

## The Concept of Gender Equality and Equity: An Islamic View

MOHAMED SULTHAN ISMIYA BEGUM\*, INDRIATY ISMAIL & ZUL' AZMI  
YAAKOB<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*Equality, equity and justice are the most frequently discussed concepts that have received much attention in modern times. However, equality is emphasised regardless of gender differences, and it remains a theory. Meanwhile, equity is a practical way to achieve equality that considers human nature. In this sense, justice is the closest term to equity. Although it is used in legal areas, all Islamic doctrines are built upon justice. Hence, justice is a more general concept. These concepts have not been clearly defined, and some people view them as one. Therefore, this study conducts qualitative-based research to illuminate the differences between these terms. This undertaking attempts to indicate the connection between the concepts of justice from an Islamic point of view. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. The Quran is used as a primary source, and written materials, including journal articles, books and web articles, are used as secondary sources. Findings show that gender equality, equity and justice are different concepts. Nevertheless, the objective of equality and equity is to promote justice among the people. The study also finds that gender equality is not acceptable in all matters. Islam considers gender equity more important than equality because it is more closely related to the doctrine of justice.*

**Keywords:** *Equality, Equity, Justice, Islam, Gender*

### INTRODUCTION

Feminism introduced several terms, among which gender equality and equity emerge as two important expressions. These ideas are considered among the concepts used to analyse the function of gender (Abdulhameed 2019). Likewise, Ismail et al. (2020) claim that equality means being equal in rights, status, advantages, opportunities, and so. And being, making, or becoming equal or uniform. Some scholars have also interpreted the words justice and fairness as synonymous (Elias 2018), thus creating a lot of confusion in understanding the true meaning of equality. Therefore, these concepts are often discussed in scholarly articles, with various studies illustrating the terms 'gender equality, equity' and 'justice'. Equality refers to the fact that men and women are equal in all aspects of life without any discrimination (Austria 2014; Mubarik 2017; Vidanapathirana et al. 2017; Susilawati et al. 2019 and Ibnouf 2019). Arifin (2019) discussed

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<sup>1</sup> **Mohamed Sulthan Ismiya Begum\*** (Corresponding Author), M.A. candidate at the Research Centre for Theology & Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM Bangi, Selangor, MALAYSIA. Email: [P118544@siswa.ukm.edu.my](mailto:P118544@siswa.ukm.edu.my); **Indriaty Ismail** PhD, is a Senior Lecturer at the Research Centre for Theology & Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM Bangi, Selangor, MALAYSIA. Email: [indriaty@ukm.edu.my](mailto:indriaty@ukm.edu.my); **Zul' Azmi Yaakob** Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer at the Research Centre for Theology & Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM Bangi, Selangor, MALAYSIA. Email: [zulazmi@ukm.edu.my](mailto:zulazmi@ukm.edu.my)

additional concepts, such as the diverse behaviours, desires and needs of men and women who are equally acknowledged, respected and favoured. Ali and Buratai (2020) attempt to determine whether gender equality is just or civilised. Ultimately, they demonstrate that this idea is not just. Meanwhile, equity assumes that men and women are not identical. Hamisan et al. (2021) indicate that gender equity means equality in the treatment of men and women. Therefore, considering their differences, men and women treat each other well. Justice has a wider meaning than these two concepts in general (Elias 2018). Although Islam does not introduce the words equality and equity, however, they contain in themselves the meaning that they express. Likewise, justice is the basic tenet of Islam, which has a wide vision of justice. Elias (2018) points out that Arabic has two terms, *al-'adl* and *al-qist*, which deal with the sense of justice. However, they reflect a different but complementary notion of justice. In English, these terms correspond to equality and equity. Therefore, Badawi (1980) points out that equity is considered a close term to justice in Islam. Even though justice is used in law, it is seen as a part of Islamic moral teaching. It is a concept based on ethic, and what is morally correct is viewed as abstract. However, the understanding of 'equality, equity and justice' has created confusion. By knowing the differences among these terms, the principle of equality can be clearly defined, thus requiring a detailed explanation. Are these three terms the same, or do differences exist among them? What is the doctrine of Islam in this regard? On the basis of these questions, this study attempts to show the differences among them and indicate their connection with the concepts of justice from an Islamic point of view. Given that this study involves qualitative-based research, the above objectives were examined using primary and secondary sources. The Quran was used as a primary source, and some written materials, including journal articles, books and web articles, were used as secondary sources. The collected data were analysed using the content analysis method. Findings show that gender equality, equity and justice are different concepts. However, the objective of equality and equity is to promote justice among the people. Gender equality has been found to be not acceptable in all matters. Notably, Islam considers gender equity more important than equality because it is more closely related to the doctrine of justice.

### **EQUALITY VS. EQUITY**

The terms equality, equity and justice have been discussed frequently in the relevant research. The feminist movement in the West advocated for women's rights and responsibilities in society at large (Shehu & Zejno 2015). Gender equality is a word borrowed from the feminist movement in the West, which attempted to combat Western cultural patriarchy (Trisnawati 2016). This term was introduced after the formation of feminist thought in the 20th century (Anon, n.d.). Among many terms that feminism developed to explain gender as a socially assigned function for both sexes are gender equality and equity, which are considered among the concepts used for analysing the function of gender (Abdulhameed 2019). The battle for gender equality is inextricably linked to the social upheaval, economic, political and Westernisation that occurred during the period, especially amid the rise of liberalism, which brought forth the idea's individual freedom and equality (Trisnawati 2016). Equality, which comes from the root meaning 'to be equal' (Elias 2018), is synonymous with the meaning of equal or similar (Kalender 2022). Originally known as 'égalité' in French, this idea later changed to 'egalitarianism'. Gender equality made history as the first declaration of women's rights in Western nations at the end of the 18th century. It was first addressed as a universal issue by Mary Wollstonecraft. Following the Declaration on the Equality

of Women (1975) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, intergovernmental organisations later adopted this term worldwide (Hamisan et al., 2021). Hence, gender equality and justice have been linked to international human rights instruments, such as CEDAW. The first rule of CEDAW states that all humanity is free by birth and equal in rights, and the second rule says that no discrimination should be done based on race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, or property (Rasmin & Issadeen 2015). Although gender equality is difficult to define, the United Nations (UN) defines it as the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women, as well as girls and boys. Most researchers agree with this definition, including Austria (2014), Mubarik (2017), Vidanapathirana et al. (2017) and Susilawati et al. (2019). Ismail et al. (2020) claim that equality means being equal in rights, status, advantages, opportunities, etc. and being, making or becoming equal or uniform. Moreover, it is fundamentally related to human rights.

Equality can be divided into two categories: acceptable and unacceptable. Hence, this concept cannot be completely refuted. People of both genders must be treated equally in some matters, and any government must treat its subjects in this way regardless of their religion, class, creed, or gender. Thus, the public demands equal rights in the political, social and economic spheres. Here, equality is welcomed as an aspect of acceptance, and both genders are equal in the above matters. In other words, equality can be defined as treating everyone the same regardless of their needs and requirements. Whatever the individual's necessity may be, it is ignored to promote the ideal of justice and equal treatment. This scenario depicts an unacceptable equal-opportunity policy. For instance, a father assigns the same work to all members of his family. These family members include children, adults, boys and girls. Here, age and gender differences among the members are not considered. Work has treated everyone equally; justice is not mentioned, and the results are not uniform because age and gender can affect the result. In this sense, thinking that men and women should be equal in all respects, as the feminist movement says, perpetuates a wrong view of equality. Absolute equality is not fair for men and women, the old and the young, the strong and the weak, the poor and the rich, the healthy and the sick, and the sane and the insane. Therefore, Austria (2014) highlights the importance of equity at this point.

Equity comes from the root meaning 'to distribute' (Elias 2018). It can be defined as the quality of treating individuals fairly based on their needs and requirements. This concept does not entail that an equal amount should be distributed to each individual. On the contrary, it highlights that resources should be distributed based on people's needs. In other words, Hamisan et al. (2021) refer to equity as equality in the treatment of men and women. This notion can be understood more clearly by taking the same example given to illustrate equality. Hence, a father assigns the same work to all members of his family. However, considering their age and gender, he shares the work accordingly: the difficult part of work is given to boys, and girls are given easy work. In this way, old people and children are shared; everyone is given equal work, but the nature of the work is different. Here, everyone is treated according to his or her age and gender status. The result is justice, which creates true equality or fair equality. Wan Fariza Alyati (2017) and Bisati (2018) indicate that most societies recognise that the important thing is not to focus on superficial procedural equality but to provide substantive equality for all its citizens. Society must treat people justly according to their needs and circumstances. Humans favour substantive equality over procedural equality because we recognise that the latter allows for justice. Those with disabilities are accommodated in our workplaces, schools and commercial areas. We acknowledge the need

for social services to take care of the impoverished in society. Meanwhile, the wealthy are subject to taxes. All these ideas promote substantive equality, equity and justice. Hence, Adeel (2010) shows the differentiation between equity and equality. He indicates that the equality of rights entails their similarity as well. However, they are two different concepts. Equality refers to the condition of being equal in degree and value, whereas similarity means uniformity.

The term 'justice' has a broad meaning (Mirakhor and Askari (2017). Zuhair Al-Khwelid (2013) explains that justice is given. Moreover, Al-Khwelid states that it refers to the equitable distribution of resources among individuals and other significant connotations. Linguistically, justice is the exact opposite of injustice. It is the process of rewarding someone for each good action they commit with another good deed and for each terrible deed they commit with another bad deed. Justice also upholds the equality of two things. Idiomatically, it is defined as the righteousness and intent of things in the soul. The term justice means that a person gives himself duties and accepts them. Furthermore, justice entails that a person is upright on the paths of truth by refraining from what the religion has forbidden, that the matter is used in its proper place and time, faces and quantities without extravagance, no shortening, no forwarding, and no delay. Philosophically, justice is fairness and balance, thus granting each person their due. Justice contrasts with equality in that the former is a political idea with social and economic implications whereas the latter is a moral notion with legal and judicial implications.

Justice means the treatment of people fairly, the quality of being fair or reasonable, or a legal system used to punish people who have committed a crime. Although justice does not mean that everyone has the same rights and opportunities, it entails that everyone should receive what is right and fair for him or her (Ismail et al. 2020). In other words, gender justice means different things to different people. For instance, it is connected to human development, which entails ending and rectifying existing disparities between both genders. Sustainable development and developmental goals cannot be accomplished without sustainable gender equality in practice (Ali & Buratai, 2020). Moreover, justice is reflected in both equality and equity, where equality is acceptable in some cases and unacceptable in others. Equality stands for the equal status that everyone enjoys in terms of rights, duties, opportunities and resources. In this case, justice reflects similarly. For example, the government provides equal rights to both men and women, who receive equal responsibilities or duties when they are employed in the labour market. In this way, the scenario provides opportunities for everyone to participate in politics. The resources of the country belong to all, regardless of gender, colour, race or religion. In some cases, such as appointing positions based on people's merit or distributing financial aid among those in need, any government should apply the principle of fairness, not equality. However, at the time of implementation, the government must provide equal rights to education for all and classify students according to their age. Likewise, duties and responsibilities are different according to everyone's position. Career opportunities are offered to fit everyone's qualifications, and government resources are offered to companies based on their needs. Here, justice is reflected in both aspects. In contrast, equality assumes that everyone should be given equal treatment in the above categories regardless of sex, merit, needs, circumstance, etc. This notion is not equal but is instead unjust. Hence, the above explanations demonstrate that equality and equity are different concepts and that justice is based on equality and equity both in the comprehensive and general sense.

## The Islamic View on Equality and Equity and the Connection between the Justices

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) makes efforts to promote women's dignity through the revision of the Jahiliyyah tradition. This tradition is the basis for the formation of the concepts of equality and justice in Islamic law (Cholil & Sudirman 2019). Even in Islam, the words 'equality,' 'equity,' and 'justice' are used interchangeably but have different meanings. Two words in the Quran have the meaning 'justice': *al-adl* (general justice) and *al-qist* (interrelational or socioeconomic justice). *Al-adl* comes from the root meaning 'to be equal', and *al-qist* comes from the root meaning 'to distribute'. In English, these terms correspond to equality and equity, and they reflect different but complementary notions of justice (Elias 2018). Hassan and Mollah (2018) state that Islamic ethics describe the first element of justice with the two words '*adl*' and '*qist*' (justice and equity). In the Islamic way of life, Muslims are encouraged to behave justly toward all. Just behaviour is tied to an individual's verified faith as a Muslim: Be just! Justice is nearest to piety (Quran Surah al-Maidha 5: 8). Mirakhor and Askari (2017) point out that *adl* is comprehensive. It refers to observing the rules not only with respect to conduct that affects others but also those that affect oneself. That is, one can be '*adil*' (the righteous) or '*zalim*' (the unrighteous) to oneself. *Qist* refers to compliance with rules that affect others. Complying with the rules prescribed by Allah results in achieving both *adl* and *qist*, whereas violating them leads to injustice. Justice (*al-adl*) is a fundamental objective of the creator for humans. One crucial axiom of Iman is that Allah (S.W.T) is just and has prescribed justice for humans (see, for example, Quran 6: verse 115, 16: verse 90). They are asked to be just (*adil*) to themselves as well as to others (Quran 5: verse 8; 6: verse 152) and to observe interpersonal justice (*al-qist*) when dealing with others of their kind and the rest of creation (see, for example, Quran 2: verses 231; 4: verse 64; 7: verse 23). As mentioned earlier, the establishment of interpersonal justice is a crucial function of prophets and messengers (two terms in the Quran referring to justice). *Adl* (general justice) and *qist* (interrelation or socioeconomic justice), which constitute the foundation of rules and behaviours, have the same antonym: *zulm* (injustice).

On the one hand, the term justice (*adl*) applies to the concepts of balance and equilibrium. It means proportionately doing things and avoiding extremes. Thus, a 'balanced' transaction is also just. Khadduri (1984) claims that literally, the word *adl* is an abstract noun derived from the verb '*adala*'. It has several meanings: firstly, to straighten or to sit straight, to amend or modify; secondly, to run away, depart, or deflect from one (wrong) path to the other (right) one; thirdly, to be equal or equivalent, to be equal or match, or to equalise; fourthly, to balance or counterbalance, to weigh, or to be in a state of equilibrium. Finally, *adl* (or *idl*) may also be a literal expression that is indirectly related to justice. On the other hand, *qist* means to give everyone and everything their proper due. Overall, justice as described by *adl* and *qist* involves maintaining the balance between the needs of the body, mind and soul while providing everyone and everything their due (Hassan and Mollah 2018).

Meanwhile, justice, or *adl*, literally means 'placing everything in its right position and giving everyone their rightful due' (Mirakhor and Askari 2017). It constitutes the foundation of rules and behaviours. *adl* requires that everything—every action and every thought—be placed

where Allah (s.w.t) has specified. Any misplacement, that is, a violation of a rule, leads to injustice. According to Al-Quradagi, *al-adl* (justice) is deemed one of the fundamental principles on which not only Islamic Shari'ah is based but also the creation of heavens and earth. *Al-adl* is indicated by the fact that this term and its derivatives are mentioned in the Quran 28 times. Moreover, its synonym, *al-qist* (equity), is mentioned 27 times in the Quran (Selim 2015). In general, *adl* (justice) includes all aspects, and each aspect is given a different name based on its meaning. As such, equality is also a part of justice. The Quran does not have a separate word for 'equality'. However, Islam considers equality in all forms of justice. Hence, Khadduri (1984) indicates that every aspect of justice produces several words, and the most common is '*adl*'. Moreover, several synonyms exist, and the most important of which are the following: *qist*, *qasd*, *insiqama*, *wasat*, *nasib*, *hissa*, *mizan*. The antonym of *adl* is not a modified spelling of the word *adl* denoting its negative meaning, as is the counterword 'injustice' to 'justice' in English. Instead, an entirely different word, *jawr*, is used. *Jawr* also has several synonyms. Some express a slightly different shade of meaning, such as *zulm* (wrongdoing), *tughyan* (tyranny), *mayl* (inclination), *inhiraf* (deviation) and others. The notion of *adl* as equality or equalising is used in the sense of equating one thing to another. Therefore, its meaning can be expressed by comparing one thing to another. This meaning may be expressed either in a qualitative or quantitative term. The first term refers to the abstract principle of equality, which means equality before the law or having equal rights. The second, which emphasises the principle of distributive justice, is perhaps best expressed in such terms as *nasib* and *qist* (share), *qistas* and *mizan* (scale) and *taqwīn* (straightening). The notions of balance, temperance and moderation may be implied in the words *ta'dil*, *qasd* and *wasat*.

In terms of equality, although Islam does not use the terms 'egalitarianism' or 'equality' anywhere, it emphasises the word 'justice'. Hence, overall equality is considered in *adl* (equality), which has the principle of equality in itself. As already mentioned, the aspect of equality can be viewed in two ways: acceptable and unacceptable. Islam recognises that all people are human and have equal access to rights, duties, responsibilities, resources and opportunities beyond any differences. The Holy Quran uses the word '*musawah*', which is derived from the verb '*istawa*', to denote equality and inequality in many places. In particular, 21 places exist. This term is used in the sense that both men and women are equal. For instance, they are equal in good deeds (Quran, Nisa: 124), equal in talaq (Quran, Nisa', 4: 130), equal in faith (Quran, An-Nahl, 16: 97), equal in creation (Quran, Al-Hujurath, 49: 13), equal in property left by deceased (Varasath) (Quran, al-Nisa, 4: 7), equal in duties and sin (Quran, Ahzab, 33: 24), equal in family life (Quran, Nisa, 4: 35), equal in evidence (Quran, al-Nur, 24: 6–9), equal in action and reward (Quran, Al Ghafir, 40: 40, Al-Fath, 48: 5 and Al-Ahzab 33:35), etc. These verses were quoted as examples only. As such, many other verses mention both men and women and specify the directions in their regard. Aside from these portions, hundreds of verses take the form of addresses, O mankind or 'O believers', which cover both men and women. In this context, Islam emphasises that everyone has non-discriminatory equality in spiritual matters, religious worship, economic and socio-political rights, etc. It entails treating everyone equally and without discrimination. Doing so is the equivalent of justice. Thus, Islam does not completely reject the concept of equality, as all are God's creations regardless of colour, language, caste or religion. Moreover, ethnic males and females are all equal. Mesbah et al. (1990) indicate that Islam considers men and women equal as far as basic human rights are concerned. It not only recognises human personalities for both but also considers them equal in all rights and human privileges.

Therefore, the scholar Abdullah bin Ahmed Al-Nasafi, justice is equal rights among creatures and each individual obtaining his right. In addition, Alaa Al-Din Al-Khazen expresses that justice entails that everyone is equal in reward. Hence, if the work is good, then the reward is good; if the work is evil, then the reward is evil (Al-Baghdadi 2021). Consequently, gender equality is considered *adl* (equality of justice) in this context.

In general, equality (*adl*) and equity (*qist*) are the same and can be used interchangeably. As Allah says in the Quran, Surah al-Nisa: 135:

O you who have faith, stand firm in equity (*qist*) as witnesses for Allah, even if it were against yourselves, your parents, or your relatives. Whether rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. Follow not your desires, so that you may be just (*ta'dilu*).

Likewise, in another verse, Surat al-Ma'idah, verse 8 (Quran 5:8), Allah says,

O you who have faith, stand firm for Allah as witnesses in equity (*Qist*), and let not the hatred of people cause you to not be just'. Be just (*idlu*), for that is nearer righteousness.

These two verses are the foundation of the concept of justice in Islam. Justice should be equal for all regardless of social status, race, religion, ethnicity, gender and so on. Here, treating everyone fairly without discrimination is meant as equity. It is considered fair to do so, thus demonstrating that equality (*adl*) is used as a synonym for equity (*qist*). Here, the word equity is used to denote the equality of justice without prejudice.

'Equity is used here to mean justice and overall equality in the totality of rights and responsibilities of both genders and allows for the possibility of variations in specific items within the overall balance and equality... it should be added that, from an Islamic perspective, the roles of men and women are complementary and cooperative rather than competitive' (Badawi, 1995: 47). In Islam, the word 'equity' is preferred to 'equality', which is sometimes interpreted to signify general equality rather than total equality in every evaluation. When we talk about equity, we mean that men and women should have equal access to all their rights and obligations. It excludes the possibility of variances in certain aspects of overall equality and balance (Rahathunnisa & Suha 2022).

Hence, setting two things equal does not necessarily produce justice. In several other portions, Allah mentioned that treating different aspects equally does not entail justice. Many verses of the Quran talk about things that are not equal to each other. For example, the living and the dead are not equal (Quran, al Fatir: 22); those who are blind and those who can see are not equal (Quran, al Fatir: 19); bad things and good things are not equal (Al Ma'idah: 100); the bodies of water, fresh, salty and bitter, are not alike (Al Fatir: 12) and the believer and the disobedient are not alike (Sajadah: 18)

Likewise, in another verse, Allah says in Surat al-An'am 6:1 that

All praise is due to Allah, who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light'; 'Yet those who disbelieve claim equality (*ya'dilun*) with their Lord.

The same phrase that refers to justice is employed in this verse to refer to elevating idols to the status of Allah. Asserting that the Creator is on par with his creations is certainly unfair. As a result, justice and equality are not necessarily synonymous (Elias 2018).

As indicated above, the Quran mentions various aspects of equality and inequality in justice and instructs us to guide them accordingly. This concept reflects fair equality. In contrast, considering or guiding unequal areas together or showing discrimination in matters that should be treated impartially is unfair. Abdur Rahman (2011) claims that Islam is a religion of justice rather than equality, as Sheikh Uthaymeen stated. This notion involves treating those who are equal equally and differentiating between those who are different.

Islam similarly provides equitable equality that unites like-minded people and distinguishes between those who are different. It is the core of justice, which full equality cannot always accomplish by uniting individuals who are different in terms of physical, psychological, and mental characteristics. This concept can be understood as follows: the world has a wide variety of things and occurrences, and each one is distinct from the others and has its special qualities. Each has unique restrictions and distinguishing qualities that give it charm and grace. The fauna, flora, and even individual members of the same species all exhibit diversity. Like other animals, humans differ and have unique qualities. However, unlike other species, where individual differences are more subtle, human differences are more pronounced. Two people are not identical in every way. In fact, comparing the fingerprints of two people is enough to tell one from the other. People also differ from one another in their thoughts, talents, attitudes, mental and physical capacities, the ferocity of their instincts, their external appearance, and other aspects (Mesbah et al. 1990). Therefore, Islam views treating two separate features equally as being unequal or unfair. Equity (justice in several areas) becomes significant in this situation. Regarding the required alms, the reality of this subject is evident (*al-Zakat*). The normal 2.5% of surplus wealth to be donated annually to charity should go to the underprivileged and those who are considered to be in the greatest need. As such, it should not go to the rich. Treating the affluent and the poor in terms of charitable giving would be blatantly unfair to the poor. Surat *al-Dhariyat* 51:19 of the Qur'an states that,

And in their properties is a right for the needy and deprived.

The wealthy have a responsibility to provide the needy with charity, and the needy have the right to receive enough to cover their necessities. Although this system may not generate equality, it produces justice. Services must be offered to care for the underprivileged in society. Meanwhile, taxes are levied on the rich. Substantive equality, equity and justice underpin everything (Elias 2018).

In our times, how equality and equity relate to gender issues in Islam is becoming less clear to people. To be sure, men and women are generally equal in rights, duties and dignity, except in



the few cases in which an equal arrangement would not be equitable. Given that justice is central to the philosophy of Islam, the idea that justice includes gender equality is a modern idea that became generally accepted and translated into law only in the 20th century (Anon n.d.). Even though justice is used in law, it is seen as a part of Islamic moral teaching. It is a concept based on ethics, and what is morally correct is viewed as abstract. Hence, Rahman (1980) claims that Islam has a very wide vision of justice, in which all human values, including economic ones, are properly adjusted. It attempts to establish justice in the entire field of human action, not just one field of action. Western feminism demands equality, which is contrary to nature because individuals are endowed with a variety of abilities and traits. It would not only check the development of individual ability but would also prevent able individuals from using their abilities. This circumstance would deprive individuals as well as the community and humankind of the benefits of their abilities. Islam fully recognises these natural differences in people's abilities and talents and makes full allowance for them in its laws. However, to establish justice, it must recognise the opportunity to use individuals' talents within the limits of the law. Thus, it guarantees the fruit of hard work and exceptional talents for all people and disciplines them with higher and nobler ideals and values beyond the material level.

Although Islam does not oppose equal rights for men and women, it opposes identical rights. Given that men and women are different by nature, they may need different rights (Nadeem 2020). Equities among both men and women should not involve absolute similarity because of the inherent disparities between the two sexes (Tirmizi et al., 2021). The Quran (Al-Imran, 3: 36) expressly states that the two are not identical: 'The male is not like the female'. Therefore, the Qur'an deals with the uniqueness of men and women. On this basis, the verses of the Qur'an emphasise the different roles, positions, rights, and obligations to both genders, the difference in the extent of rights and the different benefits for women considering their nature. Hence, to maintain discipline, the husband is assigned the position of protector and maintainer of the family. Allah says in the Quran, Surah Al-Nisa' 4: 34, 'men are managers of the affairs of women because Allah has made the one superior to the other and tasked with supporting them financially'. However, he is given very strict instructions to be just and benevolent (2: 226-227) and fulfil his duties with equity and willing cooperation (4:4). Moreover, he is never to keep his wife merely to injure her or take undue advantage of her (2: 231). Elias (2018) points out that the favour of men over women refers to the physical strength of men, which is on average much greater than that of women and which enables men to perform the hard physical labour and military duties necessary for political and economic security better. Instead, wives are advised to be loyal and obedient to their husbands (4:34) and prevent anyone whom their husbands do not like from entering their house. Here, this status of *Qawwamun* is not simply granted. The husband has elevated the status of the family breadwinner (*Qawwam*) by giving him higher economic responsibility. Meanwhile, the wife reduces her responsibilities by obeying her husband. As such, both are equal in their responsibilities. Considering the practical problems of life, the husband and wife are given due rights based on equity, justice and benevolence.

Likewise, although polygamy is exclusively a male right, he should treat justice equally between them. Otherwise, he must keep only one wife (4:3). However, if he marries more than one wife, he must treat them all alike and must not keep any of them in suspense (4:129). Similarly, the personality traits of a woman include love, kindness, sincerity, tolerance, submission, and admiration. These characteristics are essential to a family's efficient operation. Therefore, Islam

assigns this duty to women because of their nature. Despite having separate roles to play, each is equally responsible for accomplishing their mutually beneficial outcomes. Allah states in Surah Al Baqarah:

Wives have the same rights on them as husbands have on them, per generally known principles. Of course, men are a degree above them in status (Quran, 2:228).

And the mothers may nurse their children for two whole years (Quran, 2: 233).

Similarly, in some other aspects, rights are provided equally but not identically. If we take the case of inheritance, Islam allows the male to inherit as much as two females (Quran 4: 11). Men alone must shoulder all the financial responsibilities for maintaining their wives and families. The wife has no legal obligation to spend any part of her wealth on the family. She needs to spend it only on her personal needs and may use it as pocket money. Therefore, a man should naturally acquire more than a woman to enable him to meet extra financial obligations. In earnings, absolute equality applies, whether in wages for labour, profits from trade, revenues from real estate, etc. Islam maintains equality between men and women. However, we should not conclude from this inequality in the inheritance that Islam regards women as no better than half a man. Moreover, a woman's testimony is frequently worth half as much as a man's. Allah says, 'And bring witnesses from among your men. And if there are not two men, then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses' (2:282). Islam demands modesty of both Muslim men and women (Quran, 24: 30), but the veil (hijab or dress code) restriction is only for women (24: 31, 33: 59). Talaq, a right granted primarily to the husband (Qur'an 4:34), has a different scale in the Qur'an. Similarly, while women are gaining some exceptions from some prayers (Jumma), some acts of worship, such as prayer, fasting, tawaf and holding the Quran while menstruating, are prohibited for women and may be dangerous. Similar restrictions on females leading men in worship and their inability to do so due to Al-Qur'anic norms are discussed (Abdulssalam 2006). Equality implies no differences between the two because of an unjust call for equality. Therefore, the Egyptian-Canadian Islamist Jamal Badawi, in his book titled Gender Equity in Islam, exchanges the concept of gender equality with the concept of gender equity, which, in his view, is more Islamic (Roald 2001).

To sum up, according to the above definitions, gender equality is the objective, but gender equity is the practice that helps to achieve that goal. Gender equality does not consider sex differences, but equity refers to granting all opportunities, resources, roles and responsibilities according to the nature of both sexes. Therefore, equality that does not consider physical differences between the two is not true equality. Justice is more general and comprehensive. Justice is a central theme of Islamic doctrine. Hence, equality, equity and justice are all different terms. However, equality and equity are interconnected with justice. Based on the main sources of Islam, men and women are equal in all spheres of spirituality, education, economy and social life. Given that the two beings are separate creations, Islam has provided them different rights in some legal matters. In some cases, the two beings have been exempted. It is the system that dignifies both characters according to their nature. This system does not intend to discriminate between men and women or to elevate one over the other; it clarifies that in the eyes of Islam, both are equal creatures but not exactly equal.

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