17(2), (2018): 57-70.

¹³ Pio, E. & Syed, J. Our bodies, our minds, our men: working South Asian women. *Gender in Management: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidispilinary Studies (IJIMS)*. 28(3), (2013): 140-150.

¹⁴ Assi, R. & Marcati, and C. Women at work: Job opportunities in the Middle East set to double with the Fourth Industrial Revolution. McKinsey & Company. (2020)

and salaries due to the availability of numerous positions in government agencies, banks, hospitals, and schools.¹⁵ However, this perception is often misleading; despite claims that women in Sri Lanka fare better than in other South Asian nations, the reality is that they typically occupy lower-status roles with limited legal rights and compensation.¹⁶

Although the participation of Muslim women in the workforce has recently reached new heights, their presence in specific fields—particularly nursing and medical specializations—remains exceptionally rare. Many skilled women are employed in roles, such as housemaids, that do not reflect their qualifications. Consequently, developing sector-specific expertise within the Muslim community poses a significant challenge.

Several factors contributing to this situation are attributed to religious beliefs, including the sufficiency of the husband's income, denial of permission to work, prioritization of household responsibilities, the double burden of work and home, dress restrictions in certain fields, lack of social recognition for some professions, and the prevalence of gender-based violence. This study aims to elucidate these reasons from an Islamic perspective. Without such research, Muslim women may continue to depend on other communities, leading to misconceptions about Islam among non-Muslims. This investigation focuses on clarifying the contributions of Muslim women in various sectors throughout Islamic history, while also identifying the reasons for their participation in specific fields from an Islamic viewpoint. The study was conducted in the Ampara District of Sri Lanka, where Muslims form the majority community.

Methodology

This qualitative research employed a purposive sampling method to select respondents, specifically targeting housemaids and working women across various sectors in the Ampara District. Respondeints

¹⁵ Farooq, M. S., Kai, Y. T. & Ferozeb, N. A Study of Gender Discrimination Faced by Professional Women in Pakistan: A Case Study of Rahim Yar Khan Region Tianjin, China. (2019).<https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/201910.0030/v1>.

¹⁶ Abeyasekera, N. & Silva, C. D. Myths & Belief in Sri Lankan Society & Their Effects on Women. 3rd International Conference on Social Sciences, (2016).pp.57-67.

97

**Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka**

were chosen from distinct locations, including Sammanthurai, Sainthamaruthu, Akkaraipattu, and Ninthavur, encompassing professionals such as lawyers, engineers, and MBBS doctors. Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources. A semi-structured interview approach was utilized to explore the motivations behind women's choices in specific sectors, and the gathered data was analyzed using content analysis techniques. Additionally, secondary data were employed to provide an Islamic perspective on the issues discussed, with analysis conducted through descriptive methods. This comprehensive approach ensured a thorough understanding of the factors influencing women's sectorial engagement within the context of the Ampara District

Finding and Discussion

Islam grants women the unequivocal right to engage in employment outside the home, provided such activities do not contravene Islamic Sharia.^{17 18 19 20 21 22 23} Scholars have identified several key requirements for women wishing to work, including obtaining permission from a male guardian, adhering to appropriate dress codes as dictated by Sharia,

¹⁷ Abdulhameed, N. M. An Analysis of Gender Roles and Relations from the perspective of Islam. *Journal of Arts and Contemporary Society* 11(2), (2019): 19-37.

¹⁸ Azeem, M., Ramzan, M., Akbar, T. Is Women's Employment Blessing or Otherwise? A Price worth Paying: An Islamic Perspective. *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 4(2), (2013): 226-232.

¹⁹ Azizah, S. N., Qoyum, A. & Prasojo. 2019. Islam, women's labor, and economic development. *Conference on Islamic Management, Accounting, and Economics (CIMAIE)*, (2019). pp.221-234.

²⁰ Kounsar, A. Economic rights of Islam: Some reflection. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS)* 4(2), (2017): 37-43.

²¹ Muhammed, A. C. A. *Penkal Tholoi Purithal Sila Valikattalhal. (Some Guidelines for Women work)*. (Colombo: IBH Publication., 2015)

²² Nadeem, M. T., Irfan, L., Chohan, N., Asim, Z. & Khan, Z. A. Analyzing Women Employment and Empowerment: An Islamic Perspective. *Indian Journal of Economics and Business* 21(1), (2022): 732-749.

²³ Parveen, S. & Rubab, I. 2013. Islamic Perspective of Women's Employment: Cottage Industry Development for Rural Women of Pakistan. *Al-Qalam*: (June 2013).

safeguarding against slander, and ensuring the presence of a Mahram during travel.²⁴

In the current research, respondents articulated various reasons for their limited sectorial contributions, framed within the context of Islamic teachings. These reasons include:

1. **Sufficient Income of the Husband:** Many women reported that their husbands' earnings were adequate to support the family, reducing the necessity for them to work.
2. **Denial of Husband's Permission to Work:** Some participants indicated that their husbands did not grant permission for them to pursue employment, which significantly limited their opportunities.
3. **Priority of Household Chores:** Women often prioritized household responsibilities over professional aspirations, reflecting traditional gender roles that emphasize domestic duties.
4. **Double Burden:** The challenge of balancing professional obligations with familial duties led many women to refrain from seeking employment, as they felt overwhelmed by the dual responsibilities.
5. **Dressing Restrictions for Certain Fields:** Participants noted that specific professions imposed dress codes that were not aligned with their commitment to modesty, discouraging them from entering those fields.
6. **Prevalence of Gender Violence in the Workplace:** Concerns about harassment and violence in professional environments were significant deterrents for many women considering employment.

²⁴ Saleh, M. Women's Professional Career through Al-Qur'an's Perspectives. *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 1(9). (2022): 1133-1149.

99

Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara District, Sri Lanka

7. **Denial of Social Recognition for Some Fields:** Certain occupations were viewed as less socially acceptable for women, leading to a lack of encouragement to pursue careers in those areas.
8. **Difficulty in Maintaining Mahram and Ajnabi Restrictions While Traveling:** The requirements for travel within the framework of Islamic law created barriers for women seeking employment opportunities outside their immediate community.

These factors highlight the complex interplay between cultural, economic, and religious dimensions that influence women's participation in the workforce. Each of these reasons is analysed through an Islamic lens, demonstrating how traditional beliefs and societal expectations shape women's sectorial engagement.

Sufficient Income of Husband

Islamic teachings on the distribution of economic responsibilities within the family are fundamentally grounded in principles of justice and equity, as articulated in primary sources such as the Quran and Hadith. The Quran explicitly assigns the primary financial responsibility to the husband, as evidenced in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:233), which underscores that men are duty-bound to provide for their families^{25, 26, 27, 28}. Despite this obligation, women are entitled to their own financial rights, including dower (mahr), inheritance, and maintenance, as stated in Surah An-Nisa (4:7), thereby affirming their rightful claims to personal earnings.

²⁵ Azeem, M., Ramzan, M., Akbar, T. &. Is Women's Employment Blessing or Otherwise? A Price worth Paying: An Islamic Perspective. *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 4(2), (2013): 226-232.

²⁶ Muhammed, A. C. A. *Penkal Tholoi Purithal Sila Valikattalhal. (Some Guidelines for Women work)*, (2015). Colombo: IBH Publication

²⁷ Parveen, S. & Rubab, I. Islamic Perspective of Women's Employment: Cottage Industry Development for Rural Women of Pakistan. *Al-Qalam*: (June :2013)

²⁸ Shehu, F. & Zejno, B. Gender Equality and the Participation of Muslim Women in Education and Work: A Critical Analysis. *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies* 3(2),(2015): 19-39.

Scholars in various Islamic traditions, including those from Sri Lanka, concur that the financial responsibility for family maintenance rests predominantly with men. For instance, Agar Muhammed (2015) argues that Islam does not regard a professional career as essential for women, given that they are not obligated to financially support their families. Nevertheless, women play crucial roles in other aspects of family life, reinforcing the view that the Islamic family is both a religious and socially oriented institution, with women primarily responsible for nurturing this structure²⁹

Ibn Abbas, a prominent companion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), interpreted Surah Al-Baqarah (2:233) as a delineation of the responsibilities of men and women, emphasizing that men serve as protectors and maintainers, thereby bearing the financial obligations of the household. This interpretation highlights the distinct roles assigned to each gender, while also emphasizing the importance of mutual support and cooperation within the family.

Similarly, Al-Shafi'i, a foundational figure in Sunni jurisprudence, articulated in his work *Al-Risala* that while men are responsible for the financial maintenance of their families, women retain their financial autonomy.³⁰ The role of women as the emotional and nurturing core of the family is further reinforced in various Hadiths, notably the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), "Heaven lies under the feet of mothers" (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith 3664), which emphasizes the profound respect and status granted to motherhood.

In summary, Islam advocates for a balanced approach to economic responsibilities, where both partners fulfill their roles in a manner that fosters a harmonious family environment. This perspective is supported by a rich tradition of Islamic scholarship, which underscores the importance of equity and mutual respect within the familial structure. While women have significant responsibilities in motherhood and guardianship, their rights to personal financial independence are affirmed, allowing them the option to engage in

²⁹ Muhammed, A. C. A. *Penkal Tholoi Purithal Sila Valikattalhal. (Some Guidelines for Women work)*, (2015). Colombo: IBH Publication.

³⁰ *Al-Risala*, 2:7

**Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in ¹⁰¹
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka**

professional pursuits if they choose. Ultimately, many women may prioritize family responsibilities over careers, particularly when their husbands' incomes allow for this choice, thereby respecting the unique circumstances of each family.

Denial of Husband's Permission to Work

In the Islamic perspective, the distribution of roles and responsibilities within the family is framed within a contractual understanding of marriage, emphasizing the principles of mutual consent and respect.³¹ The Quran designates men as protectors and maintainers of women, as articulated in Surah An-Nisa (4:34), which underscores their obligation to provide for and support their families while highlighting the importance of cooperation in decision-making between spouses.³²

Respondents, including professionals such as doctors and domestic staff, expressed a desire to work in their fields but indicated that their husbands often discouraged them due to concerns regarding work hours and family obligations. According to Islamic principles, women are expected to seek their husbands' consent before pursuing employment outside the home.³³ This aligns with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who emphasized the significance of mutual consultation within the family. In a hadith reported in both Sahih Bukhari (6014) and Sahih Muslim (2557), he stated, "The best of you are those who are best to their families," underscoring the necessity of respecting each partner's roles and decisions.

The analogy of a work contract further elucidates this concept. Just as an employee must adhere to the terms established by an employer, including obtaining approval for certain actions, a wife is

³¹ Varol, M. B. (2020). Islamic Family as a Concept and Institution and Its Historical Epistemology. *Istem* 18(36): 215-228.

³² Saleh, M. Women's Professional Career through Al-Qur'an's Perspectives. *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 1(9). (2022): 1133-1149.

³³ Asar, A. & Ghalia, B. Islāmic Guidelines for Women to Work and Hold Public Office Positions. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 5(10). (2016): 1311-1315.

expected to communicate her professional aspirations and align them with her husband's preferences. This understanding is reinforced in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:233), which discusses the mutual rights and responsibilities of spouses.

While Islamic law permits women to engage in any profession, it emphasizes that such decisions should be made with consideration for the family's overall well-being and the marital contract. Classical scholars, such as Ibn Qudamah, a notable Islamic scholar of the Hanbali School, addressed women's rights to employment in his work *Al-Mughni* (Volume 8, Chapter 36). He emphasized that women may engage in work as long as it does not conflict with their primary family obligations. Ibn Qudamah highlights the importance of balancing personal autonomy with traditional roles as caregivers and nurturers. While advocating for women's financial independence, he underscores the necessity for open communication between spouses regarding employment decisions to maintain family harmony.

This perspective reflects a broader Islamic jurisprudential understanding that honors both individual rights and the integrity of family life, recognizing the significant responsibilities women hold within the household. Moreover, the nurturing role of women is considered essential for the emotional and spiritual well-being of the family, embodying broader Islamic values of harmony and cooperation. The findings of this study demonstrate that Muslim women navigate their professional aspirations while adhering to Islamic doctrine and fulfilling their family obligations.

Priority of Women to Household Chores

In the Islamic framework, a woman's primary responsibility after marriage is to care for her husband and children, a role regarded as noble and essential for fostering a loving and supportive home environment. A professional woman can't perform the duties of a housewife to the fullest. However, every family needs this role in order to function. Because, if the wife works, who has to entertain her husband after coming home from work, it is certain that the family will fall apart if the

Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in 103
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka

wife cannot provide full service to her husband³⁴. A woman acts as a queen of a home, a mother for her children and a wife for her husband. Hence, Islam provides her more responsibilities to look after her family members. This responsibility is emphasized in the Quran, particularly in Surah Ar-Rum (30:21), where Allah states, "And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates so that you may find tranquillity in them; and He places between you affection and mercy." This verse underscores the importance of *sakinah* (peace), *mawadah* (love), love and *rahmah* (compassion) within the marital relationship, which are foundational to a harmonious household.

Scholarly perspectives, such as those presented by Azizah et al. (2019), argue that maintaining a family life characterized by *sakinah* (peace), *mawadah* (love), and *rahmah* (compassion) necessitates that women prioritize their familial responsibilities. Islamic teachings assert that women will be accountable for their roles in the hereafter, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling duties assigned to them.³⁵ This is further illustrated by the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who stated, "A woman is responsible in her husband's house and therefore will be questioned about her responsibility in the hereafter" (Sahih Bukhari 2409; Babul Vasaya 2751).³⁶

Moreover, the Quran reinforces this understanding in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:189), which states, "He created you from one soul, and He created their spouses from themselves so that they might find peace." This notion positions women as vital contributors to the emotional and spiritual well-being of the family, emphasizing that a woman's primary duty is to cultivate an environment of peace and tranquillity.

While Islamic law permits women to pursue professional careers, many scholars contend that such endeavours should not compromise their family obligations. The prevailing view among respondents in a

³⁴ Saleh, M. Women's Professional Career through Al-Qur'an's Perspectives. *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 1(9). (2022): 1133-1149.

³⁵ Azizah, S. N., Qoyum, A. & Prasajo. Islam, women's labor, and economic development. *Conference on Islamic Management, Accounting, and Economics (CIMAEE)*. (2019). pp.221-234.

³⁶ Muhammed, A. C. A. Penkal Tholoi Purithal Sila Valikattalhal. (Some Guidelines for Women work). Colombo: IBH Publication (2015).

recent study is that men are typically seen as breadwinners, while women are designated caretakers. This reflects a traditional perspective that prioritizes familial responsibilities over professional aspirations.

A notable respondent articulated this sentiment by stating, "If the family is destroyed, giving more importance to the job is really wrong" (Respondent: 8). This highlights the belief that prioritizing family aligns with Islamic values. The majority of Muslim women in the study expressed that they derive greater fulfilment from being homemakers than from pursuing external employment, believing that adherence to religious ideals and the maintenance of family harmony are paramount. They perceive their domestic roles not as lesser but as integral to their identity and spiritual fulfilment, recognizing that all duties, particularly family responsibilities, are forms of *ibadah* (worship) in Islam.

Thus, from an Islamic perspective, while women have the option to engage in work outside the home, the emphasis remains on their pivotal role in nurturing the family, which is deemed essential for both personal and communal well-being. This understanding reinforces the notion that the responsibilities of homemaking and caregiving are not merely societal expectations but are integral components of a woman's spiritual and moral duty within the Islamic tradition.

Double Burden

In Islamic thought, the responsibilities assigned to women are both significant and multifaceted, particularly in the context of marriage and family life. Central to this understanding is the Quranic principle that states, "Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope" (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:286). This verse underscores the notion of equitable distribution of responsibilities, acknowledging the inherent capabilities of individuals, particularly women, who often bear the dual responsibility of managing both familial obligations and professional commitments.

In many Muslim societies, the family structure tends to be extended, resulting in societal expectations that place considerable demands on women to fulfill not only their immediate family's needs but also those of extended family members. This often leads to the phenomenon known as the "double burden," where women must

**Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in 105
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka**

navigate the complexities of work-life balance. As one respondent articulated,

“As we are given a salary, we have to work thoroughly. Thereby, we are more committed to the work than fulfilling the familial obligation. As we work, it is a big challenge to maintain work-life balance. Sending the children to school, revising their subjects, and taking care of their studies by the working mother is more difficult than others” (Respondent 12).

This sentiment highlights the substantial challenges faced by women in reconciling their professional aspirations with their roles as caregivers.

The need for family support emerges as a crucial factor for working women in managing this dual burden. Many respondents noted that adequate familial support is essential for successfully balancing professional and domestic responsibilities. This aligns with Islamic teachings that emphasize mutual assistance and cooperation among family members as foundational to a harmonious household. The Quran and Hadith encourage families to foster an environment of support, which is vital for the well-being of all members.

Furthermore, findings from Saleh (2022) indicate that women often perceive their engagement in the workforce as conflicting with their obligations to their husbands and children. This perceived conflict frequently results in the decision to withdraw from professional opportunities. Many respondents expressed that a lack of family support and motivation significantly impacts women's engagement in various fields. Despite aspirations for higher education and professional advancement, these goals are often contingent upon the presence of supportive family dynamics that enable women to manage both domestic and professional duties effectively.³⁷

Islam advocates for a balanced approach to family life, recognizing the integral roles that both spouses play within the family unit. While women are often viewed as primary caregivers, their

³⁷ Saleh, M. Women's Professional Career through Al-Qur'an's Perspectives. *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 1(9). (2022): 1133-1149.

professional aspirations should not be dismissed; rather, they should be supported within the context of a collaborative family environment. This approach is essential for fostering a work-life balance that allows women to pursue their ambitions without compromising their familial responsibilities.

In conclusion, the challenges associated with the double burden faced by women in the workforce are significant and frequently compounded by societal expectations. However, from an Islamic perspective, it is imperative to cultivate an environment in which family support is prioritized. By promoting collaboration and understanding within the family unit, both men and women can work together to establish a harmonious balance between professional ambitions and familial obligations. This approach not only upholds the values of compassion and equity central to Islam but also enriches the overall well-being of the family.

Dress Restriction for Certain Fields

In Islamic jurisprudence, women are permitted to work outside the home, particularly in professions that align with their inherent skills and societal needs, such as nursing and teaching. This perspective is grounded in various Quranic verses and Hadith that underscore the significance of women's contributions to society. For instance, Surah Al-Nisa (4:32) affirms women's financial independence, stating, "And do not covet what We have bestowed upon some of you more than others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned..." This verse highlights that women have the right to earn a livelihood.

However, the Islamic principle of modesty in dress remains a critical aspect of women's participation in the workforce. As stated in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:59), "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused." This verse emphasizes the necessity for women to dress modestly, forming the basis of the hijab.

Research by Saidun et al. (2018) indicates that hijab can pose significant challenges for Muslim women pursuing careers in nursing,

**Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in 107
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka**

particularly in environments where they are part of a minority. Cultural and professional expectations may conflict with religious obligations, complicating their dual identities as both professionals and observant Muslims.³⁸

Moreover, dress codes across healthcare institutions can vary considerably, affecting women's experiences in the workplace. A study by Jabbour et al. (2021) found that while some hospitals in Muslim-majority countries accommodate Islamic dress, others impose restrictions that may not align with women's commitment to modesty. This discrepancy can force women to choose between adhering to their religious beliefs and fulfilling professional requirements.³⁹

Additionally, private healthcare facilities may enforce stricter dress codes than public institutions. A qualitative study by Ali and Ghanem (2020) revealed that respondents often felt pressured to conform to certain dress standards that contradicted their understanding of modesty, leading some to leave the nursing profession entirely.⁴⁰

In summary, while Islamic teachings endorse women's participation in the workforce, including in nursing and caregiving roles, adherence to Sharia-compliant dress codes is paramount. The interplay between professional dress requirements and Islamic values of modesty presents significant challenges for many Muslim women. Thus, creating a supportive environment that respects both professional standards and religious obligations is essential to enhance the participation of Muslim women in various professional fields, particularly in healthcare.

Prevalence of Gender Violence in Working Place

In Islam, the dignity and sanctity of women are core values, with explicit prohibitions against any form of violence, including physical,

³⁸ Saidun, S., Akhmetova, E. & Rahman, A. A. Muslim Female Healthcare Personnel Dress Code: A Proposed Guideline *IMJM* 17(2). (2018): 57-70.

³⁹ Jabbour, M., & Obeid, A. 2021. "The Impact of Dress Codes on Muslim Nurses in Healthcare Settings." *Journal of Nursing Ethics*, 28(3), 345-357.

⁴⁰ Ali, M., & Ghanem, M. (2020). "Navigating Modesty: The Experiences of Muslim Women in Nursing." *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management*, 13(2), 239-252.

emotional, or sexual abuse. The Quran underscores the importance of treating women with respect and kindness. Surah An-Nisa (4:19) states, "O you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that [they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know [it is unlawful]." This verse reflects a broader principle of justice and equity, which encompasses the treatment of women in various spheres, including the workplace.⁴¹

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further emphasize this principle. He asserted that "the best of you are those who are best to their families" (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith 6014), suggesting that the kindness and respect owed to women should extend beyond familial relationships to include all interactions, particularly in professional environments. Any form of harassment or violence contradicts the fundamental Islamic principles of compassion and respect.

Moreover, Islam mandates that both men and women strive to create safe and supportive environments. The concepts of *Maslaha* (public interest) and *Hifz al-Nafs* (protection of life) in Islamic jurisprudence indicate that society has a responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all its members, especially vulnerable groups like women. Therefore, workplaces that tolerate harassment or violence are acting in direct opposition to Islamic values.⁴²

Research supports these observations. A study conducted by Mahrukh and Ahmed (2020) found that fear of harassment and unsafe work environments significantly deterred many Muslim women from pursuing their careers. The respondents reported that issues such as physical and verbal abuse, along with feelings of isolation, often led them to opt out of professional opportunities altogether. This not only limits

⁴¹ Sadia, H., Waraich, R. S. & Halima, S. CEDAW & Woman's Right to Work in Islamic Law. (2023) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369201767> [27.02.2024].

⁴² Al-Ghazali, A. H. (2000). *Ihya Ulum al-Din (Revival of the Religious Sciences)*. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.

Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in 109
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka

their personal advancement but also constrains their contributions to the economy and society at large.⁴³

In conclusion, Islam advocates for the protection of women from all forms of violence, emphasizing the need for safe and respectful workplace environments. Addressing issues of harassment and insecurity is both a moral imperative and an alignment with Islamic teachings that promote justice, respect, and compassion for all individuals. Creating an environment where women can thrive professionally while upholding their dignity and rights is essential for fostering a just and equitable society.

Denial of Social Recognition for Some Fields.

Within the Islamic context, women's professional choices are not only encouraged but also situated within the ethical boundaries set by Sharia. Islam recognizes and values women's talents and capabilities, permitting them to engage in a diverse array of fields, such as education, healthcare, and social services, as long as these roles serve the community and adhere to Islamic ethical standards.⁴⁴ The Quran underscores the importance of knowledge acquisition, stating, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim" (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith 224), which emphasizes the necessity for both men and women to pursue education and professional development.

Scholars like Asar and Ghalia (2016) articulate that while women should gravitate toward professions that align with their inherent abilities and inclinations, they may face social resistance when attempting to enter traditionally male-dominated fields such as construction or manual labor.⁴⁵ This resistance is rooted in societal expectations and the physical demands associated with such roles. Islamic teachings traditionally emphasize women's nurturing roles, framing their contributions as essential for familial and community

⁴³ Mahrukh, F., & Ahmed, S. (2020). "Exploring the Experiences of Muslim Women in the Workplace: Challenges and Resilience." *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29(4), 442-457. DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2020.1735325.

⁴⁴ Doi, A. R. I. *Women in Shari'ah (Islamic Law)*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia: A.S Nordeen. (1990)

⁴⁵ Asar, A. & Ghalia, B. Islāmic Guidelines for Women to Work and Hold Public Office Positions *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 5(10), (2016): 1311-1315.

110 **Mohamed Sulthan Ismiya Begum, Indriaty Ismail and Zul' Azmi
Yakoob**

welfare, as evidenced in Quran 2:233, which discusses the mutual rights and responsibilities of spouses.⁴⁶

Moreover, social recognition significantly influences women's career choices, as professions like nursing and teaching are often deemed more socially acceptable for women. Despite this, Islam does not confine women to specific occupations; rather, it empowers them to advocate for their professional roles, even in the face of societal opposition. This notion is supported by Islamic principles that encourage individuals to fulfill their societal obligations and promote communal welfare.

In conclusion, the Islamic perspective supports women's rights to pursue their professional ambitions, provided they navigate these choices within the framework of Sharia while also honoring their familial responsibilities. This approach reflects a balanced understanding of women's roles in both the professional sphere and the home, reinforcing the idea that professional aspirations can coexist harmoniously with Islamic values.

Difficulty in Maintaining *Mahram* and *Ajnabi* Restriction on Travelling

In Islamic jurisprudence, the stipulations regarding a woman's travel are fundamentally rooted in the principles of safety, dignity, and societal norms. The hadith from Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim explicitly states: "A woman must not travel alone without a male companion of her immediate relatives to whom she can never get married" (Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1763; Sahih Muslim, no. 1341). This directive underscores the importance of a Mahram (an unmarriageable male relative) as a protective measure intended to ensure a woman's security during her travels.

The interpretation of this principle varies across different Islamic schools of thought. Scholars from the Shafi'i and Maliki traditions contend that a woman may travel for religious purposes, such as Hajj, with a trustworthy group of women. This perspective acknowledges the

⁴⁶ Doi, A. R. I. *Women in Shari'ah (Islamic Law)*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia: A.S Nordeen. (1990).

**Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in ¹¹¹
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka**

significance of fulfilling religious obligations while maintaining an emphasis on safety. The Hanafi and Hanbali schools impose stricter limitations, permitting travel only within a radius of three days without a Mahram, thereby reinforcing the necessity of protective companionship. In the context of shorter journeys, Islamic teachings provide more leeway. It is generally accepted that if a journey is not conventionally regarded as travel—such as attending to immediate needs—a woman may undertake it without a Mahram, particularly if she can ensure her safety through appropriate measures. This flexibility reflects an understanding of diverse contexts and circumstances, permitting women to use public transportation or travel alone in environments that are perceived as safe or friendly to Islamic values. Despite these provisions, many women encounter significant obstacles when pursuing educational or professional opportunities that necessitate travel, especially in fields like medicine. Numerous respondents in various studies indicate that the lack of a Mahram can impede their ability to accept job offers or participate in educational programs abroad. This predicament often creates a conflict between their professional ambitions and adherence to religious obligations.⁴⁷

The situation exemplifies a broader challenge within the Islamic framework: the need to reconcile religious mandates with contemporary realities. While the emphasis on safety and protection remains paramount, there is a growing recognition of the necessity for women's contributions in various sectors, including healthcare and education. Enabling women to travel safely can enhance their professional opportunities and societal roles.

In conclusion, the Islamic perspective on travel restrictions for women is primarily cantered around ensuring their safety and dignity. Although traditional interpretations uphold the requirement for a Mahram, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the need for flexibility in contexts that promote women's educational and professional development. Striking this balance is crucial for fostering women's contributions to society while upholding the principles inherent in Islamic teachings.

⁴⁷ Asar, A. & Ghalia, B. Islāmic Guidelines for Women to Work and Hold Public Office Positions *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 5(10), (2016): 1311-1315.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while women have historically faced marginalization, the advent of Islam brought significant rights, freedoms, and dignity that enabled Muslim women to contribute meaningfully to various fields throughout Islamic history. In the contemporary context, Muslim women are participating in diverse sectors globally as never before; however, their contributions in Sri Lanka, particularly in the Ampara District, remain notably low. This study identifies several factors influencing this disparity, including familial responsibilities, workplace challenges, societal attitudes, and the restrictions posed by Mahram and Ajnabi considerations. To enhance their sectorial contributions, Muslim women may benefit from implementing certain strategies and advice. Future research could further explore the experiences of Muslim women in other regions, particularly in areas where they constitute a minority, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of their contributions and challenges within different sociocultural contexts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abeyasekera, N. & Silva, C. D. Myths & Belief in Sri Lankan Society & Their Effects on Women *3rd International Conference on Social Sciences*, (2016). 57-67.
- Akhmedshina, F. A. The Role of Muslim Women in the Development of Science, Culture and Education in the period of Early Islam *Science and Innovation: International Scientific Journal* 2(5). (2023).: 17-24.
- Alfitri, A. Women's Rights and Gender Equality Issues in Islamic Law in Indonesia: The Need to Re-Read Women's Status in the Islamic Religious Texts. *Mazahib* 13(1), (2014).
- Ali, M., & Ghanem, M. (2020). "Navigating Modesty: The Experiences of Muslim Women in Nursing." *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management*, 13(2), 239-252.

**Perception of Muslim Women Regarding the Reasons for Barriers in 113
Engaging in the Sectorial Contribution and Some Clarifications from
An Islamic Perspective: A Qualitative-Based Study in Ampara
District, Sri Lanka**

Al- Quran.

Asar, A. & Ghalia, B.. Islāmic Guidelines for Women to Work and Hold Public Office Positions *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 5(10), (2016): 1311-1315.

Assi, R. & Marcati, C. *Women at work: Job opportunities in the Middle East set to double with the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. s.l: McKinsey & Company. (2020).

Azeem, M., Ramzan, M., Akbar, T. Is Women's Employment Blessing or Otherwise? A Price Worth Paying: An Islamic Perspective. *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 4(2), (2013): 226-232.

Badawi, J. *Women Rights of Islam* Qatar:Doha: (1980)

Doi, A. R. I. *Women in Shari'ah (Islamic Law)*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia: A.S Nordeen.

Galloway, S. D. 2014. *The impact of Islam as a religion and Muslim women on gender equality: A phenomenological research study*. Nova Southeastern University, (1990).

Jabbour, M., & Obeid, A. 2021. "The Impact of Dress Codes on Muslim Nurses in Healthcare Settings." *Journal of Nursing Ethics*, 28(3), 345-357.

Muhammed, A. C. A. *Penkal Tholoi Purithal Sila Valikattalhal*. . Colombo: IBH Publication, (2015).

Nawab, S. The contribution of women to Muslim society: a study of selected autobiographical and bibliographical literature South Africa. University of Johannesburg (South Africa), (1997).

Parveen, S. & Rubab, I. Islamic Perspective of Women's Employment: Cottage Industry Development for Rural Women of Pakistan. *Al-Qalam*: (2013).

Pio, E. & Syed, J. Our bodies, our minds, our men:working South Asian women. *Gender in Management: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS)* 28(3). (2013): 140-150.

**114 Mohamed Sulthan Ismiya Begum, Indriaty Ismail and Zul' Azmi
Yakoob**

Qardawi, Y. *Islam oru Nadunilaya Maarkam*. Chennai: Islamic Foundation Trust. (2017).

Qazi, M. S. & Din, B. U.. Islamic Concept of Gender Equality: Origins and Signs. *Al-Qawārīr* 1(3), (2020): 1-11.

Qazi, M. S. & Din, B. U. Islamic Concept of Gender Equality: Origins and Signs. *AL-QAWĀRĪR* 1(3), 2020: 1-10.

Sadia, H., Waraich, R. S. & Halima, S. CEDAW & Woman's Right to Work in Islamic Law. (2023). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369201767_\[27.02.2024\]](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369201767_[27.02.2024]).

Saidun, S., Akhmetova, E. & Rahman, A. A. Muslim Female Healthcare Personnel Dress Code: A Proposed Guideline *IMJM* 17(2), (2018): 57-70.

Sajo & Muhammad, A. An Islamic Perspective on Gender Equality Controversy in Nigeria. *African Scholar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (JHSS-6)* 15(6), (2019): 27-34.

Saleh, M. Women's Professional Career through Al-Qur'an's Perspectives. *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 1(9), (2022), 1133-1149.

Shehu, F. & Zejno, B. Gender Equality and the Participation of Muslim Women in Education and Work: A Critical Analysis. *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies* 3(2), (2015), 19-39.

Sulistyawan, A. & Nurfaidah, S.. Gender Construction in Islamic Perspective. *Ijtimā'iyya: Journal of Muslim Society Research* 5, 2020, 47-56.

Varol, M. B. Islamic Family as a Concept and Institution and Its Historical Epistemology. *Istem* 18(36), (2020), 215-228.