

**RESEARCH PAPER****Religion and Gender Studies: Examining the Intersection****<sup>1</sup>Abdul Qayyum Gondal, and <sup>2</sup>Prof. Dr. Zulkarnain Hatta**

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**\*Corresponding Author:** qayyum.gondal@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The intersection of religion and gender constitutes a captivating and intricate field of study that has increasingly garnered scholarly attention in recent years. In order to understand the complex interactions between gender dynamics and multifaceted intersection of religious ideas, this research paper takes a close look at the junction of gender studies and religion. The aim is to promote a deeper knowledge of how religious beliefs influence and are influenced by society conceptions of gender roles and expectations as scholars delve into sacred texts, theological interpretations, and lived experiences. Based on the understanding that cultural, historical, and social elements play a role in this intersection, the research takes a multifaceted approach to revealing the complex ways that religious beliefs affect, contest, and navigate societal constructs of gender roles and expectations. In order to obtain comprehensive insights and nuanced understandings, this study used mixed approach; qualitative as well as quantitative research methodology by analyzing sacred texts, survey, interviews, theological interpretations, and lived experiences. Recognizing the intricacies of identity and the ways in which many characteristics cross in religious contexts is made easier with the help of Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory. Likewise, the study examines how women function in religious organizations, looking at differences in leadership roles, how religious teachings affect women's autonomy, and how women interact with patriarchal systems. The study also explores how religion affects LGBTQ+ people, looking at how different religious traditions react to non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. The present study offers significant contributions to the current discourse on inclusion, tolerance, and acceptance in religious organizations. It also sheds light on the varied obstacles and prospects faced by persons navigating the confluence of gender and religion.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender Dynamics, Gender Identities, Intersectionality, Religious Beliefs, Social Elements, Traditions, Theological Interpretations, Women Status**Introduction**

The complex connection between gender dynamics and religious ideas has been the subject of scholarly interest due to its varied nature, which has sparked a nuanced investigation of this intersection. The diverse ways in which gender identities are constructed, contested, and negotiated are revealed by the complex tapestry of human experiences within religious contexts. Islam considers women to be a perfect part of society like men. And considers both of them to be equal partners of each other. Like men, women also have freedom of action and will. But if an individual is a perfect part of a society, it does not necessarily follow that every right enjoyed by a person of the society or every characteristic possessed by an individual should also be possessed by another individual.

The historical process of making something much less important for women in the Christian faith has been completely examined by feminist theologians, including Rosemary Radford Reuther (Vuola (2017)). Catholic Church's ban on women becoming priests and the many Protestant religious groups' restrictions on their ability to hold positions of leadership serve as examples of treating people unfairly based on their sex in religious institutions (Nyhagen 2017).

Moreover, the four ancient goals of life, known as the Purusharthas, have traditionally been used to define the specific social obligations attributed to each gender (Kumar 2021). However, modern interpretations coming from feminist groups within the faith are challenging the dominant gender norms in Hinduism. According to Kumar (2021), the "goddess movement" in Hinduism is defined by the devotion of female goddesses and aims to advance women's liberation by critically analyzing and challenging patriarchal interpretations that have dominated throughout history.

Examining the relationship between gender and religion is important because of how it affects people's lives and has wider societal ramifications. Throughout history, religious convictions have been crucial in determining gender roles, influencing power dynamics, and forming society norms. Examining this junction offers an analytical framework for evaluating and assessing the ways in which religious establishments either support or contradict gender inequality in society (Alfred et al, 2019).

A complex interplay between linguistic components, historical context, and interpretive paradigms is shown by the investigation of gender narratives in religious texts. Understanding the reciprocal relationship between beliefs and societal norms requires an understanding of gender roles and attitudes as they are portrayed in religious texts, according to Allen's (2020) approach. The approach indicated above recognizes the importance of placing gender narratives within religious texts and the fact that interpretation is a complex process that is influenced by historical and cultural context. Furthermore, feminism as a focal point highlights the critical viewpoint used to analyze the underlying prejudices in these writings (Matney 2022).

Recognising the place of women in religious institutions is essential to understanding the subtleties of the relationship between gender and religion. Studies have shed light on gender differences in leadership roles, the influence of religious doctrines on women's autonomy, and the manner in which women interact with and resist patriarchal frameworks in religious settings (Miller, 2021). This emphasis acknowledges that conversations on gender equality and women's empowerment must include gender dynamics inside religious organisations.

Women are a very important part of society. Without whom the concept of society is not possible. In general, Islam gave women the same level of humanity as men. God says: "O people! Fear your Lord. Who created you from a single seed and created from it its mate and from them many men and women proliferated." In this verse, men and women are considered to be of the same origin and given equal status in humanity. The subject of debate is Islamic feminist hermeneutics, particularly emphasizing Amina Wadudin's intellectual contributions (Matney 2022). There is perfect equality between man and woman in spiritual and moral field. Just as a man can attain nearness to Allah through struggle and obedience, "Undoubtedly, ladies and gentlemen are equal to each other. There is no difference and contradiction between the two, and this is the proof of the known fact proved by their nature that two similar and similar things have the same order." The term "Kirveld" offers an unbiased depiction of biblical stories along with a critical examination of the power structure inside Christianity (Damle and Damle 2023).

In addition, the lived experiences of people navigating their gender and religious identities, acknowledging the intersections between these identities and other

dimensions like sexual orientation, race, and class are some main factors (Brown, 2020). Gaining an understanding of the complex and nuanced nature of identity is crucial to appreciating the range of opportunities and challenges that people experience at this crossroads. The theory of intersectionality, put out by Kimberlé Crenshaw, provides a fundamental means of understanding the interdependence of diverse social categories and the ways in which these intersections impact people's experiences in religious contexts (Yao et al., 2019).

Although investigation is based on the understanding that the relationship between religion and gender is complex, shaped by social, historical, and cultural factors rather than existing as a single, monolithic entity (Edgell, 2017). As a result of the changing nature of related to the feeling that women and men must be treated equally and intersectional explanation of why something happens the way it does, there is a great deal of overlapping between religious borders and institutions as well as many identities related to male and female status like sexuality, race, and other aspects. The relationships between gender, race, and religion have been studied by academic researchers, such as Amina Wajud (Kasehage 2020). This new field of study draws attention to how male and female status is socially built within religious ideas and recognizes how gender systems people are in separate levels of importance have influenced the development of religious institutions over time.

This study's main goal is to critically cut apart the gender stories that are in a detailed way woven into holy and untouchable writings. What's more, by examining different religions and related to where mountains, rivers, cities, etc., are located areas in the big picture of their historical histories, new understandings of things can be gained and the risks connected with modern people are reduced. Additionally, the study explores how religion affects LGBTQ+ people, recognizing the range of ways that different religious traditions react to non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations. This investigation offers insights into how LGBTQ+ people negotiate their religious and gender identities and adds to the continuing conversations on acceptance, tolerance, and inclusivity within religious communities.

### **Literature Review**

The significance of investigating the intersections between religion and gender studies has come to the attention of academics in both subjects. The main ideas, conceptual frameworks, and empirical discoveries that have come to light in studies at the nexus of gender and religion are explored in depth in this survey of the literature. A more complex knowledge of how gender dynamics both influence and are influenced by religious practices, institutions, and beliefs has resulted from the investigation of this junction.

Examining how religious teachings and practices impact gender roles and expectations is a recurring issue in the literature (Edgell, 2017). Scholars have examined sacred texts, institutional practices, and theological interpretations to identify the ways in which different religions prescribe and uphold different roles for men and women. Research along these lines frequently highlight the various ways that religious teachings either question or support gender inequality in society (Alfred et al., 2019).

Yao et al. (2019) literature has adopted a global viewpoint, examining how the interaction of gender and religion differs in various cultural situations. This comparative method contributes to a global awareness of gender and religious diversity. The literature analysis is further strengthened by comparative studies, including Jackson's (2014) work on gender studies in Pakistan.

According to (Damle and Damle, 2023), reinterpreting the Quran challenges conventional readings that prioritize male perspectives and prevalent patriarchal beliefs. The controversy concerning the function of a female leader during public prayer served as an example of how feminist hermeneutics might be applied to the interpretation of Islamic texts. "Christian Feminist Theology Highlighting Prejudices against Women," written by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, is a thorough analysis of Christian literature that looks for instances of bias against women based on gender.

An increasing concern in the position of women in religious institutions is also reflected in the literature. Scholars have investigated how many women hold leadership roles, how religious teachings affect women's agency, and how women interact with and confront patriarchal norms in religious environments (Meyers et al., 2021). This corpus of study advances our knowledge of the intricate relationships between gender dynamics and religious organisations.

Furthermore, Adams, (2018) research on the negotiation of gender and religion identities frequently highlights the potential and problems that this junction presents to marginalised populations. Researchers have looked into the real-life experiences of people juggling their gender and religious identities. This line of inquiry examines how people's experiences are shaped by the intersections between religious beliefs and other facets of identity, such as race, class, and sexual orientation (Messing et al., 2020).

Research in the nexus of religion and gender has been greatly influenced and guided by theoretical frameworks like feminist theology, queer theory, and intersectionality (Perry & Whitehead, 2021). These frameworks give academics the instruments they need to investigate the complex nature of identity, question normative presumptions, and critically analyse power relations. Because of this, the literature presents a diverse theoretical landscape that enhances and informs empirical research.

## **Material and Methods**

The methodology for the study titled "Religion and Gender Studies: Examining the Intersection" involves a multifaceted approach that aims to comprehensively explore the dynamic relationship between religion and gender. In order to obtain comprehensive insights and nuanced understandings, this study uses a qualitative research methodology that incorporates a number of techniques.

Prior to establishing the theoretical framework and identifying important issues and debates at the junction of religion and gender studies, a thorough literature review will be carried out. Scholarly publications, books, and pertinent theoretical stances that serve as the study's foundation was included in this review.

The study uses qualitative interviews with people of all genders and religious backgrounds to collect varied viewpoints and experiences. Participants have been able to express their personal stories, opinions, and experiences regarding the intersection of religion and gender during these semi-structured interviews. To ensure a rich and diverse dataset, the sample was deliberately chosen to cover a range of ages, cultural origins, and religious affiliations.

Furthermore, a content analysis of religious texts and teachings were carried out in order to investigate the manner in which different religious traditions construct and understand gender. A thematic analysis was performed on the information gathered from participant observation, content analysis, and interviews. The study aims to identify themes and patterns pertaining to the junction of gender and religion. The results were evaluated and contextualised within extant literature and theoretical frameworks.

Thorough coding and classification will improve the validity and dependability of the study's findings.

In order to collect quantitative data on attitudes, beliefs, and experiences connected to gender and religion, a survey with closed-ended questions were given to a wider sample in order to identify broader trends and patterns. Statistical techniques were employed to analyse the data, enabling a more methodical investigation of correlations and relationships among a broader set of participants. The goal of this mixed-methods methodology was to combine the breadth of quantitative patterns with the depth of qualitative insights to offer a comprehensive and rigorous investigation of the relationship between religion and gender.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of the study on "Religion and Gender Studies: Examining the Intersection" revealed multifaceted insights into the complex relationship between religion and gender. Qualitative results from participant observations and in-depth interviews showed a range of viewpoints and experiences within various religious contexts. The narratives presented by the participants showcased the intersectional character of their identities, demonstrating the ways in which religious beliefs influence and interact with gender norms and expectations. Religious text content analysis revealed both constrictive and liberating interpretations of gender and highlighted the complex ways in which gender is created within particular traditions.

Larger themes and patterns were further elucidated by quantitative survey results. Correlations between specific religious affiliations and specific gender norms or responsibilities were found through statistical research. According to Lata et al. (2021), the viewpoints stated above are often overlooked in the conversation surrounding religion, yet they provide important insights into the complex elements that affect religious participation. Furthermore, the survey data revealed differences in how religion affects gender attitudes across demographic variables like age, education level, and cultural background. A thorough investigation was made possible by the mixed-methods approach, which was able to capture the breadth of overarching tendencies as well as the depth of individual experiences.

The discussion of these results delves into the implications for both religious studies and gender studies. According Ziersch et al. (2020), women actively participate in many aspects of religious observance, yet they still face barriers to achieving prominent roles in many religious traditions. Discussing how people negotiate their gender identities in religious situations allows for a more nuanced understanding of identity, agency, and social norms. The study challenges preconceived notions about how religion affects gender roles and highlights the value of appreciating the variety of experiences that exist within religious communities. According to Van Rossum (2021) the comparative analysis of many religions and areas across the globe offers significant insights into the diverse manifestations of religious gender standards. The results also highlight the necessity of using an intersectional lens to examine how other variables, such as culture and socioeconomic class, connect with religion and gender dynamics.

Religious settings frequently enforce modesty laws, which support patriarchal and gender norms and have particular effects on women. As mentioned by Raday (2016), in the Islamic culture, required modesty practices like the hijab can be seen as tools used to impose patriarchal control over women's behavior and bodies. However, within the framework of Islamic teachings, Islamic feminist groups actively challenge this conventional wisdom and push for alternative interpretations that value personal autonomy and a revised definition of modesty (Raday 2016). Similar to this, women's behavior and appearance are influenced by religious traditions' adherence to modesty

ideals, which often reflect deeply rooted patriarchal power structures residing inside religious institutions.

As Religious organizations usually maintain boundaries between genders and have an impact on the roles and opportunities that are open to people. Ziersch et al. (2020), have brought it to light. Certain customs, like the use of gender-segregated prayer rooms and the prohibition against women participating in certain rituals, are visible indicators of the observance of deeply ingrained institutional norms in Orthodox Jewish communities. Similar restrictions on leadership roles based on gender are enforced by the Catholic Church, which maintains the custom of an entirely male priesthood. The previously noted regional differences highlight the way in which religious teachings and cultural nuances overlap, impacting gender dynamics in indigenous civilizations (Singh & Vom Hau 2016).

Moreover, the revival of religious frameworks and organizational standards holds the key to transformation. It is a great chance to question and even change accepted norms when religious writings and teachings are critically examined and reinterpreted (Tomkinson 2023). Historical occurrences like the American Civil Rights Movement and the Protestant Reformation provide examples of how religious leaders and beliefs challenging established power systems led to significant changes in society (Gantioler et al., 2023). According to Green (2021), feminist analyses of today, such as Carol Christ's studies, critically reevaluate these representations in order to offer different narratives of empowerment based solely on language.

Similarly, the investigation of Wondimagegn et al., (2020) it has mentioned that the convergence of disability and normative gender within religious contexts represents an unforeseen progression. It has been argued by Bachtiger and Schwaiger (2022) that individuals with disabilities who reside in religious institutions frequently encounter many obstacles, encompassing physical accessibility issues, limited linguistic proficiency, and inadequate inclusive housing options. The experiences of individuals underscore the necessity of implementing religious practices that are more inclusive, accommodating diverse capacities, and challenging conventional gender, Edgell (2017) paper on the relationship between language and gender narratives in the text falls short.

This research offered insights for religious scholars, practitioners, and policymakers looking to promote inclusivity and resolve gender-based disparities within religious communities by identifying certain religious teachings or practices that may influence gender norms. Additionally, the study's quantitative component has given empirical evidence to support or question existing theoretical frameworks, expanding the scholarly conversation on the junction of religion and gender.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, investigating the relationship between gender studies and religion has produced a wealth of information about the complex relationships that influence human lives. The ways in which different religion traditions support or oppose societal gender inequality have been thoroughly studied by academics, illuminating the manner in which religious beliefs both impact and are influenced by gender roles. The complex examination of lived experiences at this intersection has revealed the complexity of identity and highlighted the necessity of viewing the world through an intersectional lens that takes gender and religious identities into account in addition to race, class, and sexual orientation. The resulting body of work highlights the difficulties in navigating one's gender and religious identities and provides insightful viewpoints on the difficulties people encounter as well as the possibility of resilience and empowerment for marginalised communities.

In addition, the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality, feminist theology, and queer theory have greatly influenced and guided this field's study. With the aid of these frameworks, academics can scrutinise power dynamics, question normative presumptions, and investigate the various ways in which identity manifests itself in religious contexts. It is clear that the intersection of religion and gender studies greatly contributes to larger discourses on social justice, inclusivity, and the recognition of varied perspectives within religious communities globally as scholars continue to work in this dynamic and ever-evolving subject. In the context of religion and gender studies, the intricate relationships that shape people's lives individually and in communities will be better understood as the complex interplay between religious beliefs, practices, and gender dynamics is further explored through ongoing research.

Notably, the complex power relations within religious communities and how they affect societal developments are made clear by the expanding fields of religion and gender studies, which are influenced by feminist and intersectional ideas. This emerging field has the ability to fundamentally alter institutional and religious structures globally by purposefully elevating marginalized perspectives and employing participatory research methods. This means that it can foster a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between gender and religion. Understanding these effects and transformative possibilities in religious settings clarifies the dynamic nature of religion's influence on social structures. Scholars and activists create possibilities for meaningful and progressive changes in religious organizations by acknowledging and comprehending power relations. The approach entails reorganizing theological frameworks and cultivating religious communities that are more socially conscious and inclusive.

### **Recommendations**

- First of all, it is suggested that more thorough and inclusive approaches to intersectionality be used in future study in the field of Religion and Gender Studies.
- Second, more research is required to determine how religious teachings affect LGBTQ+ people, with a focus on developing inclusive environments within religious communities.
- Recognising the intersectionality of many dimensions of identity, academics should endeavour to include a wider range of identity characteristics in their analyses, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and disability.
- This will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how multiple aspects of identity intersect and shape individuals' experiences within religious contexts.
- In order to capture the complexity of gender and religious dynamics across various cultural and geographic contexts, researchers should also conduct cross-cultural studies. This will help to build a more global perspective on the intersection.

The goal of research should be to create methods for bridging the divide between religious beliefs and the acceptance of different gender and sexual identities. Moreover, recommendations for developing educational programs within religious institutions, aimed at promoting inclusivity and tolerance, can play a crucial role in creating environments that affirm the diverse identities of all individuals. All things considered, creating an atmosphere that is receptive to discussion and comprehension between gender identities and religions will support more inclusive and supportive religious settings.

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