



Women's Stories in the Quran as Models of Social Agency and Gender Justice

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Abstract

The stories of women in the Quran are often interpreted through a patriarchal framework that positions women as didactic objects. At the same time, the dimension of their social agency has received less systematic attention in exegetical studies. Although gender discourse in Islamic studies is developing rapidly, there is little research that thematically and narratively examines how the structure of the Quranic story itself represents women as autonomous subjects while also articulating the principle of gender justice inherently. This study specifically analyses the representation of social agency in the stories of Mary, the mother of Moses; the Queen of Sheba; and the wife of Pharaoh, and identifies their relationship to the construction of gender justice in the Quranic narrative. This study uses a qualitative approach, employing thematic interpretation of related verses, followed by narrative-contextual analysis to map patterns of decision-making, configurations of power relations, and articulations of moral responsibility, and engaging in critical dialogue with selected classical and contemporary commentaries based on their influence and representativeness. The results of the study show three main findings: first, the Quranic narrative consistently presents women as moral agents who make strategic decisions in crises; second, the stories demonstrate women's social interventions in domestic and public spaces that have had historical impact; third, their narrative structures affirm the equality of ethical responsibility and rational capacity between men and women. These findings confirm that gender agency and justice are intrinsic dimensions of Quranic narratives and

have implications for reconstructing an interpretive methodology that is more responsive to a gender justice perspective.

Keywords: Women's Stories; Social Agency; Gender Justice; Thematic Interpretation; Contextual Analysis

Abstrak

Kisah perempuan dalam Al-Quran kerap ditafsirkan melalui kerangka patriarkal yang menempatkan perempuan sebagai objek didaktik, sementara dimensi agensi sosialnya kurang mendapat perhatian sistematis dalam studi tafsir. Meskipun wacana gender dalam kajian Islam berkembang pesat, belum banyak penelitian yang secara tematik dan naratif menelaah bagaimana struktur kisah Al-Quran sendiri merepresentasikan perempuan sebagai subjek otonom sekaligus mengartikulasikan prinsip keadilan gender secara inheren. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis secara spesifik representasi agensi sosial dalam kisah Maryam, ibu Musa, Ratu Saba', dan istri Fir'aun, serta mengidentifikasi relasinya dengan konstruksi keadilan gender dalam narasi Al-Quran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui tafsir tematik terhadap ayat-ayat terkait, dilanjutkan analisis naratif-kontekstual untuk memetakan pola pengambilan keputusan, konfigurasi relasi kuasa, dan artikulasi tanggung jawab moral, serta dialog kritis dengan tafsir klasik dan kontemporer yang dipilih berdasarkan pengaruh dan representativitasnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga temuan utama: pertama, narasi Al-Quran secara konsisten menampilkan perempuan sebagai agen moral yang mengambil keputusan strategis dalam situasi krisis; kedua, kisah-kisah tersebut memperlihatkan intervensi sosial perempuan dalam ruang domestik dan publik yang berdampak historis; ketiga, struktur naratifnya mengafirmasi kesetaraan tanggung jawab etis dan kapasitas rasional antara laki-laki dan perempuan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa agensi dan keadilan gender merupakan dimensi intrinsik narasi Al-Quran serta berimplikasi pada rekonstruksi metodologi tafsir yang lebih responsif terhadap perspektif keadilan gender.

Kata Kunci: Kisah Perempuan; Agensi Sosial; Keadilan Gender; Tafsir Tematik; Analisis Kontekstual

Introduction

The stories of women in the Quran represent narrative constructions that are not merely informative but also normative and transformative, shaping ethical horizons, social relations, and structures of moral responsibility (Ibrahim, 2020). The concept of social agency in this study is understood as the subject's capacity to make autonomous decisions, undertake meaningful actions, and consciously and responsibly influence social configurations within the framework of revealed values (Silver et al., 2021). The narrative hermeneutics perspective views stories not merely as historical illustrations but as mediums for constructing meaning and models for ethical action (Brockmeier & Meretoja, 2014). Through figures such as Maryam, the mother of Moses; Queen Balqīs; and Asiyah, the Quran presents women as subjects who make strategic decisions, demonstrate moral courage, and actively participate in both public and domestic spheres (Darzi, Ahmadvand, & Nushi, 2021). However, the tradition of literal and androcentric readings tends to reduce this narrative dimension to the legitimacy of subordinate roles, thereby diminishing its theological potential as a foundation for gender justice. The tension between the

agency-affirming narrative structure of the Quran and the biased practice of interpretation underscores the need for a systematic conceptual reconstruction grounded in cross-narrative analysis.

The phenomenon of global gender inequality demonstrates that the issue of women's agency remains structurally unresolved. The World Economic Forum (2025) report reveals significant gaps in economic participation and political representation, with projections of a longer timeframe to close them. Data from the International Labour Organisation (2023) document low female labour force participation and the persistence of the global wage gap. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (2025) reports unequal access to higher education and knowledge production, primarily due to social norms that limit women's roles. This reality demonstrates that value structures and cultural legitimacy contribute to maintaining inequality. The context of Muslim societies demonstrates that religious interpretations are often used as normative references in shaping gender roles, and interpreting the primary sources of Islamic teachings directly impacts social construction (Karimullah & Aliyah, 2023). This situation demands a scientific approach that positions the Quran as both a source of public ethics and a field for criticism of interpretive bias.

Previous studies have shown important developments, but they have not been conceptually integrated. Latif (2023) affirms the moral equality of men and women through an analysis of normative verses, but has not yet examined the narrative structure of the story as a social model. Čustović (2025) critiques the patriarchal construction of classical interpretation and opens up space for non-patriarchal readings, but has not yet formulated a typology of women's agency based on comprehensive textual analysis. Yudha (2023) strengthens the ontological equality of humans through a theological approach but does not connect it to concrete social action. Khodijah and Musafa'ah (2025) adopt a historical-ethical approach to highlight the value of justice in the Quran, even as women are positioned more as objects of legal regulation than as subjects of social transformation. Mirza (2022) examines the figures of Maryam and Balqīs thematically, but the study is partial and does not establish cross-narrative patterns. The literature synthesis reveals three main limitations: the absence of a unified conceptual model of women's agency grounded in the story, a lack of cross-textual structural narrative analysis, and a lack of connection between the story's reading and contemporary gender justice issues. This gap indicates the need for research that systematically formulates a typology of women's social agency through a gender-based narrative hermeneutic approach.

This study formulates two main questions: how the narrative structure of women's stories in the Quran constructs a model of social agency, and how this model represents principles of gender justice relevant to contemporary social challenges. The research aims to formulate a typology of women's social agency

based on a cross-narrative analysis of the stories and to identify the principles of gender justice inherent in its textual construction. The initial argument is based on the theoretical assumption that Quranic narratives function as normative tools for shaping public ethics; therefore, the representation of women as active subjects demonstrates theological legitimacy for social participation and relational justice. A comprehensive narrative reading is believed to reveal patterns of agency obscured by interpretive bias. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual model of women's social agency based on Quranic narrative hermeneutics, while enriching the methodology of gender studies through a cross-story structural analysis. Its practical contribution includes providing a theological argument for strengthening gender justice in Muslim societies and developing a framework for responsible, academic dialogue between the values of revelation and the global social justice agenda.

Method

This research is a qualitative literature study with a critical Islamic gender hermeneutics framework that integrates thematic-narrative analysis of the Quran and contextual-critical hermeneutics based on double movement to reconstruct normative meaning in the contemporary social horizon. Primary data sources include all narrative verses featuring central female figures—Maryam, the mother of Moses, the Queen of Sheba, the wife of Pharaoh—identified through lexical searches (*imra'ah*, *nisā'*, *umm*, *bint*) and digital thematic index verification. Secondary sources were selected purposively and representatively across methodological styles, including *riwāyah*, *dirāyah*, rational, and contemporary interpretations with a gender perspective, as well as structural-practice social agency theory literature for the operationalization of concepts. Data collection was carried out through a systematic inventory of verses and interpretations, selection based on conceptual relevance, and cross-auditing between interpretations to minimize selection bias. The analysis was carried out in stages: first, mapping the narrative structure and power relations; Second, comparative discourse analysis to identify patriarchal patterns and egalitarian alternatives; third, operationalization of agency indicators—reflective capacity, moral action, resistance, and social transformation; fourth, conceptual synthesis to formulate a typology of women's agency in the Quran and a non-dominant model of gender justice. This approach asserts novelty through typological reconstruction, grounded in the systematic and replicable integration of texts, interpretations, and social theory.

Results and Discussion

Women's Individual Agency in the Quran

The concept of individual agency in this study is formulated as the capacity of moral subjects to reflect on norms, evaluate alternative actions, make conscious decisions, and bear ethical consequences within the context of limiting structures.

This formulation combines Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory of the dialectical relationship between structure and action with the conception of moral agency in religious ethics and Saba Mahmood's (2005) reading of female agency. This framework allows the analysis of female figures in the Quran to go beyond descriptions of actions and to assess processes of reflexivity, deliberation, symbolic resistance, and self-transformation.

The figure of Maryam bint 'Imrān represents reflective agency articulated through an intense dialogue structure and language choices that signal self-awareness. In Surah 19:20, Maryam asks, "How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me, and I am not a prostitute?" This question demonstrates a reasoning process grounded in empirical experience, as well as a moral sensitivity to the social implications of pregnancy without a biological relationship. This response does not reflect doubts about faith, but rather a rational negotiation between biological facts and revealed information. Al-Ṭabarī (2001), al-Rāzī (2001), and Ibn 'Āshūr (1985) emphasize this dimension of consciousness by highlighting inner deliberation and solitude as a means of protecting spiritual integrity. Maryam's silence in Surah 19:26 is read as a discursive strategy that shifts the arena of legitimacy to divine authority, thus presenting a form of agency under constraint. This narrative analysis presents a typology of reflective-existential agency, positioning Maryam as an active moral subject rather than a passive figure within a patriarchal structure.

The story of Moses' mother and sister displays a configuration of strategic agency in a situation of structural crisis. The verb "*awḥaynā*" in Surah 28:7 carries significant theological weight because it is usually associated with the Prophet, thereby providing a direct normative basis for legitimizing Moses' mother's actions. The decision to set the baby adrift reflects a rational action grounded in trust ethics, namely, a belief in a divine promise that transcends protective instincts (Ali et al., 2025). Al-Ṭabarī (2001) and Ibn Kathīr (2004) emphasize the balance between spiritual obedience and concrete safety considerations. Moses' sister demonstrates adeptness in reading the political situation through observation of the river and negotiation of the public space of Pharaoh's palace. Al-Zamakhsharī (1987) and al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1997) view this move as practical intelligence born without explicit instructions, thus demonstrating agency under conditions of structural constraints. This narrative distinguishes Maryam's reflective agency from strategic-crisis agency that combines courage, calculation, and tactical action.

Asiyah, Pharaoh's wife, presents a model of resistive agency that operates through prayer as a counter-hegemonic discourse. Quranic verse 66:11 records an explicit plea that separates personal moral identity from repressive domestic relations, thereby making prayer a declaration of normative independence. The asymmetrical power relations between the tyrannical ruler and his wife reinforce the moral-courage interpretation of this act, rather than a mere private spiritual expression. Al-Qurṭubī (1964) and al-Rāzī (2001) emphasize the ethical dimension

that goes beyond calculations of personal security. The Queen of Sheba, Bilqīs, expands the spectrum of agency into the realm of deliberative politics. The deliberation with the rulers and the examination of gifts to Prophet Solomon demonstrate reflective leadership grounded in rational evaluation and the avoidance of violence. Classical interpretations read this act as wisdom, while deliberative leadership approaches interpret it as political agency that transforms power toward the acceptance of truth through argumentative deliberation (Pless et al., 2022).

The narratives of Imran's women demonstrate religious agency through the practice of vows directed toward divine service. Quranic verse 3:35 displays an explicit intentionality that affirms the capacity to determine the future orientation of offspring. Reactions to the birth of a daughter, followed by reflective acceptance, signal moral development, not merely biological disappointment. Abraham's wife expresses laughter and critical inquiry upon receiving news of her late-term pregnancy; al-Rāzī (2001) views these responses as a reflexivity of faith that tests empirical limits without rejecting revelation. Zakariyya's wife participates as the subject of collective prayer, acknowledging biological limitations while also seeking divine transformation. Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1997) emphasizes this participation as a shared moral consciousness. This series of stories demonstrates a form of embodied religious agency, namely agency manifested through emotion, language, and practical commitment to divine promises (Chaoui, 2023).

Zulaykha presents an ambivalent dimension of agency that requires an ethical analysis of moral failure and recovery. Quranic verse 12:23–35 depicts a conscious choice that leads to transgression, followed by an explicit confession of "*al-Ān ḥaṣḥaṣa al-Ḥaqq*" as a form of ethical responsibility after the fall. Al-Ṭabarī (2001) and al-Rāzī (2001) read this confession as a moral awareness that affirms the capacity for self-reflection. The perspective of moral failure and recovery positions Zulaykha not as a relativization of error, but rather as an illustration of the dynamics of agency that include the possibility of self-correction (Cullen, 2022). The complainant in verse 58:1, known as Khawlah bint Tha'labah, appears as a litigious subject who raises objections to the practice of *ḡihār* (equating a wife with a mother/*maḥrām*) through an intense dialogue with the Prophet. The phrase "*qad sami'a Allāhu qawla allatī tujādiluka*" affirms the legitimacy of women's voices in the space of revelation, thus expanding the spectrum of agency towards the discursive and normative realms.

The identified typologies of agency include reflective-existential, strategic-crisis, resistive, deliberative-political, religious-embodied, and litigative-discursive. This differentiation avoids terminological repetition and demonstrates the development of progressive argumentation. Each type is rooted in specific textual analysis and strengthened by critical dialogue with classical exegesis and modern agency theory. This approach demonstrates that Quranic narratives do not simply

represent women as story elements but as moral subjects who interact with social, political, and theological structures through reflection, negotiation, and transformation. The integration of close reading with structuration theory and feminist agency theory produces a methodological synthesis that goes beyond mere compilation of interpretations. This framework rejects baseless totalistic claims and builds gradual conclusions based on narrative evidence and coherent conceptual argumentation.

Women as Agents of Social Change

The story of the Queen of Sheba in Surah 27:23–44 represents a deliberative political agency that reconstructs the legitimacy of the monarchy. Bilqīs's decision to prioritize collective deliberation before confrontation reflects a rational leadership practice that negotiates the patriarchal structure of the kingdom. Structural analysis shows a shift in the source of legitimacy, from symbolic authority based on inheritance to ethical legitimacy grounded in transcendent truth. The scene of the throne testing contains a critique of symbolic power that rests on material representation, so Bilqīs's acceptance of Solomon's message indicates a repositioning of political authority towards a new normative order. Al-Ṭabarī (2001), al-Zamakhsharī (1987), and al-Rāzī (2001) can be reread through Habermas's (1991) deliberative theory that positions dialogue as a mechanism for the production of legitimacy. Patriarchal interpretations that treat the story as an anomalous exception fail to account for the verse's argumentative structure, which presents women as rational subjects. This analysis emphasizes that female leadership is not a normative deviation, but rather a model of Quranic political transformation.

The story of Moses' family in Surah 28:7–13 presents the collective agency of women who intervene in the biopolitics of a repressive state. Pharaoh's policy of controlling reproduction through the killing of male infants reflects the practice of power over bodies and demography. Moses' mother's act of throwing her son away is not an emotional response, but rather a creative resistance strategy that exploits gaps in the structure of control. Moses' sister acts as a social mediator who reconstructs the caregiving network, while Asiyah represents an ethical opposition within the palace. This configuration aligns with James Scott's (1990) theory of covert resistance that undermines domination without open confrontation. Analysis of state-household relations shows that women transformed the domestic arena into a subversive space that had a historical impact on the birth of the liberating Prophet. Interpretations that emphasize the miraculous dimension without examining the dynamics of power tend to overlook structural significance. This approach shows that social transformation emerged through a coordinated network of women's agency.

The narrative of two women in Madyan (Surah 28:23–26) presents an economic intervention that challenges the patriarchal division of labour. Their

presence at a public water source signifies a negotiation of access to a vital resource traditionally controlled by men. A gender economic analysis suggests that this action reflects the rationality of family labour production and distribution (Harris et al., 2017). One of the women's recommendations for recruiting Moses, based on competency criteria, shifts the pattern of patronage toward meritocracy. Nancy Fraser's (1990) concept of the public sphere helps interpret this action as deliberative participation rather than a violation of moral norms. Ridha and Abduh (2008) allude to the dimension of rationality, but structural elaboration reveals the impact on the family's economic stability and the legitimacy of paternal authority. Critiques of patriarchal interpretations that focus on personal propriety need to be strengthened by an analysis of labour distribution and resource access. This economic agency expands the Quranic typology of social transformation.

The stories of Maryam in Surah 3:42–47 and Surah Maryam 19:16–34 represent symbolic agency that reconstructs honour-based stigma mechanisms. Social accusations reflect an honour-shame culture that controls women's bodies through collective reputation (Xiaochun, 2024). Maryam's response, which refers to divine legitimacy and to Jesus as a narrative defender, shifts the standards of moral judgment. Foucault's (1980) discourse analysis shows that the production of truth is no longer monopolized by patriarchal authority, but is instead interrupted by revelation. The interpretations of al-Zamakhsharī (1987) and al-Qurṭubī (1964) can be enriched through Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) theory of symbolic power, which assesses reputation as social capital. The narrative forces the community to revise social control mechanisms that initially positioned women as objects of suspicion. Reducing Maryam's story to an individual miracle ignores the structural factors that shape collective ethics. This symbolic agency emphasizes the possibility of social transformation through the deconstruction of public stigma.

The women's oath of allegiance in Surah 60:12 explicitly articulates women's political participation in the formation of the Medinan community. This act of swearing allegiance contains a social contract dimension that positions women as moral and political subjects. Comparison with the male oath of allegiance demonstrates that women's inclusion broadens the basis of collective legitimacy and strengthens normative solidarity. Max Weber's (1978) theory of political legitimacy helps explain the shift from charismatic authority to normative legitimacy based on ethical commitment. Ibn 'Āshūr (1985) and al-Zuhaylī (2009) acknowledge its legal significance, but analyses of early Islamic citizenship reveal its structural consequences for the formation of the community's political identity. The neglect of the political dimension of the oath of allegiance in patriarchal interpretations diminishes the complexity of the verse affirming equal moral responsibility. This formal political agency complements the typology of social agency in the Quran through institutional participation.

The synthesis of the overall narrative demonstrates a consistent analytical progression: Bilqīs's deliberative political agency, Moses's family's biopolitical resistance, Madyan's women's economic intervention, Maryam's symbolic deconstruction, and the institutional participation of women's allegiance. This pattern demonstrates that social transformation in the Quran occurs through the reconstruction of legitimacy, resource distribution, bodily control, and political participation. The theoretical framework of agency and power relations ensures the connection of the revealed text with historical social dynamics without descriptive reduction. Critical dialogue on patriarchal interpretations is conducted by identifying reductionist tendencies and providing counterarguments grounded in structural analysis. This reading emphasizes that women are not marginal figures, but rather actors in historical transformation who shape the configuration of power, economics, symbols, and politics of the community through revelation.

Women and the Principles of Gender Justice in the Quran

The narrative of women in the Quran affirms the ontological equality of humans as moral subjects through linguistic constructions that position women as autonomous theological agents. The story of Maryam displays a pattern of direct relationship between the female subject and God, without the mediation of a male figure, as seen in the repetition of the verb *iṣṭafāki* in Surah 3:42, which emphasizes divine selection based on moral qualities rather than gender identity. The dialogue structure of Surah 19:16–21 presents Maryam as an active interlocutor who responds to revelation with reflective questions, demonstrating rational capacity and ethical responsibility. Semantic analysis indicates that divine selection is related to the concepts of *ṭahārah* and *qunūt*, two terms denoting universal spiritual integrity. The theoretical distinction between ontological equality and social justice is important: ontological equality concerns the intrinsic value of humans, while gender justice concerns the regulation of social relations grounded in that value. Nussbaum's (2000) capability approach framework is deepened through a critical reading of moral universality that aligns with the concept of piety as a measure of nobility.

This reading requires a critical dialogue with classical exegetical traditions and contemporary studies. Al-Ṭabarī (2001) and al-Qurṭubī (1964) often emphasize the biological miracle of Jesus' birth, leaving the relational dimension between Mary and God underexplored as a model of spiritual agency. Ibn 'Āshūr (1985) shifts the focus to the principle of piety-based moral evaluation, opening up a normative hermeneutical space that rejects gender-based moral differentiation. Amina Wadud (2021) and Asma Barlas (2023) strengthen the argument that the Quran's linguistic structure constructs an independent ethical subject. This analysis avoids apologetic reductionism by acknowledging the patriarchal horizon of classical exegetes without denying their historical contributions. Interpretive tensions are recognized as a space for hermeneutic dialectics, not simply a fault of tradition. The

argumentative position asserts that moral equality is ontological-theological, while its social implications require normative construction that is continuously tested through contextual and critical reading.

The story of al-'Azīz's wife in Surah 12 presents the complexity of power relations that transcend stereotypes of female morality. Narrative analysis reveals shifting focalization techniques between the perspectives of Yūsuf, women, and family witnesses, leading readers to assess rational evidence rather than gender assumptions. Verses 26–29 present a verification procedure based on material signs as a mechanism of justice, affirming the principle of individual responsibility. The woman's public confession in verse 51 demonstrates a reflective capacity and an admission of guilt without diminishing ontological dignity. Iris Marion Young's (1990) structural injustice framework helps read the text as a critique of the culture of blaming a particular group. This reading acknowledges the narrative's ambivalence—desire and power coexist—but the rhetorical structure steers toward a resolution of personal accountability. The distinction between equality and equity becomes relevant; the text does not generalize about gender experiences but demands ethical evaluation in the context of concrete power relations.

Dialogue with contemporary literature on Quranic studies deepens this analysis. Angelika Neuwirth (2010) and Kecia Ali (2016) show that Surah Yūsuf constructs moral dynamics through dialogical drama that rejects character simplification. This approach avoids claims of premature harmonization between revelation and modern theory, as the text presents tensions between desire, social reputation, and political authority. Classical interpretations that emphasize women as sources of slander are reread through an epistemological critique of moral generalizations (Harahap, Is, & Julaiha P, 2025). This positions the text in a reflective hermeneutical position that combines linguistic analysis, literary criticism, and relational justice theory. This approach does not aim to free the text from criticism, but rather demonstrates that the narrative's internal structure provides normative tools for resisting gender stigmatization. The argument is strengthened through an intertextual reading that links the principle of verification with the ethics of universal witness.

The stories of Pharaoh's wife in Surah 28:9 and Surah 66:11 present a model of relational egalitarianism that rejects moral subordination based on family ties. The structure of verse 66:11 uses the formula *ḍaraba Allāhu mathalan li alladhīna āmanū*, positioning the female figure as a paradigm of universal faith rather than a particular exception. Rhetorical analysis reveals the ethical opposition between Pharaoh's tyranny and his wife's integrity, thereby showing that the marital relationship does not eliminate moral autonomy. Elizabeth Anderson's (2010) concept of relational justice helps us understand that justice is not merely the distribution of rights, but the quality of social relations free from domination. Classical interpretations that read this story as an individual exception are criticized

through textual analysis that demonstrates its universality. Tensions arise when other verses, such as Surah 4:34, are read side by side; academic integrity demands recognition of this complexity. This confirms that the Quranic relational paradigm opens space for normative reinterpretation without ignoring hermeneutic problems.

Surah 58:1–4, concerning a woman's complaint against the practice of *zihār*, demonstrates a strong theology of recognition. The opening *qad sami'a Allāhu qawla allatī tujādiluka* affirms divine hearing of women's voices, establishing a linguistic structure that centres the female subject as a legal interlocutor. A semantic analysis of the word *tujādiluka* suggests an active argumentative act, not a passive complaint (Ash-Sha'rāwī, 1997). Early Islamic family law reform was reflected in the abolition of *zihār* and the establishment of a proportionate expiation mechanism (Munirah et al., 2026). Axel Honneth's (1996) theory of recognition helps explain that recognition is a prerequisite for social integration; the revealed texts formulate this recognition at both theological and legal levels. This approach avoids simplification by recognizing that patriarchal structures have often influenced the historical implementation of family law. It emphasizes that the principle of divine recognition provides a normative foundation for contemporary legal reform based on dignity and accountability.

The conceptual synthesis emphasizes the distinction between ontological equality, distributive justice, and relational justice as three complementary dimensions. Ontological equality is rooted in the concept of piety as a universal moral standard; distributive justice regulates social rights and obligations; relational justice demands relations free from domination. These three dimensions are articulated through a variety of women's stories that present individual agency, critique structures of injustice, and acknowledge women's voices. A critical dialogue with the theories of Nussbaum, Young, Anderson, and Honneth demonstrates both the compatibility and epistemological differences between revealed ethics and secular theory. The Quranic text is not reduced to modern theory, but provides a normative horizon that enriches global discourse.

Integrating Women's Stories as a Model of Social Agency and Gender Justice

The story of women in the Quran is formulated as a theoretical model composed of three interrelated components: moral agency, social articulation, and the principle of normative justice. This model is normative-transformative because it not only describes narrative representation but also formulates a conceptual structure that explains how women's subjectivity gains theological legitimacy and social implications. Moral agency refers to the reflective capacity that enables women to make ethical decisions based on an awareness of their individual responsibility as caliphs. Social articulation embodies these ethical decisions in actions that have a collective impact. The principle of normative justice serves as an evaluative horizon that assesses actions and social structures according to their

moral equivalence. The relationship between these three components is dialectical and reciprocal, not linear. Agency does not cease to be a personal quality but rather triggers social transformation that simultaneously tests the consistency of the revealed principle of justice.

This framework expands the ethical-historical approach pioneered by Fazlur Rahman by incorporating the gender dimension as an explicit analytical category. Rahman (1982) emphasized universal ethics as the central message of revelation, but did not develop a specific conceptual tool for reading gender-based power relations. The model formulated fills this gap by analyzing women's stories as the concrete locus of universal ethical articulation. Women's moral subjectivity is not presented as a rhetorical exception but rather as empirical evidence that the anthropological principles of the Quran apply equally, without biological reduction. This expansion confirms that revealed ethics have structural implications for social configurations. The integration of moral anthropology and gender analysis produces a more comprehensive theoretical framework, so that reading the text does not stop at abstract morality but moves towards the transformation of social relations grounded in equal values.

The dimensions of social articulation are developed through a critical dialogue with Islamic feminist hermeneutics pioneered by Amina Wadud. Wadud (1999) emphasizes piety-based relations as the foundation of social legitimacy but has not yet formulated a mechanism for the transition from individual agency to social structural change. This model explains this mechanism through the concept of ethical mediation, namely the process by which personal moral decisions are institutionalized into new social norms (Huebner, 2018). Ethical mediation operates through symbolic actions, resistance to injustice, and the establishment of normative precedents enshrined in revelatory narratives (Field & Crowe, 2020). This explanation allows for an analysis of domestic and public relations without a hierarchical dichotomy. Social space is understood as a spectrum of ethical interactions, assessed by their contribution to the collective good. Social articulation is not a derivative of masculine authority but rather an autonomous expression of moral mandates derived from revelation and realized through women's historical actions.

The principle of normative justice finds its hermeneutic foundation in dialogue with the thought of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (2002), who positions justice as the orientation of textual reading. This approach is operationally implemented through three analytical steps: identifying narrative structures, evaluating historical contexts, and drawing universal values that affirm moral equivalence. These steps allow for the assessment of androcentric interpretations that tend to isolate legal texts without considering a comprehensive ethical vision. This model distinguishes between equality of value and uniformity of function, thus avoiding the liberal reduction that equates justice with role identity. Justice is understood as recognition

of the moral capacity and legitimacy of women's social contributions. This framework positions women's concrete experiences as indicators of hermeneutic validity, thus testing interpretations through their consistency with the universal principles of mercy, responsibility, and human dignity.

The values-based approach developed by Abdullah Saeed (2013) is expanded by integrating a gender perspective as a permanent evaluative category. This model emphasizes that the values of justice, responsibility, and dignity are not neutral with respect to power relations but rather demand a sensitive reading of women's experiences. This non-reductive formulation implies a rejection of legalistic readings that separate law from ethics, as well as a rejection of biological essentialism that limits agency based on gender. The integration of values and gender analysis forms a paradigm that views narrative as a medium for articulating norms. This framework avoids the fragmentation between exegetical studies and social theory because its conceptual structure allows for dialogue with modern agency theory without losing its theological foundation. The result is a model that bridges text and contemporary reality through a consistent and argumentative ethical synthesis.

This model's positioning within the global discourse map is established by identifying an unfilled research gap. Islamic feminist literature tends to focus on the reinterpretation of legal verses, while studies of Quranic ethics often neglect the gender dimension as a structural variable (Fischbach, 2021). This model offers a synthesis that combines narrative analysis, agency theory, and the hermeneutics of justice. Its conceptual novelty lies in formulating the dialectical relationship among the three main components as an integrated system rather than a collection of separate arguments. This model can serve as an analytical tool to assess both classical and contemporary interpretations by examining the coherence among women's agency, social articulation, and the principle of justice. This contribution broadens the horizon of Quranic studies and presents a paradigm that is responsive to critical social theory without compromising the normative authority of revelation.

The model's internal coherence is maintained through consistent, operationally defined terminology. Moral agency is understood as the reflective capacity and the ability to choose in accordance with theological responsibility. Social articulation refers to the process of institutionalizing ethical action into collective norms. The principle of normative justice serves as an evaluative criterion that assesses social relations according to moral equivalence. These three concepts do not stand alone; they form a reflective cycle that enables continuous evaluation of social structures. This relationship explains how women's narratives serve as normative precedents that influence the construction of religious understanding. Clarity of definition avoids ambiguity and ensures continuity of argument between components. This systematic structure strengthens the claim of conceptual integration, which was previously declarative, into a theoretical construct that can be tested and replicated in further research.

The theoretical implications of the model include expanding the methodology of Quranic studies toward an interdisciplinary approach that combines hermeneutics, agency theory, and normative ethics. This framework provides an analytical tool for evaluating gender-based power relations without being trapped in the traditional dichotomy between the normative and the descriptive. The model's application allows researchers to assess whether an interpretation is consistent with the principle of moral equivalence and acknowledges women's reflective capacities. This perspective also opens up dialogue with contemporary social theories on structure and agency, thus contributing to global academic discourse. The resulting synthesis confirms that women's narratives serve as a coherent and innovative theoretical paradigm. The model demonstrates that the vision of divine justice has transformative implications that challenge ahistorical readings and broaden the horizons of understanding inclusive humanity.

Conclusion

The stories of women in the Quran formulate a model of social agency and gender justice structured through three analytical dimensions: personal, relational, and structural. The main findings demonstrate a systematic narrative pattern that positions women as subjects in moral decision-making, as negotiators of familial and political authority, and as drivers of community value transformation. The typology of agency is evident through figures who maintain spiritual integrity, correct unequal power relations, and ensure social sustainability across generations. This pattern demonstrates that the construction of gender justice rests on a balance of responsibility, dignity recognition, and proportional role distribution. The theoretical contribution extends thematic interpretation and narrative hermeneutics through an operational framework that can be tested across texts, while repositioning non-androcentric readings based on textual argumentation. Practical implications include developing a gender-responsive exegesis curriculum, reorienting *da'wah* materials, and strengthening normative arguments for Muslim family policies. Limitations include the selection of specific stories, the use of a textual-narrative approach without in-depth historical-critical analysis, and the absence of reception studies. The further research agenda is directed towards intertextual analysis with classical and contemporary interpretations, a multidisciplinary socio-legal approach, and an applicative test of the model in diverse educational contexts and Muslim communities.

Acknowledgments

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Author Contribution Statement

The authors' contributions to this manuscript include YM, who designed the research concept, developed the theoretical framework, conducted the primary analysis, and wrote and revised the manuscript thoroughly. SG contributed to the

literature review and the preparation of the methodology section. HZ conducted additional data analysis and strengthened the discussion with critical reviews. KB played a role in data validation, reviewing argument consistency, and editing the language. SA contributed to enriching references, adjusting the writing format, and finalizing the manuscript before publication.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this manuscript was prepared without any conflict of interest. There are no financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the writing, analysis, or conclusions of this study. The entire contents of this manuscript are the result of objective, independent scientific research, free from intervention by any party. The authors assume full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and authenticity of the entire contents of this manuscript.

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The authors declare that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in preparing this manuscript was limited to improving language quality, correcting grammar, and assisting with text formatting to make it more systematic and in accordance with academic principles. All scientific content, including research results, findings, concept formulation, analysis, idea development, and conclusions, is entirely the result of the authors' thinking, study, and responsibility. AI was not used in the formulation of ideas, interpretation of data, or development of scientific arguments. The authors ensure that academic integrity is maintained and that the entire content of the manuscript reflects the authors' original intellectual contributions.

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