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WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SURAH AN-NISA: A CONTEMPORARY QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Surah An-Nisa occupies a significant position in the Qur'anic discourse on social justice, family relations, human dignity, and the protection of vulnerable members of society. The Surah provides detailed guidance concerning the rights and responsibilities of women, particularly in relation to marriage, dowry, inheritance, family responsibilities, property ownership, and protection from exploitation. Its teachings establish principles of justice and accountability within the family and wider society. This study examines the Qur'anic perspective on women's rights and social justice through an analytical study of relevant verses of Surah An-Nisa and considers their significance in the contemporary context. The study focuses particularly on the principles of human dignity, economic rights, marital rights, inheritance, protection of orphans and vulnerable persons, and equitable social relations. Contemporary scholarship continues to examine Islamic approaches to gender justice, family law, and women's agency, demonstrating the continuing relevance of Qur'anic principles for discussions of women's rights. The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach based primarily on Qur'anic verses and supported by contemporary scholarly literature. It argues that Surah An-Nisa presents women's rights within a broader framework of justice, responsibility, dignity, and social protection rather than treating women's rights as an isolated issue. The research concludes that a contextual understanding of these Qur'anic principles can contribute to contemporary discussions about justice, family relationships, economic security, and the protection of women in Muslim societies.

KEYWORDS

Women's Rights; Surah An-Nisa; Social Justice; Qur'an; Islamic Studies; Gender Justice; Women's Economic Rights; Family Rights; Contemporary Qur'anic Interpretation

INTRODUCTION

Women's rights and social justice have become important subjects in contemporary religious, social, legal, and academic discussions. Within Islamic studies, these discussions require careful examination of the primary sources of Islam, particularly the Qur'an, rather than relying exclusively on cultural practices or historical assumptions. The Qur'an establishes a comprehensive ethical framework based on justice, human dignity, responsibility, compassion, and protection of vulnerable individuals. Surah An-Nisa is particularly important in this context because it contains extensive guidance concerning women, marriage, inheritance, family responsibilities, property, orphan protection, and social justice. The Surah therefore provides an important foundation for examining the position and rights of women within the Islamic framework.The opening verses of Surah An-Nisa establish the moral foundation of social relations by emphasizing the common human origin of men and women and calling believers to maintain consciousness of Allah and respect family relationships. This opening framework is significant because it places human relationships within an ethical and spiritual system. Women's rights are consequently connected with broader principles of justice and responsibility. The Qur'anic approach does not simply discuss individual rights but also emphasizes the

responsibilities of individuals, families, and society toward one another. This relationship between rights and responsibilities is particularly relevant to contemporary discussions in which social justice requires both protection from harm and recognition of individual dignity.
One of the major contributions of Surah An-Nisa is its treatment of women's economic rights. The Qur'an explicitly recognizes women's entitlement to inheritance and property and establishes rules governing the distribution of wealth. In societies where women could historically face economic vulnerability, these provisions represented an important legal and social framework for protecting their financial interests. The Qur'anic discussion of inheritance in Surah An-Nisa also demonstrates that economic justice is an essential component of family and social justice. Women are not presented merely as dependents within the family; rather, the Qur'an recognizes their legally and morally significant claims to wealth and property.

Marriage is another major area addressed by Surah An-Nisa. The Qur'an establishes marriage within a framework of responsibility, fairness, and protection from exploitation. The institution of marriage is connected with rights and obligations for both spouses, while the treatment of women is placed under ethical and legal principles. The discussion of mahr is particularly important because it recognizes a woman's financial entitlement within marriage. The Qur'an instructs believers to give women their dowries properly, thereby establishing an economic right that cannot simply be treated as a symbolic cultural practice. Such provisions demonstrate that the Qur'anic approach to family life includes concrete protections for women.Surah An-Nisa also gives special attention to orphans and other vulnerable members of society. This is important for understanding its broader concept of social justice. Women's rights cannot be separated from the Qur'anic concern for individuals who may be vulnerable to exploitation because of their social or economic circumstances. The repeated emphasis on protecting orphans, maintaining trusts, and avoiding injustice illustrates a wider ethical principle: those who possess greater social, economic, or legal power have responsibilities toward those who are vulnerable. Contemporary scholarship similarly examines Islamic approaches to justice and social protection through questions of law, human rights, and gender equality. Another important aspect of Surah An-Nisa is its emphasis on justice in situations involving family conflict and social relationships. Justice is not presented merely as an abstract moral ideal; it is connected with practical behavior, decision-making, financial dealings, family responsibilities, and the protection of rights. The Qur'an repeatedly warns against consuming the wealth of vulnerable persons unjustly and commands believers to uphold trusts and justice. Consequently, social justice in the Surah includes both the recognition of rights and the prevention of exploitation.

The contemporary relevance of these teachings can be understood by examining how Qur'anic principles interact with modern discussions about women's dignity, economic independence, family law, education, social participation, and protection from discrimination and abuse. Contemporary research on Islamic gender discourse demonstrates that Muslim scholars have developed different approaches to interpreting gender, family law, and equality. These differences make careful textual and contextual analysis particularly important. A scholarly examination should distinguish between Qur'anic principles, later legal interpretations, cultural practices, and contemporary applications rather than treating all of them as identical.The present

study therefore focuses specifically on Surah An-Nisa and examines its contribution to the Qur'anic understanding of women's rights and social justice. The study considers major areas including women's dignity, marriage, mahr, inheritance, property rights, protection from exploitation, and social responsibility. It also considers how these principles may be understood within contemporary academic discussions. The objective is not to impose modern categories mechanically upon the Qur'anic text, but to examine how its ethical and legal principles can be studied systematically in relation to present-day questions.

In this regard, Surah An-Nisa offers a particularly valuable field for research because it combines spiritual teachings with practical social regulations. Its discussion of family and economic relations demonstrates that justice in Islam has both moral and institutional dimensions. Individuals are expected to act with fairness, while social structures are also expected to protect rights and prevent exploitation. The Qur'anic framework consequently provides an integrated approach in which personal morality, family responsibility, economic justice, and social protection are interconnected.The study is also significant because contemporary discussions of women's rights sometimes separate religious teachings from the historical and social contexts in which they have been interpreted. A focused study of Surah An-Nisa can help identify what the Qur'anic text actually emphasizes and can provide a foundation for further research into classical and contemporary interpretations. Recent scholarship continues to explore Islamic family law, women's agency, and gender-related interpretation, indicating that these questions remain relevant within contemporary Islamic studies. Thus, this research examines women's rights and social justice in Surah An-Nisa through a qualitative and analytical approach. It investigates the major Qur'anic principles concerning women and evaluates their significance for contemporary discussions of justice, dignity, economic security, family relations, and social protection. By concentrating on the Qur'anic text and engaging with contemporary scholarship, the study seeks to provide a balanced academic understanding of the relationship between women's rights and social justice in Surah An-Nisa.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the Qur'anic principles of women's rights and social justice presented in Surah An-Nisa.
2. To analyze the rights of women concerning marriage, mahr, inheritance, property, and social protection in the light of Surah An-Nisa.
3. To explore the contemporary relevance of the Qur'anic principles of justice and women's rights for modern Muslim societies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What principles of women's rights and social justice are presented in Surah An-Nisa?
2. How does Surah An-Nisa address women's rights regarding marriage, mahr, inheritance, property, and social protection?

3. How can the principles of women's rights and justice in Surah An-Nisa be understood in the contemporary context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Surah An-Nisa has received considerable attention in Qur'anic and Islamic studies because of its extensive discussion of family relationships, inheritance, marriage, social responsibility, and the protection of vulnerable members of society. The literature concerning women in Islam demonstrates that the Qur'anic treatment of women's rights needs to be examined through the primary text as well as through the historical and interpretive traditions that developed around it. Scholars have particularly focused on questions of gender justice, women's economic rights, marriage, inheritance, and the relationship between Qur'anic principles and contemporary social realities.A major theme in the literature is the Qur'anic recognition of women as holders of rights and responsibilities. Surah An-Nisa contains explicit provisions concerning inheritance and financial rights, making it an important source for examining women's economic position in Islam. Qur'anic verses concerning inheritance establish specific shares for different family members and reject practices that could deprive women and other vulnerable relatives of their legitimate rights. Contemporary discussions of Islamic inheritance frequently examine these provisions in relation to changing family structures, economic conditions, and debates concerning gender justice.Another important area of scholarship concerns women's rights within marriage. The literature highlights the importance of mahr, mutual responsibilities, fair treatment, and ethical conduct between spouses. Surah An-Nisa presents marriage as a relationship involving legal, moral, and social responsibilities rather than simply a private arrangement. The Qur'anic emphasis on fairness and responsible treatment has therefore become an important area for contemporary Islamic family-law research.Scholarly literature also emphasizes the connection between women's rights and the broader Qur'anic concept of social justice. Surah An-Nisa does not discuss women independently from society; rather, its teachings about women are connected with orphans, inheritance, family relationships, trusts, justice, and protection from exploitation. This broader context suggests that women's rights form part of an integrated Qur'anic system of social ethics. The protection of vulnerable persons and the prohibition of unjust economic practices are therefore important dimensions of the Surah's approach to justice.

Contemporary scholarship has also examined the interpretation of Qur'anic verses concerning gender and family relations. Different scholars may adopt different interpretive methodologies, including textual, historical, linguistic, legal, and contextual approaches. These approaches can produce differences in how particular verses are understood and applied. Therefore, the literature indicates the importance of distinguishing the Qur'anic text itself from later interpretations and cultural practices. Such distinction is particularly important when studying contemporary questions concerning women's rights.The literature further indicates that women's economic security is closely connected with social justice. Property ownership, inheritance, financial independence, and protection from economic exploitation are significant components of women's social status. The Qur'anic recognition of women's financial rights in Surah An-Nisa

provides an important basis for studying these issues within Islamic thought. Contemporary researchers can therefore examine how these principles relate to modern questions of economic participation, family financial responsibilities, and legal protection.

Overall, the existing literature demonstrates that Surah An-Nisa provides a comprehensive framework for examining women's rights through the concepts of dignity, justice, responsibility, economic protection, and family relations. However, further research remains valuable because contemporary social conditions continue to raise new questions about the application and interpretation of Qur'anic principles. This study contributes to that discussion by bringing together the major dimensions of women's rights in Surah An-Nisa and examining their relevance from a contemporary Qur'anic perspective.

METHODOLOGY

The study follows a qualitative and analytical research approach. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on understanding Qur'anic teachings, meanings, concepts, and principles concerning women's rights and justice. The study examines selected verses of Surah An-Nisa in their textual and thematic contexts and considers how these teachings relate to contemporary discussions about women and social justice.The analytical dimension of the research involves examining major concepts such as justice, dignity, economic rights, marriage, inheritance, family responsibility, and protection from exploitation. These concepts are studied individually and then connected to develop a broader understanding of the Qur'anic framework. Contemporary academic literature is also considered to identify different scholarly perspectives and interpretive approaches. This approach allows the study to remain focused on the Qur'anic text while also considering its significance for contemporary Muslim societies.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study uses a descriptive-analytical research design. The descriptive component identifies and explains relevant Qur'anic teachings concerning women's rights and social justice in Surah An-Nisa. Key verses are examined according to their subject matter, including marriage, mahr, inheritance, property, family relations, justice, and protection of vulnerable individuals.
The analytical component examines the relationship between these teachings and the broader Qur'anic principles of justice and human dignity. Relevant scholarly interpretations are reviewed to understand how these principles have been discussed in Islamic studies. The research does not involve surveys or experiments; instead, it relies on documentary sources and textual analysis. This design is appropriate for a study whose primary purpose is to interpret and systematically organize religious and scholarly texts.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data are analyzed through thematic analysis. First, relevant Qur'anic verses from Surah An-Nisa are identified according to their connection with women's rights and social justice. The selected material is then organized into major themes, including women's dignity,

marriage and mahr, inheritance and property rights, protection from exploitation, family responsibilities, and social justice.After thematic categorization, the meanings and implications of each theme are examined in relation to the overall message of Surah An-Nisa. Contemporary scholarly literature is used to provide additional interpretive context and to identify areas of agreement and difference among scholars. The findings are then synthesized to determine how the different dimensions of women's rights contribute to the broader Qur'anic concept of justice. The analysis remains qualitative and interpretive rather than statistical.

FINDINGS

The analysis indicates that women's rights in Surah An-Nisa are closely connected with the broader Qur'anic principle of justice. The Surah addresses several areas of women's lives, including financial rights, marriage, inheritance, family relations, and protection from exploitation. Rather than treating women's rights as a single isolated issue, the Qur'anic framework presents them as part of a wider system of social responsibility and ethical conduct.
One important finding is the recognition of women's economic rights. Surah An-Nisa establishes women's entitlement to inheritance and recognizes their financial claims within the family. This demonstrates that economic justice is an important dimension of women's rights. The Qur'anic treatment of wealth and inheritance also emphasizes that vulnerable individuals should not be deprived of their legitimate shares.A second finding concerns marital and family rights. The Surah provides guidance concerning marriage and mahr and places responsibilities upon individuals within family relationships. The treatment of women is connected with principles of fairness, responsibility, and protection. This indicates that family relationships in the Qur'anic framework are not based solely on social authority but are also governed by moral and legal obligations.A third finding is the strong connection between women's rights and protection from exploitation. Surah An-Nisa repeatedly addresses the rights of vulnerable people, including women and orphans. The emphasis on protecting wealth, maintaining trusts, and avoiding injustice demonstrates that social justice requires active protection of those who may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation.Finally, the findings indicate that the principles presented in Surah An-Nisa remain relevant to contemporary discussions concerning human dignity, economic security, family justice, and social protection. Their contemporary application requires careful interpretation that distinguishes Qur'anic principles from cultural practices and considers the historical and social context of interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined women's rights and social justice in Surah An-Nisa from a contemporary Qur'anic perspective. The analysis demonstrates that the Surah provides significant guidance concerning women's dignity, marriage, mahr, inheritance, property, family responsibilities, and protection from exploitation. These teachings are presented within a wider ethical framework based on justice, accountability, responsibility, and social protection.The study concludes that women's rights in Surah An-Nisa cannot be understood separately from the broader Qur'anic concept of social justice. Economic rights, family rights, and protection from exploitation are

interconnected dimensions of a comprehensive system of justice. The Qur'anic emphasis on fair treatment and protection of vulnerable individuals further demonstrates that justice is both a moral responsibility and a social obligation.From a contemporary perspective, the principles found in Surah An-Nisa remain important for academic discussions concerning women, family, economic security, and social justice. However, their application requires careful interpretation of the Qur'anic text, awareness of historical context, and distinction between religious teachings and cultural practices. Further research can explore how classical and contemporary Qur'anic scholars interpret specific verses concerning women and how these interpretations relate to contemporary Muslim societies.

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