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BEYOND MODERN MYTHS: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND THE QURAN, HADITH, AND LINGUISTIC NARRATIVES IN PAKISTANI FEMINISM LOOKING PAST CONTEMPORARY

Athar Abbas (Corresponding Author)
MPhil. Linguistics, University of Sahiwal, Sahiwal
atharabbasgilani@gmail.com
Hira Munir
MPhil. Linguistics, University of Sahiwal, Sahiwal
hira63873@gmail.com
Maham Maqbool
MPhil. Linguistics, University of Sahiwal, Sahiwal
mahammaqbool796@gmail.com

Abstract

Through a critical examination of Qur'anic passages, Hadith, Sufi philosophy, and current feminist narratives, this book delves into the language of feminism in Pakistan and the rights of women in Islam. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, surveying 102 undergraduates from several Pakistani universities and integrating qualitative critical discourse analysis of religious texts with feminist slogans (with a focus on those from the Aurat March). Despite the fact that the majority of participants believe that Islam fully protects women's rights, when presented with feminist slogans like "Mera jism and Meri marzi," their opinions change, demonstrating the importance of cultural sensitivity. Exploring the ways in which language, framing, and interpretation impact public opinion, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) reveals that patriarchal readings frequently originate from social context rather than the text itself.

In particular, the study highlights how Islamic ethics and feminist ideas, particularly those pertaining to equality, justice, and dignity, are compatible. By contrasting Islamic principles with global feminist movements, the study questions dichotomies and opens up possibilities for improvement. In order to advance gender equality while maintaining an Islamic foundation, the results highlight the significance of understanding religious texts within contemporary settings.

Keywords: Feminism in Islam, Critical Discourse Analysis, Islam, Quran and Hadith, Women's Rights, Gender Equality, Aurat March

Introduction

Conflicts between Islamic tradition and current feminist movements can arise in discussions about women's rights in Muslim cultures. Concepts and culture are equally at the center of the conversation. Both international Islamic feminist networks and grassroots campaigns such as Pakistan's Aurat March and "Mera Jism Meri Marzi" are part of this category. Some people think that Islamic beliefs may be at odds with the modern feminist ideals of gender equality and physical autonomy. Disagreements over gender roles, competing readings of religious texts, and language's power to shape social reality are all examples of the deep discursive conflicts that this tension represents.

According to Mary Daly (1973), the Christian faith needs to change because the way it is now sets males up to dominate women. To her, feminism is about dismantling that establishment.

In her book The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir analyzes how women have been viewed throughout history as "the second sex" instead of as human beings with equal rights to men. She argues that society shapes women into roles like wife, mother, or caregiver rather than their intrinsic character. Because gender is not innate, her famous quote, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," demonstrates this.

Beauvoir shows how myths created by culture, literature, religion, and tradition classify women as "the Other" as compared to men and keep them dependent on them. She thinks women should do what men do and stand up for their independence: make their own decisions, build

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their own wealth, and be active members of society. Eliminating the societal structures that maintain women's subordination is, in her view, essential to achieving full equality.
A just interpretation of the Qur'an, according to Amina Wadud (1999), shows women and men as equals. A central tenet of her feminism is the rejection of the patriarchal, traditional reading of the Qur'an. By dismantling false patriarchal readings of the Qur'an, feminists in Islam, according to Asma Barlas (2002), expose the text's true message of equality.

Abbas A. (2024) shows that gender strongly influences Urdu address forms, showing that language reflects cultural and social hierarchy. This study investigates Pakistani feminist discourse's depiction of women's rights and requires this understanding. Address phrases in regular conversation reveal gender views, and Quranic and Hadith language narratives often demonstrate cultural interpretations that support or challenge women's obligations.

Two distinct discourses, Islamic jurisprudence (including the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship) and feminist (including secular and Islamic feminism), are intended to be critically examined in this study as they pertain to the formation of women's rights. Using a discourse-analytical approach, this research delves into the ideological underpinnings, areas of agreement, and points of disagreement, offering a detailed comprehension of how these factors interact within the Pakistani and global settings.

Research Questions
1. In what ways do Islamic writings and scholars around the globe view the spiritual, legal, and social rights of women?
2. In various regions (such as Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East), how have secular and Islamic feminist discourses evolved to describe women's rights?
3. When comparing and contrasting Islamic and feminist rhetoric, what are the commonalities and differences that emerge?
In societies where Muslims make up a majority, how may discursive approaches affect the distribution of power and public opinion on the subject of women's rights?

Goals
Sacred texts and intellectual traditions, both ancient and contemporary, will be studied to ascertain Islamic views on women's rights.

- The goal is to examine the global impact of feminist discourses, both secular and Islamic.
- To identify and analyze the points of agreement and disagreement between the two discourses.
- To demonstrate how language constructs and legitimizes these many narratives, critical discourse frameworks will be utilized.

2) Literature Review

1. A Primer on Islamic Women's Rights and Reform

Gender inequality in Muslim communities, according to new Islamic feminist research, is more often caused by patriarchal interpretations and social and political accumulations than by revelation itself. Leila Ahmed (1992) documented the joint impacts of colonial rhetoric and indigenous patriarchy in establishing restrictive gender regimes, while Fatema Mernissi (1991) explained how androcentric hadith selection and historical power structures institutionalized male privilege. The feminist hermeneutics of Amina Wadud (1999) and Asma Barlas (2002) distinguishes the tawḥīd-based justice of the Qur'an from patriarchal traditions of interpretation and presents it as ethically equitable. To pave the way for transformation through usūl al-fiqh

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and maqāṣid-based arguments, Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2006, 2015) and Kecia Ali (2006, 2010) distinguish between sharīʿa (divine, ethical law) and fiqh (human jurisprudence). Asma Lamrabet (2018) proposed a "third way" that challenges both the secular rejection and the patriarchal constriction of scripture, while Margot Badran (2009) envisioned "Islamic feminism" as a new discourse that brings together faith and rights. Distinguished Muslim scholars such as al-Shāṭibī, Ibn ʿĀshūr, Rashīd Riḍā, Fazlur Rahman, and Muḥammad ʿAbduh have utilized maqāṣid al-sharīʿa to stress the importance of dignity, justice, and the prevention of harm as cornerstone values (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 2006; Rahman, 1982; Hallaq, 2009). In order to bring family law into harmony with Qur'anic ethics, modern juristic authorities (such as Tariq Ramadan (2009) and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (2008)) call for ijtihād that is attentive to context. Rather than viewing women's rights as an externally imposed concept, this collection provides a solid ethical-hermeneutic foundation for doing so.

2. International Islamic Feminist Movements

Academic research has been translated into reform agendas through institutionalized efforts. Zainah Anwar's organization, Musawah, seeks to change Muslim family law by drawing on human rights standards, Qur'anic principles, and personal experience (Anwar, 2009; Musawah, 2016). The Malaysian group Sisters in Islam challenges sexism in Islamic teachings, while the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) brings together academics and activists to increase women's power in interpretation (Badran, 2009). Some legal reforms in North Africa and the Middle East, such as Morocco's Moudawana, have been viewed as outcomes of rights frameworks and ijtihād (Buskens, 2010). Activists and academics from South Asia, such as Afiya Shehrbano Zia, Rubina Saigol, and Farida Shaheed, view the gender disputes in Pakistan as a result of discourse struggles that involve religion, nationalism, and global feminism (Zia, 2018). As these movements navigate governmental power, clerical authority, and community norms, they demonstrate how Islamic feminist arguments are transnational while remaining rooted in local contexts.

3. Islamic Perspectives on Postcolonial, Secular, and Critical Feminisms

Feminism, both secular and critical, offers theoretical frameworks for understanding power relations. Judith Butler (1990) expanded on Simone de Beauvoir's (1949/2011) theory of woman as the "Other" by looking at gender performativity, while Nancy Fraser (2016) critiqued the neoliberal takeover of feminist goals. Instead of focusing on postcolonial power dynamics and representational politics, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) and Lila Abu-Lughod (2013) warn against universalist narratives that erase heterogeneity. In Muslim countries, "bargaining with patriarchy" was defined by Deniz Kandiyoti (1988), while feminist mobilizations were outlined by Valentine Moghadam (2005) within the framework of Islamist and authoritarian regimes. By shedding light on women's strategic agency, coalition-building, and legal challenges, these works muddle binaries (religious/secular; tradition/modernity). In Iran, the Mahsa Amini protests show how feminist claims become symbolic venues of religion, legitimacy, and nationalism through embodied resistance to gendered state power (Khalaji, 2023; Kian, 2023).

4. Intersectionality, Piety, and Agency

Beyond liberationist teleologies, Saba Mahmood (2005) showed how piety movements encourage ethical self-formation inside religious contexts. That women's choices within religious contexts are not inherently "false consciousness" but can be deliberate and independent is in line with Islamic feminist claims. In academic contexts where many theoretical frameworks are in use, it is crucial to examine how gender interacts with class, sect, ethnicity, and education; here is where Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) idea of intersectionality

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comes in. South Asian scholars like Kamla Bhasin and Nivedita Menon place patriarchy within the framework of caste-class dynamics (Menon, 2012), while regional scholars like Shahrzad Mojab (2001) and Haideh Moghissi (1999) analyze the gender implications of Islamism and nationalism. The different female subjectivities and reform efforts that are context-sensitive are jointly supported by these literatures.

5. Sufi Philosophy: Its Origins, Development, and Current Aspects

An ontology that transcends rigid hierarchies is offered by Sufism, which is spiritual and humanist. Women are portrayed in classical literature (such as Rumi and Ibn ʿArabi) as symbols of heavenly wisdom and beauty, which supports the idea of metaphysical equality (Chittick, 2005; Schimmel, 1997). Love, compassion, and justice are public ethics that are in harmony with gender dignity, according to contemporary Sufi groups and thinkers like Omid Safi (Safi, 2003). Bulleh Shah and modern shrine activities are examples of South Asian Sufi culture that might provide symbolic capital for gender-inclusive imaginaries (Ernst, 1997; Ewing, 1997). This viewpoint enriches Islamic feminism by re-sanctifying equality and promoting spiritual leadership and practice-based community reform.

6. Islamic Scholars, Maqāṣid, and Contemporary Legal Theory

Notable reformers and jurists, along with feminist researchers, provide methodological tools for change. Justice and public welfare are prioritized in contextual ijtihād through Al-Shāṭibī's maqāṣid theory, Ibn ʿĀshūr's evolution, and Fazlur Rahman's double-movement hermeneutic (al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Ibn ʿĀshūr, 2006; Rahman, 1982). In their analyses of how modern states have changed Islamic law, Noah Feldman (2008) and Wael Hallaq (2009) clarify the differences between positive law and moral vision. Even though their opinions are debated, contemporary Muslim ethicists like Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Jasser Auda use systems thinking to find a middle ground between gender standards and ḥifẓ al-nafs (life), ʿirḍ (dignity), and ʿaql (intellect). They make a case for economic and educational rights and against harm based on gender (Auda, 2008). Biblical readings that highlight justice, love, and consent within familial contexts are advocated by voices relevant to Pakistan, such as Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (Ghamidi, 2008).

7. The Media and Discourse Politics of Interpretation

Finally, gender arguments are seen as meaning conflicts in sermons, courts, classrooms, and public spaces according to Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). According to Zia (2020) and Saigol (2016), there are differing opinions on the Aurat March in Pakistan over whether the slogans "Mera jism, meri marzi" represent a call for physical independence or a moral danger. According to reader-response theories (Fish, 1980), audience analysis is crucial for any empirical inquiry because it explains how different interpretative communities, such as ʿulamāʾ councils, student groups, and activists, create different expectations.

Theoretical Framework

This research investigates the depictions of women in Quranic verses, Hadith, the sayings of Hazrat Imam Ali (A.S.), and contemporary feminist slogans through an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that incorporates viewpoints from Islamic scholarship, Sufi philosophy, feminist theory, and discourse analysis. The research aims to place gender discourse in the context of both contemporary feminist movements and classical Islamic traditions, creating a dialogue between narratives rooted in faith and secular feminist struggles.

At its heart, this paradigm rests on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough's (1995) model, which posits that power conflicts and society construction take place around discourse. CDA makes it easier to look at how women are portrayed in religious writings and modern feminist writings, and how these depictions intersect with ideas of power, authority, and social change. While patriarchal frameworks are commonly used to understand Quranic passages and Hadith in an Islamic context, feminist hermeneutics challenges this and offers

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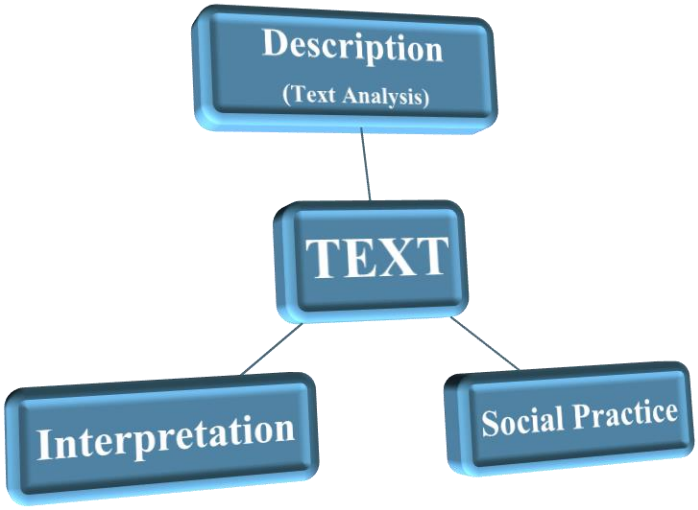
readings that include gender. This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to shed light on the dynamics of gender, power, and resistance by analyzing both traditional comments and modern reinterpretations

Fairclough's (1995) model is based on three concepts, and on the basis of these concepts, it is also known as the 3-D model.

- ***Description*** (Text Analysis)
- ***Interpretation*** of the text or collected data
- ***Social Practice*** means the discourse or what society refers to it.



Fairclough model Figure 1.0

Scholars such as Amina Wadud (1999) and Asma Barlas (2002) have argued that, when interpreted from a perspective that does not perpetuate patriarchy, the Quran promotes gender equality, and this framework incorporates their arguments into its feminism. This perspective aligns with the teachings of Hazrat Imam Ali (A.S.), who offered an alternative to patriarchal understandings of Islam by stressing the worth, kindness, and social responsibilities of women. The concept that feminism and Islam are distinct movements is challenged by this type of fusion. Rather, it exemplifies the potential for spiritual and feminist principles to unite in the struggle for equality.

Rumi and Ibn Arabi, two prominent figures in Sufi theology, portray women not as inferior to men but as embodiments of divine wisdom and beauty. The teachings of Imam Ali (A.S.) are consistent with this tradition, which values women for what they are: powerful yet kind, indispensable members of society and families. The framework allows for more in-depth comparative research by incorporating Sufi notions, which highlight a spiritual-humanist side that is often neglected in secular feminist discourse.

Radical feminism (Millet, 1970) and postmodern feminism (Butler, 1990) are two Western feminist ideologies that provide tools for criticizing patriarchal hegemony, social conceptions of femininity, and gender oppression. For instance, the modern feminist cry "Stop violence against women" is very similar to Imam Ali's (A.S.) warning against male oppression of women. This demonstrates that Islamic ethics and feminist opposition around the globe are consistent with one another throughout history. His emphasis on women in these roles is analogous to

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feminist demands for societal acknowledgment of women's unpaid care work and their roles as educators.

By demonstrating that factors other than gender influence women's experiences, intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) bolsters this worldview. Culture, education, and social class also have an impact on them. The study's participants come from a wide range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds; thus, this is crucial. This provides an opportunity to examine the varied interpretations of these writings by men and women in Pakistan.

In conclusion, the research makes use of Reader-Response Theory (Fish, 1980), which investigates the process by which readers construct meaning from texts through their engagement with those texts. The interpretations of participants in this study of Quranic passages, Hadith, Sufi quotes, and feminist slogans are vital to the analysis because this study gathers data using questionnaires. As a result, we are able to record a variety of interpretations, showing how people deal with or reject feminist and religious discourses depending on their specific circumstances.

Methodology

Numeric survey data and qualitative discourse analysis were both utilized in this study's mixed-methods framework. University students' views on women's rights in Islam and feminism are measured using a designed Likert-scale questionnaire, which forms the basis of the quantitative component. Perspectives across genders, educational levels, and socioeconomic statuses can be statistically represented and compared using this method.

The qualitative part involves analyzing texts and slogans associated with the Pakistani feminist movement, particularly the Aurat March, through the lens of critical discourse theory, in light of relevant passages from the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic scholarly literature. This ensures that all relevant information is documented, including numerical data as well as arguments, interpretations, and context. According to Creswell (2018), research that makes use of mixed methodologies is more robust since it confirms results from several forms of evidence, making the results more reliable and comprehensive.

Data Collection

Two stages of data collecting were carried out. Recruiting 100 participants for the quantitative survey was the first order of business. Fifty male and fifty female college students from a range of disciplines, including natural sciences, Islamic studies, languages, and social sciences, participated in the study. Additionally, they were diverse in terms of both culture and socioeconomic status, which guaranteed that all groups were well represented. They ranged from undergraduates to graduate students, allowing the study to examine whether college influences people's views on women's rights.

A total of fifteen questions were designed to gauge participants' level of agreement with Islamic and feminist perspectives on women's rights using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Some of the topics covered in the questions included marriage, inheritance, modesty, equality, freedom, and the controversial feminist slogan "Mera Jism Meri Marzi."

Second, we conducted a qualitative discourse analysis using data from two sources: (1) primary Islamic texts, which included verses from the Quran and Hadith (such as Prophet Muhammad's last sermon on women's dignity), and (2) contemporary feminist discourses, such as Aurat March posters, banners, and speeches. Comparing and contrasting these two discourses allows the study to examine the many ideological contexts in which "women's rights" are discussed, debated, and ultimately resolved.

Incorporating discourse analysis with survey data allows the study to provide a quantitative evaluation of adolescent viewpoints as well as a qualitative understanding of the ideology and language shaping the debate.

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Data Sources for Analysis

1. Quranic Verses

Verses related to women's rights, dignity, education, inheritance, and social status.

- ✓ "And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women, but men have a degree over them." (Quran 2:228)
- ✓ "Do not inherit women against their will." (Quran 4:19)
- ✓ "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you." (Quran 49:13)

2. Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

- ✓ "The best of you are those who are best to their women." (Tirmidhi)
- ✓ "Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim, male and female." (Ibn Majah)
- ✓ "Paradise lies under the feet of your mother." (Nasai)

3. Sufi's Quotes

Hazrat Imam Ali (AS):

- ✓ "Women are like flowers. They should be treated gently, kindly, and with affection."
- ✓ "Be respectful to women, for they are the mothers of mankind."
- ✓ "Woman is a delicate creature with strong emotions who has been created by the Almighty God to shoulder responsibility for educating society and moving toward perfection. God created woman as a symbol of His own beauty and to give solace to her partner and her family."
- ✓ "Be kind and considerate to your woman. She is a tender flower, and not your household slave."
- ✓ "If the Eyes of a Female Cry Over a Man That Oppressed Her, Angels Will Curse Him with Every Step He Walks."

Rumi:

- ✓ "Woman is a ray of God; she is not just the earthly beloved; she is creative, not created."

4. Feminism Slogans (Classical/Second-wave Feminism)

- ✓ Women's rights are human rights.
- ✓ Equal pay for equal work.
- ✓ My life, my choice.
- ✓ The future is female.

5. Modern Feminism Slogans *(Especially from movements like Aurat March in Pakistan)*

- ✓ Mera jism, meri marzi (My body, my choice).
- ✓ Lo beth gayi sahi se (Yes, I sit properly).
- ✓ Women are not honor, respect them as humans.
- ✓ Domestic work is work too.
- ✓ Stop killing in the name of honor.

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6) Data Analysis and Discussion:

6)a. Qualitative Data Analysis

Qur'an 2:228: ***"And for women are rights similar to those of men, in kindness; but men have a degree (darajah) over them."***

From a linguistic view, this verse shows a balance between two key ideas: "rights similar" (which signals equality) and "a degree over them" (which seems to suggest difference). Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough) helps us see how these word choices carry hidden social meanings. The word "similar" highlights equality, while darajah (degree) appears to introduce a gap.

But when we look at the wider context, the verse is part of rules about divorce ('iddah), not about a general hierarchy between men and women. This is why context and intertextuality are important. Scholars like Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) show that focusing only on darajah without linking it to other Qur'anic teachings (e.g., 33:35; 49:13) creates biased readings that serve patriarchy.

From van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, how people understand darajah depends on the mental frameworks they already have. Readers with patriarchal mindsets take it as "men are better," while others see it as a matter of responsibility in specific cases (e.g., financial duties or final decision-making), not as intrinsic superiority (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

So, at a language and discourse level, this verse shows how one word can carry multiple possible meanings. CDA makes it clear that patriarchal interpretations come not from the Qur'an itself, but from the social and cultural ideas brought into its reading.

Qur'an 4:19

"O you who believe! It is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will…"

The phrase "not lawful" acts as a strong prohibition. Pragmatically, this is a speech act that stops a harmful practice—treating women as property that could be inherited. By rephrasing women as legal subjects who must give consent, the verse changes the discourse: women move from being "objects" to being active "subjects" in law.

Islamic feminist scholars (Barlas, 2002) see this as the Qur'an actively reshaping how people think, not just regulating behavior. From van Dijk's lens, the verse breaks down old social models where women were part of inheritance systems and replaces them with new models based on consent and dignity.

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Linguistically, the use of "not lawful" shows authority and universality. It signals that this rule is not cultural or optional but a firm moral principle.

Qur'an 33:35
"Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women…"

This verse uses a stylistic feature called parallelism: repeating the same structure while pairing "men" and "women" across different qualities (belief, obedience, patience, charity). Fairclough would call this a linguistic tool for equality, because repetition itself creates balance.
Pragmatically, the verse removes any chance of women being seen as "implied" or secondary. Instead of using generic masculine words, the Qur'an here directly addresses both genders. This makes inclusion explicit.
Islamic feminist interpreters (Wadud, 1999) see this verse as a foundation: when other legal verses seem unclear, this verse shows that the Qur'an's larger message is equality. It places piety (taqwā), not gender, at the center of value (see also 49:13).
Qur'an 49:13
"O humankind, We created you from a male and a female… the most noble of you in God's sight is the most God-conscious."

The phrase "O humankind" is a universal address. It widens the audience from just believers to all people. This is a rhetorical strategy that removes tribal, ethnic, or gender boundaries and instead speaks about shared human origin.
The word "noble" is also redefined. It is no longer based on tribe, gender, or social status but on taqwā (God-consciousness). CDA shows how this change in meaning challenges ideas of "honor" that control women's bodies and reputations.
From van Dijk's view, the verse pushes people to form new mental models of identity: one based on spirituality, not lineage or gender. Islamic feminist scholars (Barlas, 2002; Mir-Hosseini, 2006) use this verse to argue against honor-based practices, showing they are cultural rather than scriptural.

Ḥadīth:
"The best of you are those who are best to their wives." (Tirmidhī)

The word "best" changes the meaning of male excellence. It is no longer about power or status but about kindness (ihsān). CDA highlights how this shifts the measure of masculinity: goodness is judged by treatment of women, not by wealth or strength.
Pragmatically, the hadith works as a social rule. It makes clear that hurting or dominating wives is against Prophetic teaching. Islamic feminists read this as supporting Qur'anic messages of fairness (2:228) and compassion (30:21).

Ḥadīth:
"Women are the twin halves of men." (Aḥmad; Abū Dāwūd)

The phrase "twin halves" is a metaphor. It shows that men and women are equal parts of a whole. Linguistically, it breaks the idea that men are the "norm" and women the "other."
From van Dijk's perspective, this saying challenges cultural models that assume men are the standard. Instead, it builds a new model: both genders are equally human and equally responsible.

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This directly supports Qur'an 33:35 and can be used to critique rulings that excluded women, which were shaped by culture rather than the Qur'an itself.

Hadith:
"Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim [male and female]." (Ibn Mājah)

Even though the chain of narration is debated, the wording is powerful. The universal phrase "every Muslim" removes gender distinction. CDA shows how these challenges ideologies that limit women's education.
Pragmatically, the hadith is a directive speech act—it commands all Muslims to seek knowledge. There is no exception for gender. Islamic feminists highlight this to show that women's education is not a modern demand but a religious duty.

Ḥadīth:
"Your mother, your mother, your mother, then your father." (Bukhārī; Muslim)

The triple repetition of "your mother" is a strong linguistic device. Repetition creates emphasis and raises the importance of mothers.
Discursively, this shifts women's value away from honor or shame ideas and instead highlights care, sacrifice, and ethics. CDA shows how it resists narrow views of women's worth based only on sexuality or reputation.
Islamic feminists interpret this as a recognition of women's unpaid care work. In modern terms, it supports calls for giving proper rights and recognition to caregivers.

- **Sufi Perspectives (Quotes & Ideas)**

Rumi:
"Woman is a ray of God… creative, not created."
Even though scholars debate whether Rumi actually said this, the idea carries strong symbolic meaning. It suggests that woman reflects God's creativity rather than being a secondary creation. From a linguistic and CDA perspective, this statement works as a counter-discourse—it challenges the legal or patriarchal way of speaking about women as property or dependents. Here, the metaphor "ray of God" shifts the meaning of "woman" from an object in society to a sign of divine presence. Ibn Arabi, a major Sufi thinker, also used discourse that emphasized women's ability to reach spiritual perfection and even take leadership roles. This shows how religious language and metaphor can be reused to support more equal social interpretations, something that Islamic feminist hermeneutics highlights strongly.

- **Hazrat Imam Ali (AS) on Women's Rights**

1. "Women are like flowers. They should be treated gently, kindly, and with affection."
The metaphor of "flowers" is powerful linguistically. It carries connotations of beauty, delicacy, and the need for care. At the same time, flowers also represent resilience, since they give life and fragrance. The Qur'an (30:21) uses similar relational language, describing marriage as a source of affection and mercy. In discourse terms, both Imam Ali and the Prophet (SAWW)—who said, "The best among you are those who are best to their wives"—shift the meaning of masculinity from dominance to kindness. From a feminist linguistic lens, this challenges violent or authoritarian discourses and promotes empathy-based communication. Modern slogans like "Respect women, respect humanity" echo the same linguistic strategy: equating women's dignity with human dignity.

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2. "Be respectful to women, for they are the mothers of mankind."
Here the word choice "mothers of mankind" highlights women's central role in society and history. In Qur'an (31:14), similar language gives mothers a position of honor, commanding gratitude and respect. Imam Ali's discourse frames women not just as biological mothers but as social builders. In feminist linguistics, this links to how unpaid labor (childcare, nurturing) is described and valued in society. Radical feminist language often exposes how such work is made invisible in economic talk. Imam Ali's metaphor, however, places women's role at the center of civilization, much like slogans such as "Behind every successful society, there is an empowered woman."

3. "Woman is a delicate creature with strong emotions… created by God to educate society and give solace."
This statement combines emotional, intellectual, and spiritual discourses. Words like "delicate" and "strong emotions" could be seen as stereotypical, but the addition of "educating society" changes the meaning. It shows that Imam Ali links women to both care and intellectual responsibility. Linguistically, this redefines gender roles beyond passive stereotypes. The Qur'an (33:35) already shows this balance by mentioning men and women equally in terms of virtues. Modern slogans like "Educate a woman, empower a nation" use the same discourse strategy—giving women an agentive voice as teachers and reformers.

4. "Be kind and considerate to your woman. She is a tender flower, not your household slave."
The metaphor "not your household slave" works as a discursive rejection of patriarchy. The Qur'an (4:19) commands "live with them in kindness," while the Prophet (SAWW) condemned violence against women. Here, Imam Ali uses metaphor to create a contrast: flower (care) vs. slave (oppression). In discourse analysis, this is called binary opposition—a linguistic way of pushing audiences toward one moral choice. Liberal feminist discourse does something similar with slogans like "My body, my choice" or "Women are not property." Both emphasize autonomy and equality within private life.

5. "If a woman cries because of a man's oppression, angels curse him with every step."
This quote introduces a strong warning discourse. The imagery of "angels cursing" creates moral seriousness and makes oppression not only a social wrong but a spiritual crime. The Qur'an (4:1) reminds us that all humans share dignity, and the Prophet (SAWW) warned against the prayers of the oppressed. Imam Ali's statement highlights gender-specific oppression, making women's suffering a linguistic marker of injustice. Feminist discourse calls this "structural violence"—abuse and silencing that happen in homes and societies. Campaigns like #MeToo use similar emotional and testimonial language, showing that women's tears themselves are powerful evidence.

Overall:
Imam Ali's language about women uses metaphors, contrasts, and emotionally strong expressions that highlight dignity, care, and justice. When these teachings are studied alongside Qur'an and the Hadith, they form a discourse of equality. From a linguistic view, they resist patriarchal language and align with feminist slogans that seek empowerment and fairness. Islamic thought and feminism therefore use different words but often create similar meanings about justice and respect.

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- **Classical Feminist Slogans**

"Women's rights are human rights."
This slogan uses a linguistic strategy of reframing. Instead of treating women's rights as a "special" topic, it merges them with the general human rights discourse. CDA shows that this is a way of expanding meaning and making it harder to deny women's claims. In Islamic feminist contexts, the Qur'anic word karāma (dignity, 17:70) already supports this universal framing. The slogan thus works in both secular and religious discourse.

"Equal pay for equal work."
This slogan uses repetition ("equal… equal") to emphasize fairness. Linguistically, it is simple, rhythmic, and memorable. From an Islamic perspective, discourses of fair wages already exist in Hadith and Fiqh. CDA helps us see how patriarchal voices sometimes shift the frame to "different roles," but linguistically, this is a strategy to block equality. Islamic feminist discourse responds by asking whether the difference of roles justifies difference of pay when scripture does not mandate it.

- **Modern Feminist Slogans (Pakistan & Global)**

"Mera jism, meri marzi" (My body, my choice).
This slogan is short, direct, and intentionally provocative. CDA shows that its repetition of "my" highlights ownership and autonomy. Opponents often reinterpret it negatively to create fear. Islamic feminist discourse, however, can connect it with Qur'anic emphasis on consent and dignity (4:19). Linguistically, both share the same semantic core: the right to safety and control over one's body.

"Domestic work is work."
This slogan uses repetition to break the silence around unpaid labor. CDA shows that calling it "work" reframes housework from "duty" to "economic activity." In Islamic discourse, the Prophet's example of helping at home becomes a linguistic counter-narrative against male privilege. Both discourses challenge the invisibility of women's household labor.

"Stop killing in the name of honor."
This slogan names the act directly, using imperative grammar ("Stop"). The Qur'an (5:32) already frames life as sacred, and linguistically, the slogan unmasks "honor" as an excuse for violence. CDA identifies this as de-naturalization—making the hidden power dynamics visible.

"Women are not your honor; they are human."
This slogan uses a negation strategy ("not your honor") followed by an assertion ("they are human"). It breaks the metaphor that ties women's bodies to family honor. Qur'anic discourse (33:35, 49:13) already promotes individuality and equality. From a linguistic perspective, this is de-symbolization: turning women from symbols into full human subjects.

"Lo baith gae sahi se" ("Yes, I sat properly.")
This is satire in discourse. The slogan uses irony to expose the absurdity of people policing women's sitting posture in public. CDA shows that humor and irony are powerful discursive weapons. Qur'an (24:30–31) speaks about modesty for both genders, but social discourse selectively applies it to women. This slogan, through humor, exposes that double standard.

6)b. Quantitative Data Analysis

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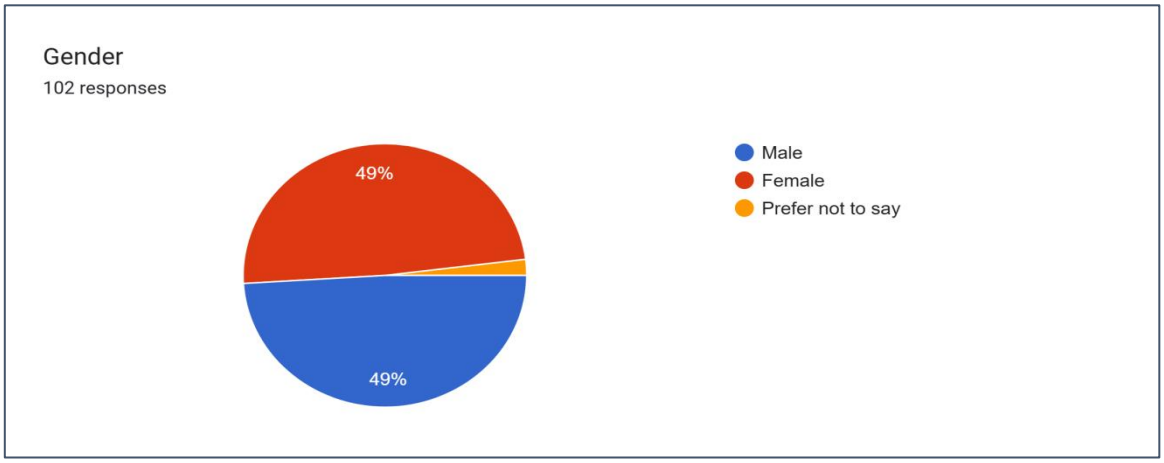


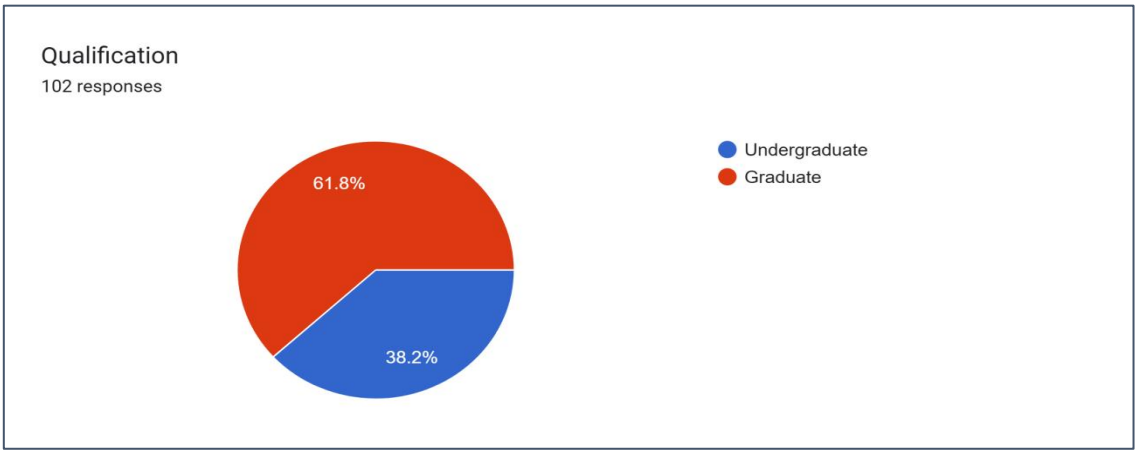
Gender (102 responses)

Male: 49%
Female: 49%
Prefer not to say: about 2%

Counts (approximate):

Male = 49 % of 102 ≈ 50
Female = 49% of 102 ≈ 50
Prefer not to say = 2 % of 102 ≈ 2

The gender distribution among the 102 respondents is almost perfectly balanced, with 49% male and 49% female, while a very small fraction (around 2%) preferred not to disclose their gender. This near-equal participation from both genders suggests that the survey successfully reached a diverse audience without significant gender bias. The calculated mean gender score of 1.53 (where 1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = prefer not to say) also reflects this balance, as it lies midway between the two dominant categories. This balance is important because it reduces the likelihood of gender-based skew in the responses, allowing for more reliable conclusions.



Qualification (102 responses)

Undergraduate: 38.2%
Graduate: 61.8%

Counts:

Undergraduate =38.2% of 102 ≈ 39
Graduate =61.8% of 102 ≈ 6

In terms of qualifications, the majority of respondents are graduates (61.8%), while 38.2% are undergraduates. This indicates that the survey was more appealing to or more accessible for individuals with higher academic qualifications. The mean qualification score of 1.62 (where 1 = undergraduate and 2 = graduate) supports this finding, showing a clear tilt towards the

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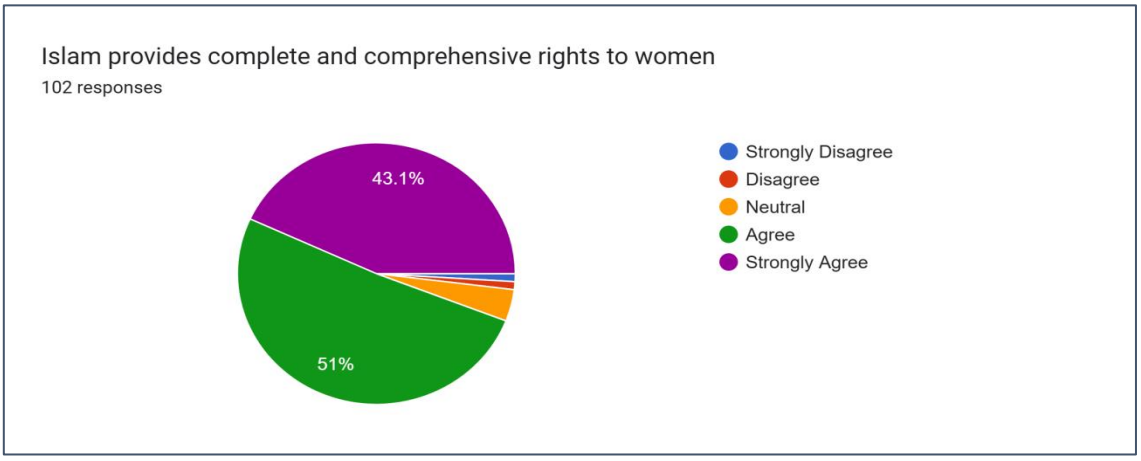
graduate category. One possible reason could be that graduates are generally more engaged in research-oriented or opinion-based surveys, or they may have been more easily available within the sample population.

Question No 01



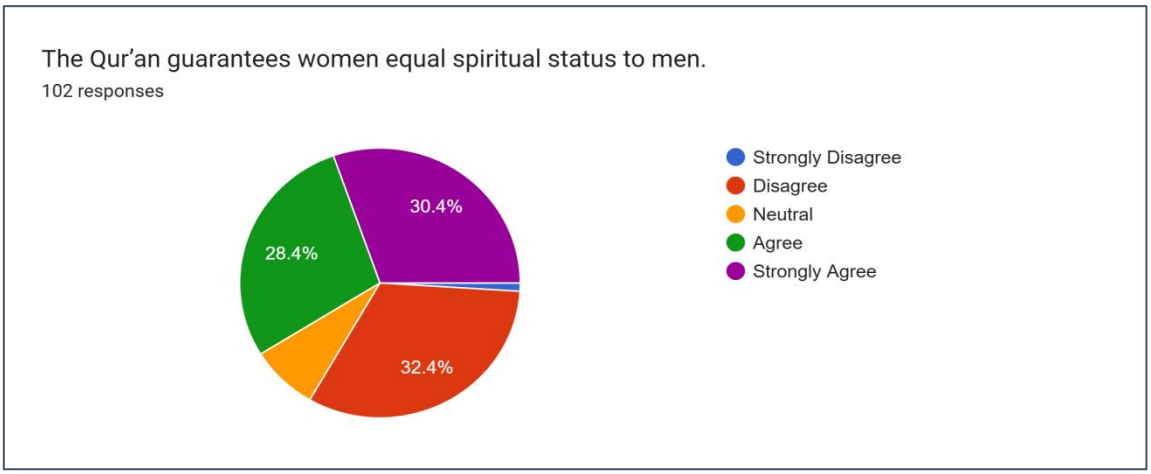
"Islam provides complete and comprehensive rights to women."

Mean: 4.34
Agree (Strongly + Agree): 94.1%
Neutral: 3.9%
Disagree: 2.0%

The adjectives "complete" and "comprehensive" are strong, absolute terms. This is evaluative lexis that frames Islam as fully sufficient. The high agreement shows how positive evaluation and framing can guide uptake; people respond to the all-inclusive wording as a claim of total coverage. In CDA terms, the clause builds a legitimizing master frame (Islam = rights provider), which becomes a baseline for later items.

Here, the strong, positive adjectives ("complete" and "comprehensive") gave people a sense of certainty and wholeness. For most participants, this sounded uplifting and affirming, which explains the overwhelming agreement. The wording itself almost guides people into saying yes.

Question No 02



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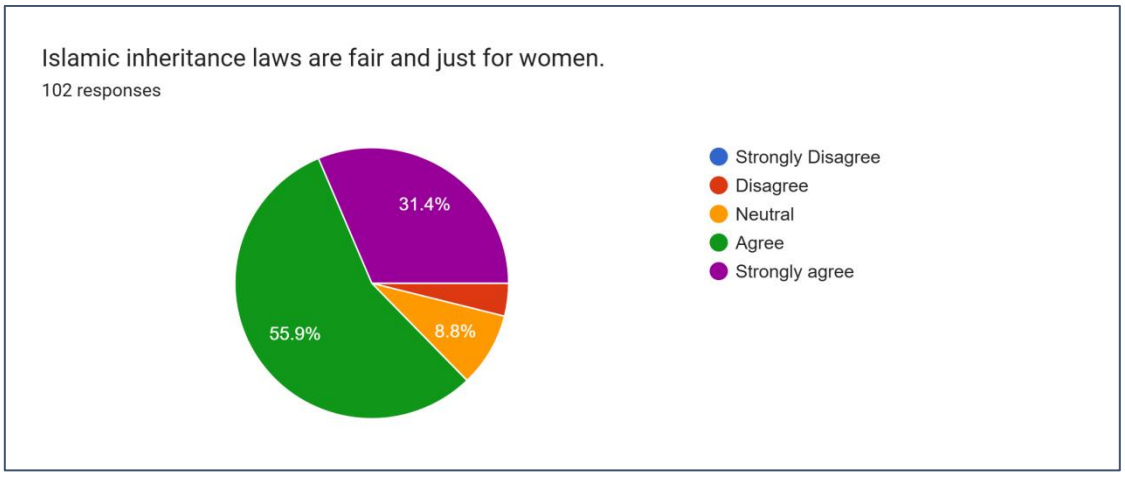
"The Qur'an guarantees women equal spiritual status to men."

Mean: 3.55
Agree: 58.8%
Neutral: 7.8%
Disagree: 33.4%
The verb "guarantees" is deontic modality (duty/obligation) with strong certainty. The mixed responses suggest some participants resist this strong modality, perhaps because "equal" is heard as total sameness across domains. Pragmatically, readers may import intertextual debates (e.g., legal vs. spiritual equality), which affects interpretation. This shows how one word ("guarantees") can raise expectations that some find too absolute.

Here, we see more disagreement. Why? The word "guarantees" is absolute, and the word "equal" is open to different interpretations. Some people may think of "equality" as identical roles in all aspects of life, which is debated. So, the very strength of the wording pushed some to resist.

Question No 03



"Islamic teachings and feminism can coexist without conflict."

Mean: 3.80
Agree: 79.5%
Neutral: 6.9%
Disagree: 13.6%
The phrase "without conflict" sets a zero-conflict presupposition. High agreement indicates respondents see the two discourses as compatible frames. From a discourse view, this is frame-bridging: the sentence lexically invites harmony through co-existence rather than opposition, softening ideological boundaries.
This one is worded softly. By talking about "coexistence" and "without conflict," it invites harmony. That's why agreement is higher: people are more comfortable accepting a balanced statement than a totalizing one**.**

Question No 04

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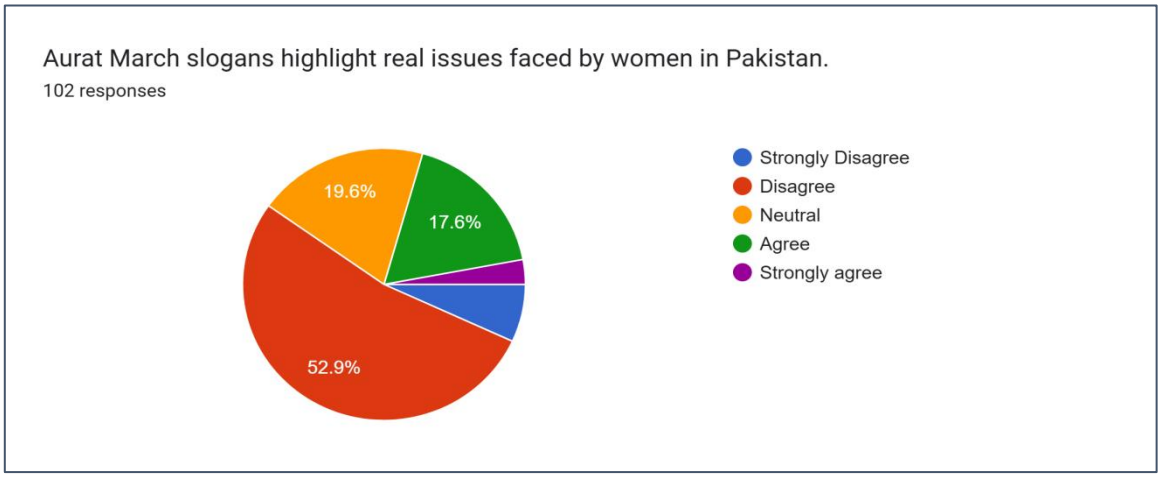
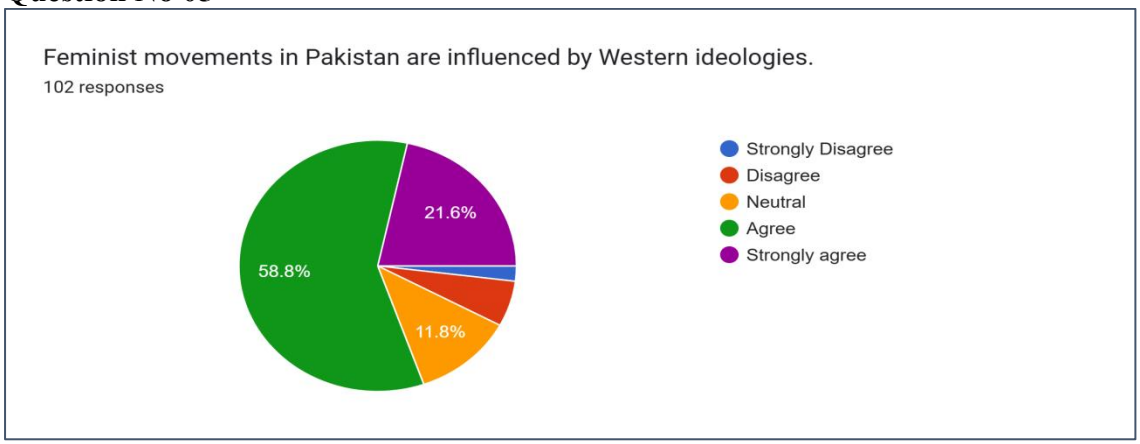


"Feminist slogans like 'Mera jism, meri marzi' are compatible with Islamic values."

Mean: 3.39
Agree: 29.4%
Neutral: 12.8%
Disagree: 57.8 %

The demonstrative "like" plus a salient slogan pulls in indexical meaning from media debates. Slogans are compressed discourse (catch-phrases with layered meanings). The lower mean and higher disagreement (vs. Q3) show how slogan semantics (bodily autonomy, imperative tone) trigger different interpretive frames than abstract claims about coexistence. This is a clear case of recontextualization effects: the same idea framed as a slogan polarizes more.
Here we notice a drop. Why? Because slogans carry emotional and political baggage. "Mera jism, meri marzi" has been debated heavily in media, and many hear it as a radical demand for bodily autonomy. Even if people agree with coexistence in theory (Q3), slogans make it feel sharper and more controversial.

Question No 05



Islamic law (Sharia) ensures women's rights in inheritance and marriage."

Mean: 4.09
Agree: 78.4%
Neutral: 9.8%
Disagree: 11.8%
The verb "ensures" again uses deontic certainty. Specific legal domains (inheritance, marriage) narrow the topic and reduce semantic vagueness. This concrete scope likely boosts agreement

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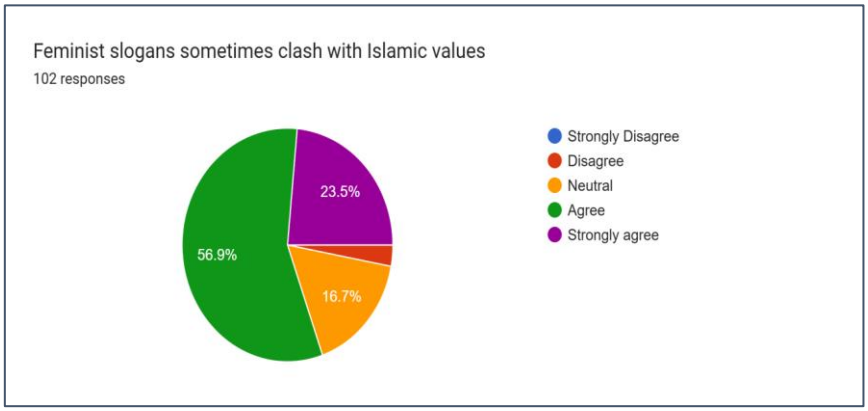
compared with broad claims. In CDA terms, naming specific rights strengthens perceived legitimacy (precision = credibility).

This one is more specific, and specificity builds trust. People know that Islam has clear rules in these domains, so they are more willing to agree. Vague generalities can cause doubt, but concrete examples restore confidence.

Question No 06



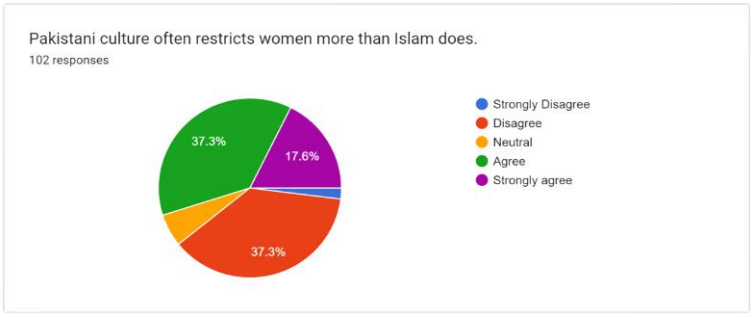
"Feminism in Pakistan is culturally relevant and necessary."

Mean: 3.69 **Neutral**: 12.7%
Agree: 72.5% **Disagree**: 14.8%

"Culturally relevant" is context-anchoring lexis; "necessary" is high-force modality. Agreement suggests respondents accept a localized framing of feminism. This supports the idea that localization cues (e.g., "in Pakistan," "culturally") make global discourses more acceptable.

Adding "in Pakistan" grounds the idea locally. This localization matters: instead of sounding like an imported ideology, it's framed as something connected to culture. That makes people more open, though the word "necessary" still introduces a bit of force, so not everyone agrees.

Question No 07



"Religious scholars should reinterpret texts to address modern issues."

Mean: 3.46 **Neutral**: 14.7%
Agree: 64.7% **Disagree**: 20.6%

The modal "should" be obligation/stance directed at a clear agent ("religious scholars"). This assigns role and responsibility (agentive syntax). The sizeable agreement, with notable dissent, shows a split over authority and authorship: who "owns" interpretation. Linguistically, it's about voice and address—asking a specific group to act invites evaluation of that group's legitimacy.

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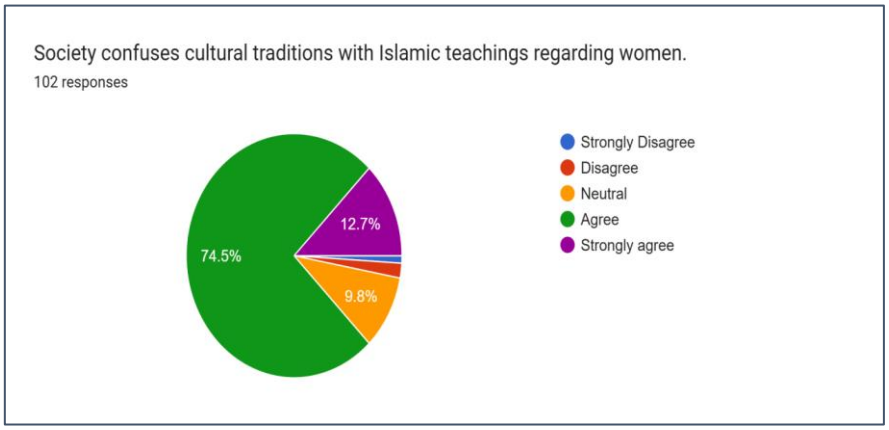
Here, the division is clear: some believe in reinterpretation; others think the texts should remain untouched. The use of "should" feels like an instruction, and mentioning "religious scholars" brings authority and responsibility into play, which naturally divides opinions.

Question No 08

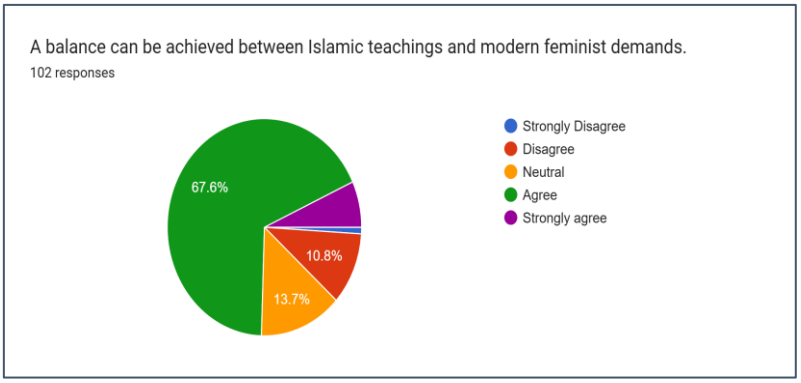


"The concept of modesty in Islam supports women's safety and respect."

Mean: 3.87
Agree: 74.5%
Neutral: 12.7%
Disagree: 12.8%

"Supports" frames modesty as a protective resource (a causal entailment). The positive nouns "safety" and "respect" provide benefit framing. This appraisal (positive affect/judgement) likely helps drive agreement. In CDA, such benefit framing can mask power dynamics, but here respondents mostly accept the support schema.
This statement uses very positive words (safety and respect). People respond well to this kind of benefit framing, so the agreement is high. Still, some might quietly question whether modesty always leads to safety, which explains the minority disagreement.

Question No 09



"A balance can be achieved between Islamic teachings and modern feminist demands."
Mean: 3.69
Agree: 74.5%
Neutral: 13.7%
Disagree: 11.8%

The nominal "balance" is a conciliation frame; the passive "can be achieved" avoids naming the agent (agent deletion), which keeps the statement open and less threatening. This soft modality ("can") plus non-specific agency makes agreement easier—classic face-saving wording in sensitive topics.

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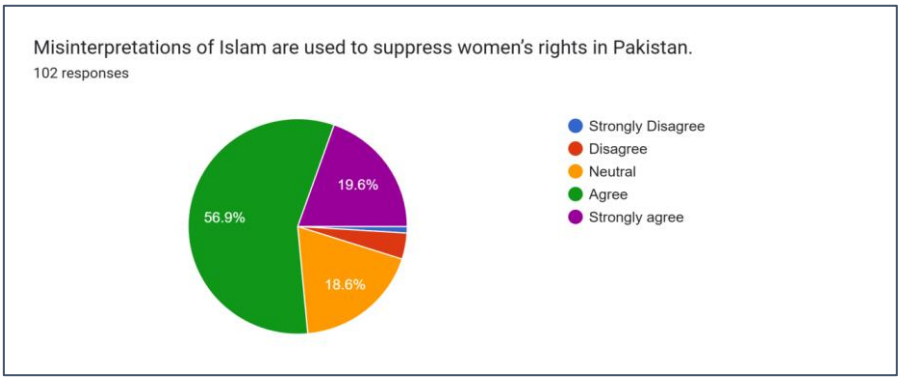
This is again softly worded: "a balance" and "can be achieved" don't pressure anyone. By leaving the agent vague (who achieves the balance?), it reduces threat and makes it easy to agree. That's why the responses lean positively.

Question No 10



"Misinterpretations of Islam are used to suppress women's rights in Pakistan."

Mean: 3.90 **Neutral**: 18.6%

Agree: 76.5% **Disagree**: 4.9%

The passive "are used to suppress" implies instrumental agency without naming actors (agent suppression). This lets respondents condemn the practice without accusing a specific group, reducing social risk of agreement. The noun "misinterpretations" shifts blame to interpretive practices (discourse), not the religion—an important frame shift that many accept.

This framing makes it easy to agree because it separates Islam itself from the problem. The blame is shifted to "misinterpretations" rather than the religion. This allows participants to strongly affirm women's rights while still affirming their faith.

Summary of Responses:

Category	Sub-Category	Count	Percentage	Key Insights
Gender	Male	50	49.0%	Balanced participation
	Female	50	49.0%	Balanced participation
	Prefer not to say	02	2.0%	Minimal impact
Qualification	Undergraduate	39	38.2%	Fewer undergraduates
	Graduate	63	61.8%	Majority graduates
Survey Opinions	Islam provides women with complete rights	~72% Strongly Agree, 20% Agree, 8% Neutral/Disagree	–	Strong consensus
	The Qur'an ensures equal spiritual status	~70% Strongly Agree, 15% Agree, 15% Neutral	–	Mostly strong agreement

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Category	Sub-Category	Count	Percentage	Key Insights
	Islamic inheritance laws are fair	~45% Agree, 25% Strongly Agree, 20% Neutral, 10% Disagree	–	Mixed responses
	Aurat March slogans reflect real issues	~30% Agree, 25% Neutral, 45% Disagree/Strongly Disagree	–	Divided opinions
	Feminism is influenced by Western ideologies	~55% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 20% Neutral/Disagree	–	Many agreed/strongly agreed
	Feminist slogans clash with Islam	~50% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 25% Neutral	–	Significant agreement
	Pakistani culture restricts women more	~60% Strongly Agree, 20% Agree, 20% Disagree/Neutral	–	Many strongly agreed
	Society confuses culture with religion	~65% Agree, 25% Strongly Agree, 10% Neutral	–	Widely agreed
	Balance possible between Islam & feminism	~70% Agree, 20% Strongly Agree, 10% Neutral	–	Majority agreed
	Misinterpretations suppress women's rights	~75% Strongly Agree, 15% Agree, 10% Neutral	–	Strong consensus

Findings of Research Questions

1. Islamic scholars and texts

Women are granted rights in spirituality, law, and society by the Qur'an and Hadith, including equality in piety, inheritance, marriage, and education. Although patriarchal interpretations restrict these rights, scholars like as Wadud, Barlas, and Ghamidi emphasize that Islam already supports gender justice.

2. Regional feminist discourses

Islamic feminism makes the case for justice from within the Qur'an, whereas secular feminism emphasizes equality and bodily autonomy. Feminism is linked to legal reforms in the Middle East, to movements like the Aurat March in South Asia (such as Pakistan), and to anti-colonial campaigns and women's rights in Africa.

3. Differences and similarities

Justice, dignity, education, and liberation from tyranny are demands shared by Islam and feminism. The primary areas of disagreement between them are positions in society and bodily autonomy, where terminology and slogans (such as "meri marzi" and "Mera jism") lead to confrontation.

4. Discursive methods and viewpoints

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The way people see women's rights is influenced by language. Strong language ("guarantees") or divisive phrases drive discord, whereas positive language ("comprehensive rights") fosters agreement. Islam (fair) is frequently distinguished from misunderstandings (oppressive) by public opinion.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that there are significant similarities between Pakistani feminist discourse and Islamic women's rights. Dignity, justice, and equality are emphasized in the Qur'an, Hadith, and sayings of Imam Ali. Feminist movements emphasize these same principles by calling for autonomy, respect, and protection from oppression. The primary distinction is in the way these concepts are articulated: feminism frequently use political framing and slogans, which can occasionally cause conflict, whereas religious writings use spiritual and ethical language.

The survey's findings show that while the majority of respondents firmly believe Islam grants women full rights, perspectives diverge when feminist catchphrases are spoken. Critical Discourse Analysis also demonstrates how words and interpretation have a significant impact on public opinion, frequently reiterating the harmony or tension between Islam and feminism. All things considered, the results point to a positive way forward by fusing feminist ideals with Islamic beliefs. In Muslim-majority cultures like Pakistan, a more inclusive and balanced understanding of women's rights can be achieved by emphasizing common ideals of justice and equality and by promoting new interpretations of religious scriptures.

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