



**WOMEN IN ISLAM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY
AGE**

BY

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES (SHSS) IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR MASTERS DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (SHSS)

SUMMER 2017

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or University other than United States International University – Africa in Nairobi, Kenya for academic credit. All material obtained herein from other sources is duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved father, without whom none of my success would be possible, and to my mother- a great and gentle soul who taught me to trust in Allah, believe in myself, and strive for excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To ALLAH, my greatest gratitude, whose strength and words of wisdom from the Quran, I have drawn from.

I would like to convey my appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Fatuma Ahmed Ali, whose proficiency, understanding, and patience added significantly to my graduate experience. I appreciate her vast knowledge and her immense assistance in my academic journey.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Prof. M. H. K. Timamy, my father, without whose inspiration and endless support I would not have considered a graduate career in International Relations. It was under his tutelage that I developed a focus and became interested in development and human rights. He gave me direction, and became more of a mentor and friend than a father. It is through his devotion, persistence, understanding and kindness that I have completed my graduate degree.

Lastly, I would like to thank my beloved family as a whole for their never-ending support throughout my entire life and in particular, I must acknowledge my best friend, Hassan Khambiye, for his love and encouragement during this process.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
AWAM	All Women's Action Society
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICW	International Council of Women
IPHRC	Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission
LGBT	Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transsexuals
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCWO	National Council of Women Organizations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PBUH	Peace and Blessings Be Upon Him
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
WAO	Women Aid Organization

ABSTRACT

In today's contemporary age, due to the pervasive chauvinist and repressive experiences of the women in Islam, Muslim women felt that the only way to be emancipated intellectually, socially, politically and economically was through fighting for their basic human rights. There is a mounting growth of Muslim women demanding for their rights guaranteed to them by Islam to be applied in their societies. Equally, women are advancing to the ranks of Islamic scholars, therefore providing their correct literature and voices different from what had been addressed by men. This study analyses the challenges and conditions that women in Islam have, their inherent human rights, and their emancipation to create exemplary influential roles among fellow Muslim women.

This study relied mainly on secondary data through the doctrines of the Quran, Sunnah or the practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hadith or spoken sayings ascribed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and content from various journal articles, books, and major publications. The objectives of the research are to examine the conditions and challenges facing Muslim women in a rapidly globalizing world and to analyze how Islamic religious precepts have been overshadowed by conservative cultural practices and traditions of some Muslim societies. This research similarly aims to explore the gross distortions, misconceptions, falsehoods, and misinformation about the nature of Muslim women's rights, and to analyze how the continued tradition-bound suppression has not helped the cause of gender development in many Muslim societies. It seeks to bridge the gap that women in Islam can still have their inherent human rights amidst the challenges involved within the framework of their cultural societies and in International Relations.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“All over the world, we see living proof that Islam and women’s rights are compatible.”

Hilary Clinton

1.0 Introduction

Mutahhari (1991) argues that since the old times, women have suffered exclusion, marginalization, victimization, violence, alienation, mistreatment, sexism, and discrimination. It is only recently that the quest for gender equality and the struggle for women’s rights assumed the character of a global movement. This has been through significant strides for emancipation, universal suffrage, and equal pay for employment and so on, made over the course of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century largely in the West. However, with the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, the consciousness and impetus for change in gender relations acquired a policy and political momentum, again mainly in the West.

In relative terms, women began to occupy decision-making positions of prominence in leadership, business enterprises, and management generally in national, regional, and international organizations, and in governments. Despite the glacial but gradual progress in the West, it was in developing countries, rather than in western democracies, that women first rose to leadership levels of prime minister or president (Ropers & Licona, 2010). However, in terms of extensive institutional representations of women in government structures, the Scandinavian countries led the way, having routinized the policy of gender parity. Equally, several African countries such as Rwanda and Uganda later constitutionalized large proportions of women to take up parliamentary representation in electoral politics (Ropers & Licona, 2010).

Al-Hibri (2001) further asserts that even though gender-based institutional and policy advances had grown rapidly worldwide, the fulfillment of women's rights in many countries remains a far cry. This is with national and regional variations being remarkably wide and uneven. Most notably, countries dominated by tradition-bound cultures and conservative religious practices appear to be pronounced in not institutionalizing and upholding women's rights. In fact, widely publicized press reports of blatant abuses of such rights in some Muslim countries, or in diaspora Muslim communities where orthodox cultural traditions hold considerable sway have provoked vitriolic international outcry and condemnation, with a large part of the outrage and expressions of disgust directed towards the Islamic faith and its adherents. Almost invariably among westerners and like-minded followers, no distinction was made between the actual prescriptions of Islam regarding education, on the one hand, and the cultural traditions practiced by purported Islamic zealots, on the other hand (Al-Hibri, 2001).

Zubaida (2009) narrates that in a contemporary age such as ours, Muslim women in their quest to claim and exercise their rights will have to contend with two hostile influences. One is the culturally-bound fanatical conservatives who arguably claim to be inspired by Islam. The second one is the forces of Islamophobia bent on curtailing religious freedoms, attacking the people violently, and fostering hostile hatred and alienation of Muslims in the society. Despite notable advances that women's rights registered on policy fronts in many countries around the world, the cultural environments have had an inhibitive effect on their progress. To redress these severe imbalances, women had to mount battles in many national, regional, and international forums. They spearheaded campaigns aloft the banner that human development cannot have its full potential realized if women, making up half of the world's population, are denied basic

rights. These basic rights comprise of education, employment, property ownership, and active participation as citizens in development processes (Zubaida, 2009).

This research examines the conditions and challenges facing Muslim women in the contemporary, rapidly globalizing age. It seeks to promote a better understanding of women's rights in Islam by dispelling misconceptions, distortions, falsehoods, and misinformation arising from the mistaken tendency to equate the prosaic traditions and cultural practices of diverse Muslim communities with the scriptural doctrines promulgated by the religion itself. It calls for inter-faith dialogue and the advancement of ecumenism in a bid to confront bigotry, fanaticism, and religiously instigated violence. Furthermore, it proposes the establishment and funding of advocacy programs and awareness campaigns to empower Muslims and non-Muslims alike to facilitate gender development. Finally, it recommends policy and institutional changes to promote tolerance, while specifically criminalizing prejudicial actions and inflammatory utterances of an abusive and insulting nature. This is similar in vein to the legislative interventions by western countries that outlaw racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism to help advance the cause of human rights of Muslim women in the contemporary age.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Since history the world witnessed an abundant flow of literature on challenges faced by women in their efforts to forge an equitable level-playing field in gender relations. This was more so in their quest to enjoy fundamental human rights in the national, regional, and global scheme of things. Prejudices and negative stereotypical adventures have impacted the women's causes in many adverse ways, with cultural traditions and practices impinging retrogressively on gender development. For millennia, women have endured gross victimization, exploitation,

repression, oppression, marginalization, mistreatment, exclusion, violence, and discrimination in varying degrees, across different societies and cultures. Some societies, notably in the West, witnessed the opening up of considerable space for women with the dawn of the contemporary age. Nevertheless, in many developing countries, the situation is still depressingly appalling, more so in several Muslim countries. With some remarkable exceptions, the predicament of women's rights has continued to be particularly dire as cultural practices, tribal traditions, and conservative norms reigned and enjoyed precedence over Islam's religious prescriptions. This contradiction needs to be thoroughly investigated and challenged at policy, political, and institutional levels for Muslim women to assume their place of pride in the plane of human rights.

1.2 Research Questions

- What are the conditions and challenges facing Muslim women in a rapidly globalizing world?
- How has Islamic religious precepts been overshadowed by conservative cultural practices and traditions of some Muslim societies?
- What are the gross distortions, misconceptions, falsehoods, and misinformation about the nature of Muslim women's rights?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to show that women in Islam can have their basic human rights in the contemporary age amidst the challenges involved.

The following are the specific objectives of this study.

- To examine the conditions and challenges facing Muslim women in a rapidly globalizing world.
- To analyze how Islamic religious precepts have been overshadowed by conservative cultural practices and traditions of some Muslim societies.
- To explore the gross distortions, misconceptions, falsehoods, and misinformation about the nature of Muslim women's rights

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study sheds light on how cultural practices and social traditions have harmed the cause of Muslim women's rights. It also reveals the challenges posed by the contradictions between the conservative norms that orthodox-driven communities have applied with abandonment, and the precepts espoused by the Islamic faith. In exposing the distortions, falsehoods, misinformation, and misconceptions, it hopes to advance proposals on how the dignity of Muslim women and their human right ambitions can advance gender development. This is especially against the poisonous trends of Islamophobia now seemingly on the ascendancy in many parts of the world.

The significance of this study tends to also seek to understand the findings from the article by Heiner Bielefelch titled '*Muslim Voices in the Human Rights Debate*' that display a plurality of Muslim positions in human rights. Questions on whether Muslim women rights are violated because of their religion will be addressed in this study.

1.5. Theoretical Framework - Islamic Feminism

Ropers and Licon (2010), define Islamic feminism as Muslim women being more fundamental than secular feminists, and deep rooted within the core of Islam with the Quran as

their focal manuscript. In addition, a Muslim feminist is one who espouses a worldview where Islam is contextualized to advance concerns of equity and equality for Muslim women, and for whom the freedom of choice has an imperative purpose in the expression of Islam (Ropers & Licona 2010). Islamic feminists base their principles in Islamic teachings, advocate for the maximum equality of Muslim women in the homebound and public realms. It incorporates non-Muslims in their discourse and activities (Ropers & Licona, 2010). In the contemporary age, Islamic feminism has further advanced with Muslim women striving to acquire support and articulate their initiatives from numerous aspects in society (Ropers & Licona, 2010).

Sherkat (2009) states that within the scholarly spheres of the 1990s, Islamic feminism instantaneously became a phenomenon in various regions around the globe. It originally commenced in Iran, where several journals contended that the clerics' chauvinist and sexist versions of religious manuscripts had been integrated into Islamic law. These periodicals disseminated works of Quranic understanding by both men and women as discourses of Islamic jurisprudence avowing women's rights. This school of thought affirmed the right to interpretations that endorsed gender equality, new functions for women in religious activities and improvements in the justice and familial laws and political and legal endeavors (Sherkat, 2009).

The Iranian deliberation prompted the advent of Islamic feminism as a theoretical movement. *Tutelages* published in the 1992 Iranian periodical called *Zanan*, which means Women, excavated the perspective of feminism that considered Islam as the foundation of its legitimacy. This therefore stripped feminism of the depreciatory implications in which it had previously been affiliated with Iran (Sherkat, 2009: 18). A decade after the Islamic revolution, religious women from the middle classes participated in this movement in reaction to discriminatory laws enacted by the regime. A regime that made social justice a theme of its

campaign and proclaimed its desire to “restore their ‘true and elevated’ status of women within Islam” (Mir-Hosseini, 1996). In the end, this implied establishing equality between the sexes.

At the same time, exiled female Iranian academics in the United States and Europe declared their adherence to the movement. In 1999, the sociologist Ziba Mir-Hosseini published a pioneering study of the religious debate in Iran. Here, she analyzed the various current thoughts on gender within the theological seminaries of Quran and their bearing on public discussions of social and political issues in contemporary Iran. In her view, an indigenous and locally produced feminism was emerging (Mir-Hosseini, 1999). Given its local character, this feminism was capable of reconciling principles that had hitherto been constructed in such a way as to bring cultural, religious and national affiliations into conflict with what was widely seen as a westernized feminist discourse of women’s rights.

From the beginning of the 1990s, other women intellectuals from the Arab and Muslim world, including African-American theologian Amina Wadud, a convert to Islam, took part in this process of textual re-interpretation (Wadud, 1992). Some had even anticipated it, for instance, the sociologist Fatima Mernissi challenged the authenticity of certain misogynist hadiths attributed to the Prophet (Mernissi, 1987). Originating in intellectual and activist circles in the non-Arab Muslim world, the religious debate over feminism later diversified, becoming part of a broader reformist tendency within Islam (Badran, 2009).

According to these authors, religion is in this way part of a new paradigm of modernity in Arab and Muslim countries. Together with that of others, their work has opened the way to enlarging the concept of Islamic feminism to include human rights, social movements and everyday practices. At the beginning of the 20th century, much emphasis was placed on the role

of the various colonizing powers as well as on states such as Mustapha Kemal's Turkey and the Shah's Iran in the articulation of discourses associating modernity, civilization and westernization with the specific ideas of women's rights that they promoted (Latte, 2006: 127-147).

This type of discourse, which continues to be periodically revised up to the present day, identified local Islamic cultures as backward or traditional. This has led the historian of Egyptian feminism, Leila Ahmed, to label it colonial feminism. The earliest formulations of women's rights in an Islamic vocabulary were thus ignored. However, Ahmed (1993) also reinforced the notion of two irreducible feminist paradigms; a supposedly imported and thus objectionable western, secular and elitist one, on the one hand, and a culturally and socially rooted one promoted by Islamic figures, on the other (Ahmed, 1993).

State promotion of women's organizations and leaders in the context of official women's rights policies continued throughout the 20th century and is ongoing today. Islamic feminism is a part of a historical continuum. It has joined the existing movements for their part, in a state of flux since the 1990s and the new networks created by the younger generation since the turn of the century to participate in third wave feminist mobilizations (Ahmed, 1993).

Margot Badran examines lines of investigation relating to the modes in which the global Islamic feminist movement has recently been structured. Local women's organizations that draw inspiration from Islam also deserve attention. Some of them such as the sections of Islamic parties and the social organizations linked to them are geared towards social and political change. Others, more varied and less readily visible, concern themselves more with personal

betterment and techniques of the self. These are groups created by women preachers, centers of Koranic memorization and other women's religious foundations (Mahmood, 2005).

As Christiansen (2002) illustrates, in the case of more socially oriented organizations, political Islam has recently promoted women in the social and political domains in the wake of demands for political change. Many of its female protagonists have developed their own demands independently of these organizations. Such is the case of Turkey and Iran that are both exceptional in the political context of the Islamic world as well as Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Palestine, Bahrain, Kuwait, Indonesia, Malaysia and even Saudi Arabia.

Various studies illustrate the way female activist trajectories within Islamic movements and the positions they adopt have evolved. They are in general encouraged by the movements to which they belong to launch themselves in the public sphere in order to boost the political presence of opposition parties or spread the message of religion among women (Christiansen, 2002). Once embarked on public life, however, many such activists redefined their role, calling upon Islam in defense of their rights or at least autonomy, and those of all women, across all domains. In addition, part of these women, in search of new fields of action or of influence within Islamic organizations, seem to move from an Islamist form of activism towards a more independent and individualized trajectory.

The level of influence accrued by Islamic feminism is now sometimes sufficient to bring pressure to bear on Islamic political organizations and has even sometimes affected their underlying philosophy (Christiansen, 2002). The issue of gender equality is certainly the subject of negotiation and disagreement. Until recently, the object of strong disapproval in Islamist circles, the term feminism no longer acts as a focus for criticism and is indeed spreading within

such groups, along with the older idea of Islam's ability to guarantee the rights of the woman by virtue of its ideal of justice (Christiansen, 2002).

Feminism is usually deemed as a Western initiative, yet Muslim women outside the West have been proactive in contemporary feminism from the 19th century to the contemporary age (Ropers & Licon, 2010). Various feminist movements replicate the cultural contexts where they derive from, and Muslim feminists acclimatize their own working ways through an Islamic framework. This is through enabling Muslim women to offset gender oppression as part of their Islamic faith. Most Muslim feminists are adamant that violence against women is an abhorrence to Islam, and that the Islamic faith does not condone it (Ropers & Licon, 2010).

As Ahmed (1993) expounds, Islamic women's movements have equally been traditionally associated with nationalist, humanitarian, and democratic spheres, as well as post imperial setbacks and Islamic reforms. At the forefront of feminism in the Islamic realm, the struggle for women's rights merged with the escalation of social justices and secular nationalism. Because various secular Muslim feminists are less concerned in streamlining Islam and more concerned with advancing gender equality within a secular society, Islamic feminism came up to concentrate on women who work distinctively within Islam.

Badran (2005) notes that Islamic feminism has become popular in the contemporary age, advancing a sprouting feminist paradigm by numerous scholars. As a global phenomenon, Islamic feminism endeavors to surpass dual concepts of West versus East, contemporary versus traditional, and religious versus secular, incorporating the Islamic Diaspora around the globe. Islamic feminism is both vastly contested and steadfastly embraced as it derives its ideals and

mandate from the Quran and advocates for the rights, justice, and equality for Muslim women in the totality of their existence.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study covers the period from the 20th century to the present contemporary age of the 21st century. The selection of this period is informed by the fact that, most women in Islam have acquired their basic human rights despite the challenges inherent. In addition, the study's focal issues and objectives studies how women in Islam have become empowered in the contemporary age from a human rights lens particularly within Islamic rights, which other scholars and their literary works have overlooked by not shedding much light into them. The boundaries of the study include the framework of International Relations, Human Rights, Islam, and Gender Studies. The research concentrated on case studies of various Islamic countries

1.7. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters.

Chapter One provides the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance as well as scope of the study. It also has a theoretical framework of Islamic feminism.

Chapter Two gives an overview of the literature review and provides an indication of previous research focusing on the research questions or specific objectives.

Chapter Three explains the methodology used including the research methods, the research design, population and sampling design, data collection, data analysis, and ethical issues.

Chapter Four contains the discussion and analysis. This includes general information of the analysis based on each of the objectives and research questions.

Chapter Five offers the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Dubois (1998) elaborates the time when tendencies of Islamophobia have generally experienced a marked rise in the western world and in many non-Muslim communities around the globe. He argues that the condition and challenges facing Muslim women in a rapidly globalizing contemporary age are matters of legitimate research concern and strategic policy relevance. This is particularly when viewed in the context of religious freedom, human rights, and the worldwide struggle for gender development. It is widely believed that Muslim women, just like women in many traditions bound systems and male chauvinistic societies, have often not been able to enjoy the full range of basic human rights as a result of the suppressive and constraining power of conservative cultural practices. They have also been denied fundamental rights by the forces of Islamophobia.

2.1 Gender Relations in a Historical and Comparative Perspective

The 1945 United Nations Charter and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights anchored the preliminary official global acknowledgment of women's rights, equality, and non-discrimination centering on gender as noted by Al-Hibri (2001). However, only until the late 1960's, the concentration was on women's reproductive functions because women were viewed to be wives and mothers and their only concerns were supposed to be acquiring access to foodstuff, contraceptives, and health care (Al-Hibri, 2001).

Ahmed (1993) equally explores that the 70's and 80's established a new dawn in which the contention advanced beyond women's rights and the domestic realm of women's functions as

wives and mothers. They were now onto the global arena where the position of women was elevated as an instrument for economic development. There were significant initiatives like the 1975 First World Conference for Women in Mexico, the endorsement of the Women in Development, and the United Nations decade for women from 1975-1985. Their approach accentuated women's rights to development, acknowledgment of women's economic purpose in state-run economies and, most appreciably, provided a voice to women in developing nations.

Furthermore, Mir-Hosseini (2003) provides the insight of how, from the 1990's, the gender standpoint is still besieged to be adequately positioned into the development initiatives of global endeavors or objectives like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The codes only concentrate on gender equality and do not deliberate enough on women's core purposes onto other developmental spheres. The gender question is evidently very lengthy and unending. Practitioners are still endeavoring to bring a realization of gender concerns to actualization that will transform perceptions and produce spot one quality between men and women in the patriarchal and matriarchal domains.

2.2 Modernization and the Struggle for Women's Rights

Dubois (1998) affirms that women's pursuit for equal rights goes back to the 18th century. Therefore, the women's suffrage movement was the initiative of the women's rights to vote and engage into politics, and it is a component of the general women's rights movement. In the mid-19th century women in numerous nations, most remarkably the United States and Britain, instituted organizations to campaign for suffrage. In 1888, the International Council of Women (ICW) was established as the foremost global women's rights organization (Dubois, 1998). Because the ICW was indisposed to concentrate on suffrage - the International Woman

Suffrage Alliance was established in 1904. Women's rights activists such as the British Millicent Fawcett, American Carrie Chapman Catt, and other prominent women's rights activists enhanced the women agenda of equality and freedom.

Delong and Natana (2006) equally discuss that the women who served a momentous function in the quest for independence were not prepared or willing to risk it by imposing themselves into the contentions of the constitution. However, by the early 19th century more women became involved in the contest over the obliteration of slavery. A series of literate women commenced to analyze the resemblance between their own social, economic, and political positions, and that of the slaves they were struggling to liberate. A small number of the abolitionists went on to institute the movement for women's rights and equality (Delong & Natana, 2006).

This was a struggle braced with animosity among supporters, liberated slaves, fresh immigrants, and first generations of women activists (Delong & Natana, 2006). Nevertheless, this culminated in the success of the 19th Amendment endowing women with voting rights. Presently, the progress for complete social, economic and political equality combats with internal conflicts among women estranged by similar dynamics that aided in delaying the suffrage amendment almost a century back (Ropers & Licon, 2010).

2.3. Human Rights of Muslim Women

Albers, Hoffman, and Reinhardt (2014) define human rights to being the rights intrinsic to all humans of all nationalities, gender, race, creed, language, as well as social, economic, and political standings. Civil and political rights include the right to life, the pursuit of happiness, liberty, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression. Social, cultural and economic rights

include the right to partake in culture, the right to employment, and the right to education (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014).

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women illustrates that the nations partisan to the United Nations Charter made affirmations towards universal human rights, in the dignity and respect of all human beings and in equal rights of both men and women states Albers, Hoffman, and Reinhardt, (2014). Within the framework of “A Declaration of the Rights of Women in Islamic Societies,” a couple of Islamic-born female scholars principally from South Asia and Iran addressed their concerns on record (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014). They stood out as exceptional in a contemporary age when most of those who view the Muslim women’s status argued that gender prejudice still prevailed in spite of Allah’s commandments and Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) instructions (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014).

Albers, Hoffman, and Reinhardt (2014) argue that as for barring women from driving, it is more of a Saudi cultural issue instead of an Islamic one. Presently however, Saudi women have still attained elevated leadership positions both in Saudi Arabia and internationally with powerful and influential roles in the society. However, most Islamic societies still lag behind in making sure that women’s human rights and equality in accordance with the Shariah are upheld, but there is hope that the 30 women who attained their roles in the Shoura will address these concerns more vibrantly. Women in Islamic societies have been attaining topnotch positions such as heads of government, diplomats, cabinet ministers, civil parliamentarians, and military officers even in nations that are usually perceived by the Western media as tyrannical to women such as Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014).

The extremists in Islamic nations interlaced their twisted concept of Islam and their malevolent cultural practices with religious contexts to legitimize them (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014). Nonetheless, nothing in Islam can rationalize, for instance, an attempt to assassinate Malala for the reason that she was advocating for the Pakistani girls' educational rights adds Albers, Hoffman, and Reinhardt, (2014).

After emanating from the dark years of extremists' regimes, Afghan women are currently reaffirming themselves in public spheres through working in parliamentary and civil societies. The authors argue that people should stop affiliating Islam with the persecution towards Muslim women and the violation of their human rights while accentuating that Muslim women's struggles for their rightful rights are a struggle against ignorance and against those exploiting Islam for their selfish interests (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014).

Mahmood and Hirschkind (2002) explain that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which contains 57 member states and more than 1.5 billion Muslims, robustly fights for women's rights within the global framework and Islamic Shariah laws. It implemented an action plan for the progression of women in the member nations, which illustrates the OIC member states' devotion in dealing with a variety of struggles women go through in four key objectives. The first one is the purging of poverty, attainment of sustainable development and plentiful resources for Islamic women. The second one is elevating Muslim women's contribution in decision-making forums from local to international standards.

Likewise, granting equal prospects to Muslim women through access to good education, health-care and advanced participations. Finally, it campaigns for the abolition of all types of bigotry and violence against Muslim women. These were not sheer words on paper as many

decisions, programs, and projects were embarked on to execute the objectives (Mahmood & Hirschkind, 2002). In addition, the member states consented to establishing an OIC Women Development Organization to be headquartered in Cairo, although the required number of countries have not yet been ratified the organization's bill for it to be implemented (Mahmood & Hirschkind, 2002).

The OIC instituted the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), the foremost human rights commission in the Islamic prism to harmonize the activities of enacted human rights organizations (Mahmood & Hirschkind, 2002). It was established to purge the misconceptions concerning the interface between Islam and human rights through the concepts of incremental and progressive approach, prioritization, complementarities, introspection, and the significance of credibility. Within the opening session of the 18-member commission argues Mahmood and Hirschkind (2002), it acknowledged the women's rights of education development as its precedence. As its core mission, the commission works to abolish distortions over the matter of alleged incongruity between universal principles of human rights and Islam. There are positive actions by the Islamic nations to decisively and inwardly analyze the deficits of implementing core principles of and exhibiting outwards their dedication to global values (Mahmood & Hirschkind, 2002).

2.4. The Importance of Human Rights

According to Albers, Hoffman, and Reinhardt (2014), there has been a remarkable development in how individuals know of and apply human rights ideas over the recent years. This has created numerous positive outcomes because the knowledge on human rights empowers people and provides resolutions for various problems. Human rights and equality facilitates in

diminishing friction within the society. Making human rights concepts into perspective helps fashion the type of society that people want to reside in. Human rights are an imperative component of how human beings relate in all planes of society including the family, community, schools, workplace, politics, and international relations. When individuals acknowledge the importance of human rights, it becomes effortless to promote equality, justice and the well-being of the society. This is because human rights are for all people, are internationally acknowledged, and are safeguarded by law. They also concentrate on the dignity of human beings, protect individuals, and should not be denied (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014).

2.5. The Protection of Human Rights

In the event of conflicts, safe havens protect refugees and war victims. Peacekeeping strategies together with violence prevention mechanisms help safeguard human lives. Several democratization initiatives reinstate social and political rights. Foreign humanitarian aid and development assistance alleviate the impact of wars on civilians. Therefore, the protection of human rights defenders is also a step in protecting human rights in overall. Advancing the capability of vulnerable populations and minority groups aids in protecting human rights because they defend their rights and provide their own voice (Sayyid & Karim, 2010). They include victims of torture or war ordeals, persons with disabilities, labor activists, indigenous peoples, the LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals), captives, women and children. Atrocity deterrence, targeted in averting attacks on marginalized populations also augments the protection of human rights. Endeavors to abolish human trafficking and protect its victims are also dominant in protecting human rights (Albers, Hoffman, & Reinhardt, 2014).

2.6. The Violations of Human Rights

Some of the gravest violations of the human rights include war crimes, torture, illegal detentions and imprisonment, massacres and genocide (Sayyid & Karim, 2010). The enactment of political oppression may also lead to these human rights violations. Women who experience sexual violations like rape, trafficked for sexual slavery through trafficking, or being forced into prostitution also have their human rights violated. Entrenched prejudice against women is predominant in many cultural societies and surmounts to various forms of social oppression. These include strict dress codes and punitive measures for sexual indiscretions that inflict brutal restrictions on women's basic liberties (Sayyid & Karim, 2010). In addition, women in certain societies experience greater poverty levels than their men do, and are denied political affiliations, access to education, and employment opportunities (Sayyid & Karim, 2010).

2.7. The African Union (AU) Developments on Gender and Human Rights

Esposito and DeLong-Bas (2001) indicate how the advancement of the African Union Gender Policy and its action initiatives have been enthused by the vast political will and dedication exhibited by the African heads of states and governments. It incorporates Article 4 (L) of African Union's Constitutive Act; preserve the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and is the Gender Equality Principle describes Esposito and DeLong-Bas (2001). The African Union Heads of State and Government Summits carry on in upholding gender parity and development. This is through their consequent pronouncements aimed at hastening the realization of their own obligations including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (Esposito & DeLong-Bas, 2001).

Tohidi (2003) further articulates that Africa is dedicated to the women's rights advancement, which takes into consideration the diversity in social, cultural, and economic milieus. It makes endeavors to tackle cultures and practices that militate against the fulfillment of rights and freedoms of women. The Africa Union Gender Policy pledges are utilized to endow the groundwork that can purge barricades to gender equality in Africa. It also sustains gender equality endeavors for Africa in executing other international dedications on gender including the SDG initiatives (Esposito and DeLong-Bas, 2001). The AU Gender Policy is exemplary in policymaking on women's human rights and grants overarching headship in Gender Equality to the Commission and other AU branches and member countries.

2.8 Islamophobia and the Violation of Muslim Women's Rights Today

Sheehi (2011) defines islamophobia to be an anti-Islamic and excessive chauvinism against, loathing and aggression towards, or fear of the Islamic religion or Muslims that is fueled by negative stereotypes. This results in the bias, marginalization, bigotry, and omission of Muslims in the social, political, and civic prisms. Muslim women are more vulnerable to be victims of islamophobic hate crimes than the men, with a majority of the attacks aggravated through hostility because of the recognition from their conventional religious attires (Sheehi, 2011). Women are unquestionably persecuted in various Muslim nations, notwithstanding the signing of plentiful affirmations and treaties guaranteeing them the fundamental rights acknowledged by the global community, states Sheehi (2011).

Women's rights have not advanced consistently due to religious, political, social, and economic setbacks, and Islam in particular has mostly been faulted as the key dynamic hindering the progression of women's rights in Islamic nations through the persecution of women (Sheehi,

2011). Although discrimination against women continues overtly and unabated in most nations, Islamic countries have specifically been singled out in the Western media for their treatment of women, and not entirely without reason (Sheehi, 2011). Moore (2000) identifies that the customary Islamic attire such as the hijab, niqab, or abaya have made most female Muslims to be victims because they are soft targets towards islamophobia. Several Islamic women have been vividly recognized to be Muslims and have been attacked because of their identification of covering their heads with a hijab and wearing the Muslim full-length black robes (Sheehi, 2011). Therefore, the vicious occurrences of islamophobia in the western world have greatly compromised the fundamental human rights of the Muslim women as they been soft targets typically recognizable through their dress codes and the distinctive veils covering their heads. Islamophobia has been sparked by radical forces alleging that their actions are enthused by Islam when in fact, their violent operations seems to emanate from political grievances, concepts of injustices, marginalization, alienation, bigotry, and subjugation (Moore, 2000).

Since hate crimes of islamophobia are normally cases of individuals attacking Muslims, research finds that 54 percent of the victims are specifically Muslim women because the attacks create a fear factor among the Muslim women, who become hesitant to venture out, further stimulating a sense of alienation. The hate crimes against Muslim women in terms of harassment, violence or threat include name-calling, rape, the grabbing and tearing of garments, and spitting in countries such as Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. Muslim women may address their experiences incognito to the researchers but they are less likely to report to the police because of fear (Sayyid & Karim, 2010).

2.9. The Subjection of Muslim Women

Sayyid and Karim (2010), addresses the subjection of women, which aroused an ardent debate. He was the first male philosopher to vocally advocate for the liberation of women in the Victorian era. He equally argued for the acknowledgment of their personal, legal and political rights including the right to work out of the domestic realm, the right to education, and the right to emancipation (Ropers & Licona, 2010). Mill's argument is that individuals cannot know if something will not work unless they try it and that the resistance to female emancipation is therefore compelled by prejudice instead of rationality.

Sheehi (2011) further outlines the advantages of female emancipation from a utilitarian perspective. He argues that more individuals existing alongside each another on a similar footing translates to more rivalry, with a beneficial impact on human ethical and intellectual advancements, both personal and communal. If, as challengers of female emancipation argue, women are not obviously prone to be political beings, they have nothing to lose by liberating them from legal constraints because nature will determine what they are able to be. Lastly, he argues that whatever women's services are most needed for, the act of rivalry will present the most vibrant inducements for them to embark on (Sheehi, 2011).

2.10. The Vindication of the Rights of Women

Mary Wollstonecraft's "*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" (1792) is a discourse on rising above the practices on how the women of her time were subjugated and deprived of their full potential concomitantly within the households and society. She argues that the neglect of girls' education was principally to blame for the circumstances of the adult women as they were regarded as subordinate beings that only cared about looking beautiful, well dressed, and being

submissive as their key concerns. They bought into oppression and did not have the means to vindicate their fundamental human rights or possess the knowledge that they were in this situation (Sheehi, 2011).

Sheehi (2011) advances reason and rationality to women and addresses the toxic outcomes of utter arbitrary ways in which women were rendered inferior and are hardly ever independent. She rebukes that women should continue being virtual slaves confined within the household and concerned only with being reserved, chaste, and attractive. Women were taught to suppress their emotions and thus have unhappy marriages because love was unrequited during her days. Sheehi (2011) argues that virtue is not supposed to be relative to gender because both men and women are created equal and women had equal inclination to develop themselves and their own character. She condemns women's powerlessness to partake in the public spheres and inspires a revolution and a vindication among the women (Sheehi, 2011).

Furthermore, Sheehi (2011) addresses the concept of modesty and enlightens that modesty is not humility as the women who practice the most reason have the most modesty. She argues that women's modesty can only perk up when they are made stronger and their minds advanced by dynamic exertions. However, she also claims that women's morality is destabilized when reputation and the burden of chastity is encouraged as the only noteworthy things they should keep (Sheehi, 2011).

She advocates for more financial autonomy for women, articulates the necessity of duty and activity in the social arenas supports the need to be good citizens, and expresses the various pursuits women can partake in society. She also addresses on parenting roles, reiterating that there should be reforms in women's education to be good mothers who do not domineer their

children or spoil them. Her suggestions for educational streamlining include an amalgamation of co-education, public and private education, and a participatory educational configuration for the women.

Finally, Sheehi (2011) calls out several ways in which women practiced their naivety. These include visiting mediums and fortunetellers, reading useless novels, rivaling other women, extravagantly worrying about looks and dressing, and treating their children like idols. She further argues that women and men should have numerous things in common to have successful marriages. Overall, she claims that women's burdens do not emanate from a natural deficiency but come from their inferior status in society, inadequate education and lack of awareness of their rights (Sheehi, 2011).

2.11 Evolution or Regression: Islam and Women

Mir-Hosseini (2003) states that in order to understand fully how Islam perceives its women, it is vital to first comprehend the status of women in the Arabian Peninsula. The social and political society that was in Arabia when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) commenced proclaiming Islam was rooted and dominated in patriarchy. During this era, a man could marry up to one hundred wives, they practiced female infanticide, and women were forbidden to inherit. It is within the framework of the oppressed status of the women that the innovativeness of the Quran's affirmation of a new status for the women in society becomes patent, Mir-Hosseini (2003).

Mir-Hosseini (2003) further points out that the significance of this early male dominance in the Arab society is not founded in the perceived impression that Islam is a patriarchal religion, but instead in the reassertion of a male societal supremacy after the demise of the Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH). The patriarchal political forces reaffirmed themselves and quickly crumbled the advances in women's rights granted through the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructions claims Mir-Hosseini (2003). In order to destabilize the moves made by the women during Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) time, men singlehandedly started assuming the task of interpreting the Quran through various schools of interpretation with a patriarchal value system as their priority (Mir-Hosseini, 2003).

They banned the participation of women in the public spheres and consequently the Quran scholarship and analysis of Islamic law became the territory of the men, with fewer rights for women in the society. The Islam practiced presently and the Islam intended by the Prophet are non-identical because Islam has evaded from its guiding principles concerning Muslim women (Chesler, 2009).

The negative subjection of women in Muslim societies particularly in the Arab countries is very much in the public domain today as accounts of stoning, lashings, and honor killings are repeatedly portrayed in the media (Chesler, 2009). One would expect that by now Islamic feminist groups would be mobilizing demonstrations against these atrocious injustices and joining forces with the repressed Muslim women who are fighting to change their status in the society but none of this is taking place (Chesler, 2009). This is not possible because of the lack of proper avenues for Muslim women to express their intentions and victimization and poor planning, cultural restrictions etc.

2.12. The Violations of Muslim Women's Human Rights: Quran Ideals versus Muslim Practice

According to Mutahhari (1991) Muslim men unendingly reiterate that Islam has granted more rights to women than any other religion has by virtue of the Quran ideals. Unfortunately, however, the cumulative prejudices that existed in the early Arab cultures permeated the Islamic religion and diluted the intent of the Quran to emancipate women from the status of inferiority and make them equal to men. An analysis of the Islamic history and culture sheds light in many avenues where the Quran's teachings supported women notwithstanding their continued subjection to miscellaneous forms of repression and discrimination often in Islam's name (Sheehi, 2011). While the Quran has a protective approach in favor of women, a majority of its women-affiliated teachings have been utilized in the patriarchal Islamic societies against, instead of for the women (Mutahhari, 1991).

Islamic societies seem to be more concerned with protecting the Muslim women's bodies, sexuality, and chastity than in granting them their fundamental human rights (Mutahhari, 1991). Moreover, they are never concerned about the men's chastity, making women the targets of the gravest human rights violations that occur in the Islamic societies claims Mutahhari, (1991). Muslim men say with great pride that Islam eradicated female infanticide but they do not mention how the murder of Muslim women by their husbands is rampant in the same Islamic societies. These so-called 'honor-killings' are indeed, awfully dishonorable and are often used to smokescreen other types of crimes (Mutahhari, 1991).

Majorities of Muslim girls are married off while still minors despite marriage in Islam being a contract and presumes that both the contracting parties are consenting grownups (Mutahhari, 1991). Albeit numerous Quran legislations are targeted at safeguarding the rights of

women in the milieu of marriage, the women still cannot claim equality with their husbands. As a matter of fact, the husband is deemed as his wife's gateway to heaven or hell and the go-between of her ultimate destiny (Mutahhari, 1991). The fact that this idea exists within the realm of Islam, which declines the notion of there being any intermediary between a Muslim and Allah, is both a great irony and an immense tragedy (Mutahhari, 1991). These contexts are found in the Hadiths of Surah 4: An-Nisa: 4-19; Surah 24: An-Nur: 33; Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 187; Surah 9: At-Tawbah: 71; Surah 7: Al-A'raf:189; and Surah 30: Ar-rum: 21.

Even though the Quran presents the notion of the contemporary age no-fault divorce (Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 231,241) and does not make any deep judgments on divorce, Islamic societies make divorce awfully complicated for women, both through legal means and social penalty. The Quran clearly declares that the divorced parents of a minor should have a joint discussion how the child should be brought up and that they should not make the child an instrument of hurting or exploiting one another (Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 233). However, in most Islamic cultures, women are robbed of their sons at 7 years old and their daughters at 12 years old, and this is very mean to the Muslim women simply because of divorcing from an unhappy marriage (Mutahhari, 1991).

Esack (1997) also says that even though polygamy was deliberated by the Quran to safeguard orphans and widows (Surah 4: An-Nisa: 2-3), in practice Muslim men have used it to keep women under continuous threat. The Quran grants women the right to receive inheritance not only upon the demise of their close relatives, but also to receive gifts during the life of a generous and compassionate caretaker. However, Islamic societies have immensely condemned the notion of giving bequests to a Muslim woman in the preference of a man, even if her needs or circumstances may necessitate it (Esack, 1997).

The purpose of the Quran legislation on women's dress codes and conduct (Surah 24: An-Nur: 30-31; Surah 33: Al-Ahzab: 59) was to make it safe for women to carry out their daily normal activities with the right to participate in productive activities (Surah 4: An-Nisa': 32) with no fear of rape or sexual harassment. However, Islamic societies have coerced them to cover themselves with veils and be locked mostly indoors on the excuse of safeguarding their chastity, ignorant that according to the Quran (Surah 4: An-Nisa': 15), captivity in their homes was not a typical way of life for chastity but a penalty for unchastity (Esack, 1997).

Indeed, woman and man created with equal standing by Allah have become very unequal in Islamic societies. The Quran's instruction of man and woman in marriage through "They are your garments and you are their garments" (Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 187) entails affinity and equality. However, Islamic societies have reduced most women to the level of puppets and slave-like beings whose only mission in life is to attend to the needs and pleasures of Muslim men (Chesler, 2009). Islamic cultures equally deny Muslim women direct access to Allah by forbidding them to worship in the mosques, which threatens the balance of power in the domain of religious activities (Chesler, 2009).

2.13. Patriarchy and Matriarchy in Islam

According to Wollstonecraft (2015) Muslim religion is viewed as patriarchal in nature, which is to say it is male dominated. From a quick look at a Muslim mosque during their prayer sessions it is noticeable to see that it is male dominated and that women are not allowed to worship together with their male counterparts (Wollstonecraft, 2015). The "patriarchy nature" of the Muslim religion is seen as discriminatory to women and therefore contributes to human rights violations argues Wollstonecraft (2015).

Islamic feminists have condemned this nature of inequality. Feminist Gerda Lerner outlined a “creation of patriarchy” in Islam, during the recurrence of male-dominated rituals and events in Islamic culture overtime indicate Wollstonecraft (2015). Women praying in mosques are always in smaller numbers and in separate and small spaces, away from the majority of men, says Wollstonecraft (2015). This form of “patriarchy” and gender differences during prayers and many Islamic practices and norms contribute adversely to the perception of Islam as being a male dominated religion, concludes Wollstonecraft (2015).

Patriarchal behaviors of the Muslim cultural practices ought to change if gender equality is to be achieved; such inequality is regarded as human rights violations because it subdues the women in Islam through neglect (Abiad 2008).

Matriarchy as a social system is defined by Abiad (2008) as one where females hold primary power, dominate in roles of political leadership, moral power, social freedom and management of property at the specific segregation of men, at least to a large degree (Abiad, 2008).

Abiad (2008) adds that the Muslim conservatives regard women as tools of social continuity and the preservation of culture and family. They observe the women’s status as a direct connection to reforming and maintaining tradition. Moreover, the Muslim societies see women’s role as a means of defining of their national identity. For instance, other conservative communities and some states in the Gulf still practice women is seclusion from men (Abiad, 2008).

Even though Islamic states promote education for both male and female to grow their economy, the number of girls enrolling in learning institutions in developing countries is

relatively low, claims (Ameli, et al., 2006). The political and poor economic circumstances in several Muslim societies forces women to involve themselves in the outside world adds (Ameli, et al., 2006). There is an increase in factors like labor migration and quarrels in many families which females head. Due to economic necessity, many women resolve in working outside their homes, mostly in low-paying, unskilled jobs (Ameli, et al., 2006).

According to Abiad (2008), during the early 20th century, the governments of independent Islamic states like Turkey made a decision to modernize women's roles. The adopting of a new family law by the state that discouraged polygamy and gave women the right to divorce was a great step. Moreover, the women in Turkey took part in voting in national and municipal elections in the 1930s (Ameli, et al., 2006).

The Iranian leader Reza Shah Pahlavi made the veiling practice an outlaw. Generally, there was a dramatic decline in the tradition of female seclusion. Due to the changes regarding seclusion, Egyptian women are participants in politics and work in public offices (Ameli, et al., 2006).

The advancement allows women to earn academic degrees and work in professions their tradition and culture did not allow them to take part in. However, in most Muslim societies, the new opportunities and freedom in employment and education were benefits of middle and upper classes living in towns (Wollstonecraft, 2015). Although they are good developments, some factors had effects on them. The Muslim conservatives regard the political and social changes as anti-Islam and a threat to their cultural value that makes males superior. The concerns about jobless men fuels debates that women should go back to their traditional roles of being mothers and wives (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

Despite of the ills that have occurred in the lives of numerous Muslim women over the years due to patriarchal Islamic cultures, there is still hope for betterment in the globalizing age. There are indications from across the Islamic world that escalating populations of Muslims reflect deeply upon the Quran ideals and the human rights of women with the exemplary Islamic case study nations of Oman, Malaysia, Kenya, Turkey, and Iran, just to mention a few (Ameli, et al., 2006). As the reflection intensifies, it leads to the consciousness that one of the absolute tasks entrusted to Muslims by Allah is attained through establishing justice for Muslim women as a requisite for bona fide peace. Islamic feminists fight for the eradication of the inequities, inequalities, and injustices that permeate through the personal and social lives of Muslim women (Ameli, et al., 2006).

If Muslims can regulate their households justly so that the human rights of women are upheld, then they can also justly regulate their Islamic societies and the world at large. Indeed, there have been somber falsifications, distortions, and pessimism by the Western media pertaining to the Islamic women's rights when they omit the inherent human rights present within numerous Islamic societies describes Ameli, et al., (2006). In today's contemporary age, numerous Islamic societies have taken the extra leap of faith in advocating for the missing puzzle remaining for the Muslim women's rights in all Islamic societies across the globe.

2.14. Conclusion

According to Dubois (1998), the issue is not the deficiency of respect for human rights in Islam, but instead that the designation of women's rights has been altered in a misogynistic culture. Women have elemental rights within Islam, and all the objectives of equality championed by the West can be attained by applying the concept of gradualism intrinsic in the

religion. Consequently, the best way to crack this predicament may not be in externally stipulating the standards in the culture, but instead in endorsing a wave of understanding of the religion by Islamic scholars themselves.

A pragmatic solution to the issue should include a framework of human rights, which complements the Muslim society and takes into consideration the rights of women already established by Islam itself. Islam has within it the origin for transformation and it is from within the Muslim culture itself that ultimate change will occur. Therefore, it may be seen that the transformation in the status of women advanced by Islam combined instant termination of wrong practices and gradual drawbacks of practices, which were viewed as detrimental (Ameli, et al., 2006). These practices are equally imperative to the ultimate equality of Muslim women but the Muslim male dominated is unwilling to hasty abolition for highly practical purposes. Islamic scholars have been hesitant to fully implement the flexibility provided to them in Islam, but now there is an escalating upsurge to reapply the doctrines of the Quran, to move society past the narrower stance of its blunt and misogynistic past, and to preserve women's rights.

As DeLong and Natana (2006) assert there are contradictory practices between the doctrines stipulated in the Quran and what the Islamic cultures do in regards to the Muslim women. The Islamic women are very much subjected to the oppressions in the cultural societies that they are born into such as in the cases of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey. The Muslim women's rights are vindicated right in front their eyes and they are rendered helpless because the legislations in their societies are always in favor of the patriarchal domains instead of equality for all.

This is all oblivious to how the Quran is ideals stipulate that women and children should be the most protected individuals in the society because of their vulnerability. Indeed, a majority of the Muslim women have been subjected to massive islamophobia, oppression, persecution, honor-killings, and discrimination. Yet, the women's only crime is to seek education, a happy marriage, a worthwhile career, and being great mothers who bring up greatly nurtured children in the society. Indeed, in today's contemporary age Islamic cultures should not regress to the ancient times where women were profoundly persecuted but should advance in an evolution to make them have equality and fundamental human rights inherent among them.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This session deals with the methodology used in this study and focuses on the approach, which was utilized in the process of conducting the research, gathering, analyzing and presenting the data. It also explains the methods and tools that were used in the research. This also helps to identify the reliability in the methods that were involved in the process of carrying out the research.

3.1. Research Design

The study emphasized on qualitative and descriptive research methods and the area of coverage was specifically on Muslim women and their basic human rights. The method used was to help investigate and understand the behavioral characteristics of the Islamic women. The descriptive research method is an appropriate method as it seeks to ascertain the association between women in Islam, women's rights, and the contemporary age. The descriptive research method used is the case study method where the populations analyzed will be from various Islamic countries with the highest number of Islamic women. The case study approach was concentrated on case study countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Oman, and Malaysia. This descriptive case study research aimed at getting detailed information regarding the role of Muslim women and human rights in the contemporary age.

3.2. Data Collection

Secondary data was collected from libraries, journal articles, books, the internet and newsstands. This study relied mainly on secondary data to fathom, examine, and address the

challenges facing Muslim women in their quest to enjoy fundamental human rights, especially their rights to education, employment, property ownership, and political representation in human affairs.

The study also relied on material from journal articles, autobiographies and biographies, major United Nations publications, African Union documents, and relevant research studies/reports. Above all, verses from the Holy Quran and the Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were consulted to shed light on the subject of women's rights in Islam.

3.3. Data Analysis

The methods of data analysis used tallies with the research design and have a descriptive and qualitative perspective. The data analysis and presentation involved the interpretation of data in a narrative format rather than a scientific report. This is because the research entailed qualitative and not quantitative methods of data collection. Therefore, the description is the vehicle towards communicating the holistic picture for this particular study.

3.4. Ethical Issues

The ethical considerations of this study adhered to strict usage of the doctrines on the Holy Quran and not distorting any information from the words of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

CHAPTER FOUR: PRACTICE AND PROSPECTS OF MUSLIM WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

4.0. Introduction

There are more than forty-five Muslim-majority countries, and other thirty or more nations, which have Muslim minorities inclusive of countries in the developed West. The study provides the conditions and challenges facing Muslim women in a rapidly globalizing world. It orientates the reader on the major dimensions of Muslim women's lives and analyzes the literature findings that emerge from chapter two of the study. Muslim women go through many issues in their societies due to Islamic precepts being overshadowed by cultural practices. The following section discusses some of the challenges and conditions they encounter.

4.1. The Conditions and Challenges Facing Muslim Women in a Rapidly Globalizing World

There are numerous challenges facing Muslim women all over the globe. These challenges vary in nature but overall, they affect and violate the rights of women in the society. This section analyses these challenges and addresses some of the mitigations issues implemented to eliminate such violations.

4.1.1. Gender Inequality

Wadud (2006) argues that there is gender inequality in the Islamic or Muslim world. Although throughout the world there is critical exploitation and mistreatment of women, Muslim women go through more oppression because of a high level of male chauvinists in their society (Wadud, 2006). The Muslim women think they are receiving the right treatment from their

societies, which make them suffer even more because of the strict Muslim traditions and cultural practices (Wadud, 2006). The issue of gender inequality exists within the Muslim-majority nations; in fact, more than seventy-five percent of the lowest-ranking countries on the World Economic Forum, which ranks participation of women in the society, are Muslim-majority nations (Wadud, 2006).

Khan (2012) adds that even though gender equality is the main topic, many findings discuss while talking about Muslim women issues around the world, there are many other problems they encounter. For example, conditions like disability, socioeconomic class, and place of origin, official and unofficial caste systems, education, employment, and sexuality have more influence than gender.

In most Muslim countries, unjust laws and government entities promote gender inequality; sometimes they sustain gender disparities and promote them using informal practices, which relate to tradition (Khan, 2012). However, we cannot base of the systems classification to justify today's Muslim women diversity issues because what other people feel is problematic to Muslim women in one nation may not be relevant or beneficial to Muslim women in other countries. For example, a group of Muslim women in France feel their inability to cover their hair in public schools is their greatest challenge, while others in Dubai think they are chafing under restrictions regarding gender segregation and modest attire in public places (Abiad, 2008).

4.1.2. Family Law

According to Abiad (2008), there is a common view of "Shariah" law on marriage and divorce that violates the right of women, thus subjecting Muslim women to harsh and unfair treatment from their communities. The issue of Family Law is held not only by Muslims but also

by Non-Muslims. Some countries formulate new versions of "Personal Status Codes" or "Family Law" which are based on classical Islamic law. Abiad (2008) adds that the view is gaining prominence as critics argue that Islamic law guarantees numerous rights for women. Unfortunately, women do not know how to invoke the laws for their protection. The judiciary and the court systems, which claim they are unenforceable and void, drag many conditions that human rights organizations raise towards achieving women rights. The action by these judicial bodies' makes women's "rights" meaningless (Abiad, 2008).

4.1.3. Socio-economic Dynamics

Shirazi (2010) discusses that while analyzing the challenges and conditions facing Muslim women, socio-economic dynamics is among the considerable factors while defining issues they face around the world; thus, it is difficult to generalize matters based on gender alone. A good example is seen in the Algerian context, where a woman from a political or social group that has an influence has more power than a man that belongs to less significant group (Shirazi, 2010).

In relation to that, Shirazi (2010) also argues that girls from the upper-class Muslim society have greater chances of pursuing professional fields than boys from lower class Turkish Muslim families. The factor shows that even within one country, the issues and questions facing Muslim women rights differ. For example, the personal status code that Bahrain adopted in May 2009 after many years of lobbying by women's rights organizations and activists affects the Sunni population alone; the issues that involve Shiites are still under the judgment of Shiite courts (Abiad, 2008).

4.1.4. Unjust Treatment by Government and Non-Governmental Organizations

Ameli et al. (2006) assert that even with all these complexities, it is difficult to elaborate on the problems facing Muslim women. However, they highlight that Muslim women receive unjust treatment by the government and non-governmental organizations, and many issues they encounter in the globalized world are evident. Making a definition of the strategies, agenda, and concerns of Muslim women's activism is difficult, by any means, though it is possible. For instance, the objective of Women Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE) that empowers Muslim women to fully take part in their societies and countries thus amplify their voices collectively is a reflection of a good starting point says Ameli et al, (2006).

4.1.5. Tradition and Culture

Fegiery (2016) shows that another challenge and condition facing Muslim women is Female Genital Cutting (FGC). The practice is unacceptable by many governments and international organizations condemn it worldwide but twenty-eight Muslim African countries practice it openly. However, many Muslim-majority countries like Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf region do not practice it. The countries that practice female genital cutting have their own distinct roots and reasons regarding the practice.

In Egypt, some conditions as the patriarchal application of Islam and economic hardship denies Muslim women from enjoying liberties set out by legal and judicial frameworks. On the contrary, in Kuwait, Muslim women enjoy a high degree of economic participation but under conservative legal systems face restrictions in other spheres of life. Global issues like; closed borders, conflicts, and sanctions influence problems Muslim women face (Fegiery, 2016). For example, the invasion of the United States in Iraq made the violence against women to escalate

forcing a majority of them to stay at home. Moreover, in Palestine, Muslim women's access to education, health, political and civil liberties, and employment is not only a restriction by internal political tension but by the Israeli-occupation (Fegiery, 2016).

Bullock (2003) explains that discussions over Islamic dressing which is a form of culture turns into a potent sign for authentic Islam, or in other words, Islamic dressing is unique in its own way but gender critics seems to portray Muslim dressing as gender biased towards women. Other scholars assert that it compromises a strategy for women who dress them to show how serious they should be taken (Bullock, 2003). Their action is to avoid harassment and get personal freedom without unchaste treatment. Although Muslims claim hijab is a demonstration of autonomy, other women find their action of forcing them to wear it unfair. Moreover, other Muslim women dislike wearing the veil because they argue that it symbolizes the idea that their proper position is at home. Also, women assert that the veil depicts a powerful connotation of their subordination by men (Bullock, 2003).

Several women say that the purpose of hijab concept is to separate them from other women of different religion. It also separates them from their male counterparts in a globalized world where interaction is inevitable. Regrettably and dishonorably, the Islamic dress disadvantages the Muslims in other jobs where they require a certain dressing code that requires them not to wear the hijab (Bullock, 2003).

4.1.6. Islamophobia

The impact of Islamophobia is a grave problem to Muslims especially Muslim women because their chances of employment as compared to women from other religions are minimal, even with same language skills and communication. According to Dalacoura (2007), the issue

discourages the Muslim women from applying for employment in fear of rejection. Additionally, it is unfortunate that out of the women in employment in many countries, only thirty-five percent are Muslims while the other sixty-five percent are of other religions (Dalacoura, 2007). The problem affects the economy, as more than fifty-eight percent of Muslim women all over the world are economically inactive which is not good for their development. Islamophobia not only applies to employment but also to dress codes, education, and social status, this shows how hard it is for a Muslim woman to merge with the fast globalizing society (Dalacoura, 2007).

Additionally, Haddad, et al., (2006) say that the Islamophobia problem generates from the patriarchal and misogynist attitudes in the Muslim society where it prevents women from acquiring their full potential. The treatments that women receive from their communities to fulfill their traditional roles is an indication of Islamophobia, inequality, and discrimination that they experience outside their regions (Haddad, et al., 2006). The Equality Act as indicated by Haddad, et al., (2006), states that all women, including Muslims, should freely make their own choices in all aspects of their lives. Such as employment, dressing, and education, the Islamic law does not change its perspective. The Islamic culture and tradition disadvantages Muslim women because of barriers it imposes on them (Haddad, et al., 2006). From the discussion, it is evident that the Muslim society blocks the progress of their women and it is the same community that has the mandate to change these, if not Islamophobia is here to stay.

4.1.7. Media and Muslim Women

Alsultany (2012) asserts that the sight of women with a scarf allows many people, especially Americans, to make assumptions about them. The reason to this is a unilateral Western view of Muslim women in the American society as it views and portrays them with a

singular set of condition. Practically, westerners know little about Muslim women and lack direct relationships or interactions with Islamic females, claims Alsultany (2012). Moreover, few Americans if any have knowledge of Islamic traditions and traits states Alsultany (2012).

The mainstream western media portrays negative images of suffering and distressed Muslim women hence making people possess discouraging opinions regarding women who practice Islam. Even when a Muslim lady finds a platform and a voice to share her views, the platform's audience listens with an 'orientalist fascination.' For example, Mehreen Kasana, who is a Muslim blogger, claims that at the beginning, her views made the media community uncomfortable because of her religious affiliations (Alsultany, 2012). The media makes the society receive and treat Muslim women as anthropological projects and in rare cases as personal musings. Currently, many Muslim women have knowledge of this double standard, as bloggers of their daily lives. Their sole aim is not serving as a mirror which someone can view life in the scope of a Muslim woman, but to air views about their daily lives (Alsultany, 2012).

People in the United States and Europe misinterpret Muslim women's goals. Due to the miscomprehension, Kasana and other Muslim women bloggers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan wrote a blog called Oppressed Brown Girls Doing Things (Haddad, et al., 2006). The blog has humor, which intends to make the audience understand why and how the common thinking that analyzes the Islamic culture is unacceptable (Haddad, et al., 2006). Unfortunately, the entire world, especially the western one still believes that Muslim women require saving or correction, as per the conformity with western liberalism traditions.

Eventually, Dalacoura (2007) argues that this limits Muslim women's ability of expression because they refuse western liberalism while decrying male sexism. Additionally, she gets between her identity as a Muslim woman and a feminist. To many western audiences, for

any Muslim woman to be taken seriously in any aspect (as a Muslim or a feminist) she must disclaim one of the two. Because of this, it is almost impossible to alter the demeaning stance that westerners take referring to Muslim women (Dalacoura, 2007).

Haddad, et al. (2006) argues that the western society perceives a traditional Muslim woman as helpless, illiterate, and full of oppression. Due to these perspectives, many non-Muslims relate with Muslim women of an unknown culture as a project, as a person who cannot understand how her community treats her poorly and whose sole liberator is the West, as it can help her find the 'truth' (Haddad, et al., 2006). Contrary to this, when Muslim women try to shed light on some insights and some context into their daily situations, they get little or no respect from western liberals. Instead, their western saviors oppose them by claiming they are helpless and make them a research opportunity for their studies. Because of the paradoxical category the world place Muslim females, it makes it hard for them to express their feelings and true views (Alsultany, 2012).

4.2. Islamic rudiments for women's rights

According to Engineer (2008), during the nineteenth century, most Islamic communities were colonies of the European powers. The Europeans brought Western values and ideas about women, marriage, and the family to the Islamic societies. The action made the professionals, civil servants, and intellectuals to question social and legal restrictions on Muslim women, especially those that relate to polygamy, education, slavery, seclusion, and heavy veiling (Engineer, 2008). Due to these developments, there was a creation of a sense of insecurity among the general Islamic population, as Muslim men tend to react by conserving their traditional rituals and customs strictly.

4.2.1. Right to Education

Due to the demand for reform there was an establishment of learning institutions both primary and secondary schools for girls and in other societies as Iran, Ottoman Empire, and Egypt, there was the opening of women in universities (Engineer, 2008). Some Women were founders of charitable and educational organizations and newspapers, and were participants in the nationalist and student movements. Most of the Islamic Shariah conservatives in the Muslim countries were opposing these moves but did not hinder their governments' from implementing these crucial changes (Khan, 2012).

Traditional societies discourage women from taking studies; it is evident that Muslim women play a major role in spreading the religious knowledge. For example, as indicated by Abiad (2008), Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s wife A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) is an important hadith source. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told Muslim men that they will complete half of their religion from their wife through hadith. Throughout the history of Islam, daughters of rich families were able to obtain a private education in their houses. However, there was an exclusion of women from formal education making them commonly illiterate.

In the 1800s, as indicated by Abiad (2008), many Muslim countries finally made a decision to open schools for girls. The girls received instructions in subjects like housekeeping and crafts. Since the independence of the Islamic world in the mid-twentieth century, both males and female can access secular education. Evidently, the girls and women in religious instruction are lagging those of men and boys. Unfortunately, conservative Muslims believe that women do not have the capacity to teach men hence this makes even women with religious training able to only teach another female (Abiad, 2008).

4.2.2. Right to Equality

For instance, the official Islamic programs in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other Muslim nations have given birth to violations of women's human rights. Conservatives of Islamic traditions and cultures in all Muslim societies, especially India, refuse the fact that all human beings are same thus do not recognize females as full, equal personalities. Because of this, they do not permit women to enjoy same freedoms and rights as men (Engineer, 2008).

The Islamic society expects women to marry, avoid participation in social life, be obedient to their husbands, stay at home, and bring up their children claims Mondal (2005). Men deny women the fundamental right of autonomy and free choice. They forbid them from acquiring knowledge, thwart them from exploiting their full abilities as part of the humanity, and prevent them from getting employment (Mondal, 2005).

4.2.3. Right to Life

Generally, humanity believes that there is an importance in controlling women, thus, it is for not only the Muslim but also the honor ethic (Mondal, 2005). It is obligatory for men to protect the chastity of their females. The Muslims' teachings about controlling and saving the virginity of women concur with the honor of ethics says (Mondal, 2005). It is therefore important for a Muslim woman to maintain her chaste, even in unfortunate situations like rape; it is shameful for her family (Mondal, 2005).

Furthermore, honor includes people's allegations and suspicions on women regarding seeking a divorce, sexual transgression, choosing a partner she prefers for marriage. The right to life is a universal right and nobody or anything should warrant a person killed (Abiad, 2008).

4.2.4. Right to Respect

According to Fegiery (2016), women in Muslim societies are not allowed to have any leadership in the community other than their roles as mothers and wives; they are more of men's extensions. According to Islam's prophet, a nation or man cannot get any salvation after permitting women to rule over them. Therefore, women have restrictions regarding their freedom (Engineer, 2008).

The idea of hijab is not a way men control females, this is a veil, which is also common among Judaism and Christianity. The curtain, or veil, creates a physical boundary of females hence show their existence in the community (Mondal, 2005). The essence of this is to protect the society (men) from social or moral destruction or danger women may cause. The Muslims argue that if a woman's physical appearance can arouse men, even if she does not know, this leads them to want her, which can result in adultery observes Mondal, (2005).

Additionally, Engineer (2008) shows that for a conservative Muslim, there is no difference between a woman who is naked and the one not wearing a veil. Moreover, Islam regards an unveiled woman in public as a plague on the Islamic pillars of morality. The Qur'an (Surah 24, verse 31) explicitly discusses the need for women to veil themselves from strangers. The Islamic community, not only in Muslim nations but in the entire world too, covers the heads of their young girls and adolescent women (Mondal, 2005).

4.2.5. The Right to Marital Consent

Before the advent of Islam, women did not have the right to marital consent for it was granted or deterred by the father or male guardian in preference of the gifts or money that they would keep for themselves. However, Islam censured these Dark Age practices in favor of the

women's right to marital consent by granting them the dignity, liberty, and independence to agree to or decline marriage proposals without regarding the opinions of their parents (Wollstonecraft, 2015). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) revoked the marriage of Khansa Bint Khuzama who was coerced into planned marriage by her father so that she could decide to marry whomever she loved (Wollstonecraft, 2015). Even though numerous Islamic schools of law erroneously deem otherwise, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) maintained that a virgin should consent to her own marriage and not forced by any male guardianship to a husband (Al-Nikah: 8-11).

4.2.6. The Right to Employment, Property, or to Run Business

When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) became a prophet, he did not prevent his wife Khadija (may Allah be pleased with her) from doing or running her own business. In fact, Khadija was a very successful female businessperson and had even previously employed the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to assist her investments (Wollstonecraft, 2015). In addition, numerous Muslim women at the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were managing their own businesses (Wollstonecraft, 2015). A Muslim woman has the right to earn her own finances, the right to own her own property, the right to engage into legal contracts, and the right to control all her assets how she sees fit.

Therefore, a Muslim woman can manage her own business and property, and no individual has any say on her business or earnings including her own husband. The Quran equally states, "And in no wise covet those things in which Allah hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others; to men is allotted what they earn, and to women, what they

earn; but ask Allah of His bounty, for Allah hath full knowledge of all things.” (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

4.2.7. The Issue of Dowry

Dowry is an obligatory free gift from the husband to the wife with no stipulations involved. The Quran states that, “And give the women on marriage their dowry as a free gift with a good heart” (Noble Quran 4:4). Before the advent of Islam, fathers or brothers would offer their daughters or sisters for marriage in exchange for another person’s daughter or sister. However, neither of the women would receive dowry, which was made the father or husband’s wealth or possession. Nevertheless, Islam put an end to this practice because dowry was not supposed to be a price established by the men as the sale of a woman. In Islam, dowry is simply a contingent on the husband’s resources and should not be viewed as the price paid for the wife after which, it will now be the wife’s exclusive property (Wollstonecraft, 2015). Therefore, no individual including her husband or father should acquire it against her wishes and only she has the power over it even in the event of a divorce (Noble Quran 2:236 and 4:20).

4.2.8. The Issue of Polygamy

Prior to the advent of Islam, Arab men could marry up to one hundred wives or even more with no stipulations or limits. Even though polygamy existed in numerous diverse societies, Islam ultimately delineated this and restricted the practice in the Quran to four wives at most, and in this case, they should all be treated equally! The Quran’s passage concerning marrying four wives has often been misunderstood within the context to which it was addressed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

Following the battle of Uhud, nearly one tenth of the Muslim men were killed and numerous women and children were rendered defenseless and vulnerable as they lost their husbands and had no means of support. Therefore, the Quran instructed the Muslim men to protect the widows and orphans by perhaps marrying more wives to take care of them and their children. Therefore, polygamy is basically a permitted practice for the people during certain circumstances but it is not an absolute right or an Islamic religious obligation (Noble Quran 4:3)

4.3. The Status of Human Rights in Muslim Society

Muslims take human rights seriously, and have laid down fundamental and universal rights for everyone to observe and respect under all circumstances (Dalacoura, 2007). The basic rights associated with Islamic beliefs and faith because they are according to their customs and laws. Thus, for Muslims, human rights are an obligation, this means it is obligatory for any Muslim to restore and protect them without any violation (Dalacoura, 2007).

According to Islam teachings, as observed by Dalacoura (2007), everyone is equal regarding human values, and before the Islamic code of law. Moreover, legal penalties and judgments apply to all classes and races of people without discrimination. The Muslim entitles everybody to his/her reputation, integrity, and honor during life and after death. In addition, Islam opposes abuse of authority, position, and power. Further, it urges people to assist individuals oppressed or suppressed even if it requires use of force claims Dalacoura (2007). In the Islamic religion, everyone regardless of his/her social status, religion or faith, has his/her rights and Muslims observes them strictly (Dalacoura, 2007).

Wadud (2006) shows that Islamic feminism is social and has a good motive that ensures the Muslims' cultural diversity and creates room for the development of women's rights within

the human studies. Shirazi (2010) asserts that contrary to the Islamic teachings, part of Muslim-born intellectuals from South Asia and Iran under the title of "A Declaration of the Rights of Women in Islamic Societies," provides their views on Islam human rights. Their views are remarkable in an era because they concern the status of Muslim women. The scholars argue that Muslim conservatives practice gender discrimination despite Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) intentions and Allah's words. It is notable that the oppression of women is an offense against humanity, which is an impediment to moral and social progress throughout the universe.

Shirazi (2010) adds that although the subject is on Muslim women, we cannot rule out that females go through oppression by fundamentalist and orthodox religions. Based on history, Muslim culture and tradition claim divine justification to make women be men's subordinates. If we consider the three Abrahamic religions of Islam, Christian, and Judaism, from the Koran, New Testament, and Old Testament as their respective Holy Scriptures they portray men as superior to women: intellectually, physically, and morally (Shirazi, 2010). Currently, Islamic feminists are trying their best through their own efforts to address the rights of their sisters both in Islamic and non-Islamic states. Although they are making gradual progress, their attempts to rise from the inferior position slows down with the Islamic law and customs that have been in place since past centuries (Shirazi, 2010).

4.3.1. Islamic Law and Human Rights

Charvet and Kaczynska (2008) claim that in the Muslim nations in parts of Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, Islamic culture affects strongly the penal code and family law. In spite of reform and modernization, the penal code and family law remains untouched. For example, the first law is polygamy; men still have unconditional rights to divorce their wives.

Second, women do not have a right to be custodians of their children (Charvet & Kaczynska-Nay, 2008). Due to the increase in Islamic organizations over the past century, in either governments or opposition, the reinforcement of the laws is put in action while implementation and introduction of more misogynist laws like the compulsory hijab, and many others are successful. Bullock (2003) adds that the only way to restore the Muslim women rights in the Islamic states is to separate religion from government business which is currently impossible.

4.3.2. Muslim Women Religious Life and Human Rights

According to the Qur'an, men and women have the same religious fundamental rights and are promised equal spiritual rewards. On the contrary, several factors tend to restrict females from participating in Islamic religious life. These include ideas on ritual purity, lack of education, and social customs. The specific limitations of Muslim women participating in religious issues and the ways they respond to the restrictions vary across Muslim societies (Fegiery, 2016). Additionally, during the twentieth century, the changing role of a female in the Islamic world led to the creation of new opportunities for Muslim women (Fegiery, 2016).

4.3.3. Shrines, Sufism and Human Rights

Khan (2012) discusses that Sufism differs from the scholarly and legal dimensions of Islamic religious life as it involves various spiritual and physical disciplines while the latter depends on formal education and literacy. In Islamic tradition, Sufi Sheiks are religious teachers in the Muslim community and also healers and counselors. Mostly, women have more interest in the Sufi movement than in other areas of the Islamic world (Khan, 2012). The late Rabiah al-Adawiyah, who was a famous Sufi woman, wrote the 'love of God' poems, which still inspires believers to date even though she is not unique in the Sufi tradition states Khan (2012). Javan

Nurbakhsh did the translation of one hundred and twenty-four Sufi women biographies into English.

A number of Sufi Sheiks in the Ottoman Empire and Mamluk dynasty (1250-1517) did allow females in their orders. Although the Sufi Sheiks welcomes women to take part in *dhikr* and the orders, there are many controversies. Additionally, several Sufi males regard women as barriers to their spiritual life. Currently, Algerian and Moroccan orders separate women's groups which females lead (Khan, 2012). In spite of the ban on women membership in Sufi Brotherhoods in Egypt, women still participate in other orders. Contrary to mosques, which Muslim tradition regard as male spaces, shrines are a dedication to Muslim saints and are always open to both genders (Fegiery, 2016).

A group of Muslims, especially Sufis, believes that saints can intercede with God on behalf of Islamic faithful and perform miracles. After the death of saints, faithful use their tombs as places of refuge and worship. The frequent visitors to these shrines are Muslim women as some of them address their concerns like fertility. Muslim women visiting the shrines of saints are a vital part of their religious lives (Fegiery, 2016).

Khan (2012) shows how Islamic conservative critics claim that saint veneration is un-Islamic. They suggest that women require formal religious education to join the orthodox Islam. Throughout the twentieth century, the provision of such instruction was by independently voluntary associations. Additionally, the courses in crafts and literacy were among the studies the organizations offer. The mosques the government operates were also providing lessons to women.

4.3.4. The Pillars of Islam and Human Rights

Muslim women also observe most of the Pillars of Islam; this includes fasting during the month of Ramadan, if financially stable making at least one pilgrimage to Muslim holy city of Mecca, and praying five times a day. However, during a period after birth or when they are on menstruation period, women may not touch the Qur'an, fast, nor pray because the Islamic teachings considers them “unclean” during this period, states Charvet and Kaczynska (2008). Additionally, the Muslim exempts nursing and pregnant women from fast on a condition that they compensate the ritual later (Abiad, 2008).

Charvet and Kaczynska (2008) discuss that presently, there are major changes of women praying in the mosques or at their homes (Charvet & Kaczynska, 2008). Referring to the hadith, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) commands men to allow women to join them in public worship (Charvet & Kaczynska, 2008). During the days of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), women did their morning prayers at the mosque, though it was and still is a condition that they line up behind men. They were the first ones to leave the mosque, theoretically, to prevent any contact with men.

Moreover, during Umar ibn al-Khattab’s caliphate, females prayed in their own room in the mosque with their Imam. After the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) death, there was a complete ban on women praying at the mosque by the Muslim conservative authorities. The leaders justify their ban by claiming that women’s praying in public places was unsafe (Charvet & Kaczynska, 2008).

Women's presence in public places is a source of conflict and temptation as perceived by traditional norms and cultural practices. Therefore, their ban from the mosque was an important

move to maintain dignity and holiness of the faithful thus regarding the mosque as for male spaces (Charvet & Kaczynska, 2008). Since the 1970s, there are modifications by Islamic resurgence on these attitudes. Currently, women have a separate space in the mosque but remain in isolation because they cannot see the preacher. Even though Muslim men and women are always separate during their religious observances, they have an interaction during their pilgrimage in Mecca (Charvet & Kaczynska, 2008). Furthermore, during Hajj, though this is not the only time or space it is necessary. In addition, during the celebrations at the shrines of saints, males and females interact (Charvet & Kaczynska-Nay, 2008).

4.4. Islamic Countries that promote women's rights, growth and development

4.4.1. Oman

Oman ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and has a governmental agency that observes its fulfillment. Discrimination against women is strictly forbidden in Oman, with women legitimately having equality in regards to issues like employment rights. The Oman government passed a law to ensure that the men and women's official testimonies should be deemed equal. Omani women enjoy the same property ownership rights as their men, and they can tie the knot without parental consent argues Wollstonecraft (2015). Rape in Oman is punishable by up to 15 years' incarceration with the authorities generally dealing with the women's grievances of domestic violence (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

Omani women obtain good health care treatment including prenatal and postnatal medical attentions. Omani women have been making sturdy advancements over the years by

making up a majority of the University students' population in spite of gender-discriminatory activities in the enrollment procedure, and constitute a projected one-third of the task force. Oman has been successful in advancing the status of its women as they have at least similar opportunities as men in both private and public spheres. Similarly, Oman commenced celebrating National Oman Women's Day in today's contemporary age (Zubaida, 2009).

4.4.2. Malaysia

Malaysian women had their paths paved for them even before the nation attained independence from imperial rule more than 5 decades ago (Zubaida, 2009). Malaysian women started lining up in great magnitudes to exercise their democratic rights by casting their votes in the foremost general election held in the nation from 1955. Malaysian women have never had to fight for their emancipation, as their rights have always been inherently theirs to exercise thanks to the struggles established by their counterparts in the western world. One of Malaysia's areas of national development that has created great development for its women is education. In fact, it has always been policy that access to education be wide open for the Malaysian girls and boys even during the colonial periods (Zubaida, 2009). Women in Malaysia have managed to elevate themselves through complete hard work thereby shattering the glass-ceiling status quo. Consequently, more Malaysian women started to realize that they too could soar as high as they wanted despite all the obstacles and shackles present along the way (Zubaida, (2009).

Women's NGOs working with government agencies in advancing women's rights concerns and awareness have been paramount in Malaysia including All Women Action Malaysia (AWAM), National Council of Women Organizations (NCWO), Educational Statistics of Malaysia, and Women Aid Organization (WAO) (Zubaida, 2009). They assist in vouching for

the endorsement of various Malaysian women's rights principles. These include non-discrimination against women, equal payment for women, increased women in decision-making positions, and higher integration of women in developmental realms (Zubaida, 2009).

4.4.3. Kenya

The post-cold war in Kenya, Alsultany (2012) says, shaped a new socio-political space in Kenya for the promotion of Muslim women's public activism and leadership. Kenyan women both muslim and non-Muslim have been able to articulate and champion their rights as stipulated in the constitution. The Kenyan constitution 2010 is one that supports women rights regardless of religion or race and gives both men and women various freedoms and rights that the Kenyan people enjoy today. For example, under the proposed Constitution, 47 special seats called (women representatives) set aside for women in Parliament. This has seen many Muslim women elected to parliament and representing Muslim women issues and problems to the August House through legislation (Alsultany, 2012).

The current government of President Uhuru Kenyatta has also been seen to advance the Muslim women through growth and development in various sectors of the economy. For example, the current foreign affairs minister is a Muslim woman-Ambassador Amina Mohamed. She has proved to be a woman of substance who even contested the position of chairperson of the African Union supported by the President. These all indicate the Kenyan government support to the Muslim women and empowering them towards development and growth as well as engaging in protection of their human rights and freedom.

4.4.5. Turkey

Turkey has experienced a lot of women rights violation towards Muslim women in numerous occasions. Fegiery (2016) illustrates that Prime Minister Erdogan campaigned in 2007 with a promise of lifting the longstanding ban on headscarves in public institutions. As Muslim women practicing the Islamic religion, the Turkish law required that you do not wear the headscarf in public institutions, Turkish universities, etc. and this made many Muslim women not to attend university and other tertiary education because of the ban (Fegiery, 2016).

On February 7, 2008, states Fegiery (2016), the Turkish Parliament approved an adjustment to the constitution which allowed Muslim women to wear the headscarf in Turkish universities as many were neglected in the education and civil service as a result of the ban. Champions of this move argued that this was an issue of human rights and that woman in whatever religion had their rights in wearing whatever they wanted so long as it did not affect the rights and freedom of others. This is a factor supported by the main political party in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party indicates Fegiery (2016). This allowed for equal treatment for all and everybody had a right to equal treatment regardless of your religion.

Fegiery (2016), argues that in the creation of a secular state, which in Turkey would be considered the first-ever in a Muslim country made it easy to pass legislation that accepted women as equal and free people vis-a-vis the state, and transformed family law, Fegiery (2016). For example, women were granted equal rights in matters of divorce and child custody in 1926 as the introduction of the Turkish Civil Code took center stage (Fegiery, 2016).

4.4.6. Iran

Iran is a Muslim state and as a result it is a nation that many women are considered discriminated upon because of the traditions and culture associated with Muslim culture. This is not very true according to Khan (2012), who argues that the Iran constitution guarantees women the right to run for office and vote. This is a fundamental human rights provision, which was lacking in Iran in previous years before the constitutional amendments. Women were never allowed to vote nor run for any elective position as it was a preserve for their male counterparts. The constitution also as indicated by Khan (2012), guarantees Iraqi mothers the right to pass on Iraqi nationality to their children.

Interestingly, Iranian men for the first time, as indicated by Khan (2012), have also organized to promote gender equality, by taking up the veil as a symbol of political protest in support of their female gender counterparts. This factor surprised many especially the international community on the events taken up by Iranian men in unconventional show of support (Khan, 2012).

4.5. Influential Women in Islam Today

As Delong and Natana (2006) assert, in the contemporary age, there have been exemplary Muslim women from around the world who have beaten the odds and have held influential places in the global arena. They have surpassed all religious and cultural norms and have attained recognition for their powerful positions in their societies. These are great example that women in Islam can have their basic human rights and influential roles in the contemporary age amidst the challenges involved.

Malala Yousafzai and Benazir Bhutto are two Muslim women who have fought against the Taliban and its brutal efforts to reinforce the institutionalized oppression of women in the Pakistan. Amina Mohamed is the Cabinet Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Kenya. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi is a life peer and shadow minister for community cohesion and has been named as Britain's most powerful Muslim woman. Farmida Bi is a banking partner at international legal practice Norton Rose. Mishal Husain is the main anchor for BBC World News (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

Professor Farida Fortune is The Dean of Dentistry and Oral Health at Queen Mary's School of Medicine in The United Kindom. Adeeba Malik is the Deputy Chief Executive of QED-UK, a charity set up to help improve the social, educational and economic circumstances of minority ethnic groups and is also co-chair of the National Ethnic Minorities Business Taskforce. Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani is the founder and chairperson of the Arab International Women's Forum. Haleh Afshar is a professor of politics and women studies at York University. Ifath Nawaz is the president of the Association of Muslim Lawyers in the UK. Mehmuda Mian Pritchard has a portfolio of public sector roles, including BBC trustee and non-executive director of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

Naseem Malik is a commissioner of the Independent Press Complaints Commission and judge of the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal. Pinky Lilani is an entrepreneur, cookery writer and specialist in diversity issues. Rimla Akhtar is the chair of the Muslim Women Sport Foundation. Rushanara Ali is associate director of the Young Foundation. Salma Yaqoob is the leader of the Respect political party and a Birmingham city councilor. Wasfi Kani is chief executive of Grange Park Opera. Zahida Manzoor is the legal services complaints commissioner and legal services ombudsman for England and Wales (Esposito & DeLong-Bas, 2001).

Wollstonecraft (2015) agrees that Tawakkul Karman better referred as the Iron woman is a renowned journalist politician, and a human rights activist as well as one of the 10 Muslims that have won a Nobel Peace Prize (Wollstonecraft, 2015). She is famous for her efforts and contribution during the 2011 Yemeni Uprising and is known to have co-founded “Muslim Journalists Without Chains” (Wollstonecraft, 2015). Another influencing women in Islam is Salma bint Hizab al-Oteibi says Wollstonecraft (2015) she is a Saudi Arabia born who spearheaded the change in political making women have their first ever ability to take place in an election through voting and vying for elective positions. She is one of the eighteen women who won elective posts in Saudi.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter addressed the challenges facing Muslim women in a globalizing world. It is noted that various challenges have been addressed in trying to understand how Muslim women can become part of the global world without going through oppression and human rights violations. The world has grown to become a global village that embraces various universal laws which is also subjected to Muslim women but in most Muslim cultures, unjust laws and government entities promote gender inequality; sometimes they sustain gender disparities and promote them using informal practices.

Islam as a religion promotes fundamental universal human rights’ practices which in essence do not violate women’s’ rights. The issue of culture and norms in today’s contemporary and global society ought to be addressed in promoting human rights practices. Women have for a very long time engaged men through women feminists who have come out in defense of the girl

child especially when their rights are being violated against certain Muslim cultural practices that are deemed as negative and violate human rights.

As analyzed in this chapter, the best way to crack this predicament may not be in externally stipulating the standards in the culture, but instead in endorsing a wave of understanding of the religion by Islamic scholars themselves. A pragmatic solution to the issue should include a framework for human rights, which complements the Islamic society and takes into consideration the rights of women already established by Islam itself. Islam has within it, the origin for transformation and it is from within the Muslim culture itself that ultimate change will occur

CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.0. Conclusion

The highlight of Muslim women and the role they have in Islam is of great importance to all Muslim societies. Firstly, Muslim women receive unjust treatment from their men with reference to Islamic laws; however, it is because of their tribal or cultural customs and not Islam.

Secondly, it is an area where non-Muslims are unaware of what Islamic human rights entail and engross towards their women. The misconceptions that result in the treatment of Muslim women generated from two sources; that is, mistreating women based on cultural practices and Muslim conservatives who try to justify their oppressive actions.

Moreover, the misconceptions come from members of other religions with an agenda of withdrawing Islamic teachings and portraying Islam as oppressive and backward. Recently, reports by the media show how Muslim women go through abuse and depression in some Muslim countries and then justify their actions with “Shariah”.

In their actions, they punish women by killing them whether they are relatives or not, for the sake of honor. In other cases, men gang rape women, as a punishment because of a crime like having an affair with a village elder's daughter. The western media link these crimes to Islam although they are not acceptable in the Islamic teachings.

Getting knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim be it male or female, as all have to be part of their society's economic growth. Although they toil to get their rights, for example, employment and education among others, Muslim women have an honorable and vital role, as well as vivacious contributions towards their societies. Other rights Muslim conservatives

violate against their women is their right to life, Islamic law, dressing, right to respect, gender equality and many others.

In the contemporary age, the fundamental human rights for Islamic women is relative as the Islamic religion versus the culture inherent that undermines the Quran ideals are at loggerheads with one another. The mainstream Muslim women face challenges within the premises of the present international treaties and conventions because most women are undeniably ill-treated in Islamic societies, as they are within other cultures.

The global village has a contractual obligation to make sure that women in Islamic nations are provided with human decorum as the women in other nations. Nevertheless, this should be done within the framework of respect, dignity, and particularly knowledge of the religion that plays such a great function within the Islamic culture and society, because Islam should be understood as it actually is and not as how it has been portrayed in the media.

Indeed, Muslim scholars ought to be partisans of the censure of this distortion, for many have inferred the religion through a patriarchal scope, which has led to activities that bar women the rights Islam provided them.

Women's rights in Islam ought to be upheld by the global community and not merely brushed off because of the ignorance regarding how Islam as a religion treats its women. Islam has been projected by the West through a pessimistic outlook, both by governments in the Islamic world that snub fundamental rights to women, and by the Western media, which is hasty to pinpoint the faults on the religion itself instead of on the misogynists who utilize it as a platform for persecution.

These zealots in the Islamic world have been futile in comprehending the function of Islam's gradualism in revolutionizing the status of women because Islam should fine-tune to all times, places, situations, and conditions. However, this cannot transpire without considering the concerns of Muslim women even though unfortunately, negative stereotypes, accentuated by distortions caused by a lack of knowledge in the West do not aid the Muslim women. The preliminary step in assisting Muslim women is founded on acknowledging the forces that essentially govern their treatment because Islam as a religion is not the predicament, and may in fact be part of the answer.

Islam encourages females to partake all her duties with enthusiasm and devotion. However, not only does taking care of the family is Muslim woman's only role, but also Islam allows her to engage in politics, open her own business, perform Hajj, and pursue careers and get employment. According to Qur'an, Allah sees all human beings to be equal in his eyes and they only differ when gaining reward, obeying him and piety, thus it is heavenly equality. The Qur'an also states that Allah made men and women in a different manner regarding their roles because they gain different rewards that is men are protectors and maintainers of women.

The Quran provides numerous ideals that grant Islamic women their fundamental human rights, which many cultures do not adhere to because of their own cultural norms, which are dissimilar from Islam, and still practiced in today's contemporary age. However, Islamic nations that do not grant their Muslim women their fundamental human rights such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan should emulate from the nations that have progressed their women such as Oman and Malaysia. This way, the existent patriarchal bridge will be narrowed in granting the Islamic women their rights and freedoms to be influential Muslim women building and inspiring their societies for a better tomorrow.

In regards to the legislative role, women through the 47 slots of women representatives in the current constitution is a plus to both Muslim and non-Muslim women in Kenya. Muslim women now have a chance to go for elective positions in the country without fear or discrimination towards representing the issues and factors affecting them as women including discrimination, gender violence, rape etc. Issues of marginalization especially in the northern part of Kenya which is majorly a Muslim dominated region, now have the chance to be addressed in a legislative manner by these women.

The two-thirds gender role, a debate in the Kenyan legislative assembly debate, ought to be pushed towards becoming a law that will provide Muslim women an opportunity to become empowered in various sectors of the government. Both private and public sector will be in a position to include women in all sectors and positions so that women both Muslim and non-Muslim can be able to take part in national building, development and growth both at personal and national levels.

5.1. Recommendations

From the findings, several recommendations can be made about Muslim women and their lives in general. Firstly, the Muslim society should allow their women to fit in the globalizing world by waiving the cultural restrictions they pose on them; this will make Muslim women fit in the community.

Secondly, Islamic prescriptions explaining fundamental women rights should be instilled to relieve them from the oppression and abuse they encounter in case of either accidental or intentional violation of the same. The action will make Muslim women more productive and

explore their abilities fully thus improve the economy and productivity of their societies in return.

Thirdly, Muslim conservatives should interpret the Qur'an correctly and stop acting according to Muslim customs and traditions that do not respect women. If they can follow Islam teachings, they will realize that whatever they do to their women is against the Qur'an (Allah).

More so, all Muslims should treat each other with caution because the non-Muslims might have misconceptions of their actions and judge them according to what they do to each other. There are Muslim men who treat women well, but it is not reported, so it is safe to say that there is bias by the western media hence, the good treatment by Muslim men to Muslim Women should be reported. As a result, people's perspectives towards Islam will change.

Moreover, equality for Muslim women should be paramount in the Islamic societies where a Muslim woman should have freedom of action, should travel alone if she wants to, should be able unveil her face, and should have equal inheritance rights as a man. Muslim women have the same rights as their male counterparts and most importantly the universal rights apply across the board and therefore Muslim woman should not go through human rights violations because of religion.

According to Muslim human rights activists, after a woman attains a legal age, the parents should leave her to marry the man of her choice. A woman should not be forced into marriage with a man she does not love and without her consent. The woman should freely divorce and receive maintenance after the divorce.

Also, the Islamic societies should provide a way to enhance equality of their women. The meaning of this is that the society should allow women to uncover their faces and permit them

freedom of action. Furthermore, the community should permit women to travel alone and attain employment.

Likewise, Muslim human rights watch suggests that a woman should enjoy the same rights as those the International Human Rights Legislation guarantees. On another point, Muslims conservatives should not force women to undergo cruel rituals that mutilate their body.

Islam is not the only issue in the repression of human rights of women. Issues of political, cultural, educational, economic, and social cases also affect Islamic women in regards to human rights violations and ought to be given emphasis. Further, the alteration of Islamic law, by Muslims conservatives will always be a major obstacle to the human rights of women in their societies.

Muslim women have proved to be very intelligent and this calls for more improvements in regards to education policy and programs that promote Muslim women. Programs such as bursaries and sponsorships ought to be available for Muslim women to help them in pursuing their education. Currently we have Kenyan Muslim women working in various occupations such as doctors, engineers, accountants, lawyers etc. this only proves that women have the power and will to become whatever they dream to when given opportunity and empowered accordingly.

Prominently, the Islamic society should ensure women acquire equal access to education, make free choices regarding the subject studies, and have equal chances for higher education in case there is a scholarship. Moreover, the community should permit women to choose their own jobs and allow them to take part in social life; this is from arts and sciences to sports and politics. Furthermore, in Islamic societies, a Muslim woman should enjoy the same human rights provided in the Quran.

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