

Is Women Employment Blessing or Otherwise? A Price worth Paying: An Islamic Perspective

Muhammad Azeem

Student M.Phil Business Administration
Superior University Lahore, Pakistan

Dr. Mohammad Ramzan

Director Libraries, Lahore University of Management Sciences
CEO, FAIR Information
President Pakistan Library Association (PB)
Editor: International Journal of Information Management Sciences

Tahir Akbar

Student M.Phil Business Administration
Superior University Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore/seeks the role of women and men preferences over each other especially in the business environment and society in Pakistan.

Design/Methodology/approach

This study based on theoretical perspective of critical review of literature from the verses of the Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.M), historical and socio-cultural contexts within which the concept was introduced and transformed accordingly. It then argues that allusion of role of women and man preference over each other in the environment of business and society.

Findings

The finding of this study address that men and women are not performing their roles as God has defined. Better understanding of each other will improve and better generation will come who will serve the community. They can help each other and minimize conflicts and reduce inequality between them. Economic responsibility is solely on the shoulder on man, whereas woman has to care of the family. In exceptional cases woman can take part in business and employment activities but abide by the prescribed rules for them.

Originality/Value

In the context of male and female roles preference over each other in the environment of business and society not enriched literature. The view point of feminist about the gender in equality does not exist, due to this female always constantly suffering in the workplace. This study provides the new horizons through theoretical insight of an historical, socio-cultural and Islamic perspective of female and male contribution in organization and society.

Key words: Roles, Islam, Women & men, responsibilities, economics, business organization

Introduction

The Quran determine the role of man and woman as per their physiological, emotional, psychological and biological needs, if applied accordingly then society can perform in a better manner. and develops a positive thinking among the both sexes so they may perform their roles in society especially in business environment. Women employment always criticized by many Muslims scholars in the context of Islam referring Quran and Hadith. Equal employment opportunity practices are done in every society and trying their best to prove that men and women are equally legible to work in organization irrespective of their gender characteristics i.e. physical, biological, mental and thinking level. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan redefined roles of gender in Muslims society.

(Ahmad Raza and Hasan Sohaib Murad 2010) Equal opportunities for women in all Muslim society are called modernity by him. There is a big gap for the right approach to highlight its impact on society. It is believed by many Islamic scholars that a modest woman has the duty bound to submit to her father or husband (Syed, 2008a) to achieve gender equality at work it is important that it should be viewed in the context of historical socio-cultural studies of Islamic written genres and traditions. (Jawad Syed 2010). Gender equality within Islamic theology has a little scope in the eyes of radical feminists and tends to women's subordination to men (Moghadam, 2002; Winter, 2001)

There is a dire need in current scenario to tell the people which are right and wrong. Sexual harassment has grown over time in the workforce as the participation of women at workplace (Berdahl, 2007; Kennedy and Gorzalka, 2002). Prenzler and Ransley, 2002; Silvestri, 2003, pp.29-31 highlight that in many studies of several countries female officer experienced sexual harassment at workplace. Unfortunately Muslims having a sacred book but not read its right meaning and trapped by other secular mind people. They are blindly followed whatsoever written in literature and being practiced all over the world including Muslim countries. Working women are trading off sexism or accepted it as a sub-optimal part of their experience at work. (Susan Corby and Celia Stanworth 2009). Women are compromising and satisfied with this trade off. This research paper determine the defined roles for men and women, their preference of each other, equality of each of them and highlight how they will be beneficial for the society.

Organizations are being managed by employees. Working woman are trying to climbing the corporate ladder to the top hence working for long hours and find the top position in the organization in lieu of scarifying the family life (Susan Corby and Celia Stanworth 2009). Right employee for the right job makes organization life easier smooth their operation creates healthy competition among employees and ultimately profitability increase. Working woman same time clearly traded off sexism or accepted it as a sub-optimal part of their experience at work, contrary they are also criticized sexism at work (Susan Corby and Celia Stanworth 2009). Women even when they go out to work, spend their salaries on providing non relevance things for their families whereas men are basically spending their money on necessity of life things. (Hale, 1996) If woman to be placed in the organization on such a position which is not meant for her or they are equally doing all the jobs along with men then there is chance for the downfall of the organization, Nevertheless many organizations are facing this problem.

Pakistan existence is based on Toheed, means its creation was made by his founder purely on the Islamic values not western base. To make Pakistan an honorable country amongst the comity of nations Fatima Jinnah fight for the equal opportunities for woman. She was the first lady in Pakistan who contested the president election against Ayub Khan. (Ahmad Raza and Hasan Sohaib Murad 2010). Gender gap in Muslim Majorities countries highlighted by the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2008)*. The report shows that Yemen, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia women are working in the organization and their numbers are increasing gradually (Jawad Syed 2010) unfortunately women roles misguided by the leadership and away from its actual role defined in Quran and Sunnah. There is need to enlighten men and women role separately and be applied first in Pakistan which having truly Islamic values and after that rest of the countries this message will be spread so people will know reality. Pakistan having the mixture of all ethnic group which no doubt irrespective of difference of opinion but sincere with each other to implement sharia in this country first then be applied for rest of the Muslim countries and finally rest of the world.

This research paper will highlight those issues and will give answer either men and women have specific roles in society or both can perform equal and balance the society. The article is structured as follows. First the article will explore the basic roles of men and women as mentioned in the Quran and the hadith and the socio-cultural framework within which the concept was introduced and subsequently transformed. It will then discuss allusion of Islamic perspective for female and male roles in society.

Literature Review

Men and women have no preference over each other if they did righteous deeds in the eyes of Allah, those who are pious whosoever whether men or women is near to Allah. Quran mentioned "O believers who have get to faith! No men shall mock other men: it may well to whom they ridicule be superior than themselves, and similarly no women mock other women might by the others are good than themselves" (Quran 49:11)

The reason behind the separately mention the men and women that islam is against the combined society of men and women so is the reason that men and women should not look like each other. In islam it did not happen that men mock women and women mock men it only happened when men and women meet in mix society and abuse each other. As said in islam any one whether man or woman if he did a good deed he will definitely get a good reward. Anyone who did good deeds is a virtual man and will get his better reward. Islam is a religion of nature as said in QURAN that all mankind is born from one man and woman and only for the sack of understanding and identity tribes, races and groups are made that it is easy to identify each other. The one who is more obedient to God is more close to Him.

All mankind is created by a man and a woman who are the parents of all human on earth. Every human is born on same criteria same way from same matter and from same creation, everyone is equal in but who surrender his or her wishes in front of God's is better and superior. There is no race no nation no group on earth who is superior to other but only who is more close to the wishes of Allah.

Men's Role/Duties

Islam has a special place for women in society, as in last address of hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) in Hajja tul Wida it said that the islam has declared certain rights for women in their regard and honor. Man is the master but women has also rights on men. As women are your partners in the walk of life so treat them well and do not disgrace them. As it said by Prophet (PBUH) anyone who have a baby girl and he brought her up nicely he will be a friend of God and get honor. On the Day of Judgment this girl will provide shelter from fire of hell.

Islam gave the right of marriage to women because it is an agreement of mutual interest between man and woman. Man has the primary responsibility of feeding woman and children even after they are separated. But there are some wrong interpretations of Quran Verses due to the wrong understanding of context about Islamic traditions. But the fact is that different context is developed on the basis of different socio-cultural and mindsets backgrounds against Islam.

All economic responsibilities are on the shoulder on men not women. Quran highlighted the importance of this concept repeatedly. For example the following verse of Quran. Almighty Allah has put the responsibility to take full care of women on the shoulder of man, and he has to manage all her necessities of life...(Quran 4:34).

An organization or a house cannot be run safely without an administrator so the God has mad man the master of the house. He has a upper hand in dealing with the matters of life and so he has the responsibility to feed his woman and children. It is the teaching of Islam that in family matters women are bound under the care and protection of man. God has made male sex master due to certain qualities and functions. Another verse of Quran says. Man has to provide livelihood and clothing in fair manner to the divorced mothers if she nurse his child for two years and if he wants to complete nursing period. (Quran 2:233).

Above mentioned clearly defines the rule that child and his/her mother to be sheltered from father, and even if the mother gives breast feed to the child and if woman demands wage for it then it is the duty of man to give her the same as per demand and if she refuse to feed his child then man should arrange someone else woman who give breast feed for his child on behalf of real mother. In Islam it is called Razaat. If husband died then it is the responsibility of other family members to look after his death for fulfilling her all economic needs, but on the other hand if she wants to re-marry she can do after completing the Iddat. Allah mentioned in Quran. We sent men as our apostles whom we inspired (Quran16:43).

Women's Role

To keep the balance in society it is important to determine the roles of each individual precisely so every member of the society can play its role effectively and betterment of society can be made. In this section I will try to highlight the roles of women desired by its creator

Modesty is one of the key parameter which has to be taken care in society Allah says in Quran.

Believing women to lower their gape and to be careful of their modesty, and not to display their ornaments in public beyond what may civilly be apparent thereof; and they must cover their bosoms and not display their charms to Namehram.... (Quran 24:31).

Islam is a complete code of conduct and life so he teaches women that how they wear and secure themselves. Islam teaches that how much eye contact is secure for her. Her walking style, ornaments, dress and lower her gaze while walking on roads. A Muslim woman should hide her appearances from Non Mahram. She should cover her bosom and beauty with proper clothes and should keep care about her adornment.

“O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters, as well as all [other] believing women, that they should draw over themselves some of their outer garments [when in public]: this will be more conducive to their being recognized [as decent women] and not annoyed. But [withal,] God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace”... (Quran 33:59). The Arabic word used for gown or outer garment in the above verse is jilbab. Hussain (1987, p. 142) argues that orthodox scholars (i.e. those inclined towards a conservative and puritanical view of Islam).

However, Al-Qaradawi (1995) argues that a woman’s aurah with respect to non-mehram men and non-Muslim women consists of her entire body with the exception of her face and hands. This view is similar to the Shiite Jafari school which does not object on the uncovering of face and hands as is commonly witnessed in Iran today. It may be noted that some Quranic verses pertaining to female modesty have been expressly addressed to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad possibly because of their unique status in Islam as *umm-ul-momineen*, i.e. mother of the believers (Al-Turabi, 1973; Young, 2001). For example, the Quran outlines a detailed etiquette for conversation, seclusion and ornamentation for the wives of the Prophet:

O wives of the Prophet! “You are not like any of the [other] women, provided that you remain [truly] conscious of God. Hence, be not over-soft in your speech, lest any whose heart is diseased should be moved to desire [you]: but, withal, speak in a kindly way”... (Quran 33:32). “And abide quietly in your homes, and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of pagan ignorance; and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle: for God only wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome, O you members of the [Prophet’s] household, and to purify you to utmost purity”...(Quran 33:33). The above verses instructed the wives of the Prophet to stay in their houses and dedicate themselves to prayer and charity in order to remain modest (“clean”). They were also required to adopt customary instead of soft speech in their conversation with strangers. The customary speech in that era represented a formal and reserved conversation between non-mehram men and women. According to some Islamic scholars (e.g. Al-Jassas, 1928; Doi, 1989), the Quranic instructions addressed to the Prophet’s wives are applicable to all Muslim women prohibiting them from unnecessary loitering outside the house. However, this view is not shared by all scholars, e.g. Barlas (2002) and Hussain (1987) who argue that the verses are particularly addressed to the wives of the Prophet and must not be generalised.

Sahih Bokhari (Book #8, Hadith #395) Narrated 'Aisha: “The believing women covered with their veiling sheets used to attend the Fajr prayer with Allah's Apostle, and after finishing the prayer they would return to their home and nobody could recognize them because of darkness”. Sahih Bokhari (Book #10, Hadith #552)

Caring to the family

Looking after carefully to all family members is the primary responsibility of women, hence the love and affection towards them may arise and good character child will grow. Allah has mentioned in Quran. “And the mothers may nurse their children for two whole years”. (Quran 2:233).

“NOW [among the best of the deeds which] we have enjoined upon man is goodness towards his parents. In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth; and her bearing him and his utter dependence on her took thirty months”...(Quran 46:15). “And [God says:] ‘We have enjoined upon man goodness towards his parents: his mother bore him by bearing strain upon strain, and his utter dependence on her lasted two years: [hence, O man,] be grateful towards Me and towards thy parents, [and remember that] with Me is all journeys’ end”...(Quran 31:14).

“O Prophet! Whenever believing women come unto thee to pledge their allegiance to thee, [pledging] that [henceforth] they would not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught but God, and would not steal, and would not commit adultery, and would not kill their children, and would not indulge in slander, falsely devising it out of nothingness: and would not disobey thee in anything [that thou declarest to be] right - then accept their pledge of allegiance, and pray to God to forgive them their [past] sins: for, behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace”...(Quran 60:12).

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Mus'ud: Allah's Apostle, the true and truly inspired said, "(The matter of the Creation of) a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then Allah sends an angel who is ordered to write four things. He is ordered to write down his (i.e. the new creature's) deeds, his livelihood, his (date of) death, and whether he will be blessed or wretched (in religion). Then the soul is breathed into him. So, a man amongst you may do (good deeds till there is only a cubit between him and Paradise and then what has been written for him decides his behavior and he starts doing (evil) deeds characteristic of the people of the (Hell) Fire. And similarly a man amongst you may do (evil) deeds till there is only a cubit between him and the (Hell) Fire, and then what has been written for him decides his behavior, and he starts doing deeds characteristic of the people of Paradise." Sahih Bokhari (Book #54, Hadith #430)

Caring husband respect

“And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has [ordained to be] guarded”... (Quran 4:34).

Preference of women over men

Narrated Abu Huraira: A man came to Allah's Apostle and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Who is more entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man said, "Who is next?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man further said, "Who is next?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man asked for the fourth time, "Who is next?" The Prophet said, "Your father." Sahih Bokhari (Book #73, Hadith #2)

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: A woman from the tribe of Juhaina came to the Prophet and said, "My mother had vowed to perform Hajj but she died before performing it. May I perform Hajj on my mother's behalf?" The Prophet replied, "Perform Hajj on her behalf. Had there been a debt on your mother, would you have paid it or not? So, pay Allah's debt as He has more right to be paid." Sahih Bokhari (Book #29, Hadith #77).

Abu Huraira reported that a person said: “Allah's Messenger, who amongst the people is most deserving of my good treatment? He said: Your mother, again your mother, again your mother, then your father, then your nearest relatives according to the order (of nearness)”. Sahih Muslim (Book #032, Hadith #6181)

Discussion and conclusion

Above discussion clearly identifies the roles of each sex in such a way which does not leave any ambiguity. If played everyone roles in the light of Quran and Sunnah then there is no doubt that society will progress with peace Literature identifies that

Now we have to analyze each role separately like

- 1) All economic responsibility on man shoulders not on woman.
- 2) To protect & look after their dependent, i.e. parents, children wife.
- 3) To educate and give direction to the children especially daughters which help them to be good daughter, sister, wife and ultimately good mother.
- 4) To be a propogator of Islam and to spread God’s message to all mankind.

Islam gave economic rights to women more than 1,500 years ago. These rights include various components. For example a sane and adult woman can possess or own or dispose of any of her own property in any way she feels fit, either she is married or not. She can make decisions about her belongings without any restriction, same as a man can make. Islam gave right to woman about fifteen hundred years ago to possess property and to make sale or purchase of it, while in Great Britain the same right was given to women in 1780 A.D. But, have these rights been outdated because these are ancient. Do these rights not meet the latest standards?

As far as the matter of women’s working and earning livelihood is concerned, Islam also gives complete permission for it. There has never been a ban on women in Quran and Hadaith for doing jobs. The condition is that the job should be within the limits of Islamic Shariah and within modesty levels. And women must observe the obligation of Hijab. But it is natural phenomenon that Islam do not permits women to adopt any profession in which she has to expose her beauty. For example, the professions of acting and modeling etc. Similarly, Islam has forbidden many professions for men too. Obviously, women cannot be permitted for these professions.

For example, professions relate to the business of wine and gambling. These professions are forbidden for men and on the same grounds for women also. In a realistic Islamic society, there are many professions which a woman can adopt. For instance, she can look at the medical profession. We need specialist doctors and nurses for treatment of women. Similarly, there is also need of women in education profession. On other hand, Islam has entrusted all financial obligations to men, and women have no obligations to earn. Therefore, under normal conditions a woman need not to work to earn her livelihood. However if certain circumstances compel the woman to earn her livelihood, Islam do not stop her. Beside the aforementioned professions, there are several other jobs which a woman can perform. Women can small businesses in their own houses.

There is no issue for women working in factories and other departments on the condition that the system of those organizations must be run on Islamic Principles. That means, there should be separate sections for gents and ladies staff because Islam do not permits the mixing up of men and women. Islam permits woman to engage in business and when required, enter into transactions with gents through a Mehram such as her father, husband or son. In this context, the best example in front of us is that of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) wife, Bibi Khadija (R) who was considered a very successful businesswoman of Makkah at that time and she transacted through her husband Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). From one aspect, Islam gives more financial security to women in the family. As explained earlier Islam imposes financial responsibility on male members of the family and no such obligation for women. Before marriage, it is responsibility of father or brother to fulfill all her needs and after marriage, this duty shifts to her husband to arrange for her food, clothing, lodging, boarding etc. If husband dies, then the responsibility moves on to her son. That means until there is a male member in the family, liability of earning remains on his shoulders.

In the light of Islamic principles, woman is again in benefit on the occasions of marriage because she is entitled to a marital gift (Meher) from the husband. In Surah Nisa Chapter 4 of Quran Almighty Allah says **“And give the women (on marriage) their dower (mehr) as a free gift; but if they of their own good pleasure remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.”** The dower (Meher) given by man to woman is a compulsory requirement as per Islamic Shariah, but in our society the real spirit of dower is being overlooked. Where millions of rupees are being spent on marriage ceremony, the dower is fixed only a few hundred rupees. Although, it is true that there is no minimum or maximum amount fixed for dower in Islam, it means that there is no upper or lower limit. However, the dower must be fixed at per financial position of the two parties. There is no logic to fix ‘one hundred and fifty one rupees’ or ‘seven hundred and eighty six rupees’

One great tragedy is that some Muslim societies have greatly been influenced by other cultures. One example is the society of Sub-Continent of Indo Pak. Here a small token amount is fixed as dower and they expect that the girl will bring huge dowry with her. It is expected that she will bring TV, refrigerator, and even flats. The groom's family do not fix dower (mehar) as per their status but they do expect dowry according to their status. The price of groom is fixed. If he is a graduate, the price is one hundred thousand and if he is doctor or engineer, then it is three to five hundred thousand. But these issues have no concern with Islam. In Islam, demand of dowry (Jahaiz) either directly or indirectly is not permissible. However, if bride's parents want to give any gift to their daughter with pleasure, there is no restriction. But to pressurize for this purpose is not permissible. Islam forbids such kind of acts.

It is not obligatory for women to earn but if a woman earns any income, the income is entirely hers and she is not entitled to spend a single penny on the household. She can spend it in any legitimate manner as she may desire. It is Islamic principle that regardless of the wealth or income of his wife, the responsibility of maintaining her lies on the husband and this responsibility includes providing for her needs pertaining to food, clothing, lodging, boarding, medication because Islam imposes financial responsibility on men's shoulders and he has to perform this duty in any case. In case of divorce or widowhood, the man is responsible for all her expenses during the waiting period. If she has any children she is entitled to child support.

Islam gave the right of inheritance to women, centuries ago. If you read Quran, you will find clearly in Sura e Baqra, Sure e Nisa and Sura e Maida that women in the role of wife, mother, sister and daughter is entitled for inheritance in property and Almighty Allah has fixed the share in Quran.

Future Directions for Research

It is suggested that future research to be carried out on these areas to highlight the roles of women and men so society can get benefit from it.

Impact of working women on cultural and social values.

Why children are not taking care of parents in old age,

Why mother's does not give them breast feed in the childhood and away from mother love.

Why higher divorce ratio in working woman as compared with housewives? Why working woman intends marry in late ages i.e. 30 to 40 years creating problems for society?

Why working woman did not care their husband like a house wife?

Why increasing ratio of rapes from men.

Sexual harassment from woman toward man

Why working woman prefer to live alone?

In miniature, there is no harm if woman works with man if can follow the rules defined in Quran & Sunnah. It is suggested that man and woman perform their roles in society as per Quran. Of course hard competition for doing righteous deeds, not to let down each other.

Value addition for researcher and manager

This research paper gives guide line to the HR manager to analyze the situation in right perspective while finalizing the candidate especially keeping in view EEO. This research paper will also examine whether there is a room for women employment in society or allowed to work on which extent. It does not mean that men and women are equally eligible for the job, but Men have the economic responsibility whereas women have to keep the home and manage household affairs. New research area like men and women roles, their preference over others, equality between them in the light of Quran and Sunnah will give new horizon for researcher.

References

- Ahmad Raza and Hasan Sohaib Murad 2010. "Gender gap in Pakistan: a socio-demographic analysis" *International Journal of Social Economics* Vol. 37 No 7.2010 pp541-557
- Alusi, M. (1983), "Ruh al-ma'ani fi tafsir al-Quran al-'azim wa-al-sab' al-mathani", Dar al-Fikr, Beirut.
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (1995), *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (translated by El-Helbawy, K., Siddiqui, M.M. and Shukry, S.), Al Faisal Press, Kuwait.
- Al-Turabi, H. (1973), "On the position of women in Islam and in Islamic society", *Islam for Today*, available at: www.islamfortoday.com/turabi01.htm (accessed 26 November 2008).
- Al-Jassas, A. (1928), *Ahkam al-Qu_ran*, al-Matba'atal-Baha'iyya, Cairo.
- Berdahl, J.L. 2007, "The sexual harassment of uppity women" *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 92 No. 2, pp. 425-37
- Barlas, A. (2002), *Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Quran*, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.
- Hussain, A. (1987), *Status of Women in Islam*, Law Publishing Company, Lahore.
- Hassan, R. (1994), "Women's interpretation of Islam", in Thijssen, H. (Ed.), *Women and Islam in Muslim Societies*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Poverty and Development Program, The Hague
- Hale, S. 1996, *Gender Politics in Sudan Islamism, Socialism and the State*, US West View Press Inc., Boulder, Co.
- Ibn Rushd, M. (1997), *Bidayat Al Mujtahid wa Nihayat Al Muqtasid*, Dar Al Ma'rifat, Beirut.
- Jawad Syed 2010. "An historical perspective on Islamic modesty and its implications for female employment" *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* vol. 29 No. 2, 2010 pp 150-166
- Moghadam, V.M. (2002); "Islamic feminism and its discontents: toward a resolution of the debate", *Signs: Journal of women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp 1135-71
- Prenzler, T. and Ransley, J. (2002), *Police Reform: Building Integrity*, Hawkins Press, Sydney
- Syed, J. (2008a), "A context-specific perspective of equal employment opportunity in Islamic societies," *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 135-51.
- Susan Corby and Celia Stanworth 2009. "A price worth paying? Women and work-choice, constraint or satisficing" *Equal Opportunities International* vol. 28 No. 2, 2009 pp 162-178
- Young, M. (2001), "Yes to hijab, no to niqaab", *Islam for Today*, available at: www.islamfortoday.com/niqaab.htm(accessed 10 December 2008).