

The Role of Women in Islamic History: A Perspective on Family, Society, and Modern Challenges

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Abstract

This study examines the social role of women in the family and society from a Qur'anic perspective, considering the challenges they face in reconciling professional pursuits with traditional maternal responsibilities, as well as the influence of modern feminist movements on the Islamic concept of the family. The research emphasizes that humans are created as God's vicegerents on Earth, and this role establishes equality and responsibility for both men and women within the family and society, grounded in the normative principles derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The study combines a textual analysis of Qur'anic teachings with an empirical survey conducted among Muslim women in Kosovo to assess perceptions of feminism and its impact on family roles. Findings indicate a cautious and conditional attitude toward modern feminist principles, highlighting tensions between traditional family expectations and evolving gender dynamics influenced by education, employment, and social engagement of women. The results underscore the need for structured scholarly dialogue, educational initiatives, and contextually grounded approaches to integrate selected feminist principles without compromising the ethical and normative foundations of Islamic teachings.

Keywords: Role of women, Family, Qur'an, Industrialization and modernization, Modern feminism, Kosovo.

Introduction

Human life is related to many different aspects such as activities, behaviors and social roles; active participation in social life is facilitated when these social roles are appropriately applied. Therefore, an individual's identity consists of a multitude of different roles, some of which carry more weight than others. For example, societal expectations about gender often assign the responsibility of providing income to men. Women, on the other hand, are typically responsible for raising children and maintaining family.

According to the structural-functionalist perspective, the family is one of the main pillars that maintains social order and balance. Studying both developing and industrialized societies, experts in this field argue that to maintain social stability, it is necessary for gender roles to change.¹ Parsons argued that to maintain social order, spouses in the family must fulfill complementary and specialized roles. He suggests that the man should have a practical role, while the woman should focus on empathy and care. This role system creates a gender hierarchy.² Relying on the traditional

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¹ Türkan Erdoğan, "Toplumsal Sistemin Düzen Sağlayıcı Unsuru Olarak Cinsiyet Rolü Farklılaşması," *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3 (2008): 127.

² Talcott Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States," *American Sociological Review* 7, no. 5 (1942): 140.

view that assigns women the primary responsibility for maintaining happiness and harmony in the family, this research adopts women as the primary subjects of inquiry. The culture of the society in which an individual lives, determines the norms and expectations for the behavior, thinking, and actions of women and men.³

People are born female or male gender, but as they grow, they develop their identity as a girl or a boy by adopting the roles society has defined for each gender. Under the influence of society and the education they receive, girls and boys form gender roles and identities, aligning with societal expectations. For women, tasks such as housework and childcare are more prominent, while for men work roles become more important than family roles.⁴ Naturally occurring biological differences are interpreted and valued according to the culture in each society. This creates expectations about what women and men can do, their rights and power, and how much of each they should have. Although these expectations vary across societies and within different groups in a society, they share a common core: the existence of gender-based social asymmetry and the inequality it creates.

These social stereotypes lead to gender-based expectations of men and women. However, it is essential to explore how religious frameworks, like those in Islam approach these roles. Men are expected to be powerful, ensure the survival of the family, and exert influence in their circle, while women are expected to be careful and patient, manage the home and regulate social relationships.⁵ This phenomenon is clearly visible in the family which is a key institution in society. The family consists of individuals who interact and influence each other. It is the most important institution for improving the satisfaction of its members in everyday life. The activities carried out in the family are distributed across different roles among individuals.⁶ In the family, the way decisions and responsibilities are distributed on social and economic matters is closely related to the roles has assigned to each member, especially the wife and the husband. Social decisions include activities and patterns of sharing feelings between spouses and are important because they affect the family's relationship with other social institutions. These decisions are important for forming responsibilities and habits in children that will influence society in the future. Economic decisions manage the resources and goals of the family and include issues related to the use of resources.⁷

While societal norms shape gender roles in many cultures, it is important to also consider religious perspectives, particularly in Islam, which offers its own framework for understanding the roles of men and women within the family structure. Islam did not limit responsibilities and rights to a particular group. Both men and women have responsibilities and rights within the framework of their natural constitutions. Neither is more important than the other, neither is superior, and both share responsibilities. A woman's activities are not restricted solely to the domestic sphere. According to Massey, confining women to the home, or the woman's body being forgotten in everyday life, has often been viewed as a marginal issue in various societies, whether religious or not.⁸ This phenomenon is not limited to Muslim societies. Throughout history, many societies have

³ A. Akın and S. Demirel, "Toplumsal Cinsiyet Kavramı ve Sağlığa Etkisi," *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Dergisi* 25, no. 4 (2003): 3.

⁴ G. N. Powell and J. H. Greenhaus, "Sex, Gender, and Decisions at the Family-Work Interface," *Journal of Management* 36, no. 4 (2010): 1012.

⁵ E. O. İmamoğlu, "Aile İçinde Kadın-Erkek Rollerini," *Türk Aile Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3 (Ankara: Türkiye Yazarlar Birliği Vakfı, 1989), 832.

⁶ Ekrem Beqiri et al., *Human Development Report Kosovo* (Prishtina: Grafika Reznici, 2002), 17.

⁷ Ş. Şafak, *Ailede Rol, Fonksiyon ve Sorumluluk Dağılımı: Türk Ailesinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Durumu* (Ankara: Başbakanlık SHÇEK Press, 1989), 35.

⁸ Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (United States: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 179.

limited women's ability to participate in public life and be more present, either directly or indirectly. For example, in ancient Indian societies, according to the Laws of Manu, a woman was dependent on her father, her husband, and then her son or another male member of the family, without any rights of her own.

In late 19th century Britain, society did not want women to be directly involved in the labor market. It was argued that hazardous work could harm women's health, leading them to be controlled and eventually they were confined to the role known as housewives.⁹ In other situations, women were expected not to neglect housework and family life. She had to give birth and take care of the children and stay inside the house. This has led to women who perform all the housework being described as "domestic angels". While idealized in this way, this image often leaves no room for women to break free from it.¹⁰ Islam considers women as honorable creatures and important pillars of the family. It rejected the claims that she (the woman) was a worthless creature or of low status, as well as the notion that her purpose was solely to serve men and affirmed gender equality. In this regard, the Qur'an says: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women."¹¹ The Qur'an¹² describes four types of human creation: Adam from clay, Eve from Adam, Jesus (Isa) miraculously in the womb, and humanity through parental reproduction. The ontological origin of Eve is described with less detail in primary text, prompting diverse hermeneutic interpretations among classical scholars such as Tabari, Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir, and Alusi. Based on Qur'an 4:1 and Hadith from Bukhari and Muslim, they explain that Eve was created from Adam's rib, with the Qur'anic term *nafs wahidah* interpreted as the single soul from which both Adam and Eve originated. This account highlights that both genders are equal, with no fundamental difference in the process of creation.¹³

The teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah are further reinforced by scholarly perspectives on gender equity. According to Begum et al., Islam fundamentally upholds the equality of men and women, transcending gender distinctions while taking into account the inherent nature of both sexes. In certain respects, gender differences should not be assumed in any objective that promotes inequality within society. Nevertheless, Islam acknowledges specific differences between men and women in particular contexts.¹⁴ The fight for women's rights has turned into a struggle between men and women. Likewise, the struggle for femininity and motherhood has created an important discussion. A widespread idea is that the invisible housework and duties of motherhood make women weak and powerless in the face of men. In this context, an ideological war has begun against the concept of motherhood and family institutions. According to the ideology of feminism, motherhood is seen as an obligation that keeps women isolated at home. However, it is important that theoretical discussions are shaped and grounded in practical experiences and the impact they have on women's lives. The objective of this paper is to analyze the theoretical discussions and practical experiences.

⁹ Murat Yüceşahin, "Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Mekânın Karşılıklı İlişkisi: Patriyarkanın Sosyal Mekânı Örgütleyişine Dair Bir Tartışma," *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 17, no. 1 (2016): 91.

¹⁰ Yüceşahin, "Toplumsal Cinsiyet", 92.

¹¹ an-Nisa' 4:1.

¹² an-Nisa' 4:1; al-'Araf 7:189; az-Zumar 39:6.

¹³ Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jaami' al-Bayaan fi Ta'weel Aayi-'l-Qur'an*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1988), 224; Abu al-Qasim Mahmud al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Tanzil wa 'Uyun al-'Aqawilji Wujud al-Ta'wil*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma'arif, 1977), 492; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 2 (Riyadh: Darusalam, 2002), 548.

¹⁴ Mohamed Sulthan Ismiya Begum, Indriaty Ismail, and Zul' Azmi Yaakob, "The Concept of Gender Equality and Equity: An Islamic View," *International Journal of Religion, Arts and Humanities*, no. 2 (2023): 103–115.

Research Approach

This research aims to analyze the interpretation of the role of women in the family and society from a Qur'anic perspective, focusing on the traditional role of the mother and the perceived impact of modern feminism on the Islamic concept of the family. In exploring the role of women in Islamic society, the primary source consulted was the Qur'an, followed by the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

With respect to gaining insight into women's perspectives on how they perceive their roles within the family and society, an analysis was conducted based on the results of the scientific conference titled "Muslim Women, Non-formal Education, and Civil Society—Challenges and Opportunities."¹⁵ Additionally, a survey questionnaire was developed, drawing on information from the literature (Şafak, 1989; Imamoğlu, 1989; Powell and Greenhaus, 2010). The empirical data were collected in 2025 through an online questionnaire completed by 107 highly educated Muslim women who actively participate in various educational roles.

The study also consulted various works and surveys related to the position of women in Islam, as well as modern challenges and evolving concepts regarding their roles in the family. This research, grounded in theories and practices related to women's rights, freedoms, and the influence of feminism on the Islamic family, aims to examine the position of women from their own perspectives. It addresses the role of women in the Islamic context, the concepts of femininity and motherhood, gender relations, and their role in the modern family, exploring these topics both theoretically and practically.

Position of Woman in Islam

To fully understand the role of women in Islam, it is essential to examine their status during the *Jahiliyyah* period (pre-Islam), particularly in the region where the revelation of Islam occurred. Since writing was known but rarely used, finding reliable sources is challenging. Despite this, works of poetry and literature -widely utilized by the Arabs- provide us with some insights. However, the most reliable source that illuminates that period is the Qur'an.

By examining the transition from primitive societies to those that achieved civilization and then moving on to the modern and postmodern world, we can better understand the concept of "woman." Social organization in pre-Islamic Arabia, was characterized by a rigid patriarchal family structure, where kinship was defined exclusively through male line. The woman's relatives were not considered part of the family. She was viewed primarily as a dependent consumer, held little respect, possessing limited social status and had absolute reliance on her husband. Women were considered property, with a limited societal role. In fact, the birth of a girl was seen as a burden and a source of shame. This is described in the Qur'an: "Whenever one of them is given the good news of a baby girl, his face grows gloomy, as he suppresses his rage. He hides himself from the people because of the bad news he has received. Should he keep her in disgrace, or bury her 'alive' in the ground? Evil indeed is their judgment!"¹⁶ This verse highlights the shame and anger that often led to the burial of girls alive.

¹⁵ "Muslim Women, Non-Formal Education and Civil Society: Challenges and Opportunities," conference, Montenegro, May 4–5, 2024.

¹⁶ An-Nahl, 16:58-59.

Islam emphasizes that this unjust act will not go unpunished, as shown in the following verse: “And when the girl-child who was buried alive is asked. Upon what sin was she killed for.”¹⁷ The killing of girls during the *Jahiliyyah* period is confirmed in several verses of the Qur’an, which are crucial for understanding the attitude of Arab society toward women and the changes brought about by Islam. In reality, all creatures are created of male and female gender, without distinction. Humans, as the most honorable creatures, are mentioned in the Qur’an as equals: “And He created the pairs - males and females- from a sperm-drop when it is emitted.”¹⁸ Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said: “Women are the twin halves of men, forming a whole together.”¹⁹ Islam has not only ensured equality for women in society but also established a principle of equality in the afterlife, with no distinction between women and men regarding rewards and entry into Paradise, as stated: “Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds.”²⁰

According to Islamic belief, there is no concept of a pre-family stage in human life. Islam rejects notions such as sexual communism and promiscuity proposed by certain Western philosophers and social theorists, as well as evolutionary theories suggesting that human social institutions developed gradually over time. Instead, Islam maintains that the first Prophet, Adam, was sent to Earth with a divinely revealed code of conduct that established the moral and social foundations of human life.²¹ Within this divinely ordained framework, the perception of women in Islam is equal to that of men with regard to individual rights. Fundamental rights—such as the right to life, ownership and management of property, equality before the law, the protection of housing, honor, and dignity, freedom of belief and thought, the right to marry and form a family, the safeguarding of privacy, and the assurance of livelihood—are guaranteed without distinction between women and men.

The Qur’anic concept regarding women is that they, too, have the same rights as men. It declares that women have rights over men, just as men have rights over women. Equality is the natural prerequisite for social justice. This does not mean that equality demands the equal distribution of social roles among all members. On the contrary, it should be understood as ensuring that each individual receives their due rights. Equality can be achieved based on what each individual deserves. This is why the Qur’an²² emphasizes equality in the rights of men and women, while also acknowledging the natural differences between them.

The Role of Women in Family and Society

The woman has always played a key role in the “institution of the family.” In general, in all religions, including Islam, she holds a special position that forms the foundation of the family and is a central figure in the social structure. She is the factor with the greatest influence in the family, playing an important role in preserving cultural heritage and educating future generations.

¹⁷ At-Takwir, 81:8-9.

¹⁸ An-Najm, 53:45-46.

¹⁹ Abu Sulayman Sijistani, *Sunenu Ebi Davud*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Darusalam, 2008), 94.

²⁰ An-Nahl, 16:97.

²¹ Yalçın Kayalı, “Traditions and Transformations: Marriage and Family Institutions among Modern Indian Muslims,” *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 37 (October 2025): 43.

²² Al-Baqarah, 2:228.

The values, objectives, and norms of society, along with the institutional frameworks created by social structures, are ingrained in individuals through socialization, which is the primary source of acquiring values. This process begins in the family, where the roles of the mother, father, siblings, grandparents, and relatives are crucial. The mother, in particular, has a profound influence during the socialization process and throughout an individual's life. In the family, parents and other relatives transmit forms of behavior, basic values, and social norms. The mother's role is especially important in the first phase of a child's socialization.²³ The role of a mother is crucial in shaping a child's upbringing. Children are influenced not only by their parents' personalities but also as social actors who carry the customs, traditions, and social and cultural values of their society, including religious practices and beliefs. The beliefs and values imparted by adults, especially the mother and father, during the socialization period form the child's super-ego.²⁴ The acquisition of norms and values is an essential part of socialization, helping the child understand how society functions. This process enables the child to absorb social and cultural elements, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices and religious beliefs.

Women, with an important and equal role alongside men, serve as excellent role models in raising children. The Qur'an does not differentiate between men and women in matters of knowledge, addressing both in its 750 verses on the subject. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) provided guidance to both men and women on how to raise the younger generations. He said: "The best of you is the one who is best to his family. And I am the best to my family."²⁵ Also, "All of you are charged with responsibility and each of you will be held accountable for what is under his management. The head of the state is responsible and will be accountable for what is under his management. The head of the household is responsible and will be accountable for what is under his management. The woman is responsible for her husband's house and her children. The servant is responsible for his master's wealth and will be accountable for what is under his management."²⁶

These sayings clearly show the importance Islam places on family responsibility and the promotion of women's social roles in family and society. These teachings further highlight the significance Islam places on family responsibilities and the active role of women within both the family and society. By emphasizing mutual kindness, understanding, and patience, the Qur'an and Hadith underscore the duty of family members to respect one another, nurture children with compassion, and foster strong sibling relationships. Such guidance not only promotes harmonious family dynamics but also affirms the value of women's contributions in maintaining a supportive and caring household.²⁷ One of the rights Islam grants women is the preservation of their personality. Women have the right to express their opinions and exercise their free will. Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that a woman who participates in social life demonstrates her individuality and protects her rights.²⁸ In this context, the woman is as active a social actor as a man, but her role as a mother should not be forgotten.

²³ Arzu Taşdelen-Karçay, "İş-Aile Çatışmasını Yönetme Öz-Yeterliği Ölçeği: Türk Örneklemini İçin Psikometrik Özelliklerinin İncelenmesi," *Kırıkkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü* 6, no. 1 (2016): 70; Özensel, "Türk Toplumunda Çocuğun Yetiştirilmesinde Annenin Rolü," *Değerler Eğitimi Dergisi* 2, no. 6 (2004): 33.

²⁴ E. Güngör, *Dünden Bugünden Tarih-Kültür ve Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul: Ötüken Press, 2007), 58.

²⁵ Tirmidhi, *Manaqib*, 63.

²⁶ Bukhari, *Istikhraj*, 20.

²⁷ Md. Ishaque and Mahmudulhassan, "Islamic Family Ethics: A Pathway to Strengthening Social Harmony in the Modern Era," *Islamic Family Ethics: A Pathway to Strengthening Social Harmony in the Modern Era* 3, no. 2 (2025): 252.

²⁸ Nazife Gürhan, "Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Din," *Şarkiyat* 4 (2010): 74.

At home, women, particularly mothers, are considered the first teachers of religion, while fathers are recognized as the first educators. Beyond their spiritual role, mothers play a central part in decision-making regarding family meal planning and nutrition. They also initiate and maintain children's healthcare and nutritional programs and serve as the primary caregivers for both children and elderly people worldwide. International studies indicate that women lead in addressing challenges arising from political and economic changes, thereby helping families adapt to new circumstances. As key initiators, women facilitate important transformations in family life. Moreover, the UN Women's Watch emphasizes that women play a crucial role in supporting their households and communities by ensuring food and nutritional security, generating income, and enhancing livelihoods and overall wellbeing. Parents thus have the greatest influence on their children's education, especially regarding religious principles.²⁹ In summary, the woman in Islam has a fundamental role not only in public life but also as a key social actor who influences younger generations through interaction and by providing a parental model. During both primary and secondary socialization, the mother is the primary bearer of religious values, models, and practices for her children.

Woman's Challenge between Career and the Traditional Role of Mother in Modern Times

Islam recognizes the rights of women to work and contribute to society, but this is also linked to respecting their social roles as mothers and home managers. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) did not forbid women from working; on the contrary, they could engage in various activities such as trade, crafts, medicine and service. However, Islam emphasizes that a woman's work should not cause harm to her duties and responsibilities within the family. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), women were present in various fields of life, and from the beginning of Islamic history they continued to work. Among the places where they worked can be mentioned the mosque, the hospital, and trade, which today are known as the service sector.³⁰ For example, it is mentioned in Islamic literature that a woman named Rajtah bint Abdullah, who was a well-known craftswoman of the time, came to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and said:

O Messenger of Allah! I am a woman who does crafts. I work and sell my products. Neither I, nor my husband, nor our children have any wealth." Because of this, she was suggesting that her family needed her work. Then, she asked the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) if she could spend on her family, also seeking an answer to the question of whether she could continue to work. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said to her: "Any expenditure you make on your family, you will be rewarded for it."³¹

With these words, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) emphasized that there was no obstacle to working.

One of the arguments that shows that Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) was not against women working is the appointment of Shifa al-Adawiyya as the head of the market in Medina, which was dominated by men. She was responsible for resolving disputes between buyers and

²⁹ Abdulgafar Olawale Fahm and Suliya Yetunde Memud, "Examining the Contributions of Muslim Women in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria," *Discover Global Society* 2, no. 4 (2024): 37.

³⁰ Abdullah Özbek, "Çalışan Kadın ve Aile," in *Aile Sempozyumu, Medeniyet Vakfı, Tebliğler* (Ankara: Sistem Ofset, 2015), 167.

³¹ Muhammad b. Sa'd b. Mani' Zuhri Ibn Sa'd, *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir*, vol. 10 (Cairo: Maktabah Khanji, 2001/1421), 274.

sellers and making the decision. She was also responsible for cleaning and organizing the market. From this example, it can be understood that during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), women also took on administrative duties. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), caliphs such as Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reappointed Shifa to supervise the market during his caliphate.³² Historical evidence from the formative period of Islam clearly indicates that the principle of intellectual and educational inclusion of women was actively practiced in early Muslim society.

Among the most prominent examples is ‘Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), who emerged as one of the most influential female scholars in Islamic history. She is reported to have transmitted approximately 2,210 hadiths and was widely recognized as an authority in Islamic jurisprudence, medicine, poetry, and history. Her scholarly competence earned broad recognition, to the extent that prominent male companions of the Prophet frequently sought her counsel on complex religious and legal matters. This historical precedent firmly demonstrates that women in Islam were not only granted access to education but were also acknowledged as authoritative scholars whose interpretations and teachings carried normative authority within the Muslim community, including among men.³³

However, in modern times, the entry of women into the workforce has brought demographic changes in the inclusion of the family workforce. Also, the traditional social roles of women and men in the family have begun to be abandoned. Marital relationship models, where the husband worked to earn a living and the wife took care of the children and housework, are undergoing significant transformation.³⁴ In Western societies, a shift towards a family model where both spouses have careers and work in paid employment has begun to emerge, and this trend is also spreading to other societies.³⁵ As women’s education levels increase, a steady increase in the number of dual-career families has been observed. In these families, the care of young children, especially due to the increasing similarities in the work patterns and participation of men and women, has brought about new and different situations, creating problems that were not previously present in the family.

As women advance in social and professional life, men face the fear of losing their dominance and have difficulty adapting to this change. They try to maintain their traditional role as fathers, including the responsibility for providing for the family’s income, while being forced to adapt to modern values of equality and sharing responsibilities. This has also brought an expectation that men engage more in tasks that traditionally belong to women, such as childcare and housework, and show more understanding, empathy, and willingness to compromise, which were previously considered female characteristics.³⁶ In families where both parents are working, the necessity of equal rights between partners during the decision-making process is present, and since the division of labor is not based on gender, role conflicts may be more frequent. Women frequently experience a higher degree of role conflict than their male counterparts. The conflict between work and family

³² Abu ‘Amr Yusuf b. ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Al-Isti’ab fi Ma’rifat al-Ashab*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992), 1863.

³³ Habiba Elahi, *Women’s Rights in Islam: A Comprehensive Analysis of Quranic and Sunnah Teachings* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Punjab, March 2025), 75.

³⁴ K. Nyström and K. Ohrling, “Parental Support: Mothers’ Experience of Electronic Encounters,” *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare* 12, no. 4 (2006): 195.

³⁵ Taryn Wallis and Linda Price, “Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Central Life Interests Amongst Single Working Mothers,” *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 29, no. 1 (2003): 26.

³⁶ V. Jessee and K. Adamsons, “Father Involvement and Father-Child Relationship Quality: An Intergenerational Perspective,” *Parenting* 18, no. 1 (2018): 29.

is one of the biggest challenges for working women. As a mother, the family is a priority for a woman. She orients her life and decisions to meet the needs of her family and may even forgo professional advancement at times. Working women have more social roles to play in both work and family compared to men.³⁷

Women who face the dilemmas of motherhood and career at key moments in their lives often choose motherhood as a priority. In all societies, the role of mother is prioritized over any other role and many times it is not a question of such a choice. This choice means that a woman can withdraw for a period from professional life or dedicate herself to only a few jobs. With this departure, she fulfills her responsibilities as a woman and the expectations of society, and after the end of the period of childcare, she can return to work. This leave of absence from work requires that the woman, when she returns, make a great effort to continue her success and professional career.³⁸ Finally, much research on women's professional lives shows that motherhood is a lifelong profession. In addition, an increase in the average age of marriage has been observed, for both men and women. This phenomenon has been explained by the fact that individuals see marriage as an obstacle to their career development.³⁹ Working women, one side of their lives is filled with a great commitment to their professional life, while the other side is burdened with childcare and household responsibilities, which creates a great burden for them. This situation often causes fatigue and stress, increasing the likelihood of experiencing emotional exhaustion, as well as experiencing great physical and spiritual fatigue.

The Influence of Modern Feminism on the Islamic Concept of Family in Kosovo

To understand the contemporary impact of modern feminist discourse on the Islamic concept of family in Kosovo, it is essential to consider the role of traditional normative frameworks that have historically shaped social relations. Within the Albanian cultural context, the *Kanun* represents a system of customary law composed of unwritten rules and norms transmitted across generations. These norms emerged in response to specific economic and social conditions of earlier historical periods and functioned to regulate social order, often reflecting and safeguarding the interests of particular social groups and strata. As a comprehensive body of customary legal principles, the *Kanun* continues to influence perceptions of family structure, gender roles, and social responsibilities, thereby providing an important backdrop against which contemporary feminist ideas interact with Islamic family values in Kosovo.⁴⁰

The Code of Lekë Dukagjini, applied in the Dukagjin region of Shkodra and Kosovo, was collected and codified by the Franciscan friar Shtjefën Gjeçovi and published in full in 1933. Comprised of 12 books and 1,263 articles, the code integrated both moral and legal norms, blending canonical and customary law. It addressed the legal positions of the church, marriage, and the relationship between husband and wife, often assigning women a subordinate status. Nevertheless, social realities indicate that women's social roles within the family were nuanced rather than uniform. The status of a woman as a "bride" differed significantly from her role as a "mother, grandmother, or mother-in-law," with mothers generally enjoying broader influence in daily family life.

³⁷ Zamantılı Dilek Nayır, "İşi ve Ailesi Arasındaki Kadın: Tekstil ve Bilgi İşlem Girişimcilerinin Rol Çatışmasına Getirdikleri Çözüm Stratejileri," *Ege Akademik Bakış* 8, no. 2 (2008): 633.

³⁸ Emine Nilüfer Tokmakçı, "Çalışma Yaşamında Kadının Tükenmişliği: Aile-İş Sosyal Yaşam Açısından Tükenmişlik Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Örneği," *Yaşar Üniversitesi Dergisi* 24, no. 6 (2011): 4050.

³⁹ Ali Bayer, *Eşlerarası Şiddet ve Din* (Konya: Çimke Publications, 2019), 71; Yusuf İnandı et al., "Kadın Öğretmenlerin Kariyer Geliştirme Engelleri," *Mersin Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 5, no. 1 (2009): 57.

⁴⁰ Academy of Sciences of Albania, *Dictionary of Today's Albanian* (Tirana: Academy of Sciences of Albania, 2002), accessed 13.12. 2025 <http://www.fjalori.shkenca.org>.

Albanian oral traditions, including epic and lyrical songs, further testify to the prominent role of mothers, especially in shaping family dynamics after a son's marriage.⁴¹ In studies of customary Albanian law, these norms are recognized as products of collective social authorship, reflecting the lived experiences and values of the community. The core tenets of customary Albanian law include principles such as equality among individuals by lineage, personal honor, hospitality, and religious faith. While the Code of Lekë Dukagjini and related customary laws were highly significant in the historical context of their implementation, their practical relevance diminished following the establishment of the Albanian state. Particularly after 1928, with the development of modern Albanian legislation across various legal domains, the Code largely transitioned from being a living legal framework to a subject of historical record, preserved primarily in national archives and museums.⁴²

Following the suspension of the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini in 1928, which aimed to formalize traditional Albanian norms and regulate relationships within the family and society, the status of women in Kosovo continued to be heavily influenced by patriarchal traditions and strict social codes. Although the Kanun provided a framework for the protection of family honor and rights, in practice it placed women under the authority of men and significantly limited their social and economic freedoms.⁴³ During the communist period, some of these restrictions were mitigated through legal reforms and the promotion of gender equality in state documents, formulated according to communist policies and non-Islamic cultural frameworks. While these measures sought to redefine women's social roles, they simultaneously imposed new forms of limitations.

Nevertheless, in certain regions, the influence of traditional cultural practices and customary norms remained significant.⁴⁴ Following the Kosovo War (1998–1999), Muslim women faced a series of new challenges, including post-conflict recovery, the disruption of family and social structures, forced migration, and rising unemployment.⁴⁵ In addition to these difficulties, they experienced dual pressures: on one hand, maintaining traditional religious and cultural values, and on the other, integrating into a society undergoing modernization and globalization.⁴⁶ These challenges were further intensified by the rise of Islamophobia, which became particularly pronounced after the conflicts of the 1990s, exposing Muslim women not only to social and economic hardships but also to stigmatization and prejudice.⁴⁷

One significant factor influencing the development and status of Muslim women in Kosovo has been the rise of feminist movements. Modern feminism, especially of Western origin, has challenged traditional gender roles and advocated for equal rights between men and women. While Islam safeguards women's rights and dignity, certain interpretations of feminism may contrast with the Islamic understanding of family. In Islam, family life is based on mutual rights and responsibilities, with justice as a key principle. Men typically provide financial support, while women oversee household management, childcare, and socio-cultural responsibilities.

⁴¹ Dardan Lajci, Gani Asllani, Gentiana Gega, and Simon Grima, "The Position of Women in Kosovo: Perspectives and Socio-Economic Challenges," *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning* 19, no. 1 (2024): 227.

⁴² Academy of Albanian Studies and Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies, "Anthropology," *Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (2018): 82.

⁴³ R. Elsie, *A Dictionary of Albanian Religion, Mythology, and Folk Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 74.

⁴⁴ N. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 230.

⁴⁵ *Civil Society Report on Human Rights in Kosovo in 2024: Women's Rights and Gender Equality* (May 2025): 37.

⁴⁶ Barbara von Glutz, "Women in Kosovo: Between Tradition and Emancipation," *Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* 7, no. 1 (2004): 132.

⁴⁷ A. Gashi, *Gender and Islam in Kosovo: Negotiating Traditions and Modernity* (Prishtina: Riinvest, 2014), 210.

Nevertheless, Islam does not forbid women from participating in social and economic life, and in some cases encourages their active involvement, highlighting a balance between family cohesion and women's agency.⁴⁸

Through the influence of modern feminism, there has been an increase in women's participation in the workforce, equal opportunities in education, and an increase in their social status, which has led some Muslim societies to reconsider the role of women. Although in some Muslim societies, the rights that Islam grants to women may seem contradictory to the understandings of modern feminism, the fundamental principles of Islam protect the dignity and rights of women but do so in a balanced way.⁴⁹ When defining social roles within the family, the natural differences and mutual responsibilities of individuals are taken into account.

Methodology for Evaluation and Analysis of Data Collected from the Questionnaire

Data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows (version 16.0) based on responses from 107 Muslim women respondents. All questionnaires distributed were returned and fully completed, yielding a 100% response rate and a 100% completion rate. As no partially completed questionnaires were identified, the final dataset consisted of 107 valid cases with no missing data at the questionnaire level, as reported in the corresponding tables. For cross-tabulation analyses, women's age, educational level, and employment status were examined in relation to perceptions of family life within the framework of gender roles. Associations between perceptions of family life and the selected independent variables were assessed using Chi-square tests to determine statistical significance.

Demographic Data

In the survey, a total of 107 respondents were Muslim women. More than half of the respondents (56.1%) belonged to the 35–44 age group, followed by 23.3% in the 25–34 age group. Respondents aged 18–24 and 45–54 each accounted for 10.3% of the sample. Regarding educational attainment, the majority of respondents (90%) had completed a Bachelor's degree, while 10.0% had obtained Master's / Doctoral degrees. Concerning occupational status, 80.0% of the women were employed, whereas 20.0% were still pursuing their studies. Among the employed respondents, 75.5% were engaged in various professions, ranging from education to craftsmanship. Approximately 24.5% of respondents were unemployed.

Table 1: Data from Questionnaire Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Respondent Number of Respondents	%
Age (years)	18–24	11	10.3
	25–34	25	23.3
	35–44	60	56.1
	45–54	11	10.3
Education level	Bachelor's	96	90.0

⁴⁸ Ibnu'l-Jawzi, *At-Tibb an-Nabawi* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2011), 260.

⁴⁹ Bukhari, *Adab*, 2; Muslim, *Birr*, 1.

	Master's/Doctoral	11	10.0
Employment status	Employed	86	80.0
	Studying	21	20.0
Type of occupation	Various (education, craftsmanship, etc.)	65	75.5 ⁵⁰
	Unemployed	35	24.5

Assessment Process and Interpretation of Questionnaire Data

Perception of Modern Feminism

The survey examined respondents' understanding of modern feminism. The responses were distributed as follows: 50.0% of respondents perceived it as a movement for gender equality and equal rights for women, 23.8% viewed it as a movement aiming to eliminate all gender differences, 17.1% considered it as challenging only traditional gender roles, and 9.5% reported a lack of insufficient knowledge. These findings indicate that while half of the respondents have a clear understanding of feminism's core objective, a substantial proportion hold misconceptions or limited views. Some perceive feminism narrowly as challenging traditional social roles or seek to eliminate all gender differences, reflecting conceptual confusion. A small minority lacks sufficient knowledge. The results highlight the need for educational initiatives and awareness programs to enhance understanding of modern feminism among women and the broader society. Such interventions can help clarify misconceptions, promote gender literacy, and strengthen engagement with feminist ideals, ultimately contributing to a more informed and equitable perception of gender equality.

Modern Feminism and Islamic Teachings on the Family

The survey examined whether respondents perceive modern feminism as aligning with Islamic teachings regarding the family. Responses were distributed as follows: 6.7% believe that modern feminism supports the equality promoted by Islam, 51.1% think it often aligns with ideas contrary to Islamic teachings, 35.2% consider that feminism may sometimes be consistent with Islam but with differences, and 7% reported uncertainty. These findings indicate a divided perception among respondents, with a majority identifying a conceptual tension between modern feminism and Islamic teachings, while a substantial proportion recognizes partial alignment.

This highlights ambiguity and mixed understanding regarding the relationship between feminism and Islam in the context of family values. Certain aspects of modern feminism may conflict with Islamic teachings, and in such cases, they should be approached cautiously or avoided to maintain consistency with Islamic principles. Furthermore, the majority of respondents believe that women and men have clear and defined roles in Islam, which they consider natural. This perception indicates support for the traditional Islamic family structure, where gender roles are separate and defined. If a balance of these roles is sought, educational programs can be developed to explain how feminism can contribute to equality and mutual respect within the framework of Islamic teachings, without threatening traditional roles.

⁵⁰ Percentage of the employed respondents.

The results suggest the need for educational discussions, dialogues, and contextual interpretations of Islamic teachings to clarify misconceptions and explore areas where modern feminist principles may be reconciled with Islamic family values. Such initiatives can enhance understanding, reduce perceived conflicts, and promote informed engagement with both feminist and Islamic perspectives, while avoiding elements that contradict Islamic teachings. Additionally, integrating guidance on balancing traditional gender roles with feminist principles can strengthen mutual respect and equity within the Islamic family framework.

Feminism and the Improvement of Family Relationships

The survey explored respondents' views on traditional gender roles within the Islamic family. 78.0% of respondents believe that women and men have clear and natural roles in Islam, 13.0% perceive that modern feminism destabilizes traditional roles, 3.0% see feminism as contributing to balance and equality, and 6.0% reported no formed opinion. These findings indicate strong support for traditional roles, with a minority recognizing potential challenges or opportunities for balance. To achieve a satisfactory outcome, it is important to discuss how feminist values can be adapted to the Islamic family without creating tension, providing guidance that respects the rights and duties of both genders.

The results highlight the need for educational programs and awareness initiatives that: a) Clarify the relationship between modern feminism and Islamic family values. b) Promote balance, equity, and mutual respect within traditional roles. c) Offer practical guidance for families to integrate feminist principles appropriately, avoiding conflicts with Islamic teachings. Such interventions can enhance understanding, foster informed engagement, and support equitable family practices aligned with both Islamic and contemporary gender perspectives.

Feminism Movements and Its Impact on the Structure of the Islamic Family

Based on the survey results, the empirical data reveal a cautious and predominantly skeptical attitude toward modern feminism movements within the context of the Islamic family. A significant proportion of respondents (33.7%) perceive feminism movements as a potential source of tension and conflict between men and women, while only 11.2% consider it a means of promoting equality and fair treatment between the two genders. Significantly, a plurality of respondents (48.1%) supports the potential contribution of feminism movements only on the condition that Islamic values are properly understood and practiced within a contemporary framework. In addition, a smaller segment of respondents (7.0%) expressed uncertainty, indicating a lack of clear positioning on the issue and reflecting broader ambiguities in public understanding of the relationship between feminism movements and Islamic family norms.

Overall, these findings suggest that the primary concern is not the concept of gender justice itself, but rather the way modern feminism is interpreted and applied in relation to Islamic teachings. In line with this interpretation, most respondents appear to believe that feminism movements, when detached from its religious and cultural context, may undermine the traditional structure of the Islamic family and generate social and relational tensions. Therefore, future efforts should focus on developing academic initiatives, structured societal dialogue, and informed consultations grounded in Islamic scholarship. Such approaches may help clarify misconceptions, address uncertainties, and facilitate a contextualized integration of selected feminist principles in ways that respect the ethical and normative foundations of the Islamic family.

The Integration of Modern Feminism into Islamic Teachings

Considering Kosovo’s social transition as a post-conflict society, the survey findings reveal a predominantly cautious and conditional approach toward the integration of modern feminism into Islamic teachings. Overall, 51.1% of respondents perceive modern feminism movements as often conflicting with Islamic teachings, 35.2% acknowledge partial compatibility, 6.7% view it as supportive of the equality promoted in Islam, and 7% express uncertainty, together constituting a complete distribution of responses. These perceptions suggest that the central issue is not the principle of gender justice itself, but rather the interpretation and application of modern feminist concepts in relation to Islamic teachings, whose foundational principles derive from the Qur’an and the Sunnah and remain normative and authoritative. Within this specific context, the findings highlight the need for academically grounded initiatives, structured scholarly dialogue, and educational frameworks rooted in Islamic scholarship. Such approaches may enable a critical examination of selected feminist principles and their contextualized integration in ways that promote equity and mutual respect within the family, while simultaneously preserving the ethical and normative foundations of Islamic teachings in contemporary Kosovar society.

Table 2: Results (Summary of Some Questions and Answers)

Question	Answer	Percentage
1. How do you understand modern feminism	a. A movement for gender equality and equal rights for women	50.0%
	b. A movement advocating for the removal of all gender-based distinctions	23.8%
	c. A movement that challenges only traditional gender roles	17.1%
	d. I do not have enough knowledge about modern feminism	9.5%
2. Do you think modern feminism aligns with Islamic teachings regarding the family?	a. Yes, modern feminism supports the equality that Islam promotes	6.7%
	b. No, modern feminism often aligns with ideas that are contrary to Islamic teachings	51.1%

	c. In some cases, feminism may be in accordance with Islamic teachings, but there are differences	35.2%
	d. I am not sure	7.0%
3. How do you perceive the traditional gender roles in the Islamic family?	a. Women and men have clear and defined roles in Islam, and these are natural	78.0%
	b. Modern feminism challenges these roles and makes them more ambiguous	13.0%
	c. Feminism can contribute to balancing these roles, making them more equal	3.0%
	d. I do not have a formed opinion on this issue	6.0%
4. Do you think modern feminism can contribute to improving family relationships within an Islamic family?	a. Yes, feminism can bring about more equal and fair treatment for both gender	11.2%
	b. No, feminism may create tensions and conflicts between the woman and the man	33.7%
	c. Yes, but only if Islamic values are understood and practiced in a contemporary context.	48.1%
	d. I am not sure	7.0%

The survey responses indicate a lack of information and a divided perception regarding modern feminism and Islamic teachings on the family within the Kosovar context. This outcome reflects the broader social dynamics of a post-conflict society undergoing rapid transformation and

suggests a clear need for increased educational initiatives and structured dialogue on this issue. Such efforts are necessary to foster a shared understanding that both respects the normative Islamic teachings on the family rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah and carefully engages with the gender equality demands promoted by modern feminism in contemporary Kosovo.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Islam provides a comprehensive ethical and legal framework that elevates the status of women by affirming their dignity, rights, and responsibilities within both the family and society. In contrast to pre-Islamic practices that marginalized women socially, economically, and legally, Islamic teachings establish justice as a foundational principle without discrimination based on gender, race, or social status. Historical evidence from the Prophetic period further confirms that women actively participated in social, educational, and professional life while maintaining a central role within the family. Empirical findings from the Kosovo-based survey indicate that most Muslim women support clearly defined and complementary gender roles within the Islamic family, perceiving them as natural and functional. At the same time, respondents expressed divided views regarding modern feminism. While a significant proportion perceive modern feminist discourse as conflicting with Islamic family values, others believe that certain feminist principles can contribute positively to family relations when interpreted within an Islamic ethical framework. These findings suggest that the identified tensions stem less from Islamic teachings themselves and more from processes of modernization, globalization, and insufficient contextualized dialogue.

The study further reveals that Islam does not oppose women's participation in public and professional life but endorses it within a framework that safeguards family stability and social balance. Socio-economic transformations, particularly the rise of dual-career families, have reshaped family dynamics in Kosovo. Families that integrate these changes while remaining anchored in ethical and religious values tend to demonstrate stronger relational cohesion, whereas those lacking such balance encounter greater challenges. Based on these findings, the study emphasizes that women's empowerment in Kosovo should be pursued through an approach grounded in Islamic and local cultural values rather than through the indiscriminate adoption of exogenous models. As Güngör (2007) argues, enduring cultural progress necessitates the ability to engage with modern realities while remaining rooted in one's moral and cultural heritage. Future research should employ qualitative and comparative methodologies to further explore the lived experiences of Muslim women in Kosovo and similar contexts. Attention should be given to developing practical models for integrating Islamic principles with contemporary gender discourse in ways that enhance family cohesion, gender justice, and social sustainability in Muslim societies undergoing rapid transformation.

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