

Reinterpreting Gender Equality: An Analysis of *Hadiths* in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the normative potential of hadiths in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in strengthening gender equality within Islam. The research is motivated by the persistence of patriarchal interpretations that often marginalize women from public life, thereby necessitating a more just and contextual reinterpretation. Employing a qualitative design through library research, the study examines hadith texts alongside classical and contemporary scholarly interpretations. Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's framework of reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings identify six major themes on gender: prohibition of gender impersonation, the Prophet's exhortation to treat women kindly, the virtue of raising daughters, prioritizing mothers over fathers, the ethics of patience in marital relations, and the Prophet's role model in domestic life, education, and leadership. Classical interpretations emphasize moral and spiritual dimensions, while contemporary scholars extend the discourse toward social-political equality and patriarchal deconstruction. The study's implications highlight hadith as a normative basis for advancing gender equality in education, family, and leadership within contemporary Muslim societies. The originality of this research lies in its integration of hadith analysis with modern gender theories (Judith Butler, Amina Wadud, and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah), offering a novel framework for Islamic and gender studies.

Keywords: hadith; gender equality; feminist hermeneutics; maqāṣid al-sharī'ah

INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equality in Islam has become increasingly relevant in line with the global awareness of women's rights (Cookson et al., 2024). In Indonesia, this issue has received serious attention due to the persistently high rates of gender-based violence. The 2023 CATAHU report by Komnas Perempuan (2023) recorded more than 4,600 cases of gender-based violence, with physical violence as the most dominant form. Violence occurs both in domestic and public spheres, including workplaces and educational institutions. The rising cases of sexual violence and divorces resulting from disputes and domestic abuse further underline the urgency of this matter. Data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (2023) reinforce these findings by highlighting the high prevalence of violence against women across various segments of society.

This phenomenon demonstrates that gender equality remains far from being achieved. Islam, as a religion that regulates various aspects of social life, has given particular attention to the status of women (Lopulalan et al., 2024). *Hadiths*, as the second most authoritative source of Islamic teaching after the Qur'an, play a crucial role in shaping

Muslim perspectives on gender relations. However, interpretations of *hadiths* concerning women often provoke debates. Some are understood as affirming equality, while others are interpreted as placing women in subordinate positions. These divergent interpretations are frequently influenced by socio-historical contexts and the cultural frameworks of respective communities.

In the context of modernization and globalization, Muslim women's demands for equal rights in social, political, and economic fields have grown stronger. This situation requires Muslims to revisit *hadith* interpretations more critically and contextually. Examining *hadiths* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* (2008) and *Sahih Muslim* is particularly important because these two collections constitute the most authoritative *hadith* compilations in the Sunni tradition. An in-depth analysis of these *hadiths* is expected to uncover a balance between religious values and the challenges of gender equality in the modern era.

Research on gender-related *hadiths* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* has developed along several main trajectories. First, some studies highlight how *hadith* texts contribute to the construction of gender in

Islamic tradition. For example, Dhanani (2020) demonstrates that although many *hadiths* reinforce patriarchal stereotypes, there are also texts that emphasize equality and respect for women. Second, research critiques the impact of *hadith* interpretation in modern contexts. Ali (2023) argues that many *hadiths* can be understood more progressively, such as those concerning women's participation in public worship and leadership, despite traditional interpretations tending to limit women's roles. Third, some studies stress the critique of patriarchal interpretations. Wadud (1999) contends that biased interpretations of *hadiths* often deny women's fundamental rights, even though the original texts highlight spiritual equality between men and women. Fourth, research focuses on contemporary reinterpretations. Jamil (2022) finds that certain *hadiths* actually provide opportunities to support gender equality in the modern world, although classical scholars interpreted them restrictively. Fifth, scholarship has emphasized theological and social discourses. Mir-Hosseini (2000) argues that the Qur'an and *hadiths*, when understood in their socio-historical contexts, can support a more inclusive framework of gender justice.

Although numerous studies have addressed women's issues in *hadiths*, most remain focused on specific themes such as domestic roles, leadership, or worship. Few studies have comprehensively analyzed gender equality in the two most authoritative *hadith* compilations—*Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*—while also considering both classical and contemporary interpretations. Moreover, previous research often becomes trapped in normative debates between patriarchal and feminist readings, without sufficiently integrating the socio-cultural dimensions of contemporary Muslim communities. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of gender-related *hadiths* in the two canonical *sahih* collections, in order to formulate an understanding that is more contextual, inclusive, and relevant to the challenges of gender equality in the modern era.

The purpose of this study is to examine in depth the *hadiths* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* that address gender equality within both social and religious contexts. This study seeks to analyze how these *hadiths* have been understood and interpreted by both classical and contemporary scholars, and to evaluate their relevance for efforts to realize gender equality in the everyday lives of modern Muslim communities. Thus, this research not only documents the position of women as depicted in *hadiths* but also tests their potential as normative and contextual references to support women's rights in today's Muslim societies.

This research proceeds from the assumption that *hadiths*, as religious texts, do not merely reflect normative teachings but also operate within social and political arenas that shape gender constructions. Referring to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, this study argues that gender identity in Islam is often produced and reproduced through discursive practices, including *hadith* interpretation. Hence, patriarchal understandings of *hadiths* are not final representations but products of social constructions that can be reinterpreted. This perspective is reinforced by Amina Wadud's hermeneutical approach, which emphasizes the spiritual equality between men and women and critiques patriarchal biases in classical exegetical traditions. By combining Butler's (2004) and Wadud's (1999) frameworks, this study contends that *hadiths* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* can be reinterpreted more progressively, thereby supporting gender equality agendas without neglecting the religious authority inherent in these texts.

METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of *hadiths* related to gender equality contained in two major *hadith* compilations, *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. The focus of the study is directed toward *hadith* texts that regulate the roles and positions of women in Islam, both in the domestic and public spheres. In addition to the *hadith* texts themselves, this research also examines the interpretations of

classical scholars and contemporary Muslim thinkers to understand how gender constructions are formed, maintained, and reinterpreted within the Islamic framework.

This research employs a qualitative design with a *library research* approach (Kosasih et al., 2024; Lune & Berg, 2017). The choice of a qualitative method is based on the nature of the study, which emphasizes the analysis of religious texts and academic interpretations rather than quantitative data. This approach enables the researcher to explore the deeper meanings of *hadiths* and to connect them with gender theories from both classical and contemporary perspectives. In this way, the study provides reflective analysis that remains relevant to contemporary socio-religious challenges.

The primary sources of the study are *hadith* texts from *Shahih al-Bukhari* (2008) and *Sahih Muslim* (1992) that explicitly or implicitly address issues of gender equality. *Hadiths* from other compilations are also utilized as supporting material to broaden the perspective. In addition, the study draws upon secondary sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and contemporary literature relevant to the theme of gender in Islam. These secondary sources are essential for providing theoretical frameworks, enriching interpretations, and situating the *hadiths* within their broader social, historical, and cultural contexts.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic *library research* process (Williamson & Johanson, 2017). All data were gathered by consulting primary literature in the form of *hadith* compilations, both in Arabic editions and academically recognized translations. Secondary data were obtained from relevant academic literature, including books, indexed journal articles, and reliable online publications. The instrument used was a literature review guideline that outlined criteria for text selection, source validity, and relevance to the research focus. This ensured that the collected data maintained both authenticity and credibility.

Data analysis employed the analytical framework of Miles and Huberman (2013),

which consists of three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, data reduction was carried out by selecting *hadiths* and secondary literature relevant to the issue of gender equality. Second, data display was performed by organizing the findings into thematic categories, such as women's roles in the family, leadership, social participation, and spiritual aspects. Third, conclusion drawing was undertaken by critically interpreting the data to identify patterns, tendencies, and the contributions of *hadiths* to the concept of gender equality in Islam. Verification was conducted repeatedly by comparing the *hadith* texts with classical commentaries and contemporary perspectives, thereby producing conclusions that are valid, reflective, and contextual.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *Hadiths* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on Gender Equality

Six major *hadith* themes are relevant to the discussion of gender equality, derived from *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. These *hadiths*, both explicitly and implicitly, address the position and roles of women in Islam, whether in domestic or public spheres. The six themes include: (1) the prohibition of imitating the opposite sex as a boundary of gender identity; (2) the Prophet's ﷺ command to treat women kindly; (3) the virtue of raising and caring for daughters as protection from hellfire; (4) the priority of honoring the mother above the father; (5) the exhortation to patience within marital relations as a highly meritorious act; and (6) the Prophet ﷺ as a role model in household chores and in recognizing women's right to education and leadership. These six themes demonstrate that the *hadiths* not only affirm biological differences between men and women but also emphasize principles of respect, compassion, and mutual responsibility, which can serve as a theological foundation to strengthen gender equality in Islam.

First, the *hadith* on male and female nature.

رَوَى عَنْ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ أَنَّهُ رَأَى امْرَأَةً تَحْمِلُ قِسِيًّا (نَبِيًّا) فَمَرَّتْ أَمَامَهُ، فَقَالَ: «لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْمُتَشَبِّهَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ بِالرِّجَالِ، وَالْمُتَشَبِّهِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ بِالنِّسَاءِ» (رواه البخاري)

It was narrated from the Prophet ﷺ that he saw a woman carrying a bow (arrows). As she passed in front of him, he said: “Allah curses women who imitate men, and men who imitate women.” (*Shahih al-Bukhari*).

،سَمِعْنَا عَنْ عُمَرَ النَّاقِدِ، وَابْنِ أَبِي عُمَرَ، قَالَا: حَدَّثَنَا سَفِيَانُ عَنْ الزُّهْرِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «اسْتَوْصُوا بِالنِّسَاءِ خَيْرًا، فَإِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ خُلِقَتْ مِنْ ضَلْعٍ، وَإِنَّ» ،أَعْوَجَ شَيْءٍ فِي الضَّلْعِ أَغْلَاهُ، فَإِنْ ذَهَبَتْ تُقِيمُهُ كَسَرْتَهُ وَإِنْ تَرَكْتَهُ لَمْ يَزَلْ أَعْوَجَ، فَاسْتَوْصُوا بِالنِّسَاءِ خَيْرًا» (رواه مسلم، رقم 1468)

Abu Hurairah r.a. reported that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “Treat women kindly. Indeed, a woman was created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is its uppermost part. If you attempt to straighten it, you will break it, and if you leave it, it will remain crooked. So treat women kindly.” (*Sahih Muslim*, No. 1468).

Second, the *hadith* on daughters.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ: جَاءَتْنِي امْرَأَةٌ مَعَهَا ابْنَتَانِ لَهَا تَسْأَلْنِي، فَلَمْ تَجِدْ عِنْدِي شَيْئًا غَيْرَ تَمْرَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ، فَأَعْطَيْتُهَا إِيَّاهَا، فَفَسَمَتْهَا بَيْنَ ابْنَتَيْهَا، وَلَمْ تَأْكُلْ مِنْهَا شَيْئًا، ثُمَّ قَامَتْ فَخَرَجَتْ. فَدَخَلَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْنَا، فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ بِذَلِكَ، فَقَالَ: «مَنْ ابْتُلِيَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْبَنَاتِ بِشَيْءٍ كُنَّ لَهُ سِتْرًا مِنَ النَّارِ». (رواه البخاري ومسلم)

‘Aishah r.a. narrated: “A woman came to me with two daughters. She asked me for something, but I had nothing except a single date. I gave it to her, and she divided it between her two daughters without eating any of it herself. Then she left. Later, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم entered, and I told him about it. He said: ‘Whoever is tested with daughters in any way, they will serve as a shield for him from the Hellfire.’” (*Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*).

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، مَنْ أَحَقُّ النَّاسِ «بِحَسَنِ صَحَابَتِي؟ قَالَ: «أُمُّكَ». قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: «أُمُّكَ»

قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: «أُمُّكَ». قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: «أَبُوكَ». (رواه البخاري ومسلم)

Abu Hurairah r.a. reported: “A man came to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, who is most deserving of my good companionship?’ He replied, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked again, ‘Then who?’ He replied, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked again, ‘Then who?’ He replied, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked again, ‘Then who?’ He replied, ‘Your father.’” (*Shahih al-Bukhari*, No. 5971; *Sahih Muslim*, No. 2548).

Third, the *hadith* on marital relations.

أَنَّهُ قَالَ: «مَنْ صَبَرَ عَلَى سُوءِ خُلُقِ زَوْجَتِهِ أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ مِثْلَ أَجْرِ أَبِي يَرْبَ عَلَى بَلَاءِهِ، وَمَنْ صَبَرَ عَلَى سُوءِ خُلُقِ زَوْجَتِهَا أَعْطَاهَا اللَّهُ مِثْلَ أَجْرِ أَبِي يَرْبَ عَلَى سُوءِ خُلُقِ» (الحديث)

It was narrated that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “If a husband endures the bad character of his wife, Allah will grant him a reward like that of Prophet Ayyub for his trials. And if a wife endures the bad character of her husband, Allah will grant her a reward like that of Asiyah, the wife of Pharaoh.” (*Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*).

Fourth, the *hadith* on household life.

حَدَّثَنَا حَفْصُ بْنُ عُمَرَ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنِ الْحَكَمِ، عَنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنِ الْأَسْوَدِ، قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا: مَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَصْنَعُ فِي بَيْتِهِ؟ قَالَتْ: «كَانَ يَكُونُ فِي مَهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ، فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ خَرَجَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ». (رواه البخاري، رقم 2044)

Al-Aswad reported: “I asked ‘Aishah r.a., ‘What did the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم do when he was at home with his family?’ She replied, ‘He used to assist his family with their household chores. But when the time for prayer came, he would leave for prayer.’” (*Shahih al-Bukhari*, No. 2044).

Fifth, the *hadith* on women’s right to education.

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ الْأَصْبَهَانِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ دَكْوَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ، قَالَ جَاءَتْ امْرَأَةٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، ذَهَبَ الرِّجَالُ بِحَدِيثِكَ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ يَوْمًا نَأْتِيكَ فِيهِ تُعَلِّمُنَا

مِمَّا عَلَّمَكَ اللَّهُ. فَقَالَ: اجْتَمِعْنَ فِي يَوْمٍ كَذَا وَفِي مَكَانٍ كَذَا
فَعَلَّمَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ Saw فَأَتَاهُنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
ثُمَّ قَالَ: مَا مِنْكُمْ امْرَأَةٌ يُقَدِّمُ مِنْهَا ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنْ وَلَدِهَا إِلَّا كَانَ
لَهَا جِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ. فَقَالَتْ امْرَأَةٌ: وَأَنْتَانِ؟ قَالَ: وَأَنْتَانِ
(رواه البخاري رقم 7310)

Abu Sa'id r.a. reported: "A woman came to the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, the men have taken much of your time with your teachings. Please set aside a day for us so that we may come to you, and you may teach us what Allah has taught you.' He said, 'Gather on such-and-such a day and in such-and-such a place.' They gathered, and the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم came to them and taught them what Allah had taught him. Then he said, 'There is no woman among you who loses three of her children but that they will be a shield for her from the Hellfire.' A woman asked, 'And if only two, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, '(Also) two, two, two.'" (*Shahih al-Bukhari*, No. 7310).

Sixth, the *hadith* on female leadership.

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ هِشَامٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ، عَنِ الْحَسَنِ، عَنْ أَبِي
سَaw بَكْرَةَ، قَالَ: نَفَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ
أَيَّامَ الْجَمَلِ، بَعْدَ مَا كُنْتُ أَلْحَقُ بِأَصْحَابِ الْجَمَلِ فَأَقَاتِلُ
أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسٍ قَدْ مَلَكُوا Saw مَعَهُمْ. قَالَ: لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْهِمْ بِنْتُ كِسْرَى، قَالَ: لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ.
(رواه البخاري، رقم 4425)

Abu Bakrah r.a. reported: "Allah benefited me from a statement I heard from the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم during the days of the Battle of Jamal. I was about to join the people of the Camel and fight alongside them, but I refrained because of that statement. When news reached the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم that the Persians had appointed the daughter of Kisra as their ruler, he said: 'A people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper.'" (*Shahih al-Bukhari*, No. 4425).

Interpretation of *Hadiths* on Gender Equality by Classical and Contemporary Scholars

First, interpretations concerning the nature of men and women.

The *hadiths* on the prohibition of gender imitation and on women being created from a rib received significant attention from classical scholars. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalanī, in *Fath al-Bārī*, interpreted the *hadith* prohibiting women from imitating men as a measure to preserve the natural order of creation and social harmony. Imam al-Nawawī emphasized that the *hadith* stating "women were created from a rib" should not be seen as derogatory but as a metaphor for gentleness. He stressed that women's innate differences require patience and compassion from men. Similarly, al-Qurṭubī (2006) understood gender differences as complementary justice from God, not as hierarchical inequality.

In modern perspectives, scholars such as Quraish Shihab reject discriminatory readings of this *hadith*. He highlights that the metaphor of the rib is consistent with the Qur'anic principle that men and women originate from a single soul (Q. al-Nisā' [4]:1). Amina Wadud views the Prophet's ﷺ statement as a strategy for deconstructing patriarchy, emphasizing that women should not be forced to resemble men. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, through his *mubadalah* hermeneutics, stresses that the *hadith's* core message is reciprocity, namely a relationship built upon mutual respect. Thus, both classical and modern scholars converge on the conclusion that the essence of this *hadith* is not patriarchal legitimation but ethical guidance for building harmonious gender relations. The Prophet's ﷺ exhortation "استوصوا بالنساء خيرا" ("Treat women kindly") serves as the key to interpretation, underscoring patience, compassion, and respect in male-female relationships.

Second, interpretations of *hadiths* on daughters.

The *hadiths* on daughters narrated in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* were regarded by classical scholars as radical correctives to pre-Islamic practices that devalued women. Ibn Hajar stressed that the

Prophet's ﷺ statement making daughters a *sitr min al-nār* (protection from hellfire) was a theological revolution that transformed social stigma into eschatological assurance. Al-Nawawī (1927) highlighted the spiritual dimension, asserting that raising daughters was not a burden but a means of soul purification. The *hadith* that placed the mother three times before the father was understood by al-Qurtubī as an acknowledgment of women's biological struggles, affirming that reproductive labor holds great value before God. Thus, classical scholars read these *hadiths* as affirmations of women's honor and excellence within a framework of worship.

Modern scholars, however, emphasize the socio-gender dimension. Quraish Shihab (2000) interprets the *hadith* on daughters as positive affirmation to dismantle discrimination, while Amina Wadud views it as the Prophet's ﷺ strategy to shift patriarchal paradigms toward equality. Asma Barlas reads the *hadith* on mothers as theological resistance against cultures that negate women, rather than a romanticization of domestic roles. Both classical and contemporary interpretations converge on one conclusion: Islam presents a transformative vision that honors women, positions them as equal subjects, and elevates them as pillars of civilization.

Third, interpretations of *hadiths* on marital relations.

Classical scholars understood *hadiths* on spousal relations as ethical foundations of family life. Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī emphasized that the Prophet's ﷺ message was the husband's duty to treat his wife with *ihsān*, consistent with Q. al-Nisā' [4]:19 on *mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf* (living together in kindness). Al-Qurtubī reinforced this view, stressing that patience in facing a spouse's flaws was not justification for oppression but an ethical principle to maintain family harmony. He explained that the patience intended was *hilm*—the wisdom of self-restraint to reduce conflict and create tranquility—so that family life is built on affection rather than dominance.

In contemporary discourse, Amina Wadud (2021) interprets these *hadiths* as affirmations

that an Islamic household is an ethical partnership based on mutuality, where men and women support one another rather than functioning in a hierarchical structure. Asma Barlas, in *Believing Women in Islam* (2002), argues that the *hadiths* affirm an egalitarian ethic: immense rewards are promised to both husbands and wives who show patience, rejecting any notion of gender superiority. Sayeed (2010) likewise asserts that spousal relations in Islam function as spiritual instruments for advancing equality. Thus, from Ibn Hajar and al-Qurtubī to Wadud and Barlas, the interpretations converge on affirming reciprocity as the foundation of a just, harmonious, and egalitarian Muslim household.

Fourth, interpretations of *hadiths* on household life.

The *hadith* narrated by al-Bukhārī that the Prophet ﷺ assisted with household tasks was understood by classical scholars as a model of equality. Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (2003) regarded the Prophet's ﷺ practice not as mere domestic routine but as an act of humility (*tawāḍu'*) that challenged pre-Islamic Arab patriarchy (Jalajel, 2016). Al-Nawawī, in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, added that this *hadith* confirmed household work was not a unilateral obligation of women but a shared responsibility with religious value. For both, a man's dignity was not diminished by domestic chores; rather, true nobility lay in service and good character, not domination.

Contemporary scholars expanded this view. Fazlur Rahman interpreted the *hadith* as evidence of Islam's "progressive intent"—a practical example of the Prophet ﷺ resisting discriminatory divisions of labor to promote a more egalitarian society (Barazangi, 2015). Quraish Shihab placed this example within the framework of *mu'āsharah bi al-ma'rūf*, emphasizing that an Islamic household must be founded on partnership and justice rather than subordination. Thus, both classical and modern scholars affirm Islam's consistent vision: the household as a collaborative space of love, justice, and participation, exemplified by the Prophet ﷺ himself.

Fifth, interpretations of *hadiths* on women’s right to education.

The *hadith* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* describing a group of women who requested dedicated time from the Prophet ﷺ for learning is one of the foundational texts in the discourse on women’s right to education. Al-Nawawī, in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, affirmed that this *hadith* served as proof of the obligation of knowledge for women just as for men, without any legal restriction (Bouzghaia, 2020). Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, in *Fath al-Bārī*, highlighted the Prophet’s ﷺ response to the women’s request as formal recognition of women’s right to education, even by giving them direct space to voice their demands (Al-‘Asqalani & al-Bāri, 2003). This *hadith* not only removed structural barriers in the Prophet’s ﷺ time but also demonstrated Islam’s openness to women’s intellectual participation in the life of the community.

Contemporary scholars extend the meaning of this *hadith* within a gender-equality framework. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir reads it as legitimizing women’s agency—the right to voice aspirations directly to authority, which the Prophet ﷺ then accommodated (Vidal I Quintero, 2021). Riffat Hassan emphasizes it as historical evidence that Islam, since the 7th century, affirmed equal access to education, even within a patriarchal Arab culture—thus modern discrimination against women stems from social constructions, not Islamic teachings (Hassan). In today’s context, this *hadith* challenges all forms of marginalization—such as discriminatory policies, child marriage, or restrictions on public engagement—and affirms that women’s education is the foundation of civilization. As underscored in another *hadith*, “Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim, male and female” (Utvik, 2022).

Sixth, interpretations of *hadiths* on female leadership.

The *hadith* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* that states, “A people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper” (*Shahih al-Bukhari*, No. 4425) is often cited in debates on female leadership. However, its historical

context is clear: the Prophet ﷺ made this statement when the Persians, already politically fragile, appointed the daughter of Kisra as their ruler. Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī in *Fath al-Bārī* interpreted this *hadith* as situational commentary, not as a universal legal ruling. Even al-Māwardī, in *al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyyah*, though inclined to limit *imāmah kubrā* (supreme leadership), acknowledged women’s roles in education, social affairs, and administration, arguing more from pragmatic-political than theological grounds (White et al., 2023). This interpretation suggests the *hadith* did not absolutely reject female leadership but rather addressed a specific context.

Contemporary scholars reinforce contextual readings by emphasizing competence and integrity as the true criteria for leadership. Muhammad al-Ghazali and Yusuf al-Qaradawi argue that Islam does not reject female leadership if leadership qualifications are met. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, through *mubadalah* hermeneutics, stresses that Q. al-Taubah [9]:71 acknowledges men and women as allies of one another in socio-political matters. Amina Wadud connects this *hadith* with the story of Queen Bilqis (Q. al-Naml [27]:23–44), whose leadership the Qur’an praised. Asma Barlas (Askouni & Dragonas, 2020) argues that patriarchal readings of this *hadith* are reductive, ignoring Islam’s mission of justice. Using the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, leadership—whether by men or women—should be evaluated by its ability to uphold justice and public good. Modern examples such as Benazir Bhutto, Sheikh Hasina, and Megawati Soekarnoputri (Jones, 2020; Neubauer, 2016) demonstrate that Islam in practice has given women ample space to lead.

Table 1. Summary of Interpretations of *Hadiths* on Gender Equality

<i>Hadith</i> Theme	Classical Scholars	Contemporary Scholars	Core Message
Nature of Men & Women	Ibn Hajar: preservation of <i>fiṭrah</i> and social	Quraish Shihab: rejects discrimination	Ethical guidance for harmony

Women	order; al-Nawawī: gentleness, not denigration; Qurtubī: difference = complementarity, not hierarchy	al-atory interpretations, unity of a single soul; Amina Wadud: strategy of deconstructing patriarchy; Faqihuddin A. Kodir: <i>mubādalah</i> hermeneutics (reciprocity)	ous relations, not patriarchal legitimization
Daughters & Mothers	Ibn Hajar: correction of Islamic practices, <i>sitr min al-nār</i> = theological revolution; al-Nawawī: spiritual purification; al-Qurtubī: mother prioritized due to biological struggles	Quraish Shihab: positive affirmation against discrimination; Amina Wadud: strategy to shift patriarchy → equality; Asma Barlas: theological resistance, not romanticization of domesticity	Islam honors women as subjects and pillars of civilization
Marital	Ibn Hajar: basis of <i>ihsān</i> , Q.	Amina Wadud: household	Ethic of reciprocity, a

Relations	al-Nisā’ [4]:19; al-Qurtubī: patience = <i>hilm</i> , maintains harmony, not legitimization of oppression	= ethical partnership (mutuality); Asma Barlas: egalitarian ethic; Sayeed (2010): marital relations as spiritual instrument of equality	just and egalitarian household
Equality in Domestic Life	Ibn Hajar: <i>tawādu’</i> , Prophet challenged cultural patriarchy; al-Nawawī: household chores = shared responsibility with value	Fazlur Rahman: Islam’s progressive intent, resistance to discriminatory labor division; Quraish Shihab: <i>mu’āsharah bi al-ma’rūf</i> , just and participatory household	Prophet’s model → egalitarian and collaborative family life
Women’s Right to Education	al-Nawawī: <i>hadith</i> as evidence of women’s obligation to seek knowledge; Ibn Hajar: Prophet acknowledged women’s	Faqihuddin A. Kodir: legitimization of women’s agency (voice & right to education); Riffat Hassan: historical	Education = foundation of civilization; women’s rights equal to men’s

	aspirations for learning	proof of education al equality, modern discrimination = cultural, not Islamic	
Female Leadership	Ibn Hajar: situational commentary (Persia), not universal ruling; al-Māwardī: restricted <i>imāmah kubrā</i> but recognized other roles (pragmatic-political)	al-Ghazali & al-Qaradawi: condition = competence & integrity; Faqihuddin: principle of reciprocity Q. 9:71; Amina Wadud: model of Queen Bilqis; Asma Barlas: patriarchal interpretations = reductive	Leadership depends on competence and justice, not gender

The summary presented in Table 1 demonstrates that although classical and contemporary scholars employed different approaches, they ultimately converge on the same conclusion: *hadiths* on gender were not intended to legitimize patriarchy but to affirm ethical values of compassion, reciprocity, and justice. Classical scholars emphasized moral dimensions, proper conduct (*adab*), and recognition of women's biological and spiritual roles, while contemporary scholars

expanded the interpretations toward social equality, the deconstruction of patriarchy, and the principle of gender justice. Consequently, whether in the realms of family, education, or leadership, Islam from its earliest teachings introduced a transformative paradigm that positioned men and women as equal partners in building civilization.

DISCUSSION

This study finds that *hadiths* in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* hold significant normative potential in reinforcing gender equality. The analysis identifies six main themes: (1) the prohibition of gender imitation as a boundary of natural identity; (2) the Prophet's ﷺ command to treat women kindly; (3) the virtue of raising daughters as a guarantee of eschatological salvation; (4) the prioritization of mothers over fathers in filial respect; (5) the ethic of patience in marital relations; and (6) the Prophet's ﷺ model of domestic engagement and his recognition of women's right to education and leadership. Classical scholars interpreted these *hadiths* by emphasizing moral, spiritual, and ethical dimensions, while contemporary scholars expanded the scope toward social equality, the deconstruction of patriarchy, and the affirmation of women's rights in public life. Thus, the findings indicate that despite interpretive diversity, the *hadiths* under study fundamentally affirm ethical values of compassion, reciprocity, and justice that remain relevant in advancing the agenda of gender equality in Islam.

These findings can be explained through three major theoretical frameworks. First, from a sociological perspective, Judith Butler's theory of gender as a social construct demonstrates that gender relations in *hadith* are not static realities but social constructions that can be continuously reproduced and reinterpreted. Patriarchal interpretations that confine women to the domestic sphere do not represent normative injunctions but rather social constructs that can be dismantled through a gender justice perspective. Butler's notion of gender performativity underscores that gender identity emerges through shifting

social practices, thereby creating space to reinterpret *hadiths* in ways that affirm equality and inclusivity (Butler, 2004).

Second, from Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of gender, patriarchal bias in the interpretation of *hadith* and the Qur'an arises more from interpretation than from normative texts themselves (Wadud, 2006). Through her historical-contextual and intratextual approach, Wadud emphasizes the *tawhidic* principle that demands unity, reciprocity, and spiritual equality. This progressive reading encourages the reinterpretation of *hadiths* as guidance for social justice, even though it often encounters resistance from conservative circles.

Third, within the discipline of *hadith* studies, the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework provides a theological foundation for interpreting *hadiths* in line with the universal objectives of Sharia—justice, public welfare, and the protection of human dignity. From this perspective, gender equality must be understood not merely in textual terms but as part of a broader pursuit of human welfare. Contemporary practices of *ijtihad*, such as the advocacy of KUPI (Congresses of Indonesian Women Ulama) (Farida & Kasdi, 2018), demonstrate how *maqāṣid* and *mubādalāh* methodologies can generate more gender-sensitive interpretations that directly address women's lived experiences.

Accordingly, the results of this study emerge because *hadiths* never stand in isolation; they are always read within social, political, and cultural contexts that shape gender constructions. Classical interpretations focused on moral and spiritual dimensions, while contemporary approaches emphasize socio-political equality. The relationship between the two demonstrates that *hadiths* function as dynamic texts that can be reinterpreted in accordance with changing times, thereby remaining relevant in strengthening gender justice in Islam (Faizah et al., 2024).

Overall, these findings align with the conclusions of Dhanani (2020), who shows that *hadiths* in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* do not merely restrict women but also

acknowledge their contributions. Sikander Ali likewise emphasizes that the texts themselves open opportunities for progressive interpretations, such as women's involvement in religious and social activities. Amina Wadud takes this further by critiquing patriarchal biases in *hadith* exegesis, which, in her view, obscures Islam's egalitarian spirit. Tariq Jamil (2022) highlights the flexibility in *hadith* interpretation that can support women's participation in the modern era. On a broader level, Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2019) stresses that reinterpretation of Islamic teachings, including *hadiths*, can serve as a foundation for gender justice in contemporary Muslim societies (Sya'rani, 2024). The novelty of this study lies in its focus on integration: it not only analyzes *hadith* texts but also connects them to contemporary realities such as globalization, digitalization, and the expanding public roles of women. Thus, this research contributes new insights by affirming that *hadiths* can serve as normative foundations for supporting modern gender equality policies.

Historically, *hadiths* about women demonstrate the Prophet's ﷺ effort to dismantle the patriarchal structure of pre-Islamic Arab society and to establish a more egalitarian order, even though subsequent interpretations were often reduced by patriarchal culture. Yet the reality of *hadith* interpretation has never been singular. Many conservative interpretations instead reaffirm patriarchal patterns by emphasizing women's obedience and rigid gender segregation. This is evident, for example, among Salafi Muslim women in Yogyakarta, who interpret *hadiths* literally by stressing absolute obedience to husbands and strict veiling (Aryanti, 2015). On the other hand, sharp criticism arises from Muslim feminists in Makassar who reject textualist readings of misogynistic *hadiths* because they contradict Islam's values of justice and equality (Tasbih et al., 2024).

The effort to deconstruct patriarchy has grown stronger through feminist hermeneutics. Amina Wadud, for instance, stresses the necessity of rereading *hadiths* with an emphasis on justice in gender relations so that they are not confined to patriarchal

interpretations. Similarly, Barazangi (2015) argues that women's identities in *hadiths* must be understood contextually, rather than as reproductions of gender-biased culture. Within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), studies also find that misogynistic *hadiths* still shape gender bias among students.

Historically, a number of Muslim women have shown that female participation in scholarship and religious leadership is not new. Figures such as Lady Amin in Iran demonstrated that women could become great scholars who produced independent *ijtihad* and Islamic ethics regarding women and motherhood (Barlow, 2008). Likewise, the record of women's contributions in both classical and modern Islamic traditions reveals substantial space for the reinterpretation of *hadiths* in line with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, namely, to uphold justice and promote public welfare. Thus, the problem of patriarchy in *hadiths* lies not in the texts themselves, but in the ways they are read, taught, and reproduced within dominant patriarchal cultures (Koburtay et al., 2023).

Socially, this study confirms that *hadith* reinterpretation can serve as an instrument for deconstructing patriarchy while simultaneously strengthening women's empowerment in education, family, and leadership. History shows that women's positions have often been marginalized due to patriarchal readings of *hadiths* and the Qur'an, which limited their roles in education, the transmission of religious knowledge, and leadership. However, critical reinterpretations by contemporary scholars open opportunities to dismantle such restrictions. For example, Erwani & Siregar (2025) demonstrate that female narratives in Islamic texts hold great potential to affirm women's religious authority and social roles, even though traditional interpretations often suppress them.

Efforts at reinterpretation also emerge through socio-religious movements. Sisters in Islam (SIS) in Malaysia, for instance, consistently advocate for new interpretations of Qur'anic verses and *hadiths* to promote gender equality, including on issues of polygamy and female judgeship (Shukri &

Owoyemi, 2014). In the same vein, Asma Barlas (2002) critiques patriarchal expropriation in classical exegesis while offering gender-sensitive methodologies to restore Islam's principles of justice and reciprocity. Politically, Goudarzi shows how reinterpretations of Islamic law by contemporary Shia scholars such as Ayatollah Jannaati create space for legitimizing women's political authority.

In addition, education and the economy serve as strategic instruments for women's empowerment grounded in textual reinterpretation. Hidayah emphasizes that reinterpreting women's economic rights in Islam supports their participation in the public sphere, while Azid & Ward-Batts (2020) highlight that women's economic empowerment through education and life skills is essential to overcoming structural inequality. A best practice can be seen in Indonesia through the Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama (KUPI), which integrates *maqāṣid* and *mubādalāh* approaches in gender-based legal advocacy. Through *fatwas*, networks of women scholars, and community empowerment, KUPI has advanced the gender equality agenda.

Thus, *hadith* reinterpretation is not merely an academic project but also a socio-religious agenda that actively dismantles patriarchal structures. It not only corrects the injustices of classical exegesis but also lays the foundation for women's empowerment in education, family, economy, and leadership. This demonstrates that Islam, when read through the lenses of justice and reciprocity, can serve as a normative source supporting gender equality and women's emancipation in modern society (Rahmawati, 2020).

Ideologically, this study reveals that Islam does not conflict with gender equality but rather provides a strong theological basis for advancing it. In other words, *hadiths* can serve as a "source of religious legitimacy" to challenge gender bias. Several studies emphasize that the Qur'an and *hadiths* place men and women in spiritually equal positions, where both are equally accountable before God and equally entitled to roles in social and

professional life. Yet patriarchal interpretations across history have shifted this egalitarian message into a gender hierarchy that restricts women's roles.

In this context, Islamic feminist theology seeks to critique and reconstruct gender-biased religious readings. Scholars such as Mir-Hosseini and Shahin highlight the importance of reopening the space of *ijtihad* so that Islamic texts can be interpreted more justly for women. Such reinterpretation impacts not only the normative domain but also legal and social aspects, including resistance to domestic violence and family policies that privilege male dominance. Accordingly, *hadiths* function not merely as normative texts but as theological instruments to dismantle patriarchal structures and to promote gender justice in contemporary Muslim societies. Reinterpretations grounded in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and Islamic feminist theology are vital to ensure that the Islamic tradition does not remain confined to biased textual legacies but continues to serve as a source of legitimacy for the pursuit of gender equality in the modern era (Khurshid, 2020).

Functionally, this study contributes in three ways: (1) it provides a normative foundation for gender equality rooted in *hadiths*, (2) it creates space for Muslim women activists to use religious legitimacy in gender advocacy, and (3) it strengthens Islam's position in interfaith dialogue on social justice. However, dysfunctionally, this study's findings may encounter resistance from conservative groups that still uphold patriarchal interpretations of *hadiths*. Such resistance is not only theological but also rooted in historical and cultural factors that reinforce orthodoxy in Muslim societies. In many contexts, gender equality is viewed as a "Western" concept perceived as a threat to family structures and traditional values, fueling rejection by conservative Islamist groups.

Politically, this resistance is evident in opposition to pro-women legislation. In Pakistan, for instance, conservative Islamist groups have rejected various laws deemed incompatible with Islamic principles. In

Indonesia, research shows that strong patriarchal attitudes correlate with opposition to women's political participation, reinforced by the rise of conservative Islamist movements. Even some Muslim women's groups adopt anti-feminist positions, such as Aliansi Cinta Keluarga (AILA), which strengthens conservative narratives of gender (Sya'rani, 2024).

Nevertheless, counter-efforts also emerge from Islamic feminist movements that stress that the problem of gender inequality stems not from Islam itself but from patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. In Turkey, for example, the Havle Women's Association combines feminism with Islam to construct new norms that are more contextual and inclusive (Taragin-Zeller, 2024).

Thus, conservative resistance to gender equality in Islam reflects an ongoing tension between patriarchal traditionalist readings and progressive reinterpretations. This dynamic shows that while major challenges persist, space for dialogue and transformation remains open, particularly through the reinterpretation of religious texts and community-based activism.

Based on these dysfunctions, several steps can be taken. First, critical religious education should be encouraged to introduce gender-sensitive interpretations of *hadiths* in *pesantren*, madrasahs, and Islamic universities. Second, affirmative policies must be strengthened to expand women's opportunities in education, politics, and leadership with an Islamic legitimacy basis. Third, dialogue among scholars and academics should be fostered so that *hadith* reinterpretation does not emerge solely from Muslim feminists but also gains support from mainstream ulama. Through these measures, the findings of this study will not remain at the level of academic discourse but will have concrete impacts on social reform and public policy in Muslim societies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the *hadiths* in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* contain strong normative potential to reinforce gender

equality in Islam. Six main themes were identified: the prohibition of gender imitation, the Prophet's ﷺ exhortation to treat women kindly, the virtue of caring for daughters, the priority of honoring mothers, the ethic of patience in marital relations, and the Prophet's ﷺ leadership. Both classical and contemporary scholars interpreted these *hadiths* through different approaches, yet they converge on the understanding that their core message emphasizes ethical values of compassion, reciprocity, and justice, all of which align with the prophetic mission of Islam.

Academically, this research makes an important contribution by integrating textual analysis of *hadiths* and classical-contemporary interpretations within the frameworks of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, Amina Wadud's gender hermeneutics, and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach. This multidisciplinary perspective demonstrates that *hadith* interpretation can be reread progressively to support gender equality, while also providing theological and epistemological foundations for socio-religious activism. Thus, this study not only enriches the academic discourse on *hadith* and gender but also offers practical contributions to advocacy for equality in contemporary Muslim societies.

However, this research also has limitations. Its focus on analyzing *hadiths* from only two major compilations, namely *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, restricts the exploration of *hadiths* from other collections. In addition, the analysis remains primarily literature- and interpretation-oriented, without engaging the empirical dimension of how these *hadiths* are practiced in the socio-religious lives of Muslim communities. Therefore, future research could be directed toward field-based studies that connect *hadith* interpretations with Muslim social realities, enabling gender equality discourse to be examined more holistically, both from textual and practical perspectives.

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