

Equal Obligations of Male and Female Offspring in Fulfilling Parental Duties: An Islamic Perspective

Marufa Islam¹, Md. Omar Faruk², Abdullah Al Masud³ Mohammad Nazmul Hasan⁴

^{1,2}Lecturer, Department of General Education, Northern University Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh

³Assistant Professor, Department of General Education, Northern University Bangladesh, Dhaka

⁴Senior Assistant Secretary, DC Office, Tangail, The People's Republic of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the concept of dutifulness toward parents within Islamic teachings, with a particular emphasis on gender equality in fulfilling filial responsibilities. Drawing upon Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic traditions (Sunnah), the research critically examines patriarchal interpretations that restrict parental caregiving obligations exclusively to male offspring. Employing a library-based, interpretive methodology, the study analyzes primary Islamic sources—including Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and classical jurisprudential texts—alongside contemporary scholarly literature to highlight the equitable duties of both sons and daughters. The findings reveal that Islam mandates kindness, respect, and lifelong care for parents regardless of gender, supported by explicit theological and ethical injunctions opposing discrimination. This study underscores the importance of challenging socio-cultural misinterpretations that marginalize women's roles in parental caregiving and advocates for collaborative spousal cooperation in fulfilling these obligations. Practical recommendations include promoting female education, implementing anti-discrimination policies, and fostering early childhood awareness of gender-inclusive responsibilities. By integrating scriptural directives with ethical considerations, this paper reaffirms Islam's egalitarian principles and positions filial dutifulness as a pathway to spiritual salvation and social cohesion.

Keywords: Dutifulness to parents, Gender equality, Qur'an and Sunnah, Islamic ethics, Filial responsibilities, Parental caregiving.

INTRODUCTION

Islam provides clear guidelines for family management and caregiving, recognizing women and parenting as integral components of society, equally important as men in shaping culture (Jahan et al., 2023). When asked from whom we have learned the most or who has supported us in times of hardship, most people unhesitatingly mention their parents. Parents are among the greatest gifts from God to any child, sharing in their achievements, joys, and sorrows throughout life.

Parental involvement in children's lives is profound and multifaceted, encompassing social, religious, educational, and even political dimensions. The family is the foundational unit of society, and parents are its core elements. Consequently, fulfilling responsibilities toward parents is considered a fundamental duty within Islamic teachings.

In Islam, dutifulness toward parents entails fulfilling one's obligations as a child while showing kindness, respect, and compassion. Islam is a universal, humanistic, and rational faith that promotes mutual respect, empathy, tolerance, and mercy. The Holy Qur'an, in Surah Al-Isra (verses 23–33), commands believers to treat their parents with kindness and to speak to them respectfully. These verses emphasize that, after the rights of Allah, the rights of parents hold the highest significance.

Furthermore, Allah has linked the duty of serving one's parents with His own worship, underscoring that honoring parents is nearly as important as worshiping God (Karim et al., 2023). Children must always express gratitude for their parents' sacrifices and care. The principle of indebtedness and reciprocity acknowledges that parents give life and nurture their children, who, in turn, owe care and support to their parents in times of need (Wise, 2001). Unfortunately, many parents still do not receive the respect and appreciation they deserve.

A widespread but often misconstrued cultural belief holds that only male children bear the responsibility to care for their parents. However, Islamic teachings affirm no gender-based discrimination regarding parental rights or filial duties. Recent decades have witnessed significant shifts in family dynamics, as increasing female education and self-reliance challenge traditional stereotypes. Notably, daughters today often demonstrate heightened awareness of their responsibilities toward their parents, sometimes surpassing that of sons.

CONTEXTUAL GROUND OF THE STUDY

This article situates itself at the intersection of religion, family studies, and gender justice within Islamic discourse. It engages with a long-standing sociocultural debate: whether the responsibility of caring for parents rests solely upon sons or is equally shared by daughters (Esposito, 2018; Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

In many patriarchal societies, particularly within Muslim-majority contexts, caregiving has traditionally been ascribed to male offspring, while daughters—especially after marriage—are often considered exempt (Engineer, 2004). Such perceptions, however, conflict with Islamic teachings, which emphasize universal obligations toward parents without gender-based distinctions (Al-Qur'an, 31:14; Sahih al-Bukhari, 5971). The persistence of these misinterpretations has not only marginalized women's role in parental caregiving but has also reinforced broader gender inequalities within familial structures (Barlas, 2002).

The contextual significance of this study emerges from several interrelated dimensions:

Religious Significance

Islam accords parents one of the highest statuses, placing their rights immediately after those of Allah. The Qur'an and Sunnah consistently underscore kindness, respect, and dutifulness toward parents as divine obligations (Al-Qur'an, 17:23; Sahih Muslim, 2548). By revisiting these foundational sources, this study situates parental responsibilities within an authoritative Islamic framework and counters gender-biased interpretations (Kamali, 2008).

Social Change and Modern Dynamics

In recent decades, women's educational attainment, professional participation, and financial independence have expanded significantly, reshaping traditional family roles (Moghadam, 2003). Daughters today frequently share—and at times surpass—sons in providing care for parents (Hashmi, 2019). This transformation highlights the dissonance between entrenched cultural expectations and Islamic principles, making a re-examination of gender-neutral parental duties both urgent and necessary.

Ethical and Humanistic Dimensions

Beyond legalistic obligations, Islam promotes mercy, compassion, and reciprocity within family life. Gratitude toward parents is not only a universal moral value but is given particular prominence in Islamic teaching (Al-Qur'an, 46:15). By emphasizing this ethical dimension, the study contributes to broader global conversations on filial piety while grounding its analysis firmly in Qur'anic and Prophetic traditions (Abou El Fadl, 2014).

Correcting Misinterpretations

Religious misinterpretations—often shaped by patriarchal interests—have historically restricted daughters from fulfilling their parents' rights (Barlas, 2002; Mir-Hosseini, 2006). By clarifying Islam's authentic teachings, this study challenges such distortions and advances a more equitable understanding of parental obligations.

Contemporary Relevance

Modern realities, including migration, nuclear family systems, and economic pressures, increasingly shape caregiving practices (Hashmi, 2019). In this context, reaffirming the shared responsibility of sons and daughters ensures that aging parents are not neglected and that the principles of justice and compassion are preserved within family life.

By situating the issue within scriptural, ethical, and contemporary contexts, this study demonstrates that Islam mandates equal obligations for both sons and daughters in fulfilling parental duties. Correcting misinterpretations that privilege male responsibility not only restores women's rightful role in caregiving but also aligns cultural practice with the Qur'anic vision of justice and compassion. In doing so, the article contributes to broader debates on gender equity, family ethics, and the evolving responsibilities of Muslim families in a rapidly changing world.

Objectives and Rationale

Dutifulness to parents is a fundamental responsibility of every individual. However, this duty is increasingly neglected in both educated and less-educated segments of society. A prevalent misconception persists that only male children are obligated to fulfill their parents' rights, while female children—particularly married women—are often considered exempt from this responsibility. In patriarchal societies, men are frequently viewed as dominant figures, and women are expected to obey them unquestioningly; such attitudes are both unjust and unfounded.

Islam, as a religion of peace, harmony, and equality, rejects all forms of discrimination and inequality. Its teachings emphasize that fulfilling duties to parents should not be subject to gender bias. Both male and female children share equal rights and responsibilities toward their parents. The main objectives of this paper are:

To explore the Qur'anic verses and the sayings of the Sunnah that promotes consciousness regarding dutifulness to parents.

To illustrate gender equality in carrying out responsibilities toward parents.

To remove traditional misinterpretations and misunderstandings regarding duties to parents from a gender perspective.

To encourage people to be cooperative and supportive of their spouses in fulfilling their duties toward their own parents as well as their spouses' parents.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive study explores the concept of dutifulness toward parents from the perspective of the Qur'an and Sunnah, with particular attention to gender equality. Employing a library-based, documentary research approach, the study draws on primary sources—including selected Qur'anic verses, authentic Hadith collections, and both classical and contemporary jurisprudential works—as well as secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and reputable online resources. Data collection followed a systematic literature review process involving keyword searches, database queries, and thematic coding. Thematic content analysis was conducted in stages, beginning with textual examination of Arabic sources, followed by thematic categorization, comparative analysis with cultural practices, and interpretive synthesis. Reliability was enhanced through the use of authentic religious texts, consultation of multiple scholarly interpretations, and reliance on established academic references. Ethical considerations included accurate citation, respectful interpretation of religious texts, adherence to recognized Islamic scholarly standards, and the avoidance of culturally or politically biased perspectives.

Limitations of the Study

This study, while providing a comprehensive examination of the equal obligations of male and female offspring in fulfilling parental duties from an Islamic perspective, is subject to several notable limitations and potential biases. Methodologically, it relies exclusively on library-based textual analysis of the Qur'an,

Sunnah, and scholarly commentaries, without incorporating empirical data, fieldwork, surveys, or interviews. This reliance introduces interpretive bias, limits insight into actual caregiving practices, and constrains generalizability across diverse sociocultural, socioeconomic, and familial contexts.

The study's focus on Islamic teachings within Muslim-majority societies may underrepresent alternative religious, secular, or comparative perspectives. The selective examination of specific Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and juristic opinions introduces potential confirmation bias, while contemporary fatwas, evolving social practices, and prevailing patriarchal norms are only partially addressed. Consequently, the predominantly theological and ethical scope excludes important legal, economic, psychological, and practical dimensions—such as migration, financial hardship, intergenerational conflict, and evolving family structures—that influence parental care.

Finally, although the research advocates for gender equality in parental responsibilities, it may risk overgeneralization by not fully accounting for variations in cultural practices, regional norms, family traditions, and individual circumstances. Future research employing mixed-methods approaches, comparative studies, and contemporary sociological, legal, and psychological analyses could help mitigate these limitations and enhance applicability to modern family contexts.

Conceptual Framework

Duties and Responsibilities

The terms "duties" and "responsibilities" are commonly used, often interchangeably. Within the framework of Islam—a comprehensive religion aimed at safeguarding women's rights—these concepts carry particular significance. Both terms are nouns; responsibility refers to the state of being accountable or answerable for something within one's control, whereas duty signifies an obligation that must be fulfilled. Sometimes, both terms are used together to emphasize an issue (Feinberg, 1988; Uddin et al., 2022;). In essence, duty involves an obligation, while responsibility involves accepting and acting upon that obligation. From an ethical perspective, duties align with deontological ethics, which focus on the morality of actions themselves, whereas responsibilities align with consequentialist ethics, emphasizing outcomes. Thus, duties dictate actions, while responsibilities dictate results.

Parents and Offspring

Parents are defined as the mother and father of a person or animal. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, parents give birth to and raise children and act as caregivers to their offspring. In humans, parents have inherent and natural rights and responsibilities concerning the upbringing of their children. These rights and duties are mutual, interdependent, and complementary between parents and children.

Biologically, a parent is an individual whose gamete results in a child—male through sperm and female through ovum. A female may also become a parent through surrogacy, while some parents are adoptive, nurturing children without a biological connection. Typically, parents comprise one male (father) and one female (mother).

The term offspring, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, refers to a person's child or children and is used in both singular and plural forms, applicable to all genders (Holmstrom-Smith, 2021). Offspring are the product of reproductive processes in animals or plants, with related terms including progeny, seed, spawn, and posterity. Traditionally, the father is responsible for working outside the home, while the mother manages childcare and household duties (Sobri et al., 2022; Talib, 2009).

Gender Issues

The term gender issue encompasses concerns viewed through a gendered lens, primarily focusing on gender discrimination. Gender discrimination recognizes that men and women experience inequality, influencing their lived realities. These differences stem from biology, psychology, sociology, theology, and cultural norms (Ahmed, 1992). While some distinctions are empirically based, many are socially constructed, often shaped by

patriarchal societies, cultural traditions, and mythological narratives transmitted across generations. This framework categorizes individuals as men and women, male and female, sons and daughters (Barlas, 2019). A key challenge lies in differentiating between directives rooted in sacred texts and those arising from subjective human interpretation (Lamrabet, 2016).

The Holy Quran

The Qur'an served as a profound political, social, spiritual, and intellectual catalyst for change among the Arabian Peninsula's immediate community. It represents a transformative force that demands recognition and understanding (Wadud, 1999). The word Qur'an literally means "the recitation" and is the central religious text of Islam, believed by Muslims to be a divine revelation from God (Allah). It is considered the finest work of classical Arabic literature, comprising 6,666 verses across 114 chapters (surahs), categorized as either Makki or Madani (Huda, 2021).

Muslims believe that God revealed the Qur'an orally to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril) incrementally over 23 years—from December 22, 609 CE, when Muhammad was 40 years old, until 632 CE, the year of his passing. The Holy Qur'an is regarded as the Word of Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta'ala) and serves as the ultimate guide for humanity until the Day of Judgment (Ali – Iqra Online, n.d.).

Sunnah

The Sunnah is the second primary source of Islamic law, ranking immediately after the Qur'an. When a jurist does not find relevant guidance in the Qur'an to resolve a case, they turn to the Sunnah to derive the ruling. The Sunnah, distinguished by a sound and complete chain of narrators, serves as an authoritative source of Islamic legislation and legal rules (Bakhtiar, 2015). Numerous verses in the Qur'an command believers to follow the Sunnah, instructing obedience to the Messenger of Allah: "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger..." (Al-Qur'an, 4:59). Obedience to the Messenger is equated with obedience to Allah: "He who obeys the Messenger obeys Allah" (Al-Qur'an, 4:80). In matters of dispute, the Qur'an directs: "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger" (Al-Qur'an, 4:59). The Sunnah—also spelled Sunnat—encompasses the body of literature that details and prescribes the traditional customs and practices of the Islamic community, both social and legal. It is primarily based on the verbally transmitted record of the teachings, deeds, sayings, and silent permissions (or disapprovals) of Prophet Muhammad, as well as various reports concerning his companions (Ashimi, 2023).

Dutifulness Towards The Parent

Obligation to Parents

Our existence in this world is owed to our parents. Kaiser and Hancock (2003) highlight that parents serve as primary teachers, as learning begins through reciprocal interactions within the family. Similarly, Sobri et al. (2022) emphasize the critical role of parental involvement in early childhood education, particularly for children under four years old. Accordingly, our obligations to parents include:

- Abiding by their advice and guidance.
- Demonstrating kindness and empathy towards them.
- Fulfilling their needs and aspirations.
- Assisting them at all stages of life with love, respect, and dedication.
- Honoring and respecting them appropriately.

For believers in Allah, these duties are divinely mandated. The Qur'an and Hadith explicitly direct Muslims to uphold respect and care for parents. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) modeled profound respect for parents, underscoring parenthood as one of the most sacred relationships in Islam. The Qur'an frequently addresses children's direct and indirect responsibilities toward their parents, while numerous hadiths reinforce these obligations.

Across cultures and religions—from tribal to national, animistic to missionary, indigenous to universal—respect and love for parents are foundational teachings. Parents consistently strive to meet their children's needs, providing support across financial, social, physical, economic, medical, religious, educational, psychological, ethical, moral, and spiritual domains. Sir William Blackstone (1765) identified three core parental duties: maintenance, protection, and education. In a contemporary context, Saeidi et al. (2014) in the *International Journal of Pediatrics* also highlight the mutual rights of children and parents as outlined in the Qur'an.

Our indebtedness to parents is immense and cannot be fully repaid. Hence, it is imperative to exhibit utmost courtesy, kindness, respect, gratitude, attentiveness, and obedience toward them. The mutual responsibilities between parents and children are comprehensively detailed in Islamic teachings (Uddin et al., 2022). Allah commands believers to honor parents, respect their views, and treat them with love and gentleness.

The Noble Qur'an states: "Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and show kindness to parents" (Qur'an 4:36). Furthermore, in Surah Al-Isra, verse 23:n "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and do good to parents. If one or both of them reach old age, do not say to them 'uff' (a word of irritation or contempt), nor repel them, but speak to them a noble word."

Allah forbids disrespect toward parents and mandates kindness in many verses. However, obedience is not unconditional; if parents urge actions against Islamic faith, their commands must not be followed. Surah Al-Ankabut (29:8) clarifies: "We have enjoined upon man to be good to his parents. But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. To Me is your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do."

The Qur'an frequently references parents, and numerous traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasize their significance (Akhtar, 2004). Parents' sacrifices and contributions are invaluable. According to the Qur'an and Sunnah, showing mercy and kindness to parents, and seeking Allah's mercy for them, embodies true filial love. Prioritizing their needs over one's own material rights reflects the profound similarity between the rights owed to Allah and those owed to parents, highlighting the ultimate completion of these duties (Akhtar, 2004).

Honor and Respect for Parents

Showing proper respect to parents is a fundamental aspect of Islam. Allah states in the Qur'an: "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor" (Qur'an, 17:23).

Worshiping none but Allah is the foremost pillar of Islam. Immediately following this command is the directive to show mercy and kindness to parents. While other major sins could have been highlighted, Allah specifically forbids disrespecting parents. He commands believers not to speak to their parents with contempt but to address them with honor and humility.

Islam emphasizes honoring one's parents by obeying them, respecting their opinions, and showing kindness to family members (Sakkijha, 2004). The responsibility of children toward their parents is repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'an and numerous Hadiths. Believers are instructed to show gratitude both to Allah and their parents, as illustrated in the Qur'an:

"And We have enjoined upon man (to be good) to his parents. His mother bore him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination" (Qur'an, 31:14).

Love and Kindness to Parents

The Qur'an further commands love and kindness toward parents: "We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents. In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the child to his weaning is thirty months. At length, when he reaches full strength and attains forty years, he says, 'My Lord! Grant me the ability to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents,

and to do righteousness that You approve of. And make righteous for me my offspring. Indeed, I have repented to You, and indeed, I am of the Muslims.' Such are the ones from whom We will accept the best of their deeds and overlook their misdeeds. They will be among the companions of Paradise, a true promise which they have been promised" (Qur'an, 46:15–16)

Importance of Parents

Parents hold a central and esteemed position in Islam. The happiness and pleasure of parents are among the greatest sources of Allah's mercy. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) stated: "The pleasure of the Lord is in the pleasure of the father, and the displeasure of the Lord is in the displeasure of the father" (Tirmidhi, narrated by Abdullah Ibn Amr).

Furthermore, in Sahih al-Bukhari, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported asking the Prophet (S.A.W.): "What is Allah's most beloved act?" The Prophet replied, "Performing prayers at their due time." Upon further inquiry, he added, "Obedience to parents." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 5970). Imam al-Sadiq (A.S.) also said: "Do good to your parents so that your children will do good to you" (al-Adab al-Mufrad, p. 20, h. 22; al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihain, vol. 4).

Inheritance Law for Parents

In Islamic law, upon the death of a child, the parents become legal heirs to the child's property. Even during the child's lifetime, parents may, under specific conditions, utilize their children's wealth in accordance with Islamic principles. Parents are entitled to a significant share of the inheritance, as prescribed in the Qur'an:

"Allah instructs you concerning your children: for the male, what is equal to the share of two females. But if there are [only] daughters, two or more, for them is two-thirds of one's estate. If there is only one daughter, for her is half. For one's parents, to each one of them is a sixth of his estate if he leaves children. But if he had no children and the parents [alone] inherit from him, then for his mother is one-third. But if he had brothers [or sisters], for his mother is a sixth—after any bequest he [may have] made or debt. Your parents or your children—you know not which of them are nearest to you in benefit. [These shares are] an obligation [imposed] by Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise" (Qur'an 4:11-12).

Duties to Deceased Parents

A distinctive aspect of Islam is that children's duties toward their parents persist beyond the parents' death. Islam emphasizes that these responsibilities continue even after one or both parents pass away, reflecting the importance of spiritual growth and honoring parental legacy.

Following their death, children must continue to respect and seek to please their parents through acts of devotion and remembrance. Honoring deceased parents includes care and ongoing remembrance, which are considered essential spiritual obligations. The loss of parents is universally recognized as a profound and stressful experience (Asgari et al., 2021).

Based on an analysis of the Qur'an and Hadith, the following duties toward deceased parents are identified:

1. **Funeral Rites:** Children must arrange and actively participate in the body's washing (ghusl), the funeral prayer (Salat al-Janazah), and burial.
2. **Debt Repayment:** Any debts left by the parents must be repaid fully and promptly.
3. **Maintaining Family Ties:** Children should remain kind and respectful toward their parents' relatives and close acquaintances.
4. **Supplication and Acts of Worship:** Children should consistently pray for their parents' forgiveness and Paradise through salat, munajat (private prayers), fasting, charity, and other righteous acts.
5. **Fulfilling Promises:** They should complete any unfulfilled tasks or promises of their parents when possible.

6. **Establishing Charitable Projects:** Founding religious, charitable, or humanitarian institutions in their parents' names encourages ongoing remembrance and prayers.
7. **Inheritance Distribution:** Children must ensure the proper distribution of their parents' property according to Islamic law and manage it with integrity.
8. **Charity on Their Behalf:** Many scholars agree that charitable acts performed by children and relatives benefit the deceased. These acts include building mosques or madrasahs, supporting the poor, and distributing food or clothing (Mohammad, 2020).
9. **Righteous Living:** Most importantly, children must strive to lead righteous lives. Their piety and moral conduct are the greatest offerings to their deceased parents. Conversely, sinful behavior may diminish the benefit of their supplications and good deeds and could even result in negative consequences for the parents in the Hereafter.

Issues of Concern

Children are expected to be attentive to all aspects of their parents' well-being. Gratitude to God and to one's parents are intrinsically linked; in Islam, expressing gratitude to Allah without showing appreciation to one's parents is considered incomplete. The elevated status of parents is emphasized extensively within Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said: "On the Day of Judgment, my person will not be seen by those who drank liquor, those who, upon hearing my name, did not invoke blessings upon me, or those who were cursed and disowned by their parents" (Akhtar, 2004).

Both Qur'anic injunctions and the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) provide clear and comprehensive guidance regarding the parent-child relationship. The Islamic code of conduct in this regard is distinct and multifaceted. Key responsibilities that every child should address without hesitation or delay include:

- Securing safe and comfortable shelter, within one's means.
- Providing nutritious food and appropriate clothing.
- Offering proper care and nursing during illness.
- Ensuring participation in religious rites and rituals.
- Facilitating opportunities for recreation and social engagement.
- Involving parents in decision-making processes.
- Supporting their economic stability.

Dispelling Gender Discrimination Is Essential To Fulfilling Our Responsibilities Toward Parents

Seeking Salvation

Fulfilling one's duties to parents is a virtuous act that, according to Islamic scholars and researchers, guides believers toward Paradise. It is regarded as one of the foremost means of attaining salvation (Najat). The Qur'an states: "And We have enjoined upon man [to be dutiful and good] to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the final destination. But if they strive to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Yet accompany them in this world with kindness and follow the path of those who turn to Me in repentance" (Qur'an 31:14–15).

Abu Huraira reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Verily, Allah Almighty will raise the status of His righteous servants in Paradise, and they will say: 'O Lord, how have we attained this?' Allah will say: 'This is due to your child seeking forgiveness for you'" (Elias, 2014). Al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah also narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Allah has forbidden: (1) disobedience to mothers, (2) withholding what should be given, (3) demanding what is not deserved, and (4) burying daughters alive. Allah also dislikes: (A) excessive talk about others, (B) asking too many religious questions, and (C) wasting wealth" (Al-Bukhari, n.d.).

A foundational concept in Islamic family life is *silat ar-rahim* (upholding family ties) (Elias, 2014). Both the Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize kind treatment toward family members, including non-believers. Islamic scholars consistently highlight the significance of maintaining strong familial bonds. Based on Qur'anic verses and Hadith, it is clear that fulfilling responsibilities toward parents is a path to salvation in both this life and the hereafter. When practiced sincerely and consistently, dutifulness to parents leads to divine approval. As stated in the Hadith:

"The pleasure of Allah lies in the pleasure of the father, and the displeasure of Allah lies in the displeasure of the father" (Al-Adab al-Mufrad 1:2; Sunan al-Tirmidhī 1821).

Rooting Out Misinterpretations Regarding Islam

Misinterpretation involves misunderstanding or misrepresenting information, thereby obscuring its true meaning. Various forms of misinterpretation—religious, social, cultural, mythological, political—are prevalent worldwide. In many societies, religious misinterpretations, particularly concerning Islam, are widespread. Male-dominated social structures often shape religious views to serve their own interests, institutionalizing these views as religious laws and traditions passed down through generations.

Eliminating gender discrimination in fulfilling parental responsibilities is imperative. Traditionally, our society holds that married women should not assist or care for their parents, even in the absence of brothers. When educated and financially independent women seek to support their parents, they often face opposition—especially from their in-laws—and may endure suffering or physical abuse. Such societal attitudes require change, as Islamic teachings unequivocally mandate that filial responsibilities must be honored regardless of gender.

Accurate dissemination of the Quran's teachings and the authentic Sunnah is crucial for raising social awareness and educating individuals about their rights and duties. Unfortunately, many people lack a deep understanding of Islam and instead rely on orally transmitted religious interpretations, which have become entrenched in negative social customs. This contributes significantly to widespread misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Islam.

Misinterpretation is closely linked with misinformation. As Ferreira (2003) asserts, "It is important to focus on the content of the interpretations because there is evidence that under some circumstances comprehenders do not obtain the meaning consistent with a sentence's true content."

Caring for Each Other's Parents

Mutual care for each other's parents is an effective way to reduce gender discrimination in parental caregiving. Both spouses should participate cooperatively in fulfilling responsibilities toward their respective parents. For example, if a husband disrespects his wife's parents, they may not receive proper care; conversely, if he sincerely cares for his parents-in-law, his wife is more likely to respect and care for his parents. Such mutual respect and cooperation are vital.

Abdullah ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "A man's rebuking of his parents is one of the major sins," underscoring the importance of filial respect. Despite challenges, frequent interaction between aging parents and adult children fosters positive social, intellectual, and emotional development during middle and later adulthood (Newman & Newman, 1981).

Evaluation and Assessment

A comprehensive evaluation of Islamic teachings on parental duties is essential for understanding how these principles manifest in contemporary practice. The Qur'an explicitly underscores this responsibility. In Sura Al-Ahqaf, Allah (S.W.T.) states: "And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship. His gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months until he reaches full strength and attains forty years. He said, 'O my Lord! Inspire me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do righteousness of which You approve, and

make my offspring righteous for me. Truly, I turn to You in repentance, and indeed I am of the Muslims” (Qur’an, 46:15).

This verse emphasizes that dutifulness to parents constitutes a sacred obligation for all children, irrespective of gender. While Islamic theology establishes equal responsibilities for sons and daughters, translating these ideals into everyday practice encounters multiple socio-cultural and structural challenges.

Practical Barriers

While Islamic teachings clearly outline the equitable responsibilities of male and female offspring in fulfilling parental duties, various practical obstacles often impede the realization of these ideals. In many Muslim-majority societies, sociocultural and economic factors intersect to create an environment in which daughters’ participation in caregiving is constrained, despite religious guidance advocating equal obligations. Understanding these barriers is essential for addressing the gap between normative teachings and lived experiences, as well as for designing interventions that promote gender-inclusive caregiving practices. The following sections highlight the key practical challenges that influence the capacity of daughters to fulfill parental duties:

1. **Patriarchal Norms and Cultural Expectations:** Despite the Qur’anic clarity, entrenched patriarchal traditions often privilege sons over daughters in caregiving. Women, particularly after marriage, may face discouragement from assisting parents, reinforcing the perception that caregiving is primarily a male duty.
2. **Marriage and Household Responsibilities:** Daughters frequently navigate the competing demands of natal and marital families. Resistance from in-laws or expectations of domestic prioritization can compromise their capacity to care for parents.
3. **Economic Constraints:** Financial limitations disproportionately impact caregiving arrangements. Sons often bear the economic responsibility, perpetuating the misconception that daughters are less accountable or capable.
4. **Migration and Urbanization:** Geographic separation resulting from employment or urban relocation poses significant challenges to sustained parental care, especially for daughters who may encounter mobility restrictions.
5. **Lack of Awareness and Religious Misinterpretation:** Cultural narratives often overshadow authentic Qur’anic and Prophetic guidance, fostering gendered biases in caregiving norms.
6. Despite clear Islamic directives advocating equal parental responsibilities for sons and daughters, sociocultural, economic, and familial factors continue to constrain daughters’ participation in caregiving. Addressing these barriers requires both awareness-raising of authentic religious guidance and the implementation of supportive policies and practices that enable gender-inclusive caregiving.

Practical Solutions

Although Islam emphasizes equal responsibilities of sons and daughters in parental care, sociocultural norms, economic limitations, and structural barriers often impede their realization. Addressing this gap requires multifaceted strategies, including educational and religious awareness, spousal cooperation, supportive family laws, women’s economic empowerment, and community-based caregiving solutions. Together, these approaches aim to align societal practices with Islamic ethical teachings and ensure daughters’ caregiving roles are recognized and supported. Bridging the gap between theology and practice requires multifaceted strategies:

1. **Educational and Religious Awareness Campaigns:** Community programs, mosque sermons, and Islamic study circles can emphasize Qur’anic verses and Hadith affirming daughters’ equal filial responsibilities, gradually reshaping prevailing cultural attitudes.
2. **Spousal Cooperation and Mutual Support:** Encouraging equitable sharing of caregiving duties within marriage fosters harmony and reflects Islamic principles of compassion and reciprocity.

3. **Institutional and Legal Support:** Family law reforms and state policies that recognize women's caregiving rights—both financial and emotional—can dismantle structural impediments.
4. **Economic Empowerment of Women:** Access to education and employment strengthens women's capacity to support parents, legitimizing and sustaining their caregiving roles.
5. **Technological Solutions for Distance Care:** Digital communication, telemedicine, and financial transfer systems facilitate caregiving across distances, mitigating geographic constraints.
6. **Community and Institutional Care Models:** Faith-inspired elder-care centers can complement familial support, ensuring parents receive adequate care when individual caregiving proves challenging.
7. Implementing these practical solutions can bridge the gap between Islamic teachings and societal realities, ensuring daughters' caregiving contributions are valued and supported. By combining awareness, legal reform, economic empowerment, and innovative care models, communities can create an equitable environment that upholds both ethical and familial responsibilities.

Bridging Theology and Practice

The Qur'an and Sunnah envision a family system rooted in equity, compassion, and justice. Without addressing tangible socio-cultural and structural obstacles, these ideals risk remaining theoretical. By confronting patriarchal norms, fostering spousal cooperation, empowering women, and leveraging contemporary technological tools, Muslim communities can better align lived practices with the Qur'anic vision of shared filial responsibility. Such an approach transforms theological guidance from abstract principle into actionable family practice.

Recommendations for Gender-Equitable Parental Care

Despite religious and ethical endorsements of gender equality, sociocultural norms often limit daughters' participation in parental caregiving. Promoting positive attitudes, providing education and empowerment opportunities for women, discouraging early discriminatory practices, and enforcing legal protections against dowry, early marriage, and domestic violence are essential to realize equitable caregiving responsibilities. Such measures can enhance both familial harmony and broader societal well-being. These strategies can be operationalized through specific interventions, as outlined below:

- Promote positive attitudes toward daughters and their caregiving roles.
- Provide education and empowerment opportunities to ensure women's self-sufficiency.
- Encourage parents to avoid discriminatory practices from early childhood.
- Implement and enforce legal measures against dowry, early marriage, and domestic violence.

Through these interventions, the equal responsibility of sons and daughters in parental care—rooted in Islamic teachings—can be more effectively realized in contemporary society, fostering both familial and societal well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the moral and obligatory duties of offspring toward their parents, irrespective of gender. Social welfare and family relations hold significant importance in Islam and represent foundational principles of Islamic civilization (Uddin & Jahan, 2023). Traditionally, women have often been marginalized while men are prioritized, and it is a socially constructed belief that married women are exempt from fulfilling duties toward their parents. However, this research demonstrates that both male and female children bear equal responsibility in honoring their parental obligations, as emphasized in the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

The influence of spouses, children, and extended family members profoundly shapes individual and familial behavior. Therefore, discrimination within the family concerning duties to parents should be eliminated, and principles of gender equality must be instilled from an early age.

It is evident that serving one's parents is a means to attain the pleasure of Allah, following the fulfillment of obligatory prayers. The prayers of parents are a significant source of divine blessings in this life. Recognizing the sacrifices and hardships endured by parents for their children's well-being, as emphasized by Allah (S.W.T.), reinforces the importance of fulfilling these duties sincerely. Neglecting parental responsibilities—regardless of gender, marital status, past family dynamics, or preferential treatment—cannot be justified. Ultimately, accountability before Allah on the Day of Judgment underscores the imperative for all offspring, male and female alike, to uphold their duties with cooperation, setting aside discriminatory customs and superstitions.

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