The Role of Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi Universities in Promoting

Women's Rights

By

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Abstract

Despite the legal and educational reforms under Vision 2030, this research argues that a gap remains between policy advancements and societal awareness of women's rights principles in Islam (WRPI) among Saudi University students. Through a qualitative case study at a leading Saudi University, including content analysis and semi-structured interviews, this research explores how the Islamic Cultural Curriculum (ICC) influences women students' perceptions of their rights. This study integrates Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Tibbitt's Human Rights Education models to advocate for a transformative approach incorporating gender justice and peace education in line with Islamic principles. Findings reveal that the ICC content and teaching strategies contain a blend of preaching, indoctrination, and marginalisation of women's agency as rights holders in the Islamic framework. The analysis explores how the current ICC discourages critical engagement instead of promoting discussion and reflection, reinforcing hierarchical gender norms through rigid teaching methods and structure that presents knowledge as static and unquestionable. As these findings contradict WRPI, this research suggests that applying the foundation (*Al-Taʾṣīl*) methodology within a critical, dialogical framework can reconcile WRPI with contemporary gender issues, needs and rights. Overall, this research provides a multidisciplinary analysis of the Islamic approach to women's rights, transformational higher education, and gender justice.

Keywords:

Women's Rights; Saudi Arabia; Education; Islamic Framework.

Dedication

My greatest treasure, being your mother, is my most profound and fulfilling privilege. I cherish every moment with you and hope I have made you as proud as you make me every day.

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Transliteration

Library of Congress Arabic Transliteration System

CONSONANTS

ء	ʾ	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	ʿ
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

VOWELS

Long				Short		
	ا	ā			◌	a
	و	ū			◌	u
	ي	ī			◌	i

Doubled	يّ	iyy (final form = /ī/)
	وّ	uww (final form = /ū/)

Dipthongs	وْ ◌	ay
	ىْ ◌	aw

List of abbreviations

ICC	Islamic Culture Curriculum
(ICP)	Islamic Critical Pedagogy
WRPI	The women's rights principles in Islam
HRE	Human Rights Education
CP	Critical Pedagogy
MOG	Ministry of Education, Government
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
KSA	A pseudonym used in place of the actual name of a Saudi public university
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
PE	Peace Education

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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<center>**Chapter one**</center>

<center>**Introduction**</center>

1.1. Introduction:

Women in Muslim-majority countries face economic, legal, political, and social challenges due to deeply ingrained male-centric structures within their societies (UN Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Entity, 2013; Al-Rumaihi, 1995). Moghadam (1992) argues that despite gender-reform efforts, the dominance of the father figure, both within the household and at the state level, remains a defining characteristic of these systems, often justified by religious interpretations. Sharabi (2008) contends that Arab societies continue to uphold patriarchal frameworks, with gender-reforms affecting only their outward appearance while leaving the underlying structures largely intact.

A critical factor contributing to gender inequality is the widespread lack of awareness regarding the women's rights principles in Islam (WRPI) among both men and women (Zumurrud, 2019). This ignorance perpetuates gender-based discrimination and reinforces misconceptions about women's roles in society. Moreover, culturally dominant attitudes, judgments, and gendered expectations are often misattributed to Islam when, in fact, many stem from deeply entrenched social and cultural traditions that diminish women's status (Cesari and Casanova, 2017; Zumurrud, 2019). Recognising this distinction is crucial for addressing the structural barriers that hinder gender equality and women's empowerment in Muslim societies. In Saudi Arabia, where religious discourse significantly influences legal and social norms, the conflation of cultural practices with religious teachings has historically shaped gender policies, reinforcing restrictive frameworks that limit women's

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rights and participation in public life (Abou El Fadl, 2001). Education is identified as the key to raising women's awareness of their rights (The World Program for Human Rights Education,2012; Osler and Yahya, 2013).

This study argues that the Human Rights Education (HRE) and Critical Pedagogy (CP) approaches align closely with the Islamic approach to education, particularly in promoting critical thinking, advocating for rights, and advancing gender justice[1]. The HRE model, as presented by Tibbitts (2002, 2017) and Bajaj (2009, 2011), positions education as a transformative tool that empowers individuals by raising awareness of human rights and encouraging personal action to uphold these principles[2]. Similarly, Critical Pedagogy (CP), rooted in the work of Paulo Freire (1970), seeks liberation through education by fostering critical thinking and a deepened understanding of human potential (Aldawood, 2020)[3]. The Islamic educational approach, as highlighted by scholars like Habib (2019) and Gilani-Williams (2014), also emphasises education as a means to approach God and ensures awareness of context to promote righteous thought, speech, and action. Critical thinking and moral responsibility are central tenets of Islamic education (Gilani-Williams, 2014),

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[1] In this study, gender justice will be used instead of gender equality to reflect the Islamic approach to gender rights better (see 1.11). While gender equality often emphasises identical treatment and opportunities for men and women, gender justice in an Islamic context recognises all individuals' inherent dignity and rights but acknowledges that gender roles and responsibilities may differ under each gender's needs. This approach prioritises fairness and equity rather than mere equality, emphasising protecting individual rights within Islamic values and social norms (Al-Alwani,2012; Al-Eid,2006; Al-Reysouni, 2002). By using gender justice, this study aims to align with these foundational principles and address the nuances of gender roles as they are understood within the Islamic approach.
[2] (See: 4.2.1 and 4.2.3).
[3] (See: 4.2.5)

and these principles resonate with the aims of HRE and CP in advocating for justice, particularly in addressing gender inequality[4].

Given these conceptual overlaps and the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative, particularly in raising awareness of women's rights in education and emphasising women's empowerment as a critical element in the Kingdom's social and economic development[5], this study examines the role of Islamic Culture Curriculum (ICC) at KSA university [6] in fostering critical awareness of women's rights within the Saudi context. The ICC is designed for men and women students throughout their four-year undergraduate program, imparting Islamic religious education and knowledge about their rights, duties, and responsibilities as outlined in Islamic teachings in the Holy *Qur'an*[7] and *Sunnah* of Prophet *Muhammad*[8] (PBUH), alongside other Islamic topics. This course, compulsory for all students, offers a platform for both genders to engage with issues of justice and gender roles from an Islamic perspective.

By integrating HRE, CP, and the Islamic education framework, this study hypothesises that while the ICC has the potential to activate critical thinking, raise awareness about women's

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[4] (See 4.3.1 and 4.3.2)

[5] (See: 3.4.3)

[6] KSA is a pseudonym used in place of the actual name of a Saudi public university to maintain anonymity. This measure is taken to protect the identity of the institution and ensure the pseudonymity of the participants, thereby safeguarding their privacy and maintaining ethical research standards

[7] The *Qur'an* is the complete revelation of *Allah* to the Prophet *Mohammad*, which serves as a spiritual, intellectual, and ethical framework for all Muslims (Al-Munajjed, 1997).

[8] *Hadith (Sunnah)* contains the sayings, interpretations, and actions of the Prophet *Muhammad*, recorded by his closest companions, the *Sahaba* (Al-Munajjed, 1997).

rights, and promote gender justice and social transformation, its current structure and implementation may hinder the educational outcomes expected by Vision 2030.

This chapter begins with an overview of the historical, educational, legal, and social contexts that shape women's rights education and discourse in Saudi Arabia. It examines the evolution of women's education, the influence of social norms, and the role of Islamic education and the ICC in fostering awareness within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030. Understanding these elements is essential for contextualising the study's research problem. Building on this foundation, the chapter then outlines the research objectives, questions, motivation, and expected contributions, concluding with an explanation of the thesis structure.

1.2. From Tribal Structure to Constitutional Framework:

In 1744, the political-religious alliance between Mohammed Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab and Prince Mohammed Ibn Saud established the First Saudi State as an Islamic state governed by *Al-Sharīʿah* law (Blanchard, 2007). At that time, most of the Arabian Peninsula was a vast, arid desert with limited opportunities for settlement for its nomadic population, who had minimal contact with the outside world. Tribes formed the basis of social and political organisation, mirroring pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyyah*) norms that reinforced male dominance and female subjugation, which Islam initially fought against (Khamlishi, 2004). Men controlled

women's movement, interactions, and economic independence, while education and inheritance rights were primarily denied[9].

After that alliance, the Saudi state underwent three stages until King Abdulaziz Al Saud announced the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. The Basic Law of Saudi Arabia was issued in 1992[10]. Article One in the "Basic Law of Governance" states, "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Book of *Allah* (the God) most high and the *Sunnah* of his Messenger, both of which govern this law and all the laws of the State". Islam is not just a religion but a comprehensive legal and social system that shapes institutional structures, traditions, and gender roles; it is inseparable from the Saudi identity (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Denman and Hilal, 2011).

Governance is based entirely on *Sharīʿah,* which contains two primary and main sources, the *Qurʾān,* the *Ḥadīth* (*Sunnah*), and two complementary and additional sources, *Ijma'a[11]* and *Qiyas[12]*. Saudi law prohibits any legal system outside *Sharīʿah***,** reinforcing its central role in shaping society (Zuhur, 2011**;** Al-Asmari, 2021**),** particularly in defining women's status, rights, and responsibilities. However, tribalism and religion have been central to

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[9] Marriages were arranged without women's consent under the guise of protecting tribal honour, and absolute obedience was expected, dictated by tribal customs. Marriage and divorce were wielded as a tool of male control, with men holding unchecked power to repudiate their wives at will (Khamlishi, 2004).

[10] The Basic Law of Governance in Saudi Arabia is the essential body of principles and rules on which the State is based. It is a constitution-like charter divided into nine chapters and 83 articles. It is a fundamental legal document that outlines the kingdom's governance system, emphasising its Islamic identity and monarchical authority. Unlike Western constitutions, it does not establish democratic institutions or allow for a separation of powers. Still, it ensures that all aspects of governance align with Islamic principles and the authority of the ruling family. https://laws.boe.gov.sa/BoeLaws/Laws/LawDetails/16b97fcb-4833-4f66-8531-a9a700

[11] *Ijma'a* is the scholarly consensus on issues not directly addressed in the *Qur'an or Sunnah* (Al-Munajjed, 1997).

[12] *Qiyas* is analogical reasoning, allowing principles from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* to be applied to contemporary issues (Al-Munajjed, 1997).

forming major cultural and social norms in Saudi Arabia (Al-Rumaihi, 1995; Hatina, 2009)[13]. Vision 2030 represents a significant initiative to balance tradition with modernisation, promoting women's participation in economic and social development while maintaining Islamic values.

1.3. The Evolution of Women's Education: From *Kuttab* to Higher Education:

Education was limited and unregulated, based on traditional schools known as *Al-Kuttab[14]*, which focused on memorising the Holy *Qurʾān,* the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet, the Arabic language, and some Islamic sciences (Doumato, 2000). Due to the high illiteracy rate in the Arabian Peninsula, 95% of the total population, King Abdulaziz (the founder and first King of Saudi Arabia) issued a decree establishing the "Knowledge Council" for boys in 1928, long before the official establishment of the Kingdom in 1932 (Ministry of Education, Government, MOG, Saudi Arabia). At that time, *Al-Kuttab* remained the sole avenue for girls' education, as girls' schooling had not yet been officially permitted. However, this traditional educational stage laid the foundation for the eventual formalisation of women's education. It contributed to the emergence of educated female

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[13] An example of the dominant cultural practices was the restrictions on a woman's mobility (to preserve the family's honour). She was prevented from leaving her parents' home for any other place except that of her husband at marriage or for her funeral upon her death. Additional restrictions limited her role to raising children and performing housework (Al Rumaihi, 1995). These practices stem from merging traditional Arabic norms and twisted interpretations of the *Qurʾān* (Bowen, 2008).

[14] The *Kuttab* is a traditional educational system catering to both sexes and all age groups, typically held in mosques for boys or in designated locations, sometimes teachers' homes for girls. Unlike in modern classrooms, students sit on mats or bare ground in a circle around the teacher, often an elder or religious scholar of esteemed social status. Instruction relies on rote memorisation and repetition, with students chanting after the teacher to aid retention under strict discipline. Writing is practiced on wooden planks coated with clay or plaster, inscribed with Qur'anic verses or lessons using ink derived from charcoal or plant extracts, and then erased after memorisation. The primary goal of this educational approach is to instil Islamic principles, preparing boys for professional and social responsibilities while teaching girls virtues that reinforce religious and societal values (Al-Munajjed,1997; Al-Sadhan, 2012).

personnel who played a crucial role in the development of formal schooling, with many being recruited by the state as teachers and school principals when girls' education was officially introduced in 1960 (Ibn Dahesh, Al-Harbi, 1999; Al-Sadhan, 2012; Al-Badah, 2011).

The relationship between tribal customs, religious beliefs, and state decision-making on women's issues was complex and conflicted (Lopez, 2013; Kechichian, 2015). There had been a strong reaction to the government's announcement of girls' education permission. Many viewed female education as threatening society's adherence to religion and virtue (Al-Manea,1984; Al-Khidr, 2011; Al-Sedhan, 2012). In addition, for the dominant gender role at that time, girls' education was perceived as a disruption to the "ideal woman" who devotes herself to protecting the family by being a decent wife and mother or traditionally accepted professions such as teaching or nursing (Hamdan, 2005). Therefore, most Saudi citizens were reluctant to send their daughters to formal girls' schools in fear of the emancipation of women, which they could witness in neighbouring Arab and Muslim countries (Al-Sedhan, 2012)[15]. In 1960, a royal decree was issued by King Saud advocating for girls' education, stating that this decision was based on the advice of Senior Scholars

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[15] However, after the discovery of oil, urbanisation had a significant role in advancing education in general and girls' education in particular. Thus, social attitudes towards women have been adjusted, contributing to an actual change in redefining the gender roles of Saudi women (Al-Suwaigh,1989).

(*Ulama) or* (The Council of Senior Scholars),[16] assuring families the right to keep their daughters at home if they wished (Al-Sadhan, 2011). *Ulama's* Support for establishing female education was crucial, as changing general social attitudes was extremely difficult without the interference of the religious establishment (Al-Suwaida, 2016). Hence, religious institutions issued verdicts (*fatwa*) to encourage families to enrol their daughters in school and to assure the families that girls' education is not a Western ideology imposed on the kingdom; instead, it is a right for women guaranteed by Islamic teachings[17] (Al-Sedhan, 2012).

 The government placed girls' education under the supervision of religious scholars, which Al-Suwaigh (1989) described as a necessary step towards reconciling women's educational rights with traditional notions of honour, which required women to safeguard their virtue by remaining at home. Years after formal girls' education, the number of girls' schools significantly increased (Rough, 2002). What began with 15 primary female schools across different regions expanded to 14,812 schools at all general education levels across the

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16 The religious establishment in Saudi Arabia has historically been a key partner of the ruling Al Saud family, forming a political-religious alliance that has shaped governance since 1744. At its core is the Council of Senior Scholars (*Hay'at Kibar Al-Ulama*), the highest Islamic authority, composed of leading Sunni scholars. The Council advises the King and government on Sharia law, issues fatwas through the General Presidency for Scholarly Research and *Ifta*, oversees the Two Holy Mosques (Makkah and Madinah), and regulates Islamic propagation (Dawah) and religious education. Senior scholars influence judicial rulings, but the ultimate legal authority remains with the king (Al-Khader, 2010). While it historically held significant power over judicial and social policies, its influence has declined recently due to modernisation efforts under Vision 2030, which aims to balance religious tradition with social and economic reforms (Al-Otaibi, 2020).

[17] Limiting women's education—whether by the state or religious authorities—has no basis in the *Qurʾān* or Sunnah (Hamdan, 2012). On the contrary, education holds a prominent and respected place in Islam. The first revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) begins with the word "*Iqra*," meaning "read." The *Qurʾān* is rich with verses encouraging education, such as: "My Lord, increase my knowledge." Moreover, the *Qurʾān* emphasises the superiority of knowledge, stating: "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (*Al-Qurʾān*,2025, 39:9). This highlights the value placed on education in Islam, granting men and women the right to education (Shah, 2006). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) further emphasised this by saying, "The quest for knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim."

Kingdom, enrolling 3,405,966 female students between 2021 and 2023, according to the Ministry of Education[18]. The development of female education in Saudi Arabia has been one of the fastest and most impressive in terms of its expansion over a short period (Hamdan, 2005; Al-Murai, 2007; Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013; Al-Omair, 2015; Al-Suwaida, 2016).

Before 1975, women's higher education was through off-campus programs, except for exams. Since then, the number of institutions for women higher education has gradually risen, as has the investment in women's education; in 2020, there were 39 government and 11 private universities for both genders (Al-Zahrani, 2021), including the Princess Nora Bint Abdul Rahman (established in 2008), a public women's only university in Riyadh and the largest women-only university in the world on over 8 million square meters, with 40,000 female members (Al-Zahrani, 2021). Thanks to these educational policies, Saudi women could combat dominant gender roles in education and profession, becoming engineers, doctors, journalists, editors, lawyers, PhD holders, and many other professions (Al-Sudairy,2017).

Saudi Arabia is uniquely positioned by the Islamic world as the birthplace, which underscores the vital role of Islam in the education system (Mustafa, 2017). The Educational Policy document, issued in 1970 by the Supreme Committee for Education Policy and consisting of 236 articles in 9 chapters, is the cornerstone of the Saudi

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[18] https://moe.gov.sa/en/knowledgecenter/dataandstats/edustatdata/pages/default.aspx

education system[19]. It outlined that education based on Islamic principles is the pillar of Saudi nation-building. Accordingly, in addition to the scientific and literature subjects, Islamic religious education was integrated into all educational levels, from preschool to higher education and across all schooling models. The Education Policy emphasised the importance of the ICC in higher education (Article 11) as a vehicle for shaping and strengthening the nation's foundational identity. The Educational Policy also emphasised disseminating Islamic morals among students (Al-Minghash, 2006; Elyas and Badawood, 2016), shaping education in Saudi Arabia through Islamic principles and values system (Rugh, 2002).

The Education Policy document incorporated human rights principles through various directives and assurances (Al-Thunayan, 2013)[20]. In 2015, the Ministry of Education launched different initiatives to promote citizens' rights, aligning with the strategic objectives of Vision 2030 (Al-Otaibi, 2020). These initiatives emphasise consolidating positive values, developing independent personalities among male and female citizens, and providing essential knowledge and skills to meet labour market demands (Vision, 2030).

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[19] Saudi Arabia's Education Policy, launched in 1970, serves as the foundational framework for the Kingdom's educational system. It defines educational objectives, emphasising religious values, societal needs, and national development. The policy covers all levels of education, including curricula, administration, and governance, making it integral to the state's public policy. Divided into nine sections, the document outlines education principles, goals, planning, types of education (general, vocational, and higher), and instructional methods.
Aligned with Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is advancing educational reforms to enhance quality, improve outcomes, and develop student and teacher competencies, ensuring a future-ready generation capable of leadership and innovation (Al-Bishr et al., 2024).
[20] For example, the document emphasised the "principle of justice and equal opportunities among citizens and the facilitation of learning opportunities based on consultative opinion and justice in transactions and the combination of rights and duties" (Al-Thunayan, 2013, p. 235).

Despite these efforts, the Education Policy document has remained unmodified since its establishment in 1970 (Al-Minghash, 2006; El-Essa, 2018)[21].

1.4. Saudi Vision 2030:

Since 2015, under the leadership of King Salman (the current king), Saudi Arabia has embarked on an ambitious strategic development plan known as Vision 2030. This comprehensive framework outlines 96 strategic objectives built upon three foundational pillars: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation. Grounded in the Kingdom's intrinsic strengths, Vision 2030 aims to empower citizens and align national progress with global advancements. A cornerstone of this transformation is the emphasis on women's empowerment, positioning it as a central component of the developmental agenda[22]. Through a series of reforms, Saudi Arabia has systematically dismantled barriers to women's full participation in public life[23].

Although Vision 2030 does not explicitly differentiate between genders, it integrates women-specific measures to correct the imbalances in gender representation across various

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[21] Al-Minghash (2006) argues that with the rise of globalisation and advancements in communication, modern societal demands require reevaluating educational policies to align with contemporary realities. Reforming these policies is essential to addressing the evolving challenges in Saudi society and the global academic landscape.

[22] Since the era of King Abdullah (2005–2015), the Saudi government has demonstrated a growing commitment to women's rights, ensuring alignment with Islamic principles derived from the Holy *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In pursuit of this objective, the state has undertaken comprehensive legal reforms and policy revisions to support and empower Saudi women while upholding Islamic teachings and societal values. These efforts aim to safeguard women's rights and clarify their roles and responsibilities within Islamic jurisprudence and national development (Saudi Human Rights Commission, 2019).

[23] Moreover, Vision 2030 sets ambitious targets, including raising women's labour market participation from 22% to 30% by 2030, acknowledging that women, who constitute over half of the university graduates and 60% of the youth population, play a crucial role in the nation's economic and social advancement (Mulligan, 2019).

sectors[24]. By dismantling structural barriers and implementing inclusive policies, Vision 2030 establishes a strong foundation for women's active contribution to shaping the Kingdom's future. These reforms have facilitated greater involvement in decision-making processes and expanded opportunities for women to oversee and contribute to government operations, reinforcing their role in shaping the nation's development. Saudi women have increasingly gained representation in the political sphere[25]. Globally, for the first time, three women were appointed as ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, first in the United States in 2019 and then in Norway and Sweden[26]. Hamdan (2012) considers that these social changes are indicators of women's rights progress and contribute to women's empowerments and gender justice in power relations, status, and access to resources.

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[24]The Basic Law of Governance supports the Vision 2030 transformative approach. The ease of the guardianship system (2019), Protection from Abuse Law (2013) and Anti-Harassment Law (2018), alongside institutions such as the Human Rights Commission and the new personal status law (2022), offer women explicit legal protections. As official documentation states, "Saudi Arabia's regulations adopt the complementary equality between men and women, which considers the characteristics of each, which differ from the other. This will ultimately bring justice. The Kingdom believes a "complementary gender relationship is an ideal means of promoting and protecting human rights, including women's rights and eliminating discrimination against women". https://www.my.gov.sa/wps/portal/snp/careaboutyou/womenempowering#:~:text=العربية20%المملكة20%أنظمة20%تعتمد20% فيها20%تتم20%الإنسان20%حقوق20%مجالات, مجالات20%السعودية20%

[25] Challenging gender roles extended to the participation of 30 Saudi women in the Al-Shūrā (consultation) Council in 2013 and the winning of 20 Saudi women in the municipal elections in 2015 (Al-Sudairy, 2017). Women were granted several rights, such as the right to drive, expanding opportunities in sports, including participation in the Olympics, and facilitating entry into previously male-dominated professions such as aviation.

[26] Similarly, in 2020, Saudi women were appointed members of the International Olympic Committee and permanent representatives of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (Al-Sudairy, 2017). Hamdan (2012) argues that such progressive social changes contribute to advancing women's rights, reducing inequalities in power and status, and expanding access to resources.

Saudi Vision 2030 also introduced the Personal Status Law under Royal Decree No. (M/73) approved by the Saudi Council of Ministers on March 8, 2022[27]. The law's primary objectives are to enhance family stability, safeguard individual rights, and reduce discrepancies in judicial rulings, rooted in the principles and objectives of Islamic law (*Sharīʿah*), considering legal guidelines to uphold family cohesion and stability[28]. The Personal Status Law comprehensively regulates marital issues, including engagement, marriage, and the documentation of divorce[29], *Khul''*[30], potential misuse or abuse (*Al-Taʿassuf*)[31], inheritance and wills[32], and marriage contracts[33], Guardianship[34] while

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[27] Personal Status Law was issued through organised consultation with specialised entities to ensure its provisions aligned with Islamic law and societal needs, which are 1) The Council of Senior Scholars (*Ulama*)**:** Ensuring the code's provisions comply with Islamic Sharia principles, and 2) The Saudi *Shura* Council (The Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia): Participating in discussions of the draft code and providing critical feedback. The code's provisions underwent rigorous review to ensure their consistency with Islamic principles. See the full document in https://laws.boe.gov.sa/BoeLaws/Laws/LawDetails/4d72d829-947b-45d5-b9b5-ae5800d6bac2/1?csrt=18186045938710399830

[28] This emphasis aligns with the Basic Law of Governance, which highlights the state's commitment to family welfare and acknowledges it as the cornerstone of society.

[29] In Personal Status Law, Chapter (3), Section (2), the legislation prioritises preserving family stability by carefully monitoring and addressing divorce rates. It also guarantees children's rights in divorce cases, ensuring their well-being and protecting their interests. For example, before the new Personal Status Code was enacted, there was no standardised legal framework governing the order of priority in child custody, leaving decisions primarily to judicial discretion. This lack of uniformity often resulted in inconsistent rulings, with custody being awarded to the father over the mother without clear or consistent criteria. In some instances, mothers were required to remain unmarried to retain custody, and remarriage could automatically lead to its revocation. With the introduction of the new personal status code, the mother is now explicitly recognised as the primary custodian, eliminating the need for her to file a legal claim or prove her eligibility unless a lawful impediment exists. Furthermore, marriage is no longer an automatic disqualifier for maternal custody; it only becomes a factor if it demonstrably compromises the child's best interests (Article 126, 127).

[30] Women are allowed to document divorce proceedings without needing a judicial judgment. (Personal Status Act, Article 96)

[31] Article 108 explicitly grants a wife the right to request the dissolution of the marriage contract if she endures harm that makes the continuation of marital life untenable, provided that the harm is substantiated with valid evidence.

[32] Personal Status Law (2022), Chapter (7), Section (1).

[33] Personal Status Law: Chapter (1), Section (2,3)

[34] Saudi Arabia's guardianship system has experienced notable reforms characterised by a steady relaxation of constraints on women, although some customary practices continue. These changes accelerated under King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's leadership, especially after the launch of the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative. Major developments have included permitting women to drive, acquire passports, access higher education, and travel independently once they reach a specific age.

outlining the rights and responsibilities of spouses[35]. It also regulates matters concerning waiting periods (*Edda*)[36], alimony and housing[37], and mutual respect within marital life, emphasising the principles of consultation (*Al-Shūrā*) and justice in managing family affairs among spouses. The law establishes the minimum legal age for marriage at 18 years[38]. These legal reforms adhere strictly to Islamic law, contradicting dominant social practices on these issues, presenting a transformative shift in protecting women's rights, stabilising families, empowering women, and upholding rights enshrined in the legal system[39]. However, studies highlighted that despite these legal reforms, women's awareness of their rights is not improving (Abu Jabal, 2020; Aldegether, 2023) (Read more about the gap between the legal reforms and women's awareness of their rights on 1.6 and 2.4.2).

1.5. Islamic Education in Higher Education: The ICC Transformation Through Vision 2030

Education has been part of the Saudi Vision 2030 agenda, as enhancing economic and social success begins with improving the quality of human capital, dedicating $50 billion to education in the 2018 budget (Rex, 2019, p.205). A key objective of Vision 2030 is to enhance higher education, enabling graduates to compete in the knowledge economy and meet local job market demands (Vision 2030). Saudi Arabia has expanded female

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[35] Personal Status Law: Article (42)
[36] Personal Status Law: Chapter (4), Section (1).
[37] Personal Status Law: Chapter (2), Section (1)
[38] Personal Status Law: Article (9).
[39] The Personal Status Law's streamlined approach facilitates swift case resolution. Many disputes, such as marital separations and their associated alimony issues, custody, visitation rights, and more, are settled in a single session. This efficiency underscores the modernised judicial approach and enhances confidence in the legal system (Ministry of Justice, official website, 2023).
 https://www.moj.gov.sa/ar/MediaCenter/News/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?itemId=1372

participation across all educational sectors, appointing women to leadership roles, including deputy ministers and general directors in the Ministry of Education. To fulfil these recommendations, the Ministry of Education added in 2021 two new subjects, "Critical thinking" and "Philosophy", taught in secondary schools[40]. Elyas (2018) argues that critical thinking and awareness of gender-related issues, such as gender roles, equality, justice and stereotypes, should be prioritised within Saudi education systems[41]. Based on the Education Policy, religious education is compulsory for boys and girls at all levels in (public or private) Saudi schools and higher education. Islamic studies are implemented at schools and include six main subjects: *Qurʾān*, *Tawhid* (declaration of the oneness of God), *Tajwid* (recitation), *Tafsir* (interpretation, commentary on the *Qurʾān*), *Ḥadīth* (record of the sayings and doings of the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) and his companions) and *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) (Pokop, 2003, p.79). In 2020, all six Islamic materials were integrated and resumed into one subject, Islamic Studies, for both genders at all school levels. In higher education, the ICC is the core religious education component, following the Saudi Education Policy. Since the 1970s, male and female students in all higher Saudi education institutions, regardless of their academic discipline, must take an ICC for four years as part of their bachelor's degree program (Education Policy Document in the Kingdom, 1969, Article 11). These courses encompass essential Islamic teachings,

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[40] This approach was designed to address the country's deficiencies in these areas, following decades of curricula built on indoctrination that hindered the development of creativity and independent thinking, essential elements for economic growth (Al-Otaibi, 2020; Rugh, 2002).

[41] Policymakers, curriculum developers, educators, and students must actively cultivate and strengthen their critical thinking skills on this issue. This is because teachers impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes and play a pivotal role in shaping students' critical awareness of key values, including moral, cultural, and gender-related issues (Elyas, 2018).

including beliefs, Islamic history, *Qurʾānic* studies, human rights, and duties. The curriculum outlines women's rights as prescribed by *Sharīʿah* (the Holy *Qurʾān* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet *Muhammad*).

The ICC was not a direct product of Vision 2030; it was first designed and taught in the Faculty of *Sharīʿah* at Damascus University in Syria in 1954. In 1961, the curriculum was adopted by all the faculties at Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Later on, ICC was introduced in several Arabic universities such as Sudan, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (Al-Ali, 2007). The Islamic academia held several conferences drawing attention to the importance of including the ICC in higher education to promote the Muslim identity of the youth so they can think critically and wisely about the dominant ideological and intellectual approaches nationally and internationally (Al-Ali, 2007). Most recently, the International Forum on the *Decision of ICC in Universities: Challenges of Reality and Development Prospects* (2022) was held at the University of Qatar, featuring speakers from various Arab universities[42]. The primary objectives of this forum were to assess the current state of teaching the ICC in universities and to highlight its role in shaping and fostering a balance in Muslim identities. In Vision 2030, pedagogical recommendations were developed asserting that religious education should be tied to the real-world context, emphasising practical application (Al-Otaibi, 2020). El-Essa (2018) said there was an urgent need to update the content of Islamic curricula to promote moderation and authentic national identity and protect students from the dangers of drifting towards perverse ideologies.

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[42] The Federation of Universities of the Islamic World https://fumi-fuiw.org/ar/article/427?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

Despite the ongoing development of the religious curricula in the Saudi educational system, the ICC has not received the same level of scrutiny as Islamic studies subjects at schools. The Chairman of the Curriculum Development Committee at KSA University in 2010 acknowledged that the ICC had remained unaltered for the past 25 years[43] . However, since 2015, the ICC at KSA has been through several updates to improve its connection to contemporary issues such as civil society institutions, human rights, and the dialogue of civilisations. This study is driven by the need to examine the role of the ICC in raising awareness of women's rights at KSA University.

1.6. The Evolution of the Research Problem:

While institutional reforms and expanded opportunities integrate women into public and economic spheres, true empowerment goes beyond access and achievements (Hamdan, 2012). Kabeer (1999) asserts that merely occupying leadership roles or workplaces does not guarantee full empowerment, as awareness of rights and the ability to make strategic life choices remain critical[44]. Providing loans and business opportunities does not necessarily shift power dynamics within families and communities. Similarly, Le Renard (2008) highlights that political and socioeconomic structures have long shaped Saudi women's status, reinforcing those formal reforms alone cannot achieve genuine

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[43] Reference is concealed for the anonymity of the study.
[44] Cornwall (2016) further argues that economic independence alone is insufficient without structural changes addressing the root causes of gender injustice, such as gender violence within families.

empowerment. Despite these challenges, social norms are not static; they evolve through negotiation and education.

From a parallel perspective, access to education alone is insufficient to fully realise the right to education, though it remains a fundamental prerequisite (Tomaševski, 2004). While economically prosperous countries often assume that achieving near-universal access to education is sufficient, this assumption neglects deeper issues related to education's quality, equity, and rights-based dimensions. As Kearney (2016) highlights, despite formal commitments to international human rights conventions and "education for all" initiatives, many students still experience educational barriers that undermine the principles of equal access, inclusion, and meaningful participation.

This perspective is particularly relevant in contexts where formal access to education does not necessarily translate into awareness or agency, especially in areas such as women's rights. Hamdan (2012) states that female education in Saudi Arabia has not expanded women's occupational opportunities, nor has it changed the gender and power relations, as she argues that women are still subordinated to men in every field. The gap between legal frameworks and lived educational experiences underscores the need to move beyond access and interrogate how education systems shape critical thinking, rights awareness, and social implementation. Karimullah (2023) suggests that Islamic education can bridge the gap between access and empowerment by enhancing women's religious understanding, expanding their knowledge, and helping them navigate social and cultural barriers within an inclusive educational framework (Ahmed and Hyndman-Rizk, 2018; Karimullah, 2023). Contrary to some approaches that dismiss religion as a tool for women's

empowerment and rights awareness[45], Karimullah (2023) argues that Islamic education serves as a powerful means to challenge and dismantle oppressive structures. It provides a framework to combat domestic violence, gender discrimination, and patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. By fostering critical engagement with religious teachings, Islamic education can empower women with the knowledge and agency to advocate for their rights within a faith-based context. However, professors and policymakers agree that there has been little to no significant progress in raising awareness of women's rights among students (El-Essa, 2018).

Additionally, my positionality as a Saudi, Muslim, female academic in Sharia studies, combined with my teaching experience, has been a central motivation for undertaking this research. These experiences not only situate me within the cultural, religious, and educational contexts where women encounter their rights, but also compel me to interrogate how these contexts shape women's awareness and agency. My background equips me with both insider familiarity and critical distance, allowing me to approach the subject with cultural sensitivity and a nuanced understanding of the role Islamic education plays in framing women's lived realities (read in depth about reflexivity in 5.5.3).

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[45] Some scholars and activists, such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2006, 2010) and Élisabeth Badinter (1980, 2003), argue that religious frameworks, particularly in their traditional interpretations, serve as barriers to women's empowerment rather than as tools for rights awareness. This approach claims that religion institutionalises gender inequality and that true liberation for women requires distancing the rights discourse from religious influences. Religion, for this approach, reinforces traditional gender roles and hinders women's autonomy. While these perspectives advocate for a strictly secular approach to women's rights, they have been met with counterarguments from scholars who emphasise the potential for reinterpretation and reform within religious traditions to promote gender justice (e.g., Wadud, 2006; Barlas, 2002). (See more in 2.1. and 2.2.)

1.7. The Hypotheses Formulation

As mentioned before, Human Rights Education (HRE) integrates education as a transformative tool that empowers individuals. It raises awareness of human rights and encourages personal action to uphold these principles (Tibbitts, 2002, 2017; Aldawood, 2020; Bajaj, 2009, 2011). Critical Pedagogy (CP), rooted in Freire's work (1970), promotes liberation through education by fostering critical thinking, self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of human potential. Similarly, the Islamic education framework considers critical thinking and moral responsibility as central tenets of Islamic education (Habib, 2019; Gilani-Williams, 2014). In addition, despite the claimed ability of religious education to raise women's awareness of their rights and promote gender justice (Karimullah, 2023); and despite Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which aims to bridge the gap between women's rights education and women's rights awareness through legal and educational reforms in the ICC, this gap still persists among women students. Through the integration of HRE, CP, and Islamic educational approach, and in the given educational and religious context, this study hypothesises that while the ICC has the potential to activate critical thinking, raise awareness about women's rights, and promote gender justice and social transformation, its current structure and implementation in the classroom may limit the educational outcomes envisioned by Vision 2030.

This hypothesis emerged from the above-mentioned studies and the researcher's direct observations in the classroom while teaching female students. Students demonstrate significant confusion surrounding their legal and social rights. Some students advocated for rights that fit their responsibilities, while others hesitated to claim the rights they owned

under Islamic law, mistakenly believing they were not allowed to. This gap between rights awareness, legal reforms, and dominant gender roles highlighted the urgent need to figure out the shortness of the ICC in providing transformative education in gender justice in the last 10 years despite the legal development and the educational policies will through Vision 2030.

1.8. Research Objectives and Questions

This study critically examines the role of the ICC in promoting awareness of women's rights in Saudi Arabia, identifying the underlying reasons for its ineffectiveness despite the implementation of Vision 2030 and legal and educational reforms, with scholars, policymakers, and specialists consistently noting a persistent lack of awareness of women's rights. Given its role in shaping ICC education at the university level, this study focuses on KSA University as a case study. KSA was chosen as the context of the study due to its historical significance, evolving governance structure, and potential for curricula enhancement.

1.8.1. The Research's Specific Objectives:

The data consists of the ICC content and interviews analysis (interviews with women professors and students at KSA). The specific objectives of the research are the following:

1- Explore Professors' and Students' Perspectives on ICC Content and Implementation in terms of its effectiveness in raising awareness of women's rights, fostering gender justice, and promoting critical thinking. This objective will assess whether there is alignment

between the curriculum's goals and the professors' and students' experiences and how these perspectives can inform improvements in the curriculum content and teaching strategies.

2- Analyse the ICC Content on Women's Rights Materials. The research will explore the curriculum structure, its pedagogical methodology, the types of knowledge it imparts, and the discourse and language used to offer this knowledge, assessing how effectively these elements address gender justice from both Islamic and contemporary perspectives. Additionally, the study will evaluate the coherence between the content, teaching methods, and their capacity to foster a deeper understanding of women's rights, emphasising critical thinking and empowerment. The research aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the ICC and highlights how deeply the ICC contributes to improving Saudi women's awareness of their rights within Islamic principles.

3- Explore the Intersection of Islamic Education and Critical Pedagogy, evaluating the integration of transformative education principles in WRPI discussion, incorporating critical thinking, self-awareness, and active engagement to encourage students to engage with gender justice and women's rights both academically and in their personal lives. This evaluation will assess the curriculum's potential to foster a transformative educational experience that empowers students to challenge gender inequalities and contribute to societal change.

1.8.2. The Research's Questions:

1. How do professors and students perceive the effectiveness of ICC content (structure and offered knowledge) and teaching strategies in raising awareness about women's rights, fostering gender justice, and promoting critical thinking?

2. How do the ICC concepts, structure and discourse address gender justice and women's rights follow an Islamic approach?   How far does it relate to the contemporary social and legal context of Saudi Arabia?

3. In what ways does the intersection of Islamic education and critical pedagogy empower students to critically engage with gender injustices, and how effectively does the curriculum foster transformative education that motivates students toward contributing to societal change?

1.9. The Significance of the Study: Expected Contributions

This research contributes to the broader scholarship on women's rights approaches in Muslim-majority countries and human rights education by demonstrating how Islamic education can serve as a vehicle for promoting gender justice. By critically analysing the ICC, the study highlights how religious and cultural frameworks can be leveraged to advance women's rights in ways that are both contextually relevant and aligned with Islamic principles. This perspective is particularly significant given the ongoing global discourse on integrating human rights education within religious and culturally specific educational systems. It offers an alternative approach that neither imposes external paradigms nor rejects universal rights frameworks but rather seeks to harmonise them within an Islamic pedagogical model.

The ICC is an essential platform for raising awareness about women's rights in Saudi Arabia, particularly within the context of Vision 2030. Saudi Arabia is undergoing a profound transformation that includes a rethinking of gender roles, especially regarding women's rights and empowerment. However, the complex interplay of traditional, cultural, and religious factors poses opportunities as much as challenges in achieving gender justice. Education, particularly in higher education institutions, is pivotal in this transformation as students are the future leaders and decision-makers who will shape and implement these changes in practice. The ICC offers students the tools to engage with these issues through Islamic teachings and contemporary-practical perspectives. However, the curriculum's ability to bridge the gap between these perspectives and address emerging gender justice concerns under Vision 2030 remains an open question. The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide new insights into how Islamic education, structured through Islamic scholarly methodologies and implemented through critical pedagogical approaches, can empower Saudi women. The study aims to inform Islamic studies and educational research by thoroughly examining how the ICC operates within Saudi Arabia's evolving sociocultural and political context. Furthermore, it contributes to women's rights by critically assessing how education can play a transformative role in shaping awareness and advocating for gender justice in Saudi Arabia.

This research fills a gap in the existing literature, which often overlooks the complex relationship between religious teachings, higher education, and women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia. This research provides a crucial academic resource for understanding the intersections and dynamics of religion, education, dominant gender roles, gender justice

and women's rights in Saudi Arabia. It offers insights not only for scholars in Islamic studies, education, and women's rights but also for policymakers and educators. It advocates working to improve women's empowerment through effective education within the unique sociocultural context of Saudi Arabia.

1.10. The Thesis Structure:

In this chapter, the research presented the background of the study. It explored the historical development of Saudi Arabia, focusing on its impact on women's rights and the evolution of the country's education policies. I also discussed the history of religious higher education in Saudi Arabia, with particular attention to the ICC, which serves as a cornerstone for understanding the intersection of education, religion, and gender issues within Saudi society. Then, the research hypothesis, objectives, and questions are covered, highlighting the study's potential contributions to knowledge and practical applications in gender and educational disciplines.

Chapter 2: **The Literature Review** explores the evolution of women's rights discourse in the Arab and Muslim world, examining its intersection with Western feminist frameworks. It identifies the diverse epistemological frameworks in women's rights advocacy across secular and Muslim Arabic approaches following the analysis of Khir-Allah (2021, 2024). It explores an inclusive discourse that respects Muslim women's lived experiences and faith-based identities. This chapter identifies the complexities of culture and religion, clarifying their intersections while highlighting how Muslim scholars address the

discussion of women's rights in a culturally specific, practical, and faith-conscious approach.

Chapter 3, The Islamic Framework to Women's Rights Discussion, delves into the Islamic framework of women's rights. It identifies its value system and defines the key concepts in discussing women's rights, following Al-*Taʾṣīl* methodology in Al-Eid's (2006) study[46]. The chapter then focuses on the Saudi context, describing Saudi women's rights, awareness, and agency and emphasising the role of education and religious and cultural identity in shaping gender norms and women's empowerment. Finally, it reviews previous studies on women's rights education in Saudi Arabia before and after Vision 2030, concluding with a critical reflection on the findings.

Chapter 4, The Theoretical Framework, structures the epistemological foundation for the study and the analysis guidelines. The chapter introduces key existing pedagogical theories of Human Rights Education (HRE), particularly Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy, Tibbitts' and Bajaj's Transformation Model of HRE, and Peace Education (PE). The Chapter moves on to focus on the Islamic epistemological approach to education, exploring

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[46] This thesis aims to establish a foundational framework for understanding the source of women's rights in Islam as grounded in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, independent of culturally inherited practices, human-biased laws, and socio-historical traditions that dominate women's rights discussion in Saudi Arabia. While it examines the differing interpretive approaches to religious texts adopted by the third and fourth waves in women's rights discussion within Islamic thought, such a comparison is not the primary objective of this study. The complex methodological differences across religious texts' interpretations exceed the scope of this research and would necessitate a separate, dedicated investigation.

the intersection of Critical Pedagogy with Islamic values of justice, equality, and peace. It examines how Islamic principles align with transformative educational practices and their potential to challenge entrenched gender norms. This section also evaluates the Saudi educational context, particularly in light of Vision 2030, and sets the stage for analysing the ICC's role in advancing women's rights within this framework.

Chapter 5, the Methodology, describes the research design, the survey structure, data collection methods, and the analysis process. The chapter also explains the rationale behind the chosen research decisions and methodologies. Finally, it explores the trustworthiness of the research following Lincoln and Guba's approach (1985) and discusses the research challenges and ethical issues.

The analysis consists of two chapters. Chapter 6 presents a three-tiered analysis of eighteen semi-structured interviews with female professors and students engaged with the ICC. Using micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis, it examines the curriculum's effectiveness in promoting awareness of Women's Rights Principles in Islam (WRPI). The micro level assesses the participants' perspectives on the ICC content, structure, and pedagogical strategies. The meso level explores participants' perceptions of key concepts in WRPI, which is explained in the curriculum. The macro level contextualises how participants implement these findings within the broader Saudi social and educational landscape. Together, these levels provide a comprehensive understanding of the ICC's role in shaping women's rights education.

Chapter 7 analyses the content of the ICC on women's rights, focusing on the first six chapters of the Curriculum. Following the three-level framework—micro, meso, and macro—it examines the curriculum's structure, discourse, and language for gender stereotypes (micro), the effectiveness of the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology in explaining key concepts in WRPI (meso), and the broader social and educational context of WRPI knowledge in Saudi Arabia (macro). This structured approach comprehensively evaluates how the ICC presents and frames women's rights within Islamic teachings.

Chapter 8, the Discussion, interprets the study's findings concerning the research questions, objectives, and theoretical framework. It examines the implications of the findings, connecting them to the existing literature about transformative education, women's rights awareness, and gender justice in Islam and examining their significance in Saudi Arabia within the framework of Vision 2030. The Discussion Chapter is structured following Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy.

Chapter 9, the Conclusion, summarises the study's key findings, revisits the research objectives, and provides a final synthesis. It highlights the research contributions to the field and suggests areas for future research.

1.11. Terminological Clarifications:

Given this study's cultural specificity and multidisciplinary nature, it is essential to establish precise definitions for the key terms used. This section aims to clarify the intended meanings of these terms to prevent misinterpretation, overgeneralisation, or ambiguity. By

providing these clarifications, this research ensures conceptual accuracy and a shared understanding of the analysis.

Sunnah and *Hadith* are closely related but distinct concepts in Islamic teachings. *Sunnah* refers to the practices, sayings, and approvals of the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) as a lived example of Islamic teachings. On the other hand, *Hadith* is the recorded narration of the Prophet's words, actions, and approvals, compiled by scholars in authenticated collections. While *Sunnah* represents the Prophet's broader way of life and customs, *Hadith* is the primary source for documenting and transmitting the Sunnah. This research uses the terms *Sunnah* and *Hadith* synonymously to maintain consistency and avoid unnecessary differentiation. Both contribute to understanding Islamic perspectives on women's rights in education since Hadith serves as the textual record of the *Sunnah*.

This research defines women's rights through the divinely ordained entitlements and responsibilities outlined in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, ensuring Muslim women's dignity, protection, and social harmony. These rights encompass financial, personal, and moral dimensions, affirming justice and equity within the Islamic framework (Bakshuwain, 2015; Al-Alwani,2012; Naseef,1995). On the other hand, women's empowerment is framed as a transformative process through which women gain awareness, agency, and the ability to make strategic life choices. It extends beyond economic or political participation to include education, negotiation, and advocacy in overcoming structural and social constraints. While women's rights establish a foundational framework of justice, empowerment represents the dynamic process of actualising these rights within society (Kabeer, 1999; Cornwall, 2016)

The term "feminism", translated to *Al-Nisāwiyya* in this study, refers to the Western and Arabic movements that advocate women's rights from a secular framework depending on UDHR and similar international declarations. It does not aim to monopolise all the diversity in the feminist movements. However, this limited focus is established due to the research focus[47].

The (ICC) in the analysis, discussion, and conclusion section refers only to level three of the ICC higher education in KSA University, specifically units one to six. Similarly, the research findings and results are limited in analysing these units and the participants' views. No generalisations are intended.

Gender equality is incompatible with the Islamic framework for women's rights discussion, while the term "gender justice" is more accurate[48]. Similarly, "gender justice" is used in the analysis section. At the same time, the terms "gender rights" and "women's rights" are used synonymously, as research indicates that discussions of women's rights within the Islamic framework are not separate from those of men's rights and responsibilities[49].

In this research, the terms "women teachers" and "women students" are used instead of "female teachers" and "female students" to emphasise gender as a social construct rather than a mere biological distinction (Butler, 2002). Additionally, using "S1", "S2", etc. to

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[47] (See 2.2).
[48] (See 3.2.3).
[49] (See 3.2.1).

refer to students and "P1", "P2", etc. for professors ensures the anonymity of the participants.

1.12. Conclusion:

While current reforms in Vision 2030 have aimed to bridge the gap between legal advancements and lived experiences, there persist gendered misconceptions and a lack of women's awareness of their rights in Islam. This highlights the need for a more robust and critically engaged educational approach. The ICC, despite its potential to integrate human rights education and critical pedagogy, has yet to fully activate its role in fostering women's rights awareness. This study follows women's rights advocacy through the Islamic framework, implemented in higher education, aiming to explore the ICC's capacity to contribute to women's empowerment through education. By examining its content, pedagogical approaches, and alignment with contemporary gender justice principles, this research seeks to uncover the barriers hindering its transformative impact.

Through a multidisciplinary analysis incorporating human rights education, critical pedagogy, and Islamic educational frameworks, this study aspires to offer insights into how the ICC can evolve to serve its intended purpose better in the Saudi Arabian context.

Chapter Two

Islamic Framework to Women's Rights: Advocacy, Saudi Context as a Case Study

2.1. Introduction:

The discourse on women's rights has been shaped by diverse ideological frameworks, with different approaches towards religion as either a tool of emancipation or a source of oppression (Khir-Allah,2024). In Western feminism, which emerged from a secular framework, religion has often been perceived as an obstacle to women's freedom and self-determination (Ahmed, 1992; Badran, 2009). This perspective contrasts sharply with women's rights movements in the Arab and Muslim world, where the role of religion in advocating for women's rights has been a subject of extensive debate (As Khir-Allah, 2021). Within this discourse, three main trends can be identified: (1) those who adopt Western feminism while incorporating religious values (Al-Saadawi, 2005; Yusuf, 2008; Ben-Salamah, 2005), (2) proponents of Islamic feminism, which seeks to reinterpret religious texts to promote gender justice following the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Mutmasik, 2008; Abu-Baker, 2012, Abood, 2013; Saleh, 2017; Lemrabet, 2014), and (3) scholars who argue that Islam itself provides a self-sufficient framework capable of ensuring women's rights without reliance on external feminist or secular paradigms (Al-Juhany, 2015; Al-Marrakshi, 2020, Khir-Allah 2024).

In the Saudi context, where religion and society are deeply intertwined, women's rights cannot be meaningfully discussed without considering the intersection of cultural and religious dimensions. As Khir-Allah (2021) argues, an intersectional approach to women's rights discourse in Muslim societies must acknowledge the role of religious identity in

shaping gender norms, legal structures, and social expectations. This view is further reinforced by Al-Marrakshi (2021), who asserts that Islamic teachings contain an internally coherent and comprehensive framework that offers applicable and just solutions to gender-related issues. Karimullah (2023) argues that the Islamic frame of reference in rights education is a powerful tool to challenge and dismantle oppressive structures. It can bridge the gap between access to empowerment, knowledge needed for emancipation and praxis[50]. Accordingly, this chapter identifies the evolution of the discourse on women's rights in the Middle East and its correlation with Western discourse on women's rights, following the works of Ghufran Khir-Allah (2021a, 2024b). The analysis sheds light on the importance of culturally specific frameworks in women's rights discussion that consider cultural identities and religious affiliations of women, following Khir-Allah's work, Cesari's (2017), Brown (2008), and Al-Sheik (2011).

2.2. The Evolution of Women's Rights Discourse in The Arabic-Muslim World:

The introduction of women's rights discourse into Arab societies can be traced back to the colonial era, particularly in Egypt in the early 20th century under British occupation. This period saw the emergence of first-wave feminism[51], which was primarily led by Christian

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[50] (See 1.6.)

[51] The term "feminism" was first coined in France in the 1880s by Hubertine Auclert, emerging as part of a broader movement advocating for women's emancipation in response to male dominance. This concept, initially rooted in the promises of the French Revolution, later spread globally, including to Arab and Muslim societies, where it took on distinct characteristics shaped by local histories, religious traditions, and sociopolitical conditions (Khir-Allah, 2024).

intellectuals, such as Qasim Amin (1899, 1911). Early feminist activists[52] focused on women's education and legal reforms, advocating for gender equality through Western-inspired modernisation efforts (Khir-Allah, 2024). This wave often positioned Islam as a primary obstacle to women's emancipation, framing religious traditions as inherently patriarchal and restrictive (Ben-Salamah, 2005a, 2005b). Afterwards, three more waves emerged in the Middle East advocating for women's rights, each from a different epistemological framework.

2.2.1. The Second Wave: Secular Feminism and Western Influence

Approving the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 gave new momentum to feminist movements in Europe. However, this framework was introduced in colonised Arab societies as a universal model of liberty and equality, often dismissing local religious and cultural values as outdated (Glendon 2003, Boulos 2019a, Khir-Allah 2021a). Colonial governments promoted the UDHR as an alternative to Islamic law on rights,

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[52] The term feminism in Arabic is translated to *Al-Nisāwiyya*, which refers to advocacy for women's rights and gender equality. It challenges patriarchal structures and promotes women's social, political, and economic empowerment within Arabic complex social structures. Saudi women tend to advocate for their rights on social platforms without using this term in Arabic or English. This could be due to the negative social attitude towards the term in Arabic or English. The negative attitude could be related to the perceived incompatibility of the term with Islamic principles (Alhajri, and Pierce, 2022).

reinforcing the perception that Arab and Muslim women were inherently oppressed and in need of Western intervention (Mahmood, 2005; Khader, 2016; Boulos, 2020b)[53].

Secular Arab feminists[54], the second wave, viewed the UDHR as a product of global cultural collaboration and argued for reinterpreting Arabic traditions and religious values within its framework to align with international human rights standards (Al-Naqash 2002, Ben-Salamah 2005a, Al-Saadawi, 2005, Yusuf 2008). They maintained that feminism and Islam were fundamentally contradictory, advocating for replacing *Sharīʿah*-based laws with civil legislation inspired by human rights conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[55] (Husaini, 2012; Sharafaldin 2013). Scholars such as Farida Al-Naqash (2002) and Raja Ben-Salamah (2005a, 2005b) argued that detaching religious law from constitutional governance would enable women to exercise their rights freely, without cultural or religious constraints.

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[53] Western discourse reinforced stereotypes of Muslims as uncivilised—depicting men as ignorant and women as sexual slaves—to justify the colonialism of Muslim countries (Ang-Lygate, 1996; Said, 2002; Haddad, 2007). Between 1800 and 1950, nearly 900 films and 60,000 books perpetuated these stereotypes, portraying Muslims as barbaric and irrational. The harem was often depicted as a site of female confinement, reinforcing Orientalist fantasies (Hoodfar, 1992). These narratives continue to shape perceptions of Muslim women in contemporary discourse, with Islam frequently used in political discourse to sustain a hegemonic and fear-based discourse (Khir-Allah, 2021).

[54] Feminism is a diverse and multifaceted movement, encompassing various frameworks shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological (European) contexts. Due to this variation, this study follows Khir-Allah's (2024) classification, using the term "Secular feminist approach" to refer to Western and Arabic women's rights approaches that follow a secular epistemological framework. This classification does not overlook the diversity within secular feminist movements. In addition, the Islamic feminist approach does not reduce Arabic feminist movements to a single framework but highlights their distinct epistemological foundations, joining the Islamic and UDHR frameworks.

[55] The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It is often described as an international bill of rights for women, outlining measures to end discrimination against women in all aspects of life, including education, employment, and political participation. CEDAW requires signatory states to take concrete steps to ensure gender equality and eliminate practices that disadvantage women (Anju, 2017).

Despite rejecting religious law, second-wave feminists did not dismiss faith altogether. Al-Naqash (2002) described secularism as a rational interpretation of religion that promotes progress, while Mernissi (1987a) contended that Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, could coexist with modernity under a secular state, where religion is a personal choice limited to the private sphere (Ben-Salamah 2005b). Ben-Salamah (2005b) suggested that the *Qurʾān* should be liberated from jurisprudence (*fiqh*), interpreting it as a moral guide rather than a legislative source. They prioritised human rights principles over Islamic legal traditions, asserting that religious adherence perpetuates gender inequality and prevents them from absolute liberty over their minds, desires and bodies as the religious legislation would be their limit (Al-Saadawi, 2005; Ben-Salamah, 2005a; Yusuf, 2008; Sharafaldin,2013). This wave of feminism challenged the gender differences and gender roles upheld by Islamic teachings, arguing that religious teachings and authority and cultural privacy protect and foster male dominance. Second-wave feminism called for a fundamental shift toward secular governance to achieve gender equality (Al-Saadawi, 1999; Ben-Salamah, 2004a, 2005a; Al-Naqash, 2002).

2.2.2. Islamic Feminism (*Al-Naswiyya Al Islamea)*: The Third Road:

In response to the second wave's rejection of religion, a third wave of Arab Muslim feminist thought emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, seeking to reconcile gender equality with Islamic teachings (Khir-Allah, 2021a, 2024b). This movement, often referred

to as Islamic feminism[56], challenged both secular feminist narratives and patriarchal interpretations of Islam, advocating for gender justice within the UDHR and the Islamic framework. Scholars such as Amina Wadud (2006), Umaima Abu-Baker (2012a, 2012b), Fatima Mernissi (1992), Asma Lamrabet (2014, 2016), and Amani Saleh (2017) have played key roles in this discourse, promoting reinterpretations of religious texts to align with principles of justice and equality in the UDHR.

Scholars defined Islamic feminism as a movement grounded in Islamic values, advocating for justice, equality, and gender awareness. Abu-Baker (2012) emphasised two main aspects: 1) identifying cultural practices falsely attributed to Islam and 2) implementing ijtihad (independent reasoning) to revive Islam's original teachings on gender justice. Lamrabet (2014) used the term "Third Road" as, for her, Islamic feminism paves a third way between rejecting religion and adopting a traditional or misinterpreted cultural form of it. Khir-Allah (2024) highlighted a fundamental divergence between Islamic and secular feminism regarding the source of legislation. While secular feminists prioritised the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a global standard, Saleh (2017) and Abu-Baker (2012) argued for the primacy of the *Qurʾān*, even when it did not support absolute gender equality. However, Saleh (2017) highlighted that Islamic traditional heritage often reinforces female subordination, yet Islamic feminism provides a space for

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[56] Islamic feminism first gained momentum during the 1990s, with publications of Iranian scholars like *Zanan* and *Farzan al-Hakim* offering new perspectives on women's rights by integrating feminist and Islamic sources. This approach was later embraced by Muslim women in the diaspora between 1991 and 2005, particularly those of Asian and African descent. The Malaysian NGO movement "Sisters in Islam", founded in 1988, became the first to adopt an Islamic feminist framework within the Muslim world. In Egypt, scholars such as Umaima Abu-Baker, who studied abroad, also aligned their work with this perspective (Khir-Allah, 2024).

ijtihad to critically examine religious sources (*Qurʾān and Sunnah*) without contradicting them. It advocated for their reinterpretation through a feminist lens, arguing that *Qurʾānic* interpretation should remain adaptable to contemporary values in UDHR, such as democracy and pluralism (Wadud, 2006; Husaini, 2012). Lamrabet (2016) argued that the *Qurʾān* promotes divine justice and does not discriminate against women. She called for reinterpretations of *Qurʾānic* texts, which led to new perspectives on issues such as male guardianship, polygamy, and hijab, with scholars asserting that these practices were cultural constructs rather than religious imperatives (Abu-Baker 2012; Lamrabet 2014)[57]. The epistemological problem in this approach is that even though the feminist scholars claimed that they aim to depend on the Islamic resources of the *Qurʾān and Sunnah* to discuss women's rights, they took the UDHR as a frame of reference to follow in the reinterpretation instead of following the *Al Taʾṣīl* methodology[58].

Secular Arab feminists have been highly critical of Islamic feminism, arguing that it is an "Islamisation of feminism", asserting that Islam itself is the root of patriarchal oppression in the Arab world and emphasising that feminism is a civil rights movement should remain

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[57] Islamic feminists have maintained an ambivalent stance toward the Sunnah as a legislative source. Some Western Islamic feminists, like Wadud (2006), prioritised the Qurʾān over the Sunnah, considering the latter a record of human behaviour. In contrast, Arab Islamic feminists have primarily preserved the Sunnah due to its cultural and religious significance in the Middle East. However, they have often overlooked hadiths that reinforce restrictive gender norms (Hassan, 2012). Furthermore, unlike secular feminism, Islamic feminism has not extensively addressed issues of bodily autonomy and sexual liberation, as seen in debates over the hijab, which is framed as an ethical choice rather than a religious obligation (Khir-Allah, 2021).

[58] *Al Taʾṣīl* methodology considers the Qurʾān and the *Sunnah* the primary epistemological framework of religious terms, concepts and practices. *The Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology consists of comparing evidence, analysing it, and linking it to its trusted sources as well as to the relevant context. It involves grounding knowledge through tracing back contemporary interpretations or issues to the sources of Islamic law (*Sharīʿah*), which are: the *Qurʾan*, *Ḥadīth*, consensus (*Ijmā*), and analogical reasoning (*Qiyas*). See (3.3.1).

independent of religious frameworks (Mernissi,1987a; Mayer, 1993; Sabbar 1994; Al-Saadawi 1999, 2005; Ben-Salamah, 2005a; Al-Qarmy, 2017). In response, Saleh (2017) contended that feminism worldwide draws from various intellectual traditions- Marxist, liberal, and religious- and questioned why Islamic feminism should be dismissed when it offers a viable path for Arab Muslim women's empowerment. Abu-Baker (2012) further argued that religious feminism exists in other faith traditions, such as Christian feminism. At the same time, Saleh (2017) and Lamrabet (2014) argued that secular feminist discourse, by disregarding local traditions, inadvertently reinforced colonial narratives that positioned Western feminism as superior, fostering Western cultural dominance[59].

2.2.3. An Emerging Fourth Wave: Epistemological Independence

Khir-Allah (2024) argues that the ideological, cultural and methodological gaps in applying the term "feminism" in Arab and Muslim discourses on women's issues have given rise to a fourth wave in Arab societies. Unlike previous movements, this recently identified wave rejects the label of feminism entirely, arguing that its ideological foundations are inseparable from secularism and Western philosophical values. Al-Marrakshi (2021a, 2023b) critically points out the cultural and methodological glitches in adopting the term feminism within Arab Muslim contexts. He indicates that the cultural glitches arise from the fact that feminism, as a concept, is an outcome of a specific historical struggle of

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[59] Saleh (2017) maintained that the epistemological framework of secular feminism, rooted in Western liberal thought, had historically justified colonial interventions in the Arab world under the guise of liberating Muslim women.

European women shaped by secular thoughts[60], a historical and cultural context that Arabic and Muslim women do not share. The methodological glitches lie in Islamic feminism's methodology, reconciling Islamic principles with secular human rights frameworks. Khir-Allah (2024) highlights that Islamic knowledge prioritises divine revelation as the ultimate source of legislation, contrary to secular knowledge, which prioritises human reasoning over divine law and separates rights and morality from religious authority (Jawad, 2023). Accordingly, attempting to synthesise Islamic principles with secular feminist values risks falling into the hermeneutic approach[61] and humanist ideological paradigms that elevate human reasoning above divine revelation (Al-Juhany, 2015). Scholars of the fourth wave argue that Islamic feminists' attempts to challenge patriarchal readings of religious texts often draw on hermeneutics to reinterpret these texts, especially the Qurʾan[62]. Even though these hermeneutic readings are conducted through contemporary ethical and gender-justice lenses, they often rely on subjective and socio-historical interpretations, sometimes at the

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[60] He explains that feminist thought was shaped by Enlightenment ideals, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and later, humanist, secular, and communist ideologies. Women's inferiority was institutionalised in pre-modern Christian thought, unlike Islamic teachings, which have historically emphasised the gender justice and equality of men and women in their humanity (Al-Juhani, 2015). Al-Juhany (2015) further asserts that colonial interventions disrupted pre-existing Islamic frameworks that had afforded women rights such as ownership, scholarship, divorce, and financial maintenance.

[61] Hermeneutics refers to the theory and practice of interpretation. Its etymology traces back to Hermes, the mythological Greek figure tasked with conveying messages between the divine and human realms, symbolising the transmission of meaning. Initially rooted in biblical exegesis during the 17th century, hermeneutics evolved significantly as a discipline (Paterson and Higgs, 2005). Friedrich Schleiermacher (1977) is widely recognised as the founder of modern hermeneutics, as he shifted the focus from religious texts alone to the broader dynamics of human understanding.

[62] To read more about "The Islamic Humanist Hermeneutics", read Alak (2023).

expense of classical jurisprudential tools[63]. Khir-Allah (2024) differentiates between sources of knowledge (human reason and sensory perception) and sources of legislation (the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*). She argues that human reasoning can be practised on the divine sources; it cannot override or replace them. Khir-Allah (2024) clarifies that while human reasoning plays a crucial role in deriving contextual applications of Islamic law, it must function as a tool for understanding divine revelation rather than as an independent source of legislation.

Another methodological weakness identified by fourth-wave scholars is the selective engagement of Islamic feminism with women's issues. Al-Marrakshi (2023) argues that a coherent epistemological approach to women's rights must address all aspects of gender relations and women's issues comprehensively. However, Islamic feminism selectively engages with specific feminist themes while avoiding others that conflict with Islamic moral frameworks. For example, while it may advocate for gender equity in economic and educational spheres, it often remains silent on issues such as sexual freedom and abortion, which are central to feminist discourse (Al-Juhany, 2015; Al-Marrakshi, 2021, 2023). Khir-Allah (2024) further asserts that this selectivity extends to the interpretation of Islamic

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[63] In contrast, the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology grounds the interpretation of religious texts within the epistemic framework of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (methodology of legal deduction) and *Maqasid al-Sharīʿah* (objectives of Islamic Law), ensuring coherence with established religious principles. Unlike hermeneutics, *Al-Taʾṣīl* seeks to protect the integrity of religious knowledge by preserving the methodological rigour necessary for deriving rulings and ethical guidance from the texts. The erosion of women's rights in some modern discourses can thus be seen not merely as a result of patriarchal interpretations, but also as a consequence of neglecting the structured, epistemologically grounded framework of *Al-Taʾṣīl*. See (3.3)

legislative texts, whereby specific *Qurʾāni*c injunctions are emphasised while others are overlooked, leading to an inconsistent intellectual framework.

Fatima Abdul Raùf (2015) further critiques the adoption of Western feminist ideals, arguing that secular feminism and Islamic feminism, despite their differing approaches, both operate within the hegemonic influence of Western ideological frameworks. She warns that the "Islamisation of Western values" or the "Westernisation of Islamic principles" constitutes an unconscious submission to Western epistemological paradigms. Instead, she and other fourth-wave scholars advocate for a discourse that derives its principles entirely from Islamic sources, asserting that these sources are inherently capable of ensuring justice and equity for Muslim women while being responsive to contemporary challenges (Al-Juhany, 2015; Abdul Raùf, 2015; Al-Marrakshi, 2021, 2023, Jawad, 2023). Fourth-wave advocates for thoroughly re-examining legislative sources, including the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*, within the methodological rigor of Islamic jurisprudence, *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology (Abdul Raùf, 2015; Al-Marrakshi, 2023). They argue that this process must not be aimed at reconciling secular and Islamic legal paradigms but rather at developing contextually relevant applications of Islamic principles that address contemporary injustices faced by Muslim women. However, this re-reading process should not be done through human-centric reasoning and ideologies: it must remain within the epistemological boundaries of the Islamic intellectual and scientific criteria to maintain the cognitive and methodological consistencies contrary to the Islamic feminist selective one (Al-Juhany, 2015; Abdul Raùf, 2015; and Al-Merrakshi, 2021, Khir-Allah, 2024).

2.3. Towards an Inclusive Approach in Women's Rights Discussion:

Concepts as "freedom" and "liberty" were key elements in the women's rights debate. These concepts were applauded by secular feminists while criticised by Islamic feminists and advocates of women's rights in the fourth wave. Saba Mahmood (2005) warns that when "freedom" is understood solely through a Western, secular feminist lens, it risks becoming another form of ideological dominance that marginalises or undermines cultures that prioritise faith and heritage. She challenges the assumption that secularism is the default path to liberation, suggesting that this approach disregards alternative ways women may experience empowerment within religious traditions and frames of reference (Mahmood, 2005; Khir-Allah, 2021). Hoodfar (1992) affirms that what benefits Western women may not apply to all women everywhere[64].

The terms "culture", "cultural practices", and "heritage" are defined differently in social studies, anthropology, and culture studies. However, these definitions agree that collective identities, practices, expressions, art, knowledge, beliefs, and skills are part of the definition (Kochel and Craith, 2006). Although the feminist discourse generally casts cultural norms and traditions as restrictive, humans inevitably understand the world and create meaning through them, as people can never make sense of the world individually (Jonson, 2013). While some cultural practices may perpetuate injustice and inequality, addressing these issues should not equate to dismissing entire cultural systems and heritage. Instead,

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[64] Abu-Lughod (2002) critiques Western feminism for serving imperialist and colonial agendas by framing women's rights as a Western construct and using narratives of saving oppressed non-Western women to justify political and military interventions. She argues that such universalist approaches overlook the historical presence of women's rights within Islamic societies and dismiss local cultural, religious, and historical contexts. Instead, she calls for a more nuanced perspective that acknowledges indigenous feminist movements and the agency of women within their own societies.

empowerment discourse should focus on challenging unjust practices while respecting and preserving the cultural frameworks that provide individuals with identity, meaning, and social cohesion (Khader, 2016; Khir-Allah, 2021a; Hamdan,2012; Dugbazah, 2009). To dismiss cultural specificity in an empowerment and rights discussion is to overlook a fundamental aspect of human experiences and personal identities (Brown, 2008; Cesari, 2017). Empowerment is not merely about granting abstract freedoms; it must also account for the values, beliefs, and cultural contexts that give meaning to them (Kabeer, 1999). An inclusive approach to rights and empowerment must engage with these identities rather than treating them as obstacles to progress (Kabeer, 1999). Otherwise, it risks alienating individuals whose sense of agency is rooted in their cultural and religious affiliations (Okin, 1997; Cesari, 2017; La Barbera, 2007, 2009; Khir-Allah, 2015, 2021).

Given the complexity of gender issues across different cultures and belief systems, an inclusive approach to women's rights must move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach. Khir-Allah (2024) proposed Maria Caterina La Barbera's (2007) "intersectionality" approach to acknowledge multiple valid approaches to gender equality, depending on the social and cultural context. Susan Okin (1997) emphasises that women's rights discussions should ensure equal opportunities for all women without imposing a singular worldview. She highlights that religious communities, in particular, place great importance on personal law, which significantly impacts the lives of women and children. Misrepresenting or misinterpreting these laws can lead to serious harm for women who see their rights as deeply embedded in their faith. This is especially relevant in Islam, where Islamic teachings and cultural practices are often intertwined in Muslim societies, fostering religious

misinterpretations to emphasise cultural gender roles (Brown, 2008; Sharabi, 2008; Abou Al-Fadl, 2001; Khir-Allah, 2015). It is also pertinent to the Western view and discussion over Saudi women's rights that dismiss the religious component in women's rights discussion despite its centrality (Mustafa, 2019).

2.4. Muslim Women's Rights at the Crossroads: The Interplay of Culture and Religion

The question that remains is: If fourth-wave scholars argue that Islam, as a comprehensive framework, provides a robust foundation for discussing women's rights and addressing gender issues, why do gender injustices and discrimination persist in many Muslim-majority countries? One significant factor lies in the lasting impact of the colonial era since the beginning of the last century, during which many (pre) colonised societies experienced disruptions to their national legal, educational, and social structures development (Cesari and Casanova, 2017; Sibai, 2018; cited in Khir-Allah, 2024)[65]. Religion was marginalised and underestimated by the colonial government, which unsuccessfully tried to secularise Arab countries (Muñoz, 2010; Haddad, 2017; both cited in Khir-Allah, 2024). A dichotomy between intellectual/modernity and religious/ backwardness was established in the colonised countries in North Africa and the Middle East, casting any religious framework to rights discussion as incompetent and fostering Western superiority (Khir-Allah, 2021).

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[65] Bryan (2012) argues that the colonial legacy in post-colonial Arab states has led to hybrid legal structures. It refers to a social reality neither purely Islamic nor purely Western but a combination of both. It fluctuates between inherited European civil laws and selectively applied Islamic legal principles. This fragmentation is evident in situations such as Tunisia and Morocco, where the legal system incorporates both French civil law and Islamic jurisprudence, creating a mixed framework that promotes women's rights while remaining vulnerable to political and cultural conflict (Charrad, 2001,2012; Cesare, 2017). However, Bryan argues that the status of women in Saudi Arabia is shaped by a unique intersection of religion, politics, and culture, much like in Tunisia, but within a different historical and legal framework.

This left many post-colonial nations struggling with fragmented systems that neither fully reflect Islamic legal thought nor align with modern human rights frameworks. The implications of colonial hegemony on the religious approach to rights discussion differs across Arabic countries due to each country's political history, social context and cultural specificity[66].

Another critical factor is the misinterpretation of religious sources, the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*, which broadens the gap between the religious teachings and laws and Islam's social and cultural practices (Khir-Allah, 2015; Cesari and Casanova, 2017; Zumurrud, 2019[67]. The gender roles construction in the Muslim world has been influenced by patriarchal traditional domination perpetuating gender hierarchies and women's marginalisation in contradiction to Islamic principles, justifying it by religion through misinterpreted religious texts (Bryan, 2012)[68]. Al-Alwani (2012) identified dual dynamics in women's rights discussion: 1) a dominant traditional heritage that devalues women and 2) contentious debates on women's freedom and rights shaped by Western feminists' ideologies. However, while the feminist approach was rejected due to its epistemological secular framework, the

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[66] This study will not delve into these variations as they are unrelated to the focus and due to the research limitation. However, further reading can be found on the North African frameworks (Charrad, 2001, 2012, Megahed, 2011), Suddan (Halima, 2009), and the Middle East (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2011).

[67] In addition, within the same religious contexts, women share different religious experiences and understandings due to education and socioeconomic factors, which affects women's perceptions and advocation to their rights (Engineer, 2007; Khir-Allah, 2015, 2021).

[68] Patriarchal practices in the Arabic and Muslim worlds cast men as superior to women and exclude women from decision-making processes, hindering their economic and social empowerment. For example, Kazouz (2016) reported that traditional views of women's work hinder their economic empowerment in Libya. In Jordan, Shweihat (2016) highlighted how adherence to conventional family roles prevents women from advancing into leadership positions. Al-Hamdi (2018) found that cultural values significantly limit women's participation in political and economic activities in Yemen. In Jordan and Pakistan, studies demonstrate how entrenched social norms act as barriers to women's advancement (Dahlan, 2023; Al-Shdiefat et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024).

alternative tendency to prioritise cultural traditions over the original Islamic framework on women's rights presents a similar issue. Both approaches risk distorting the discussion— one by imposing a secular lens that may not resonate with Muslim women and the other by conflating cultural norms with Islamic teachings, potentially reinforcing gender inequalities that Islam itself seeks to address (Hamdan, 2005). The fourth-wave approach to women's rights discussion in the Arab world aims to address the misalignment in women's rights discussion, calling for a revival of Islamic values and teachings without compromising the integrity of its epistemological foundation nor for secular or traditional frameworks (Khir-Allah, 2024).

Islam came to eliminate the *Jāhilīyah* (pre-Islamic) practices that undermined women's dignity, and it successfully did so during the time of the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) (Khamlishi, 2004). But when people have moved away from the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology in analysing women's rights, relying instead on human interpretations and personal reasoning, *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* (the objectives of Islamic law) have been lost. Male-dominant readings of religious texts have been imposed, transforming into unquestionable social norms supported by religious justifications (Hamdan, 2005a, 2012b)[69].

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[69] Several factors contribute to the distortion of Islamic teachings on women's rights, including socialisation, a lack of awareness, limited religious knowledge among men, cultural and traditional influences, societal perceptions of women as inferior, women's subservience to men, limited educational attainment, and various economic and psychological factors (Yamani 2000; Al-Abdullaṭif 2009; Al-Qahtani 2015; Al-Muḥaymeed, 2008; Al-Khateeb 2005; Abu Khalid 2009; Al-Suhaili 2014). Al-Sheikh (2011) highlights that prevailing traditions in Saudi society often contradict Sharīʿah law, as seen in the denial of women's inheritance rights and forced marriages or denying women marriage choices due to family restrictions (Al-Ajlan, 2011; Alhajri, 2020).

Islam does not leave the protection of women's rights to individual discretion or societal trends, but instead, it relies on binding Divine and legal rulings supported by ethical commitments (Al-Ghunaim, 2020; Al-Eid, 2006; Naseef, 1995; Al-Dasuqi, 2002). The Islamic legal system utilises a dual mechanism: binding regulations, punitive measures, and self-regulation grounded in piety and moral conscience (Darraz, 2012). However, the persistence of pre-Islamic cultural norms has led to the entrenchment of patriarchal customs under the guise of religious legitimacy, often contradicting Islamic principles (Jawad, 1998; Saeed, 2018).

Hamdan (2005a, p. 54) asserts that while the *Qurʾān* and other Islamic sources do not support gender inequality, "misinterpretations of the *Qurʾān* are those that have strongly influenced unjust behaviour towards women". Abou Al Fadl (2001) and Al-Alwani (2012) critique how (religious) authoritarian voices have shaped gender roles, overlooking Islam's emphasis on justice and balance in family dynamics. A key example is the misinterpretation of *Al-Qiwāmah* (male guardianship), which is often framed as male control to justify all the unjust socio-cultural practices rather than the responsibility-based leadership it was intended to be (Mansour, 2014). In addition, while Islamic teachings outline a framework where men provide financial support and protection to the women's family members, it does not confine women to domestic roles. Islam permits their participation in education, work, and public life, provided that family obligations and responsibilities are upheld[70]

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[70] (See 3.3.).

(Omar, 2014; Amara, 2009; Patoari, 2019). In the context of Saudi Arabia, colonialism is not a relevant factor in the slow advancement of the women's rights discussion, instead, the complex conflation between the tribal social structures and the (mis)interpretations of Islamic teachings on women's rights is the main factor restraining the full implementation of women's rights guaranteed by Islam (Sharabi, 2008; Abou Al Fadl, 2014; Al-Suhaili, 2014; Al Mnea, 2010). Al-Munajjid (1997) describes Saudi Arabia's political structure as a blend of tribal norms and religious law, reflecting the country's profound religious and tribal heritage that shapes societal expectations of women as religious imperatives (Al-Munajjid,1997; Hamdan, 2012; Czornik, 2020). Hamdan (2005a, p. 61) pointed out that women's rights are stuck between Western values that are not adaptable to the Saudi people and conservative religious scholars and dominant traditions, which are both extremes in women's rights positionality. Each part practices the Bush ideology, "you are either with us or against us".

In a coinciding approach to the fourth wave, Saudi advocates of women's rights avoid the "feminist" label to emphasise the disconnection from Western ideologies, alternatively adopting culturally positive resonate ones such as "Womenist" or "Nisā'iyya" (female) (Hoza, 2018; Al-Dabbagh, 2015; Alhajri, 2023; Alhajri & Pierce, 2023). Hoza (2018) indicates that feminism, as framed in Western contexts, is not a comprehensive system for addressing oppression in diverse cultures with religious affiliations such as Saudi Arabia. Hoza (2018) explores how Saudi women challenge oppressive structures within their cultural and religious worldviews, relying on an approach that effectively respects and incorporates their cultural values and norms. However, Alharbi (2023) analysed attitudes

toward feminism within the younger generation, revealing gendered differences in understanding the term. Male participants viewed the term negatively, describing it as "destructive" and "immoral," whereas female participants associated it with empowerment and support, using terms such as "saving" and "supportive." These divergent perceptions contribute to gender tensions in family, workplace, and social environments, where women advocating for their rights face resistance from men who perceive such changes as threats to traditional societal roles (Al-Harbi, 2023). The growing support among young women for "feminism" can be understood in light of the lack of a framework rooted in *Al-Taʾṣīl*; accordingly, young women in their justice advocacy often turn to feminism as a response to societal inequalities.

2.4.1. Dominant Socio-Cultural Stereotypes on Women's Rights: The Interplay of Religion, Tribalism, and Social Norms

Hamdan (2005) and Le Renard (2008) observe that women are the "carriers of cultural traditions," with their roles shaped by cultural norms and beliefs to define the nation's identity. In Saudi Arabia, women are framed as a symbol of virtue and expected to embody that framing in their appearance and practices (Le Renard, 2008; Badi, 1982). Although Islam acknowledges the high position of women in society (Amara, 2009), it did not mean to marginalise them in social practices. Women's value in the Saudi traditional cultural consciousness challenged girls' education in 1960 and resisted women's driving in 2015. It also challenges the perception of women's professionalism in domains out of the ideal-job list, such as teaching and nursing (Al-Manea, 1984; Doumato, 1992; Hamdan, 2005; Al-Sadhan, 2012).

In a study conducted in Riyadh, Al-Sheikh (2011) found that social pressure forces divorced women and survivors of domestic violence into silence. Al-Suhaili (2014) adds that family socialisation[71] is central to embedding patriarchal values and sustaining gender injustice. Fathers often teach boys from an early age to practice authority over their sisters, fostering a sense of male entitlement while diminishing girls' confidence and self-worth (Al-Suhaili, 2014; Al-Otaian,2005; Alhajri,2020). Such practices perpetuate systemic inequalities by normalising gendered expectations and reinforcing the power imbalances that shape women's lives. These dynamics entrench systemic injustices, shaping women's opportunities and reinforcing restrictive gender norms throughout girls' lives.

The influence of societal norms on women's perceptions and lived experiences is evident in women's issues (Al-Sheikh, 2011). Al-Awad (2014) highlights that the social stigma *(Ayb)[72]* attached to women's behaviour, though lacking religious justification, remains a significant barrier to their empowerment. Similarly, practices such as forced marriage, expelling divorced women from their houses before the completion of their *Edda* (waiting period), and preventing women from claiming their inheritance persist due to cultural misinterpretations (Al-Shikh, 2011).

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[71] Family socialisation refers to the norms, values, behaviours, and social skills children acquire in their family interactions. These competencies are vital for engaging in society, mainly when they grow into adults. This process is crucial for social development; it shapes individuals' identities, beliefs, and relationships with others (Al-Suhai 2014).

[72] "Ayb" (عيب) is an Arabic term that means shame or social disgrace. It is commonly used in many Arab societies to describe socially unacceptable behaviours, even if they are not religiously or legally prohibited. In the context of women's rights in Saudi Arabia, *Ayb* plays a crucial role in shaping gender norms. Many restrictions imposed on women—such as limitations on mobility, career choices, or personal decisions—are justified through the concept of Ayb, reinforcing patriarchal traditions. For instance, divorced women may face social stigma (Ayb), not because Islam condemns divorce but because cultural norms associate it with dishonour. This conflation between Ayb and religious principles often leads to the misinterpretation of women's rights (AL-Marsafi, 2012).

Empirical research underscores this socio-cultural and religious intertwining. A study by Mulhem et al. (2019) surveyed 391 female students at Prince *Muhammad* Bin Fahd University to assess their understanding of social norms and sources of legislation, revealed a significant conflation between religious framework and cultural traditions toward women's rights implementation. Students firmly and comfortably attributed dominant gender rules and norms religious mandates rather than questioning the original WRPI. Mulhem (2019) highlights two types of flows: the first involves attributing cultural traditions to religion, which may perpetuate patriarchal practices that restrict women's rights; the second is the failure to recognise religious teachings on these rights. The findings underscore the importance of a clear distinction between religious rules and cultural traditions, as this ambiguity significantly impacts people's acceptance or rejection of these norms, particularly when traditions are presented as legitimate religious rules. Doumato (2000, 2002, 2010) observes that many Saudi citizens perceive gender injustices as part of the Islamic framework's complementary system of rights and duties. Instead of analysing these unjust practices through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology and rectifying them, they justify the existing unjust dominant practices using the Islamic framework's complementary principle.

In the Saudi women's rights discussion, indoctrination and preaching reinforce these socio-cultural traditions, discouraging critical thinking about WRPI and promoting passive acceptance of the cultural cycles on gender roles. Merry (2005) describes indoctrination as the repetition of authoritative beliefs without allowing for independent critical analysis. In Saudi society, this is reflected in social education and familial upbringing, where youth are expected to adhere to predefined gender roles without critical scrutiny. Preaching, a form

of indoctrination, also discourages questioning and critical engagement, reinforcing patriarchal norms through authoritative voice and emotional appeals rather than academic or critical argumentation. These distortions create a reality in which women struggle to distinguish between what is dictated by religion and what is enforced by patriarchal traditions, as questioning indoctrination and preaching sounds synonymous to asking God's words (Al-Mutawa and Magliveras, 2021).

The issue of women's rights has long been a politically charged discussion influenced by religious interpretations, cultural norms, and state policies (Cesari, 2017; Khir *Allah*, 2021). The misinterpretation of Islamic teachings in Saudi Arabia significantly shaped legal and social frameworks before Vision 2030. Al-Sheikh (2011) highlights that a lack of awareness regarding women's rights in Islam (WRPI) often results in a conflation between socially dominant practices and legal laws, making it difficult for women to challenge discriminatory norms. Recognising this, Vision 2030 reflects a political commitment to advancing women's rights by implementing legal, social, and educational reforms[73].

Since 2015, the strategic framework of Vision 2030 under King Salman's leadership has driven significant reforms to break down barriers to women's participation in public life. Recognising that women constitute over half of university graduates and 60% of the youth population, the government has set clear targets, including raising female labour market participation from 22% to 30% by 2030 (Mulligan, 2019). Concrete policy changes reflect

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[73] (See more in 1.4).

this commitment. Women have gained unprecedented political representation, including appointments to the *Shūrā* Council and participation in municipal elections (Al-Sudairy, 2017). Additionally, lifting the driving ban, expanding roles in sports, and facilitating entry into previously male-dominated professions, such as aviation, mark a transformative shift in gender norms. The appointment of Saudi female ambassadors to key international positions, including in the U.S., Norway, and Sweden, further underscores this progress (Al-Sudairy, 2017).

Legal reforms have also reinforced women's rights, such as introducing the Personal Status Law under Royal Decree No. (M/73) in 2022 aims to enhance family stability, protect individual rights, and ensure consistency in judicial rulings. Rooted in Islamic law (*Sharīʿah*), the law addresses marital rights and responsibilities, divorce regulations, inheritance, and establishing a minimum legal marriage age of 18. By prioritising justice, consultation (*Al-Shūrā*), and family cohesion, this legal framework challenges entrenched social practices that have historically restricted women's rights.

These reforms signal a decisive shift in Saudi policy, demonstrating a genuine political commitment to integrating women into all aspects of national development. While challenges remain, the systemic changes under Vision 2030 lay the groundwork for long-term gender equality and women's empowerment within a framework that aligns with Islamic principles.

2.4.2. Saudi Women's Agency and Awareness:

Socio-cultural and religious intertwining shape women's social roles, economic participation, and leadership opportunities (Al-Ghamdi, 2012; Jabr, 2021). Studies have examined the underrepresentation of Saudi women in leadership (Al-Ghamdi, 2012; Jabr, 2021) and gender disparities in economic and developmental sectors (Al-Atta, 2020; Al-Zahrani & Al-Hamami, 2020). Additionally, male dominance in higher education administration and decision-making roles remains prevalent despite Vision 2030 reforms (Hakiem, 2021; Al-Mazer, 2017; Al-Shalqi, 2020).

The societal perception of women's rights as a private family matter further limits women's access to justice. Studies indicate that many Saudi women refrain from using legal channels, such as courts or police support, to resolve family issues due to the social stigma *(Ayb)* associated with seeking external intervention (Al-Suhaili, 2014; Al-Fayez, 2009; Al-Awad, 2014; Al-Sheikh, 2011; Al-Fawzan, 2011)[74]. Women facing psychological or physical violence, restrictions on marriage, or disputes related to divorce and custody often rely on silent support from close relatives or friends rather than formal institutions (Al-Sheikh, 2011; Al-Fawzan, 2011). These restrictions reinforce a cycle in which women remain dependent on male guardianship structures, limiting their ability to claim rights.

Despite structural limitations, Saudi women have historically found alternative mechanisms to exercise agency within sociocultural, economic, and political constraints.

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[74] A report by the National Society for Human Rights (2013) emphasises that social customs and traditions significantly hinder Saudi women from making critical life decisions, such as those related to marriage and divorce. Many women, affected by patriarchal family structures and male dominance, hesitate to seek assistance from human rights agencies to advocate for their rights (National Society for Human Rights, 2013).

Winkel and Strachan (2020) conducted an oral history project in which university students interviewed their grandmothers about their past experiences, revealing significant restrictions on financial independence, education, and decision-making. However, these narratives also highlighted women's resilience in navigating traditional norms. Despite their lack of formal education, many women made strategic choices to secure better futures for their daughters, ensuring they had access to education and career opportunities (Winkel and Strachan, 2020). This demonstrates that Saudi women's agency has long existed, manifesting in adaptive strategies to secure autonomy within so(cietal boundaries.

The limitations in women's rights awareness and enforcement are deeply tied to entrenched societal perceptions perpetuated by social institutions (Al-Zahrani & Al-Hamami, 2020, Alghamdi and El-Hassan, 2022). To overcome these challenges, researchers emphasise the need for educational reform that integrates women's rights discourse into curricula. Al-Zahrani and Al-Hamami (2020) advocate moving beyond traditional family-centered narratives to a more balanced perspective that aligns with Islamic principles and contemporary societal needs. Similarly, Omar (2020) identifies cultural legacies as major barriers to women's participation in social and economic development, emphasising the need for structural reforms.

Another quantitative study by the Bahethat Centre (2011), involving 1,305 female participants (96% of whom were university students), revealed that 32% of women were unaware of their rights under Islamic law. In contrast, only 18% demonstrated full awareness. On the contrary, Al-Ajlan (2011) argues that Saudi women possess rights awareness but lack mechanisms to enforce them. Citing the UN Human Development

Report (1980-2011), which ranked Saudi Arabia 56th out of 196 countries, she contends that access to education, healthcare, and economic stability should theoretically enable rights awareness. However, the disconnect between the education system and practical legal implementation hinders women from translating knowledge into action.

On the university level, before Vision 2030, Saudi female university students were not sufficiently informed about their rights in Islam (Al-Sharary & Saqr, 2012; Al-Ruwaily, 2008; Al-Shammari, 2013; Al-Zakry, 2015). For example, Saqr and Al-Sharari examined the knowledge levels of Al Jawf University graduates in 2012 regarding Islamic human rights concepts, finding that students scored below 75% sufficiency. Similarly, Al-Ruwaili's study at King Saud University in 2008 found that rights awareness among female students did not exceed 40%, with social traditions significantly shaping perceptions of their rights. Al-Saghir (2011) attributes this lack of understanding to failures in social institutions, including education policymakers, religious scholars, and media outlets. The absence of effective advocacy, educational programs, and human rights initiatives contributes to this deficiency.

Al-Fayez (2017)[75] found that awareness was still particularly low among students, except for divorced women, who demonstrated significantly higher knowledge of human rights. Additionally, many students relied on informal sources such as family, peer groups, and social media rather than formal educational curricula. Al-Mutairi (2017) argued that social

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[75]Al-Fayez conducted Quantitative research at three universities in Riyadh: Amira Nora, King Saud and Imam Muhammed Bin Saud University

media plays a crucial role in raising awareness, while Al-Sanad (2017)[76] found that media efforts were insufficient in educating women effectively about their rights in Islam. To address these gaps, Al-Sanad (2017) recommended incorporating human rights education as an independent course at the university level, using modern teaching methods and technology to enhance engagement. Following these suggestions, McGregor and Hamdan (2022) call for a shift in women's rights education that equipe women with the needed tools to advocates for their rights instead of informing them about them. They argue that Such education contributes to broader societal transformation in Saudi Arabia and potentially across other Arab contexts engaged in similar nation-building efforts.

2.4.3. Education as a Catalyst for Women's Rights Awareness

Education is a foundational pillar in Islam, regarded as a moral duty and a means for individual and societal advancement. Rugh (2002), Baki (2004), and Hamdan (2012) agree that Islam has a long history of promoting education, gender justice, and peace and social transformation. Education occupies a high and respectful place in Islam, as the first verse revealed in *Qurʾān* begins with the word "*Iqra*", which means "read". In the *Qurʾān*, several verses encourage people, men and women, distinctly, to seek and provide education and knowledge (Shah, 2006). Almighty *Allah* said:

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[76] Al-Sanad conducted Quantitative study at five universities: Amira Nora, Dammam, King Saud, Umm al-Qura and King Khalid university.

"O my Sustainer, cause me to grow in knowledge!" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025,

20:114).

"Say: 'Can they who know and they who do not know be deemed

equal?" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 39:9).

The first thing *Allah* provided Adam when He created him was knowledge. *Allah* said:

"And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things And He taught

Adam the names - all of them" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025,2: 31).

In the same light, Prophet Mohamad (PBUH) also instructed individuals to educate themselves. He emphasised the importance of seeking knowledge for both men and women, stating, "The search for knowledge is an obligation laid on every Muslim"[77]. Prominent scholars, educators, and leaders throughout Islamic history were cited, such as Aisha bint Abu Bakr, who narrated over 2,000 *Ḥadīths*, and Fatima al-Fihri, who founded the University of *Al-Qarawiyyin*. These figures demonstrate the significant contributions of women to Islamic scholarship (Al-Kandari, 2020).

Education is one of the most powerful tools for women's empowerment. It gives them the knowledge and confidence to challenge inequalities and assert their rights (Turk & Suweg, 1989). Abu Laghad (1965) argues that when women receive education, they are not just

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[77] Ibn Maja, cited in Mishkat al-Masabih 218, Book 2, Hadith 20

passive participants in society; they become active agents of change. However, in many Arab countries, school curricula still reinforce gender hierarchies. Mansour (2014) argues that these curricula consistently emphasise male superiority, shaping societal norms that place women in a subordinate role. Similarly, Barlas (2002) highlights those traditional interpretations of Islamic texts in education tend to focus on men's rights while overlooking the shared responsibilities and rights of both genders. Yasun (2018) highlights that legislating gender justice often fails to translate into real equality, especially for socio-economically marginalised women. Using an intersectional approach, Yasun's study argues that education is a crucial factor in enabling legal justice to produce tangible outcomes. The empirical research of the study on marginalised women in Diyarbakır, Turkey, reveals that higher education levels significantly increase the likelihood of claiming equal inheritance rights. This underscores that legal reforms alone are insufficient; achieving gender equality requires improving women's educational status. The study also emphasises the value of intersectional research in understanding and addressing the challenges marginalised women face.

However, experts like Dugbazah (2009), Porter (2016) and Kelley (2014) stress the need for culturally sensitive educational reforms that promote women's rights in Muslim societies. A 2005 article in *Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper*, "Education and Its Role in Gender Discrimination in Some Gulf Countries," illustrates how school curricula in Kuwait,

Bahrain, the UAE, and Oman continue to perpetuate these traditional roles[78]. Although

female education has expanded in Saudi Arabia, the underlying power structures remain

unchanged in the educational books, being legitimated by Islamic (mis) interpretations (Al-

Rawaf and Simmons, 1991; Al-Sanabary, 1994; Hamdan, 2005a, 2012b; Al-Suwaida,

2016; Mustafa, 2017; Abu Jabal,2020; Hamdan et.al, 2023, Aldegether, 2023; Al-Rowais,

2023). Hamdan (2005a, p 48) argues "women's education did not change the patriarchal

nature of Saudi society; women in every field remain subordinate to men". The blending

of religious and tribal cultural norms has made it difficult to distinguish between Islamic

principles and long-standing social traditions (Al-Alhareth, 2015). Al-Sanabary (1994)

further describes Saudi education as a reflection of its society, reinforcing gender divisions

and hierarchical power structures within its curriculum. Sulaiman (2002) argues that the

lack of knowledge of Saudi women's rights stems from the ongoing imposition of gender

stereotypes in the education system. The successful woman is the one who solely cooks or

raises children; this image has been implanted in the minds of Saudi generations since

childhood (Sulaiman,2002)[79]. Hamadan (2012, p. 200) agrees with Sulaiman (2002) and

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[78] The article explains how educational materials shape students' perceptions of gender, often presenting girls as less capable. For example, a study on Kuwaiti textbooks found that male characters were portrayed as intelligent, hardworking, and ambitious, whereas female characters were often depicted as indecisive, lacking ambition, and superstitious. In Bahrain, Wajeeha Al-Baharna pointed out how textbooks fail to use feminine forms of address, reinforcing a male-dominated learning experience that affects young girls' confidence. Similarly, in the UAE, Ahmad Tahir Hussein observed how mothers in textbooks prioritise their sons' needs over their daughters', while fathers are depicted teaching boys practical skills, leaving girls confined to domestic duties. In Oman, these biases are even more pronounced, with textbooks reinforcing outdated traditions that don't reflect modern gender expectations. The article also notes that these biases are upheld not just by men but also by many women, highlighting how deeply ingrained these societal attitudes are.

[79] That was the conclusion of the qualitative study conducted by Sulaiman (2002), participating with 1146 male and female students and staff members at King Saud University in Riyadh. The study reveals that both men and women held the same limited view of gender roles as an extension of the gender norms reproduced in the national curricula (Sulaiman, 2002).

Abdul-Karim (2007), who argues that the Saudi curriculum includes "the everlasting gender discourses" that "instil the idea that a woman's role is merely to be a good wife and mother who can cook, clean and care for the family". Hamdam (2005) extends that the Saudi education system and curricula need to implement different strategies for looking at the other people with whom we disagree to overcome the push strategy[80] (Hamdan, 2005, p.61). In a coinciding research, Al-Naji (2011) explored Saudi women's societal roles in Arabic language and Social Science textbooks in the primary and secondary grades. The researcher conducted a content analysis of the two books and tracked women's roles and social status within them. The study found that the roles for women were limited and ranked as follows: mother, girl, schoolgirl, sister, daughter, teacher, doctor, wife, grandmother, and nurse. At the same time, the image of women did not deviate from three social situations ranked descending as married, divorced, and widowed (Al-Naji, 2011). According to Al-Huthali (2011) and Al-Humoud (2010), these patterns have been visible in other Saudi national curricula. Women's social role was intentionally cancelled in their English and History curricula analyses. Therefore, Al-Humoud (2010) criticised the History curriculum at all school grades for failing to represent women's social participation across Saudi and Islamic history. Abu Khashaba (2012) identified a similar conclusion in his analysis of Islamic history curricula before Vision 2030, calling for more studies from a human rights perspective.

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[80] (see 2.4.).

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aims to challenge these traditional roles, providing opportunities for Saudi women, expanding their access to education and employment, establishing new institutions for women, and promoting gender justice in various fields. However, significant challenges continue to hinder gender justice in education. Abu Jabal (2020) pointed out that several school textbooks have not been updated in the last ten years, such as the social science curriculum in the secondary grade; which indicates that the Vision 2030 reforms are not reflected in the educational curriculum (Al-Fayez, 2017; Abdullatif, 2017; Abu Jabal, 2020). For example, a study by the National Observatory of the Saudi Family Affairs Council (2022) examined how women are portrayed in Saudi textbooks from early childhood to high school. After analysing 236 books, the study found a significant gender imbalance in language, imagery, role models, and leadership representation, with a clear preference for male figures. Women were often depicted in outdated, unrealistic ways, reinforcing limited perceptions of their capabilities. The study called for a more balanced and empowering representation of women in textbooks, eliminating gender bias, adopting inclusive language that aligns with Islamic values, and fostering a culture of respect and dignity. The study also called for an interpretation of the Islamic system of value on gender rights that follows the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology.

From a parallel focus, Aldegether (2023) analysed the content of the Saudi Arabian high school Family Education curriculum to examine how girls and women are represented. The study found out that women were not given their dignity and respect guaranteed by Islam in these books despite Vision 2030 goals to empower Saudi women. This underrepresentation perpetuates outdated gender roles and hinders the empowerment of

women. Al-Rowais (2023) examined how these portrayals influence female students' perceptions of gender roles. She argued that English textbooks in secondary public schools present Saudi women as traditional homemakers with culturally specific family responsibilities, whereas men are strong bodies and career oriented. Further research has examined specific aspects of Islamic curricula. Al-Khateeb (2019) evaluated the Hadith and ICC in high schools, concluding that it lacked a comprehensive integration of human rights concepts in Islam. The study also notes the absence of structured exercises and activities to reinforce these principles. Additionally, Al-Abdulkarim (2021) examined the high school Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) curriculum, specifically focusing on how it addresses women's rights and obligations. The findings indicated that the representation of these rights was both limited and incomplete, necessitating a more thorough and methodical integration of women's rights into educational content.

Despite this growing body of research, few studies have analysed women's rights curricula in higher education after Vision 2030. One such study, conducted by Al-Zakary (2015), examined the integration of human rights concepts in the General Requirements Curriculum at Imam *Muhammad* Ibn Saud Islamic University. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study analysed Islamic Culture Courses. The findings revealed that while the curriculum did not contradict international human rights standards, it lacked sufficient detail to help students develop a nuanced understanding of these rights within the Islamic frame of reference, including those related to women.

Al-Zakary's (2015) findings align with other research on human rights education in Saudi universities. Al-Husain (2007), then Head of the *Al-Sharīʿah* Department at Imam

Muhammad bin Saud University, critically analysed Islamic Culture Courses in both civil and colleges. He concluded that discussions of human rights within these courses failed to meet the needs of contemporary university students. Al-Husain (2007) emphasised that teaching human rights should be a fundamental part of university education, rooted in Islamic principles derived from the *Qur'an and Sunnah*. He further recommended introducing dedicated courses on human rights in Saudi universities, a position echoed by scholars such as Al-Suwaida (2016) and Hamdan (2005, 2012).

2.5. Conclusion:

The analysis of feminist waves concerning the Saudi approach to women's rights highlights that Saudi Arabia's framework aligns with the fourth wave of feminism. In this approach, this research deliberately avoided the term "feminism" due to its cultural and religious specificity. Concepts of freedom and liberty, while celebrated in secular feminist thought, are critiqued by Islamic feminists and fourth-wave advocates for imposing Western paradigms on diverse cultural realities. Scholars such as Saba Mahmood (2005) and Hoodfar (1992) caution against the universalisation of secular feminist ideals, emphasising the necessity of recognising alternative models of empowerment embedded within religious and cultural frameworks.

Prioritising human experience in reinterpreting religious resources, demanded by Islamic feminists, has historically contributed to women's oppression rather than their liberation in many parts of the Arab world. The most effective approach is to adhere to the religious texts and apply the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, which ensures a just and objective framework

for gender rights, free from human bias. Without a comprehensive methodology, subjective interpretations of religious texts can distort their intended meaning and objective*s* *(Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah)*, ultimately harming women rather than protecting their rights. The historical entanglement of colonial legacies, patriarchal traditions, and misinterpretations of religious texts has contributed to gender disparities in Muslim-majority societies. While Islam itself upholds principles of justice and equality, local traditions and entrenched social norms often distort these principles, reinforcing gender hierarchies under the guise of religious legitimacy. This chapter explores an inclusive framework for discussing women's rights that neither compromises religious teachings nor succumbs to cultural rigidity. Instead, it advocates for a revival of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* to ensure justice, dignity, and agency for women. This approach acknowledges the importance of cultural specificity while challenging harmful traditions that contradict Islamic values, fostering an inclusive discourse that respects Muslim women's lived experiences and faith-based identities.

Furthermore, this chapter highlighted how discriminatory practices in Saudi Arabia often stem from conflating Islamic teachings with historical and cultural traditions rather than from Islam itself. The intersection of culture and religion plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of gender roles, reinforcing traditional norms that limit women's societal participation. Such outdated stereotypes contradict the broader goals of Vision 2030, which aims to empower Saudi women and promote gender equity. Saudi women's agency is dynamic rather than static, as evidenced by their evolving roles and increasing participation in various sectors. However, despite ongoing educational reforms and political initiatives, awareness of women's rights within the Islamic framework remains limited. This research

identifies a crucial gap between the political will to advance women's rights and the mechanisms through which education fosters awareness of these rights. There is a significant lack of research examining how ICC in higher education shapes women's rights awareness, and this investigation is needed to bridge this gap.

The interwoven between the tribal customs and religious interpretations complexities are relevant to the ICC analysis at KSA University, where cultural, religious, and institutional frameworks intersect. By demonstrating that the ICC provides both challenges and opportunities for women's rights discourse, this research advances the argument that Islamic education, when grounded in the principles of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* and the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, can be an effective tool for fostering gender equity. This research moves beyond theoretical debates and engages with the practical implementation of women's rights education in the Islamic framework. In doing so, it challenges the dichotomy often presented between religious tradition and gender empowerment, arguing instead for a model that integrates Islamic jurisprudence with contemporary social realities to ensure justice, dignity, and agency for women.

This research fills a critical gap in existing scholarship by addressing the absence of studies that examine how Islamic education, specifically the ICC, can serve as a vehicle for women's rights awareness and empowerment within Muslim contexts, particularly in Saudi Arabia. While significant research has explored feminism and gender justice in Muslim societies, much of it has either framed the discussion through secular feminist paradigms or focused on state-driven reforms without considering the role of religious education in shaping societal attitudes. This study positions itself within the ongoing debate on whether

Islamic education can contribute to gender justice or whether it inherently reinforces patriarchal structures.

Chapter Three

Islamic Framework to Women's Rights Advocation: Saudi Context as a Study Case

3.1. Introduction

The chapter focuses on Islam's ability to offer a comprehensive framework for women's rights, following Al-Juhany (2015) and Al-Marrakshi's (2021) above-mentioned argument. It explores the Islamic value system in rights discussion. Then, it defines the essential concepts and terms used in Islamic women's rights debates following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, following Nawal Al-Eid (2006) and Zainab Al-Alwani (2012). Then, the chapter delves into the varied implementation of these concepts in Saudi society and the challenges, barriers, and opportunities women face in advocating for their rights in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the role of education in raising women's awareness of their rights.

3.2. The Islamic Framework for (Human) (Women) Rights[81]:

Islamic law provides a comprehensive system that encompasses detailed regulations on all aspects of life, including personal, legal, spiritual, religious, and social matters (Ceasri, 2017; Al-Alwani, 2012; Morgan-Foster, 2005; Al-Munajjed, 1997). In contrast to cultural or governmental legislations emitted by humans, Al-Raysoni (2010) argues that the Islamic law is established by the Creator of all humans, the most experts by his creators and the

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[81] Verses from the holy Qur'an are included in this section, see the original Arabic Verses in Appendix 10.

Only capable offering them a rights system, aligning with their human nature *(fitra)*[82] and guarantees them justice and equality. As Al-Alwani (2012) explains, the Islamic rights framework is grounded on the purpose of human creation: worshipping God and fulfilling the role of stewardship *(Khilafah)* on earth, almighty *Allah* said:

> "AND LO! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it." They said: "Wilt Thou place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood - whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory, and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name?" [God] answered: "Verily, I know that which you do not know"(The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:30).

Al-Alwani (2012, p. 77) states that the *Istikhlaf* concept governs human choices and actions; it defines their mission and purpose of existence. God entrusted human beings with responsibilities in this world (*Dunia*) and will reward them hereafter (*Akhirah*). Almighty *Allah* created humans with the needed qualities and attributes that qualify them to bear this trust (*Amanah*) assigned to them: developing and maintaining the earth while worshiping Him, adhering to His commands, and avoiding His prohibitions (Al-Alwani, 2012). Almighty *Allah* said:

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[82] *Fitrah* (Instinct) in Islam refers to innate purity and natural willingness towards the unification and righteousness with which every human being is born. However, external effects - such as nurturing and the environment - can alter this natural state. Islam emphasises the care of fitra through faith, moral behaviour and religious practices. The Prophet Muhammad said: "Every child is born over the period, but his parents make him Jewish or Christian..." (Right Bukhari, 1358; True Muslim, 2658) (Ahmadi, 1993)

"And [tell them that] I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 51: 56).

The concept of *Istikhlaf* serves as a regulatory principle within the holistic Islamic framework of social and family relations. The *Istikhlaf* mission encompasses both men and women alike; it is not assigned to one gender over the other. Even though this principle unifies human movement within a broader system that contributes to the building of the *Ummah*[83], family represents the first level of *Istikhlāf*, where spouses are entrusted with one another and are responsible for maintaining the family's well-being and interests (Al-Raysoni, 2010). They uphold the divine trust (*Amanah*) that ensures stability and harmony in the family, which is reflected in the social structure (Al-Alwani, 2012; Al-Raysoni, 2010).

3.2.1. Rights and Duties: A Balanced Approach in Rights Discussion

Islamic jurists define *Al-Ḥaq* (the right) in alignment with its linguistic and jurisprudential origins. It is one of the names of Almighty *Allah*, and in Arabic, it carries multiple meanings: certainty, obligation, truth, fairness, and a specific portion or share (Al-Eid, 2006; Al-Zuhayli, 2006). *Al-Ḥaq* means the legal right an individual holds as a member of

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[83] *Ummah (أمة)* is an Arabic term meaning "community" or "nation." In an Islamic context, it refers to the global Muslim community bound by faith, transcending geographical, ethnic, and cultural differences. The concept of *Ummah* emphasises unity, mutual support, and collective responsibility among Muslims (Al-Munajjed, 1997).

a religion or a nation; its plural form is *Al-Huquq*[84]. Islam's approach to human rights is rooted in revelation and Sunnah practices (Al-Saghir, 2011). Muslims believe these rights were established 14 centuries ago in the Prophet's Farewell Sermon[85]. Al-Zarqa (1961) describes *Al-Ḥaq* as an entitlement that the *Sharīʿah* determines as either a privilege or an obligation. Al-Khafif (2010, p:95) defines *Al-Ḥaq* as "a legally recognised interest", while Al-Duraini (1984) defines rights as "an entitlement acknowledged by *Sharīʿah* to achieve a specific benefit," underlining that every right has a corresponding duty.

Anju (2017) argued that all the rights mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights UDHR[86], including the right to life, liberty, equality, justice, fair trial, prevention of

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[84] Islam categorises rights into two types: *Allah*'s rights and human rights. Allah's rights, primarily *Tawheed* (the oneness of God), include the declaration of faith. Human rights involve moral and legal obligations in a social context. In the Islamic perspective, all kinds of rights and freedoms are granted by Almighty Allah, and revelation (Wahi) is their sole base. Many verses of the Holy *Qurʾān* and *Hadith* (sayings) of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) scientifically describe these rights. However, while *Allah* may forgive violations of His rights, human rights violations (*Huquq al-Ibad*) are not easily pardoned (Bhat, 2018).

[85] The Farewell Sermon, *Khuṭbat Al-Wadāʿ,* delivered by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 632 CE (10 AH) during his final pilgrimage at Mount Arafat near Makka, remains a cornerstone in Islamic ethical and moral thought. This sermon is one of the most significant addresses in Islamic history because it encapsulates core moral, ethical, and social principles and fundamental human rights in Islam. Central to the sermon are human equality, unity, and mutual responsibilities. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explicitly underscored the equality of all humans, asserting that no individual holds superiority over another except through piety and righteous deeds. He outlined clear rights and duties within society, highlighting particularly the respectful and compassionate treatment of women. The Prophet (PBUH) also strongly advocated for social justice, promoting tolerance, fairness, and equity. He condemned unjust practices and encouraged believers to diligently uphold their religious obligations, including regular prayers, fasting during Ramadan, performing the pilgrimage (*Hajj*), and giving charity (*Zakat*). Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reminded Muslims to steadfastly adhere to the teachings of the *Qurʾān* and his Sunnah, clearly stating that he was the final messenger sent by God, thus concluding divine revelation. In essence, the Farewell Sermon serves as a profound moral compass for Muslims worldwide, reinforcing universal human rights, social responsibility, ethical behaviour, justice, and compassion within society. https://www.abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/tag/farewell-sermon/#:~:text=Farewell%20Sermon%3A%20Final%20advice%20to%20follow%20Qurʾān%20and%20Sunnah&text=Ibn%20Abbas%20reported%3A%20The%20Messenger,will%20ever%20be%20worshiped%20%5B%E2%80%A6%5D

[86] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a landmark international document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, outlining fundamental human rights that should be universally protected. It serves as a common standard for all people and nations. For more details, see the official document here.

torture, the right to education and freedom of movement (etc.)[87], were fundamentally highlighted in the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights[88] (1982)[89].

As explained above, the Islamic framework for human rights differs from its Western counterpart in its epistemological foundation. These differences extend to the underlying objectives and philosophies that justify establishing rights. In Western discourse, rights are primarily grounded in individualism[90] and humanism, prioritising individuals' freedom (Foster,2005; Khir-Allah, 2024). Al-Rikabi (2014) argues that Western discourse views men and women as autonomous individuals rather than members of a family system with complementary roles and responsibilities. He argues that this perception has contributed to tensions and conflict between genders, whereas the Islamic model seeks to establish harmony by integrating rights within social and family responsibilities. Cesari (2017) indicates that the Islamic framework to rights values prioritises communal obligation over individualism, linking social identity to social commitments. She observes that this approach enhances social solidarity.

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[87] Human rights are acknowledged as universal, indivisible, and interdependent based on international and religious conventions applicable to all people, regardless of gender, race, religion, or country of residence (Al Zakari, 2015).

[88] The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1982 by the Islamic Council of Europe, a private nongovernmental organisation affiliated with the Muslim World League. The organisation was established in 1973, with headquarters in London. The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights rooted human rights in the law of God and restated fundamental human rights using the language of Islamic jurisprudence. It addressed several issues such as privacy, torture, criminal cases, marriage, inheritance, divorce, and economic activities, freedom of religion based on traditional Islamic law. The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights provided a useful starting point: it was the first official political statement of Islamic exceptionalism in the realm of human rights.

[89] For more about Human Rights and Islam, read An-Na'im (2000), Akbarzadeh & MacQueen (2008), Mayer (2018),

[90] The Online Cambridge Dictionary defines individualism as "the idea that freedom of thought and action for each person is the most important value in society, rather than shared collective responsibility" (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/individualism). Morgan-Foster (2018) asserts that this approach contrasts with Islamic traditions, which emphasise the complementary relationship between rights and duties, particularly in gender.

In addition, the Islamic rights framework emphasises balancing rights and duties, ensuring that neither is prioritised at the expense of the other (Al-Rikabi, 2014). Al-Alwani (2012) agrees that every right in Islam is inherently tied to a corresponding duty: children's rights impose responsibilities on parents, just as a wife's rights entail obligations for her husband. These rights are inalienable; they cannot be annulled, rejected, or waived, as their legitimacy is derived from the divine order (Baht, 2018; Al-Qahtani, 2020). The prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) affirmed the sacred dimension in the duality of rights and duties principles, stating: "Each person is accountable for their duties and actions before God."[91] Al-Eid (2006) explains that the commitment to rights and duties extends beyond legal obligations in worldly life; it is a religious duty for which Muslims will be held accountable in the afterlife. This divine accountability grants rights intrinsic authority and is a powerful motivation for individuals to uphold them (Al-Eid, 2006). Al-Qahtani (2020) asserts that the balance between rights and duties reflects the comprehensiveness of the Islamic approach to the term *Al-Ḥaq*[92] (Right) to ensure positive social balance, upholding the human dignity and honor bestowed upon them by *Allah* when He commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam (Al-Raysoni, 2002)[93]. To sum up, the foundations of the Islamic framework for rights can be summarised in four key principles: (1) Divine

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[91] Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of Judgments, chapter obey God, the Prophet and those in authority among you, (7138)

[92] Islamic jurists define *Al-Ḥaq* (right) in alignment with its linguistic and jurisprudential origins. It is one of the names of *Almighty Allah*, and in Arabic, it carries multiple meanings: certainty, obligation, truth, fairness, and a specific portion or share (Al-Eid, 2006; Al-Zuhayli, 2006).

[93] This act of prostration (*Sujood*) before Adam is mentioned in the *Qurʾān*: "And when We told the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam!' -they all prostrated themselves" (The *Qurʾān*,2025, 2:34), symbolising the unique honour and dignity *Allah* bestowed upon humanity. Islamic scholars interpret this as a demonstration of the high status of human beings in creation, affirming their worth and responsibilities. Al-Raysoni (2002) discusses this as a foundational principle in Islamic thought, emphasising that human dignity is divinely ordained and serves as the basis for the duality of rights and obligations in Islam.

Acknowledgement of Rights, (2) Balance Between Rights and Duties, (3) Affirmation of Human Dignity, and (4) Achievement of Justice and Equality (Bakshuwain, 2015). Therefore, for this thesis, Islam's approach to women's rights is rooted in 1) the divine honour bestowed upon humanity, 2) a balance between rights and duties, and 3) a commitment to justice. This framework ensures comprehensive and sustainable rights, stabilising women's familial and social lives.

3.2.2. Emphasised Values in the Islamic Approach to (Women's) Rights

Before the advent of Islam, in (*Jāhilīyah*), Islamic research suggests human dignity, particularly that of women, was severely undermined (Khamlishi, 2004). Islam abolished a number of oppressive traditions found in the Arabian Peninsula, looking to ensure that women were no longer treated as transferable commodities (Saeed, 2018)[94]. These reforms were "revolutionary" and transformative for their time, embedding dignity, honour, and equality as fundamental rights for all Muslims and ensuring women as rights holders (Saeed, 2018, p.113)[95]. The Islamic framework of rights is rooted in dignity (*Karama*), peace *(Al-Salām),* justice (*Adl'*), balance and God-Consciousness (*Al-Taqwā)* (Al-

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[94] Discriminatory attitudes towards women were prevalent, as evidenced by practices such as female infanticide, treating women as property, and depriving them of their rights in inheritance and marriage (Saeed, 2018, p.111). Women were often regarded as possessions under male authority. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) described this reality: "When a man died, his heirs had a greater right to his wife. If one of them wished, he could marry her; if they desired, they could arrange for her to marry, or they could choose not to marry her off. They had more rights over her than her own family." (Al-Eid, 2006). The impact of Islam's reforms is best captured by Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who stated: "During the pre-Islamic era, we regarded women as nothing, but when Islam came, and Allah mentioned them, we realised that they had rights over us" (Shah, 2006; Saeed, 2018).

[95] Saeed (2018) argues that the core teachings of the Qur'an emphasise the importance of uplifting and empowering vulnerable groups within society, including orphans, slaves, the poor, and women. He asserts that the Islamic rights approach provided a new framework for gender relations and family law, as many pre-Islamic practices were revised or rejected. He said, "They challenged the status quo and questioned the unequal and discriminatory prevailing gender norms of that time" (Saeed, 2018, p. 113).

Alwani,2012). These values are briefly explained through this Islamic approach to rights as follows:

Dignity:

Islamic teachings are deeply rooted in preserving human dignity (*Karama*), particularly in protecting women's rights as mothers, wives, and daughters (Hassan, 1991; Al-Luhaibi, 2017). Al-Ja'afary (2017) emphasises that the *Qurʾān*'s recognition of women's dignity serves as a methodological foundation for framing women's rights, mandating comprehensive psychological, social, and economic care for women (Shah, 2006; Saeed, 2019; Badawi, 1980a,1995b). Islam fully respects women and guarantees their dignity and honour, and abolishes dehumanisation, inequality and discrimination against them, emphasising that both men and women share the exact spiritual human nature (Shah, 2006) when *Allah Almighty* says:

> "NOW, INDEED, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favoured them far above most of Our creation" (The *Qur'an*,2025, 17:70).

This verse highlights the unique honour and dignity *Allah* has bestowed upon humanity, granting them knowledge, speech, an upright form, and numerous blessings, including dominion over land and sea. It emphasises human superiority (of both men and women) over many other creations, while acknowledging that this preference applies to all

humanity, regardless of race, color, or gender (*Tafsīr al-Jalālayn,* translated by Hamza, 2007).

Peace (*Al-Salām*):

"Islam" originates from a root word that primarily signifies peace (*Al-Salām*) in Arabic. As a result, the notion of peace is deeply embedded in Islam and plays a fundamental role in the lives of those who embrace it (Köylü, 2004). *Al-Salām* is one of the attributes of Almighty *Allah*, the source of peace (*Al-Salām*), as well as the name given to paradise, the abode reserved for all who obey *Allah*[96]. Almighty *Allah* said:

> "God is He save whom there is no deity: the Sovereign Supreme, the Holy, the One with whom all salvation rests, the Giver of Faith, the One who determines what is true and false, the Almighty, the One who subdues wrong and restores right, the One to whom all greatness belongs! Utterly remote is God, in His limitless glory, from anything to which men may ascribe a share in His divinity" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 59:23).

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[96] See The Qurʾān, 2025, 59: 23; 10: 25; 5: 16; 6: 127–128, 13: 19–24

> "Theirs shall be an abode of peace with their Sustainer; and He shall be near unto them in result of what they have been doing" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 6:127)

Prophet says in his prayer: "O *Allah*, you are As-Salam, From You is all peace, blessed are You O Possessor of majesty and honour[97]". Peace is a core principle emphasised repeatedly throughout the *Qur'an* and in Islamic teachings. *Allah* underscores the importance of peace as an essential value for problem-solving, mainly because human societies often face conflicts, disputes, and social tensions (Nahar, 2022), including marital life. For example, *Allah* has explained practical guidelines for managing peace in *Surah al-Hujurat* (9:10*)* when two groups of believers in that moment conflicted (Nahar, 2022). *Allah* says:

> "Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to God's commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably [with them]: for verily, God loves those who act equitably!." (The *Qur'an*,2025, 49:9)

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[97] Sunan Ibn Majah 924,Book 5, Hadith 122

The *Qur'an* consistently instructs Muslims to dedicate themselves fully to peace and justice while denouncing anything that disrupts peace and societal harmony[98].

Justice and Equality

Islamic rights reforms addressed deeply entrenched inequalities, rejecting discriminatory pre-Islamic practices and affirming the equality of all humans, with all their diversities (gender is one of these diversities), before Almighty *Allah,* who rewards or punishes them based on their actions (Shah, 2006). *Allah* states:

> "Whereas anyone - be it man or woman - who does [whatever he can]
> of good deeds and is a believer withal, shall enter paradise, and shall
> not be wronged by as much as [would fill] the groove of a date-stone."
> (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:124).

Islam asserts that men and women are equal in origin, created from the same soul, and it constitutes humanity as equal partners:

> "O MANKIND! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out
> of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two
> spread abroad a multitude of men and women" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:1).

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98 For more example, see *Qurʾān* 2: 209, 5: 9 and 65, 7: 56 and 74, 11: 85, 28: 77–78, 29: 36

Naseef (1995) emphasises that the *Qurʾānic* discourse addresses both genders without exception, using gender-inclusive universal calls such as "O mankind," "O Children of Adam," and "O you who have believed." These terms include both genders as active participants working together to build the society, affirming that women possess rights equal to those of men, including the right to life, financial support, breastfeeding, custody, education, employment, and economic independence (Shah, 2006; Naseef, 1995; Al-Eid,2006). The Prophetic saying reinforces these rights: "Indeed, women are the counterparts of men[99]".

Furthermore, men and women are equally eligible for religious duties and acts of worship, encompassing obligatory and voluntary practices. They are also treated equally under legal penalties for offences such as theft and adultery, bearing the same responsibility before God, with equal reward or punishment in the Hereafter (Al-Eid, 2006). Almighty *Allah* said:

> "Whereas anyone - be it man or woman - who does [whatever he can]
>
> of good deeds and is a believer withal, shall enter paradise, and shall
>
> not be wronged by as much as [would fill] the groove of a date-stone"
>
> (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:124).

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[99] Sunan Abi Dawud, Hadith: 240, Sunan Tirmidhi, Hadith: 113. Also see Sunan Darimi, Hadith: 764

"As for anyone - be it man or woman - who does righteous deeds, and is a believer withal - him shall We most certainly cause to live a good life. and most certainly shall We grant unto such as these their reward in accordance with the best that they ever did" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 16:97).

However, Islamic equality and justice do not imply a rivalry or a battlefield-like parity between men and women who achieve more rights. Instead, it is founded on complementary collaboration within a system that balances rights and duties, recognising the distinct nature between gender and the interdependent social and family roles assigned to each gender (Al-Sha'rawi,1998; Al-Juhany, 2015; Al-Marrakeshi, 2023). Badawi (1995) asserts that it is more accurate to say that Islam promotes gender justice rather than gender equality. He justifies that justice is a more suitable term because equality is often misconstrued as necessitating absolute sameness in every aspect. Instead, justice refers to justice and equity, acknowledging the overall equality in rights and responsibilities of both genders while permitting differences in roles or duties that maintain balance and equity.

This framework ensures justice rather than a rigid sameness, allowing both men and women to contribute harmoniously according to their *fitrah* (innate competencies) to society while upholding their dignity and clearly defined responsibilities (Al-Sha'rawi, 1998). For example, men's primary duty in family maintenance is to provide financial support for their families, yet this does not undermine their essential role as fathers. Similarly, women are not barred from working if they choose to, maintaining their right to decide whether to participate in family financial responsibilities (Karim, 2021). Despite the differing

responsibilities assigned to men and women, both are equally valued, and their contributions are similarly respected (Al-Ghunaim, 2020).

Justice in the Islamic framework to gender relations and women's rights is reciprocity, affirming that spouses' rights and responsibilities are mutual. Almighty *Allah* said:

> "But, in accordance with justice, the rights of the wives [with regard to their husbands] are equal to the [husbands'] rights with regard to them,"
>
> (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:228).

Everything a husband has the right to expect from his wife, such as obedience, trustworthiness, chastity, fidelity, good companionship, affection, respect, and the safeguarding of mutual interests, is equally the wife's right to expect from her husband in a reciprocal manner (Al-Eid, 2006). Rashid Reda (1971) elaborates on Ibn Abbas's statement, "I like to take care of my appearance for my wife just as I like for her to take care of her appearance for me. This is because *Allah* says they (women) have rights similar to those of their husbands) over them to what is reasonable", clarifying that marriage equality does not necessarily mean identical roles but rather mutual rights and responsibilities. Each spouse contributes to the marriage in ways that are equivalent in purpose, even if they differ in form. They are equal in their essence, emotions, and intellect, capable of rational thought and decision-making regarding their shared life. True justice in marriage cannot be achieved through one party dominating the other; instead, it flourishes through mutual respect and fulfilling each other's rights. This approach to justice reduces structural inequalities, women marginalisation, and possible conflicts and fosters peace and

harmony within the family and social structure (Badawi, 1995b; Saeed, 2018; Hamdan,2005; Al-Ghunaim, 2020).

God-Consciousness (*Al-Taqwā*)

In Islam, individuals' value in God's eyes is based on piety (*Al-Taqwā*) and righteous action, not gender, race, or wealth (Omar, 2014). Almighty *Allah* states:

> "Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of *Allah* is the most righteous (Taqwa) of you" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 49:13).

Al-Taqwā in Islam means God-consciousness and "observing God in performing the duties and staying away from prohibitions" (Al-Thabit, 2018). It directs individual and societal behaviour toward attaining God's pleasure and upholding Islamic values (Badawi, 1980a). It is not merely a spiritual virtue but a foundational guiding principle upon which the ethical and legislative system is built. *Al-Taqwā is* mentioned over 300 times in the *Qurʾān*, and it is more frequently mentioned in family law regulations and women's rights (Al-Thabit, 2018). It serves as a moral compass, encouraging individuals to adhere to divine principles out of reverence for God (Al-Thabit, 2018). Defined as fear coupled with love and reverence for God, *Al-Taqwā* motivates individuals to embrace good and avoid evil (Al-Thabit, 2018). Abdullah Draz (1973) argues that *Al-Taqwā* is not merely a personal matter but a social and organisational principle ensuring human relations justice. *Al-Taqwā* is a crucial key in implementing Islamic legislation.

Al-Thabit (2018) and Zumurrud (2019) extend that *Al-Taqwā* is a powerful force that maintains balance and tranquillity within the family. It fosters peace through mutual respect and ethical conduct, ensuring women's rights are theoretically upheld and actively implemented and shaping harmonious relationships between spouses (Al-Thabit, 2018).

3.2.3. Islamic Framework for Women's Rights

The Islamic framework for rights presented in this section is grounded in the epistemological approach outlined in Chapter 2, which argues that the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah,* as sources of legislation, provide a comprehensive and self-sufficient framework for discussions on rights, particularly women's rights.

Al-Awad (2014, p.79) defines women's rights in Islam as "what *Almighty Allah* has prescribed for women in the *Qurʾān* and the *Sunnah* in terms of privilege and legislations aimed at their care, protection, and the fulfilment of their interests and happiness within their family life". In this study, women's rights refer to the entitlements and responsibilities divinely stipulated in the *Qur'an and Sunnah*, granting them sacred legitimacy and ensuring Muslim women's protection. These rights affirm women's dignity, balance rights and clear responsibilities, and uphold justice and equity to foster peace and social harmony (Bakshuwain, 2015; Al-Alwani,2012; Naseef,1995). These rights encompass: 1) Financial Rights: Maintenance (*Al-Nafaqah*), dowry (*Mahr*), and housing; 2) Personal Rights: The right to marry, choose a spouse, and seek *Khul"* (divorce initiated by the wife); and 3)

Moral Rights: Including mutual kindness (*Maʿruf*), benevolence (*Ehsan*), and preferential treatment (*fadhl*)[100] (Al-Alwani, 2012).

The legislative source of women's rights in Saudi Arabia is mainly the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*[101], and the objectives of any rights legislation follow *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* (the primary objectives of Islamic legislation). By embedding these rights within the broader objectives of Islamic law, they are defined and protected through precise legal and ethical mechanisms (Quradaghi, 2016); they become permanent and immutable, impervious to modification or annulment by any governmental, cultural or individual authority (Baht, 2018; Abdulhakeem, 2013).

Scholars emphasise that the primary objectives of Islamic legislation (*Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*), in general, aim to secure five essential interests: the preservation of religion (*Dīn*), life (*Nafs*), intellect ('*Aql*), lineage (*Nasl*), and property (*Māl*) (Ibn Ashur, 1999; Al-Raysoni, 2002, 2010). These objectives are foundational in ensuring social justice and upholding human dignity, peace and equity (Darraz, 2012; Ibn Ashur, 1999; Al-Raysoni, 2002, 2010). To achieve and protect these five objectives, Islamic law operates on two primary tracks: 1) establishing legislation to secure these necessities and 2) enacting laws

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[100] These rights are the Islamic rights rooted in sharia sources (*Qurʾān*, *Sunnah*, and Islamic jurisprudence). They remain constant, unaffected by temporal or contextual variations, based on divine guidance rather than human interpretation or societal shifts. They are not necessarily the rights that Muslim legal regulations maintain in the Personal Law. This section focuses on the Sharia framework of women's rights through the theological and jurisprudential Islamic approach, excluding state-specific laws, which are subject to change over time from one country to another and administrative interpretation, ensuring academic clarity in the discourse on women's rights in Islam.
[101] The methodology to identify these rights from the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* is called the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology.

to protect them from violation, with penalties for infractions (Abdulhakeem, 2013; Al-Zuhayli, 2002).

Al-Alwani (2012) also agrees that *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* offers a comprehensive frame for achieving rights and duties through engaging with Islamic heritage or applying *Sharīʿah* to contemporary challenges[102]. Within the rights discussion, Auda (2011) explained that the *Maqāṣid Al Sharīʿah* constitutes a bridge between Islamic legislation and prevailing notions of human rights and contemporary social values such as justice, dignity, freedom, and equality. In other words, *Maqāṣid Al Sharīʿah* provides the link between Islamic law and the modern concept of human rights, including women's rights. Accordingly, going through the *Maqasid Al-Sharīʿah* methodology can offer critical re-reading and reinterpreting of Islamic texts concerning human rights, including women's rights (Awdah, 2011, p.7). Al-Alwani (2012) emphasises that grounding women's rights discussion on *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* of the *Qurʾāni*c texts and Sunnah enhances the ability to interact with society in alignment with divine guidance. She asserts that this methodology goes beyond theoretical understanding to reach practical application, enabling women to organise their lives in a manner that harmonises scriptural principles with contemporary challenges (Quradaghi, 2016).

Islamic scholars emphasise that deriving *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* from Islamic texts requires expertise among jurists and scholars who should acquire a high level of proficiency in

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[102] Abdulhakeem (2013) asserts that women's rights in Islam are not abstract ideals, but actionable principles protected through divine authority and legal mechanisms, ensuring their implementation across societal levels.

Classical Arabic linguistics[103], have deep knowledge of *Tafsir*[104] and *Ḥadīth* sciences[105], expertise in *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*[106], must understand historical and societal contexts (*Fiqh al-Wāqiʿ*)[107], uphold intellectual integrity[108], be familiar with contemporary legal and social issues to ensure a balanced and applicable *Maqāṣid*-based analysis (Ibn Ashur, 1999; Al-Raysoni, 2010).

These required competencies of scholars engaged in the reinterpretations of religious texts are the key difference between the third wave (Islamic feminism) and the fourth wave in advocating women's rights in the (Arab) Muslim world. It becomes more visible as the divergence is reflected through different epistemological frame reference adopted by the scholar/interpreter in each wave: Islamic humanist hermeneutic approach[109] (Alak, 2023)[110], widely adopted by Islamic feminists, and the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology[111] (Al-Raysoni, 2010;

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[103] Knowledge of *Balāgha* (rhetoric), *Sarf* (morphology), and *Nahw* (grammar) to avoid misinterpretations.

[104] (Qur'anic exegesis) with an understanding of classical and contemporary interpretations.

[105] Including authentication, classification, and context of revelation.

[106] Understanding the methodology of legal deduction, including *Qiyās* (analogical reasoning), *Ijmāʿ* (consensus), and *istihsān* (juridical preference).

[107] Awareness of historical, cultural, and societal contexts in which Islamic laws were revealed and applied. The ability to differentiate between timeless principles and context-based rulings.

[108] Commitment to objectivity, sincerity, and justice in legal interpretation. And avoiding bias, political agendas, or external pressures that could distort the *Maqāṣid*-based analysis.

[109] Hermeneutics, as explained in note (61), is based on Hermes, the mythological Greek figure tasked with conveying messages between the divine and human realms, symbolising the transmission of meaning. Initially rooted in biblical exegesis during the 17th century, hermeneutics evolved significantly as a discipline (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). Friedrich Schleiermacher (1977) is widely recognised as the founder of modern hermeneutics, as he shifted the focus from religious texts alone to the broader dynamics of human understanding. To read more about "The Islamic Humanist Hermeneutics", read Alak (2023).

[110] Alkan (2023) emphasises that personal psychology, life experiences, circumstances and education are significant factors in the construction of meanings in the interpretation process. According to this perspective, interpretation is a dynamic, dialectical process involving the text's linguistic structure, the author's intent, and the reader's context, recognising that meanings are actively shaped and negotiated (and not invented) by interpretive communities over time (Alkan, 2023).

[111] *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology involves both 1) considering the source of legislation in Islam and 2) the methodology followed to interpret the religious texts and identify *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* out of it (Al-Raysoni, 2010; Al-Alwani, 2012).

Al-Alwani, 2012), which is central to the fourth wave approach in reinterpreting religious texts concerning women and gender rights in Islam.

Islamic feminists, the third wave, heavily rely on the humanist hermeneutics approach to reinterpret religious texts, including the Qur'an, in ways that challenge traditional gender inequalities (Alak, 2023). They emphasise the active role of the interpreter, even if he/ she does not adhere to the scholarly conditions stipulated by the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology for religious interpretation. They acknowledge their socio-cultural context and subjectivity, which allows feminist scholars to critically examine classical and patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith, recognising that interpretations are not fixed or divine mandates but human and contestable[112]. They depend on this interpretive paradigm to legitimise gender-focused reformulations of religious texts, advocating for social justice and gender equality rooted in a contextual, ethically oriented, and dynamic understanding of Islam (Alak, 2023).

On the contrary, *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology does not deny the presence of the human role in interpreting religious texts. Instead, it calls for a disciplined and methodologically grounded approach in which interpretation is entrusted to those who possess the necessary epistemological tools and ethical integrity. Over fourteen centuries, Qur'anic exegetes in Islam have developed a scientific methodology for understanding the Qur'anic text,

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[112] They often focus on the internal, contextual, and rhetorical aspects of the texts, highlighting that many verses traditionally used to justify gender inequality can be re-read through a feminist lens—emphasising themes of justice, equality, and the interpretive fluidity of divine messages.

grounded in precise scholarly principles derived from the foundations of Islam and the rules of the Arabic language (Shalabi ,2020; Sano, 2004). These principles can be summarised as follows:

1. Reliance on the Qur'an itself: When the text is explicit and unambiguous, such as in *"That is ten complete"* (The Qur'an 2:196), or when it is definitive and not open to interpretation, such as *"And never accept their testimony, ever"* (The Qur'an 24:4), or when it is explained by other Qur'anic verses, based on the principle that the divine text explains itself.

2. Reference to the Prophetic Sunnah: As the practical and verbal clarification of revelation, where the Prophet(PBUH) explains the meanings of the verses and demonstrates their application.

3. Reliance on the sayings of the Companions: Particularly those who witnessed the revelation and understood the occasions, context, and circumstances of its descent.

4. Linguistic and rhetorical analysis: By determining meanings following the rules and styles of the Arabic language, since the Qur'an was revealed in pure, flawless, Standard Arabic.

5. Reference to the occasions of revelation and the historical context: To understand the circumstances in which the verses were revealed, aiding in placing their meanings and objectives in the correct context.

6. Comprehensive inductive analysis: By gathering all texts related to a single topic to form an integrated and holistic understanding, such that the general is understood

in comparison to the specific, the absolute in comparison to the restricted, the Meccan in comparison to the Medinan, and reconciling various texts using all possible methods of synthesis.

7. Commitment to impartiality and objectivity: In understanding the divine text, one must avoid preconceived notions, inherited biases, or pre-set positions, and ensure that the understanding originates from the text itself.

This methodology, as Shalabi (2020) affirms, ensures that the exegete works within the framework of the text, not outside it, and that the authority over the meaning ultimately returns to the intent of the Lawgiver, not merely to the reader's understanding and human-mind horizon[113]. In this light, the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology is not a rejection of interpretive freedom, but rather a system of ضوابط علمية (scientific regulations) that assert not every reader, no matter how sincere or well-intentioned, is equipped to reinterpret the Qurʾan in ways that carry legal, ethical, and social weight. Artalim (2016) argues that this model of regulated interpretation (تفسير منضبط) is not epistemological authoritarianism—it is a safeguard for the coherence, sanctity, and ethical integrity of the revealed message

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[113] According to Shalabi (2020, p. 133), Islamic *taʾwīl* (interpretation) differs fundamentally from Western hermeneutics in both its starting point and its objective. Interpretation in the Islamic tradition is closely tied to *tafsīr*, the search for the intended meanings within religious texts—notably the Qurʾan—while adhering to established linguistic conventions, distinguishing between sacred and non-sacred texts, and regulating the process with legal and methodological principles that preserve the sanctity and divine origin of the text. Hermeneutics, by contrast, is a modern interpretive art that arose in a Western philosophical context which does not recognise the sacred. It applies its methods to all texts, whether sacred or not, without distinction, and is built upon foundations such as the "death of the author," the rejection of any "innocent" reading, and absolute relativism—principles that are incompatible with the nature and purposes of the Qurʾanic text.

(Artalim, 2016)[114]. The fourth wave asserts that any attempt to reinterpret the religious texts far from the scientific methodology established in Islamic studies is merely a personal reflection of the religious texts far from being epistemologically grounded (Khir-Allah, 2024). For the fourth wave, a solid Islamic framework for women's rights should be holistic, inclusive, and comprehensive to all women's issues in diverse social and family roles, such as daughter, wife, mother, professional, housewife, and/or entrepreneur (Al-Juhany, 2016; Anju, 2017).

Under Islamic law, men and women enjoy fundamental legal rights such as marriage, property, divorce, inheritance, education, and work (Al-Munajjid, 1997). The *Qurʾāni*c guidelines protect women's rights and build a balanced and just society that practically and ethically upholds these rights (Al-Juhany, 2015; Al-Marrakshi, 2023). As family is the centric unit in the Islamic approach to social structure, the *Qurʾān* addresses marital relations in several contexts and verses, advocating for kindness and protection between spouses, emphasising love and affection, mutual collaboration and consultation *(Al-Shūrā)*, and fostering mutual respect, *Maʿruf* (goodness), mercy, understanding, and strong, peaceful marital bonds. The central values asserted in the *Qurʾān* when describing the marital bonds are *Sakinah* (tranquillity), *Mawaddah* (love), and *Rahmah* (mercy), which

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[114] What is rejected in *Al-Taʾṣīl* is arbitrary interpretation, not diversity of views. Islamic tradition, as embodied in the works of al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Ibn ʿĀshūr, showcases a rich plurality of readings, developed within rigorous scholarly traditions comparable in intellectual depth and diversity to the best of Western philosophical schools. The difference lies in the methodological rigour: interpretation must be accountable, principled, and grounded in the epistemological framework of Islamic knowledge. In both theory and practice, the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology thus offers a middle path: it does not freeze the text in literalism, nor does it dilute its authority in the name of interpretive freedom[114]. It affirms that the Qurʾan is sacred, not static—and that interpretive multiplicity (*taʿaddud al-afhām*) is welcome, so long as it follows the methodological pathways established by the tradition (Artalim, 2016). Future research could further develop how Al-Taʾṣīl and its potential applications can be applied in fields such as women's rights.

are highlighted as the essential components in a healthy family life (Atiyah, 2003). *Allah* said:

> "And among His wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own kind, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you: in this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who think!" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 30:21).

Justice is a fundamental value in the women's rights framework. Al-Dasuqi (2002, p. 190) asserts that justice "plays an essential role in creating a positive and conducive atmosphere for family life." The *Qurʾāni*c discourse demanded that men treat women through *Ma'ruf* (goodness): "And consort with your wives in a goodly manner" (The *Qur'an*,2025, 4:19). The Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) exemplified these principles, urgen men repeatedly to treat women in their families through these Islamic values: "nd indeed I order you to be good to the women[115]" "The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family[116]" and "A believer must not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another[117]". The prophet's constant concern about women's rights and justice is detected in his last sermon in the Farwell Pilgrimage. He particularly highlighted women's rights, instructing men to treat women with kindness and fairness, stating:

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[115] Jami` at-Tirmidhi,Vol. 1, Book 7, Hadith 1163.
[116] Tirmidhi and Darimi, cited in Mishkat al-Masabih3252, Book 13, Hadith 170.
[117] Muslim, cited in Mishkat al-Masabih 3240, Book 13, Hadith 158

"O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under *Allah*'s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste"[118]

Al-Alwani (2012, p. 123) describes the values in WRPI as a holistic approach that recognises both emotional and rational dimensions of relationships, fostering a peaceful and balanced family structure:

1. At the emotional level: The *Qurʾān* establishes key values within marriage, such as mutual closeness, protection and warmth (clothing/Libas), kindness (*Maʿruf*), affection (*Mawaddah*), mercy (*Rahmah*), and ensuring a stable and secure home.

2. At the rational and ethical level: Beyond emotional bonds, the *Qurʾān* lays the structural foundations for family life, including justice (*ʿAdl*), consultation (*Al-Shūrā*), mutual consent, benevolence (*Iḥsān*), excellence (*Fadhl*), and reconciliation (*Islah*) (Al-Alwani, 2012).

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[118] Jami` at-Tirmidhi,Vol. 1, Book 7, Hadith 1163.

Thus, the Islamic framework upholds women's rights and fosters a cooperative, just, and ethical family system rooted in divine guidance. Therefore, these values and principles will be examined in the ICC.

3.3. Critical concepts in women's rights discussion in Islamic framework:

Understanding the Islamic embedded references of key terms in women's rights discussions is essential, as these terms hold specific meanings within the framework of Women's Rights in Islam (WRPI). These terms are often associated with stereotypical Western and Arabic secular discourses and interpretations. Khir-Allah (2021) emphasises that to engage with a culturally specific framework accurately, researchers must interpret terms within the value system of that framework rather than through the lens of dominant external narratives. She argues that misinterpretations arise when Islamic concepts are examined outside their theological and jurisprudential foundations, leading to misconceptions about their role in shaping women's rights. Accordingly, this section aims to clarify how the Islamic framework defines and applies these critical terms in the discourse on women's rights following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, drawing from the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah,* to explore their original meaning and implementation.

3.3.1. Al-Taʾṣīl : A Tool Bridging Knowledge with Actions

Al-Taʾṣīl (التأصيل) is an Arabic term that means the foundation. The Islamic reference of *"Al-Taʾṣīl"* stands for an approach in which the primary epistemological reference of religious terms, concepts and practices is derived from the *Qurʾān* and the *Sunnah* through a complex methodology (*Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology) of comparing evidence, analysing them,

and linking them to their trusted sources as much as to the context. It involves grounding knowledge through tracing back contemporary interpretations or issues to the sources of Islamic law (*Sharīʿah*), the *Qur'an, Ḥadīth*, consensus (*Ijmā*), and analogical reasoning (*Qiyas*) (Al-Raysoni, 2010; Al-Alwani,2012).

The *Taʾṣīl* methodology identifies rights and duties through collecting relevant texts from these resources, understanding their meanings, and determining their objectives *(Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah)[119] (*Al-Alwani, 2012*)*. It ensures that the implementation remains consistent with Islamic legal frameworks. As a result, *Al-Taʾṣīl* is a methodological tool for uncovering the wisdom of Islamic rulings related to women and aligning them with contemporary realities while maintaining Islamic rights values of justice, dignity and peace (Khamlishi, 2004, Al-Alwani, 2012; Awdah,2011). For example, the application of *Al-Taʾṣīl* in the divorce and *Al-Khul'* (a woman-initiated divorce) allow the integration of ethical principles to uphold justice, balance, and peace in post-marital relationships. It also maintains family stability and women's emotional and economic well-being, preserving women's rights values of goodness (*Maʿrūf*), benevolence (*Iḥsān*), and piety (*Al-Taqwā*)[120].

Al-Raysoni (2019) and Al-Alwani (2012) stress that *Al-Taʾṣīl* is essential for addressing misconceptions about women's rights, as it bridges theoretical principles (teachings and laws) with actionable solutions that coincide with *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* and promote justice

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[119] The objectives of Islamic law (*Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah)* play a pivotal role in the process of Al-Taʾṣīl. Classical scholars such as Al-Asfahani, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Al-Shatibi, as well as modern exegetes like Muhammad Rashid Rida, Sayyid Qutb, and Ibn Ashur, have followed the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, combining it with the *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, to establish a comprehensive framework on the issue understudy (Al-Alwani,2012).
[120] (see 3.2.2.).

and human dignity. Scholars such as Al-Qahtani (2020) and Al-Alwani (2012) stress the significance of *Al-Taʾṣīl* in bolstering confidence in Islamic jurisprudence, as it clarifies intellectual ambiguities, clears off unjust cultural dominant practices, and expands epistemological understandings of rights.

Based on the above literature, *Al-Taʾṣīl* and *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* represent essential methodologies for addressing the challenges related to women's rights. These tools provide a legal and epistemological framework that links religious texts with contemporary realities, enhancing the adaptability of Islamic law to modern contexts. Accordingly, this section will follow the *Al Taʾṣīl* methodology as much as possible to introduce the Islamic definition and implementation of the key terms in discussing women's rights in Islam.

3.3.2. Guardianship *(Al-Qiwāmah)*[121]:

Al-Qiwāmah linguistically indicates providing protective care to somebody or something while ensuring their interests are protected and upheld (Ibn Manzur, 12/p. 497). Traz (2016) defines *Al-Qiwāmah* as a social regulation grounded in the *Qurʾān*. and *Sunnah*, designed to govern marital relationships. Al-Eid (2006, p. 917) explains that the linguistic root of *Al-*

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[121] The correct pronunciation is qiwāma (قوامة) with a *kasrah* (short "i" sound) on the *qāf* (ق), not qawāma (قَوامة) with a *fatḥah* (short "a" sound), as confirmed by Arabic language dictionaries (see Al-Muʿjam Al-Wasīṭ, Vol. 1-2, p. 768; Muʿjam Lughāt Al-Fuqahāʾ, Vol. 1, p. 372; Lisān Al-ʿArab, Vol. 12, p. 224). This is because words in the pattern of *fiʿālah* (فعالة) with a *kasrah* on the first letter typically indicate a profession, role, or responsibility, similar to ʿ*imādah* (عِمادة - leadership), *niqābah* (نقابة - syndicate leadership), *kitābah* (كِتابة - writing), *khiyāṭah* (خِياطة - tailoring), and *najārah* (نجارة - carpentry), just as one might say *waliya ʿalaynā wilāyah* (وَلِيَ علينا ولايةً - he governed us with authority*), amara imārah* (أمَرَ إمارة - he ruled as a governor), or *saʿā siyāyah* (سَعَى سِعاية - he interceded). Thus, qiwāma (قوامة) is a duty assigned to men, requiring them to provide protection, care, and financial support. It is not an honorary position or a status of superiority (Abbadi, 2013).

Qiwāmah signifies "preservation, protection, and justice," indicating that a man should treat women justly, whether they are a mother, sister, wife, or daughter. Similarly, Al-Alwani (2012) asserts that *Al-Qiwāmah* extends beyond financial provision to include material and emotional care.

Following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, *Al-Qiwāmah* is understood within the framework of mercy, love, companionship, support, kind treatment and obedience to *Allah* (Ezzat,2020; Al-Rume, 2008). According to Ezzat (2020), it appeared in the holy *Qurʾān* in three contexts: 1) In verse 34 of Surat An-Nisaa', *Allah* Almighty said that men are caretakers of womenfolk due to *Allah*'s favor and the responsibilities men hold:

> "MEN SHALL take full care of women with the bounties which God
>
> has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with
>
> what they may spend out of their possessions" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025,
>
> 4:34).

The second, in verse (135) of Surat An-Nisaa', Ezzat (2020) asserts that the value of justice in the Islamic rights approach requires the man to be fair to himself first so that he does not follow his whim (*Hawa*) and does not do injustice to serve his own interests. In other words, the man's *Al-Qiwāmah* is not only with money but also with material and moral care (Al-Alwani, 2012). Almighty *Allah* said:

> "O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding
>
> equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be

against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk." (The *Qurʾān*,

2025, 4:135).

And the third place *Allah* Almighty said:

> "O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion
>
> to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of
>
> any-one lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is
>
> closest to being God-conscious" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 5:8).

Ezzat (2020) and Al-Alwani (2012) argue that *Al-Qiwāmah* concerning women cannot be

understood in isolation from other related verses[122]. It is closely associated with justice and

trust, reflecting *Allah*'s attribute, the *Al-Qayyum* (The Sustainer), which humans are

commanded to emulate. This establishes *Al-Qiwāmah* as a responsibility rather than an

absolute authority.

The exegesis[123] clarifies how *Al-Qiwāmah* or "caretakers" means legal rights for women

and obligations for men. It is a woman's right over the man 'to do what is right for her in

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[122] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān bil-Qurʾān* (the interpretation of the Qurʾān using verses and concepts within the Qurʾān itself) is a method of Qur'anic exegesis in which the meaning of a verse is explained through other Qur'anic verses, ensuring coherence in interpretation and preserving the divine intent. This approach allows for a deeper and more precise understanding of key terms by considering their usage across different contexts within the Qur'an itself. Scholars, including Ibn Taymiyyah and Al-Ṭabarī, emphasise that this method is the most authentic form of tafsīr, relying solely on the Qur'anic text without external influences. Applying this methodology clarifies terms that may otherwise be subject to varied interpretations influenced by linguistic, cultural, or historical factors (Rustom,2023). In the context of this study, the referenced Qur'anic terms are examined through this lens to ensure their meanings align with the broader Qur'anic framework and *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah.* (the higher objectives of Islamic law).

[123] The researcher depends for *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (interpretation) on http://Qurʾān.ksu.edu.sa/translations/english/1.html#.For *Hadith* narratives on https://sunnah.com/.

her religion and her world, to provide for her, to support her and to treat her well' (Al-Rumi, 2008, P. 8). Ezzat argues that *Al-Qiwāmah* manifests justice to women encompassing two key elements: 1) Material and Emotional Support: A man is responsible for fulfilling a woman's material and emotional needs, ensuring her security and well-being. 2) Protection and Just Leadership: A man must manage the family issues and confront the challenges they might face, providing care and protection. Accordingly, Al-*Qiwāmah* entails that women have the right to security and protection and to be free from the burden of supporting themselves without diminishing their status (Al-Rumi, 2008). Even if a woman has her income, she is entitled to be entirely funded by her husband and can have her marriage annulled if he cannot be in charge of his wife's needs (Cheema, 2014).

Cheema (2014) and Hashem (2017) point out that the Prophet's domestic behaviour is the example of *Al-Qiwāmah* within the household. The Prophet (PBUH) used to keep himself busy helping his family members[124]. Even the early generation of Muslims followed the Prophet's example of the good treatment of wives. For example, a man approaches ʿUmar to complain about his wife's behaviour, only to overhear ʿUmar's wife speaking similarly to him. When the man expresses surprise, ʿUmar explains that he endures such behaviour because of his wife's numerous positive contributions, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for their children, none of which are obligatory for her (Hashem, 2017).

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[124] Sahih Al-Bukhari, cited in Riyad as-Salihin 605, Introduction, Hadith 605

Accordingly, *Al-Qiwāmah* is a mandatory responsibility rather than a privilege for men; it evolves around responsibility, not authority, and it is a complementarity of roles rather than an absolute equality (Cheema, 2014; Al-Shaarawy, 1998; Ezzat, 2015; Al-Eid, 2006). It is established to ensure family stability and harmony, preventing competition for rights and confusion over responsibilities (Amara, 2009).Scholars such as Amara (1985a, 2009b), Ezzat (2015), Al-Alwani (2012), Al-Eid (2006) and Naseef (1995) acknowledge that *Al-Qiwāmah* grants men the responsibility to make decisive judgments in unresolved disputes. Yet, the default family leadership model is consultative (*Al-Shūrā*), not authoritarian and emphasises that *Al-Qiwāmah* operates within a framework of *Al-Shūrā*, mercy, and justice (Ezzat,2015). They argued that several issues cannot proceed without women's consultation or approval, such as breastfeeding in divorce cases[125] (Ezzat,2015; Al-Alwani, 2012). In addition, the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) consistently consulted with his family, exemplifying justice and dignity (Al-Alwani, 2012).

Several Islamic scholars challenge the misinterpretation of the term in both Western academia and Arabic traditional practices (Cheema, 2014; Ezzat, 2015; Traz, 2006; Amara, 2009; Al-Alwan, 2006; Al-Khomaishi, 2004) that frame *Al-Qiwāmah* as absolute authority and superiority of men over women. These scholars argue that such an understanding contradicts the original Islamic reference of the term mentioned in the *Qurʾān*, practiced in Sunnah and aimed at in *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*[126]. The superiority argument cites the

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[125] "And if both [parents] decide, by mutual consent and counsel, upon separation [of mother and child], they will incur no sin [thereby]" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:232).
[126] See The *Qurʾān* verses: (42:49-50, 16:58-59; 6:151; 81:8)

Qurʾānic verses 4:34[127] and 2:228[128], asserting that the *Qurʾānic* discourse favoured men, granting them superiority, rights and authority over women. However, Ezzat (2015) and Al-Alwani (2012), among others, argue that critical readings of the complete discourse of the verses reveal the contradiction of this argument. In the first verse (4:34), the privilege of taking decisive action is tied to the economic input with which men sustain the family. In the second verse (2:228), the first part establishes the equality in rights discourse as preference applies to both genders. Some stereotypical misinterpretations associate *Al-Qiwāmah* with biological superiorities, such as men's rationalism and women's emotional weaknesses (Al-Eid, 2006). This argument is often justified by verse 2:228, which states, "although men have precedence over them" (The used Arabic word is "*Darajah*," الدرجة, which means a degree. However, the traditionist-exegete Al-Tabari[129] (d. 310 H), after citing all the transmitted perspectives in the meaning of *Darajah*," الدرجة concluded with Ibn `Abbas's substantial view is that men are instructed to unconditionally fulfil their duties and responsibilities, while being forgiving of women if they fail in their obligations; that is, it represents a degree of responsibility rather than privilege.Ezzat (2015) suggests that "the degree" signifies the ethical principles under which a man exercises *Al-Qiwāmah*. Al-Sha'arawy (1998) emphasises that this degree represents the responsibility of protection

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[127] MEN SHALL take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions".

[128] [...] the rights of the wives [with regard to their husbands] are equal to the [husbands'] rights with regard to them, although men have precedence over them [in this respect] [...]."

[129] Al-Tabari (b. c. 829–d. 923) had a widespread reputation in the 9th and 10th centuries CE. Well known for his works in history, Qurʾan exegesis, tradition, and Islamic law, al-Tabari continues to remain a central figure in the Qurʾān interpretation and understanding of classical/medieval Islamic civilisation (William, 2015).

and care rather than authority and subjugation. It obligates men to provide financial and ethical support, safeguarding women's dignity and security. Al-Alwani (2012) highlights that a holistic reading of all the particulars related to the subject of *Al-Qiwāmah* through the *Qurʾān* and the practices of the Prophet, setting evidence to the man's duty to uphold responsibility towards women in his family, preserving family integrity through piety, love, compassion, peace, and justice. *Al-Qiwāmah* is not a tool for oppression but a framework ensuring balance, mutual care, and consultative leadership. It casts any form of domestic violence, arrogance, or domination under the guise of *Al-Qiwāmah* contradict the *Qurʾānic* principles and the Prophet's teachings (Al-Alwani, 2012).

3.3.3. Marriage (*Al-Nikāḥ* or *Al-Zawāj*)

Al-Zawāj in Arabic means association and joining together. It is a contract between a man and a woman to create a joint life and procreation. Marriage is part of the *Istikhalf* concept mentioned above[130]. The *Istikhlaf* (stewardship) concept encompasses meanings that regulate human practices and guide their journey (Al-Alwani, 2012). As the stewardship mission applies to both men and women alike, its fulfilment is not exclusive to one party over the other. Therefore, this concept unifies their roles within overarching relational frameworks that contribute to nation-building while also adapting its components to the family's specific dynamics. Accordingly, the *Qurʾānic* discourse situates the issue of marriage at multiple levels of social development: a personal level concerning the

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[130] (See 3.2.).

relationship between a man and a woman, and a familial level where both spouses are entrusted with different social roles within the extended kinship framework (Al-Alwani, 2012, p.77). *Allah* the Almighty describes marriage in the *Qurʾān* as a *"Mīthāqan Ghalīẓan",* which means a solemn covenant:

> "And how could you take it away after you have given yourselves to
> one another, and she has received a most solemn pledge from you?"
> (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4: 21).

Marriage is described as a solemn covenant, *"Mīthāqan Ghalīẓan,"* to emphasise the mutual rights and responsibilities involved in the contract. However, at the same time, the *Qurʾān* describes marriage as a relationship of peace, love, and tenderness *(Mawaddah wa Rahma)*:

> "And among His wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your
> own kind, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love
> and tenderness between you: in this, behold, there are messages indeed
> for people who think!" (The *Qur'an*, 2025, 30:21).

This divine framework underscores the *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* of marriage, mainly the companionship, emotional support, and shared responsibilities. Marriage is also metaphorically described as "clothing" (Libas), symbolising closeness, protection, and warmth:

"They are as a garment for you, and you are as a garment for them" (*The Qur'an, 2025,* 2:187)

This metaphor reflects the deep intimacy and security between spouses, shielding each other from harm and nurturing their bond (Omar, 2014). Marriage in Islam is the most essential institution of the social structure. Therefore, Islam sets rules and regulations to ensure that marriage is possible for everyone, asserting that the real and natural way to gain peace and satisfaction in life is through a husband-wife relationship, just as Adam and Eve did beforehand (Naseef, 1995). Only through peace can marriage be achieved and guaranteed (Jawad, 1998). However, male-centered interpretations have often led to gender disparities in marriage framing, contradicting these Islamic framings and *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, which are founded on justice and mutual obligations (Jawad, 1998).

A fundamental right guaranteed by Islamic legislation is a woman's autonomy in choosing her spouse. The *Qurʾān* explicitly prohibits forced marriages:

"O YOU who have attained to faith! It is not lawful for you to [try to] become heirs to your wives [by holding onto them] against their will; and neither shall you keep them under constraint with a view to taking away anything of what you may have given them." (*The Qur'an, 2025,* 4:19).

Another verse explicitly denounces preventing women from marrying an eligible person of their choice:

"Hinder them not from marrying other men if they have agreed with each other in a fair manner." (*The Qur'an, 2025,* 2:232).

The *Ḥadīth* narrative also supports a woman's right to choose her spouse. A young woman approached the Prophet (PBUH) and informed him that her father had arranged her marriage against her will. The Prophet (PBUH) immediately annulled the marriage. In another narration, a young woman complained about being forced into the marriage, and the Prophet (PBUH) offered her the choice to remain married or seek divorce[131]. These *Ḥadīth*s highlight that Islam respects a woman's freedom in marriage and prohibits coercion.

In Islamic teaching, a male guardian (*Wali*) is required at signing the marriage contract. The *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* of having the bride's male guardian ensures the seriousness of the groom in taking his corresponding responsibility and gives the bride the rights guaranteed to her in Islam (Radimann, 2013). It is not an authoritarian position used to prevent or force women into marriage, nor to take the possession of her dowry.

Islam also grants women the right to a dowry[132] as an act of honouring them, symbolising respect and acknowledgment of their value in marriage. The *Qurʾān* states:

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[131] Abu Dawud (2096), Book 8, Hadith 24.
[132] In Islam, the dowry is called Mahr, a mandatory gift or payment a husband must provide to his wife as part of the marriage contract. The Mahr is a fundamental aspect of an Islamic marriage and symbolises respect, commitment, and responsibility toward the bride. Often, people specify an instant amount paid before marriage ("Muqaddam AS-Sadaaq") and a postponed amount paid in case of divorce or the death of the husband ("Mu'akhkhar al-AS-Sadaaq").

"And give unto women their marriage portions in the spirit of a gift; but if they, of their own accord, give up unto you aught thereof, then enjoy it with pleasure and good cheer" (The *Qur'an*, 2025, 4:4).

The dowry belongs solely to the woman; no one can take or use it without her consent. If she wishes to waive part of it, this must be done with the entire agreement. Almighty *Allah* says:

"Do not take away anything of what you have given the first one, however much it may have been. Would you, perchance, take it away by slandering her and thus committing a manifest sin?" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:20).

Islamic teaching adverts from cases where a husband neglects to provide a dowry or the father unjustly seizes it for his benefit, practicing *Al-Taʿassuf* [133] (misuse of rights), contradict Islamic legal principles. Yet, the *Taʾṣīl* methodology is often ignored in these contexts, and relevant religious texts are omitted.

The *Qurʾān* mandates that men provide financial maintenance *(Al-Nafaqah)*, housing, and care for their wives:

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[133] see point 2.5.7.

"Let the women [who are undergoing a waiting-period] live in the same manner as you live yourselves, in accordance with your means; and do not harass them with a view to making their lives a misery." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 65:6).

Additionally, Islam obliges men to provide financial support, even if the woman has her own income:

"[In all these respects,] let him who has ample means spend in accordance with his amplitude" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 65:7).

The Prophet (PBUH) emphasised kindness in marriage and the obligation to support one's wife financially. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, complained to the Prophet (PBUH) that her husband was miserly. The Prophet (PBUH) responded that she has the right to the alimony without even asking her husband permission, stating: "Take from his possessions on a reasonable basis that much which may suffice for you and your children[134]". The *Qurʾān* repeatedly commands men to treat their wives with kindness:

"And consort with your wives in a goodly manner; for if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something which God might yet make a source of abundant good." (The *Qurʾān,* 2025, 4:19).

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[134] Al-Bukhari and Muslim, cited in Riyad as-Salihin 1535, Book 17, Hadith 25.

Ibn Ashur (1984) explained that preserving *Ma'ruf* (goodness) fosters affection and unity, reducing conflict and promoting peace in martial relations. Furthermore, the *Qurʾān* urges spouses to resolve disagreements with grace:

> "And forget not [that you are to act with] grace towards one another: verily, God sees all that you do" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:237).

Islamic teachings on marriage establish a framework based on affection, protection, mercy and justice. However, patriarchal interpretations and traditional cultural practices have sometimes distorted the Islamic rights to dowry, choice of spouse, financial maintenance, kind treatment, and prohibition of coercion and abuse (Al-Eid,2006).

The *Qurʾān* encourages patience and good manners even in the face of marital dissatisfaction:

> "for if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something which God might yet make a source of abundant good" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:19)

3.3.4. Polygamy (*Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt*)

In Arabic, the term *Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt* stands for having a maximum of four wives simultaneously with a condition to be fair and just among them all[135]. *Allah* says:

"And if you have reason to fear that you might not act equitably towards orphans, then marry from among [other] women such as are lawful to you - [even] two, or three, or four: but if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then [only] one - or [from among] those whom you rightfully possess. This will make it more likely that you will not deviate from the right course." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4: 3).

This verse explicitly set two conditions for polygamy to be permitted: justice among wives (*ʿAdl)* and the economic ability to sustain one's wives. If a man is afraid that he will not be able to treat his wives justly and cannot find the financial means to marry more than one, then it is forbidden for him to marry more than one (Al-Tayar, 2011). The equal treatment includes spending, clothing, intimate relation, spending the days with them and every material issue under his control.

The *Qurʾān* prohibits the unequal treatment of wives in a polygamy context. *Allah* says:

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[135] Polygamy existed long before Islam across various religions and civilizations, often without restrictions or regulations (Al-Abbas, 2017). In Pharaonic civilization, as well as in Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity, the practice was common. In pre-Islamic Arabia, men could take multiple wives without limits or obligations (Al-Eid, 2006). Such unregulated practices often led to exploitation and harm, particularly for women and families. Islam, however, introduced strict reforms to regulate polygamy, ensuring justice, equity, and family stability. These measures aimed to prevent harm and mitigate the negative consequences historically associated with the practice (Al-Eid, 2006).

"And so, do not allow yourselves to incline towards one to the exclusion of the other, leaving her in a state, as it were, of having and not having a husband. But if you put things to rights and are conscious of Him - behold, God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:129),

The Prophet *Muhammad's (*PBUH) *Ḥadīth* informs that whoever has more than one wife and does not maintain justice between them as much as possible, by providing equal treatment in terms of financial support, housing, clothing, and overnight stay, half of his body will be hanging down as a punishment for him on the Day of Judgment[136]. Such inclination is a punishment for his injustice, reflecting his unfair treatment (Al-Tayar, 2011)

Islam's approach to polygamy is not unrestricted permissibility but a careful regulation that ensures vales of justice, responsibility, and social welfare. By imposing strict conditions, Islam transformed polygamy from an unregulated practice into a structured system designed to address specific societal needs while upholding the dignity and rights of all parties involved. Al-Tayar (2011) outlines four key conditions governing polygamy in Islam:

1. Limitation on the Number of Wives: A man may marry up to four wives, but no more.

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136 Sunan Abi Dawood,2133, Book 12, hadith,88. T

2. Obligation of Justice: Equal treatment in financial provisions, housing, time allocation, and general fair dealings is required. However, emotional inclinations, being beyond human control, are not mandated.

3. Financial Responsibility: A man must demonstrate the financial means to support all his wives adequately.

4. Prohibited Marriages: Certain marriages remain forbidden, such as marrying two sisters simultaneously or a woman and her aunt.

Moreover, Islam upholds a woman's autonomy in marriage. Neither a woman nor her family is obligated to accept marriage to a polygamous man. Women also have the right to include a condition in the marriage contract prohibiting polygamy, a stipulation that is legally binding and enforceable (Al-Tayar, 2011). In the broader framework of the Islamic family system, polygamy is intended as a solution to specific social challenges rather than an open-ended privilege. Historically, in contexts such as post-war societies, where large numbers of widows and orphans are left vulnerable, polygamy has served as a mechanism for social protection, ensuring financial security and social stability (Al-Tayar, 2011). By placing stringent ethical and legal constraints on the practice, Islam seeks to prevent its misuse and promote fairness within the family structure (Al-Ghunaym, 2020; Al-Dusuqe,2002).

3.3.5. Divorce (*Al-ṭalāq* and *Al-Khul'ʿ*)

Despite the sacredness of the character of the marriage tie, Islam acknowledges the need for divorce, *Al-ṭalāq,* in cases of severe marital conflicts. *Al-ṭalāq* means the "dissolution

of the marital bond", emphasising the official termination of the relationship between the spouses (Ghunaym, 2020). Divorce can sometimes involve ending the marriage entirely and addressing specific aspects of the relationship. It also addresses various parts of the couple's shared life. The husband initiates the divorce. Muslim women who face difficulties in getting a divorce can seek *Al-Khul'* (Saleh 2011, p.122)*. Al-Khul'* is an Islamic legal provision allowing a wife to dissolve the marriage by offering compensation, usually returning the dowry. Unlike *Al-talāq*, which the husband initiates, *Al-Khul'* emphasises women's honour and empowers them to end the marriage if they find it unbearable (Al-Eid, 2006; Al-Alwan, 2012).

In the pre-Islamic period, *Jāhilīyah*, the husband could divorce his wife and get her back whenever he wished (Al-Eid, 2006), which put pressure on women to go under unlimited times of divorce in the same relationship. Islam develops clear rules for divorce to protect women from manipulation and to ensure the stability of the marital bond. *Al-ṭalāq* is limited to only three occurrences between the same couple (Al-Eid, 2006). After the third *ṭalāq*, Islam prohibits the husband from returning to an ex-wife, which strengthens women's independence and minimises the possibility of being in an unhealthy marriage or going through manipulation (Al-Eid, 2006; Al-Alwani, 2012). Islamic law also outlines specific reconciliation methods during the following three month after divorce, the waiting period

(*Edda*)[137]. During *Edda*, women have the right to spend this period in the marital home (Al-Eid, 2006). The *Qurʾān* states:

> "O PROPHET! When you [intend to] divorce women, divorce them with a view to the waiting period appointed for them, and reckon the period [carefully], and be conscious of God, your Sustainer. Do not expel them from their homes, and neither shall they [be made to] leave unless they become openly guilty of immoral conduct." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 65:1).

The verse prohibits the husband from expelling the wife from the home during the *Edda* period. The Islamic teaching also indicates that the husband should pay alimony to his ex-wife. Almighty *Allah* said:

> "let the women [who are undergoing a waiting-period] live in the same manner as you live yourselves, In accordance with your means; and do not harass them with a view to making their lives a misery." (The *Qur'an*, 2025, 65:6).

If his ex-wife is breastfeeding their baby, she is entitled to additional payment for it. Almighty *Allah* said:

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[137] The first two divorces are called revocable divorces (*Talaq Rajʿi*).

"And if they nurse your offspring [after the divorce has become final],

give them their [due] recompense." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 65:6)

During *Edda,* the husband can reconcile with her through explicit verbal affirmations such as, "I take you back as my wife," or through physical gestures exclusive to marriage, such as intimacy. The reconciliation, however, must be sincere and with the wife's consent (Naseef, 1995). Islamic rulings on divorce are deeply rooted in *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, which aims to prioritise finding marital solutions, offering breakup periods *(Edda)* to rethinking the marital relationship fostering *Maʿrūf* and *Iḥsān* among spouses. Almighty *Allah* said:

"And if you have reason to fear that a breach might occur between a [married] couple, appoint an arbiter from among his people and an arbiter from among her people; if they both want to set things aright, God may bring about their reconciliation. Behold, God is indeed all-knowing, aware." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:35)

"And forget not [that you are to act with] grace towards one another: verily, God sees all that you do." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:237)

After the end of *Edda*, divorce is a final decision, guided with ethical guidance emphasising *Al-Shūrā* (mutual consultation), patience, kindness, dignity, justice, and respect (Al-Alwani, 2012). *Al-Shūrā* is emphasised in resolving post-divorce family-related issues like childcare, breastfeeding, and financial support. Almighty *Allah* said:

"And if both [parents] decide, by mutual consent and counsel, upon

separation [of mother and child], they will incur no sin [thereby]..."

(The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:233)

In addition, Islam prohibits returning the wife with no honest intention to make the marriage work or to cause harm to women. Almighty *Allah* said:

"And so, when you divorce women and they are about to reach the end

of their waiting-term, then either retain them in a fair manner or let them

go in a fair manner. But do not retain them against their will in order to

hurt [them]" (The *Qur'an*, 2025, 2: 231).

The concept of *Al-Taqwā* (consciousness of God)[138] is present in the divorce teachings and rulings. It is required during the divorce proceedings and post-divorce cooperation. *Qurʾāni*c verses consistently associate *Al-Taqwā* with ethical responsibilities in marital and family post-divorce affairs (Al-Thabit, 2018). When the man is conscious that *Allah* is watching his actions, he will restrain from acting out of anger, retaliation, or selfishness, compelled to uphold fairness in financial settlements, custody decisions, and overall treatment of his former spouse. Almighty *Allah* said:

"And when you divorce women, and they have come to the end of their

waiting-term, hinder them not from marrying other men if they have

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138 See: 2.4.2.

agreed with each other in a fair manner. This is an admonition unto every one of you who believes in God and the Last Day; it is the most virtuous [way] for you, and the cleanest. And God knows, whereas you do not know." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:232)

Scholars such as Al-Alwani (2012) emphasise that while divorce is "the most disliked permissible act," it serves as a peaceful resolution when the continuation of a marriage is no longer viable. This aligns with the broader Islamic objective of maintaining the stability and dignity of women. *Al-Khul'* is another tool to liberate women from unhealthy and harmful martial relations that lack tranquillity (*Sakinah*) (Al-Dasuqi,2002; Al-Eid,2006 and Naseef, 1995). Muslim women also can go through *Al-Khul'* legitimately to end a marriage that lacks affection (*Mawaddah*) or marital desire or attraction. A well-documented case involves a woman approaching the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) to seek *Al-Khul'* as she does not feel attracted to feeling in love with him (Naseef, 1995). *Al-Khul'* demonstrate the Islam recognition of women's agency over their emotions and bodies in marriage relationships.

By emphasising divorce guidance and tight its principles with mutual consultation and gender justice, Islam ensures a balance between legal rulings and human dignity, reinforcing its commitment to protecting both spouses in the marital and post-marital relationship.

3.3.6. Obedience(*Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj)*

In Islam, obedience (*Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj)* is a broad concept that regulates the interactions between those in authority and those under their care, emphasising mutual respect and responsibility between all members (Al-Dusoqi, 2002). Within the marriage and family relations, the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* draw a complementarian vision of marriage in which husbands are obligated to support the wives economically, paying all the needed expenses such as food, clothing, and shelter (referred to as maintenance, *Al-Nafaqah* in Arabic); while in return, wives have to consider their husbands' opinions in making decisions related to or affect the relationship or family (Esposito,1982). Obedience to the husband *Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj* is not an oppressive principle as the stereotypical discourse on women's rights in islam and traditions portray. It is built on affection, mercy, and complementary roles between spouses rather than considering it as a tool of authority (Al-Dusoqi, 2002).

Recognising women's agency over their lives is essential in the *Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj* discussion. Muslim women are rights holders, capable of concluding contracts or wills by themselves, entitled to inheritance, and enjoy financial freedom and the right to a spouse's decision, among other issues (Esposito, 1982; Naseef,1995). *Ṭāʿat al-Zawj* (Obedience to the Husband) does not negate a wife's agency, freedom, rights, or independence. Instead, it is contextually limited to matters directly related to family welfare and household management. This obedience is not absolute but is tied to decisions that affect the well-being of the family unit, particularly in areas where the husband bears economic responsibility; it is a sub-principle related to *Al-Qiwāmah* (Amara, 2009; Ezzat, 2015; Al-Alwani, 2012; Al-Eid, 2006; Naseef,1995). In such cases, *Al-Ṭāʿat al-Zawj* ensures peace in the long term, which is an essential principle in *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* as it provides the

family's stability in conflictive moments and prosperity (Syamsu and Budianti, 2022). However, this framework does not imply unilateral authority but rather a structured partnership where both spouses contribute to the family's success while respecting each other's rights and autonomy. The *Qurʾān* suggests that peace and satisfaction in marriage are primarily obtained through harmonious husband-wife relationships[139]. The *Qurʾān* asserts that when this framework of *Al-Ṭāʿat al-Zawj* is achieved, the spouse has to treat their wives justly. Almighty *Allah* said:

> "And if thereupon they pay you heed, do not seek to harm them. Behold,
>
> God is indeed most high, great" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:34).

As explained in the justice and equity section, justice is a key principle in the Islamic framework, and rights are reciprocal between spouses. That is to say, although obedience is a significant principle in marriage, it is never meant to dismiss women's agency over their personal life decisions.

3.3.7. Abuse of the Right (*Al-Taʿassuf*)

Al-Taʿassuf (التعسّف) in Arabic refers to acting unfairly or unjustly abusing power (Qalaaji, 1996). In legal and social contexts, *Al-Taʿassuf* denotes the misuse of a right or authority in a way that causes harm to others, even if it technically falls within one's legal or granted

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[139] Surah Al-Rum, Verse 21, underscores this by highlighting the concepts of "Affection and Mercy" (*Mawaddah wa rahamah in Arabic*) as the legal and moral foundation of marital bonds. These principles emphasise the complementary roles of spouses in providing emotional support and security, which are essential for family stability and happiness (Al-Alwani,2012).

powers (Sultan, 1998). In the Islamic framework of rights, Al-Duraini(1988, p. 87) defines

Al-Taʿassuf as "a contradiction in action to the intentions of Islamic law permitted in

principle under its original ruling." In other words, it is the exercise of a lawful right in a

manner that opposes *Makasid Al'Sharīʿah*, such as justice, fairness, and the prevention of

harm (Al-Qalaaji,1996, p. 182). This occurs when an action, while technically permissible

under Islamic law, contravenes its original objectives and aims (Al-Otaibi, 2009).

The abuse concept (*Al-Taʿassuf)* is evident in the *Qurʾān* and Sunnah in every discussed

concept in the women's rights framework, such as *Al-Qiwama*, Polygamy, or obedience.

The Islamic rights framework is founded on two principles: 1) Rights must be exercised in

alignment with their Islamic purpose. 2) Rights should not cause harm to individuals or

society or serve no beneficial purpose. It aims to achieve justice, equity, peace, social

justice and cohesion (Sultan, 1998; Al-Otaibi, 2009), particularly in safeguarding women's

rights.   In Islamic jurisprudence, the use of *Al-Qiwāmah* (guardianship) in ways that

contradict the *Sharīʿah*'s intent to honour women due to misunderstanding or cultural

norms is referred to as abuse (*Al-Taʿassuf*) (Qalaaji, 1996, p. 182). For example, in the *Al-*

Qiwāmah principle, the Islamic teachings prohibited the *Al-Taʿassuf* in martial issues such

as *Adhl (العضل), w*hich refers to a man exercising his authority to prevent a woman from

marrying a suitable partner for reasons like self-interest, prioritising his benefit over hers,

or imposing conditions such as waiting until an elder sibling marries, thereby harming her

(Al-Eid,2006, Naseef,1995). Almighty *Allah* said:

"And when you divorce women, and they have come to the end of their waiting-term, hinder them not from marrying other men if they have legally agreed with each other" (*The Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:232).

Another form of *Al-Taʿassuf* prohibited in the *Qurʾān* is when the husband deliberately creates difficulties or puts undue pressure on his wife, often targeting her work or independence, to force her to "negotiate her freedom" through divorce. These "negotiations" typically involve pressure on the wife to renounce her rights, such as agreeing to unfavourable divorce terms or abandoning financial claims such as dowry or alimony (Al-Otaibi, 2009). Almighty *Allah* said:

"And neither shall you keep them under constraint with a view to taking away anything of what you may have given them, unless it be that they have become guilty" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:19).

A third form of *Al-Taʿassuf* in marital relations includes any behaviour that causes women harm or discomfort. The Islamic teachings forbid causing harm by restricting their residence; appropriate accommodation should be provided based on the husband's means (Tafseer Al-Qurtubi, 1273). Almighty *Allah* said:

"And do not harass them with a view to making their lives a misery" (The *Qurʾān,* 2025, 65:6).

Islamic legislation provides a comprehensive framework for organising women's rights and responsibilities. It is derived from a divine source represented in the *Qurʾān* and affirmed

by the Sunnah through the sayings and actions of the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH) in various contexts. These laws are underpinned by higher values such as justice, benevolence, mercy, compassion, and goodwill (*Maʿruf*), reflecting Islamic legislation's primary objectives and creating a balance between rights and duties across all dimensions of women's lives.

Al-Alwani (2012) highlights that prohibiting *Al-Taʿassuf* in the Islamic framework to women's rights aims to protect these rights from being violated or misused. It draws men's attention, along with the *Al-Taqwā* principle, that these principles are not entitled to them as an absolute authoritative position. Instead, these principles aim to establish gender justice, harmony and order in social and family structures. They are responsible before God for implementing them correctly and effectively following *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah.*

3.5. Conclusion:

This chapter provided an analysis of Women's Rights in Islam (WRPI), offering a religion-centred approach to addressing contemporary gender challenges faced by Saudi women. The brief implementation of *Al-Taʾṣīl*, which defines key terms in the women's rights discussion, demonstrated its potential as a solution for advancing women's rights by grounding them within the Islamic framework. This methodological approach ensures that discussions on gender are rooted in Islamic jurisprudence and *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, safeguarding them from ideological impositions while promoting justice and equity.

The analysis in this chapter also explored the concept of "gender equality" does not fully align with the Islamic principles of women's rights discussion; Islam prioritises gender

justice and equity within a complementary framework rather than enforcing competition over identical roles. Accordingly, this research adopts the term "gender justice" to align the study's focus with the Islamic conceptualisation of gender rights. Moreover, the reciprocal nature of rights and responsibilities in Islam suggests that limiting the discussion to "women's rights" is theoretically imprecise. A more accurate term within the Islamic framework would be "gender rights," as women's rights discussions inherently include men's duties and responsibilities and vice versa. This study, therefore, uses "women's rights" and "gender rights" interchangeably to reflect both the ICC's approach and the socio-cultural advocacy of women's rights in Saudi Arabia within Islam's reciprocal model.

This chapter established the WRPI as a comprehensive framework for discussing gender justice in an Islamic context. However, for WRPI to be effectively implemented, it must be integrated into the educational framework as seen in Chapter 2. The next chapter will explore how the ICC can incorporate this paradigm, ensuring that Islamic education serves as a tool for fostering awareness of women's rights and promoting gender justice within Saudi Arabia's evolving socio-political landscape.

Chapter four

Towards Transformational Islamic Women's Rights Education

4.1. Introduction:

This chapter introduces the core pedagogical theories and approaches to Human Rights Education (HRE), focusing on Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy (1970) and Tibbitts' and Bajaj's Transformation Model of HRE. The discussion highlights the alignment between pedagogical theories and the Islamic approach to rights education. This chapter provides a solid framework on human rights education, offering insights into strategies for the analysis methodology and identifying triggers to critical awareness and women's agency.

The chapter ultimately sets the stage for an inclusive and transformative educational approach to women's rights education, aligning with the study's goals.

4.2. Human Rights Education Theory (HRE)

4.2.1. HRE as an Empowering Tool

The United Nations (UN) asserts that students and youth should be educated about their rights through all possible educational channels, including public and higher education (United Nations General Assembly 1993; United Nations, 2006). A prominent objective

of HRE is to empower people to have agency over their relationships (Tibbits, 2011)[140].

Tibbits (2005, p.107) emphasises that HRE is "an emerging area of practice that aspires to promote and protect human dignity and encourages trainers to involve learners in an empowerment process". Empowerment entails giving power to those less powerful or vulnerable, such as women, which leads to sharing equal levels of authority in society (Tibbits, 2005).

As an HRE objective, Students' empowerment is the first step towards achieving social change. Tibbits (2005) argues that HRE involves valuing and respecting individuals' rights while encouraging personal action to uphold and ensure these principles. Human rights educators view HRE as a transformative tool that empowers individuals to achieve changes in their lives and those of their families, communities, and surrounding institutions. Inspired by Paulo Freire, Mezirow (1978) encourages recognising the critical dimension of learning, especially in adulthood, to enable learners to identify and re-evaluate the structure of assumptions and expectations that frame their thinking, feeling and behaviour. Mezirow (1978) called for transformative learning as a process by which learners can transform frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, perspectives of meaning), assumptions and expectations to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and capable of

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[140] The World Programme is structured in consecutive phases, in order to further focus national human rights education efforts on specific sectors/issues. The first phase (2005-2009) focused on human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems. The second phase (2010-2014) focused on human rights education for higher education and on human rights training programmes for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel. The third phase (2015-2019) focuses on strengthening the implementation of the first two phases and promoting human rights training for media professionals and journalists (UNESCO,2005). Education – Human Rights Education.

change. Consequently, learners are more likely to justify beliefs and opinions are generated to guide their actions. Mezirow's theory emphasises that learning is not merely informational but can be transformational, particularly when it involves critically reflecting on one's beliefs and assumptions.

Thinking critically helps individuals to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others (United Nations General Assembly, 2011). Human Rights education enables individuals to advocate for their rights effectively without risking violating others' rights (Musheer and Shakir,2017). On a social level, HRE ideally enhances the education of living together on the national or societal level by promoting peace education among people and fostering the development of personal strength, social support, and critical awareness (Tibbitts and Kirchschlaeger, 2010). Harris (2002) explained that peace education promotes individuals' ability to discuss problems, be productive, use their time creatively, enjoy human rights, and live without violence. Deploying peace education in communities was the UN program's precise aim for calling for the Peace Education Program (Fountain, 1999). To promote peace education, Reardon (1988) called for social changes, which may be changes in social relationships and structures, ideologies or shared mental frameworks that shape the formation of these social institutions (Reardon, 1988). Over the past three decades, human rights education initiatives have proliferated worldwide in policy discussions, textbook reforms, and grassroots initiatives (Bajaj, 2011). However, no established evaluation methods exist for implementing HRE (Bajaj, 2011; Robinson, 2018). Three reasons for the lack of a unified HRE content structure are noted: 1) the novelty of HRE's history, 2) HRE's function beyond

mere knowledge transfer, and 3) its inherently flexible framework (The National Council for Human Rights in Morocco, 2009, p. 40). These factors contribute to methodological differences. Bajaj (2011) explains that HRE methodologies vary depending on social context, content requirements, and participant engagement. This flexibility is a strength, offering the potential for enduring educational reform (Bajaj, 2011). Consequently, various adaptable HRE models have emerged, each providing guidelines to achieve the best stated objectives and outcomes (Aldawood, 2020), as discussed below.

4.2.2. The Models of Human Rights Education

There are several Models in HRE due to its flexible approach. However, Tibbitts's (2002, 2017) and Bajaj's (2011) models are the most frequently cited ones. Although each perspective on the development of HRE is diverse, they tend to overlap in several ways. Bajaj (2011, p.492) identifies three outcomes-based HRE models, each with unique content, approach, and course of action. The first is HRE for Global Citizenship, which emphasises individual rights as a component of the global community. It is broader and less focused on the specific cultural and structural aspects that affect women's rights in a local context such as an Islamic one. The second is HRE for Coexistence, frequently found in post-conflict settings and reflects this in its emphasis on minority rights and pluralism. The third is HRE for Transformative Action, primarily concerned with "understanding how power relationships are structured and the possibility for collaboration across grounds to enable greater respect for human rights" (Bajaj, 2011, p.494). It implies that HRE should be critically reflective (analysing power and inequalities) and collaborative (working together across differences). This combination equips individuals and communities to

pursue meaningful change, advancing human rights by addressing the root causes of oppression and inequality. Tibbitts (2002) also proposes three distinct models detected when developing human rights education programmes. Each is based on the premise that HRE is achieved by influencing attitudes and behaviours (Tibbitts, 2002). The first model is "Values and Awareness", which is associated with socialisation (Tibbitts, 2017). Within this model, HRE focuses "to transmit basic knowledge of human rights issues and to foster its integration into public values" (Tibbitts, 2002, p.163). This model is typically implemented so that the public can disseminate knowledge about human rights and inspire people to incorporate HR values into their value systems (Aldawood, 2020). However, Tibbitts (2017) points out this model is not a structured methodology for specific social change. Instead, it focuses less on teaching methods and targeting particular audiences and more on the "serendipity" of learners already interested in HRE's message rather than directly encouraging women to challenge existing power dynamics and address social change (Tibbitts 2002, p.163). The model's goals are not likely to be reached directly, but some people might be "primed to advocate"; therefore, it places little emphasis on learning skills such as conflict resolution (Tibbitts, 2002:163).

The "Accountability Model" in Tibbitts' theory links change to individuals' professional roles, focusing on how HRE can influence their knowledge, attitudes, and actions to uphold human rights norms in their work. Thus, this model prioritises understanding human rights laws and tools for government accountability over personal transformation. It assumes that learners who see HRE's relevance to their roles may adjust their behaviours to reduce human rights violations (Tibbitts, 2017; Aldawood, 2020).

The third model in Tibbitts' theory is the "Transformational model". The focus of this model includes students and community members to enable individuals and communities to transform by recognising human rights violations and consequently contributing to preventing them (Aldawood, 2020). The Transformational Model assumes that, regardless of whether the learner has personally experienced rights violations, they are predisposed to become a promoter of human rights (Tibbitts, 2002). Therefore, this model can be found in educational settings, where pedagogical options combine critical thinking[141], self-reflection, group discussions and dialogue (Aldawood, 2020). Tibbitts (2002) highlights that the transformational model of HRE is possible if links are made between school and social life.

To conclude, these models, especially the transformative model, closely align with the study objectives of enhancing women's rights awareness within the Saudi ICC higher education by involving teachers and students. The models reinforce the objectives by encouraging deep critical thinking, personal empowerment, and social awareness transformation. Bajaj's Global Citizenship Model emphasises individual rights within a global framework but does not emphasise challenging local power dynamics, which is essential in the current case study for advancing women's rights awareness in the Saudi context. Although Tibbit's Values and Awareness Model raises awareness, it mainly focuses

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[141] This research adopts Hamdan's (2006) definition of critical thinking, which emphasizes a deeper understanding of issues and problems, along with the ability to analyse, evaluate, and examine arguments from multiple perspectives. Critical thinking equips individuals to become responsible citizens who actively contribute to society rather than merely consuming or perpetuating its shortcomings.

on knowledge transmission rather than active engagement or skills development—the transformative depth required for a curriculum aimed at empowering women. The accountability Model focuses on professional responsibility and governmental accountability but does not aim to foster personal transformation. However, these three models offer a deep and systematic understanding of HR knowledge, education's role in social change, and power structures that impact women's rights awareness and lead to developing the commitment to social change and promoting personal transformation.

4.2.3. Critical Reads through Tibbitts' HRE Models

Tibbitts' transformational model assumes social action is initiated by the learners from economic and political rights who understand their realities and question the legal frames to achieve more inclusiveness, non-discrimination, openness, and reflection. However, Robinson et al. (2020, p. 229) suggest that the "Transformational Model" is not separated from the two other models, the "Values and Awareness" and the "Accountability Model". However, they argue that these models must prove a clear theory on how the students in HRE will transform knowledge and human rights implementation in their society to achieve social changes. Furthermore, they suggest that the practices and strategies implemented in the other models have a straightforward impact on the transformational process. Robinson et al. (2020) also highlighted the need for a plan or method to achieve the desired results, as discussed in the next section. The Transformational Model encourages students to resist the structural constraints of social, economic and political realities (Bajaj, 2009; Monaghan, 2017). It cultivates what Bajaj (2009, p.551) referred to as "transformative agency" through implementing peace education (to be discussed in

detail below) and enhancing critical thinking skills on social patterns and traditions that impose injustice on (some) society members. Brookfield (1995) states that empowering learners to practise self-expression and other essential critical skills increases awareness and can lead to individual transformations. Keet and Carrim (2006) suggest that human rights can be presented as ethical assertions that students can critically assess to consider their rights and responsibilities to others at local and global dimensions. The transformative models of HRE identified by Tibbitts (2002, 2017) and Bajaj (2011) implicitly imply that the student's awareness of what constitutes human rights abuses is sufficient to empower learners and initiate social change. Although Tibbitts' (2002; 2017) and Bajaj's (2011) HRE's models overlapped significantly in the "Transformational Model" when identifying the power relationships and depending on experiences as a trigger for action, Tibbitts's HRE model includes a deeper level of engagement with values, rights and justice issues (Bajaj, 2011, p. 468). Tibbitts' models of HRE align with the objective of this study; it explicitly focuses on individual knowledge and behaviour in "Values and Awareness" as the "micro-level" of action and on the social context in the "Transformational Model" as a "macro-level" where the experiences are shaped. The models also include the students-teachers-curriculum interaction as part of the dynamic of action in the "Accountability Model", focusing on the professionals' role (teachers, educators, authors) in providing an unbiased explanation of the key concepts of human rights discussion, away from any social stereotypes as "Meso Level" (Tibbitts, 2017). This aligns with Tibbitts' (2002, p,159) assertion that **"each model is associated with particular target groups, contents, and strategies"**, reinforcing the idea that different levels of HRE contribute to both individual and societal transformation (see Methodology Section: 5.6). For these reasons, I draw on

Tibbitts' model in the framework and analysis structure due to its compatibility with the study's objectives. These Models assume that learners are predisposed to promote human rights, whether they have personally experienced rights violations or not. This approach is practical when connections are established between educational content and real-life social contexts and interactions. Social change theory is crucial to the scope of this study as it encourages learners to implement human rights values in their social lives (Tibbitts, 2017, 2002). This makes it a practical framework for women's rights education in an empowering and culturally attuned way. The upcoming discussion might focus on the transformative model and its capacity to achieve social change.

Figure (1) summarises the various steps in HRE models. However, the transformative model did not detail how to implement Critical Pedagogy strategies, which will be discussed in the next section.
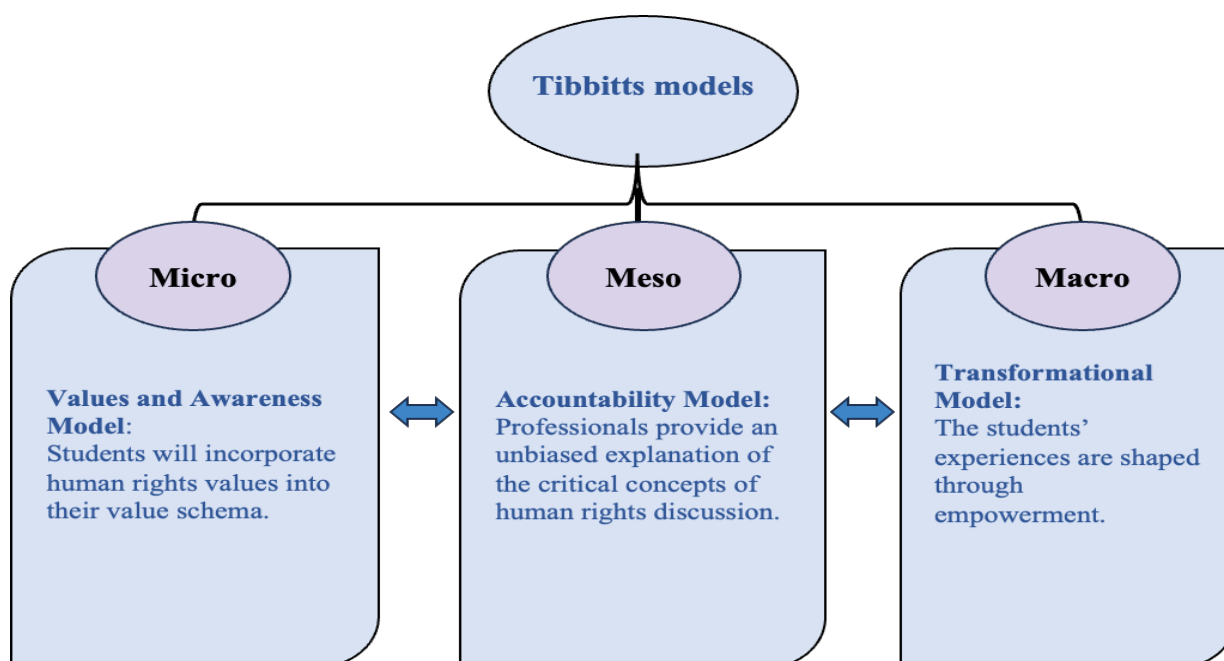
Figure (1): Tibbits's models of HRE

4.2.4. Social Change Theories and the Education System

Several sociological theories help connect education with society, including Structural Functionalism, Cultural Reproduction Theory, and Critical Pedagogy. Structural Functionalist Theory views society as a comprehensive system of interconnected sub-systems that work together to maintain social order. As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology (Turner, 2006, p. 218), functionalists argue that society operates as a system of interdependent parts, each fulfilling functions essential to maintaining and reproducing social order. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), key figures in this field, emphasised that Structural Functionalism examines society at the macro level, focusing on how social facts work together to ensure stability and cohesion (Trevino, 2017). Social facts include laws, morals, values, beliefs, customs, and cultural rules, which are fundamental elements that shape and regulate social life (Durkheim, 1895), as cited by Geddam (2022, p. 3). Building on that, society is based on a value consensus, which means everyone agrees on what society should look like, how they should behave, and how to achieve that standard. Cultural Reproduction Theory, mainly reflected in Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) work, emphasises the importance of social structures over individual action in explaining social life. Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology (Turner, 2006, p.109) refers to "Cultural Reproduction Theory as the transmission of cultural capital through inheritance and the cultivation of order through normative coercion". In the context of education, Bourdieu emphasises the contribution of the educational system to the reproduction of the structure of power relationships between social classes by contributing

to the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these classes (Giddens et al., 2018). Bourdieu argues that teachers play an enduring role in reproducing social inequalities concerning students' social class (Giddens et al., 2018). Students with higher social class tend to acquire higher cultural knowledge (e.g., attending opera, ballet, or theatre, appreciating art, literature, classical music, and language). They are more likely to be appraised favourably by their teachers than students who do not have access to this cultural knowledge, even though this form of knowledge does not necessarily affect their academic progress (Giddens et al., 2018). However, Cultural Reproduction Theory is criticised for its potential to underestimate individual agency, resistance, and the capacity for change within social structures (Turner, 2006, p.109).

While Structural Functionalist and Cultural Reproduction theories offer valuable insights into the role of education in shaping society, they are not appropriate theoretical frameworks for this study. Both present education as a system that maintains and reinforces social structures rather than challenging them. While they provide helpful critiques of how inequalities persist, they do not offer a framework for education as a tool for empowerment, social change, or critical reflection.

According to Geddam (2022), education within Structural Functionalism is a framework that transmits shared values, norms, and cultural knowledge to ensure societal cohesion. However, the theory overlooks critical engagement, power dynamics, and the potential for educational transformation. It assumes that societal consensus is achievable and desirable, implying that individuals naturally conform to existing social norms. This perspective fails

to acknowledge the diversity of experiences, inequalities, and resistance within educational settings.

Similarly, Cultural Reproduction Theory provides valuable insights into how social inequalities are perpetuated through education; however, it is less concerned with the role of education in fostering critical awareness and transformative change, which is the core focus of this study. Bourdieu's theory primarily analyses how power is maintained but does not sufficiently address how education can be used as a tool for liberation.

Both theories share a fundamental limitation of understating the role of agency and resistance in the learning process. Raihani (2020) criticises Structural Functionalism for depicting students as passive recipients, shaped by educational institutions to conform to societal norms without the capacity to question, challenge, or reshape their knowledge. Similarly, Cultural Reproduction Theory has been critiqued for portraying students as mere products of their social environment rather than active agents capable of contesting and transforming educational structures (Raihani, 2020). This implies misalignment with the ongoing transformations in Saudi society, particularly in women's affairs within the Vision (2030). These two theories' assumptions do not capture the agency and empowerment increasingly accessible to Saudi women, for whom education is becoming a pathway to social change rather than a mere reproducer of static norms. Maintaining stability and social cohesion overlooks the rapid social changes driven by Saudi Vision 2030, which promotes women's inclusion and empowerment (The Vision, 2030). A theory prioritising the preservation of current norms clashes with a society committed to reshaping values and advancing gender equality through educational reforms (The Vision,2030). As this study

aims to explore education as a tool for empowerment and critical awareness, a theory that frames learners as passive compliant rather than active agents of change is inappropriate.

In contrast to Structural Functionalism and Cultural Reproduction Theories, Critical Pedagogy provides a framework that directly addresses the need for empowerment and critical awareness in education. Among the theories, Critical Pedagogy (CP) is concerned with social justice. It calls for developing critical awareness in the educational environment to question injustices and societal norms and achieve positive social change. This theory views education as a tool for examining and transforming societal norms rather than merely reinforcing them (Bajaj, 2009, p. 552).

Paulo Freire (1970) founded Critical Pedagogy in "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"[142], and it was later expanded by scholars such as Kincheloe, McLaren, Giroux, Shor, and Macedo were prominent scholars who adopted it (Gilani-Williams, 2014). He calls for the liberation of the oppressed through education. His approach aimed to help Brazilian peasants identify the injustices they go through and encourage them to act against them. Consequently, CP focuses on empowering students with a critical lens to combat the oppression and

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[142] Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Portuguese: Pedagogia do Oprimido) is a work by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, composed in Portuguese between 1967 and 1968, and initially published in Spanish in 1968. An English translation was released in 1970, the Portuguese original was published in 1972 in Portugal, and subsequently in Brazil in 1974. The book is considered a pioneering work in critical education, advocating for a novel interaction among teacher, student, and society.

inequality between social classes. It also emphasises the importance of linking personal and social structural issues through awareness to improve their living conditions.

Critical Pedagogy encourages students to actively shape their own lives and society. Freire (1970) points out the significance of connecting individual problems with large social structures. He believes that oppressed individuals can only experience justice if they can transform their present situation independently (Freire, 1970). Employing critical thinking increases self-awareness, which broadens one's understanding of human potential (Aldawood, 2020). In this sense, CP theory would allow students to interact critically with the educational content and social context, using their knowledge, skills, and personal experiences to promote the change directly (Tibbitts, 2005)[143].

Horkheimer believes that "a critical theory is adequate only if it simultaneously meets three criteria: explanatory, practical and normative. In other words, it needs to explain what is wrong with the current social reality, identify the actors to change it and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable, practical goals for social transformation" (cited in Bohman, 1996, p, 190). Shor views critical awareness as an active, self-reflective stance that empowers individuals to understand and potentially change their social conditions, mainly through engaging with knowledge, power, and language in education and daily life (cited in Al Ajlan, 1992). McKernan (2013) skilfully integrated the elements of Critical Pedagogy, that is, education, awareness, and action, by providing a comprehensive

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[143] Freire's approach was derived from Critical Theory, which is associated with the Frankfurt School; however, it has now expanded into the numerous fields that employ it (Gilani-Williams, 2014).

definition of Critical pedagogy, "Critical pedagogy is a movement involving relationships of teaching and learning so that students gain critical self-consciousness and social awareness and take appropriate action against oppressive forces" (McKernan, 2013: 425).

4.2.5. Transformational Model and Freirean CP Strategies:

In her article *Transformative Learning and Human Rights Education: Taking a Closer Look,* Tibbitts (2005, p.1) provided evidence of the impact of human rights education programs "on transformative – empowering the people they work with to make changes in their own lives, as well as in their families, communities and institutions around them". Tibbitts (2005) suggests that Freire's work completes and complements the idea of transformative learning. Freire's approach indicates that human rights education should empower individuals to reflect critically on social injustices and motivate them to enact personal and social transformation. This means that transformative learning is about changing one's worldview and actively equipping individuals to work toward a more just and equitable society (Tibbitts, 2005).

In a case study, Tibbitts (2005) emphasised that rural women in Turkey who participated in the WWHR-New Ways program[144] demonstrated significant increases in cognitive, affective, and action competence, decreased physical and emotional partner violence, increased self-confidence, and, in many cases, returned to school or the workforce.

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[144] Woman for Women's Human Rights-New Ways (WWHR-New Ways) is an autonomous women's organisation committed to promoting women's human rights and gender equality and eliminating all kinds of discrimination in Turkey, and internationally. (see: https://wwhr.org)

Furthermore, a shift in family relationships, including a change in decision-making power and gender roles, has been reported. Similarly, 31 women in Argentina experienced "personal empowerment" by participating in training on the right to health care and submitting testimonials for a Human Rights report. Tibbitts indicates that these women believed that their testimonies transformed into triggers for social change. Tibbitts (2005) asserted that the goal of transformative learning experiences in the context of women's rights is to encourage personal and social transformations to promote peace and protect human dignity.

The strategy of CP:

According to Freire (1970), developing a critical awareness does not happen naturally or spontaneously, nor is it achieved solely through intellectual effort; it requires engagement and the practice of critical pedagogical strategies. He identified some general elements through education to avoid or to follow to achieve social change. Freire was the first to recognise the "Banking Model of Education", a strategy to prevent, pointing out the teaching approach that resembles "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories, and the teacher is the depositor" (Freire, 1970, p. 53, 72). In the Banking Model, teachers are seen as the ultimate source of knowledge, while students are expected to sit quietly, memorise, and repeat what they are told. There is no space for questioning or connecting to the world around them. This approach limits creativity and independence,

reinforces authority[145], and keeps students in a passive, almost mechanical role, stripping away their agency and voice. As an alternative to the banking model, Freire (1970) proposed a problem-posing education which can bring learning to life by making it a shared, dynamic process. Instead of just listening, students actively engage, ask questions, and think critically about real-world issues. Here, teachers don't dictate knowledge; they co-create it with students, encouraging them to challenge ideas and see the world as something that can change, something they can help shape (Simmons, 2019).

Within the classroom strategies, Freire strongly emphasises the non-hierarchical classroom instruction that encourages student agency through dialogic learning (Monaghan et al., 2017). The "Banking of Education" is the opposite of what Freire promotes: an education proclaiming the significance of dialogue, engagement, and equality. He denounces a "culture of silence" and oppression that is accepted as a given and unquestionable fact to establish social order (Hamdan, 2006). Hussien (2007, p. 85) advocates for Critical Pedagogy, highlighting its ability to "synthesise all previous approaches with a clear critique of the societal conditions of education," making it, in his view, "the ultimate, if not the best available paradigm for education."

Simmons (2019) implemented problem-posing education in postgraduate human rights programmes, highlighting its transformative effect on student engagement. He observed

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[145] Al-Ajlan and Aljohani (2020) explained that the depositing process in education implies that teachers are perceived as knowledgeable, while students are not as knowledgeable; consequently, teachers communicate and think, whereas students passively and submissively listen and receive knowledge. For this reason, there are fewer expectations that learners will develop critical awareness; instead, they will be more likely to adopt a passive role the more effort they put into memorising knowledge (Al Ajlan and Aljohani, 2020).

increased intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving, which led to innovative, interdisciplinary solutions. This approach deepened students' understanding of human rights and promoted empowerment through experiential learning (Simmons, 2019). However, Simmons notes faculty resistance to adopting new pedagogies, especially when they necessitate a shift from traditional teaching methods. Freire identified key strategies within this paradigm: problem-posing, critical consciousness, and praxis that raise awareness in the classroom, address real-life issues, and dismantle the "cultural cycles" perpetuated by the educational system. Following Freire´s CP strategies, Freebersyser (2015) explained that critical awareness is developed through three ongoing consciousness levels: 1) magical consciousness, where people recognise problems but label them destiny, misfortune, or divine will instead of investigating social causes or power dynamics. Therefore, they feel powerless to change them, often attributing them to unchangeable external forces. 2) naïve consciousness, individuals often do not fully recognise or question social marginalisation and injustice in their social environment; they accept things as they are, seeing issues as natural or given. Individuals become a passive acceptance of the status quo without questioning how things could be different, instead of having dialogue and critical thinking; 3) and critical consciousness, people move towards critical thinking due to educational efforts. They develop a capacity for critical engagement, prevent distortion when identifying problems, disregard preconceived conceptions when assessing problems, reject passive status, and empower their ability to engage in dialogue (Freebersyser, 2015). The three levels of awareness, naïve, magical, and critical, are essential for understanding women's rights education, particularly in societies with deeply entrenched cultural or religious norms, like Saudi Arabia. Using Freire's

transformative model and critical pedagogy, these levels illustrate stages of awareness and engagement with social issues that my study aims to address. Naïve and magical consciousness represent starting points in understanding women's rights. Many initially accept gender inequality as "just the way things are" (naïve) or beyond their control due to fate or tradition (magical). This framework seeks to advance learners to critical awareness, encouraging them to see social conditions not as fixed but as structures that can be questioned and changed. By shifting from passive acceptance to active engagement, learners realise they can meaningfully influence and advocate for women's rights. Recognising these stages underscores the transformative journey, from passive acceptance to empowerment for social change, at the core of women's rights education.

This study relies on the previously mentioned HRE theory, CP, and transformational education as the framework for the analysis section. The following figure (2) illustrates how the analysis identifies the correlation between these theories and categorises them through Tibbitts' model of transformational education levels:
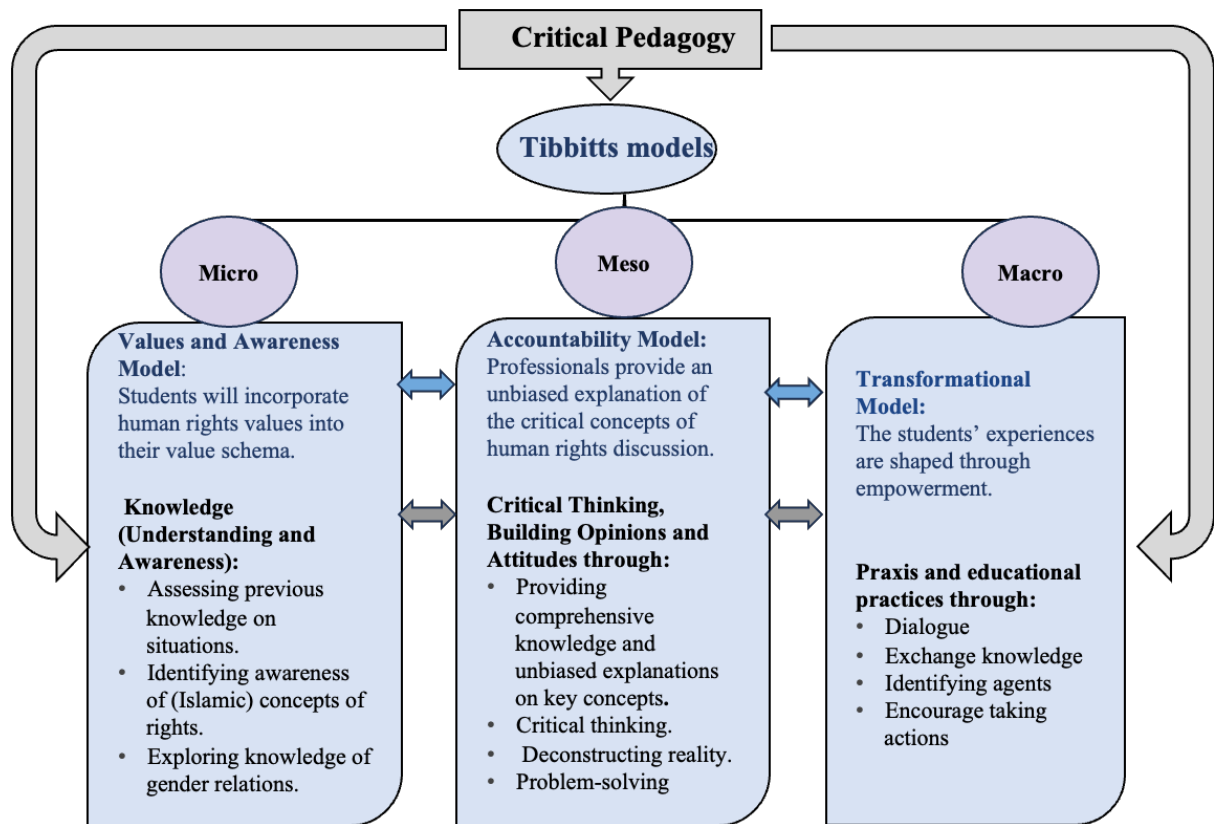
Figure (2): Framework for CP, Tibbitts's Model

4.3. Critical Thinking, CP, and HRE: The Islamic Approach

One of the doubts on adopting Freire's approach to this research on Islamic rights education is that his theory arose from a secular context, focusing on the emancipation of marginalised groups under colonialism and oppressive regimes. However, the analysis below will delve into how CP approach aligns with the research objective, as it supports an educational model that can raise the awareness and agency of Saudi women over their rights in Islam. This section explores that although knowledge is closely linked to religious texts in an Islamic context, Critical Pedagogy remains an adaptable tool that can promote

a deeper understanding of religious texts, reconsider traditional interpretations, and enable individuals to interact critically with their religious and social knowledge.

Critical Pedagogy is particularly relevant in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which seeks to advance women's roles and promote social change (The Vision, 2030). Its focus on agency and critical awareness resonates with Saudi initiatives that prepare individuals, especially women, to participate actively in the country's transformation. Thus, Critical Pedagogy offers a robust framework and encourages students to critically engage with the ICC's content, fostering a sense of empowerment and the capacity to question restrictive norms.

4.3.1. Critical Thinking in the Islamic Education Approach:

Critical thinking is fundamental in Islamic thought, providing evidence of God's existence, powers, features and wisdom (Habib, 2019; Elyas et al., 2017). *Qurʾān* includes numerous verses that promote thinking in different contexts; for example, the word "*Al-Aql*" in Arabic, meaning "intellect", is repeated in 49 verses, and *"Al-Nazar,"* meaning implementing the sense of sight to consider, meditate, and reflect, is repeated in 129 verses. The *"At-tadabbur"*, the process of mediation, speculation, and reflection, is repeated in 148 verses. The *"At-tafakkur"*, the process of contemplating, considering carefully, and working to develop one's mind, is repeated in 16 verses (Elyas et al., 2017, p.136). In light of Horkheimer's definition of Critical theory, which includes explanatory, practical and normative levels mentioned above, Gilani-Williams (2014,p.25) argues that Islamic education, through activating critical thinking, "can critique every aspect of life and present

a solution that is in harmony with the teachings of the *Qurʾān* and Sunnah; and can lead to emancipation, transformation and a better life".

The source of the knowledge is a significant variable in the Islamic Education approach. Habib (2019) emphasises that the central source of knowledge in the Islamic approach to critical theory, including rights, is the two divine sources: the Holy *Qurʾān* and the sayings of the Prophet (*Ḥadīth*). The Islamic approach considers education a key to abiding by the teachings of Islam; accordingly, people get closer to God (Habib, 2019, p.96). Rexhepi (2019) points out that this functional purpose of education provides a moral-ethical framework for humanity's goal of achieving their role on Earth following God's guidance, which is central in Islam as the *Qurʾān* states it:

> "And [tell them that] I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me" (The *Qur'an*, 2025, 51:56).

Education aims to develop people's awareness of their environment and Almighty *Allah*'s guidance. In that sense, education starts deepening the human knowledge of their creator, Almighty *Allah*, so they are more capable of following his guidance and achieving the purpose they are created for, which consequently improves social justice within the Islamic frame of reference (Gilani-Williams, 2014; Habib, 2019; Rexhepi, 2019).

The *Qur'an* repeatedly refers to the importance of maintaining rights and guarantees of justice, affirming that each individual is responsible for his/her actions in the afterlife. For example, the *Qurʾān* says:

> "BEHOLD, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men; and He forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason, as well as envy; [and] He exhorts you [repeatedly] so that you might bear [all this] in mind." (The *Qur'an*, 2025, 16:90).

> "And no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden" (The *Qur'an*, 2021, 6:164).

Gilani-Williams (2014) indicates that improving the social structure of Muslim society and maintaining justice and rights for all humanity is one of the main focuses of the *Qurʾānic* verses. She argues that Islamic teaching "develops a critical understanding of the society in the service of justice, service to humanity and service to God." Islamic teaching argues that knowledge is grounded on the belief that humankind must constantly be aware of contextual situations, as the lack of awareness may lead to wrong thoughts, actions, and speech. Therefore, it asserts the importance of critical thinking and understanding to achieve the "correct thought, action and correct speech" (Gilani-Williams, 2014, p.23).

Critical thinking regarding the rights value system in Islam[146] is not merely an epistemological framework. It is a religious practice necessary for identifying the *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* behind these laws and implementing it effectively[147]. However, critical thinking within the Islamic framework should not rely solely on human rationale. It should align with the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology (Mustafa, 2019)[148]. Such a framework for women's rights would equip Muslim women with critical thinking tools relevant to their social context, empowering them to advocate for their rights within their religious value system.

4.3.2. Recent Islamic Critical Pedagogy (ICP) Approaches

In a quantitative study on activating students' thinking about the essential practice of critical awareness in the classroom at Taif University, Saudi Arabia, Al-Ajlan and Al-Johani (2018) proposed a teaching framework that combines critical thinking and action to enhance social change. The framework includes three connected elements that lead to empowerment: critical thinking, dialogue, and problem-solving. Al-Ajlan and Al-Johani (2018) described the relationship between teachers and students as "horizontal", where both teachers and students talk reciprocally, avoiding what Freire (1970) called the Banking System based on a hierarchical structure in education. Al-Ajlan and Al-Johani (2018) conclude that students went through an active learning process. They explained that dialogue is an effective tool of communication between students and teachers that encourages critical reflection so

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[146] (See 3.2.2.)
[147] (See 3.2.3).
[148] (See 3.3.1).

students can transform knowledge into action and achieve transformation. Al-Ajlan and Al-Johani (2018) emphasised the role of educators in initiating social change in the Saudi educational environment and keeping up with the latest teaching strategies to achieve the goals of the Saudi University.

Raihani (2019) Advocates for developing a flexible, context-sensitive educational framework that values diversity and challenges dominant narratives. He argues that this approach is crucial for fostering inclusive education that responds to the complexities of multicultural societies like Indonesia. Raihani highlights a critical issue within Islamic education: teachers of Islamic subjects are unlikely to equip students with critical thinking skills to reflect on social inequalities in multicultural societies. This reluctance stems from their concerns about maintaining social order and the traditional educational cycles. Therefore, Raihani (2019) suggests that reforms in Islamic education should start with teachers and curriculum, explaining that teachers must undergo training to address students' needs to find answers to contemporary issues following the Islamic frame of reference, which supports equality, justice and respect. To respond to this need, he developed a model for educational reforms for Islamic education, combining the philosophical theories on education and Freire's CP approach to critical awareness following CP strategies: "identifying a problem, analysing the problem, creating a plan of action to address the problem, implementing the plan of action, and analysing and evaluating the action" (2019, p.174). Raihani's (2019) implementation of the CP framework consists of four main points; first, teaching approaches should be contextual, meaning students build their knowledge through educational processes pertinent to their

surrounding world and real social issues, such as social injustices. Therefore, Critical thinking "will equip students with an ability to critically analyse the contexts identifying problems and finding alternative solutions by utilising contextually immediate resources." Second, there should be an increase in teachers' and students' awareness of cultural differences and their effects on sectarian conflict-related social inequalities. Students must be convinced that, in education and other settings, no one deserves to be treated differently, which diminishes their human dignity due to their cultural background. In addition, teachers must be proactive in recognising the cultural differences of each student and take appropriate action to ensure that each student's culture is respected and acknowledged equally. Third, the teaching process must train students to appreciate diversity and promote social justice. Teachers should emphasise the significance of social justice and various strategies for promoting it in Indonesia. Fourth, students must analyse social problems by identifying contributing factors and developing action plans for problem resolution (Raihani, 2019, p.178). Put simply, Raihani (2019) stressed the context relevant to students' reality and social injustices should also be considered when developing their knowledge. This knowledge entails explaining problems and analysing contexts to create alternative solutions, along with the importance of teaching Critical Pedagogy tools within the context of Islamic norms.

Similarly, Aldawood (2020) established two case studies in Ghana to explore how Freirean principles can be applied in HRE to empower women and enhance their education. These case studies offer valuable insights into the transformative potential and limitations of integrating Freirean methodologies in real-world educational initiatives. In the first project,

which focused on endorsing women's rights, community-based activities such as focus group discussions created spaces for dialogue and reflection, central to Freire's concept of developing critical awareness among women and men. The outcomes were remarkable: shifts in societal attitudes toward women challenged entrenched patriarchal norms, leading to a reduction in domestic violence. Women became more confident and active participants in community decision-making processes, gaining greater access to critical resources such as land and education for their children.

In contrast, the second project, which aimed to improve girls' education, adopted a different approach, primarily relying on sensitisation campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of schooling for girls. While this effort achieved significant outcomes, such as increased retention rates for girls in school and greater parental involvement in their children's education, it lacked the participatory depth of the first project. The absence of Freirean practices such as critical dialogue and praxis—where learning is directly linked to transformative action—meant that participants were informed about their rights but not necessarily empowered to challenge or address the structural barriers that impede girls' education.

The difference between the two projects highlights a key area for improvement of non-participatory education. Simply transferring knowledge about human rights without encouraging critical thinking, dialogue, and action often results in naïve awareness rather than real empowerment. Sensitisation can inform people about issues but rarely provides the tools to address them or drive systemic change. In contrast, Freirean methods actively

involve participants in identifying problems, finding solutions, and taking charge of their transformation, making empowerment both practical and lasting.

The findings of studies in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Ghana emphasised the transformative potential of Freirean's principles in education, providing valuable insights into their application within the Islamic framework. These studies highlighted the importance of dialogue, critical thinking and participatory and contextual approaches in empowering learners and promoting social change, especially when addressing contemporary challenges from an Islamic perspective. Al-Ajlan and Al-Johani (2018) and Aldawood (2020) emphasised the role of educators in initiating social change through active dialogue and learning processes. Their findings stress the need to abandon the non-participatory education model, where knowledge is transmitted without activating critical thinking, creating naïve awareness rather than genuine empowerment. Rehani (2019) also highlighted the importance of context-sensitive education that reflects students' realities and addresses social injustice.

4.3.3. Critical Pedagogy in the Saudi Educational System: Towards Vision 2023

Multiple publications on Critical pedagogy for overcoming oppression have been published in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe; however, the Middle East is noticeably bereft despite the need for such studies in the area (Rexhepi, 2019), particularly regarding women's issues. Women's rights, among other topics, have been an increasingly central focus of international organisations, forums, and conventions in the Arab world (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowering Women, 2013, p.7). Rexhepi

(2019) argues that Freire's methods could provide valuable insights and transformative potential in a multifaceted region such as Saudi Arabia. Rexhepi (2019, p.199) highlights that the absence of Freire's approach "represents a specific gap in understanding the potential for the reinvention of Freirean pedagogy and critical literacy in a region with immense ethnoreligious, sociocultural, geopolitical, economic, and historical significance such as Saudi Arabia". As CP and Islamic education approach are compatible[149] (Rexhepi, 2019), this section will discuss the possible implementation of critical pedagogy in the Saudi Islamic education system to raise awareness of Saudi Muslim women's rights.

Hamdan (2006) affirms that education systems in Arab Muslim societies, including Saudi Arabia, have enforced gender-biased ideologies for so long. Gender stereotypes are traditionally institutionalised in Saudi society, even though Islamic principles promote women's rights and equality (Hamdan, 2005). As a result of the intersections of the traditional-socio-political elements, Saudi women's role has been significantly undermined in education, among other dimensions, including economic, social, cultural, and political (Hamdan,2005). Thus, concerns about Saudi women's rights questioned the social norms and stereotypes reinforced in the education system, such as normalising gender differences and justifying women's absence from social scenes (Al-Sanabary, 1994; Hamdan, 2012; Topal, 2019). Al-Sanabary (1994) describes the Saudi education system as a microcosm of

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[149] (See 4.3.1).

Saudi society that has deliberately established mechanisms of social control to preserve gender-biased norms and stereotypes through education.

The discussion in Chapter Two highlights how the complexity of Saudi traditional attitudes toward women has influenced the content of curricula in national and religious education for school students (see 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). Hamdan (2006) argues that the Saudi educational system is a Banking System that fosters a male-dominated power hierarchy. Students are indoctrinated to memorise and retain the information their teachers feed them (Hamdan, 2006). In the meantime, teachers impose information that may not be relevant to students rather than conversing with them while they are learning (Habib,2019)[150]. Hamdan explained that the emphasis on memorisation rather than critical thinking and innovation in educational systems reflects the Banking System of education and imposes the dominant gender discourses on students (Hamdan, 2006, p.4). She refers to her experience in Saudi schools where students are not allowed to question religion or cultural traditions, as everything in that regard is taught as the best and only way. Accordingly, Saudi students may be in the magical consciousness phase described earlier by Freebersyser (2015)[151], uncritical of the growing social injustices surrounding them in contemporary society.

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[150] Hamdan states that "male perspectives prevail in textbooks, especially religious ones. Although the female administration may not seek to oppress women and girls, it makes no effort to change the status quo. Gender ideologies perpetuated for so long have convinced many Arab Muslim people that women's nature is different from men's and that women's education should be limited to what is helpful to women's primary role as wives and mothers" (Hamdan, 2006, p. 56) (see 2.6.3).
[151] (See: 4.2.5).

In line with the Vision 2030 goals, which aims to shift from traditional 'Banking System' methods of rote memorisation to critical thinking and global citizenship (Rexhepi, 2019), Al-Otaibi (2020) emphasises that the Ministry of Education should incorporate materials that develop creative and critical thinking skills (Rexhepi, 2019). Similarly, Rexhepi (2019) argues that implementing Critical Pedagogy in universities through active learning, dialogue, and knowledge exchange could foster independent, critical thinkers who advocate for their rights and drive social change. From a parallel perspective, Yates (2006) indicates that teachers' practices are as important as educational curricula, and both need to be reviewed. Yates suggests curricula are vital in raising HR awareness, especially regarding women's rights. He stresses the importance of maintaining dialogue with women and young girls, integrating their experiences as a realistic approach to providing answers and evaluations. Similarly, Bajaj (2011) argues that women students must acquire the critical tools necessary to achieve their full potential in challenging injustice in their contexts (Bajaj, 2009, p. 552).

4.3.4. ICP in the ICC Framework and Women's Rights Awareness:

Drawing on Freire's CP, Tibbitts' (2002) and Bajaj's (2011) educational Model of HRE, Raihani(2019), Aldawood (2020), and Al-Ajlan and Al-Johani (2018), the following Islamic Critical Pedagogy approach is structured into three levels: 1) knowledge and awareness (content), 2) Building opinions and attitudes (concepts), and 3) educational strategies and Praxis for transformation (context). The first focuses on the ICC's provided knowledge, the second concentrates on the individual's perception of the knowledge, and

the third relates to the teaching methods and social interactions; however, all are interconnected in the educational process.

The first level in ICP is the knowledge of women's rights. It must be within the Islamic frame of reference[152], including the gender-relation rules, rights, obligations and responsibilities of each gender in light of the *Qurʾān* and Sunnah and through the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, focusing on the long-term and short-term *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*[153]. Aldawood (2020) asserted that HR educational programs should focus on empowering women by providing the necessary knowledge to engage in a critical thinking process, enabling them to identify and solve problems. Contextualising knowledge helps students understand women's rights within their Islamic society and real-life experiences, enabling students to identify social injustice rather than being determined by others (Raihani, 2019) and seek solutions using relevant resources critically (Bajaj, 2011). As Freire (1970) suggests, problem-posing involves innovative reflection and action rooted. Through collaborative analysis and discussion, teachers and students explore feelings, experiences, and knowledge together, empowering students to recognise and address issues in their environment.

The second level in ICP involves building personal opinions and attitudes based on CP's awareness. In this approach, students develop critical viewpoints by assessing their current situation, deconstructing reality, and suggesting feasible solutions based on Saudi Arabia's

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[152] See (2.2.3) on the fourth wave approach to women's rights in Muslim and Arabic world.
[153] (See 3.3.1)

Al-Sharīʿah-based Islamic normative society (Rexhepi, 2019). This critical approach should also be based on the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology to adhere to Islamic norms as much as it should be contextualised in relation to Saudi women's issues to develop an awareness of cultural differences and Islamic teachings on rights. Contextualising critical thinking will also clear up the confusion regarding Saudi women's understanding of the Islamic framework and the secular Western one (Kirmani, 2011; Baderin, 2007; Saeed, 2019)[154]. The third level of ICP is the educational strategies and praxis for transformation, which is concerned with educators' responsibility as change agents. Teachers of Islamic subjects might separate classrooms from society and limit the class to "places where heavenly knowledge is imparted" (Raihani, 2019, p. 171). As a result, Raihani points out that students may lack awareness of the social inequalities and injustices occurring more frequently in local society. Uncritical teaching strategies lead to a lack of essential thinking abilities and a refusal to challenge the systems of power that continue to oppress certain groups (Rexhepi, 2019).

Critical Pedagogy inspires reflection on and engagement with reality (Freire,1970). Therefore, lessons should incorporate educational dialogue or conversations between teachers and students. Communication between teachers and students through dialogue enables students to act critically, discover the problems around them, and see themselves as people who can be transformed to change their reality (Al-Ajlan and Al-Johani, 2018).

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[154] (See 2.3).

Accordingly, learners are likely to take action toward transformation because they begin to examine their social reality critically and are motivated to take appropriate action (Uddin, 2017). According to Freire, professors must engage students in discussions rather than simply transmitting information, avoiding the Banking System of education. Hamdan (2006) argues that any educational system's emphasis on "memorisation" rather than critical thinking and creativity unintentionally contributes to pervasive gender discourses in Arab Muslim society. She argues that the politics of education based on memorisation and authoritarianism "uncritically follows the patterns and gender roles for men and women" in Arab Muslim society (Hamdan, 2006, p. 54). Raihani (2019) emphasises that the traditional educational approach does not seem to be able to address social issues in Muslim-majority countries.

4.4. Peace Education as a Pedagogical Strategy:

Peace Education (PE) and Human Rights Education (HRE) are closely intertwined. Peace education is a vital component of human rights education, as they work together to promote peace on a global scale (Page, 2008)[155]. PE offers an educational framework for transforming societal structures by promoting justice, equality, and peaceful coexistence, thereby creating a more equitable society (Alnufaishan, 2020). Endorsed by the UN, PE fosters the attitudes, skills, and behaviours necessary to challenge such deep-rooted

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[155] See: Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, in Part 2, paragraphs 78-82,

inequalities (Harris, 2002; Reardon, 1988). As Reardon (1988) argues, PE is the foundational pillar for effecting societal change at social or ideological levels.

PE is a long-term process (Oueijan, 2018); UNICEF156 advocated for incorporating peace education across communities, not just in schools or formal learning environments, to foster meaningful and lasting social change (Fountain, 1999). This advocacy refers to the reasonable and possible means of promoting "knowledge, skills, attitudes and values" that influence the individual's behaviour to avoid conflicts and thus reduce or eliminate rights violations and violence (Fountain, 1999). This holistic approach is especially relevant for Saudi women, as it would empower them to challenge the systemic structures of patriarchy and contribute to building a culture of peace and justice through social transformation rather than simply addressing immediate conflicts. Incorporating Peace Education as a framework and CP for social change can thus play a critical role in helping Saudi women navigate and challenge the complex gender dynamics that continue to shape their rights and societal roles.

4.4.1. Peace Education (PE) Definitions

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156 UNICEF IS UN agency dedicated to protecting the rights of children, especially the most disadvantaged, and working to ensure their survival, well-being, and development. UNICEF promotes peace education as a crucial part of its mission to protect children's rights and ensure their well-being, particularly in conflict-affected areas, by fostering skills and attitudes for peaceful conflict resolution and understanding (See: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un system#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Children's%20Fund%20(UNICEF)%20works,their%20potential%2C% 20from%20early%20childhood%20through%20adolescence.)

There is no concise definition of PE; scientists frequently define it through the epistemological approach they come from, including sociology, psychology, politics, economics, or religion (Köylü, 2004). Reardon (1988) focuses on PE's potential in training Individuals to actively contribute to global peace and build a world based on equality and human dignity. She defines PE as preparing learners to contribute to peace. She adds that its purpose is to equip individuals with knowledge, skills, capacity, and commitment to overcoming obstacles to peace and building a global society where all human beings have equal value and full dignity.

Brock-Utne (1985, p.73, cited in Brock-Utne,2000) defines PE as "a social process through which peace is achieved," highlighting its role in societal transformation toward peaceful coexistence. Fountain (1999, pi) emphasises the process-oriented nature of PE, stating:

"Peace education is the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level."

Harris (2008) similarly emphasises that peace education has a dual approach: it can be conducted in community-based, informal settings or within formal educational institutions like schools and colleges. Brock-Utne (1985) affirms the significance of combating structural violence in PE by addressing gendered forms of aggression, emphasising that societies not at war are not necessarily peaceful, as they may still harbour considerable

internal violence in their structure, such as domestic violence (cited by Harris, 2008). This perspective aligns with Galtung's (1975) categorisation of peace into negative peace, which refers to the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, which fosters cooperation, justice, and integration within societies (cited in Salomon, 2005). While negative peace may represent the absence of overt conflict, as Brock-Utne argues, domestic violence and other forms of structural violence persist, requiring the promotion of positive peace to address these underlying issues and create truly peaceful societies[157].

4.4.2. Peace Education Development

The historical evolution of PE can be traced to the early 20th century, coinciding with the two World Wars. The League of Nations, founded in 1920, fostered peace through international collaboration and education. PE began to gain traction after World War II and the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, particularly following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which underscored the necessity for global understanding, tolerance, and peace (Fountain, 1999). PE was included in international educational agendas by the 1970s and 80s, along with initiatives to address human rights, environmental sustainability, and nuclear disarmament. Global institutions such as UNESCO and other NGOs started advocating for PE to resist violence, injustice, and inequality (Fountain, 1999). Over the past decades, some UNICEF national committees

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[157] However, peace education, like the concept of peace itself, is disputed (Brock-Utne, 2000). Brock-Utne (2000, p.3) calls for "reach(ing) consensus on the definition of peace education to be used in the international community or guidelines for formal school curricula - the term was intentionally designed to be open to different interpretations and to draw on different perspectives."

and country offices have created PE initiatives and garnered consistent attention since their inception (Fountain, 1999; Köylü, 2004). Western theories and approaches have primarily shaped PE; however, there is a growing recognition of the importance of integrating diverse cultural perspectives into PE to make it more relevant and effective across different societies (Reardon, 1988; Tibbitts, 2008; Bjaj, 2008; Alnufaishan, 2020). Bajaj and Brantmeier (2011) advocate for an adaptable framework for peace education to address cultural specificity and diversity rather than a fixed framework that attempts to impose the same model on every cultural context. The interest in PE is not exclusive to Western organisations, as it also has roots in the Islamic framework. PE content "was emphasised in the First, Second, and Third World Conferences on Islamic Education, held in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, in 1977, Islamabad in 1980 and Dacca in 1981, respectively" (Köylü, 2004, p.73).

4.4.3. PE and Women's Rights Principles in Islam (WRPI):

PE is compatible with Islamic principles, recognising that "Islam" originates from a root word that primarily signifies peace (*Al-Salām*) in Arabic. As a result, the notion of peace is deeply embedded in Islam and plays a fundamental role in the lives of those who embrace it (Köylü, 2004)[158]. Hassan (1987, p.96) suggested that "the concept of peace is so deeply embedded in the daily lives of Muslims that every time they meet and greet one another,

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[158] See more on Peace value in 2.4.2

they exchange the phrases *Salam Alaikum* and *Wa AlaikumAl-Salām*, which mean peace be upon you and peace be upon you, too"[159].

Islam aims to build peace among people, especially in family relations, to develop and progress a well-entrenched social order (Mustafa, 2004; Omar, 2014). This aligns with Reardon's (1988) argument that peace education aims to reshape societal structures and the underlying structures of individual awareness, fostering harmony and mutual respect. As mentioned above[160], the Islamic framework of rights and duties includes all the issues involved in family and marital relations (Al-Juhany, 2015; Al-Marrakshi, 2020). It is grounded on a moral and spiritual framework, which is the foundation of PE, as it promotes social justice and harmony (Patoari, 2019). Snauwaert (2008) stresses that for a peaceful and prosperous society, individuals must not only enjoy their rights but also take on the responsibilities and obligations of protecting others', helping them, and preventing harm, which is the basis of the Islamic rights framework[161]. Accordingly, Hassan (1987) believes PE "must be a high priority in Muslim societies" as it is an integral part of Islamic values. The Islamic teachings confirm women's rights and explicitly prohibit any form of direct or indirect violence against women (negative peace)[162], thereby promoting their safety, safeguarding, justice, equality, and dignity[163] (positive peace) (Nahr, 2022; Patoari, 2019).

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[159] Peace and justice were central themes in the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights prepared by the Islamic Council of Europe in 1980 (Köylü, 2004, p.73).
[160] (See 2.3. and 3.2).
[161] (See 3.2.1.)
[162] (See 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.)
[163] This includes physical harm, emotional abuse, or unjust treatment in any form. It can be seen in how Islamic law addresses women's rights in dowery (*Mahr*) and maintenance (*Alnafaqah*), marriage, inheritance, and guardianship (*Alqawama*), among other rights intended to ensure protection and support, not dominance or oppression (see 2.5. on the key concepts in WRPI)

Abadi (2014) states that *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* aims to preserve and promote peace by safeguarding five essential needs: religion, life, intellect, offspring, and wealth[164]. The Islamic framework for PE, particularly in family and gender relations, is grounded on *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology as the only human-based interpretations of the religious texts can deprive women of the rights, dignity, honour, and status that Islam grants them, often leading to oppression (Patoari, 2019)[165]. This, in turn, disrupts harmonious relationships and threatens societal peace.

Based on the analysis mentioned above, which employs CP in the Saudi (religious) education system, the figure (3) below explains how implementing the CP, PE, and Tibbit's models in the ICC Saudi Educational system would bridge the potential gap between women's rights principles in Islam WRPI and social patterns and realities.

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[164] Abadi (2014) confirms that these necessities, alongside needful and ameliorative interests, are not only moral guidelines but legal imperatives, the protection of which is essential to ensuring peace at both the individual and societal levels.

[165] see 3.3.1
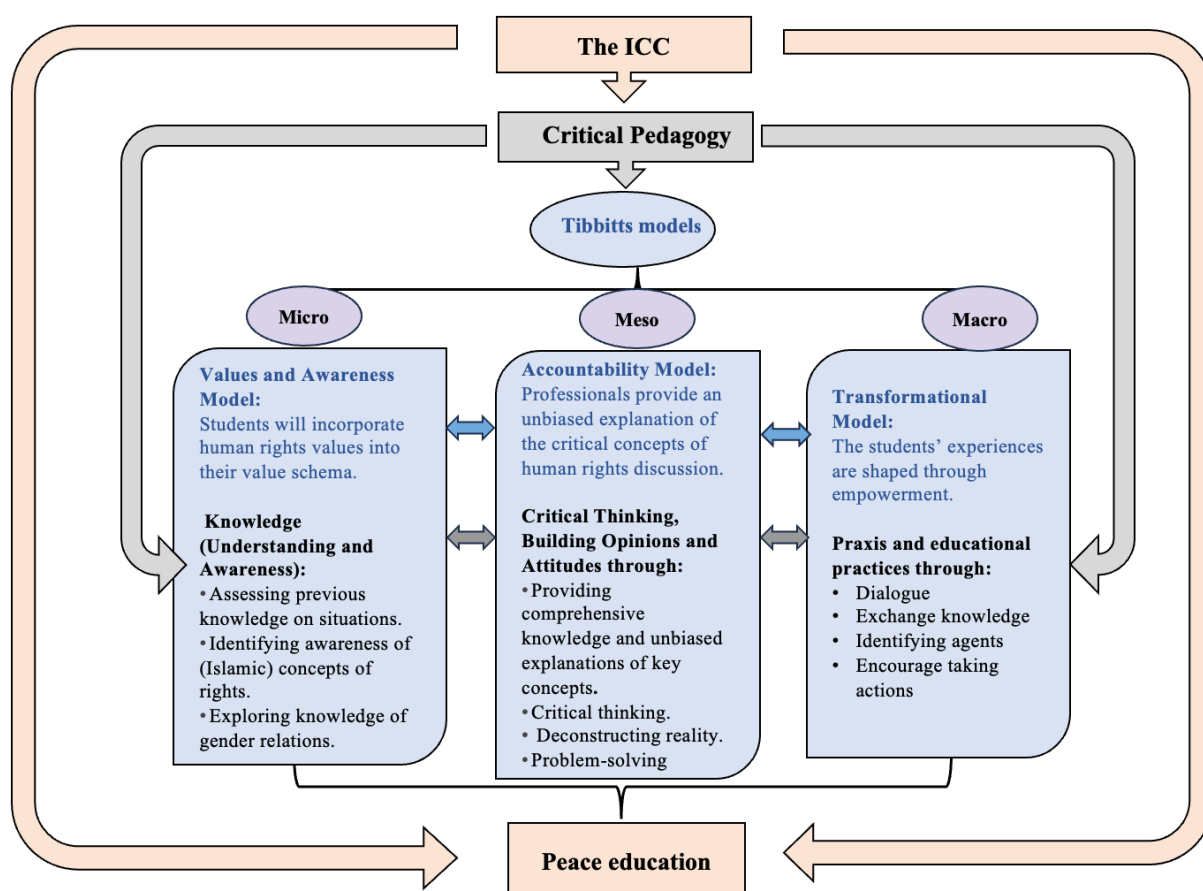
Figure (3): Framework for CP, Tibbitts's Model, and PE in Teaching the ICC: ICP

This figure shows the analysis framework of this research. It argues that joining these theories and approaches can effectively support women's rights education. It avoids transferring knowledge like in the traditional mode of instruction. It provides a teaching strategy that encourages girl students to think critically about theory and practice and to construct WRPI awareness through (a) Knowledge (Understanding and awareness): providing students with extensive knowledge to explore, explain, identify, and understand Islamic concepts on which rights are based and that regulate gender relations, It works on a micro level where the existing knowledge and awareness of the involved participants

(teachers and students) is the starting point. (b) Critical thinking (building opinions and attitudes): It focuses on the professionals' and curriculum's ability to encourage critical thinking in students by providing unbiased, epistemological explanations of the key concepts in rights discussion. Providing free-of-social stereotypes and dominant discourse triggers girl students to use critical thinking to assess their current situation, analyse and deconstruct social realities, and suggest feasible solutions based on Saudi Arabia's *Al-Sharīʿah*-based Islamic normative society. The professional and curriculum ability to maintain the unbiased discourse will implement peace education as girl students will advocate for their rights through critical thinking and reflections instead of having reactionary attitudes on biased discourse that assert or recycle social stereotypes on gender roles, (c) Praxis (educational practices and social implementation): engaging students in effective discussion to identify injustice and right violation and fomenting dialogue and social implementation of acquired knowledge and discussed solutions during the learning process rather than simply transmitting and banking information. As a result, students could recognise themselves as rights holders and agents of social change.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has laid the groundwork for the study by integrating the transformative models of Human Rights Education (HRE), Critical Pedagogy (CP), and Peace Education (PE) within an Islamic epistemological and educational framework. It offers a nuanced and contextually relevant lens to explore women's rights education and social transformation in alignment with Saudi Vision 2030.

The complementary roles of CP and PE are pivotal in fostering transformative education. CP equips learners with critical thinking tools to question and evaluate societal structures, while PE promotes justice, equality, and reconciliation through non-violent strategies. Together, they create a dual framework that supports the study's overarching aim: to enhance awareness and advocacy for women's rights within Islamic educational settings, maintaining peace and social order. The analysis proved the profound alignment between these pedagogical approaches and Islamic principles, emphasising that critical awareness, justice, and social equity are inherent in Islamic teachings. These values resonate with the goals of the transformational model in education, which seeks to challenge stereotypes and foster meaningful social changes. The framework underscores the significance of contextualising women's rights education within the Islamic perspective. It highlights the necessity of empowering students with the knowledge to explore Islamic concepts of rights and gender relations, fostering critical thinking to analyse their realities, and enabling actionable strategies to address social injustices by bridging the gap between Islamic theoretical principles and their application in real-world contexts.

This theoretical framework has provided a comprehensive structure for analysing the ICC's content and teaching strategies. Synthesising the CP, PE and Tibbitt's three HRE models with the Islamic approach, the framework sets the stage for three levels of analysis: Mirco Level (students and professors' awareness, values and prior knowledge), Meso Level (professionals' and curriculum role in activating critical thinking through unbiased discourse on key concepts in HR discussion), and Macro Level (the teaching strategies implemented in the classroom to link the knowledge to social praxis and implementing

possible solutions or steps to achieve social change). These three levels of analysis propose actionable strategies to activate critical awareness and promote women's awareness and agency. In the context of Saudi Arabia, these three levels of analysis are insightful to building knowledge and understanding the Islamic principles of rights and gender relations, to developing critical thinking to analyse current social realities and propose *Al-Sharīʿah*-based solutions, and to engaging in praxis through peace and dialogue to identify and address injustices, empowering Muslim women as rights holders and agents of social change.

Chapter Five

Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This research studies how ICC Education promotes awareness of women's rights among women students at KSA University. It analyses how the ICC's content and teaching strategies offer knowledge and explores the knowledge produced by the KSA's women students and professors[166]. This chapter outlines the qualitative method to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. It details the process of designing the survey from its initial stages. It explains the multiple methodologies implemented in the data collection criteria, the data analysis, and the decisions guiding the research process. The chapter highlights the researcher's identity and the trustworthiness principle proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

5.2 The Philosophical Assumption:

The research paradigm is a set of philosophical assumptions about the nature of a phenomenon, the understanding of it, and the purpose of research (Hammersley, 2007)[167]. The researchers' ontological and epistemological backgrounds and the philosophical sources that underline them shape their choice of research methodology. In seeking to

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[166] See 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8.

[167] These assumptions are categorised into ontology (the reality of nature/existence), epistemology (what constitutes knowledge about it), and methodology (how knowledge is obtained) (Mason, 2018). Ontology focuses on perceptions of reality and the nature of phenomena. It asks questions like: What is the nature of reality? What kinds of things exist in the world? What are the fundamental entities or structures of the universe? (Mason, 2018). While epistemology concerns credible evidence of social reality, it asks questions such as: How do we know what we know? What counts as a justified belief? What is truth, and how can we access it? (Mason, 2018).

explore women professors' and students' perspectives of the ICC's impact in producing knowledge and awareness of women's rights principles in Islam, this study adopted an interpretive epistemology which conveys the idea that social systems are constantly constructing the social phenomena and their meanings (Crotty, 1998, Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2013). Interpretivism seeks to comprehend the intricate world of lived experiences from the perspective of those who live it (Crotty, 1998)[168]. Crotty (1998, p.67) suggests that social research aims to comprehend and depict social events as they are and strives for "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social lifeworld".

However, this study extends beyond a purely descriptive or interpretive approach. It recognises that knowledge production is fundamentally political and that research, particularly in educational environments, has the potential to contribute to social transformation. Therefore, the research adopts Paulo Ferier's (1970) Critical Pedagogy theory, which contends that knowledge should be emancipatory, challenging power structures and establishing spaces for marginalised voices to be heard (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008). This study aims to comprehend the perspectives of female teachers and students and emphasise how educational discourse and practice can either reinforce or challenge existing power dynamics related to gender and rights in Islamic contexts by adopting an interpretive paradigm. Emphasising its socially created character, the

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[168] From an ontological level, interpretivism is related to ideas that focus on understanding the world from others' perspectives (Crotty, 1998; Chilisa, 2012). Interpretivism understands that knowledge is socially constructed, and truth lies within the human experience, which is influenced by culture, history, and context (Crotty, 1998; Chilisa, 2012).

researcher's ontological and epistemological presumptions direct the study's approach to social reality. In this study, educational settings are viewed as spaces where knowledge is transmitted, contested, and negotiated. Consequently, the interpretative paradigm is embraced to develop new, more profound interpretations of social context (Saunders, 2009). Moreover, the study gathers subjective perspectives and viewpoints, acknowledging that broader historical and cultural factors influence participants' experiences. By integrating a transformative and emancipatory lens, the research highlights the potential for education to serve as a site for critical consciousness and social change. While this study is rooted in an interpretive approach, it also seeks to promote social transformation and empowerment. Understanding social realities is inherently ethical; it involves confronting oppression (Mertens, 2007). Constructivism and interpretivism are often used reciprocally in the literature, as both emphasise the role of human experience and meaning-making in knowledge production (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Hammersley, 2007). Therefore, this research is framed within an interpretive-constructivist perspective, acknowledging that cultural and historical contexts influence knowledge. At the same time, it incorporates critical pedagogy, highlighting the importance of education in fostering awareness, empowerment, and social justice.

The choice of the research methodology is shaped by the researchers' ontological and epistemological backgrounds and the philosophical sources that underline them[169]. Quantitative research asserts that reality is singular, and knowledge is independent of the researcher, empirically tested, stable, generalisable, and must be replicable[170]. In contrast, qualitative research considers that realities are multiple and are shaped through experiences (Mason, 2018)[171]. Therefore, constructivism and interpretivism often have reciprocal uses in literature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Hammersley, 2007).

This research operates within the epistemological paradigm by identifying the epistemological Islamic framework in women's rights discussion, emphasising the importance of a comprehensive and affiliation-inclusive framework representing Saudi women's diverse identity to achieve an effective rights awareness. It also aligns with the interpretive-constructivist paradigm, reflecting the ontological view that reality is socially constructed and context-dependent. Ontologically, the research acknowledges that the Islamic epistemological framework about women's rights is not static but rather shaped by

[169] In this sense, Creswell (2009) highlights the importance of the researcher's decisions in determining whether a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method paradigm is used. In contrast, Quantitative research relies on statistical data, logical processes, and tools such as large-scale questionnaires or experiments for data collection and analysis. Quantitative research aligns with positivism, emphasising objectivity, generalisability, and empirical testing. It asserts that reality is singular, and knowledge is independent of the researcher, empirically tested, stable, generalisable, and must be replicable (Mason, 2018; Creswell, 2009).

[170] Quantitative research aligns with positivism, emphasising objectivity, generalisability, and empirical testing. It relies on statistical data, logical processes, and tools such as large-scale questionnaires or experiments for data collection and analysis (Mason, 2018; Creswell, 2009).

[171] Quantitative research aligns with positivism, emphasising objectivity, generalisability, and empirical testing. In contrast, qualitative research reflects constructivism, focusing on the multiple, socially constructed realities shaped by individual experiences and interactions. Qualitative research interprets how people make sense of their experiences and the world around them. It reflects constructivism, focusing on the multiple, socially constructed realities shaped by individual experiences and interactions. Wellington (2000) asserts that reality is socially constructed through interaction and complex experiences (Chilisa, 2011)

cultural, historical, and institutional factors. By adopting an interpretivist approach, the study positions itself within a framework that values subjective experiences, recognising that meaning is co-constructed through lived experiences and social interactions. Methodologically, this perspective justifies the choice of a qualitative research design, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, experiences, and meaning-making processes[172]. This is particularly relevant in the context of the ICC, where religious and educational discourses influence students' understanding of gender and rights. Rather than assuming a fixed truth about women's rights in Islam, the study engages with how female students and professors perceive, negotiate, and interpret these rights within their sociocultural and institutional contexts.

5.3. The Research Design:

The following section carefully explains the research design's initial stages, with a clear justification for the qualitative approach and the chosen case study. This ensures alignment between the research problem, research questions, and methodology (Creswell, 2012), which determines the methods for data collection and analysis (Gray, 2014).

5.3.1. Qualitative Methodology:

This study views educational settings as socially constructed realities. These settings are examined through both ontological and epistemological lenses. The ontological

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[172] (See 5.3.1).

perspective addresses foundational questions such as: How do professors and students perceive the effectiveness of ICC content? (RQ1, see 1.8.2) How do students navigate dominant cultural traditions and the ICC content to learn about their rights in Islam? (RQ3, see 1.8.2). The epistemological approach focuses on understanding how knowledge about women's rights is constructed and transmitted within this context, asking: What is the epistemological framework of the rights discussion in the ICC? What are the core concepts related to women's rights that the ICC incorporates? What types of values are embedded within the curriculum? What is regarded as a right instead of a responsibility in discussions surrounding women's rights? (RQ2, see 1.8.2).

Therefore, the study adopts qualitative data analysis methodologies to comprehensively understand the reality within these educational settings (Saunders, 2009). The qualitative approach delves deeply into the personal experiences and interpretations of women professors and students, uncovering the nuanced and contextual dynamics (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) that influence their understanding of WRPI. While qualitative methodology forms the foundation of this research methodology, a simple quantitative approach was applied to complement the analysis. The quantitative approach provides measurable insights into patterns, trends, and relationships concerning how women's rights are perceived and taught. It helps the researcher to uncover broader generalisations about the prevalence and structure of perspectives within these settings. A simplified quantitative method was used to calculate the proportions of participants who shared similar perspectives on certain topics and to quantify the frequency of specific patterns in the ICC discourse on women's rights. I do not consider the methodology mixed, as the quantitative

methodology was not implemented statistically. A purely quantitative method was not followed because the study aimed to explore in-depth perspectives, interpretations, and contextual nuances that quantitative approaches cannot capture. The focus was on understanding the complexities of participants' experiences and the cultural discourse, which aligns more closely with qualitative methodologies.

This decision to use qualitative methodology with a simplified calculation of ratios and repetitions creates a holistic framework for interpreting how the ICC influences the construction and sharing of knowledge about women's rights. It ensures that the study captures the empirical and interpretive dimensions of this socially constructed educational environment. Accordingly, conclusions will be based on participants' social experiences and interpretations rather than simply discovering them through quantitative findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Hammersley, 2007).

5.3.2. The Case Study Approach[173]

A comprehensive case study examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and thoroughly analyses a single unit to gain a deeper understanding of a broader class of similar units (Gerring, 2010). The case study of this research examines the ICC and its pedagogical approaches in Saudi higher education to investigate how its teaching

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[173] Merriam and Tisdell (2015) define a case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a particular case or bounded system, which can be a program, a group, an institution, a community, a specific policy, or an individual. Yin (2009) argues that the definition of the case study comprises two key elements: the logic design and the data collection and analysis techniques.

practices, classroom dynamics, and broader educational strategies promote awareness of women's rights issues.– Professors play a key role in navigating the complexities of the curriculum and connecting it to real-world applications. At the same time, students offer valuable perspectives and lived experiences that provide insights into the ICC's impact on their views regarding women's rights. By examining this dynamic relationship between curriculum content, teaching practices, and student engagement, the study sheds light on how religious education can influence perceptions of gender roles and women's rights in Saudi society. Data sampling becomes robust and representative when it incorporates diverse sources, such as interviews and content analysis, allowing for triangulation within a well-defined theoretical framework (Yin, 2009, p.18). Gray (2014) emphasises that incorporating multiple perspectives through diverse data sources enhances the understanding of the context. Therefore, data collection includes interviews and an extensive analysis of the ICC's text. This will thoroughly explore key issues and generate deep insights into the women's rights principles in Islam (WRPI) knowledge offered in the ICC content and classes.

Yin (2009) mentions two justifiable conditions for conducting a case study, both of which align with the nature of this study. First, a case study can help answer "how" and "what" questions more effectively. In addition, selecting a single case study is appropriate when it accurately depicts the case's nature, identifies its features, and identifies any associated issues. This research focuses on the ability of religious education to raise awareness of WRPI in higher education through ICC education at KSA. The Saudi context is particularly relevant for this case study because of its unique sociocultural, historical, and political

dynamics, which make it an ideal setting for examining the promotion of women's rights through Islamic teachings.

The ICC, grounded in Islamic principles[174], aims to align students' understanding of gender roles with religious values and modern society's evolving expectations, considering Saudi Arabia is undergoing transformative changes under Vision 2030, a strategic plan prioritising women's empowerment and greater participation in the workforce. By focusing on this specific case, the research can provide nuanced insights into how Islamic teachings are interpreted, taught, and applied. Thus, the Saudi context provides a rich and distinctive backdrop for exploring the intersection of religious education, gender dynamics, and social reform. It is an exemplary case study for understanding the broader implications of ICC education in promoting women's rights.

5.3.3. Exploratory Methodology:

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[174] Saudi Arabia has a rich history deeply rooted in Islamic traditions, which are the foundation of its societal norms, laws, and educational practices. However, the country's cultural framework is further influenced by tribalism, local customs, and the rapid modernisation that followed the oil boom (Al Manea, 2010). These intersecting factors create a complex environment where traditional values coexist and sometimes clash with religious and contemporary aspirations for gender roles and women's rights. As the birthplace of Islam and home to its two holiest sites, Makka and Madinah, Saudi Arabia occupies a unique position in the Islamic world. This position adds a layer of significance to examining the ICC's role in promoting women's rights.

Research activities generally serve three primary purposes: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Saunders et al., 2000)[175]. This study aims to fill a critical gap by exploring how Religious Education influences Saudi women's awareness of their rights and empowerment. Silverman (2013) emphasises that research on gender often relies on interpretive frameworks, recognising that gender roles are shaped by specific societal and cultural contexts (Hammersley, 2007). In Saudi Arabia, the unique sociocultural dynamics surrounding gender roles and family relationships create a culturally distinctive case warranting deep research within the Saudi system of gender values. This study adopts an exploratory approach through the lens of Islamic teachings because the values associated with women's rights and gender roles in the Saudi value system are shaped by the Islamic frame of reference[176]. As Crotty (1998, p. 67) explains, exploratory research seeks "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social lifeworld." By employing this dual focus, the study explores how Islamic teachings inform the ICC's framework and provides an interpretive lens to understand the broader societal implications of its impact on women's rights.

5.4. The Pilot Study

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[175] Explanatory research delves into relationships, such as cause and effect, to uncover underlying connections. Descriptive research focuses on providing a detailed account and thorough understanding of phenomena (Yin, 2003). Meanwhile, an exploratory study seeks to uncover the fundamental dynamics behind data production, offering new perspectives and insights into previously unexamined areas. According to Saunders et al. (2009), an exploratory approach seeks to identify what is happening, gain new insights, pose questions, and address issues using qualitative methods. The exploratory methodology is particularly relevant to this study due to the scarcity of literature addressing the specific phenomenon under investigation. This absence of prior knowledge necessitates a deep dive into understanding how the ICC impacts women's rights within the proposed theoretical framework, which serves as a benchmark for judging the success of the exploration (Yin, 2009).
[176] (See 2.3).

The research started with a pilot study before the leading investigation to gain insights into the proper methodology in data collection and analysis focus (Arain et al., 2010). Newby (2010, p.661) defines a pilot study as "an investigation that takes place before the main investigation and is designed to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the research procedures." According to Padgett (2008), the primary aim of a pilot study is to familiarise researchers with the proposed methodology and assess the adequacy of their tools and procedures. For this research, the pilot study served two key purposes: (1) ensuring the appropriateness of the semi-structured interview questions in addressing the research questions and (2) evaluating the management of the interview effectively. The pilot study interviews a small group of volunteers: one women professor and five students who graduated from the ICC, all from KSA University. This number was sufficient to test the clarity and relevance of the structured questions.

Additionally, an expert in teaching and research was consulted to validate the interview questions, as quality and validity are closely linked (Silverman, 2005). The pilot study enabled the researcher to identify areas for improvement and refine the questions accordingly (Padgett, 2008). As a result, the interview questions were evaluated, discussed, and amended to ensure they were clear, relevant, and effective for the study's aim.

Conducting the pilot study highlighted a significant time management challenge in the initial interviews. While speaking at length with participants to understand their perceptions of the ICC in promoting women's rights, the track of time was lost. For instance, around 20 minutes were spent on introductory questions, leaving less time for the more critical, in-depth questions later in the interview. Reflecting on this issue, a better

balance between gathering rich, detailed responses and adhering to the interview schedule was approached[177]. The pilot study proved invaluable in this regard, as it allows the research to 1) reorganise and streamline the interview questions to prioritise those most relevant to the research aims and 2) enhance the ability to manage time effectively while encouraging participants to share in-depth and nuanced responses[178].

After discussing the pilot study's results with the supervisor, it was agreed that the responses gathered during the pilot interviews were particularly rich and insightful. As a result, the pilot interview data was integrated into the main study participants' interviews, which were conducted later. This decision was based on the richness and relevance of the information obtained, which aligned with the research objectives.

5.5. Data Collection and Sampling:

The data collection in this study consists of two primary sources: interviews (professors and students) and documentary analysis (ICC's content), enabling a comprehensive analysis from multiple perspectives within the previously established theoretical framework. The interviews and participants' contributions provide insights into the ontological dimension of the research, exploring the lived experiences and perspectives related to women's rights and gender roles (Mason,2018). In contrast, the analysis of the

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[177] As Walsham (2006) points out, a researcher must skilfully balance passivity and over-direction to maintain good timekeeping without sacrificing the depth of responses

[178] The pilot interviews significantly improved the communication and listening skills in interview management, allowing balanced open-ended discussions, controlling the time, and ensuring that all key questions were covered while still providing participants the opportunity to articulate their experiences fully.

ICC content focuses on the epistemological dimension, examining the construction and dissemination of knowledge regarding women's rights principles in Islam. Relating the ontological and epistemological dimensions to data collection ensures a comprehensive understanding of the participants' lived realities and the knowledge frameworks that influence these realities. The following sections outline the data purposive sampling selection and collection criteria, ensuring a robust and holistic approach to addressing the research objectives.

5.5.1 Participants Selection:

The study interviewed participants to obtain in-depth insight into a specific area of research interest (Mason,2018)[179]. In this case, the researcher can be involved in the participants' context to deepen the understanding and clarify matters relating to human meaning and social realities (Creswell, 2013a). Interviews can be conducted in person, over the phone, or via video conferencing and can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured.

There are the unheard voices of women in Saudi society as much as in academic studies over their rights and issues (Jamjoom,2010; Doumato, 1992; Le Renard, 2014a; Yamani, 1996). The shortage of Saudi women's voices led to a gap and, occasionally, to a

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[179] Personal histories and worldviews will provide the most insightful answers to the researcher's questions (Saldana, 2011). Interviews can explore the topic in focus through the participants' experiences, history and practices; therefore, researchers can dig deeper into social dynamics and behaviours to gather in-depth data (Wellington, 2000). Interviews also ensure the flexibility to "let the participant develop ideas and speak more widely on the issue raised by the researcher" (Denscombe, 2010, p.176). As a result, it would allow the participants to express their opinions and many different points of view on the subject matter following their diverse socio-cultural experiences.

misrepresentation in the literature that has developed regarding the situation of Saudi women (Hamdan, 2006; Alsweel, 2013; Mustafa, 2017). Accordingly, the interview will provide in-depth information from Saudi women students and professors about the impact of the ICC on women's awareness of their rights, which is impossible to observe through questionnaires.

The study follows a purposive sampling strategy to align with the research design and questions[180]. Patton (1990) highlights its effectiveness, noting that snowball sampling also applies to identifying hard-to-reach participants through referrals and expanding access to relevant individuals (Creswell, 2014). Given that the present study aims to explore whether Islamic Education, the ICC at KSA University in Saudi higher education, can improve women's rights awareness, participants were explicitly chosen through criterion-based selection (Merriam et al., 2015). The study considered nationality and university variables by interviewing 18 Saudi women participants: (5) ICC professors aged 25-60 and (7) students at KSA University of different ages (18-35); three of them recently graduated. In addition, the researcher interviewed one professor and 5 five students in the pilot study. The students are from various colleges (see Table 4.1 below), but all are studying or have studied the ICC. The decision to choose students from different colleges is that the research wants to include voices from different academic approaches, both from scientific and humanities colleges. Age was not restricted because the study aimed to obtain the

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[180] Creswell (2014) and Yin (2015) emphasise selecting participants through predetermined criteria rather than random-based approaches, as this method provides deep insights into the focus of the investigation. Purposeful sampling involves identifying key informants or individuals with specific expertise relevant to the research topic (Creswell, 2014).

perceptions of different generations regarding the topic. All professors are married, while all students are single except for one, who is divorced.

The sample size in this study was 18, which falls slightly below the typical range of 20 to 25 participants (Bryman, 2008). This limitation arose due to significant challenges in recruiting individuals to discuss gender roles and women's rights. Identifying the ICC professors willing to critically and openly examine the ICC's content was difficult. Similar challenges were encountered when attempting to involve students, who were often hesitant to engage in such discussions.

This reluctance can be attributed to multiple factors. Firstly, the topic's sensitive nature within the Saudi sociocultural context likely discouraged potential participants. Gender roles and women's rights are often seen as contentious issues, deeply intertwined with religious, cultural, and social values, making open discussions potentially uncomfortable or even controversial. Secondly, a lack of deep understanding or familiarity with the nuances of women's rights and their alignment with Islamic teachings may have further contributed to participants' hesitancy. These barriers highlight the cultural and contextual complexities of researching such a sensitive topic in this specific setting. Despite these challenges, the selected sample provided valuable insights and contributed meaningfully to the study's objectives. The participants' information is explained in the following table:

	Particip ant	Position	Age	Experience	Degree	Subject	Marital status
1	P1	Professor		11	Dr.	Islamic studies	Married
2	P2	Professor		13	Dr.	Islamic studies	Married
3	P3	Professor		15	Dr.	Islamic studies	Married
4	P4	Professor		25	Dr.	Islamic studies	Married
5	P5	Professor		15	Dr.	Islamic studies	Married
6	P6	Professor		10	Lecture r	Islamic studies	Married
7	S1	Student	21	3rd year		Information system	Single
8	S2	Student	19	3rd year		Law	Single
9	S3	Student	21	3rd year		Electrical engineering	Single
10	S4	Student	22	4th year		Clinical psychology	Single
11	S5	Student	20	3rd year		Law	Single

12	S6	Student	22	4th year		Psychology	Single
13	S7	Student	19	3rd year		Media	Single
14	S8	Student	22	4th year		Medicine	Single
15	S9	Student	21	3rd year		Media	Single
16	S10	Gradated Student	25	Graduated one year ago		Psychology	Single
17	S11	Gradated Student	27	Graduated 3year ago		Law	Single
18	S12	Gradated Student	27	Graduated 3 years ago		Social service	Divorced

Table 4.1. A summary of the research participants (18)

The recruitment process of the participants was through a multi-stage process as follows:

1. The names of women professors of the ICC were listed in cooperation with the head of the Department of General Subjects in the College of Arts and Humanitarian Studies. A copy of the letter approving the researcher's task was sent to all nominated professors[181].

2. The professors were emailed and WhatsApp messages, and they were provided with a brief explanation of the research's nature and the purpose of the interview. They were then arranged for a face-to-face meeting to interview them.

3. The dates of the interviews were coordinated with the professors in person at her home (one professor), and some were conducted online (5 professors). Professors signed the consent form before the interview[182].

4. The interviewed professors nominated several women students to participate in the study and provided their phone numbers or email addresses.

5. Snowball sampling was undertaken from those students from the same level of the ICC classroom (Bryman, 2004, p. 100).

6. The consent form was shared with the students to sign before the interview[183]. At their request, the students were provided with some questions that would be asked in the interview.

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[181] (See appendix 1).
[182] (See appendix 2).
[183] (See appendix 2).

7. Upon the return of the consent forms, the researcher contacted the participants and arranged for interviews.

8. Students were interviewed inside the KSA University campus.

5.5.2. Ethical Issues:

Researchers studying human beings must adhere to ethical protocols before and during their research (Oliver, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007)[184]. This study adhered to key ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and avoiding harm. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and consent was obtained voluntarily. Measures such as pseudonyms and secure data storage ensured participant privacy[185]. At the same time, efforts were made to create a safe and supportive environment for discussing sensitive topics like gender roles and women's rights. Cultural sensitivity was integral to the research design, respecting Saudi societal norms and Islamic values while ensuring transparency and accountability. The consent process provided participants with clear information about the study, including their right to withdraw within 14 days,

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[184] Oliver (2010) posits that it is essential for researchers to consider potential ethical concerns from the outset of their research projects to ensure integrity and respect for participants throughout the process. For example, when conducting interviews on sensitive topics like gender roles and women's rights, participants may share personal or emotionally charged experiences. In such cases, safeguarding participants' confidentiality and ensuring informed consent are crucial to protecting their privacy and emotional well-being. Addressing ethical concerns early on is crucial because it helps to build trust between the researcher and participants, ensuring the data collected is authentic and reliable. Moreover, it demonstrates the researcher's commitment to upholding ethical standards, enhancing the research's credibility and validity. Researchers can navigate complex dynamics responsibly by pre-emptively identifying and mitigating ethical risks, ultimately contributing to more meaningful and impactful findings (Oliver, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007).

[185] The primary data was stored electronically in encrypted files in the UoB drive. and I copied files to my laptop to work on while away from the office. All my data is covered by a confidentiality agreement and cannot be shared.

the confidentiality of their data, and an opportunity to ask questions or discuss any research component. None have withdrawn their participation.

Seeking ethical approval involves a two-stage process. First, an application was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Birmingham, which, despite delays due to COVID-19 restrictions, was eventually approved[186]. This documentation, including the ethical approval form and research proposal, was then submitted to the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London, which forwarded it to the KSA Committee in Saudi Arabia. After a month, permission to conduct the study was granted. Ethical approval required comprehensive documentation detailing the research objectives, methods, and processes, such as interview recordings and potential study benefits. These documents ensured participants had sufficient information to make informed decisions about their involvement, fostering trust and credibility while adhering to rigorous ethical standards. All participants signed informed consent forms, and confidentiality was maintained through strict measures. Participants were assured that their data would remain private, with no third-party access allowed without their permission. Data was securely stored on the researcher's password-protected computer and scheduled for deletion after the study. To ensure further privacy, the researcher personally conducted all transcriptions and translations. Participants' identities were protected by using pseudonyms and omitting identifiable information, fully safeguarding their anonymity throughout the research process (Cohen et al., 2007). To ensure the pseudonymity of the participants, the

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[186] Application for Ethical Review ERN_20-0621, (see appendix 3).

university's real name is also concealed. The abbreviation of KSA University is used instead.

5.5.3 The Researcher's Reflexivity and Positionality

As a researcher, my personal, cultural, and academic background inevitably shaped the way this study was conceived, conducted, and interpreted. Reflexivity was thus not an optional add-on but a necessary practice to ensure transparency and critical awareness (Dodgson,2019). Throughout the research process, I remained attentive to the ways my insider–outsider position, my professional identity, and my personal values influenced both access to participants and the interpretations I drew from their narratives. My role in this research was marked by a shifting insider–outsider positioning. Milligan (2016) asserts that researchers are neither entirely one identity nor another; neither fully inside nor outside but rather move between positionings depending on the people they are interacting with and their familiarity with socio-cultural norms. Insider researchers often benefit from a deeper understanding, but they also face questions of objectivity and authenticity when they are too closely tied to the project (Kanuha, 2000).

Reflecting on my positionality as a researcher, following Milligan (2016), I acknowledge that, as an insider, I share important commonalities with participants in terms of language, religion, socio-cultural background, and academic affiliation. These commonalities allowed me to build rapport and gain access to nuanced meanings that may not have been available to an outsider researcher. This insider knowledge was significant in recognising implicit references and understanding the subtle dynamics surrounding women's

experiences of rights and education. However, I was conscious of the risk of over-familiarity, such as assuming too much, glossing over explanations, or allowing my prior knowledge to blur the distinctiveness of participants' voices. I remained cautious not to assume that common gender identity automatically dissolved power imbalances (Willig, 2001, Dodgson,2019).

On the other hand, my position as a female researcher affiliated with a Western institution inevitably marked me as an outsider. I identified myself as an outsider when I perceived hidden hesitation by the participants, particularly when discussing the imported Western terminologies and ideologies on women's rights discussion compared to the Saudi context. I was mindful that my identity as a researcher affiliated with a Western British University could unintentionally intimidate them. Given this context, the questions were carefully framed to avoid potential conflicts, reflecting an awareness of the participants' concerns and the sensitivity surrounding these topics. I emphasised transparency about my research role and intentions, clarified confidentiality, and adopted collaborative interviewing strategies that invited participants to co-construct meaning rather than simply respond to questions. I also identified my positionality as an outsider after spending several years outside the Saudi kingdom. This experience broadened my exposure to diverse perspectives on gender and rights, enabling me to engage more deeply with global academic debates. Consequently, I felt more capable of approaching the data through a critical lens, particularly in identifying gender injustices that may otherwise remain normalised within the local context. While conducting the analysis, this positional awareness informed my

interpretation, enabling me to strike a balance between cultural sensitivity and a critical evaluation of the curriculum content.

With over a decade of experience teaching the ICC at a Saudi university, I was well-versed in the cultural and educational context[187]. However, this familiarity also necessitated heightened vigilance against potential biases, particularly regarding personal views on women's empowerment (Willig, 2001). Drawing on William James's theory (cited in Comello, 2009) of the "self," I adopted a cognitive approach to detach myself from the study by reframing the research as an external experience (Comello, 2009). Avoiding the use of the pronoun "I" facilitated this separation. This cognitive distancing allowed for greater credibility, fostering a critical lens throughout the research process. Acknowledging the potential influence of my background, I implemented strategies to maintain unbiased analysis and objectivity. Recognising the sensitive nature of the topic and the inherent power dynamics, particularly during interviews with professors, efforts were made to create a safe space for participants to share their perspectives openly. In addition, triangulating data from multiple sources, such as interviews and the ICC texts, and depending on well-known religious studies in the literature reviews to examine the religious texts in the ICC helped to maintain unbiased analysis and objectivity, recognising the sensitive nature of the topic and the inherent power dynamics, particularly during

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[187] As a Saudi, Muslim, female, academic in *Sharia* studies, a previous, my teaching experience inevitably shapes my approach to this research. The academic background and personal experiences provide deep knowledge of the cultural, religious, and educational contexts where women engage with their rights. This familiarity allows me to approach the topic with cultural sensitivity and nuanced understanding, particularly regarding the role of Islamic education in shaping women's awareness and agency.

interviews with professors, efforts were made to create a safe space for participants to share their perspectives openly.

To enhance the study's trustworthiness, coding processes were reviewed in collaboration with the primary supervisor, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The iterative approach of framework analysis, involving repeated reanalysis and the incorporation of emerging insights, supported the interpretive perspective of the research. This reflective and systematic approach reduced any possible bias. It deepened the understanding of the cultural and social factors shaping women's rights within an Islamic framework, reinforcing the study's credibility and rigour.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed key criteria to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research that is aligned with the constructivist paradigm. These criteria—credibility, transferability, and confirmability—replace positivistic terms like validity and reliability, offering strategies to ensure research rigour (Loh, 2013). These principles guide qualitative researchers in producing credible and reliable findings. Credibility ensures that the research design and findings accurately represent the participants' perspectives. This study achieved credibility through prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The prolonged engagement involved building trust with participants, which the researcher did by chatting informally through WhatsApp before interviews and fostering a friendly atmosphere. Peer debriefing allowed me to revise interpretations and coding processes critically, enhancing credibility (Morse, 2015). Triangulation was achieved by collecting data from diverse participant groups, including professors and students, through various methods, such as face-to-face and online. I offered

participants to request the interview transcript, which serves as a member check to ensure that participants validate the findings (Padgett, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

Transferability parallels external validity in quantitative research, focusing on applying findings to similar contexts. This study employed thick descriptions detailing participants' experiences and the cultural context surrounding the ICC and women's rights awareness. The research findings can potentially be transferable to other Muslim social contexts due to the shared reliance on the same religious texts, such as the *Qur'an* and *Sunna*, which form the foundation of Islamic education and cultural values. This common framework ensures that insights into the role of religious education in promoting women's rights can be relevant and applicable across similar sociocultural and educational settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2001).

Confirmability aligns with objectivity, requiring findings to reflect participants' views rather than the researcher's bias (Olmos-Vega, 2022). Reflexive journaling involves the researcher systematically recording their thoughts and experiences throughout the research process, enabling them to evaluate assumptions and methodological decisions critically[188]. Reviewing the memos, the analysis, and discussions with the supervisor, colleagues, and

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[188] Reflexive journaling allows researchers to critically analyse assumptions and methodological decisions by recording their thoughts and experiences (Olmos-Vega, 2022). This practice has helped me understand my positionality as a researcher, identifying and challenging my unconscious biases in the data analysis and research-related decisions. It has also improved my analytical approach, helped me identify study obstacles, and developed better solutions, making my study more rigorous and transparent. (see samples in appendix 5 and 9).

friends further ensured that the findings were grounded in the data rather than any preconceived ones (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Olmos-Vega, 2022).

As Hellawell (2006, p: 486) suggests, researchers often "slide along more than one insider–outsider continuum during the process, moving in both directions depending on context". My professional background as an educator and my personal commitment to issues of gender justice informed both the direction of this study and the questions I asked. While this gave me a clear motivation for the project, it also required deliberate efforts to separate my assumptions from the data. To maintain this balance, I engaged in continuous reflexive journaling, recorded memos after interviews, and sought feedback from my supervisor throughout the analysis stage. In addition, using MAXQDA program allowed for ongoing revision and continuous evaluation of interactions with and support for the study data. This reflective and systematic approach reduced any possible bias. It deepened the understanding of the cultural and social factors shaping women's rights within an Islamic framework, reinforcing the study's credibility and rigour. These strategies enabled me to monitor how my own values and expectations might have influenced my interpretations and to adjust where necessary.

Rather than being a fixed stance, reflexivity unfolded as an ongoing practice at every stage of this project. As Mercer (2007) argues, a researcher's identity shifts depending on the situation, the context, and the personalities of participants. Reflexivity required me to recognise my shifting position across different research encounters, to negotiate the tensions between familiarity and distance, and to remain accountable to my participants' trust. Ultimately, reflexivity allowed me to transform potential limitations—such as gendered power imbalances and cultural proximity—into opportunities for deeper understanding, while acknowledging that my interpretations remain situated and partial.

5.5.4. Structuring and Conducting the Interviews:

Three primary forms of interviews are structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Structured interviews involve asking a fixed list of questions in a set order, making them ideal for producing consistent and reliable data, particularly in scenarios with multiple interviewers. In contrast, unstructured interviews lack predetermined questions or order, relying on the interviewer's expertise and the interviewee's experiences with the study's focus. Semi-structured interviews combine both approaches by following a guide with pre-determined, open-ended questions while allowing flexibility in the order and range of questions (Parsons in Wellington, 2000, p.74). This format enables exploring unforeseen topics and generating rich and detailed data[189].

For this study, semi-structured interviews were the most suitable approach to elicit women professors' and students' experiences with the ICC. Open-ended questions ensured participants could comfortably share their perceptions and experiences. This method offered flexibility to adjust the line of inquiry and explore unanticipated responses. However, challenges arose with professors who occasionally veered off-topic to discuss unrelated teaching experiences. To manage this, the focus on well-defined themes and

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[189] As Mason (2018) notes, qualitative researchers aim to uncover the complexity of interactions, adjusting questions to pursue different angles or pertinent responses. This approach rejects the notion of "single story" or "true views" and instead allows participants to articulate their experiences as part of the social-interaction reality (Mason, 2018, p.113).

questions was maintained while allowing participants to share their insights. Despite minor challenges, this approach provided rich, nuanced data that exceeded initial expectations[190].

As mentioned above, the interviews with students were conducted at the KSA campus. A familiar environment helps establish rapport and makes participants feel more at ease, encouraging them to share more detailed and comprehensive responses (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989; Silverman, 2016). Such settings also reduce power dynamics often associated with formal interview spaces. For this study, female student interviews were conducted face-to-face at the KSA campus, including the pilot study. Interviews with professors were primarily conducted online via Zoom or occasionally at their homes. The timing of the study influenced this approach, as the professors' interviews took place during Ramadan, a significant month in which most people prefer to remain at home due to religious observances, fasting, and altered daily routines. Conducting interviews during this period proved beneficial, as it respected participants' comfort and availability, fostering a more relaxed and accommodating environment for engagement. Professors allowed the use of cameras, which was valuable for observing body language. A letter from the faculty dean facilitated access, explaining the study's purpose, data collection methods, and confidentiality assurances. During all interviews, I paid close attention to participants' voices, body language, and experiences while taking notes that proved helpful for data

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[190] (See appendix 4).

analysis. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of participants' meanings and values related to the topic.

Before starting the interviews, the researcher introduced herself to the professor and student participants to establish connections and ease formal barriers. Relevant personal information was shared with them to create a human connection, momentarily setting aside research roles[191].

During the interviews, students appeared more open in their discussions, while professors were reluctant to express opinions on sensitive issues. This hesitation is likely due to the relatively recent inclusion of women's rights in the country's progression plans, making it challenging for women to feel comfortable engaging in open dialogue about such controversial topics. Professors may fear potential disciplinary consequences for voicing opinions perceived as critical of established practices or government policies (Schostak, 2002). Given this context, the questions were carefully framed to avoid potential conflicts, reflecting an awareness of the participants' concerns and the sensitivity surrounding these topics. The reluctance of some professors to respond to specific questions underscores the complexities of discussing such issues in the given sociocultural and institutional setting.

5.5.5. The Islamic Cultural Curriculum:

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[191] This introduction was significant for both groups, helping to make the interviews feel more natural and less intimidating for participants (Wallendorf, 1987).

Since its establishment, the KSA University has followed the Education Policy Document in the Kingdom, 1969, Article 11, to teach both men and women students Islamic Cultural Courses (ICC) in each year of their bachelor's degree throughout all institutions of higher education, regardless of their academic specialisation (Rugh, 2002; Saudi education policy, 1975).

The ICC essentially teaches the Islamic concepts that organise Muslims' lives and thoughts. This ICC falls into four compulsory levels allotted along the four years of a bachelor's programme equally to all men and women students in higher education institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For KSA University, the ICC plan includes faith and beliefs in the first level, the Islamic sources in the second, the third level family system where they learn about rights, duties, and responsibilities as prescribed in the teachings of Islam, and *Serah* (prophet life) in the fourth one. This research analysed parts of the ICC level 3, which is the most relevant to the study, focusing on family rights, women's issues, and gender roles. The data collection consists of the units (1- 6) from (pp 8- 137), as the rest of the book does not specify women's issues[192]. By analysing these six units, this study aims to critically examine how the curriculum addresses women's rights within the Islamic family system, ensuring alignment with the broader research objectives.

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[192] These six unites are: 1) The Meaning and Characteristics of the Family System in Islam; 2) Spouse Selection and Betrothal; 3) Marriage-Related Provisions; 4) Mutual and Specific Marital Rights; 5) Marital Disputes and Conflict Resolution in Islam; 6) Separation and Divorce Provisions

Analysing the ICC content on women's issues can provide a detailed understanding of the knowledge offered on WRPI through the discourse and concepts presented in the book and whether any biases are visible in interpreting the religious texts on women's issues[193]. Accordingly, the book analysis involves examining the content elements, such as 1) identifying themes and concepts related to women's issues, 2) Repetitive patterns in discussions of WRPI, 3) The religious texts used or ignored in the discussion, 4) the (biased or unbiased) interpretations on these religious texts, 5) link between the theoretical and the practice in the units.

5.5.6. Research Memos:

The research supervisor required weekly email updates to track progress as part of the data collection process. To facilitate this, a research diary was adopted from the project's outset to maintain a comprehensive record of experiences, observations, and insights throughout the study[194]. Aligned with this guidance, the research diary was utilised to systematically capture comments, ideas, and thoughts during the research process[195]. This approach provided a robust record of research activities and methods, enhancing the study's reliability, validity, and transparency and promoting reflexivity. The process encouraged continuous critical examination of perspectives and biases to minimise their influence on the findings. Moreover, the diary proved instrumental in identifying patterns and themes

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[193] A documentary analysis can enhance data collection representation and provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied (Mason, 2018).
[194] Wellington (2015) highlights the importance of a research diary in documenting a chronological sequence of events, field notes, methods, methodologies, ideas, and emerging themes or patterns.
[195] (See Appendix 5).

and uncovering relationships and insights that emerged from the data, contributing significantly to the depth and rigour of the research analysis.

5.6. Data Analysis Process:

The educational and social science analysis process provides a structured framework for examining complex interactions. The Framework Analysis process adopted by this research follows Laurie Goldsmith's study (2021)[196]. This approach begins with identifying key theoretical constructs from relevant frameworks. In this study, the Critical Pedagogy of Freire[197], Tibbitts' transformative education model[198], and the Islamic approach to critical thinking[199] were adopted as the backbone of the analysis process[200]. These frameworks are foundational for understanding the analysis's dimensions and core principles. After collecting the relevant data, the Framework Analysis process continues to "identify, describe, and interpret key patterns within and across cases of, and themes within the phenomenon of interest" (Goldsmith, 2021 p: 2061). The Framework Analysis is a robust and adaptable tool for analysing qualitative data since it incorporates an organised structure of inductively and deductively derived themes (Goldsmith, 2021).

This section will explain the Framework Analysis process followed to guide the qualitative analysis through comprehensive, systematic, and explicit steps through a series of

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[196] Framework analysis, developed in the 1980s by Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer from diverse qualitative methods and traditions, enables cross-sectional analysis by combining data description and abstraction (Goldsmith, 2021).
[197] (See 4.2.5).
[198] (See 4.2.5)
[199] (See 4.3.1)
[200] (See Chapter 4).

interconnected, flexible phases. This process enables the researcher to navigate the data to obtain a coherent analysis (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

5.6.1. The Implementing Framework Analysis Process

Framework Analysis entails two significant components: creating and applying this analytic framework (Goldsmith, 2021). These two major components are executed through a series of five steps (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994, cited in Goldsmith, 2021): (1) Data familiarisation; (2) Identifying a thematic framework; (3) Indexing all study data against the framework; (4) Charting to summarise the indexed data; and (5) Mapping and interpretation of patterns found within the charts (Goldsmith, 2021).

Smith and Firth (2011) highlight the similarities between the Framework Analysis and thematic analysis methods, especially in the first two stages when the researcher is immersed in the data, making notes about key concepts and identifying the essential themes. The last three steps distinguish the framework analysis from other approaches, namely, the emphasis on indexing systematically and comprehensively across all the data, charting the indexed data into a matrix format and mapping and interpreting the key patterns and abstractions that appeared in the matrix format (Goldsmith, 2021). The framework approach and thematic analysis are well-established qualitative data analysis methods. However, the framework approach emphasises making the analysis transparent and illustrating the linkage between the stages of the analysis (Smith and Firth, 2011; Goldsmith, 2021; Braun and Clark, 2006). In other words, the Framework Analysis approach involves a structured thematic analysis process conducted in stages based on a

pre-determined set of topics, categories, or frameworks. Furthermore, the Framework Analysis approach involves a transparent method of thematic analysis, making it easier to demonstrate the linkage between stages of analysis and ensure that the process is carried out systematically and rigorously.

Framework Analysis is adopted in this research because it provides a clear and structured way to explore how participants frame their experiences with the ICC. Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on uncovering language power dynamics and ideological influences (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1993), this study does not aim to criticise dominant discourses. Instead, this research is interested in understanding how participants frame and interpret women's rights in Islam included in the ICC and how they make sense of these concepts within their own educational and cultural contexts[201]. It ensures that the analysis is structured and replicable, which is especially important when examining how educational programs shape awareness and understanding (Smith & Firth, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ultimately, this method allows for remaining close to the voices of the participants while interpreting their experiences in a rigorous and meaningful manner.

Additionally, the Framework Analysis approach is especially relevant when exploring the ability of the ICC to enhance women's awareness of their rights in Islam. By systematically identifying and analysing patterns in participants' narratives through the discussed

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[201] Framework Analysis is instrumental because it allows the systematic organisation and comparison of participants' narratives, making patterns in their perspectives more transparent (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994, cited in Goldsmith, 2021).

educational theories in chapters three and four, the Framework Analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how such educational programs contribute to shifting perceptions, challenging biases, and fostering greater awareness of Islamic principles related to women's rights.

The analysis of this research followed these five steps in the Framework Analysis based on Goldsmith's approach (2021) while working through the data from participants and the ICC content:

Stage 1: Familiarisation: This step involves reviewing transcripts and the book content multiple times to familiarise oneself with the research data before conducting an in-depth analysis. It includes closely examining the data in relation to the research questions and the framework educational theories discussed in chapter three, which may involve taking notes on key concepts in participants' statements or relistening to the recordings as needed. The familiarisation process identified similar traits between the Critical Pedagogy theory and the participants' contributions[202].

The entire data collection is coded according to primary categories during this process. A second round of coding follows, allowing for insights into what the data reveals before proceeding with a more detailed analysis, contextualising the data for further exploration.

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[202] For example, some professors and students in the interviews demonstrated awareness of the socially biased roles towards women's rights and critically discussed some ICC content. This is the first stage in Freire's theory in CP to identify the social injustice by students and teachers (see 4.2.4.). In the familiarisation process with the ICC content, a primary observation was that the book does not encourage critical thinning activation recommended in (see 4.3.1).

A primary coding scheme is then established using the data analysis program MAXQDA[203].

Stage 2: Identifying a thematic framework: The second step focuses on identifying more abstract concepts by pinpointing key themes from the generated codes. Themes can be developed either inductively, where they emerge directly from the codes, or deductively, where they are derived from a pre-existing framework. In this phase, relevant codes are compiled to generate themes. Thematic summaries of the data, particularly those related to the framework, are helpful, especially when these themes are dispersed across the entire interview (Kuckartz, 2014). Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest summarising participant responses to extract the most relevant insights aligned with the research question. These summaries can then replace passages from the original material within the structured thematic matrix, which will be developed after the indexing phase (Kuckartz, 2014)[204].

Stage 3: Indexing the interview data[205]: According to Goldsmith (2021), indexing is an iterative process that systematically applies the framework to ensure that all data are indexed within the final framework, enabling a comprehensive analysis. The MAXQDA program was used to facilitate the data manipulation required for subsequent steps in the framework analysis. The indexing step is an essential opportunity for ongoing framework revision, allowing for continuous evaluation of how the framework interacts with and

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[203] Define MAX and acknowldge that i got a traner from th main company to train me how to use the the program (see the certificate in appandix 11
[204] (See appendix 6).
[205] This process is called indexing, as it mirrors the creation of a book's index (Spencer, Ritchie,1994; O'Connor et al., 2014, cited in Goldsmith, 2014).

supports the study data. The indexing tables were developed following thorough reflection on the interviews, the ICC content, and the theory discussed in Chapter Four[206]. The codes emerged from the data generated from the interviews and the ICC content. As the coding process is iterative, with codes being updated or new ones added as additional themes emerge, according to Goldsmith (2014), the procedure may involve modifying existing components, such as renaming, removing, consolidating, or rearranging codes as necessary. For me, the indexing was already achieved through the previous two steps[207].

Stage 4: Charting data into the framework matrix: In this stage, indexed data is organised into a thematic grid or matrix (Kuckartz, 2014) to enable systematic examination (Goldsmith, 2021). Using MAXQDA, data from interviews and the ICC content analysis were reviewed and categorised by emergent codes for each theme, with summaries entered into the grid matrix. Charting allows the refinement of analysis decisions and ensures thematic summaries remain grounded in original statements for traceability and comparison (Kuckartz,2014). The charting follows Tibbitt's Human Rights Education (HE) model, structured across micro, meso, and macro levels (see Chapter 4), ensuring comprehensive data exploration. The micro level focuses on how the ICC's foundational elements, such as language, structure, consistency and presentation, shape the initial understanding of students' initial engagement and interpretation of Islamic teachings. At the meso level, key Islamic concepts such as *Al-Ḥaq* (Rights), *Al-*

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[206] (See 4.3.2)
[207] (See the coding index in the appendix 6)

Qiwāmah (Guardianship), marriage, and family dynamics are analysed, focusing on how they are contextualised and connected to students' real-life experiences. At the macro level, the analysis examines how these teachings interact with broader societal norms, educational strategies, and reforms, highlighting their role in fostering critical awareness and bridging traditional and contemporary perspectives[208]. This structured, multilevel approach ensures systematic comparison and synthesis, supporting within-case and cross-case analyses (Kuckartz, 2014).

Stage 5: **Mapping and interpretation:** In this final phase, the essential insights from the preceding stages are synthesised across and within the units of analysis and framework components to address the research question meaningfully. As Ritchie and Spencer (1994) argue, the presentation of final data interpretation takes no single form; rather, it depends on the researcher's creativity to craft a compelling narrative that captures the structured and patterned nature of the data. In this study, I have endeavoured to construct a narrative that balances structure and critical insight. While the analysis in Stage 4 was organised around the micro, meso, and macro levels, the discussion is further enriched by employing Freire's model of CP[209]. This critical framework complements the thematic structure, offering a deeper lens for interpreting the findings. Freire's model provides a transformative perspective that aligns seamlessly with the themes of this study, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the data. This dual approach combines structural rigour

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[208] (See Appendix 7).
[209] (See 4.2.4 and 4.2.5)

with critical depth by integrating both Tibbitt's HE models and Freire's CP framework. Tibbitt's model offers a solid foundation for organising and analysing data systematically. In contrast, Freire's model enriches the interpretation by critically engaging with the thematic components, particularly those tied to social transformation and empowerment. These frameworks create a cohesive and dynamic analytical narrative, underscoring the study's relevance and offering a persuasive synthesis of structural and critical dimensions[210].

These five steps in the Framework Analysis used in the data analysis of this research (participants and the ICC content) as illustrated in the figure below:

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[210] (See Appendix 8).

The interviews transcripts

Interviews were conducted with 6 professors and 12 students teaching and learning the ICC

Recording the interviews and transcribing data

The ICC content

Familiarise myself with the transcripts and the ICC content in a comprehensive understanding of the data

Developing a new analytical framework

Indexing the transcripts codes based on the initial framework

Identifying codes, themes and patterns.

Indexing the ICC and transcript codes based on the new framework

Summarising the data set from the interview and the ICC content and charting them into a matrix using MAXQDA

Refining, interpreting and synthesising of the themes and subthemes

Figure (4) Illustration of the five stages in the Framework Analysis

In sum, by applying these five stages of the Framework analysis method to the interview and the ICC content analysis, the research could provide a clear, structured, and rigorous systemic data analysis of the ICC's role in promoting women's rights.

5.7. Conclusion:

In conclusion, this chapter aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the role of the ICC in promoting awareness of women's rights within the sociocultural context of Saudi Arabia. By examining the perceptions of women professors and students at KSA this research contributes valuable insights into how religious education can shape gender dynamics and empower women within an Islamic framework. The combination of semi-structured

interviews and content analysis of the ICC allows for a comprehensive exploration of the participant's experiences and the curriculum's impact on their perspectives.

The research is grounded in exploratory interpretivist epistemology, which emphasises the importance of understanding reality through participants' lived experiences. This approach is particularly suited to analysing complex and dynamic social phenomena that cannot be easily quantified, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of those involved attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. By selecting KSA University as a case study, the study leverages the university's academic prominence and cultural relevance to explore how educational frameworks can contribute to social reform in a context deeply rooted in Islamic traditions.

A key strength of this research is its methodological rigour. Using a pilot study allowed for refinement of the interview process, ultimately improving the quality of the data collected. This stage highlighted the importance of flexibility, active listening, and time management in conducting effective qualitative research. Moreover, integrating multiple techniques—such as prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checks—ensures the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, addressing potential biases and reinforcing the research's objectivity.

Although the study incorporates a simplified quantitative method for calculating proportions and frequencies related to participants' perspectives, it does not adopt a mixed-methods approach, as the primary focus remains on qualitative inquiry. This is because the research seeks to explore the rich, nuanced meanings behind participants' experiences rather than produce broad generalisations or statistical analyses. By leveraging qualitative

methods, the study emphasises the importance of context and the depth of participants' insights into the role of education in shaping attitudes toward women's rights.

The findings of this research contribute significantly to the fields of gender studies and Islamic education, providing a model for future studies examining similar phenomena in other sociocultural contexts. Additionally, it opens avenues for further research on how religious education can catalyse social change, particularly in societies where traditional values intersect with human rights and justice. By offering a deep understanding of the complex relationships between education, culture, and gender, this study paves the way for further multidisciplinary exploration of how educational frameworks can contribute to broader social reform in contexts rooted in Islamic traditions.

Chapter Six

Analysis Section I: Interviews Analysis

6.1. Introduction:

This chapter analyses the eighteen semi-structured interviews with women professors and students who study or teach the Islamic Culture Curriculum (ICC)[211]. The interviews focused on the ICC's effectiveness in promoting awareness of Women's Rights Principles in Islam (WRPI).

The analysis chapter is structured into three levels: micro, meso, and macro, following Tibbit's HRE models[212]. This logical multi-tiered approach comprehensively analyses the impact of the ICC and teaching strategies on women's rights education through individual experiences, considering the broader social contexts and dominant traditions.

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[211] Six interviews were conducted during the pilot study, while the remaining twelve were conducted for the main study (see 5.5.3)

[212] (See 4.2.3, 4.2.5, figure 1).
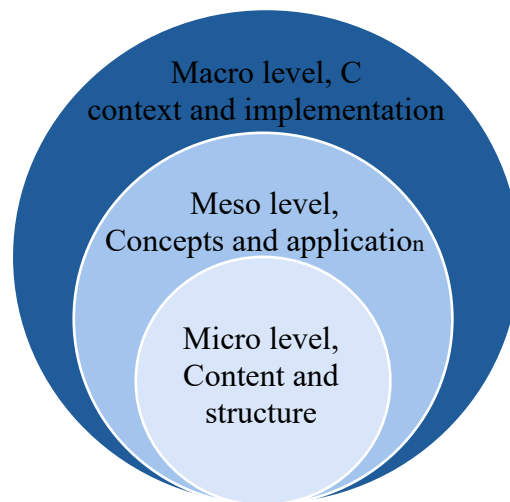
Figure (5): Findings chapter structure

The Micro level aims to answer RQ1 (see 1.8.2). It will examine how women students and professors assess the effectiveness of the ICC and teaching strategies in promoting WRPI. The micro level is organised into five distinct parts, beginning with a broad overview of Islamic curricula in the Saudi educational system and gradually narrowing the focus to the ICC content, structure, language and other pedagogical strategies. The micro level concludes by discussing the ICC's implementation challenges.

In the Meso level, the focus shifts to address RQ2 by focusing on participants' perceptions of the key concepts about WRPI introduced in the ICC. The analysis in this section delves into how professors and students understand these concepts in general and their perceptions about how the ICC introduces these terms and uses them in gender-specific content.

The Macro-level analysis will address RQ3, extending to contextualise knowledge on WRPI within the broader Saudi social and educational framework. It explores how students integrate their understanding of WRPI into their broader social and educational contexts and examines how the dominant educational patterns impact the discussion of WRPI within the Saudi classroom.

The three-level analysis aims to reveal how far the ICC impacts students' understanding and application of WRPI. The Micro level evaluates the curriculum's effectiveness through student and professor assessments. The Meso level investigates how the ICC's content influences students' knowledge of the key concepts of WRPI. Finally, the Macro level places these findings in broader social and educational contexts.

6.2. Micro Level (Content and Structure) The ICC Content on WRPI: Professors' and Students' Overall Perspectives

This level focuses on the participants' assessment of the ICC content structure, knowledge, and language related to raising women students' awareness about their rights in Islam. The Micro level starts with the participants' evaluation of the Saudi Islamic curricula on women's rights in general. It moves to analyse the participant's assessment of the language and structure of the ICC. Then, it focuses on the participants' overview of the knowledge provided in the ICC on WRPI. After that, the analysis delves into the participants' evaluation of the effectiveness of the ICC content in raising women students' awareness of their rights in Islam. Finally, the Micro level ends by analysing the pedagogical challenges both professors and students identified in ICC teaching.

6.2.1 Participants' General Evaluation of Saudi Islamic Curricula on Women's Rights Education:

Asking the participants about their evaluation of the Saudi Islamic curricula in raising knowledge of WRPI, the analysis obtained the following results:
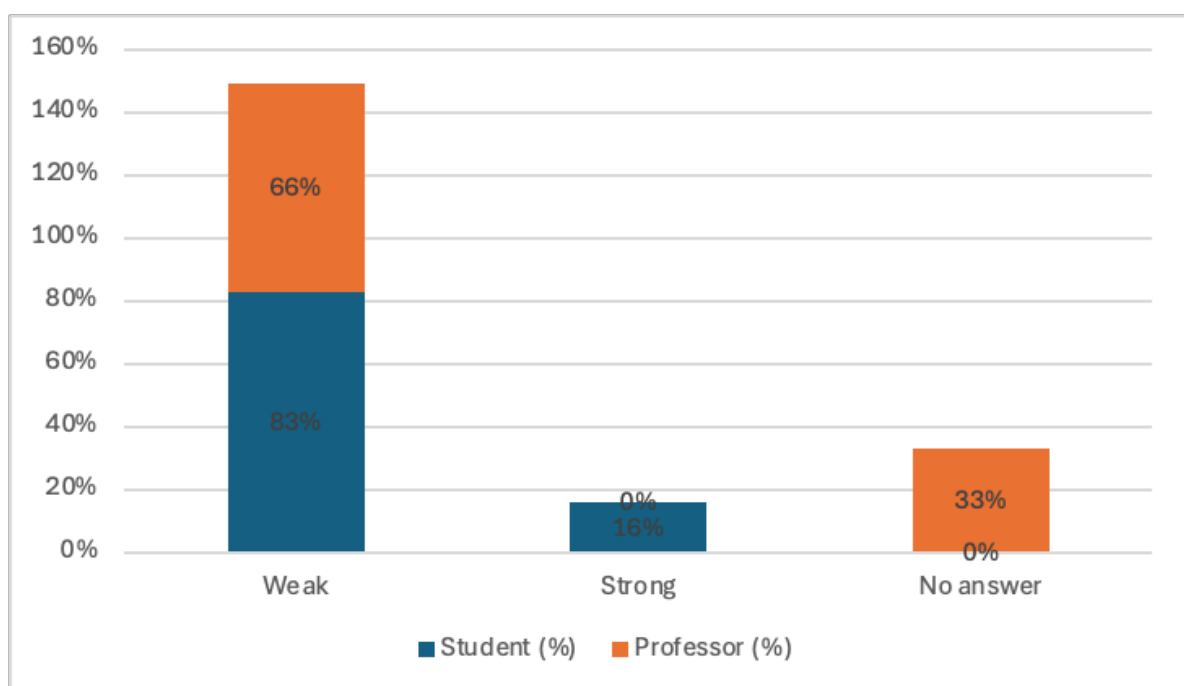
Figure (6): Participants' perspectives on the outcomes of Islamic curricula in Saudi education in raising knowledge of women's rights.

As the figure indicates, a vast majority of students (83%) and professors (66%) believed Islamic education, in general, is inadequate in addressing women's rights. No professor agreed with the small minority of students (16%) who thought Islamic education was strong in this area. Notably, 33% of professors preferred not to answer the question. The data

suggests that there is a significant consensus among students and professors that Islamic education is currently inadequate in addressing women's rights. The reluctance of some professors to provide an answer further suggests potential uncertainty or ambiguity in their perspectives on the effectiveness of the current curricula. The participants revealed that Islamic education curricula do not provide deep knowledge on specific essential topics such as marital rights, which has affected the education of family relations among generations. 66% of the professors acknowledged that Islamic education had a limited impact on providing comprehensive information about WRPI. They criticised the general education outcomes, noting that despite various forms of Islamic education during school years, girls showed little awareness of the Islamic principles in daily cultural, family and religious issues. P6, for example, criticised Islamic education in the Saudi education system and said: "*Girls, despite receiving Islamic education, having Islamic TV channels, speeches and having religious activities in various forms, have not shown significant awareness of cultural and religious aspects*".

Professor P5 believed that "*female students reach university without knowing their rights, especially those related to marital rights*". S5 supported the professor's claim that she never learned about family relationships in Islam by stating: "*We were never taught about women's rights at school as a separate subject. Islamic studies were focused on worship. However, family relationships were not included in any Islamic subject*".

This deficiency in knowledge also affected the previous generations, including S5's mother. She stated: "My mother, who attended school in the 1970s in Saudi Arabia, wasn't taught about women's rights there. She learned about her rights only through family traditions,

resulting in limited understanding. Despite completing high school, she doesn't know her rights in situations like her husband's absence or seeking separation".

S5 elaborated that her mother endured a long period of suffering with her husband, unaware that she had the option to seek separation through *Al-Khul*'[213]. In other words, her mother mistakenly believed that only the husband had the authority to initiate a divorce. Consequently, she felt trapped in the marriage, thinking she had no choice but to remain his wife if he refused to divorce her.

P2 and P3 acknowledged that when they were young students, they lacked knowledge about women's rights until they were students at the university, despite the extensive study of Islamic education during their school years. In a parallel perspective, S4 and S3 asserted that their understanding of women's rights in Islam was derived from sources outside of formal schooling. S1 expressed apprehensions about the outcome of the Islamic education system, implying that it may fail to meet the anticipated results of the Ministry of Education that endorses Islamic teaching through its Islamic education policy. She highlighted the gap between the Islamic education received by individuals from a young age and their actual behaviour in society. She said: "*Despite thorough and intensive Islamic teaching beginning in elementary school and continuing through all levels, do you see people in society*

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[213] (See 3.3.5).

behaving intentionally from a religious perspective? Frankly, no. Although it could be better, I am unsure whether the problem is with the curricula or the teaching strategies".

Likewise, 83% of students admitted they could not recall whether they studied WRPI during their general school years. However, 16% of students held a different perspective compared to the others. They believed that Islamic education enhanced their knowledge of WRPI. This implies that the problem might lie in the student's personal preferences and differences, such as prior knowledge, home education, learning styles, or personal experiences, rather than in the curriculum's content or structure. This different observation implies that factors beyond mere educational and pedagogical ones might limit Islamic education's general effectiveness—external factors such as family education and socio-cultural context can contribute to fomenting effective education on WRPI.

6.2.2. Participants' Assessment of Language and Content Structuring in the ICC:

Several participants shared their concerns about the challenges of the complex language and monopolised content structure of the ICC that influence students' awareness of WRPI. When asking the participants about their perspectives on the language, structure, and content in general in the ICC, the analysis obtained the following results:
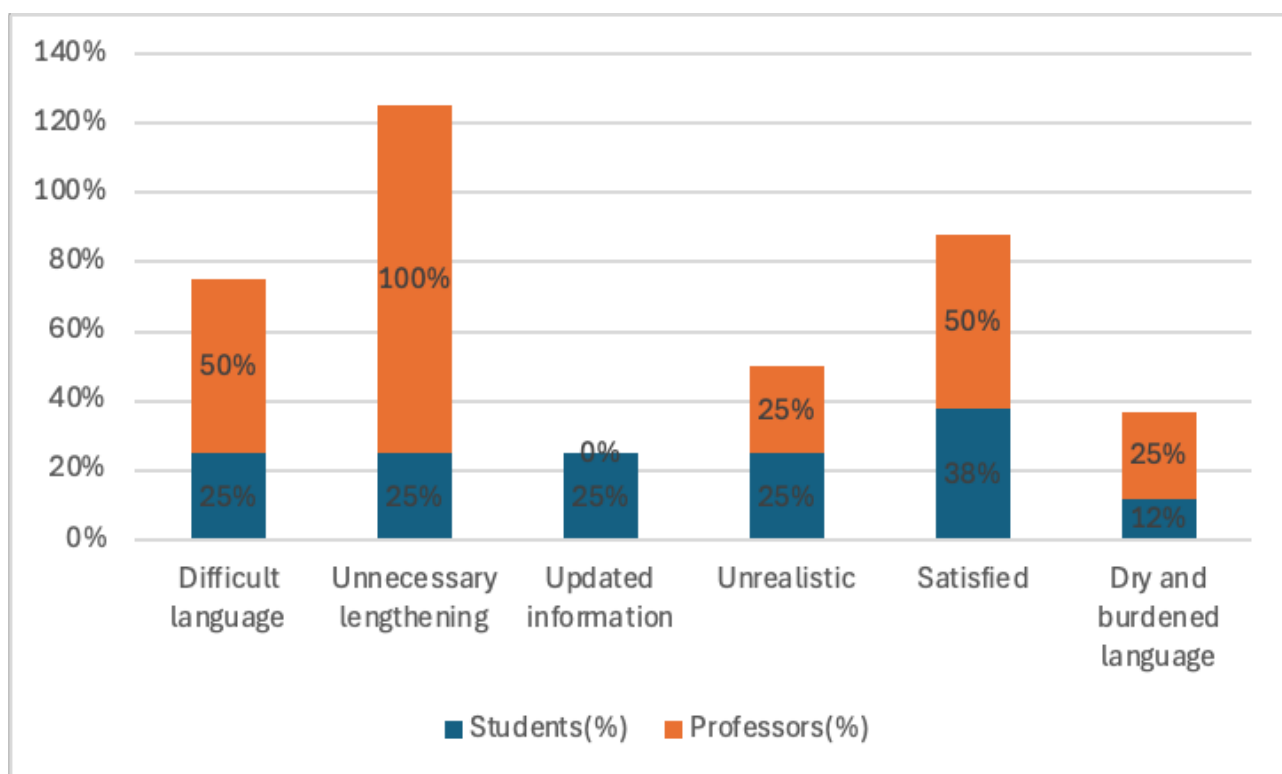
Figure (7): The participants' perspectives on the ICC's language and structure.

According to the figure, 16% of the students expressed dissatisfaction with the ICC's complex language, unnecessary length, and outdated and unrealistic information. Meanwhile, 33% of the professors acknowledged the language's complicated structure, and all professors were dissatisfied with the ICC's unnecessary length of the texts. Additionally, 8% of the students and 16% of the professors highlighted the dry language, noting that it failed to address women's values. A consensus among participants suggests that the content's presentation is a significant barrier to engaging in effective teaching and learning experiences. However, it is noteworthy that despite these criticisms, 33% of professors and 25% of students affirmed their satisfaction with the language structures. This indicates that while there is significant recognition of challenges related to the language and presentation

of the ICC content, a substantial portion of both groups still find the language structure acceptable and adequate.

Even though P1 and P2 expressed their satisfaction with the ICC language, they pointed out the challenges posed by using juristic language (*Fiqh*), which P1 considered difficult for students to comprehend. Using complex (*Fiqh*) terms or jargon (technical terms) without a clear explanation could prevent students from adequately understanding. Moreover, such language would allow professors to assert their intellectual superiority over students, which could create a hierarchy based on linguistic complexity rather than proper understanding (Erickson and Shultz,1982). P2 supported the need for clear and straightforward language in the ICC, considering many students' weak Arabic skills due to an excessive focus on foreign languages. P5 claimed that the overall linguistic style failed to resonate with the current female generation's needs.

Although 25% of students expressed their satisfaction with the linguistic structure of the ICC, affirming that it is logical and coherent, 50% of students completely disagreed with that. S7 and S1 pointed out the difficulty of language structures and the absence of current or up-to-date language styles. S1 described the language as "*ridiculous and resembling an outdated poster from 2005*". She cited a lesson on "Factors for Disintegration and Weakening of the Family Structure." (pp. 199-205), where the mentioned factors, she argued, are illogical and unrealistic, i.e. "*corrupt films* ". She considered this example outdated and unreal because of the rise of media streaming services like Netflix, one of the platforms that now shape contemporary TV watching. S12 agreed with P5 that the language used to discuss women's rights is often away from the core value of WRPI. She stated that

the ICC discourse sometimes fails to highlight "*women's honour and elevate their status. It presents women's rights dry and burdened*". For example, S11 highlighted that the ICC's discussion on the dowry focused solely on reducing the financial burden for men rather than recognising its importance as a symbol of respect and value that Islam places on women's worth and rights. This indicated a narrow interpretation that overlooks the broader significance of the dowry in Islamic teaching. These dry language structures foment mistrust of the content of the ICC on WRPI, as students perceive it as biased and impractical.

The content structure was also criticised by professors and student participants, who highlighted the long and unnecessary sections. Asking the participants about their perspectives on the content structure, we obtained the following answers:
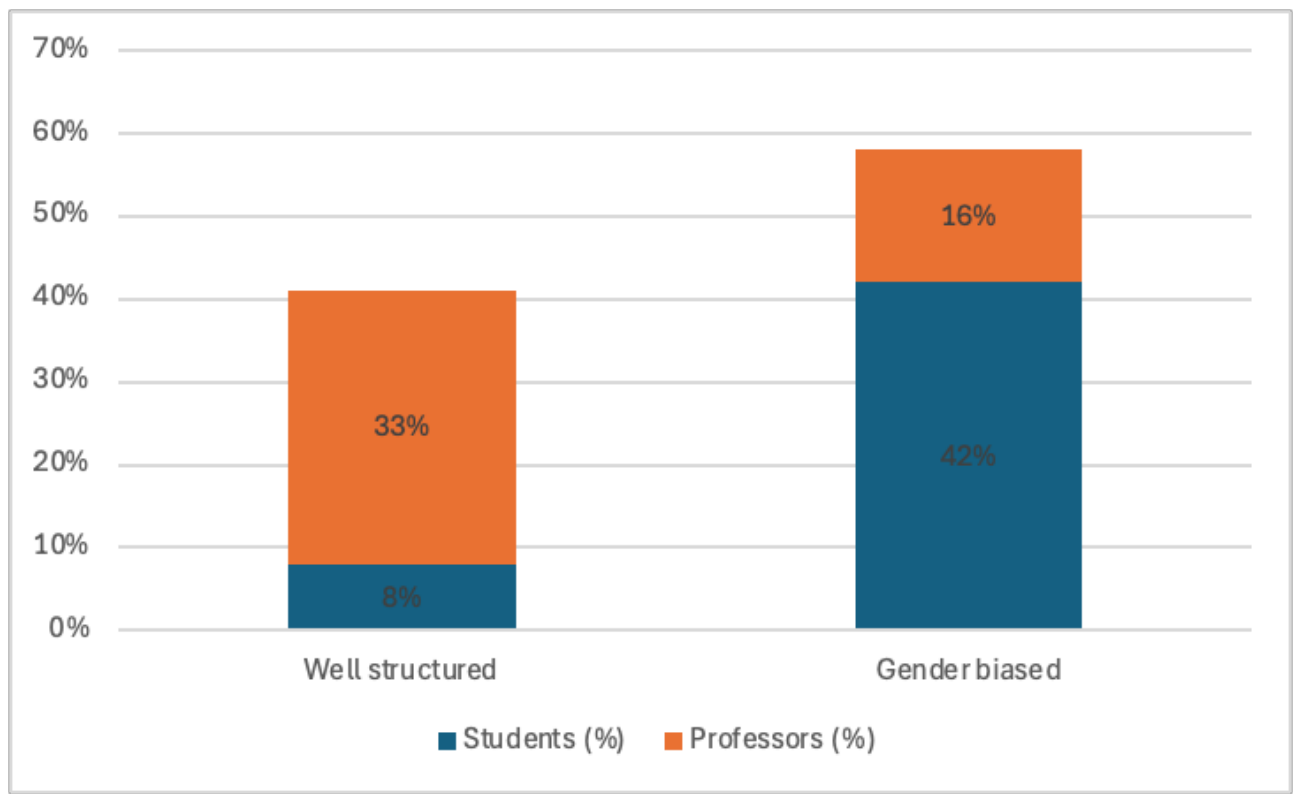
Figure (8): The participants' perspectives on the ICC's structuring

The figure shows that 33% of professors are satisfied with the ICC's content structure arrangement, suggesting that the curriculum's structure aligns well with the pedagogical expectations. Only 8% of students agreed with professors, whereas 42% found the structuring gendered biased. Only 16% of professors recognise the gender-biased structure identified by most students. Such contrasting answers between professors and students highlight the gap between the ICC content structure and how students perceive it.

One of the interviewed professors is a member of the committee that designs the ICC committee. She was satisfied with the structure and mentioned that the content structure was developed by a committee of six male and two female professors. Decisions on content

structure are based entirely on those teachers' reflections, opinions and experiences. That is to say, students' needs, reflections and opinions on the curriculum and the content are underestimated and excluded. P1 justified this monopolisation by saying that "*the committee members were expert and able to understand students' needs, given their close relationship or proximity to the students*". Such pedagogical methodology reflects Ferrier's "culture of silence" theory (1970), as discussed in chapter 4, which states that students' opinions and needs are muted and underestimated compared to the knowledge and intellect of professors.

Consequently, a hierarchal educational system is established between professors and students where the committee acts as a supreme authority (Ferrier, 1970). In addition, the higher number of male professors in the committee (6:2) can be a factor for the gender-biased content structure. P4 explained that men's rights are always prioritised over women's in structuring the ICC. This bias may also indicate hierarchical gender dynamics within the committee.

Although 8% of students were satisfied with the ICC structure in agreement with P1 and P2, 42% agreed with P4s. They indicate that the ICC structure prioritises males' rights in accord with Saudi social traditions and focuses only on men's interests. S11, for example, criticised the lesson titles that did not match the content and manipulated women's rights related to the topic. For example, the dowry[214] lesson is titled '*The Call for Facilitation and*

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[214] (See 3.3.3)

Easement in Dowry.' S11 explained that the title did not highlight women's right to the dowry but demanded that women drop part of their rights for men's ease. She extended that author quoted the Prophet (PBUH) advising a man to "*seek a dowry, even if it is just an iron ring*" to emphasise that the dowry can be less worthy than money, gold or jewellery. S11 argued that this *Ḥadīth* emphasises that men must provide a dowry according to their means, whether rich or poor, and not to reduce its importance or worth. For here, structuring the lesson under that title seemed to prioritise men's interests over the *Ḥadīth*'s intended reference.

From a parallel perspective, S10 and S12 argued that authors prioritised their interpretations of Islamic teachings over the original inherited interpretations of *Qurʾānic* texts. They explained that the lesson "Preserving the Husband in His Presence and Absence," which emphasises women's roles in pleasing their husbands, lacks any evidence from the primary legislative sources in Islam (*Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*). S10 argued that by not providing religious evidence on the issue, the given content seemed to be personal objective opinions that empower traditional gender roles rather than Islamic teachings on WRPI. S5 added that controversial issues for the current generation, such as polygamy, justice and family maintenance, were not addressed clearly in one well-structured lesson but were scattered throughout the ICC's content, which resulted in incoherent and fragmented knowledge on these essential and delicate issues of women's rights.

Accordingly, although most professors recognised the ICC's problematic language, they still needed to identify the shortness in the content structure, which students pointed out as biased and fragmented. Students shared more profound critical thoughts about the ICC

language and structure than professors whose positions defend the committee's decisions and choices in structuring the ICC content on WRPI.

6.2.3 Participants' Assessment of the Knowledge Provided in the ICC on WRPI

Asking the participants whether the ICC provided the students with sufficient knowledge about WRPI, the analysis obtained the following results:
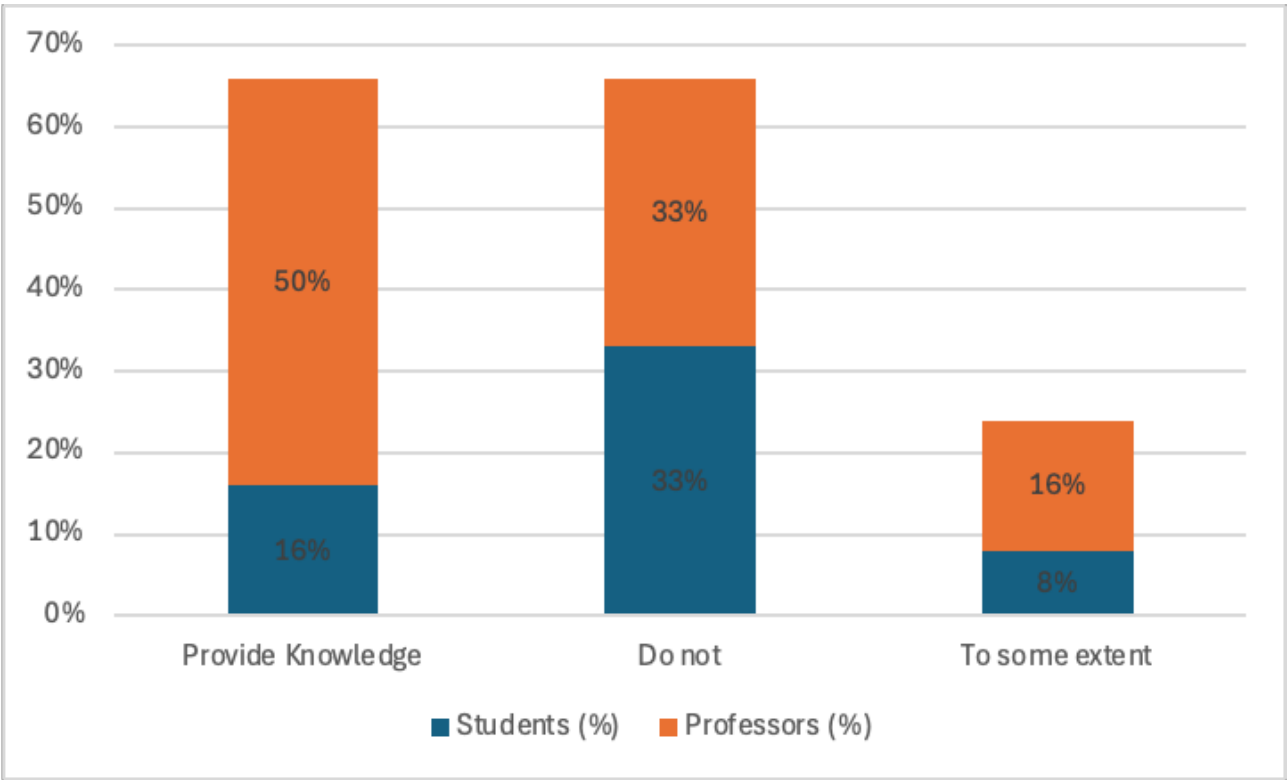
Figure (9): The participants' perspectives on the knowledge provided in the ICC about WRPI

The figure demonstrates that 50% of professors and 16% of students believed that the ICC provided sufficient knowledge on WRPI. However, 33% of students and 33% of professors thought that the ICC did not offer the needed knowledge, and 8% of students saw that the ICC provided knowledge to some extent; 16% of professors agreed with the latter. The graphic shows that professors are more optimistic about the knowledge offered in the ICC on WRPI than students. Although half of the professors believed the ICC provided students with adequate information for today's needs, P6 pointed out the repetitive content through the years. From a contradictory perspective, P4 asserted that the ICC provides minimal content, expecting professors to elaborate comprehensively on it in the classroom. P5 explained that the ICC is "*poor in providing what the girls need today*". For example, although ICC education is compulsory for men and women students, P5 pointed out that the ICC focuses on enhancing women's knowledge of their duties from social lenses and expectations (*ideal women*), prioritising teaching women their duties rather than teaching men their responsibilities. This might sustain traditional social gender roles throughout the ICC and affect how both genders view and implement their rights and obligations[215]. As for the students, only 8% indicated that the knowledge provided is sufficient to some extent. In comparison, 16% perceived the provided knowledge in the ICC on WRPI as complete and adequate, and 33% did not agree with the latter. S5, for example, stated that some knowledge she obtained from the ICC was new and unfamiliar to her, such as the unit on resolving marital problems, which, for her, provided a practical guide to manage such

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[215] (See 3.4.3 and 7.2.1).

issues (Chapter 5 in the ICC). She suggested that teaching this subject in high school could help address such issues within some families. S2 commended the information in the ICC about women's rights. However, it was scattered and required a logical arrangement and linking of topics with more methodological perspectives and illustrative examples. Students criticised the repetition of information in the ICC; S10 explained that the ICC content only included information already widely known in society. On a parallel perspective, S12 and the three others pointed out that the ICC lacks adequate contextual information about women's rights in contemporary life. She echoed P5's view that the ICC does not address men as responsible for women's rights in society but only as rights holders. She made a page reference (p. 42) of the second unit on the criteria for choosing a wife: The ICC listed the criteria of choosing wife such as her wealth, for her lineage, for her beauty or for her piety, while it solely pointed out the most important criterion for choosing a husband is a religion among "other criteria" and did not mention these other criteria." S12 added that "there is no benefit if one side is actively working towards change while the other remains stuck in outdated traditions.

Accordingly, students and professors criticised the ICC's capability to produce knowledge on WRPI. Although several professors highlighted its effectiveness, many students expressed concerns about the insufficient and biased knowledge provided by the ICC content on WRPI, which asserts traditional gender roles of ideal Saudi women rather than promoting WRPI within the Saudi social context.

6.2.4 The Participants' Evaluation of the Awareness of WRPI Among Women Students

When the participants were asked about their evaluation of the existing awareness of WRPI among women students, the analysis found the following results:
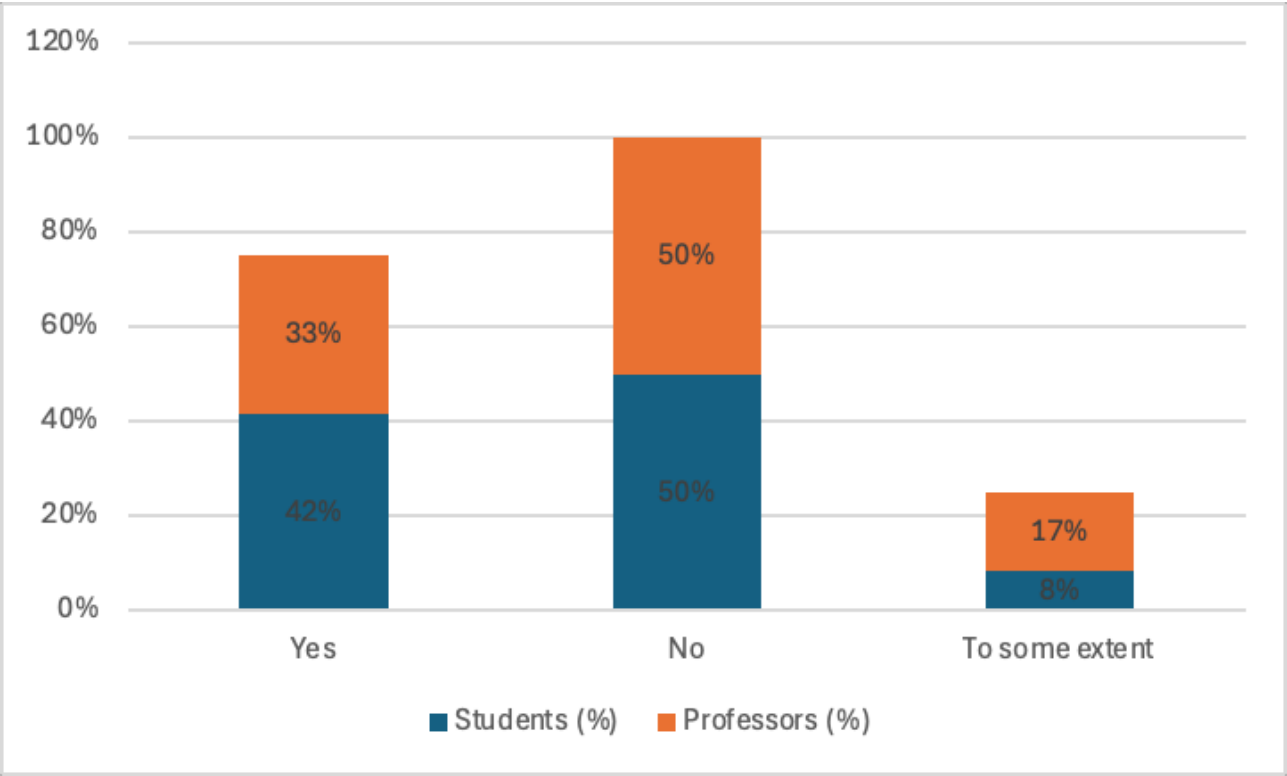
Figure (10): The evaluation of the existing awareness of WRPI among women students

Half of the professors and students believed that women students have a low awareness of WRPI. Meanwhile, 42% of the students and 33% of the professors believe that women students enjoy awareness of their rights. The rest of the two groups, 17% of professors and 8% of students, responded that women students enjoy awareness "to some extent." Interestingly, both professors and students who answered with full awareness followed

their answer with "but", except for one of the students who confirmed that there is complete awareness among female students on WRPI, especially in the social media era.

The "but" extensions of professors and students negatively evaluated referred-to awareness. For example, professors described it as "false awareness" (P4) and "only theoretical, and women don't know how to put it in praxis" (P3). Students, on a parallel perspective, evaluated it as "false" (S2), "limited to the current generation, not the past one" (S5), "accompanied by excessive reaction" (S6), and "It comes from sources other than education" (S3). Having the "but" patterns shared by professors and students suggests a shared critical thinking on the female students' awareness of WRPI. Including "but" after acknowledging the awareness implies that while participants recognise some level of it, they also perceive limitations, complexities, or alternative perspectives that qualify or challenge the quality of the awareness.

However, professors and students followed the "No" answer with similar evaluative terms, such as "*false awareness*" (P1, P2, and S7) and "an extreme *reaction can indicate it*" (P5 and S12). They emphasised that it is a false awareness as most students are "*unaware of Islamic texts*" (S7). However, S2 explained that even if the awareness is false, it can still be considered "a type of" awareness. Accordingly, those who think that awareness is false refuse to consider the existing awareness as accepted or legitimate.

As mentioned above by students, the way students react and reveal their awareness was also criticised by professors. P5 explained that some students react unbalanced when discussing men's rights in the classroom. These reactions extend to rebelling against the

Islamic texts, as student S12 pointed out. The contrasting opinions among participants regarding the female students' awareness of WRPI highlight the complexity of the social context in which this awareness is situated. The analysis found no consensus or standard definition for the concept of awareness in Saudi social or academic standards, which makes it empirically difficult for the researcher to think critically about the referred-to awareness.

6.2.5 The Participants' Identification of the Pedagogical Challenges in the ICC Teaching and Learning

Asking the participants to identify the pedagogical challenges they face in implementing the ICC in the classroom, the data find out the following results:
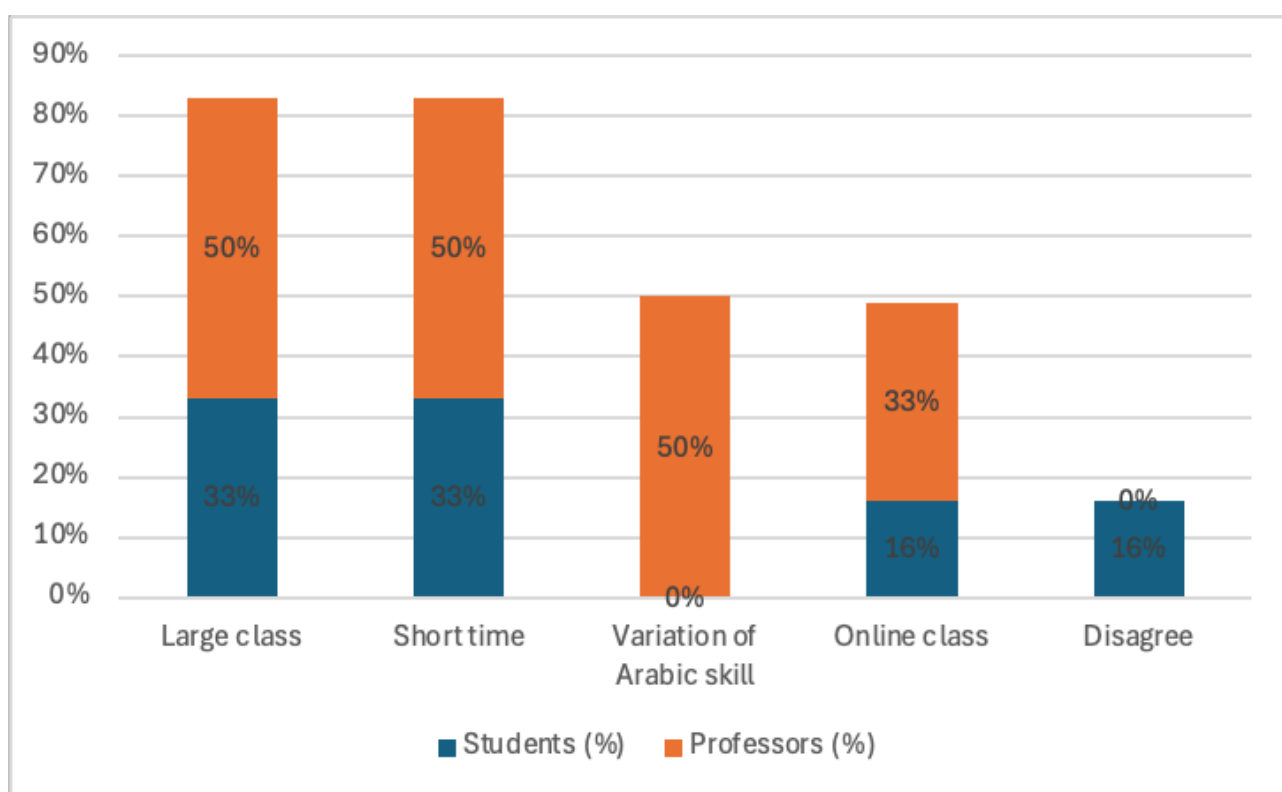
Figure (11): The participants' perspectives on pedagogical challenges

The large number of students and short class duration are the prominent challenges identified by 50% of professors and 33% of the students. The variation of Arabic language skills is noted as a challenge by 50% of professors; however, none of the students identified this challenge. Online courses (shifted since the Coronavirus duration and remained) challenged 33% of professors and 16% of students. Students seem less aware of the pedagogical challenges than professors, as 16% deny any existence of such challenges.

Although half of the professors believed that the ICC provides students with adequate information for today's needs[216], half also believed that students still have a low awareness of WRPI[217]. They justify the gap between the theoretical and the practical through several pedagogical challenges that hinder effective teaching and learning processes in the classroom. They pointed out that a large number of students reduces individual attention and the quality of interaction between students and professors. For example, P3, P5, and P2 noted that student numbers sometimes reach 150 or 170 per class, with only 45 45-minute duration (35 minutes during Ramadan). The combination of these two challenges restricted the discussion and the engagement with the content. However, P3 noted that the department recently acknowledged these challenges and asked professors to upload audiovisual materials on the Blackboard virtual system as a solution. However, P3 commented that not all professors followed this solution. Moreover, none of the student participants mentioned these extra virtual materials as a source of knowledge in the interviews.

Language proficiency is essential for understanding religious concepts and engaging in meaningful discourse; however, students' varying levels of Arabic language skills impose significant challenges for professors. P2 attributed this weakness to prioritising foreign languages over Arabic in primary education, leading to a disconnect from the Arabic language cognitive competencies, mainly needed for the *Qurʾān* and *Ḥadīth* understanding.

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[216] (See 6.2.3)
[217] (See 6.2.4)

Additionally, the online ICC lecturing model, which started during the COVID-19 crisis and continues to date, was the final straw. P2 and P5 explained that online lessons are challenging in creating an interactive environment and fostering effective communication in the virtual model. It also prevents offering a basic level of individual support to students. P5 emphasised her dissatisfaction with the virtual teaching model and said:

When I see the student, I can sense her needs or if she is struggling with family issues. Yet, online, I cannot discern her viewpoint.

Losing body language and facial expressions is essential to understanding students' needs and challenges. P2 argued that in-person classes allow professors to manage the taught content effectively. She noted that whispers could indicate students' concentration and engagement, which is lost online, where students tend to mute microphones, turn off cameras, or even leave the class in silence, making managing the classroom difficult.

16% of students agreed with the professors identifying the challenges of the online model. For example, S10 and S6 agreed that online limited class duration and large student numbers restrict discussions and prevent interactions. On the contrary, the other 16% of students considered online classes an opportunity for flexible learning experiences and overcoming students' large number of challenges. They disagree with professors' argument that online lectures might break communication between students and professors. They set an example of their experiences in other online lectures where professors could facilitate successful discussions. Students asserted that the ICC professors followed traditional

teaching methods based on presenting the content and tracking attendance rather than engaging in interactive discussions or creating interactive online teaching materials.

83% of students agreed that the ICC and the professor's teaching strategies failed to assist students in providing deep awareness of WRPI. S3 explained that the traditional teaching methodology focuses on rote learning over engagement and questioning, which is ineffective with the current generation that needs an educational approach based on critical thinking and debates. S1 strongly agreed with S3 and conveyed a message to the education staff: *"Please avoid rigid narrative methods and teach us how to be critical learners."* From the same perspective, S7 stressed that millennials must be informed, have critical discussions, and engage in dialogues to confront current social challenges. She also expressed that she and her colleagues *"belong to a generation that asks a hundred questions and needs to meet a hundred answers."*

Accordingly, the pedagogical challenges in implementing the ICC within the classroom are well-identified by professors and students. As professors considered the deficiency in the Arabic language, the online model, and the large number of students challenging factors to interactive teaching and discussions on WRPI, students did not recognise the language competencies as a barrier. They found the online model an opportunity to deal with large groups and the large number of the students as an enriching experience. Students pointed out the traditional teaching strategies based on preaching as the primary pedagogical challenge for effective learning and critical thinking teaching methods. The dominant teaching strategies are to be analysed deeply at the macro level (see

6.3. Meso Level (Concepts and application)

The Meso level aims to analyse the key concepts and terms that participants consistently referred to in the interview and the discussions about the ICC content and students' awareness of WRPI. The analysis identified eleven recurring concepts related to women's rights discussion in Islam. These concepts were neither included in the interview scripts nor introduced by the researcher during the interviews.

This section aims to identify the participant's perspective on the importance of these terms in WRPI discussion and whether the ICC effectively applies these terms and concepts. The analysis identifies two categories of key terms used by the participants. The first is the "Islamic terms" category, which includes ten terms that initially have Arabic roots and Islamic references, which are Marriage and family formation, Obedience, Balance between rights and duties, The Foundation (*Al-Taʾṣīl*), The Right *(Al-Haq)*, Polygamy, Divorce initiated by the wife(*Al-Khulʾ*), Divorce (*Al-ṭalāq*), Guardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*), and the Peace concept. The second category includes what the participants called the "imported term" from Western thought: "feminism". The following figure consists of the frequency of mentioning these terms among professors and student participants:

Professors	Frequency	Students	Frequency

Al-Khul'	50%	Al-Khul'	16%
Al-Taʾṣīl	100%	Al-Taʾṣīl	66%
Divorce (*Al-ṭalāq*)	33%	Divorce (*Al-ṭalāq*)	16%
Gardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*)	33%	Gardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*)	75%
Marriage(Al-*Zawāj*)	66%	Marriage (*Al-Zawāj*)	0
Feminism (*Al-Naswiyya*)	66%	Feminism (Al-Naswiyya)	83%
Obedience to the husband (*Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj*)	33%	Obedience to the husband (*Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj*)	25%
Peace (*Al-Salām*) in interpersonal relationships	50%	Peace (*Al-Salām*) in interpersonal relationships	58%
Polygamy (Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt)	33%	Polygamy (Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt)	33%
Rights and duties balance	66%	Rights and duties balance	50%

The right (*Al-Ḥaq*)	66%	The right (*Al-Ḥaq*)	83%
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	100%	DOCUMENTS with code(s)	100%
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0
ANALYSED DOCUMENTS	6 / 100%	ANALYSED DOCUMENTS	12 / 100%

Figure (12): A comparison of frequency segments and cases between professors and

students

As the figure shows, some key concepts are discussed by professors and students, but others, such as marriage and family formation, are only addressed by professors. The terms will be discussed below, starting with the Islamic terms and closing the Meso level with the imported term.

6.3.1. The foundation (*Al-Taʾṣīl*)[218]

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[218] (See 3.3.1)

The importance of *Al-Taʾṣīl* was acknowledged by 100% of the professors, who referred to it thirty-two times. Students also recognised the importance of *Al-Taʾṣīl,* as 66% of students mentioned the term 17 times. Both professors and students agreed that integrating the *"Al-Taʾṣīl"* term and concept into the ICC is essential to fostering a comprehensive religious understanding of WRPI. They asserted that *Al-Taʾṣīl* would contribute to building students' critical awareness to address internal and external social challenges and gender-oppressive structures within a solid Islamic frame. The *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology would help students develop coherent views on WRPI, enabling them to address social changes, globalisation, and social media influence within the Islamic frame of reference. However, there was a consensus among participants on the ICC's failure to include the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology effectively.

Professors explained *Al-Taʾṣīl* as a process of defining, comprehending, and comparing terms related to women's rights within the religious evidence in a reciprocal process between the professor and the student. P3 added that the *Al-Taʾṣīl* approach could establish adherence to *Allah's* commands and deepen students' belief that women's rights are founded on justice rather than equality. Due to its importance, P1 suggested dedicating a lesson on *Al-Taʾṣīl* in the opening chapter on WRPI as a starting point of knowledge to foster a comprehensive understanding of *Sharīʿah*-based rights, eliminate confusion, and address doubts about WRPI. P5 agreed with P1 as she explained that it is insufficient to provide rulings on women's rights in the ICC without any prior knowledge of the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, that is, how this knowledge is conceived and structured from the Islamic sources of knowledge. Building on this, P1 and P5 affirmed that *Al-Taʾṣīl* would

significantly enhance students' awareness of gender dynamics in Islam, enabling them to think critically and be knowledgeable about the potential misinterpretation of Islamic texts or social norms diverging from Islamic principles. P3 added that *Al-Taʾṣī* is crucial to comprehending women's rights in real-world contexts as, she explains, it links theoretical religious knowledge with practical everyday experiences. Likewise, P6 indicated that comparing sources of knowledge through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology is an effective method of elevating awareness as it enables the student to critically assess societal, political, and economic ideas, beliefs, and values. P4 emphasised that critical thinking is achieved through discussing the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology in the classroom. she said:

> Raising critical thinking about rights involves analysing ideas and evaluating practices that balance and perpetuate rights.

She stressed that students should be encouraged to analyse the religious texts critically and to think critically about the surrounding social, economic, and political conditions beyond traditional interpretations.

Students acknowledged that professors effectively employed the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology in teaching women's rights, even though the ICC did not follow it consistently. S6 and S7 explained that professors' efforts in following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology helped strengthen the students' belief in the inherent religious justice and wisdom of these rights, providing them with a solid and enduring foundation in their understanding. Although the rest of the students who did not mention *Al-Taʾṣīl* in teaching methods or the ICC's content, they referred to its essential role in enhancing critical awareness, particularly linking religious

knowledge on women's rights to social realities. In agreement with P1, S1 argued that critical awareness of women's rights requires a deep faith in *Allah's* commands, a comprehensive understanding of *Sharīʿah*'s objectives, and a recognition of the fact that rights come with corresponding duties and responsibilities. S1 continued that *Al-Taʾṣīl* paves the way for rational discussion and conviction, especially with the contemporary generation, and establishes a logical approach to thinking, leading to social change. S3 emphasised the importance of a deep foundational understanding of *Al-Taʾṣīl* to deal with controversial topics on different websites and their social impacts.

Professors' and students' emphasis on *Al-Taʾṣīl* indicates that a curriculum grounded on an effective *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology can profoundly impact students' comprehension and application of WRPI within the Saudi social framework.

6.3.2. The right (*Al-Ḥaq*)[219]

The term *Al-Ḥaq* was mentioned by 66% of professors and 83% of students. Professors agreed on the need to define *Al-Ḥaq* to enhance the awareness of this concept and its connection to *Qurʾānic* principles like justice and equality. They highlighted the need for a precise definition of the term to establish its boundaries and prevent the misuse of the concept. P5 explained that it is essential to clearly understand the *Al-Ḥaq* concept within the context of family dynamics. She believed this understanding is crucial for women to

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[219] (See 3.2.1)

confidently fulfil their rights, duties, and responsibilities according to *Sharīʿah* law. In this regard, P5 outlined four essential aspects of *Al-Ḥaq* that students should be aware of to maintain balanced and healthy relationships. For her, rights in Islam are divinely established by the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* and must align with what pleases *Allah*. She pointed out that asserting one's rights should not infringe on others' rights, that rights come with corresponding duties, and that the failure of others to fulfil their duties does not exempt an individual from fulfilling their own responsibilities. She said: First, all rights are established by divine authority in the Qurʾān and Sunnah (the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH). Therefore, these rights should not conflict with anything that displeases Allah. Second, claiming one's rights does not mean infringing on others' rights; a wife enjoying her rights does not mean she oversteps the rights of her husband or children. Third, every right has a corresponding duty, for example, a husband's claim to his rights should be matched by fulfilling his duties towards his wife. Finally, others' failure to fulfil our rights does not exempt us from performing our duties towards them.

P4 extended that a lack of a comprehensive definition of *Al-Ḥaq's* concept could exacerbate social gender role challenges. She clarified that women might advocate for "falsely perceived" rights, leading to conflicts with others, including family members, because of unclear perceptions about genuine entitlements. P1 and P2 indicated that the term *Al-Ḥaq* was not explicitly nor comprehensively defined in the ICC content[220]. For example, in the term *Haq Al-Nafaqah* (the right to alimony-spousal maintenance), the professor explained

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[220] (See 7.3.1).

the meaning of *Al-Nafaqah* but never explained *Al-Nafaqah* as a women's right within the *Al-Ḥaq* framework. However, P2, contrary to other professors, minimised the need to define *Al-Ḥaq,* arguing that the ICC is not a course for rights. P2's view is contradictory because she considered that the ICC focuses on "The Family System in Islam" and understanding the concept of *Al-Ḥaq* is not sophisticated within that system. P2's opinion reflects a simplified understanding of the complex role that concepts like *Al-Ḥaq* play, resonating with Freire's concept (1970) of (naïve consciousness), which denotes a superficial engagement with societal dynamics[221]. In agreement with most professors, and contrary to professor P2, students agreed that a comprehensive definition of *Al-Ḥaq* is crucial for fostering critical awareness, preventing confusion and ensuring its correct application. S7 and S2 highlighted that the absence of a specific definition for *Al-Ḥaq* led to the inappropriate claiming of rights. S5 confirmed that the ICC's failure to define *Al-Ḥaq* properly might be due to the author's assumption that the term is obvious and known by students, which is not necessarily true. However, students show some awareness of the *Al-Ḥaq* reference in the interviews. For example, S2 argued that claiming rights without considering corresponding duties is claiming *"false rights"* in agreement with P4's earlier argument. S1 emphasised that Islam's distribution of rights and responsibilities between women and men is based on justice, not absolute equality; otherwise, they are *"perceived rights"* that one believes to be valid yet not grounded on the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology.

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[221] (See 4.2.5)

Accordingly, *Al-Ḥaq* is a key concept for WRPI discussion as it establishes a comprehensive frame of rights reference. It will allow them to know how to analyse the sacred text to determine their rights within the complex social structures and family relations.

6.3.3. Balance of rights and duties[222]

Participants, 66% of professors and 50% of students, emphasised the importance of balancing rights, duties, and responsibilities to maintain social justice, particularly nowadays, as social norms and media significantly influence people's lives and perceptions of rights. Professors and students criticised the contemporary trend among Saudi women influenced by media narratives that prioritised claiming rights over fulfilling their responsibilities.

As for professors, 66% repeated thirteen times that the younger generation lacks a comprehensive understanding of the balance between rights and responsibilities. P3 indicated that this is particularly applicable to male youth who asserted their rights more frequently than their duties, as social traditions favour men over women, too. P2, in contrast, pointed out that Saudi women focus more on rights than responsibilities, influenced by imported media narratives and agendas that highlight an unbalanced view of women's rights and duties. However, P2, P5, and P4 acknowledged the importance of

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[222] (See 3.2.1)

promoting awareness of balancing rights, duties, and responsibilities for social justice. They criticised the ICC content for its lack of clarity on the issue. They indicated that professors are left alone to address the issue, and they become pivotal in raising awareness of the balance rather than relying on the curriculum content on the balance.

Students demonstrated considerable awareness of that balance and criticised the ICC's unbalanced, biased content, as 50% of students agreed with the professors and pointed out the importance of increasing awareness of the issue. S7 and S2, in a parallel agreement with P2, criticised claiming rights without acknowledging duties. S12 warned that a lack of awareness of this balance could lead to social problems comparable to the dangers of misinterpreting or even abolishing women's rights.

S8 argued that the ICC seemed to prioritise men's rights. S5 agreed with S8's claim, as she had observed a similar trend in many Islamic curricula during her education journey; she said: *"This is the case in most Islamic curricula at various Saudi educational levels, which do not address relationship matters or the balance between men's and women's rights but only focus on religious worship."*

The students also agreed with the professors that the issue of balancing rights, duties, and responsibilities should have been explicitly addressed within the ICC. S5 recognised that professors put effort into explaining this missing balance, but not all professors can address the issue effectively without pedagogical guidance.

6.3.4. The Guardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*)[223]

Participants revealed different interests in *Al-Qiwāmah;* only 33% of professors referred to it three times, while 75% of students did it twenty-one times. However, all participants agreed on the controversial nature of the *Al-Qiwāmah* concept, pointing out the patriarchal dominance attached to it. They also criticised the ICC for failing to clarify the concept's confusion and link it to its real Islamic reference and how to practice it in real life. P3 contributed to the controversy over the term, which stemmed from Saudi society's patriarchal structure, which Islamic education failed to address. P1 assured that the ICC could increase students' critical awareness of *Al-Qiwāmah* through the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology.

On the other hand, students identified tensions between Islamic education and cultural norms, leading to confusion and many unanswered questions about *Al-Qiwāmah*. Students who mentioned this term indicated they were confused by *Al-Qiwāmah's* meaning. They assert that their doubts and questions about the term and its implementation remained unresolved despite being frequently mentioned in Islamic education. S1 believed that merely gaining knowledge is insufficient to improve awareness of *Al-Qiwāmah*, echoing P5's viewpoint[224]. S2 supported S1's observation that information on *Al-Qiwāmah* within the ICC lacks coherence and fails to relate religious knowledge with social reality.

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[223] (See 3.3.2)
[224] (See *Al-Taʾṣīl* section 3.3.1)

An example of the doubts unsolved in the classroom for S1 is the women's financial contributions to family expenses, especially with current socio-economic changes. S1 questioned whether a woman's financial independence or her contribution to the family's economic sustainability diminishes or reduces men's *Al-Qiwāmah* of the family. Similarly, S10 added that she always tries to find an answer about who precisely the *Qa'im* (Guardian) is. Is he the husband? Or any male family member? S6 further questioned the prerequisites for *Al-Qiwāmah* and the criteria for men becoming guardians, asking if a man with a drug addiction or who neglects prayers could still act as a guardian.

The concept of *Al-Qiwāmah* is challenging to understand and implement in the family, especially when those men who are supposed to perform it need help understanding how to apply it within the Islamic frame. This complexity is evident in the case of S12, who complained about being dominated by her father and brother, who justified their behaviour by the *Al-Qiwāmah* concept. She claimed that although her brother graduated from Islamic studies, his interpretation of *Al-Qiwāmah* is limited by existing social norms and traditions. This suggests the disconnection between the Islamic frame of reference and cultural norms.

The *Al-Qiwāmah* concept is a key concept due to its cultural patriarchal use. The term is used to justify the female members' domination by the male members of the family. It is a tool detached from its original religious meaning based on holding responsibilities and attached to a new practice approved collectively by cultural norms. That explains the high ratio of students who referred to that term in the interviews.

6.3.5. Marriage (*Al-Zawāj*) and family formation[225]

About 66% of professors mentioned their concerns about *Al-Zawāj* disinterest among the younger generation nine times. The students' reluctance to discuss marriage and family issues during the interview might indicate their sensibility to this concept. Professors emphasised the complex interplay between the ICC's materials, societal expectations, and personal perspectives on *Al-Zawāj*. Professors explained that women students' perspectives on marriage are filled with concerns about male dominance under the excuse of *Al-Qiwāmah*. For example, P3 was frustrated by, according to her, the recent decreasing Saudi women's interest in marriage and rising divorce rates. She and P1 concluded that this social trend might be due to fear, insecurity, and rejection of the men's dominance. They explained that these insecurities could stem from emotional, financial, or physical safety concerns within the marriage. P5 recounted an incident during an online lecture when a student wrote on the board without prior permission, *"I am against marriage"*. Although P5 was displeased by the student's behaviour, her feelings were mixed with empathy for her. P5 considered that the student's reaction might have been influenced by potential familiar suppression or difficulties that negatively shaped her perception of marriage. This highlights a generational gap in framing marriage values of peace, love, and tenderness (Mawaddah wa Rahma) within family relations[226]. Professors P3, P5 and P1 emphasised their role as agents in social change by confronting female students' apprehension,

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[225] (See 3.3.3)
[226] (See 3.3.3)

questioning social norms, fostering a comprehensive understanding of marriage and enhancing students' self-perception. They explained that the ICC fell short in addressing social challenges related to gender roles and marriage sanctity and raising awareness to enrich the concept of peace in family relationships. P1 criticised the previous old ICC's narrow definition of marriage as mere "enjoyment," seeking to redefine it to reflect women's values and roles in Islam away from traditional social norms. As a committee member, she contributed to the redefinition of marriage as a solemn covenant through the *Qurʾān*ic word *Ghalīẓan* (solemn covenant). Thus, the updated definition became: "Marriage is a solemn covenant between spouses that establishes physical, spiritual, and psychological tranquillity between spouses, entails rights and duties, and forms families" (The ICC, p. 55).

P1 emphasised that increasing awareness of the sanctity of marriage and enriching the concept of peace (*Mawaddah wa Rahma*) in family relationships are crucial for achieving social change. This change, in turn, positively impacts women's roles in society and their self-perception. By fostering these values, women's fears from men will decrease, such as the student's attitude against marriage.

6.3.6. Polygamy (Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt)[227]

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[227] (See 3.3.4)

66% of professors referred to *Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt* three times, while 25% of students mentioned it five times. Both highlighted the failure of the ICC content to address the pros and cons of this practice within the Saudi context.

Professors explained that the term causes unease and heated discussion. P2, among them, pointed out that when the term is mentioned during the session, the class environment becomes a "battlefield", in which students link polygamy to social traditions and social problems. Although this heated discussion might reflect the students' need to express their thoughts, resistance, or critical thinking about *Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt* and its impact on the Saudi social structure, P2 refuted the notion that societal problems are associated with the practice, attributing the contentious debate to media narratives that negatively influence students' perceptions of polygamy. During the lesson, she adopted a one-sided discussion strategy to reframe the discourse and transform students into passive learners. She emphasised the benefits and intended purposes of polygamy rather than directly addressing student concerns and social experiences, asserting, "*This is the best approach.*" [228]. P3 agreed that the emotional and psychological challenges of polygamy on women were ignored in the ICC. She highlighted that Islam acknowledges women's concerns on the issue as they have the right to include a clause in their marriage contract preventing their husbands from marrying a second wife, an Islamic right that must be respected and honoured. The two professors suggested that the conflictive attitude towards polygamy of students is not attributed to the inherited nature of the practice but from its misapplication

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[228] (See 3.3.4)

or misinterpretation in social practices. Professors noted that the current ICC's content failed to address this critical gab between religious theories and social practices, suggesting that the ICC overlooks essential aspects of women's rights and well-being in the context of polygamy.

As for the students, 33% criticised the ICC content and the professors' inability to conduct deep discussions to address the complexities of gender bias and the impact of media narratives on *Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt*. They believed that the ICC's content generally supported men's interests. S12 criticised the ICC for presenting polygamy as Islamically permitted (p. 36) without addressing the specified conditions for its allowance through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology through the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*. S1 observed that the ICC content and professors often do not critically discuss the topic of polygamy and its implications on family members; they tend to highlight the positive aspects of polygamy, which are primarily for men, which coincides with P2's methodology in teaching the topic. S1 stated:

They always underscored polygamy's advantage in having more children without considering the negative impacts that polygamy could impose on families and the societal structure, especially when the conditions for polygamy to be allowed, such as justice, are not met.

This uncritical and one-sided discussion has harmed some families like hers. She extended:

Polygamy may have positive aspects, but I have never found anyone talking about its negative aspects. It might disrupt a family, disperse children, and

foster hatred among co-wives and their children. Moreover, polygamous practices often leave men unaware of the extent of their parental responsibilities or sometimes even how many children they have. I wonder how important it is to increase offspring over their proper upbringing and care!

S1's perspective could provide insight into why P2 experienced the classroom atmosphere as becoming a "battlefield" during discussions on polygamy. The tension seems to be grounded on the personal and social experiences of the students who live the consequences of the incorrect implementation of religion-allowed practices. Professors seem to perceive the critical discussion as a criticism of the word of *Allah*, or they might be unable or untrained to address the issue effectively, spotting the light on the differences between the religious frame of reference and the traditional religiously irrelevant practices.

6.3.7. - *Al-Khul'* and Divorce (*Al-ṭalāq*)[229]:

Participants highlighted a complex interplay between social norms, Islamic teachings, legal reforms, and the education system in shaping women's attitudes and decisions regarding divorce and *Al-Khul'*. As indicated in the marriage section above, the fear of social stigma and a prevailing sense of insecurity due to male dominance are pivotal factors influencing women's decisions on these matters.

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[229] (See 3.3.5)

83% of the professors raised the subject of dislocation and divorce eight times, while 23% of students raised the topic six times. P3 expressed deep concerns over rising divorce rates, attributing them to women's insufficient understanding of family values and haste decisions to end the marriage and dismantle the family. Yet, the underlying causes might also include fear of the spouse's domination and feelings of insecurity, as P1 and P5 explained. They pointed to the influence of patriarchal societal traditions on women's divorce decisions. P5 observed that women today face a dilemma: they must choose between enduring a husband's abuse due to fear of the social stigma associated with being a divorced woman or opting for *Al-Khul'* and leaving her house to escape her husband's dominance with the possibility of being under another male's dominance in her family house.

S5, one of three students who discussed the topic repetitively, argued that the previous generation was largely unaware of women's rights in Islam regarding divorce and *Al-Khul'*. According to her, the current generation is more informed. S5, affected by her mother's situation[230]. She also highlighted how societal fear of judgment on divorced women led her mother to remain in a distressing marriage for twenty years, echoing P5's earlier comments about the impact of social stigma on divorced women.

On the other hand, S12 disagreed with S5 on the current generation's awareness of their rights to divorce and *Al-Khul'*. She confirmed that most of her peers demonstrate a lack of

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[230] She explained that despite graduating from Islamic education in Saudi schools, her mother was completely unaware of her right to claim *Al-Khul*. (see: 6.2.1)

knowledge about their rights during and after the divorce process, especially the rights that have been reformed in the Saudi legal system recently. For example, a woman's right in Islam to custody of her children. S12 explained: *"Historically, Saudi women often refrained from seeking custody after divorce, primarily due to judicial decisions that favoured men in line with societal norms."*

She added that although this practice has recently been reformed according to Islamic teachings, where mothers are entitled to custody as long as they remain unmarried, the ICC does not address these changes. This suggests a gap between the ICC content and recent legal reforms and social change.

Accordingly, the divorce and *Al-Khul'* terms are mentioned not to highlight the concepts that these terms stand for but to highlight the rights that these two terms hold for Muslim women- rights that have been ignored and lost in traditional social practices. Even though recent legal reforms recovered these rights, social traditions and patterns have not yet entirely accepted them. The young generation is still unaware of these rights as the ICC is not effectively addressing them.

6.3.8. Obedience to the Husband[231]

This subject has been repeated on five occasions by 33% of professors with contradictory opinions on the position of contemporary Saudi women as obedient or as rebellious. The

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[231] (See 3.3. 6)

term was mentioned three times by 25% of students, and all agreed that the subject was highly provocative and controversial because it reproduced the societal gender patterns of men's dominance and women's inferiority.

P5 highlighted how promoting the social norms of blind submission to husband place undue pressure on women, causing them to disregard their rights and endure violence silently. Thereby keeping their suffering invisible to others. She listened in the class discussions on marriage rights under Islam[232] to sad stories from students' personal experiences. P5 shared a distressing story of a student who faced severe domestic abuse and was forced by her family into silence and to maintain obedience to her husband. The professor asserted that marriage rights and related issues must be addressed in Islamic marriage rights lesson, including redefining obedience in marriage as an expression of mutual respect, love, and partnership. She argued that this understanding could transform obedience from being an act of submission into an act of love, thereby reducing "rebellious" behaviours. However, P5 affirmed that the current ICC is often skewed towards male dominance under the guise of tradition or Islamic norms. This could undermine the principles of peace and compassion in spouse relationships, promoting instead a despotic male authority. On the other hand, P3 held a perspective that values traditional norms of obedience to the husband. She labelled this practice as "submissiveness," which she felt was being eroded recently.

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[232] (See: 6.3.5)

In agreement with P5's view, 25% of students emphasised that obedience to the husband often provoked intense reactions among students, as it reflected societal biases favouring men and depicting women as inferior. They accused the ICC of disregarding and excluding women's emotions and concerns in presenting the topic of obedience to the husband rather than providing a balanced perspective in marria2ge relationships (the same view was in polygamy). S6's underscored this bias, stating: "*The ICC and teaching method focused heavily on promoting the wife's obedience to her husband, neglecting to equally stress the importance of the husband's responsibility to treat his wife with affection and mercy.*"

Likewise, S11 criticised the ICC for its redundant emphasis on obedience to the husband in the same way traditional social context does, comparing it to pre-Islamic customs. She pointed out the ICC's failure to offer balanced views on marital roles and stated: *"Teaching this topic is nothing new; it's echoing pre-Islamic customs (Jāhilīyah)."*

S5 summarised her colleagues' views by pointing out that the ICC does not adequately include the WRPI concerning marriage, such as mutual respect, complementary, and partnership unless each teacher makes a concerted effort to address these aspects. In this aspect, obedience is a term that the ICC misuses to reproduce and enforce male dominance in family relationships.

6.3.9. Peace in interpersonal relationships[233]

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[233] (See 3.2.2)

50% of professors and 53% of students highlighted the significance of peace in relationships to achieve balanced and harmonious family dynamics. They agreed that promoting WRPI education can significantly advance the vision of peace among genders. Educating men and women about mutual respect, love, and understanding in marriage fosters a more balanced and just relationship, reflecting Islamic teachings[234]. According to participants, this awareness prevents violent conflict, and addresses underlying issues like injustice, oppression, prejudice, and fear, which can lead to conflict[235].

Despite P1's assertion that the ICC's objective is to promote peace, complementarity, and mutual relations[236], P3 noted a challenge related to the *Al-Salām* concept in marriage. She explained that in addition to the fears of male dominance and insecurity, there is a lack of understanding of the basic notion of *Al-Salām* in family relationships. She emphasised that addressing these values is as crucial as addressing marriage fears.

From a parallel perspective to P3's, students pointed out the lack of emphasis on women's dignity, which is crucial for establishing peace. S1 believed the ICC ignored women's honour and their elevated status in Islam, which did not foster respectful and stable relationships among genders. Students discussed the implications of the lack of awareness

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[234] The professors concurred that the principle of peace is essential in nurturing personal and social relationships, thereby fostering the development of a high-quality life. They asserted that Qurʾānic teachings uphold affection and harmony in interpersonal relationships, implying that a family's dynamic should be analysed following the Al-Taʾṣīl methodology to approach these principles.

[235] Jawad (1998) and Syamsu and Budianti (2022) highlight this in their explanation of verses 9 and 10 of Surah al-Hujurat, emphasising peace in both negative and positive forms.

[236] As a committee review member, P1 claimed that the ICC aimed to promote the *ASsalam* principle in marriage and family, emphasising that relationships are based on partnership and mutual responsibility. She stressed that these principles create a stable and harmonious social structure and pave the way to peaceful relationships that meet human needs, especially in marriage.

about the importance of peaceful family relationships from social and legal dimensions, which consequently lead to negative consequences within the family[237]. S11 extends that such a narrow interpretation overlooks the broader significance of Islamic teaching and negatively impacts family dynamics; consequently, it affects daughters' interactions with their mothers and their framing of the principles of marriage.

From S1's point of view, the absence of *Al-salam* in the family dynamic often leads to rebellious behaviour and girls' fleeing from family houses where the environment could not provide peace and safety to the daughters. In most of these cases, girls may have disrespectful and aggressive experiences with their fathers or brothers. In the same context, S10 expected that fostering an awareness of peace within relationships could reduce family conflicts, such as domestic violence or divorce. She stated: *"Establishing a foundation of peaceful interaction makes people aware of each party's boundaries and not crossing them, maintaining mutual respect and empathy."*

S12 argued that a comprehensive interpretation of protective and valuing aspects of women's rights in Islamic education, including the ICC, can provide security and empowerment for women. She shared her personal experience with the legal system in her custody struggle, highlighting that knowing the incompatibility of removing children from their mothers with Islamic peace principles empowered her to defend her rights. She

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[237] An example mentioned above is what S11 explained about the ICC's discussion of the dowry that focused solely on reducing the financial burden for men rather than recognising its importance as a symbol of respect and value that Islam places on women's worth and rights.

expressed pleasure in recent legal reforms[238] allowing mothers to be primary custodians, making them feel safer and less forced into unhealthy marriages for fear of losing their children after divorce. However, S5 believed that the ICC contributed to her inner peace and empowerment by offering practical ways to manage and resolve marital problems. She mentioned a gradual approach, being proactive in solving problems before considering divorce and overlooking and forgiving specific issues to maintain peace within a marriage. This implied that the ICC provided helpful advice to improve students' lives.

To sum up, *Al-Salām* education is a target focus for the ICC, as the committee member indicated. However, not all professors and students agree on its effectiveness. Some professors explained that the ICC did not follow *the Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology to foster the *Al-Salām concepts* in family and marriage relations. Although few students recognised the *Al-Salām* concept and education in ICC, the majority of students highlighted that the ICC did not provide Muslim women with the dignity and value that Islam initially set for them. Such biased content limited attempts to establish the *Al-Salām* concept as a framework for gender relations.

6.3.10. Feminism (*Al-Nisāwiyya*)[239]:

Feminism was the third most frequently mentioned term among interviewees. The professors agreed that the term was part of students' interests, which is reflected in the 32

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[238] (See 1.4)
[239] (See 2.2)

repetitions of the terms used by 83% of students. The professors pointed out that feminism is a popular term among youth primarily used to critique and oppose male-biased norms, often without acknowledging its ideological origins. P1 attributed the popularity of the term feminism among students to its challenge to the male-biased social norms in Saudi society, standing as a resistance term to unjust social structures. However, P1 asserted that discussions about feminism underscored a more significant issue: the perceived imbalance in understanding gender relations and the application of justice and equality between males and females within the framework of Islamic rights. According to P1, these concerns may drive female students to seek solutions to their issues outside of Islam or to rebel against Islamic teachings. This reaction, she argued, stems from a lack of awareness of gender roles as outlined in Islamic teachings. In the same context, P3 noted that feminism exacerbated gender tensions in Saudi society. Her statement is based on her observation of the aggressive reactions of female students during discussions about men's rights. P5 suggested that such aggression might stem from experiences of domestic violence, indicating that these students' attitudes are reactions to their personal experiences and suffering. This indicates that the lack of awareness of WRPI and the unbalanced and biased presentation of gender relations resulted in using imported terminologies and narratives to challenge the traditional unjust gender structure.

50% of professors pointed out that raising awareness of gender relations following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology[240] is the solution to correct misconceptions on WRPI, emphasising the

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[240] (See: 6.3.1)

Islamic frame of reference in addressing women's rights. Although the ICC did not discuss Feminism, they agreed on the professor's roles in addressing this topic during lessons as much as necessary and raising awareness of it.

In agreement with P1, S1 admitted that embracing feminist ideology indicated a lack of awareness of women's rights in Islam among girls because it is culturally different from the local context. She assured most girls have no idea about the historical and cultural origins of feminism, particularly about its roots in Western values on gender roles and rights. S4, for instance, expressed her astonishment upon realising that feminist ideology might contradict Islamic teachings. However, S11 commented that girls might embrace feminism not for its ideological origins but to find a safe space to express themselves and defend their rights. S1, supporting S11 and P5, affirmed that feminist girls may have been victims of family abuse or discrimination of siblings' sex, causing them a psychological complex because of their gender identity.

83% of Students who mentioned these terms agreed that feminist voices in Saudi Arabia rose in reaction to gender patterns and traditions in a patriarchal society. They expressed their deep concerns that the ICC often supports men in rights discussions, ignoring women's rights. S1 explained that this methodology does not provide a comprehensive foundation of gender relations in Islam to help young people develop clear and coherent thinking.

66% of students confirmed their need for equal value and respect for their roles and qualities among men and women. In agreement with P3, they referred to the ongoing

gender conflict in society as a consequence of males' striving to maintain domination over women. S1 described the gender conflict in social media as a "disgusting war" as once a conflict on social media ended by cyber revenge.

It is worth noting that both professors and students view feminism as a borrowed point of reference. While teachers see students who use these terms as lacking awareness, the students consider these terms a way to assert their rights and resist social hegemonic traditions when the ICC and Islamic education fail to provide a comprehensive frame of reference on WRPI.

6.4 Macro Level (Context and implementation)

Having explored the participants' perspectives on the ICC content and the key concepts of WRPI discussion, this level focuses on how the women's rights discussion is contextualised and implemented in the Saudi social praxis. Contextualising theoretical information helps to explore how female students apply abstract concepts of women's rights to real-life situations. This brings us to RQ3[241] to answer questions such as: How is the understanding of women's rights, acquired by female students at KSA through the ICC, translated into effective awareness in praxis? What is the impact of the implemented teaching strategies in raising students' understanding of their rights?

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[241] (See 1.8)

Based on the participants' perspectives, this level identifies the social norms that govern women's rights implementation in Saudi Arabia and the fear of challenging these norms. The research analyses the participants' views on the implications of ignoring traditional and cultural behaviours. This level also delves into the teaching strategies, which are affected by social norms and implemented in the ICC education to maintain the status quo around women's rights. The macro-level analysis also highlights the participants' perspectives on how the recent and rapid legal reforms have influenced women's rights in Saudi Arabian society. It ends up by the participants' expectation of the WRPI awareness in current and future periods.

6.4.1. Social Norms: Traditional Gender Role and Tribal Norms

Saudi women face social, cultural, and legal challenges that empower the patriarchal system. 66% of professors and 75% of students pointed out that the overlap between cultural norms and religious interpretations perpetuates gender inequality and restricts women's roles and opportunities in society. Participants identified three main challenges that exist in contemporary social practices towards women: 1) restricting women's roles, 2) strengthening men's authority over women, and 3) prioritising tribal customs preference over *Al-Sharīʿah*.
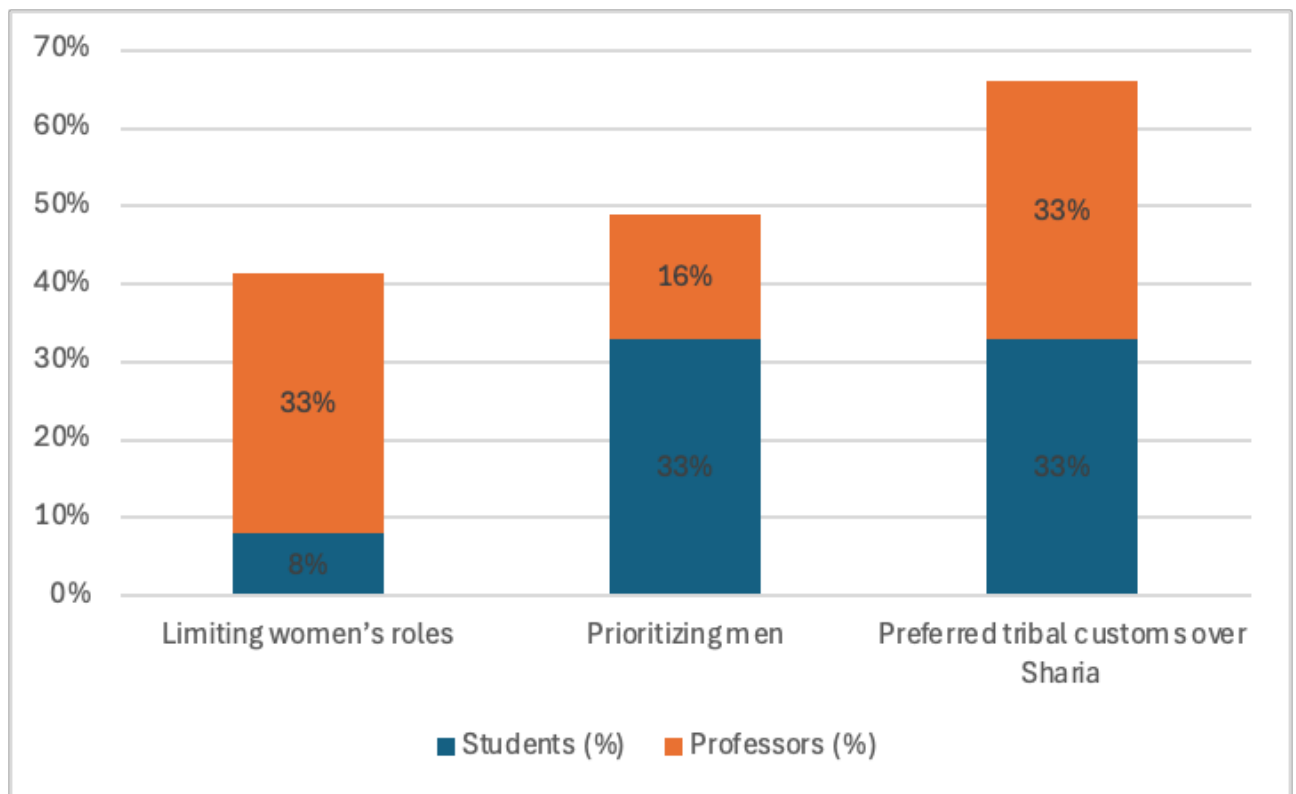
Figure (13): Saudi societal context scenes that have affected women

33% of professors and 8% of students agree that Saudi traditional gender roles are gender biased and restrict women's role to serving in the family, more specifically, the male members of the family. P5 stated: "*In the common upbringing in Saudi society, the woman must serve her brother and husband*." P3 commented that, unlike men, women are expected to maintain relationships, beautify themselves, and cater for their husbands. She said that *"in Saudi society, women must humble themselves to men and maintain relationships, but no one tells men to dress up for their wives".* P5 explained that society expects women to be aware of their husbands' rights and prioritise their pleasure, whereas men do not face such expectations. Therefore, according to P4, women are expected to fulfil household duties and understand their obligations towards their husbands, but husbands less often

need to be aware of wives' rights. This leads many women to accept minimum positive gestures from men rather than asking for their full rights.

Further, P5 asserted that women are expected to obey their husbands unconditionally, even if oppressed. Family or neighbours often blame wives first if a marriage fails. She shared an example of a student who faced a domineering husband and family that did not support her seeking a divorce. S5 agreed on the existence of unfair social gender roles. She recalled her childhood memories of her mother being restricted from playing any role except as a housewife. She emphasised that education has perpetuated these notions[242].

16% of professors and 33% of students explained that men's authority over women is a visible practice that reflects the patriarchal structure of Saudi society. P3 explained that this unconditional authority tends to be justified by religious texts. In this sense, S7 and S1 pointed out how some families manipulate Islamic texts to maintain male dominance and diminish women's agency as Islam initially sets, contradicting the women's rights and roles delineated in these texts[243]. S2 added: *"There has been a long-standing imposition of male authority without justification, denying women's rights. This was common in our mothers' and grandmothers' times, reflecting a stronger male voice in society."*

In a coinciding perspective, S12 noted that the long history of strengthened male authority makes it difficult for men to shed their sense of superiority. As a result of men's tendency

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[242] (See 1.5).
[243] (See 2.4 and 2.4.1).

to hold unconditional authority, women are perceived as inferior, and their agency over their lives is diminished. P3 observed that this cultural mindset is shared by people among all social strata, including academics. She stated: *"The most striking point is… the method by which men diminish women, even among academics. A man may be an accomplished academic in medicine yet remain ignorant of women's rights in Islam."*

S2 asserted that society is unwilling to listen to or perceive women as rights holders. They mute her and prefer listening to men's voices and claims. She explained that society *"gave a louder voice to men, often telling women to endure and stay silent, even if their rights were violated"*. S11 and S10 agreed that Saudi society considers women as second-class citizens; it's hard to express their demands and to be listened to. S11 highlights that these societal contexts often make it difficult for men to view women as rights holders capable of asserting their claim within the Islamic frame. She explained that men accuse women who claim their rights as being rebellious to *Allah*'s words and influenced by the Western and feminist context. S11 asserted that the denial of women as right holders exacerbates the gender conflict and extends it across generations. She added that the intensification of the gender conflict has recently inflamed after the new laws in favour of women.

Even though these practices contradict the WRPI, they are justified by Islamic texts. When the evidence of WRPI is straightforward and robust enough to highlight the contradiction, 33% of professors and 33% of students asserted that social traditions are usually prioritised over *Al-Sharīʿah*. P5 explained that social traditions govern the Saudi society more than Islamic laws do. For example, some girls know they can include stipulations in marriage contracts based on their preferences in building relationships with their husbands, but they

do not because their families prioritise social traditions and taboos over *Al-Sharīʿah*. Due to dominant norms, P5 recounted how her marriage contract did not include a clause regarding her freedom to pursue further education. P6 noted that certain tribes prioritise customs over religious laws in inheritance. Thus, they might deprive women of their fair portion of their heritage.

S1 and S10 agreed with P5 that Saudi society occasionally prioritises traditions even when they contradict Islamic teachings. S3 and S4 noted that distinguishing between traditions and religion can be challenging as people frequently defend traditions as sacred laws without realising, they are cultural practices, not religious ones. S3 said: *"People may reject some concepts about rights, even if taught at schools, because they contradict traditions; often they need to understand why they oppose them."*

To sum up, the participants find that Saudi women face challenges due to restrictive gender roles and tribal traditions, which prioritise men's needs and authority over women's agency. Women are often viewed as inferior, treated as second-class citizens, and struggle to clarify the difference between cultural traditions and religious teachings.

### 6.4.2. Fear of Challenging Social Norms: Generating False Awareness

The implications of socio-cultural constraints and traditional gender roles in Saudi Arabia impact women's preferences, choices, and decisions, causing them to go through difficult situations without being allowed to claim their rights. For example, P5 said that Socio-cultural constraints create confusion about women's rights, hindering progress in raising

women's awareness. The implication of social norms and tradition is perceived implicitly in the ICC content analysis[244] and some professors' statements. These implications are multifaceted and illustrated in the following figure

Figure (14): The Implications of Social Norms on Women's Rights Awareness[245]

There is an underlying conflict between professors' enthusiasm for social changes as
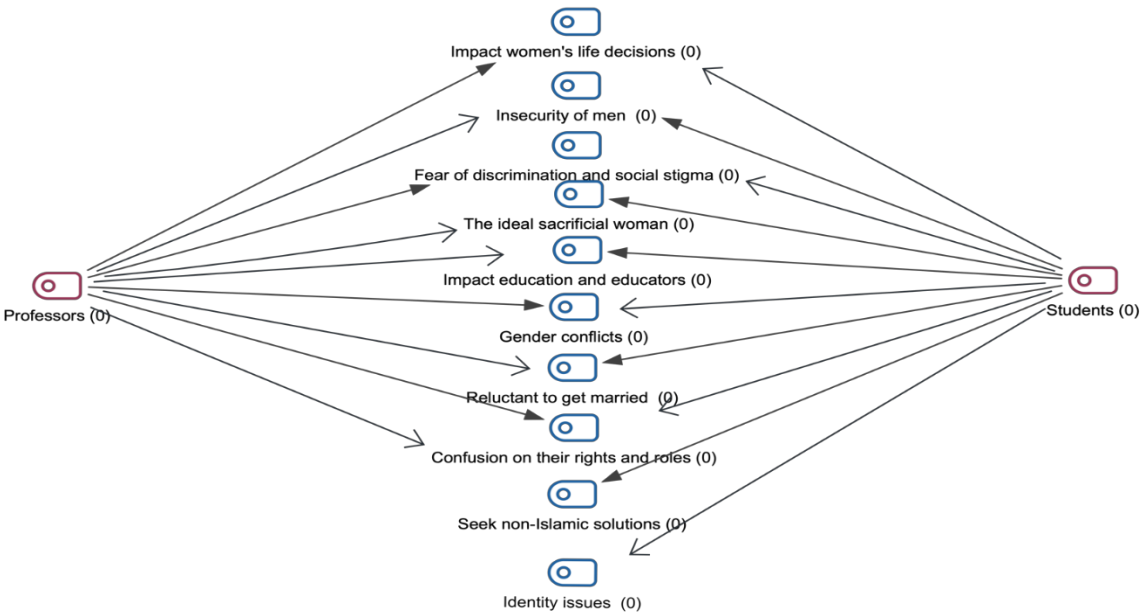
professionals and their adherence to traditional discourses on women's roles. For example, P5, P3, and P4 identified the implicit traditional negative perception of women in the ICC

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[244] (See 7.2).

[245] The figure illustrates four categories of implications: 1) Social and Cultural Implications, such as Insecurity of men due to men's domination, Fear of discrimination and social stigma, the ideal and sacrificing women due to cultural expectations that women should endure hardship for the sake of family or societal harmony and gender conflict and tensions between men and women due to evolving gender norms and expectations. 2) Psychological and identity implications, such as confusion in rights and duties and Identity Issues as women struggle with self-definition within religious and societal frameworks. 3) Educational and intellectual implications, such as impact on education and educators, as social norms might influence curricula, teaching approaches, and the role of educators in addressing gender issues. Therefore, women might seek non-Islamic solutions due to receiving an inadequate understanding of the Islamic gender discourse. 4) Personal and life-decision Implications include marriage and divorce decisions and lifestyle choices. Or reluctance to get married due to perceived gender inequalities or fears of unfair marital social expectations.

content. They noted that it subtly encourages females to focus on understanding and upholding their husbands' rights rather than asserting their own. However, the ICC discourse did not similarly urge men to acknowledge their duties towards their wives[246]. However, these professors still did not follow innovative educational strategies to challenge the gender-biased structure in the classroom. As explained below, students criticised professors' adherence to traditional social norms and their fear of breaking the social order[247].

Students' responses also confirmed the implicit traditional negative perception of women in the ICC. S2 explained that Saudi women's religiously dominant discourse, whether through public speeches in the media or education, was and continues to urge women to be patient and sacrifice for their families. Therefore, she stated that "*Saudi women remain in fear of society if they fall short.*"[248] P3 noted that some women are reluctant to marry due to fear of men's dominance and insecurity and to avoid repeating the tragedies observed in women's lives around them. Moreover, S1, S9 and S6 share the professors' view that Saudi women often feel insecurity on the part of men as an impact of the prevailing social context, resulting in the phenomenon of unwillingness to marry. In agreement with P1, S3 pointed out that Saudi women get confused by the contradiction between traditional gendered roles and expectations and WRPI. To get out of the confusion, women often tend to adopt,

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[246] (See 6.3)
[247] (See 6.4.1)
[248] S5's mother's experience showed how much Saudi women fear society and resist social changes. Her mother suffered more than 20 years without financial support from her husband, but she refused to restore her rights or demand divorce for fear of society's stigma (see 6.2.4).

without critical thinking, external solutions that do not coincide with Islamic teachings. S2 and S7 described these choices as misleading and a "false awareness". S2 explained that advocating rights away from the religious frame of reference, such as those based on the feminist movement, contradicts the Islamic and social context. Similarly, P1 stated that Saudi women face social rejection when they attempt to resolve their issues in ways that don't coincide with Islamic principles. She stated that, in Saudi society, Islam is embodied in the social, cultural, and legal norms; seeking solutions outside the Islamic framework possibly triggers alienation and rejection by the families and communities.

The escalating gender conflict as a reaction to men's dominance in society creates an identity crisis among Saudi women. S11 and S12 noted that in agreement with P3, the male unconditioned authority over women's choices created an identity crisis among Saudi women, a "female identity crisis". Coinciding with S1's view, S11 stated: *"Many girls in tradition-affected families grew up feeling that their female identity was a problem... This implies her family treats her differently from her brothers… probably many have psychological issues".* S11 was one of those influenced by this gender discrimination within the family. She confirmed that she and her close friends had developed a resentment towards their female identity because society disrespects girls and considers them to be second-class human beings. Students acknowledged that social norms have affected the attitudes and behaviours of some professors. According to S10, the social norms mindset of some professors and the ICC content hinder social change and the improvement of women's positions and rights. Professors tend to focus on specific topics that reveal their preexisting traditional beliefs or their reluctance to contradict them. For example, P5

illustrated that a professor might advocate for polygamy and excessively elaborate on its advantages, possibly because this professor is a second wife herself, while ignoring other significant aspects of women's rights in polygamy. This might be evident from one of the interviewed professor's approaches while discussing polygamy[249]. She seemed influenced by her personal experience as the researcher realised that this professor was a second wife. As illustrated in the discussion of polygamy, she adopted a one-sided discussion strategy and selectively acknowledged only the positive aspects of polygamy that align with her personal experience as a second wife and dismissed any negative societal implications which might contradict her beliefs. This led to student protests, as they wanted their voices and concerns to be heard. Such biased methodology by professors might follow a narrow perspective explaining key concepts like *Al-Qiwāmah* to confirm the social patterns or to assert personal beliefs or experiences as the ultimate truth.

Over half the students agreed that the domination of the cultural norms over the ICC and professors' perspectives restrict open discussions during lessons. S2 and S5, in agreement with P5, suggested that this domination leads to selectively biased teaching of topics rather than ensuring objectivity. It also presents the women's rights issue through an inappropriate lens that does not coincide with the contemporary societal roles of women. For example, S1 explained her professor's stance when she paradoxically argued that women should not work, even though she herself works. This contradiction highlighted the potential challenges of the professor's intellectual biases and the ICC content, which might result in

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[249] (See 6.3.6)

misleading messages that deviate from objective educational standards and thus influence students' awareness of their rights.

From a parallel perspective, S8 often found the subject of a woman leaving the house without her husband's permission discussed from the professor's point of view without considering the Islamic view in the cases of necessity. Therefore, S8 emphasised that professors should incorporate the appropriate Islamic context and assess students' contemporary and practical needs when teaching such topics. S3 and S10 also observed that the outcomes of teaching the ICC might be inconsistent and vary among classes due to the personal biases and experiences of the professors, which might lead to disparities in students' learning experiences and their awareness of women's rights. Moreover, it potentially affects the overall quality and credibility of the ICC.

In conclusion, the persistence of traditional social norms within Islamic education, especially in institutions like the ICC and among academic staff, adds another layer of complexity. Instead of challenging these norms, these educational frameworks may inadvertently reinforce them. This presents a significant barrier to genuine social transformation and women's empowerment, as Islamic education, ideally, should emphasise teachings that support women's rights and promote gender equity. The implication of the fear of breaking the social norms ends up by generating false awareness based on professors' biased perspectives or affected by non-Islamic frames such as the feminist frame of reference.

6.4.3. Implications of Non-recognition of Social Problems: Maintaining Status Quo

50% of the professors and 66% of the students explicitly emphasised the need to include contemporary women's issues in the ICC.[250] Students asserted that the ICC and some professors' attitudes often supported the status quo on women's rights progress rather than addressing social problems and meeting the needs of women students.

P1, P3, and P5 acknowledged the existence of social problems related to women's rights in the Saudi context. P3 and P5 stressed that recognising these social issues is the way to find solutions. P1 recognised that most widespread issues today are caused by an old idea that has not been appropriately addressed or unresolved family problems. However, P2 disagreed that complex and deep social problems exist. She argued that discussing social issues in the ICC might be unnecessary because they do not exist. It could even be counterproductive, suggesting that some girls face simple concerns and convert them into complex issues, such as their family not allowing them to visit friends. She justified that she had never heard of severe social problems during her professional career. She questioned students about such experiences and could not verify them. P2 also believed girls' allegations of women's rights violations were exaggerated and untrue as, for her, external factors or personal motivations, such as TV series or movies, trigger these demands to seek what they perceive as rights, leading them to frame personal desires as rights based on dramatized narratives. It could also be a claim of being aggrieved over her rights as a tactic to raise their entitlement ceiling and justify their failures to fulfil duties or

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[250] They suggested that this approach realistically reflects the current social context and is essential for addressing socio-cultural challenges and increasing awareness of women's rights.

shirk responsibilities. P2 continued that these demands could also be supported by a tendentious campaign encouraging young girls to rebel against their parents. Accordingly, P2 praised those girls who chose to remain silent and patient despite being subjected to domestic violence or oppression, maintaining respect and reverence for their parents. She considered this behaviour to be of righteousness towards parents or, in Arabic (*Birr Al-Wālidayn*, بِرّ الوالدين). She explained: Some girls have been subjected to harsh conditions, violence, or even thrown in shelters; however, they did not claim or reject their parents, but they still made *duaa'* (pray) for them. P2's perspective is contradictory as she failed to identify such cases as "severe" problems. Her discourse reflected how the social constraints and the reluctance to challenge the status quo affected her role as a professor and limited her engagement with transformative educational practices.

66% of students broadly supported discussing contemporary social issues in academic institutions, believing this would improve consciousness and foster collaboration in finding solutions. S10 explained that the ICC's failure to recognise the societal problems challenges students' consciousness, leading to a disconnection from reality. She considered that recognising these problems offers a short path to identifying and addressing social issues, in agreement with some of the professors above. S3 believed that drawing students' attention to real societal problems effectively improves awareness; the lesson will take a different direction from the traditional one. It will be vital and realistic, which the S10 agrees with. Likewise, S5 believed classroom discussions of these issues would alert girls to their rights and others' experiences, allowing them to collaborate on practical solutions.

From another perspective, S4 pointed out the challenges that girls might encounter, such as *Al-ʿAḏl*[251] (العضل) and forced marriage, as traditional behaviours prevailing in tribal communities. She explained: *"Girls in tribal communities, like mine, may acquiesce to forced marriage since they are not aware that no one has the right to force them into marriage, or in the worst cases, they might flee from their families."*

S4 expressed deep regret for acquaintances in her tribe who suffered from such challenges and were unaware of their rights. She explained that if society does not identify these tribal practices as a problem, initiating a social change to eliminate them will be impossible. S9, belonging to a tribal community, highlighted the challenge of deeply entrenched tribal traditions. She found it pointless to identify the problems in the classroom while the whole community outside did not identify them as wrong practices. She hoped for a social change in the future, saying, *"Discussing social problems within classrooms is pointless because tribal customs are profoundly entrenched and strongly influence people's behaviour and beliefs, yet I hope that education will change the new generation."*

Students affirmed that the ICC failed to recognise and address social issues and included one-sided opinions that failed to encourage critical thinking and realistic engagement with social problems. For instance, S1 referred to the phenomenon of adolescent rebellion as being solely attributed to corrupt friends, ignoring other key factors such as seeking refuge from parental or husbands' violence. Even though the ICC was designed for both genders,

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[251] (See 3.3.3)

S10 criticised the gender bias in addressing several gendered issues; she said: *"It focuses on women's duties and neglects to address men's violations of women's rights."*[252]

Most professors and student participants recognised that the ICC does not cover contemporary women's issues. Ignoring addressing urgent socio-cultural challenges contributed to asserting social norms over religious teachings and impeded women from demanding their rights and confronting dominant traditional norms. However, the ICC has faced criticism for implicitly supporting the status quo, potentially limiting students' empowerment to question and reshape their social conditions. Participants highlighted examples where the ICC content and teaching approaches seemed to reinforce existing societal norms rather than challenge them. This aligns with Freire's (1970) assertion that education is inherently political and influenced by power dynamics and social structures.

6.4.4. Distorting the Sacred: Manipulating Religious Texts to Uphold Social Norms

Both professors and students agree that gender bias and power relations are observed in the ICC through presenting Islamic teachings favouring men's interests. Different strategies are applied, such as biased narratives, ignoring relevant teachings, selective quotes, and manipulated interpretations of the sacred text.

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[252] From another perspective, S1 highlighted that when the ICC discusses a social problem, it always uses unrealistic or outdated examples, such as opposing media streaming on Netflix (see 6.2.2).
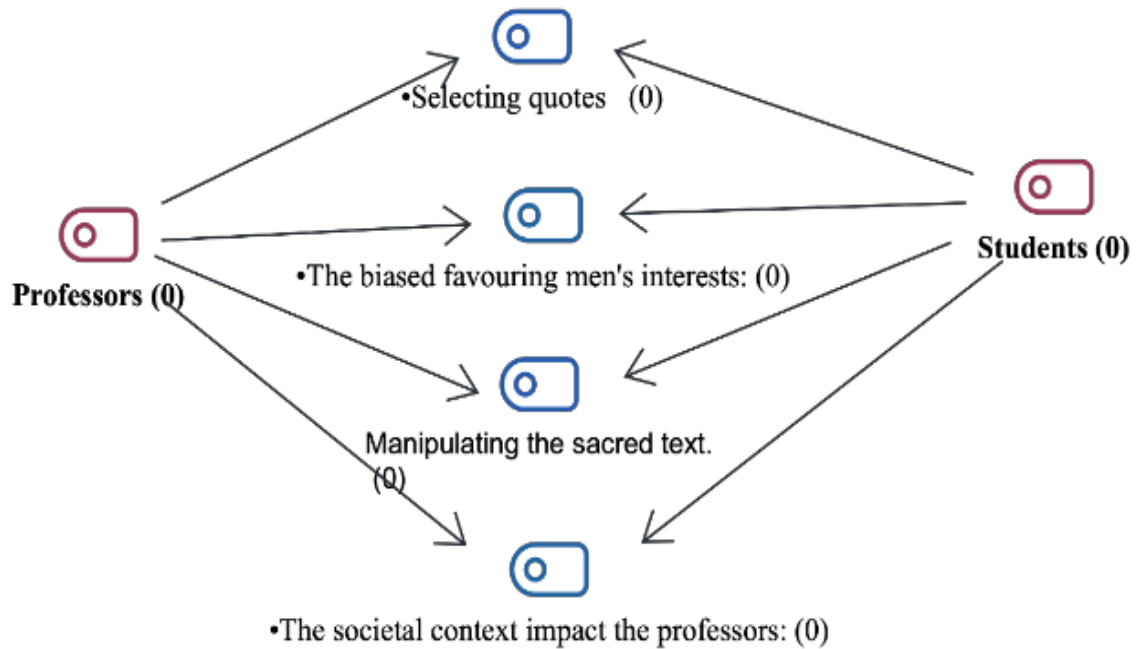
Figure (15) The ICC uphold social norms

66% of professors and 83% of students confirmed the complexity of promoting social norms in education under the guise of Islam. S12 accused the authors of the ICC of reproducing social norms in its content; she stated that "*the authors wrote what served social norms and social context.*" The gender bias in ICC content was repeatedly mentioned by almost all participants and analysed throughout the three levels of analysis. This prompted S1 to advocate for an inclusive approach that addresses the noted bias by giving equal consideration to the rights and responsibilities of both genders. In the same context, S10 pointed out that some topics in the ICC are influenced heavily by the author's personal opinions or prevailing social norms. The *Qurʾān*ic texts or *Ḥadīth* are manipulatively used to empower these cultural stereotypes. She said: *"On p. (81), in talking about men's rights,*

the author explained how women must preserve men's money, houses, and honours, using explicit references from the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth to support these points. Then, the author expanded the scope of men's rights to include the right to preserve men's feelings without providing Islamic textual evidence. In contrast, in the context of women's rights, the text does not direct the same attention towards the emotional well-being of wives as it does for husbands, despite the availability of Islamic texts urging men to consider their wives' feelings."[253]

Islamic texts were used in teaching to promote social norms by deliberately or unintentionally being cut or ripped off from the context, focusing on the part of the texts that benefits men. P3 acknowledged that the *Ḥadīth* "*women are deficient in intelligence and religion*" was used in society to justify dehumanising women. P3 explained that men in Saudi society widely use this quotation to assert their superiority over women. However, the prophet's narrative introduction praises women and describes them as "depriving the wisest of men of their intelligence" (meaning that women are more effective in using their wisdom and intelligence than men); this introduction is ignored in the public discourse. Even though this narrative is not included in the ICC content, P3 mentioned it to draw attention to the fact that the ICC should consist of such *Ḥadīth* to eliminate and rectify the culturally distorted meaning. S7 admitted that it was the first time she had heard the

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[253] A similar manipulated use of the Islamic texts is mentioned before on polygamy (see 6.3.6) In the same context, S11 noted that the ICC's authors advised women against overburdening their husbands financially (ICC, p. 84), focusing on men's interests without equally advising men to hold their responsibility in supporting their family's needs or paying alimony.

completion of this narrative from the professor in the ICC's lessons. She viewed it as a testament to women's strength and value, challenging societal norms.

S4 argued that the ICC intentionally omitted certain Islamic concepts, like *Al-ʿAḏl*[254] and the ban on forced marriage, which is prevalent in tribal customs, to which she, being from a tribe, attests. She stated: *"I have never heard before that forcing girl to marry is prohibited in Islam. And that the girl could break the contract... I just heard from outside education."* She argued that the ICC conceals parts of women's rights in Islam to maintain the social order and tribal norms. The ICC content, for her, focuses on maintaining the status quo[255].

According to S12, misquoting or ignoring sacred texts related to WRPI or taking them out of their intended context and interpretation gives rise to the identity and religious crisis students previously mentioned. She criticised the manipulation of the understanding of religious texts. She explained that when the ICC presented the custody rules (p,131), the line cited a prophet's speech (PBUH) to the mother: "*You have the right to custody your child unless you remarry*". Right after that quotation, the author immediately contradicted the prophet's text by stating that one of the parents (implicitly referring to the father) may have a right to child custody over the other. S12 commented: *"This inconsistency could*

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[254] (See 3.2.2)
[255] Another example of misquoting sacred context to align with social norms is what S11 stated above regarding advising women to accept low dowry. She stated: "while there are authentic *Ḥadīth* encouraging modest dowries (Mahr), the specific *Ḥadīt*h being referenced in the discussion was misapplied or taken out of context." (see 6.3.5).

lead to confusion among students trying to recall custody rules accurately, similar to what I encountered when I needed to understand these rules precisely in front of the judge.”

These misrepresentations confuse students who advocate for their rights within the Islamic framework. Instead of finding supportive teachings, they encounter biased narratives and misquoted texts that reinforce traditional gender roles rather than giving them back the dignity they deserve and empowering them to defend their rights through a religious lens.

Not only did societal norms impact the ICC's content, but some professors' attitudes were also impacted, notably exemplified by P2. Her answers and perspectives include a visible bias against women. She openly identified herself with “Masculine” traits or perspectives, aligning herself with societal norms where male attributes and behaviours are more valuable or commendable. This stance is contextualised within her critiques of Saudi women, whom she depicted as defiant or disobedient towards men, referring to their challenge of traditional gender roles. In particular, she described women's challenge to patriarchal expectations as a denial of men's contributions, ungratefulness toward husbands, or so-called in Islamic terms (*Kufrān al-ʿashīr*). She cited the same prophetic narrative (*Ḥadīth)* that P3 had previously highlighted in its misuse of asserting women's inferiority and dependence on men. P2 further attempted to reconcile her endorsement of masculine attributes with her own female identity, especially when she commended men for their forbearance with what she perceives as women's shortcomings, commenting, *“May Allah grant men patience with us”*. This selective focus on men's patience aligns with traditional gender norms that often idealise women as dependent on male forbearance while neglecting the reciprocal nature of tolerance in relationships. She prioritised tribal

customs over *Al-Sharīʿah* when she called for women to return to the inherited cultural practices from past generations alongside the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*. She stated that "*women today must adhere to the Qurʾān and Sunnah, alongside their parents' teaching and upbringing".* This stance contradicts religious texts that call for abandoning ancestral traditions and adhering only to the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*.

In this context, S11, S8, and S1 asserted that some professors embody societal norms. S1 was puzzled by the contradiction of her professor, who advocated for women's roles at home only and criticised their work outside, despite her being a working professional and students are studying university careers to be future ones. S8 noted her professor's lack of neutrality in focusing on men's rights over women's, as the professor believed men's rights were more important, resembling P2's statement above. In agreement, S11 believed this contradictory reality led to confusion among students about their social roles and identities caused by the ICC and the professors. These examples highlight how the ICC content and some professors' attitudes manipulate the religious texts to maintain and reproduce existing societal norms rather than challenge them, shedding light on how the current educational approach fails to empower female students about WRPI effectively.

6.4.5 Dominant Teaching Strategies in teaching WRPI:

RQ3 questions whether the ICC fosters a transformative education. This section identifies the participants' perspectives on the teaching strategies implemented in WRPI teaching through the ICC. The objective of identifying these strategies is to answer the following sub-questions: How do these teaching strategies impact raising students' awareness of their

rights? It also analyses whether these strategies foster immediate and long-term changes in their interactions and application.The researcher asked the professors about the approaches used in teaching WRPI through the ICC. They acknowledged the ongoing need for diversity and innovation in teaching methods[256]. They claimed they involve students in debates to grasp complex issues more effectively or use storytelling to convey their points and make the concepts more accessible and easily understood. However, students did not recognise the effectiveness of the current teaching strategies. They strongly criticised the existing teaching method, which encourages students to pass exams without prioritising improving practical awareness of students' rights.

The analysis detected four dominant teaching strategies in teaching WRPI: 1) Indoctrination, 2) Preaching, 3) exchanging roles, and 4) dialogue strategies. In this part of the research, the analysis will identify these strategies and underline the impact, or the possible outcome, of implementing them in the ICC classroom on WRPI.

Indoctrination[257]:

33% of professors highlighted indoctrination as a traditional teaching strategy that underestimates students' participation and emphasises the teacher's role and authoritarian position. P3 argued that this approach casts students as passive learners, discouraging

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[256] Professors mentioned that they are using a PowerPoint presentation prepared 3 years ago by the department without updating it.
[257] (See 4.3.1)

critical and independent thinking and leading to ineffective education. She argued that "indoctrination" as part of social norms perpetuates such effects across generations.

In contrast with P3, P6 considered indoctrination an initial strategy of the teaching and training process, where professors introduce students to fundamental theoretical concepts. In her opinion, this procedure is essential in any educational setting, such as in computer-based, physics or chemical courses, where the theoretical explanation is the foundation of the learning process. P6 argued that indoctrination is not a blind process but helps students to memorise, recite and explore the information to solidify their comprehension. She and the other professors referred to the *Al-Taʾṣīl* concept as an example[258]. They explained that introducing the term, its reference, and how it operates within the Islamic teaching system is done through indoctrination to build a solid and profound understanding of how rights and responsibilities concepts are structured in the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah* and thus know how to implement them in real life, activating critical thinking.

S3, S11, and S4 shared concerns about the professors' reliance on the indoctrination method, which impacted student engagement and participation. 58% of students perceive indoctrination as a traditional teaching method that mirrors Saudi society's dominant educational approach, even in raising children. For example, S12 suggested that Saudi society believed in the hierarchy structure: males are superior to females, teachers are superior to students, etc. Accordingly, families impose this hierarchal relation on their

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[258] (See 3.3.1)

children and push them to respect it, casting critical thinking and structure challenging as disrespectful. S12 explained that this hierarchal and doctrinal educational approach is observed in children's behaviour as boys grow up unable to break feeling superior or accept equal social positions or authority with girls. Girls tend to believe in their social and gender inferiority due to dominant societal indoctrination. S12 extended that these social and educational patterns are reflected in the education sector and teaching approaches, including the ICC. For her, this teaching strategy infantilises students, underestimates their mental capability, and indoctrinates knowledge through the hierarchal relationship between professors and students without promoting independent and critical thinking following societal norms and patterns in education.

S3 agreed with S12's observation that justifies her teacher's indoctrinated teaching method, avoiding dialogue in class even though she could combine both. S11 confirmed the influence of dominant social and educational patterns in teaching strategies in the ICC classrooms and believed that the ICC professors' approach to teaching women's rights recycled the dominant shallow and surface-level information and perspectives existing in society without offering any new critical or more profound viewpoints. As a result, she and her colleagues repetitively felt frustrated by this ineffective lecturing approach after each session of WRPI in ICC class. S10 explained the need for motivation and dialogue in the classroom: *"We are accustomed to this approach in education, where the teacher treats the student as a warehouse and drops information into their mind. Indoctrination reduces students' awareness and alters them as passive recipients. Students need help to ask, discuss, or even bring knowledge into reality."* She criticised the one-way lecturing

technique, arguing that students must be motivated to start dialogue and discussion to clarify doubts about their rights and comprehensively understand them. S9 asserted that the lack of engagement in the classroom does not mean that students agree with teachers' statements. She explained: *"The ICC classes were monotonous, like a continuous recording; most female students might disagree with the professor's perspectives but preferred to remain silent ... students did not engage actively; they just listened passively to get through the lesson."*

Students' lack of engagement in the classroom does not indicate that they agree with what teachers say. It can signify the hierarchal authority imposed by cultural norms in the educational system. As a result, students fear their professors and would rather listen passively to avoid being classified as rebellious or disrespectful. S4 extended that professors hold significant power over students' results in the ICC's final exams. She explained: *"Even if I have different opinions or want to challenge something the professor says, fear stops me from arguing or engaging because my grades depend on her."*

In agreement with Professor P6, S1 supported the indoctrination strategy if the balance with dialogue is sustained. She agrees that Indoctrination is functional in constructing the foundation of theoretical knowledge, while dialogue allows for open discussions and questions. S1 emphasised that merely repeating information without engaging in conversations is ineffective, especially in the era of Saudi Vision 2030 and new reforms where gender roles and laws are evolving. She put as an example that students might question the concept of guardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*) in light of changing women's roles and their contributions to the family's financial expenses. They might ask: "*does the husband*

now lose his guardianship?" S1 explained that such concepts can become problematic without a solid foundational understanding of *Al-Qiwāmah* and opportunities for critical debate (see 3.3). S5 believed that different types of information require different teaching methods: some information is best taught only through indoctrination, while other information is best taught through dialogue. As a solution, some students suggested a blend of traditional and interactive methods, using *Al-Taʾṣīl* as a foundation for teaching Islamic women's rights and preparing students for practical application. This balanced approach ensures that students acquire knowledge and equip them with the critical tools to engage with, question, and reformulate the understanding of women's rights within an Islamic framework.

In brief, participants criticised indoctrination in teaching, arguing it reinforces social hierarchical structures without critical scrutiny. They also criticised the authoritarian approach, where professors hold power, enforce knowledge and beliefs, and treat students as passive recipients of knowledge. This is particularly problematic in women's rights education, where understanding and challenging norms are crucial. They suggested a blend of traditional and interactive methods, using *Al-Taʾṣīl* for teaching Islamic women's rights.

Preaching Strategy[259]

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[259] (See 4.3.1)

Students were dissatisfied with preaching strategies applied in the ICC class, especially regarding WRPI. They believed women's rights topics needed a practical, academic, and critical teaching methodology relevant to reality within the *Qurʾān*, rather than the rhetoric narrative that blurs the lines between cultural stereotypes and religious teaching.

P2 posited that the traditional preaching method is the most effective way to teach WRPI. Her argument is structured around the notion that life is a test, and enduring patience is pivotal, even when advocating for one's rights. She seemed to prefer emotional appeals to persuade the students, focusing on eliciting spiritual emotions and relying on religious texts that praise patience to emphasise her arguments rather than interactive discussions. In the lesson about marital problems, she always advised the students to be patient and avoid confrontation, especially with their fathers. She stated, *"I always remind the students that life is a test… I always remind the students of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth texts. It is okay for a woman to demand her rights, but patience is the best action"*.

Her statements implied a more one-way form of communication, as she imparted expectations, such as patience and non-confrontation, as absolutes rather than topics open for discussion or exploration. P2's teaching method preaches that students should be passive social agents instead of being provided with liberation tools. It reflects Islam as a set of clear rules and regulations that must be followed rather than encouraging students to explore and discuss these teachings critically or spiritually to implement them in the contemporary social context.

On the other hand, P5 criticised teachers who solely relied on preaching, such as P2. She asserted that this teaching overlooks girls' academic level and factual issues and fails to provide practical guidance on their rights. She viewed this approach as "oppressive" since it promoted rigid adherence to rules and regulations while not encouraging critical thinking to link these teachings to their social reality. She said that statements like "*this is the Islamic law*" and "*you must fear Allah*" are instruments of fear to limit the critical thinking of students, which impede students' capacity to think independently and comprehensively understand Islamic teaching at a more profound level. Accordingly, P5 emphasised the significance of critically discussing religious topics, particularly complex ones like polygamy. She advocated for a more "*interactive, empathetic teaching style, where the teacher meets her students at their level, supports them, and facilitates a gradual understanding of the rights issues*".

Students expressed dissatisfaction with the preaching strategy as the only approach adopted by some professors, describing it as outdated and unconvincing. S1 emphasised that this method is effective when the content is around spiritual beliefs and metaphysical matters (*ʿAqīda*), where beliefs are absolute and unquestionable, such as the truth of the hereafter. However, she refuses this teaching strategy in the Islamic family and gender laws. S1 argued that these laws require an analytical, critical, and relevant real-life educational approach. This approach should encourage critical thinking and practical application within the contexts provided by the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnh*.

In brief, the differing views among professors and students on preaching as a teaching method reveal a significant educational gap, especially concerning WRPI. Students

emphasised the need for practical, critical discussions on women's rights, arguing that preaching infantilises women's issues and is overly simplistic. They advocated interactive and critical educational teaching methods, acknowledging students' challenges, which could support their understanding and empowerment. This approach reinforces the existing social structures and norms without allowing for critical scrutiny or debate.

Exchanging Roles Strategy:

Participants emphasised the significance of student-professor exchange in enhancing learning experiences, even though no one emphasised its use in the classroom[260]. P6 called this teaching method *"the flipped classroom strategy"*. She favoured this strategy because it has dual benefits: it improves the teacher's experience while also assisting students in understanding the content. P6 stated that "*students are more likely to engage with and understand the content when they play the teacher's role. This approach also enables the teacher to learn fresh viewpoints or ideas from the students, which improves their teaching approaches. In essence, it's a mutually beneficial learning experience that is reciprocal"*. P6 explained that the flipped teaching strategy is better implemented later in the lesson after the professor establishes foundations. She believed it ensured that the students had a solid understanding of the lesson's fundamental concepts initially presented by the professor. Similarly, S9 and S6 affirmed that the exchange roles approach enhances

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[260] This approach's value enriches teachers' experiences by incorporating fresh perspectives and fosters a supportive environment for students to share their insights, improving comprehension and retention.

students' learning process and promotes self-confidence by allowing them to show their best in front of the teacher and classmates. However, neither the professor nor the student mentioned using this strategy in the ICC lectures.

According to the responses, this approach is practical and effective for teaching women's rights, yet it has yet to be widely used. The participants emphasised that complex topics such as women's rights can be explored thoroughly by utilising this approach. Professors and students engage in an ongoing dialogue, exchanging ideas and questions to deepen understanding, challenge existing beliefs, and encourage new perspectives. Thus, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of women's rights.

Dialogue Strategy:

Participants agreed that dialogue enhances students' awareness and creates a dynamic environment. Unlike indoctrination and preaching, dialogue encourages active participation, develops critical thinking and relates the ICC content to real-life situations. Dialogue potentially reduces disputes, especially when establishing *Al-Taʾṣīl* as a foundation understanding of essential concepts. The data showed variability in how dialogue is implemented across classrooms. Participants highlighted the challenges of using dialogue-based teaching in environments dominated by traditional methods. Students noted that professors' lack of engagement in dialogue reflects broader social norms that undervalue dialogue.

P4, P5, and P6 acknowledge the importance of dialogue in women's rights lessons. They agreed on its importance in active participation and collaborative problem-solving, which they see essential for enhancing students' understanding of women's rights. They also encouraged students to analyse, question, and critically assess the information once the foundation knowledge *(Al-Taʾṣīl)* was established. P2, however, expressed reservations about open discussions due to practical challenges such as limited time, large class sizes, language barriers, low student knowledge levels, and online lessons[261].Students agreed with the professors' points of view and underscored the positive impacts of dialogue in WRPI. For example, S5 and S10 argued that sharing knowledge and experiences helps students express their thoughts and apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, making the learning process more dynamic and practical. Thus, students' understanding of women's rights is enhanced. S6 further stated that sharing knowledge clarified complex topics and somehow reduced disputes. S1 and S11 added that critical discussions on social matters prevent boredom and encourage active participation, which makes lessons on women's rights more engaging and persuasive. Although there was broad agreement on the usefulness of dialogue, students had mixed feelings about its implementation. 33% of students expressed satisfaction with the professors using dialogue. Among the satisfied, S7 appreciated how her professor connected knowledge to social life, enhancing her

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[261] Professors highlighted the challenges considered triggers for the Banking Model, such as limited time, large class sizes, language barriers, low student knowledge levels, and the   model. As professors see these issues as barriers to dialogue and participatory methods, students perceive them as leveraged elements for effective online class planning despite the large size of the class. They criticised professors for not incorporating online/digital opportunities and interactive materials in lesson planning and prioritising content delivery and attendance tracking. Some students pointed out some professors' attempts to initiate critical thinking. However, these attempts were limited and lacked depth, offering only a superficial level of engagement and ending with passive learning. This might show that some professors are keen to break out of the Banking Model but lack training in conducting such class activities.

understanding. Similarly, S1 praised her professor's methodical and persuasive discussion approach, particularly during a lesson on men's guardianship, which explained financial responsibilities. However, S1 observed that most other professors engaged minimally in dialogue, as her peers with different professors also noted.41% of students expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of dialogue and criticised the traditional, didactic preaching style often used in classrooms. They believed this style stemmed from professors viewing themselves as ultimate authorities whose opinions could not be questioned, thus eliminating the need for dialogue, which highlights a culture of fear and repression through the teaching process, reinforcing the instructor's authority and the students' passivity. This perspective supports S12's earlier argument about hierarchical norms in teaching. S11 was concerned that this approach led professors to treat students as less knowledgeable, particularly on topics involving religious texts, which are often considered non-debatable. S6 noted that the lack of methodologically planned dialogue in lesson planning frequently resulted in disorganised and chaotic debates, rendering lessons on women's rights ineffective.

Overall, the analysis revealed that dialogue strategies in education create a dynamic, persuasive, and attractive educational environment and enhance students' critical thinking skills and rights awareness. However, students criticised professors for not engaging in dialogue due to societal norms' domination of educational contexts, such as the hierarchal authority. This can lead to chaotic discussions, unproductive lessons on women's rights, and making discussions sacrosanct, making them less effective.

6.4.6. Saudi's New Social Reforms: Sudden Shift in Religious Edicts on Women's Rights.

This section covers the participants' perspectives regarding the impact of the recent reforms in fostering awareness of women's rights. That is to explore how female students at KSA move from merely knowing women's rights concepts to applying this knowledge within a new legal context and whether the ICC helps along this process. The findings will answer parts of RQ3, which questions how the knowledge obtained from ICC is translated into effective awareness in praxis.

Participants agreed on four main points regarding the issue: 1) The impact of the *Fatwa*[262] (Edict) constant changes on Women's awareness of WRPI, 2) The gap between education content and legal changes on women's rights. 3) The alarming impact of new laws on gender relations, 4) Promoting women's rights and awareness

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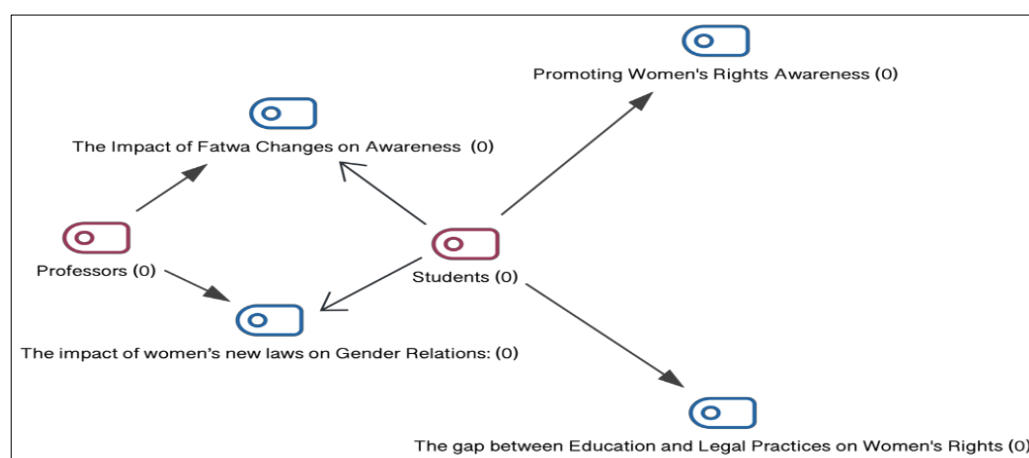
[262] *Fatwa*: a religious decree issued by a Muslim scholar or scholars, interpreting Islamic law to guide on a major issue or question. Examples could include declaring a government legitimate, endorsing a war, or prohibiting certain behaviours (Bowen,2008).

Figure (16): The Impact of New Reforms on Saudi Women's Rights Awareness

The disturbing sudden transition in Saudi women's laws without a gradual process was recognised by professors who agreed that it generated confusion among students about their rights. They highlighted the need for educational institutions to proactively address the resulting knowledge and awareness gaps. In this context, P5 and P3 expressed concerns regarding the substantial and rapid transformations since 2015 in Saudi women's laws without any gradual transitional period. They affirmed that these changes have served women's issues in many respects; however, they have created confusion among women students regarding their awareness of their rights, as most of the reforms contradict the prevailing patterns of social traditions previously sustained by religious claims. For example, the ban on women driving cars was lifted in 2017 based on a *Fatwa* (Edict) from the Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia[263]. However, before that time, women were prohibited from driving based on a *Fatwa* (Edict) from the same council. P5 affirmed that Islamic education has not addressed or justified these changes to minimise inner student conflicts. She said: *"We used to inform female students during the ICC that it is not permissible for a woman to travel without Muhrem (a male guardian) and that women are prohibited from driving. Suddenly, everything became permissible, and laws were issued to that effect. This confused students' awareness: Has religion changed? Of course not, but*

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[263] (See 1.3 and 1.4)

we have never taught them that religious scholars can change fatwas taking into account the interests of society's reality, which shifts with time."

41% of students agreed with the professors that the changes in *Fatwas* caused some disturbance in women's rights awareness. S1 asserted that changing *Fatwas* needs to be clarified for students as no justification was provided. She said*, "The educational staff did not explain to us as students the reasons behind the recent changes in the fatwas."* P5's and S1's statements underscored the lack of comprehensive rationales and logical teachings of *fatwas* dynamics in Islamic education on WRPI, which might be ignored to maintain the social status quo on women's rights.

Accordingly, students' observations suggested that the ICC fails to include the recent reforms in women's rights laws. This may indicate that the ICC upholds traditional gender norms supporting men, widening the gap between Education and Legal reforms on women's rights. For example, P5 hoped the committee had focused on areas where legal regulations have changed. This process would help guarantee thorough and up-to-date educational content for students and prevent knowledge or awareness gaps. In a parallel perspective, S11 expressed dissatisfaction with the ICC, arguing it does not incorporate the latest laws and regulations concerning women's rights. As a result, there is an increasing disconnect between what is taught in education and the actual practices observed in courts, deepening the divide between theory and reality**.** S12 supported S11's point of view; she offered an example from her experience in the case of child custody (see 6.3.7); she explained: *"The ICC does not keep pace with the new laws; for example, the updated rules on child custody say that the kids go to the mother immediately after separation if she does*

not get married, instead of the need to file lawsuits, as the case was before. This is not

stipulated in the ICC; it only says that one parent is more important than the other (p. 131),

which is not what courts do now." S11 believes that keeping pace with the current reality

makes women feel that their religion and rights align. She explained that the ICC promoted

a vision of Islam as "fixed" and static, even though, in practice, it is not. Building on this,

a lack of awareness about women's rights in education, even though new laws support these

rights, can disrupt social and family gender dynamics. Participants highlighted two main

issues: 1) Saudi women exerting dominance over men and 2) gender conflict. These issues

show the growing gap between education and societal norms. If education does not

effectively raise awareness of women's rights, it can lead to imbalances in gender relations

and family dynamics. Enhancing awareness is critical to navigating and addressing the

complexities of gender dynamics in Saudi society. P3 expressed her concern that the new

laws related to women have provided a foundation for some women to become oppressive

forces, seeking to overthrow male authority, often motivated by revenge against their

husbands or fathers. P3 accused some women of misusing the laws by making false

allegations against their fiancé, claiming they had been alone together without

accompaniment (*Khul'wa*) as a sign that he had sexual intercourse with her to gain financial

rights. In this case, P3 explained, the fiancé cannot deny or refute her claim, even if he is

telling the truth, because the law is now on the woman's side. On the other hand, 50% of

professors argue that the new laws have developed discord between men and women

because of social legacies that discourage the advancement of women to positions of

authority in society. Men want to preserve authority, while women adopt a confrontational

stance against men to overthrow their dominance and power.

S1 echoed the teachers' viewpoint, attributing the emergence of resentment between genders to the sudden changes in women's rights without a prior adaptation phase following a long period of patriarchal domination. She stated: *"It would have been preferable to have a transitional period between the two stages, supported by an intensive awareness campaign about women's rights as a preparation for the new changes."*

On the other hand, S12 and S7 believed that introducing legislation explicitly addressing women's rights has played a significant role in spreading a fresh understanding of women's rights principles among youth. They asserted that these legislative measures have been instrumental in promoting a new perspective on women's rights within the framework of Islam. S12 emphasised the importance of Islamic education in increasing awareness about women's rights, which is crucial for empowering women to advocate for their rights. She argued that legal reforms, while necessary, are not enough to change societal attitudes and behaviours. For real change to occur, people must also alter their mindsets, deeply ingrained cultural norms, and personal beliefs. The students' viewpoint underscored the importance of the connection between policy interventions and education in initiating social change and advancing women's rights within Islamic frameworks.

To sum up, participants spotlighted the alarming impact of Saudi Arabia's sudden legal reforms. Both professors and students recognised the gap between the ICC content and these reforms.

6.4.7. Critical Awareness Implementation: Pros and Cons

This theme highlighted the participants' expectations of implementing the knowledge of women's rights gained from the ICC, transforming theoretical understanding into real-world actions. By examining these expectations, the analysis better identifies whether there is critical or limited awareness of WRPI. This analysis helps identify areas where education support is needed, addressing research question RQ3.

Participants emphasised the importance of providing female students with critical awareness tools to effectively translate theoretical knowledge into practical outcomes. It ensures that students know their rights and can effectively promote and defend them. Otherwise, women might generate unbalanced reactions that could be overly passive or aggressive toward themselves, men, and others around them. They might react out of frustration, revenge or confusion.

These concerns implied that women must be critically aware of their rights, legal protection, and how to address and claim these rights within their social context. Indeed, according to Ferrier (1970), such aggressive actions demonstrate women's transition from being seen as oppressed to becoming oppressive characters as a reaction to the male's domination, which leads to new challenges in social structures. Participants attributed these extreme reactions to oppressive experiences within their immediate environments, the pressures of inherited sociocultural norms, the unconscious influence of TV shows and movies, and the confusion between rights based on Islamic law and perceived rights or *false awareness.* Students argued that the ICC's inconsistency restricts students' understanding and application of their rights.

The term "reaction" or synonymous ones are used 13 times by professors and 23 times by students, indicating its significance in the discussion. The professors agreed that the students' reactions and stances in the classroom reflected their knowledge and awareness of their legal, social, and personal rights. P4 and P6 argued that when students believe in rights that do not have a basis in Islamic law or so-called (false awareness of rights), their behaviour and reactions can be inappropriate or misguided because they rely on false assumptions. Likewise, P5 observed that the students' extreme reactions constantly occurred after lessons on marital rights, attributing these reactions to a lack of understanding of their rights. She insisted that such students' reactions might stem from oppressive experiences within their immediate environments, such as aggressive families or husbands[264]. She stated: *"If this student knew her rights, her reactions might probably be less extreme, as she would feel empowered rather than victimised."* She suggested that such a student might have failed to demand her, leading her to feel helpless and react violently to express her frustration or powerlessness.

P3 also noted that the pressure to follow dominant social norms and expectations influenced Saudi women's behaviours. She referred to trends of reactions to traditional societal expectations of women's roles toward men in the family. Therefore, she discussed three reactions that Saudi women might take in front of these unfair dominant social norms, each reflecting a law level of understanding of their rights within marriage and family life.

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[264] Therefore, she expressed deep sympathy for the student who wrote on the board during the lesson, I am against marriage, (see 6.3.5).

The first reaction is seeking an unreasonable divorce instead of trying to solve the conflict. Or, on the contrary, a woman might remain in a harmful marriage with no light at the end of the tunnel out of fear of social stigma. The second reaction is avoiding marriage altogether due to insecurity and mistrust of the future husband. This insecurity could be related to emotional, financial, or physical safety concerns within the marriage. P3 asserted that such a reaction could be due to witnessing the oppression of women relatives. The third reaction is exploiting the legal loopholes against husbands, fathers or brothers and filing unjust lawsuits as a form of retaliation against perceived male domination. P3 emphasised that these reactions are not productive rights assertions. Thus, it might lead to the destruction of family relationships and the dispersal of children. From a different perspective, P2 denied the impact of social norms on women's lives; however, she asserted that students' aggressive stances are primarily due to the unconscious influence of external sources such as TV shows and movies. She believed that most of those who showed any reaction during women's rights lessons were the pampered segment of society who sought thrills, nothing more.

On the contrary, students agreed that women's rights awareness allowed them to be conscious even in difficult times without being drawn into uncontrolled reactions. S3 believed women will always feel empowered when they increase their awareness of their rights. S7 focused on the meaning of empowerment, stating that women will be active and engaged in society, capable of expressing their opinions openly and making decisions. S3 further noted that with this awareness, women can defend, demand, and protect their rights if infringed upon. S5, for example, said that she decided to study law to gain the strength

and empowerment and to support her mother [265]; she stated: *"I decided to study law for two reasons: first, to understand my rights and duties and to become stronger. I was a very weak person who would cry over any word. I could not even defend myself. Now, I feel empowered to fight for rights, whether mine or someone else's. The second reason is that I wanted to protect my mother's rights from my father's abuse."*

After the divorce, S12 experienced a challenge with child custody. Before the new Personal Status Law was issued in 2022, child custody usually went to the father based on social customs. She firmly rejected this judgment, believing in the mother's right to custody her children unless she remarries based on the texts of the *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*. She fought for two years for her right to custody and eventually won. S12 asserted that her persistence came from her awareness of her rights, which she gained through her deep research, empowering her to win her legal battle. She stated: *"After searching in Islamic sources, I realised that child custody is the unmarried mother's right. The court's decision reflected male dominance and infringed on women's rights. Since then, I have known I was demanding my rights and nothing more. ... I merely wanted to prove it legally. After two years of legal battle, I finally won the case."*

S3 focused on the reactions of some peers who, unlike S12, could not critically analyse or evaluate women's issues appropriately because they were not fully aware of their rights. She explained that the lack of comprehensive awareness would leave them confused and

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[265] (See 6.3.7)

powerless, often thinking they were at fault. This confusion could affect their decisions and make them adopt unconvincing solutions, even if these contradict Islamic teachings. S7 agreed with P5 that some students react harshly in the classroom due to a lack of awareness of their rights in Islam. This might be because their awareness was not adequately raised within their family or educational context.

S1, in an assessment of the earlier reactions discussed by P3, stated that women who avoid marriage, leave their families, or stay away from abusive husbands were acts of withdrawal rather than asserting their rights because they are not aware of them. Similarly, in an assertion of S7's argument above, S4 avoided engagement in women's rights discussions, preferring to pretend not to hear rather than confront these issues due to her lack of profound understanding of these rights. Likewise, regarding the tension between genders, especially on social media, S1 said that both sides have taken an unconscious attitude in dealing with the other: girls fight for revenge and healing, and boys fight to maintain their authoritative positions in control. S1 emphasised that these reactions indicated a significant lack of rights awareness among both genders.

As for the ICC, S3 pointed out that its content had yet to raise her critical awareness. S11 expressed her desire to not only learn information but also to be able to apply it and shape practical opinions, especially regarding the variety of topics discussed on social media and public forums. S3 agreed with S11 and stated, *"I wanted to be able to adopt a reaction and express views that are informed and aligned with my community's religious and cultural values. I wanted to be able to judge information, especially on Google, and participate in public discourse critically."* S6 was almost the only student who asserted that the ICC made

her more assertive in claiming her rights. She said that she learned how to take a correct attitude towards certain concepts that she was unaware of, such as the husband being charged to fulfil all his wife's affairs, regardless of her financial status. This understanding led her to expect that Saudi women, being informed of their rights, would be less likely to be susceptible to any form of husbands' abusive behaviour. However, S6 did not specify which aspects of the ICC helped her apply this theoretical knowledge in practice or whether it was the professor's teaching strategy that raised such awareness of WRPI.

To sum up, participants emphasised that critical awareness of women's rights is crucial for empowering women to defend their rights, evaluate events critically to take an appropriate stance, express their opinions, make wise decisions, and be active and engaged in society. However, women's awareness of their rights might be influenced by inherited norms, oppressive experiences, or external values, leading women to adopt unbalanced, passive, or aggressive reactions. On the other hand, students narrate their before and after being aware of their rights in Islam. They explained how cultivating this awareness through seeking knowledge allowed them to make better choices within their family relations, claim their rights in accord with their religious values, and compete with male domination when conflict arose.

6.5. Conclusion

The findings of this chapter reveal a significant awareness among professors and students of the complex interplay between the Islamic framework for women's rights, cultural norms, and pedagogical practices in the ICC. Participants could highlight several critical

gaps that hinder the ICC's effectiveness, including reinforcing patriarchal norms, lacking

critical discussions, and lacking structured methodological approaches such as the *Al-Taʾṣīl*

methodology.

A key insight from this chapter is the prevalence of false awareness regarding women's

rights, primarily shaped by personal biases, restrictive teaching methods, and the absence

of critical engagement with religious texts. The majority of participants agree that rather

than fostering independent analysis, the ICC tends to present women's rights through a lens

of social traditions that often conflate culture with religion. This approach reinforces

dominant gender hierarchies, where women's duties are emphasised over their rights, and

men's responsibilities are rarely discussed. As a result, students perceive these narratives

as rigid, contrary to the *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* flexibility. They perceive it as disconnected

from the evolving socio-legal landscape in Saudi Arabia, which has witnessed significant

reforms regarding women's rights under Vision 2030.Another issue identified from the

participants' contribution is the lack of institutional support for the ICC, which manifests

in large class sizes, limited instructional time, and untrained professors who struggle to

facilitate nuanced discussions on critical terms and contemporary issues. The ICC appears

to contain minimal content and resources, fulfilling curriculum requirements without

investing in it as an academic and social development field. This structural limitation

restricts the depth of classroom discussions and forces professors to rely on didactic and

indoctrinatory methods rather than fostering interactive and critical dialogues on women's

rights.

Furthermore, professors and students show a significant commitment to *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, following the *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* approach in defining, applying, and framing the key concepts in women's rights discourse in Saudi Arabia. They critically analysed the ICC's culturally biased approach to dealing with these terms, which trigger tensions in the classroom and students' construction of gender, religious and social identity.

This chapter also highlights the absence of a peace education dynamic within the ICC. While peace (*Al-Salām*) is theoretically a foundational principle in Islamic education[266], participants explained that its application in gender discussions remains insufficient. The ICC fails to integrate *Al-Taʾṣīl* effectively in a way that fosters a balanced and justice-oriented approach to gender relations. Without this critical methodological tool, students are left without a structured framework to navigate the evolving discourse on women's rights. This makes them more susceptible to adopting external epistemological paradigms that may not align with their cultural and religious contexts.

The professors' reluctance to engage in critical discussions on women's rights reflects a broader fear of social disorder. Many professors perceive debates on gender roles as a potential challenge to societal stability, leading them to adopt passive, one-directional teaching strategies that discourage student engagement. However, this fear limits the ICC's transformative potential, preventing it from equipping students with the intellectual tools

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[266] (See 3.2.2)

needed to analyse and challenge discriminatory practices while remaining grounded in Islamic principles.

Chapter Seven

Content Analysis Chapter

7.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the Islamic Culture Curriculum's (ICC) content on women's rights, covering the first six chapters (pp. 8-137), as the three remaining chapters of the ICC do not address WRPIs. It is structured following the previous chapter's three levels, Micro, Meso, and Macro, allowing for a comprehensive examination aligned with the research questions. The Micro-level section examines if the ICC contains gender stereotypes or societal expectations in its structure, discourse style, and language complexity. The Meso level analyses whether the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology explains and introduces the key concepts of women's rights principles in Islam (WRPI). The Macro level contextualises WRPI knowledge provided in the ICC within the broader social and educational framework of Saudi Arabia.

7.2. Micro Level (Content and structure)

This section analyses the ICC content to identify societal stereotypes on gender roles and women's rights identified by the participants in the previous chapter. It aims to reveal implicit and explicit biases on gender roles in content structure, linguistic choices and educational methodology. Through this lens, the section seeks to uncover how the ICC's presentation of gender roles corresponds to or differs from broader societal expectations, providing insight into how educational materials can either reenforce stereotypes on gender roles or serve as catalysts for social change by challenging these dominant norms by fostering the Islamic framework on women's rights discussion.

The Micro-level analysis identified three challenging aspects of the ICC regarding WRPI educational material: 1) gendered ownership of rights, 2) undermining women's dignity guaranteed by Islam, and 3) inconsistencies and coherence issues.
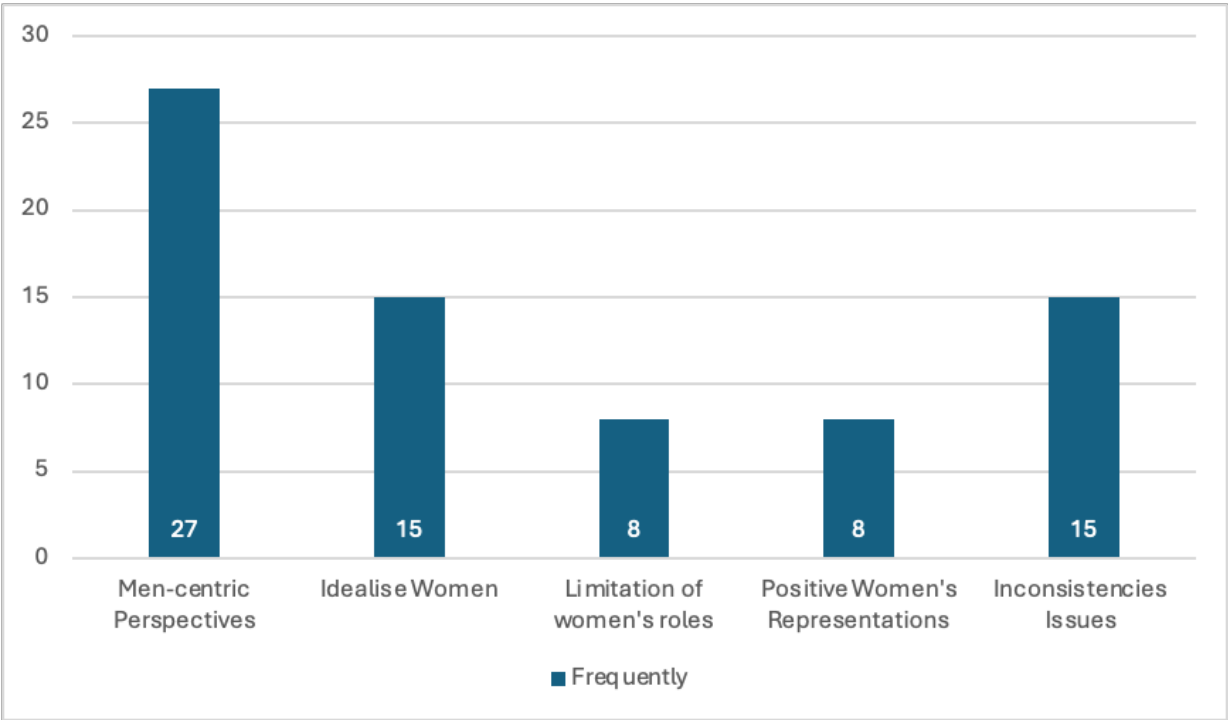

Figure (17) The frequency of gendered and male-biased perception at the ICC

7.2.1. Gendered Ownership of Rights: Male Prioritisation and Stereotypes in Text Representation

The analysis of the ICC content on rights material reveals a gendered, male-biased perception as they are the rights holder. This reinforces stereotypes, portrays men as holders of absolute authority and decision-making power, and ignores the justice requirements in rights discussion within the Islamic frame of reference, particularly applying *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* that seeks justice, not hierarchical authority[267]. The analysis identified the following strategies in the ICC that pointed out men as the right holders in the Islamic gender roles regulation:

7.2.1.1. Emphasis on Male-Centrality in Rights and Needs Discussions

The ICC listed and explained rights and responsibilities in Islam from male-centred lenses, through which Islamic teachings seemed to serve men's desires, affectional needs, and authoritative status. For example, even though *Al-Qiwāmah* in Islamic law is a man's responsibility and a woman's right[268], the implementation of *Al-Qiwāmah* in gender roles discussion in the ICC is framed as a duty on the wife to *"help her husband perform this task" (p. 79)*, women also have the responsibility over her husband religious practices as she has *"to assist her husband in following divine teachings"* (p. 80)[269].

The ICC linguistic structure frames the man, specifically the husband, as the primary beneficiary of the wife's education. Women's education indeed increases the family's

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[267] (See 3.2.2)
[268] (See 3.3.2)
[269] The ICC does not refer to the reciprocal reference to the husband's responsibility to support his wife or maintain familial balance as part of *Al-Qiwāmah*..

intellectual level. Still, the ICC discourse exclusively limited the benefiting of women's education to *"the husband"* in the first place *"and children"* in the second place (p. 86), reinforcing the view that women's education's purpose is to serve men's interests rather than being a right for women to fulfil their intellectual needs. Similarly, the text emphasises women's role in the domestic sphere, urging them to manage household duties to *"win her husband's heart and affection"* (p. 82) while neglecting to address the corresponding affectional duties men are obligated to fulfil. Even the woman's right to independent housing is framed from a male-centred perspective. It is interpreted as *"achieving the fullest and most complete fulfilment of the husband's rights"* (p. 84).

In the polygamy lesson, the ICC introduces the practice as a solution to several social and marital problems, such as the chronic illness or infertility of the first wife (p.65). However, the linguistic structures used to discuss the Islamic rationale of the practice portray women as those who have shortcomings and men as *"savers"* of the first wives from getting divorced as much as entitled to the *"useful remedy to compensate the inadequacy of the first wife."*[270] Even in discussing *Nikāḥ Al-Muḥallil*[271], the prohibition is justified as this type of marriage is *"an injustice to the second husband, an infringement on his rights, and*

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[270] That is to say, the ICC discussion ignores the feelings or emotional needs of the first wife, who suffers from illness or infertility, as no lines are dedicated to drawing the husband's attention to these needs. Nor is the conciliation or mediation between the spouses a primary solution when a conflict arises.

[271] *Nikāḥ Al-Muḥallil* refers to a marriage arranged solely to permit (halal) a woman to remarry her former husband after triple talaq (three divorces). In Islam, after three divorces, a woman becomes permanently forbidden *(ḥarām)* to her ex-husband unless she genuinely marries another man; the marriage is consummated, and it later ends naturally (through divorce or widowhood). Suppose the second marriage is pre-planned or temporary solely to legalise remarriage with the first husband *(Nikāḥ Al-Muḥallil).* In that case, it is considered invalid and sinful according to all major Islamic schools of thought *(Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali).* Islam strictly prohibits such arrangements as they undermine women's dignity and jeopardise the seriousness of marital life (El-Eid, 2006).

harassment" (p.61), failing to point out that Islam bans this marriage to protect women's rights and emotions from being violated or mistreated through such manipulated marriage.

Furthermore, the male-centred emphasis is visible in the debate on women's right to the dowry (p. 83); the discussion focuses on the need to reduce the value of dowries to recognise the economic difficulties men face instead of focusing on the women's right to the dowery regarded as an act of honouring women, symbolising respect and acknowledgement of their value in marriage[272]. The male-centred argument lists prophetic evidence in favour of men, shifting the focus of the *Ḥadīth* from the importance of the dowry, whatever the economic situation of the man, to the need to reduce the dowry amount, which the participants in the previous section highlighted and criticised too[273]. The book debate fails to acknowledge a husband's duty to provide for his wife and family, a critical component of women's rights. When this is omitted, the discourse becomes excessively male-centric, even though it is intended to emphasise women's rights and challenges.

The discussion predominantly frames men as the primary rights-holders and beneficiaries of the Islamic gender-rights system, while women's rights are addressed in broad terms. Contrary to *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, which is founded on justice, balanced rights, and mutual

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[272] (See 3.3.3)
[273] (See 6.3.5)

responsibilities, this male-centred approach exacerbates gender disparities in both marital and social settings.

7.2.1.2. Unbalanced Approach to Men's and Women's Rights:

The analysis identified nine instances of unbalanced arguments regarding men's and women's rights and responsibilities in marriage. Women were repeatedly instructed to fulfil their husbands' needs as part of their duties without equal emphasis on their rights. The ICC lists five rights for men (pp. 79–86) but only three for women—dowry (*Mahr*), alimony (*Al-Nafaqah*), and kind treatment (*Maʿrūf*), while overlooking other rights such as choosing a husband, education, financial independence, intimate fulfilment, and adequate housing. However, even these three rights were framed through a male-centred lens. For instance, women are told to *"respect and honour their husbands, value their efforts, and not contest their competencies"* (p. 97). Still, husbands have no equivalent instruction to reciprocate these values in building a balanced marital relationship[274].

Similarly, maintaining family well-being is framed as a wife's duty, advising women to *"honour their husbands, appreciate whatever he provides, and not be ungrateful"* (p. 81) without expecting men to acknowledge their wives' contributions. Women are also instructed to protect their husband's emotions so he *"sees only what he likes, hears only what pleases him, and finds comfort at home"* and to *"dress up and look good for him"*

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[274] The *Qurʾān* emphasises reciprocal duties between spouses, which is not reflected in the discussion (see 3.2.1).

(p.81). These directives prioritise men's needs without addressing women's reciprocal rights. Furthermore, the text warns women not to burden their husbands financially or be ill-tempered (p. 84) but does not equally emphasise a husband's duty to provide for his wife adequately, despite this being a guaranteed right in WRPI. Overall, women are primarily portrayed as fulfilling men's needs rather than as equal partners with independent rights and responsibilities in marriage[275].

In addition, although the ICC defined the primary shared obligation of both genders to obey *Allah* (p. 75), the emphasis remains on the wife's imposing on her the responsibility of her husband's piety and upholding the home (p. 80) while ensuring that her actions do not undermine the husband's *Al-Qiwāmah* (p. 79). In discussing the divorce right, the book prohibits women from requesting divorce without a legitimate reason (p. 123), assuming that women would abuse this right. Still, it does not similarly emphasise the prohibition of men's abuse of their right to divorce (التعسف، *Alta'asuf*), placing the primary responsibility for marital stability on the woman[276].

In the case of *Nushūz* (نشوز)[277], the ICC points out "If a wife becomes aware of her husband's *Nushūz*, such as a lack of sexual intimacy, mistreatment, or a failure to fulfil his financial obligations, she should search for the underlying causes of his situation, whether

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[275] In the polygamy discussion, the right of men to practice polygamy was detailed in three pages. In contrast, the conditions imposed on the practice, which men must fulfil and follow, were reduced to three lines. Read more about the polygamy ICC discussion in the Meso level (7.3.3.)
[276] (See 3.3.7)
[277] *Nushūz* (نشوز) refers to marital discord or disobedience, particularly in the context of a spouse not fulfilling their marital duties. The term is mentioned in the *Qur'an* in relation to both husbands and wives (see 3.3.7).

stemming from her shortcomings in fulfilling his rights or from her neglecting of his matters, she must do everything she can to restore the situation to what it once was" (p. 98). The discussion does not consider the husband's responsibility concerning his wife's *Nushūz* or question if his treatment might trigger his wife's behaviour. The ICC provided solutions for women to deal with their husband's *Nushūz*, either by divorce or Kulu`. Suppose she does not want to end the marriage. In that case, she is recommended to "relinquish some of her financial rights, such as a portion of alimony, or non-financial rights, such as the relinquishment of her right to sleep over if her husband is married to another woman, to pacify the husband and gain his consent" (p. 98). Again, the husband was not addressed in the book to stop treating his wife unjustly or to take up his responsibilities towards his wife as part of the Al-Qiwāmah principle.

The discourse fails to address men directly or hold them accountable for their behaviour; the strategy perpetuates unequal power dynamics within the family. Such a discursive strategy contradicts the Islamic value of justice between spouses or family members, overlooking the importance of mutual respect and shared responsibility to achieve peace and a balanced family structure.

7.2.2. Undermining Women's Dignity Guaranteed by Islam: Gap in Language Structure and Linguistic Choices

The analysis identified contradictions in the ICC discourse concerning women's dignity and respect. In equally detected contexts, the discourse emphasises Islam's stance on upholding respect and dignity for women, showing evidence of their social and legal rights

in eight arguments. However, in another eight arguments, the ICC discourse ignores the Islamic stances and opts for linguistic structures that reproduce social stereotypes of women's roles and dignity. To address this contradiction, the analysis is divided into two parts: One explores where the ICC discourse maintains respect and dignity for women and the other highlights areas where women's dignity and agency are diminished or ignored. This structure aims to provide a balanced critique, highlighting both the positive and limiting aspects of the ICC's approach to women's rights.

7.2.2.1. Upholding Dignity: Positive Representations of Women's Rights

The content analysis observed eight contexts where the ICC respects and honours women, focusing on their rights and protection, both socially and legally. This reflects a positive and affirming discourse that places significant value on the role of women in Islamic society. For example, regarding the focus on protection and honour, the ICC makes two unequivocal assertions that the foundation of women's rights is protecting and honouring women. The first point emphasises that assigning different rights to men and women is intended to support and protect women's interests. Women's exemption from certain obligations imposed on men benefits their *"honour, preservation and protection"* (p. 20). In the second point, the book draws attention to an Islamic ethical principle that discourages the public display of marital discord between a husband and wife, particularly in the presence of children or strangers (p.100). The ICC explains that this Islamic principle aims to avoid emotional damage to the wife. Such discourse emphasises the Islamic approach to women's rights and protection from psychological, emotional, and social harm.Women's dignity was also identified in some marital discussions. For example, on (p.49), the

discourse affirms women's rights to retain the gifts bestowed by their husbands during the betrothal period if the marriage is not consummated. Likewise, on (p.126), women's right to stipulate their desired terms in the marriage contract is stated. The texts highlight the importance of a man demonstrating his desire for a woman and assuming responsibility for her (p. 82). The ICC emphasises a woman's honour and right to *Al-Khul'*, which allows her to seek separation if the marriage is unsatisfactory, akin to a man's right to divorce (p. 62). In addition, the emphasis on moral values through the marriage process was recognised twice in the discussion of the guardian's sponsorship (pp. 58, 57).

The discourse explained that having a guardian when signing the marriage contract does not underestimate the woman's decision over her spouse. The ICC textbook states: *"Guardianship over a woman in marriage is a form of honour and respect for her, as the Sharīʿah has given her a representative who defends her and protects her rights, especially in the marriage contract, which if she were to undertake it herself, shyness would overcome her and she would forfeit some of her material and other rights"* (p. 58), It continues: *"Guardianship over women does not diminish or diminish their value, or revoke their rights, or subjugate them. Instead, the goal is to preserve their rights, especially knowing that marriage cannot take place without their consent."* (p. 58). The discourse emphasises women's worth and explains that guardianship is a form of women's social immunity.

7.2.2.2. Undermining Dignity: A Superficial Approach to Women's Rights and Agency

Although the ICC occasionally acknowledges that certain Islamic rights aim to honour women, the dominant discourse frequently overlooks aspects that preserve women's value.

This analysis will focus on the discourse where the ICC missed the opportunity to emphasise Islam's honouring of women, especially in the comparison between WRPI and pre-Islamic Arabic women's rights. It is to say that the ICC compares the Islamic family system with the Western's, overlooking a valuable historical comparison with the *Jāhilīyah* (pre-Islamic) period, a time when women faced severe injustice and degradation. A historical comparison of women's status before and after Islam is as crucial as comparing Islamic and non-Islamic contemporary systems on women's rights. Such a contrast would underscore how Islam addressed and rectified the injustices women historically faced, offering a more transparent, more compelling picture of the ways Islam enhanced women's societal position[278].For example, the ICC does not address the preservation of women's dignity in discussing the prohibited three marriage types (*Al-Nikāḥ*) (pp. 60-61)[279]. The ICC explained that these forms of marriage are not permitted to prevent adultery (illicit relations) as in temporary marriage or to preserve the husband's rights in the marriage as legalised without any reference to the ethical values of these prohibitions that safeguard women's dignity and honour. The ICC discourse overlooks women's dignity and emotional needs in the discussion on polygamy (p. 65)[280]. In the *Al-Qiwāmah* discussion, the ICC emphasises men's superiority while implying women's submission to them[281], highlighting

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[278] (See 2.4. and 3.2.2)

[279] There are three prohibited marriage types in Islam: 1) Barter marriage (Nikāḥ Al-Shighār), where women are exchanged between men without a dowry, as if women were commodities. 2) Temporary marriage (Nikāḥ Mut'ah): a temporary marriage for enjoyment. 3) Marriage as a legaliser (*Nikāḥ Al-Muḥallil*): a man marries a woman solely to make her permissible for her first husband (see 3.3.3).

[280] As mentioned above (7.2.1.1), it ignores a detailed explanation of the concept of justice as a fundamental condition in regulating polygamy, thereby failing to guarantee that women are not oppressed and that their dignity is preserved in polygamous families.

[281] (See 7.3.4)

women's emotional vulnerability and using it to justify the unconditional authority conceded to men in the book's discourse. For example, in the *"preventing marital disputes"* section (p. 97), the ICC compares the emotional innate characteristics of women and the authoritarian role of men; it states: *"A woman's nature requires men to take into account her delicacy, weakness and emotional vulnerability"*, then the discourse followed up asserting the need for *"women to respect, honour and obey the husband's right to Al-Qiwāmah and not to challenge his prerogatives, which should be his alone"*. It is to say, instead of explaining to men students how to practice *Al-Qiwāmah* through Islamic rulings and teachings (being responsible for taking care of women on various levels/needs and in complex contexts of marriage and family life), the discourse shifted the addressee to women asking them to submit to an open, unlimited nor defined practice of the men's *Al-Qiwāmah.* This unbalanced discourse enforced male dominance among male students, diminishing women's agency, autonomy and freedom of choice guaranteed by Islam.

7.2.2.3. Inconsistencies and Coherence Issues: Structural Flaws in Educational Material

The content is inconsistent in discussing Islamic teachings related to gender roles and marriage relationships. The inconsistency is detected in 15 issues and can be grouped into three categories: 1) male-centred repetition of ideas, 2) contradictions in the discussion, and 3) discrepancies between the title and the content.

The male-centred repetition is evident in *Al-Qiwāmah* concepts in all marital-issue lessons[282]. The analysis of the ICC revealed three visible contradictions. The first is identified in the discussion of counselling and cooperation between spouses. The ICC states that *"a husband will not act independently in decision-making if he finds himself in the company of a mature and wise wife"* (p. 79). This approach restricts the collaboration between spouses to the presence of a "wise wife," leaving the criteria for what constitutes wisdom entirely up to the husband's subjective judgment. However, in the *Al-Shūrā* discussion (p. 75-76), the ICC explained that *Al-Shūrā* is a mutual right in Islam, irrespective of the degree of wisdom of each party involved in the consultation. This presents an apparent contradiction in interpreting the right of *Al-Shūrā* and collaboration within the marital relationship.

The second contradiction is identified in the focus on tolerance and favourable cohabitation versus holding women responsible for improving family conditions. The ICC placed considerable emphasis on tolerance and harmonious cohabitation (p. 77, 84). However, it warned women that their husbands *"may misbehave"* if she does not reduce their expenses (p. 84). Such discourse overlooks addressing men to consider their wives' economic needs and rights to proper alimony. This argument conflicts with the concept of *Ma'ruf* (good

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[282] In every marital issue, the idea is raised to give the husband supreme authority over the topic in focus. AS explained below in (7.3.4), the one-sided discussion of *Al-Qiwāmah* failed to address the husband's responsibility for his behaviour and shortcomings in the *Nushūz* situation (see 7.2.1.2). The ICC overlooks essential values and principles in the discussion of women's rights, which creates a contradiction, although the Islamic rights system is comprehensive, coherent and interconnected (see the Islamic framework in 3.2). Selectively addressing certain aspects while ignoring others on the same issue disrupts this coherence and undermines the integrity of the discussion.

cohabitation) mentioned on (p. 84) and the value of justice, which implies mutual respect and shared responsibility between spouses. By placing the burden of maintaining harmony solely on women, the discourse overlooks the need for equal accountability from both partners in fostering a healthy and balanced marital relationship. The third contradiction is identified in the author's explanation of the conditions for a woman requesting *Al-Khul'* (divorce initiated by the wife) (p.125). The ICC states that a woman has the right to request *Al-Khul'* if she feels aversion towards her husband and fears being unable to fulfil his rights, even if the husband is fulfilling all his obligations towards her. However, on page 126, the ICC asserts that women seeking *Al-Khul'* without reason is a major sin. This inconsistency lacks clarity and coherence in a woman's right to *Al-Khul',* avoiding spotting the light on the husband's behaviour as a trigger to demanding *Al-Khul'* or addressing him to put an effort to prevent it, a similar avoidance observed above in the *Nushūz* case. These inconsistencies underscore the need for a coherent approach to discussing the rights and duties of both spouses equally within the Islamic frame of reference. Several sections identify discrepancies between the title and the content, revealing a lack of coherence in the ICC content's structure. For example, jealousy was discussed under *"Shared Rights between Spouses"* (p. 77), implying that jealousy is a mutual right for both husband and wife. However, the content focused on jealousy as a right exclusive to men without indicating it as a shared aspect between spouses. In addition, the ICC categorised *Al-Qiwāmah* as a right belonging to men within the topic of *"'Men's Rights"* (p.79); however,

it is defined as *"a right the wife has over her husband"* that she needs to accept and cedes decision making over her rights to him[283].

The inconsistency in the discussion reveals a need for coherence and clarity in how rights and responsibilities are conceptualised in the ICC. These inconsistencies suggest a skewed representation of gender roles, where male authority is emphasised, and women's rights are either diminished or misinterpreted.

7.3. Meso Level (Concepts and Application)

In the previous section, the Meso level analysed the participants' perception of the book's definition of the key concepts. The Meso level of this chapter examines the ICC discourse and structure that define these key concepts. This section analyses how the ICC introduced the eleven key concepts in WRPI highlighted by the participants[284]: Marriage (*Al-Zawāj)*, Polygamy (*Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt)*, Divorce (*Al-ṭalāq)*and *Al-Khul',* Guardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*), Obedience to the husband (*Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj),* The Foundation (*Al-Taʾṣīl)*, the right (*Al-Ḥaq*), and peace in relationships (*Al-Salām)*, and Feminism. In addition to these principles, which are mentioned at the meso level of the previous chapter, this chapter extends to analyse how the ICC introduces some jurisprudential terms relevant to the WRPI discussion.

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[283] (See: 7.3.4).
[284] (See 6.3.)

This analysis helps clarify whether the key concepts and jurisprudential terms of WRPI are outlined in the ICC through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology[285] to provide a coherent frame of reference and knowledge on the gender rights system in Islam or if it included an unbalanced and biased approach to justice affected by social stereotypes. This analysis is significant in exploring if the ICC discussion of the key concepts of WRPI can raise both genders' awareness of their rights or if it recycles socially unjust discourses on women's issues.

7.3.1. Clarification of Jurisprudential Terms

The ICC content addresses several jurisprudential terms effectively in 11 places, such as explaining the meaning and forms of engagement (*Al-Khuṭbah*) (p. 43-47), Marriage *(Al-Nikāḥ)* (p. 55), *Nushūz* (p. 99), and divorce forms with examples (p. 118). Furthermore, the analysis found that the ICC makes efforts to clarify specific terms used in the *Qurʾān*, such as the word "*Baʿal*" in verse (2:228), which means "husband." Additionally, the ICC explains a statement by the Prophet (PBUH) advising a man considering marriage to *"look at her (the woman), as it is more likely that the two of you will get along."* These explanations help students to understand these terms and phrases more effectively.

In addition, the ICC emphasises the concepts of *Al-Taʾṣīl*, the right (*Al-Ḥaq*), balance, and peace in the book's introduction, establishing these concepts as central principles of the

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[285] (See 3.3.1)

Islamic family value system (p. 14-23). Under the title "*Characteristics of the Family System in Islam*," the discourse emphasises that the only source of these rights is *Allah* and that no one can cancel or demand what *Allah* has not granted. The ICC states that Islamic family law aims at diverse objectives, including peace, balance, mutual compassion, solidarity, and inner tranquillity (*Sakan*). It further distinguishes the Islamic system from other systems that prioritise individual rights, advocate for absolute equality, and promote the interchangeability of gender roles. The ICC asserts that the Islamic family system is cohesive and considers men and women as partners in dignity and humanity, upholding individual rights as part of broader societal rights. This system is built on justice and complementarity between genders without yielding to temporary individual interests. This balanced approach to personal and collective rights reflects a comprehensive vision of marital rights in Islam, founded on gender justice rather than equality or bias dominance. Nevertheless, despite the prominent introduction to gender rights and the explanation of several specific terms, the ICC content remains unclear in 21 places, which may impede students' comprehension of the underlying jurisprudential concepts and their nuances. These include the following findings:

- The content fails to define a *"pillar"* in the marriage contract (p. 57) or explain its importance and implications if this term is absent. This lack of clarity may lead to misunderstandings that could negatively impact women's rights in marriage and divorce.

- The ICC's use of *"compensation in a lease"* (p. 58) to describe the dowry is unclear and misleading, implying it functions as payment[286].

- The use of complicated terms, such as *Sifāḥ* (fornication), *Akhdān* (secret lovers), *Mukhādana* (clandestine relationships) (pp. 64, 57, 58), and *Al-manīḥa* (a type of gift) (p. 83), was repeated without explanation of the meanings, which may hinder students' understanding of their meanings and implications in Islamic legal contexts.

- The ICC's content refers to alimony as an obligation based on the husband's financial capacity (p. 83) without clarifying that it remains obligatory even if the wife has her own income. This may give the incorrect impression that alimony depends on the wife's financial situation or employment.

- The content only mentions the cases of *(Makrūh)* and *(Mandūb)* in divorce (p.116) without clarifying the other rulings, such as prohibited *(Muḥram)* and obligatory *(Wājib),* which may lead to an incomplete understanding of divorce rulings in *Sharīʿah*[287].

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[286] In Islamic law, a dowry is a wife's exclusive right, symbolising honour and agency, not compensation. This misrepresentation may weaken students' understanding of the role of a dowry in supporting women's dignity in marriage (see 3.3.3).

[287] In Sharīʿah (Islamic law), actions are classified into five legal rulings based on their religious status and consequences. Makrūh (Disliked/Discouraged) is an action that is discouraged but not sinful if performed. However, avoiding it is rewarded. Mandūb (Recommended) is an action that is encouraged and rewarded but not obligatory. Muḥram (Prohibited) is an action that is strictly forbidden in Islam, and committing it is sinful. Mubāḥ (Permissible/Neutral) is actions that are neither encouraged nor discouraged; they carry no reward or sin, and Wājib (Obligatory) is a compulsory action, and failing to do it is sinful. These classifications help Muslims understand their religious duties and guide them in daily practices and ethical decisions.

To conclude, the ICC effectively explains several key jurisprudential terms and foundational Islamic family law concepts, reinforcing themes of justice, balance, and complementarity in gender roles. However, unclear explanations in 21 places weaken students' understanding of marital rights and obligations. Missing details on marriage pillars, dowry, alimony, and divorce rulings risk misinterpretations, while unexplained legal terms create gaps in comprehension.

7.3.2. Marriage (Al-Zawāj / Al-Nikāḥ):

The ICC addresses the concept of marriage six times with a greater focus on the jurisprudential and legal aspects, such as the pillars, conditions, and rulings of marriage (pp. 57-59), while overlooking several fundamental elements that give this contract its holistic and comprehensive nature. *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology was not prominent in the discussion and the argument structuring. For example, the ICC defines marriage as a "*solemn covenant (Mīthāqan Ghalīẓan) between spouses that establishes physical, spiritual, and psychological tranquillity between spouses, entails rights and duties, and forms families*" (p. 55). Even though the term solemn covenant *(Mīthāqan Ghalīẓan)* is mentioned in the *Qurʾān (4:21)*, the ICC does not depend on the *Qurʾānic* verses and *Ḥadīth* (Prophet's narration) as part of *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology to define the term and explain marriage relationships (see 3.3.3).

In another context, the ICC refers to the honour and protection Islam provides women in the marriage contract ruling, such as the role of the guardian (*Wali*) as a supporter and protector of the woman and the requirement of publicising the marriage, which reinforces

her position and respects her rights as a wife of the spouse (p. 58). However, several women's rights were mentioned without highlighting the dignity and value that Islam guarantees through them, such as her consent and right to refuse marriage if she is not interested (p. 57), her right to set conditions in the marriage contract (p. 62), and the prohibition of setting a time limit for the contract, which serves to protect her and ensure her psychological and social stability (p. 59). These rights are not addressed following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology and are briefly mentioned in the narrative.

In the discussion on dowries (*Mahr*), *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology was used for the sake of the groom's benefits, citing the *Ḥadīth* of the prophet in which he said to a young guy who complained that he could not afford a ring for the bride: *"Go and ask for even an iron ring"* (p. 83). The discussion shifted the focus of the *Ḥadīth* from being addressed to men to seeking whatever they can afford (each as much as he can afford) to buy a ring for the wife to focus on addressing women to reduce the value of dowries to recognise the economic difficulties men face. In the case of *Al-Taʿassuf* in dowries, the corresponding verses are not cited[288].

In the discussion on marriage, the ICC addresses the prohibition of *Al-ʿAḍl (العضل)* (p. 123), highlighting one of its meanings: the husband harming his wife to force her into seeking *Al-Khulʾ*. The ICC supports this with the verse: *"And neither shall you keep them under constraint with a view to taking away anything of what you may have given them"* (The

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[288] (See the verses in 3.3.3 and 3.3.7)

Qur'an, 2025,4: 19), noting that this is a real problem in Saudi society. However, the ICC ignores a second meaning of *Al-ʿAḍl*; when the guardian precludes a woman from marrying an eligible person, she consents to marry[289].

The analysis shows that addressing marriage in ICC could be enriched by highlighting *Qurʾānic* and prophetic sources to follow *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology and present marriage as a profound, compassionate, and sacred contract's noble, not solely as a legal or physical contract.

7.3.3. Polygamy (*Taʿaddud Al-Zawjāt*):

The concept is mentioned six times through a discourse that reinforces male dominance and female subordination rather than fostering a balanced view of marital relationships. The ICC emphasised the permissibility of polygamy with up to four wives and the benefits of the practice in over three pages (pp. 62-64), repeatedly citing the following verse (three times):

> "And if you have reason to fear that you might not act equitably towards orphans, then marry from among [other] women such as are lawful to you - [even] two, or three, or four: but if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then

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[289] (See 3.3.3)

[only] one - or [from among] those whom you rightfully possess" (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 4:3).

The open justification of the practice may be understood as emphasising men's absolute right to practice polygamy without adequately considering its religious and social context. However, after three pages mainly addressing women on the benefits of the practice, the discourse dedicates three lines to explain the practice conditions the husband must strictly follow when considering polygamy. These three lines, mainly addressing men, provide generalised conditions, oversimplify polygamy access, and overlook justice as part of the family equation.

The discussion on justice in polygamy reveals several areas for improvement. The ICC mentions the balance of financial support, housing, and time allocation without considering justice in daily interactions, an essential aspect for balance, stability, and meeting each wife's needs. The ICC overlooks significant references from the *Sunnah*, prophetic practices that explain how the prophet dealt with his wives through the justice value in daily interactions and emotional care. Instead, the ICC selectively cites a *Qurʾānic* verse and a *Ḥadīth* justifying the emotional preference that the husband might feel[290]. This is to say that the - *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology is not implemented in the polygamy discussion in ICC.

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[290] See the ignored religious texts in (3.3.4). These religious texts do not aim to normalise the husband's unbalanced emotional feelings. Instead, they aim to draw the husband's attention to the fact that if this happens, it should not be transmitted through actions that discriminate between the wives or lead to unbalanced or unjust treatment. However, the ICC needs to elaborate on the meanings in focus of these verses. It left the interpretation of these religious texts open to the students.

The religious texts are either ignored or added without clearly explaining the meaning in focus.

The ICC describes polygamy as a *"principle… that serves the family's interests"* without clearly defining these interests or identifying who benefits from them. The ICC reinforces this view by comparing the family to a business institution requiring a single *"manager"* (the man) to oversee the family issues. This metaphorical explanation positions the man as the authority figure and the woman as part of a system that follows the man's instructions. Such a comparison renders the marital relationship an imbalanced administrative hierarchical structure, lacking human and emotional depth and overlooking the woman's rights and needs as an independent partner.

At the micro level of this chapter, the analysis proves that the discourse promotes polygamy as a social solution, ignoring any references to the first wife's emotional needs and rights. Under the title *"Foundations of the Legitimacy of Polygamy"* (p. 64), the ICC lists several points that the practice can resolve, such as increasing offspring, protecting unmarried women from moral corruption, or addressing *"situations that disrupt the husband's interests"* (p. 65), like a wife's illness, infertility, or advanced age. The ICC concludes that the practice is *a "beneficial remedy to compensate the husband for the first wife's shortcomings"* (p. 65). However, this perspective disregards the human and relational dimensions of marriage, reducing the woman to a tool for specific purposes without regard for her individual rights or psychological, emotional and social needs. Consequently, this approach lacks comprehensiveness and reinforces an imbalanced view centred on the husband's interests.

Emphasising the moral and spiritual dimensions of polygamy would have contributed to a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the practice. The primary objectives of marriage, tranquillity, compassion, and mercy are not sufficiently addressed, leaving an incomplete and biased perspective on the practice. A holistic understanding of polygamy requires attention to its human and spiritual dimensions, reflecting the noble values of the marital contract in Islam and fulfilling the ethical and social goals established by Islamic law.

7.3.4. Guardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*):

The concept of *Al-Qiwāmah* is the most repetitive term in the ICC; it is mentioned 15 times. The analysis shows that the explanation and the use of the term in the ICC differ from the Islamic approach to the practice[291]. Although the ICC clarifies that *Al-Qiwāmah* should not be understood as "a privilege or absolute authority that grants men additional rights, nor does it imply women's inferiority" (p. 79), the ICC's interpretation of *Al-Qiwāmah* appears to be influenced by social norms that grant men unconditional authority within the family. Al-Qiwāmah is referred to eight times in the context of authority and dominance (pp. 58,

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[291] The discussion does not follow *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology in the Qur'anic and prophetic texts to promote justice, mutual consultation, and complementarity. It fails to provide a holistic vision of familial balance that highlights the partnership between men and women. It does not refer to examples from the Prophet's (PBUH) life illustrating how he practised Al-Qiwāmah with his wives. Nor does It cite *Qurʾānic* verses reflecting this partnership, such as the verse: "But, in accordance with justice, the rights of the wives [with regard to their husbands] are equal to the [husbands'] rights with regard to them," (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 2:228). For more reading, (see 3.3.2).

64, 80, 97, 98) yet fails to underscore justice and maturity inherited in the concept frame of reference[292].

The concept was introduced in the chapter entitled "The Rights of the Husband" (p. 79) as "the wife's right that her husband should take care of her affairs and take care of her. This requires that women consider this right and help him achieve it." Even though the term is introduced in the "husband's rights" section, its definition imposes the Al-Qiwāmah as a right for women not to enjoy but to accept as an obligation. A right by which she cedes supreme authority to her husband to oversee and manage her life. And she is demanded to recognise and accept this authority, comprehend its implications, and assist her husband in its implementation[293].

In several instances (pp. 64, 79, 80, 97, 98), the ICC refers to *Al-Qiwāmah* as *"supervision and authority"* (p. 79) without clarifying its essential care and protection aspect, which may lead to an incomplete understanding of this critical term (see p.79). Additionally, *Al-Qiwāmah* is described as a *"social function for which men are prepared to assume"* (p. 79) instead of saying aloud that it is a duty men have to fulfil. In addition, the *Al-Qiwāmah* discussion ignores the different competencies between both genders, upon which the term

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[292] For more illustration, see Al-Rumi (2008), El-Eid (2006).

[293] In the polygamy context (p.64), *Al-Qiwāmah* is described as *"administrative work,"* where a husband can administer the issues of four wives/families, with emphasis on the husband's powers, rights and capacities to "administrate" in a general term with no specific reference to meeting women's emotional, economic and moral needs, ensuring their protection, and affording them a sense of security and tranquillity. The discourse also ignores women's stewardship over their issues and does not clarify whether it is a man's right or duty (see 3.3.2).

structures its meaning[294]. This contradiction might be one of the outcomes of not following the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology[295], emphasising stereotypical male preference, promoting conflict and hierarchy within the family, reinforcing male dominance and triggering reactionary attitudes by women instead of raising their awareness of WRPI.

7.3.5. Obedience to the Husband (*Ṭāʿat Al-Zawj)*

The concept of obedience is mentioned three times in the ICC content through a male-centred perspective. *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology was selectively used to assert that perceptive, citing the prophetic narrative: *"The husband has right over his wife, which is among the greatest rights after the right of God"* (p. 80). However, other religious texts on the specific areas where obedience is required and the limitations where women have the right to make their own decisions are ignored[296]. The authority provided in the obedience concepts coincides with the authority conceived in the guardianship (*Al-Qiwāmah*)[297] , emphasising stereotypical male control rather than implementing the *Al-Sharīʿah*-based knowledge on the balanced roles, compassion, and mutual respect within the marital relationship.

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[294] Islamic teachings acknowledge biological, psychological, and functional differences between men and women, assigning complementary roles in family life while upholding justice and balance (Al-Alwani, 2012).

[295] The concept of *Al-Qiwāmah* lacks a discussion founded on ʾ *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology rooted in the *Qurʾānic* texts, the practices of the Prophet (PBUH), and his commitment to justice.

[296] For example, A woman may act without her husband's permission; Allah says:" But if they, of their own accord, give up unto you aught thereof, then enjoy it with pleasure and good cheer" (4:4). The prophet (PBUH) "O women folk! You should give charity" (*Riyad as-Salihin* 1879, Book 19, Hadith 11), and he did not that they have to take their husband's permission first.

[297] (See 7.3.4.)

The presentation of obedience as a mere mechanical obligation rather than a choice rooted in affection and mercy undermines the spiritual essence of the concept. In addition, the discussion does not explain the husband's role in fulfilling and considering the wife's desires or needs in exchange for her obedience[298]. There was no limitation on marital obedience concerning the welfare and management of the family. The text does not mention women's right to decide on finances, health, or personal issues, which are guaranteed in Islam. ICC discourse on marital obedience does not encompass these areas in which Islam grants women independence. Note that it emphasises that such authority should not be abused or used to exert undue pressure.

Thus, the ICC content on the obedience to the husband concept requires revision to address several deficiencies to recognise the reciprocal duties of the concept and to guarantee women's rights and autonomy within the practice of obedience.

7.3.6. Divorce and *Al-Khul'*:

These two terms are mentioned nine times in the ICC from a purely jurisprudential approach, such as listing the relevant rulings, terminology, types, procedures, and evidence for its legitimacy following the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology depending on the *Qurʾān* and the Prophetic *Sunnah*. However, the cited religious texts lack a comprehensive explanation, and there are ignored critical citations to women's rights during the divorce and *Al-Khul'*

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[298] Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of the husband providing for his wife's material and emotional needs, fostering emotional security within the family. This is achieved through mutual consultation and cooperation between the spouses.

process. It is to say, divorce (p. 117) is defined as the *"dissolution of the marital bond or part of it"*[299], which is an insufficient definition, potentially hindering students' understanding. Similarly, *Al-ʿAḍl*[300] (p. 123) was defined as *'harming a woman to force her into Al-Khul''*[301]; the definition misses another meaning of *Al-ʿAḍl* related to women's rights, which is a rejection of the woman's choice of marrying a suitable husband, stated in the *Qurʾān* (2:232). Additionally, the emphasis on prohibiting women from seeking *Al-Khul'* did not offer a balanced perspective, as there was no corresponding reminder to husbands that they are also forbidden from initiating divorce without valid cause (p. 123). This lack of clarity regarding such terms may lead to an incomplete understanding of critical jurisprudential concepts.The ICC does not emphasise the humanitarian and dignity aspect Islam offer women by the Divorce rights system[302]. However, the ICC skips these details. Similarly, when focusing on the ruling of *Edda*, the ICC oversimplified the husband's return to his wife during *Edda,* explaining that it can be done by pronouncing the words *"I have returned you"* or *"by actions such as having a relation with her"* (p. 120)[303]. The ICC oversees the conditions of the return, such as the sincerity in the

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[299] See the definition of Divorce in (3.3.5).
[300] See the definition of the *Al-Ad'hl* in (3.3.5 and 3.3.7).
[301] See the definition of *Al-Khul'* (3.3.5).
[302] In the pre-Islamic period, *Al-Jahiliyyah*, the husband could divorce his wife and get her back whenever he wished (El-Eid, 2006), which put pressure on women to go under unlimited times of divorce in the same relationship. Islam develops clear rules for divorce to protect women from manipulation and to ensure the stability of the marital bond. Another ignored issue is that Islam prohibits a man from returning to an ex-wife after the third divorce to strengthen women's independence and minimise the possibility of being in an unhealthy marriage or going through manipulation (see 3.3.5).
[303] In Islam, if a man has issued one or two revocable divorces (*talaq raj'i*) and the wife is still in her waiting period (*Edda*), he can reconcile with her through specific verbal and/or action-based methods. The husband can return to his wife by expressing his intention to resume the marriage. Examples of verbal statements include: "I take you back as my wife," "I am returning to you," or any equivalent phrase that explicitly communicates reconciliation said in a language both understand. Reconciliation can also occur through actions that imply marital intimacy, such as physical gestures exclusive to a marital relationship (e.g., hugging, kissing, or sexual relations). In both methods, the husband's intention for reconciliation and the wife's approval should be sincere and straightforward (Naseef, 1995).

reconciliation action and the desire to bring reforms in the marital relationship and ensure justice. It also ignores the wife's opinion on the return guaranteed in Islam[304].

The ICC discourse focuses on the jurisprudential rulings on divorce and *Edda,* ignoring the Islamic rationale of these rulings to honour women during these two difficult situations [305]. The ICC cited part of the *Qurʾānic* verse related to the waiting period, and it omits the rest of the verse, which explicitly prohibits expelling a woman in her waiting period from her home unless she commits grave indecency, such as adultery or abusive behaviour or actions that harm the husband or family (El-Eid, 2006)[306]. Omitting this part of the verse may be seen as ignoring a woman's right to spend her *Edda* t home as turning a blind eye to the reality faced by many women.

Neither the ICC points out the ban on pressuring the wife to seek divorce nor does it mention keeping her with an intent to harm her or prolong the waiting period *Edda*[307]. These problems are particularly relevant in modern societal contexts where several divorce cases have been through these banned practices. Nevertheless, the curriculum did not clearly emphasise the higher purpose of these rulings: to protect the family bond and

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[304] See more information about the husband's return to his wife on (3.3.5).

[305] It fails to mention the prohibition against expelling a divorced woman from her home during the waiting period, *Edda*, as stated in the *Qurʾān* " Do not expel them from their homes; and neither shall they [be made to] leave unless they become openly guilty of immoral conduct." (The *Qur'an,* 2025, 65:1). (See 3.3.5)

[306] The verse states: "Do not expel them from their homes, and neither shall they [be made to] leave unless they become openly guilty of immoral conduct." (The *Qurʾān*, 2025, 65:1).

[307] There are clear verses which ban these two practices: "let the women [who are undergoing a waiting-period] live in the same manner as you live yourselves, In accordance with your means; and do not harass them with a view to making their lives a misery." (The Qur'an, 202 , 65:6). "And so, when you divorce women and they are about to reach the end of their waiting-term, then either retain them in a fair manner or let them go in a fair manner. But do not retain them against their will in order to hurt [them]" (The Qur'an, 2025, 2: 231). (see 3.3.5).

women's rights during and after divorce. For example, the content did not highlight those Islamic restrictions on divorce[308]. These rulings are designed to consider the emotional stability of women through their hormonal periods and to prevent the misuse of divorce as a tool to harm women[309].

ICC content does not address the moral and spiritual outline aimed at preventing marriage breakdown and ensuring the marital relationship's sustainability. For instance, the frequent reminder of fear of *Allah (Al-Taqwā)[310]* associated with divorce verses in the *Qurʾān[311]*, the encouragement for the husband to exercise patience and good manners with his wife even if he dislikes her[312], the emphasis on arbitration between spouses or reconciliation[313], and the reminder not to forget the good shared between them[314] were ignored in the ICC. Nor does the ICC mention that the continuation or dissolution of the marital relationship should be done through the principles of kindness and fairness *(Ma'ruf)*, nor does it say that exceeding these limits causes injustice to women and constitutes a transgression of

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[308] Such as limiting the number of divorces to three, imposing specific conditions for divorce (such as ensuring it occurs when the woman is in a state of purity or during pregnancy), allowing the opportunity for reconciliation before the waiting period (*Edda*) ends, imposing financial protections for women, like obligating the husband to provide maintenance during the waiting period (*Edda*) and prohibiting him from reclaiming any gifts he has given her, are also crucial

[309] All these safeguards were established to prevent any manipulation and abuse of women who might be economically unstable in these contexts, such as what occurred in pre-Islamic times, ensuring the protection and justice of women after divorce. This explanation would highlight *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* of achieving balance and justice through divorce and post-divorce relationships.

[310] See the definition of *Al-Taqwā* in (see 3.2.2)

[311] "O PROPHET! When you [intend to divorce women, divorce them with a view to the waiting period appointed for them, and reckon the period [carefully], and be conscious of God, your Sustainer. " (The Qur'an, 2025 ، 65:1).

[312] "for if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something which God might yet make a source of abundant good". (The *Qur'a*n, 2025 ، 4;19).

[313] "And if you have reason to fear that a breach might occur between a [married] couple, appoint an arbiter from among his people and an arbiter from among her people; if they both want to set things aright, God may bring about their reconciliation. Behold, God is indeed all-knowing, aware." (The Qur'an, 2025 ، 4;35). "it shall not be wrong for the two to set things peacefully to rights between themselves: for peace is best," (The *Qur'an*, 2025 ، 4;128).

[314] " And forget not [that you are to act with] grace towards one another: verily, God sees all that you do." (The *Qur'an*, 202 ، 2: 237).

Allah's boundaries[315]. These guidelines aim to promote justice and balance in marriage and emphasise that while divorce is allowed in Islam, it is generally discouraged and is the last choice.

To sum up, the analysis of divorce and *Al-Khul'* discussion in ICC highlights the need for a more holistic approach that integrates *Al-Taʾṣīl* in all the details involved in the process and integrates Islamic ethical principles to uphold justice, balance, and peace in marital and divorce relationships. It needs to be more inclusive of women's rights and to emphasise the rationale and purposes of these laws, such as protecting the family structure and safeguarding women's emotional state and economic stability. By incorporating ethical and spiritual guidelines, such as fairness (*Maʿrūf*), benevolence (*Iḥsān*), and observing piety (*Al-Taqwā*), the WRPI discussion would ensure that divorce is a last resort, approached thoughtfully and justly to prevent harm and promote the overall well-being of both parties involved.

7.3.7. Feminism:

Although participants frequently mentioned this term, there was no explicit reference to the term "Feminism" in the ICC content. The ICC extensively criticises ideas closely associated with the Western feminist movement, particularly concerning family

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[315] "And so, when you divorce women and they are about to reach the end of their waiting-term, then either retain them in a fair manner or let them go in a fair manner. But do not retain them against their will in order to hurt [them]: for he who does so sins indeed against himself"'(The *Qur'an,* 2025, 2:231)

relationships, gender roles, and perceptions of individual rights (pp.12-24). However, the content does not explicitly or directly use the term Feminism. This avoidance confused students, as they confirmed during the interviews[316]. The analysis identified nine indirect references to "Feminism" in the ICC. The ICC criticises Western ideology for its excessive emphasis on individualism, pointing out that this approach seeks to achieve justice by granting individuals their full rights without considering their obligations towards others in society (p. 14). The content also addresses the Western ideological stance on family and familial bonds, which considers women's engagement in household responsibilities as constraining to women's freedom (p. 15)[317]. The ICC criticises full gender equality, including social and sexual roles. The discourse argues that these thoughts strip each gender's roles of their value within society. The ICC also criticises the gender role interchange concept, suggesting that while it aims to achieve social justice, it may distort human nature and overlook the biological, emotional, physical and social differences that characterise each gender (p. 20)[318]. Avoiding mentioning "Feminism" by its term in the ICC content may have administrative or official justifications. However, engaging with social reality requires that students be aware of these concepts and be able to identify them, deconstruct their meaning, and compare them to the Islamic frame of reference when discussing women's rights.

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[316] (See 6.3.10)

[317] This perspective is supported by Western feminist movements that stigmatise social institutions such as family households and religious commitments as primary obstacles to women's freedoms and rights (see 2.3)

[318] See more in (2.2.3, 3.2.1, and 3.2.2),

7.4. Macro Level (Context and Implementation)

The Macro level focuses on the ICC's ability to situate WRPI within the Saudi social context. It explores whether the ICC content empowers female students to take action, challenge societal and educational stereotypes, and implement these concepts in real-life interactions. The macro level highlights the ICC's role in clarifying the legal reforms related to women's rights in Saudi society, rectifying gender stereotypes, and prioritising Islamic teaching over prevailing social norms.

7.4.1. The ICC Addressing Dominant Social Problems:

The ICC emphasises that identifying social problems is fundamental to providing solutions (pp. 93-97). It points out that overlooking some key factors would exacerbate marital issues. The ICC explains that internal factors such as weak religious commitment led to neglecting mutual rights and responsibilities between spouses and failure to choose a suitable partner based on Islamic principles. Furthermore, the ICC highlights the lack of balance between rights and duties and the misunderstanding of the innate, psychological, and physical differences between genders as primary triggers of marital disputes. As a solution, the ICC stresses the need to be equally aware of each right and duty within the Islamic system of values and teachings to ensure the relationship's stability.

The ICC also recognises external factors that negatively impact marital stability, including interference from family members or friends in spousal relationships and the media's role in fostering unrealistic expectations. Therefore, it underscores the importance of addressing

these factors thoughtfully to develop strategies that protect the marital relationship from their harmful impacts.

Although the ICC attempts to link the WRPI content to real-life practices, the analysis reveals a significant gap in bridging the theoretical WRPI content and its practical implementation (pp. 93-97). It fails to harmonise core Islamic principles, which uphold justice and equality, with social traditions that may perpetuate male dominance[319]. Instead, the ICC reinforces social stereotypes through 1) a male-centred approach that emphasises male authority, entrenching male dominance[320], and 2) a stereotypical image of women as obedient, aligning with traditional societal expectations, which fuel the gender conflict in Saudi Arabia instead of addressing it. Engaging superficially with women's rights concepts may have missed the opportunity to critically address these issues despite their strong resonance within the Saudi social context, a problem highlighted by the participants in the previous chapter[321.]

Women's reluctance to marry is another social problem that the ICC tries to resolve. However, the ICC identified several issues that women might think of before marriage, such as finishing their careers, the children's responsibilities, and the economic costs of marriage. However, the ICC overlooks a significant fear raised by the participants in the previous section: the sensation of insecurity in the marital relationship. The feeling of

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[319] (See 3.3.2)

[320] It portrays guardianship *(Al-Qiwāmah)* as a social privilege granted to men based on cultural norms and innate nature without establishing clear ethical or religious conditions following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, such as the obligation of justice (see 7.2.1 and 7.3.4)

[321] (See 6.4.3)

insecurity is an outcome of the dominant discourse and cultural practices that grant men the privilege of power in the family. They fear losing agency over their life decisions; the main concerns identified among the participants are being subjected to unfair treatment or lack of psychological and emotional security, which are ignored in the ICC discussion. Addressing these concerns and opening a dialogue about building trust between spouses is necessary to establish peace and stability in marital relationships.

Divorce in Saudi Arabia holds a social stigma for both spouses[322]. While the ICC covers some of the social challenges faced by both spouses after separation, there is a lack of explicit discussion on the stigma's specific impact on women, who often endure marginalisation or prejudicial judgments from society, framing them as the primary person responsible for the marriage failure. It is significant to include a more comprehensive approach in addressing the effects of divorce on women, along with practical solutions to mitigate this stigma, such as the role of governmental and social institutions in raising the awareness of the society members on the injustice of this stigma and in providing psychological and economic support to divorced women[323]. Additionally, discussing the recent social transformations could help lessen the stigma associated with divorce in Saudi society by empowering women and increasing their participation in the workforce, aligning

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[322] Women face a more pronounced social stigma after divorce than men (see 3.3.5). The ICC discusses the impact of divorce on both spouses in social life and the broader community (p. 112), noting that divorce should not always be viewed negatively; instead, it is a legitimate solution when marital life becomes untenable (see 7.3.6).

[323] The stigma surrounding divorced women contradicts the justice (*'adl*) principle, leading to social and economic hardships that are not aligned with Islamic justice. Addressing this issue requires a more comprehensive approach that acknowledges the impact of divorce on women and actively seeks to mitigate its negative effects.

with Vision 2030 objectives. Overlooking these changes might make the discussion seem outdated and disconnected from the evolving reality.

7.4.2. The ICC Overlooking Social Behaviour

The ICC mentions specific Islamic rulings, such as the acceptance of marriage, dowry, divorce, and alimony. However, it fails to connect these to behavioural problems circulating in social practice[324]. The ICC fails to identify, discuss and address them within the Islamic system of values and teachings. Instead, the ICC implicitly legitimises certain practices[325]. The ICC's omission of reality problems can be seen as a shortcoming in the debate, as such issues require comprehensive attention by both genders to ensure the preservation and protection of women's rights. Addressing these behavioural problems would add depth to the discussion and raise awareness to protect women's rights from infringement or exploitation. For example, the ICC's discussion of women's right to consent and permission in marriage (p. 59). It clarifies that marriage must be based on the woman's complete agreement without coercion or pressure, without addressing the prevalent practices in some families where girls are sometimes forced into marriage without their consent, as participants pointed out in (6.3.5)[326]. Another example is the waiting period (*Edda*) and the

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[324] Such as forced marriage, the deprivation of women's rightful dowry, fathers seizing their daughters' dowries, husbands expelling their wives from the marital home before the end of the waiting period *(Edda),* right to alimony for wives who has an income, or the discriminatory practices against women under the pretext of male superiority or *Al-Qiwāmah*.
[325] , emphasising the reduction of dowries to facilitate marriage while overlooking women's agency regarding the dowry, specifically, that it cannot be utilised without their consent (see 7.3.2).
[326] Women might face family pressure to accept a particular spouse chosen by their guardian (father, brother, grandfather or uncles). It would have been beneficial if this issue had been explicitly addressed, in line with contemporary demands and WRPI to make their own marital decisions freely, particularly since Islam rejects coercion in marriage.

financial rights associated with them (p. 117). The ICC addresses these issues but failed to address a common social practice, which is the expulsion of a divorced woman from her husband's house before the waiting period has ended, which contradicts Islamic teachings[327]. Similarly, the ICC focuses only on one meaning of *Al-ʿAḍl*[328], reducing the comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings and prohibition, especially given the widespread nature of both behaviours in Saudi society. Ignoring these social behaviours on women's issues that go against the Islamic teachings in ICC could be seen as turning a "blind eye" to a reality that many women face, overlooking a critical aspect of the situation and demonstrating a shortcoming in fully addressing the Islamic legal text.

7.4.3. Critical Awareness: Implementation or Suppression

As analysed at the Micro and Meso levels, the male-biased discourse in the ICC does not encourage students to think critically. On the contrary, it pushes them to reactionary attitudes based on rejections and lack of knowledge, as the ICC does not effectively follow *Al-Taʾṣīll* methodology to foment comprehensive knowledge about WRPI. The analysis identified three strategies in the ICC-biased discourse that constrain critical thinking: confirmation bias, cultural continuity bias, and overgeneralisation bias.

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[327] Omitting the part of the verse (pp 122-124), "Do not expel them from their homes" (The Qurʾān, 2025, 65:1), that explicitly affirms this right may reflect the ICC's stance on social behaviour (see 7.3.6.).
[328] The ICC discusses the prohibition of one practice of *Al-ʿAḍl*, from one perspective, the husband harming his wife to force her into seeking *Al-Khul'*. It ignores pointing out another Islamically prohibited but socially practised behaviour when the guardian precludes a woman from marrying an eligible person; she consents to marry (see 7.3.2 and 7.3.6).

Confirmation bias on male authority refers to the discursive tendency to seek out or interpret information in a way that confirms certain beliefs or preconceived notions while ignoring evidence that contradicts those beliefs (Friedmans, 2023). In WRPI discourse in the ICC, there appears to be a tendency to reinforce traditional interpretations that align with the prevailing male-centred culture. This is evident in the emphasis on the idea that men are entitled to absolute authority within the family because of their guardianship while neglecting to highlight that guardianship is conditional upon wisdom and justice[329]. The ICC fails to emphasise religious interpretations that advocate for women's rights and agency more equitably. As a result, students are more likely to need clarification on traditional norms and Islamic teaching. The perplexity among them might negatively impact students' understanding of the social roles of men and women in alignment with Islamic principles[330]. Cultural Continuity bias refers to the tendency to uphold existing cultural traditions and practices and ignore or resist challenging them (Friedmans, 2023), even when the Islamic teaching explicitly indicates the contrary and even in the face of new legal reforms that call for an improvement in women's rights in Saudi Arabia. For example, the ICC perpetuates cultural bias in gender role definition. The ICC criticises the Western concept of absolute gender equality, which advocates for erasing natural differences between the sexes, arguing that these ideas conflict with natural and biological

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[329] (See 3.2.2)

[330] The analysis has provided a rich analysis of this confirmation bias on male authority (see 7.2.1.2.), such as in the *Al-Qiwāmah* discussion (see 7.3.4.), giving privilege to men in the imbalance discussion on gender rights, prioritising men's interests and desires at the expense of women's feelings and concerns in polygamy (see 7.2.1.1. and 7.3.3.),and emphasising women's duty to obey their husbands and neglecting women's independent rights and reinforcing a traditional view of men as the central focus in marriage (see 7.2.2.2. and 7.3.5.)

distinctions between men and women. The ICC explains that this concept contradicts Islamic principles that emphasise balance and complementarity between genders, grounded in the idea of justice based on the biological characteristics of each gender. However, the analysis has identified a contradiction between the ICC argument and the ICC's discourse on women's rights and agency, which reinforces male dominance and presents the role of women in a way that reflects cultural legacies rather than Islamic values of justice and complementarity between genders. This contradiction reveals the ICC's bias towards preserving social structures and men's authority, even when this authority is derived from cultural traditions rather than original religious teachings. As a result, students struggle to distinguish between genuine religious values and cultural traditions, leading to a lack of awareness of their rights in Islam, such as in the stereotypical ideal woman image, undermining women's dignity in rights discussion[331] and the unbalanced power distribution in the family[332].

The ICC primarily focuses on the role of women as wives without giving the same level of attention to their rights in other roles, such as being mothers, daughters, or sisters, which are generally grouped under overall family rights (parents, children, and relatives' rights). Additionally, it neglects to address women's contemporary roles, such as being employees or community leaders. This focus reflects a cultural bias within a society still influenced by dominant power relations, which perpetuates stereotypes that limit women's potential.

[331] (See 7.2.2.2)
[332] (See 7.3.5.).

Women seem to be valued mainly through their husbands' relationships rather than being recognised as right holders in different roles they might perform in the family as much as in society.

Overgeneralisation bias refers to the tendency to generalise a judgment or experience to all situations, regardless of differences or varying circumstances (Friedmans, 2023). In the context of WRPI discussion in the ICC, overgeneralisation bias is visible in the discourse that overgeneralises men's inherited qualifications, their more rational capacity to make decisions, and gender differences to authorise him an unconditioned authority under the guise of *Al-Qiwāmah*[333] and giving him unlimited guardianship without conditions. Such over-generalisation disregards the individual's differences; not every man is necessarily wise or just in his judgments, and some men may be more emotional, unfit or even unjust in taking on such responsibilities. At the same time, the ICC ignores several historical stories in which Muslim women were influential and leaders in society. Ignoring these models renders unrealistic over-generalisation and reinforces stereotypes about female inferiority justified by the gender differences that the Islamic framework points out as empowering and complementarily for the social, familial, and martial structure[334].

In addition to these three biases, the analysis found that the units' final questions and exercises largely failed to encourage critical thinking or challenge dominant gender norms. Instead, they focus on descriptive analysis and memorisation rather than fostering

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[333] (See 7.3.4.)
[334] (See 3.2)

independent inquiry or critique of societal structures. The topics in unit one are directly linked to women's daily experiences, such as the characteristics of the family system in Islam, marriage objectives and *Sharīʿah's* rationale behind the explained principles and how they are socially constructed and maintained[335]. Both the "outlining differences between men and women" and "effects of losing modesty" questions prioritise answers based on prevailing values rather than evaluating the social behaviours and gender dynamics in Saudi Arabia on these topics. The question on marriage and education also lacks an exploratory dimension; rather than prompting students to think about strategies for navigating these challenges, the question focuses on identifying existing difficulties, reinforcing a passive stance toward social realities rather than inspiring critical engagement to offer solutions.Unit two focuses on spouse selection and betrothal, touching on an issue of personal and cultural significance[336]. Identifying non-negotiable qualities in a partner could facilitate self-reflection, particularly for women, as they consider their criteria and values in choosing a spouse. However, the question remains narrowly framed within individual preference without inviting students to analyse how societal norms shape these choices. By not addressing external influences, such as familial expectations, cultural

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[335] The questions of unit one are the following: "What are the main differences between males and females, and what are the rights, obligations, and effects that result from recognising these differences?, What are the dimensions of the virtue of modesty and its impact on individuals, and what are the effects of losing modesty in terms of clothing, marital relationships, parent-child relationships, and gatherings and marketplaces?, What are the advantages and disadvantages of early marriage, and what is the appropriate age for marriage?. What is the impact of combining marriage and study, and what are its main challenges and difficulties?" (pp.35).

[336] The questions of unit two are the following: What are the non-negotiable qualities in the partner, and which qualities can be overlooked? (p,50)

pressures, or legal constraints, the question fails to promote deeper critical engagement with the structural factors that impact personal decision-making.

Unit three is about marriage-related provisions. It explores real-life issues related to women's rights, such as secret marriages and the role of guardians in marriage decisions[337]. While these topics are highly interesting and controversial for young girls, the phrasing of the questions undermines the potential for critical thought. Questions that begin with "Is it permissible…?" lead students toward recalling legal rulings rather than fostering discussion on the broader religious, ethical, and social implications of these practices. This approach prioritises memorisation over analysis, leaving little room for questioning how these rules function in contemporary society or how different interpretations might offer alternative insights into women's rights and autonomy.

Unit four focuses on marital rights but presents a skewed perspective, prioritising men's interests, particularly in financial matters[338]. Three out of four questions emphasise men's financial responsibilities, implicitly framing them as the central component of marriage while neglecting both spouses' reciprocal rights and duties. This narrow focus disregards evolving economic realities in Saudi society, such as rising living costs and women's increasing financial contributions. Moreover, the question on *"acceptable moderate*

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[337] The questions of unit three are: Is a secret marriage permissible, and who are the people whose knowledge is required? and Is civil (informal) marriage without a guardian permissible? (p, 68)

[338] The questions of unit four are the following: "What is the minimum monthly amount that a couple can live on (excluding rent costs)?, What are the acceptable forms of moderate jealousy, and what are the unacceptable forms?, Rising living costs burden families due to a lack of proper understanding of money management and spending. What is the standard by which money should be spent and used effectively?, How should family members deal with social media that promotes a culture of material consumption, and what prophetic guidance can help with this?"(p.88).

jealousy" reinforces traditional male-centric perspectives, sidelining women's experiences and reinforcing conventional gender roles rather than encouraging students to examine relationship dynamics critically. Although the questions in this unit are structured around model answers and predefined conclusions, they could encourage open-ended discussion and foster an analytical approach to marital relationships if professors effectively could drive the discussion

Unit Five addresses family intervention in marital conflicts but presents a dichotomous framework, intervention versus non-intervention, that oversimplifies complex situations[339]. By limiting students' choices to these two options, the question restricts critical engagement with the diverse factors influencing marital conflicts, such as emotional independence, family dynamics, and alternative mediation strategies, which are topics discussed in the unit. The second question on preventive measures against marital conflict similarly lacks depth, as it directs students toward predefined answers rather than prompting them to explore the varied challenges and evolving needs of contemporary relationships. Unit Six deals with divorce but fails to connect its discussions to contemporary social realities[340]. The question on the "intolerable issue" that could lead to divorce directs students toward singular, issue-focused reasoning rather than considering the broader socio-cultural and economic complex factors that influence marital dissolution. Similarly, the question on

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[339] unit five questions are: "Is it better for family members to intervene in resolving the problem, or to refrain from intervention? And why? and What are the most important measures recommended to prevent marital conflicts?"(p.104).
[340] The questions of unit six are: "What is the issue that you consider intolerable with your partner, one that would lead you to choose separation as the solution? and What remedial actions are recommended to take before making the decision to separate?" (p.134).

remedial actions before divorce lacks the depth necessary to engage students in analysing the root causes of marital instability or evaluating the effectiveness of intervention strategies.In sum, the selective methodology in the *Al-Taʾṣīl* in WRPI and the mostly memorisation-based questions of units hinder a comprehensive understanding of WRPI. By failing to prompt students to critically analyse gender roles, social pressures, and evolving realities, the curriculum ultimately maintains the status quo rather than empowering students to engage in meaningful reflection and discussion on gender and social behaviour in Saudi Arabia.

7.4.4. The ICC's Alignment to New Social Reforms and Saudi Vision 2030:

An analysis of the content revealed no reference to the legal references achieved in Saudi Arabia since 2015[341]. The content overlooks areas that could have significantly contributed to advancing women's rights awareness if they were supported by legal articles, especially concerning social issues raised by participants[342]. Bridging the gap between Islamic teachings and legal reforms would increase the awareness of women's rights as a cooperative system in which religion and law work together to achieve gender justice. It

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[341] (See 1.4)
[342] (See 6.3.6)

would empower women to know that their rights guaranteed in Islam are defended by civil law[343].

7.5. Conclusion:

The analysis of the ICC at these three levels, Micro, Meso and Macro, reveals a complex intersection of gaps and contradictions that hinder its ability to foster social transformation and support the educational models of Human Rights Education (HRE), Critical Pedagogy (CP), and Peace Education (PE). While the ICC aspires to align with Islamic principles in women's rights discussions, it falls short in its practical application and integration of these values, limiting its capacity to address contemporary social realities and promote transformative societal change.

At the macro level, the ICC's approach to gender relations remains firmly entrenched in male-centric perspectives, reinforcing patriarchal values and traditional gender roles. The selective use of religious texts and the omission of critical discussions surrounding systemic issues, such as forced marriage, dowry rights, and women's emotional and economic stability in marital contexts, undermines the curriculum's potential to foster critical engagement with gender equality. This narrow approach contradicts the core objectives of HRE, which seeks to empower students to understand and advocate for

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[343] The laws in Saudi Arabia are fundamentally rooted in Islamic *Sharīʿah*, which explicitly supports and affirms women's rights in various aspects of family and social life. Recently, these rights have been further strengthened by the enactment of the Personal Status Law (2022). By codifying *Sharīʿah* principles into civil law, this legislation ensures that the rights of women, which are religiously guaranteed, are legally protected. This provides greater clarity, reduces judicial inconsistencies, and effectively promotes gender justice.

universal human rights, particularly those of women, within both religious and civil frameworks. The lack of alignment between the theoretical teachings of Islam and the real-world challenges faced by women limits students' ability to engage with women's rights as active, civil entitlements that require legal protection and advocacy. On the Meso level, the selective application of religious texts and the lack of focus on *Al-Taʾṣīl* and *Al-Ḥaq,* key grounding Islamic rights principles in *Qurʾānic* and Prophetic sources emphasising justice, equity and balance, hinder the curriculum's alignment with HRE and CP. By focusing disproportionately on male authority and neglecting women's rights and agency, the ICC promotes a gender-biased understanding of Islamic teachings.

At the Micro level, the ICC fails to address the systemic challenges that perpetuate gender inequality. This oversight prevents students from fully understanding the link between Islamic teachings on justice and the contemporary legal systems that protect women's rights. By failing to engage with women's evolving social realities, the ICC remains disconnected from the practical application of these teachings, limiting its relevance and effectiveness in fostering social change.

Furthermore, the ICC fails to incorporate key principles of Critical Pedagogy, emphasising the need for critical reflection and questioning societal power structures. The biases present in the ICC, such as confirmation, cultural continuity, and overgeneralisation biases, undermine the goal of fostering critical thinking and social transformation.

In conclusion, the ICC's content, in its current form, does not fully align with the educational models of HRE, CP, and PE. Its male-centred approach, selective use of

religious texts, and failure to address contemporary gender injustices undermine its potential to equip students with the critical tools needed to advocate for social justice, gender equality, and peaceful, non-violent relationships.

Chapter Eight

Discussion Chapter

8.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from the analysis section (both the interview analysis and the ICC content analysis) and examine how the ICC content aligns with the Islamic framework of women's rights, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. It will explore the findings through Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Tibbets's transformation model (discussed in Chapter 4), determining if teaching strategies implemented in the ICC classroom align with or diverge from the Islamic Framework of critical thinking and these two educational models, especially regarding raising awareness of women's rights. The discussion is organised around four key components of Freire's theory, which coincide with the study's findings: 1) Banking Model and a dialogical method, 2) problem posing, critical consciousness, and praxis, 3) humanisation and cultural cycles, and 4) education as a political act.
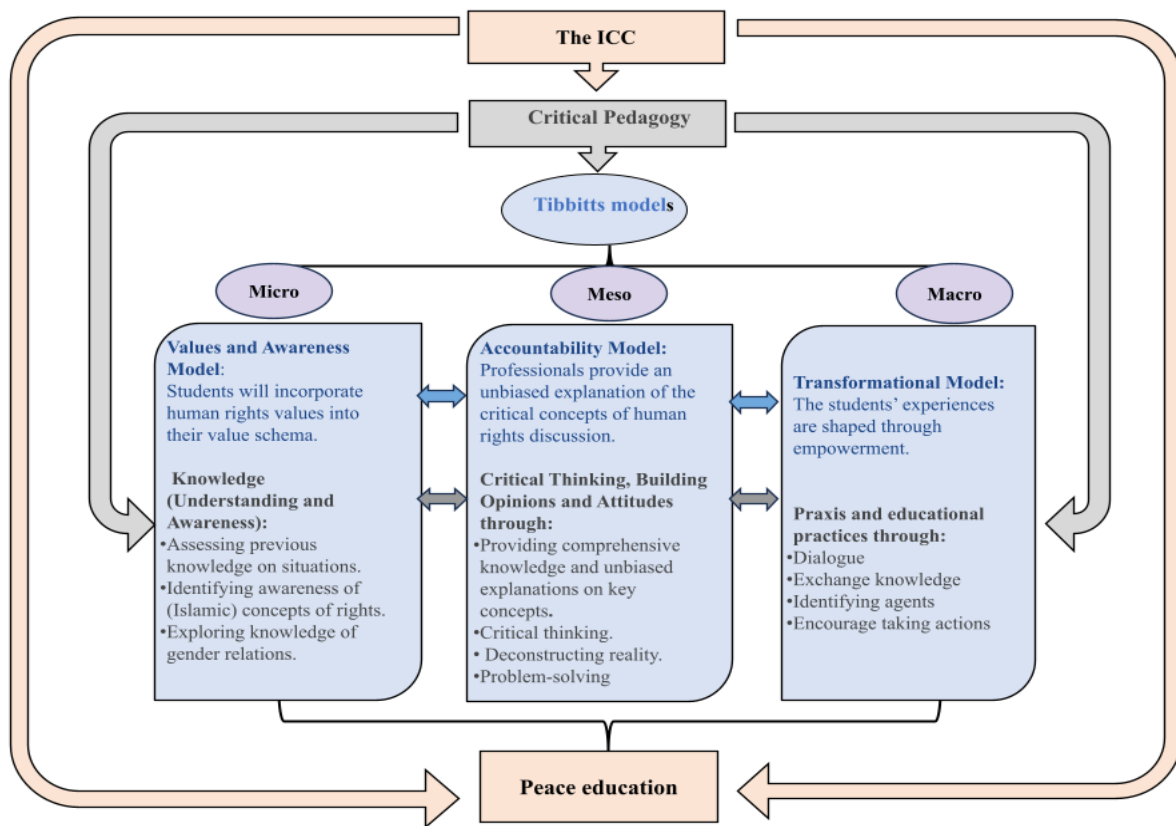
Figure (18): Framework for CP, Tibitts's Model, and PE in Teaching the ICC: ICP

This chapter, grounding the discussion on Freire's framework of critical pedagogy and Tibbett's Models of human rights education, critically assesses the ICC's capacity to foster critical engagement with Women's Rights in an Islamic Perspective (WRIP) and its potential to initiate social change. While Freire's emphasis on dialogue and consciousness-raising provides a framework for evaluating the ICC's ability to challenge hegemonic narratives, Tibbet's models help situate the ICC within broader educational approaches to human rights discourse. However, given the religious and cultural specificity of Saudi Arabia, this study argues that a contextually grounded epistemology is necessary to frame

women's rights education in a way that aligns with Islamic principles while promoting gender justice.

Building on the epistemological framework established in Chapter 2, this discussion engages with the Al-Taʾṣīl methodology, which was identified as a key approach to integrating Islamic resources—*Qurʾan* and *Sunnah*—into the discourse on rights. The chapter thus examines whether the ICC serves as a transformative educational tool that empowers female students through an Islamic rights-based discourse, or whether it reinforces sociocultural constraints by perpetuating traditional interpretations of gender roles. By synthesizing Freirean critical pedagogy, Tibbet's educational models, and Al-Taʾṣīl as a methodological approach, this chapter provides a nuanced analysis of how women's rights education is framed within the ICC, identifying both its limitations and its potential for reform.

8.2. Understanding and Awareness: Banking Model

The findings from the analysis (Chapters 6 and 7) reveal a significant alignment with Freire's critique of the Banking Model of education[344]. This section discusses how the Banking Models' strategies prevail in the ICC teaching strategies at KSA, which are 1)

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[344] Freire argues that in a Banking Model, the teacher is the sole holder of knowledge, depositing information into passive students who are expected to absorb it without critical engagement. This model is characterised by a lack of dialogue, creativity, or critical thinking and reinforces a hierarchical relationship between teacher and student.

Scholarly power and authoritative structure, 2) Complex language and ambiguous jurisprudential terms, and 3) Sacralisation discourse.

Hamdan (2006) argues that the Banking Model of Education reflects and reinforces a hierarchical structure entrenched in power and authority[345]. The analysis indicates that the teaching strategies and content of the ICC exhibit a similar power structure, where professors assume authoritative roles, depositing information into students without encouraging or allowing space for critical engagement[346].

Indoctrination and preaching[347] are key components of Banking Model education in Saudi Arabia. The Banking Model in ICC education is distinct from other authoritarian education models due to the alignment of religious authority with religious content, which deepens students' intellectual passivity[348]. Unlike secular contexts where knowledge may still be subject to critique within limits, religious discourse is sacrosanct. The ICC discourages critical engagement with the text beyond rote memorisation. This dynamic reinforces

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[345] This sentiment is echoed by studies such as National Observatory of the Saudi Family Affairs Council (2022), Al-Sanabary,1994; Hamdan,2005, Al-Rawaf and Simmons (1991), Aldegether ,2023, Alrowais (2023) and others.

[346] This approach infantilises students, treating them as passive recipients rather than active participants in their learning process, mirroring societal norms undermining women students' agency (Al-Sanabary,1994). These strategies are common in the Saudi educational system and are not limited to the ICC subject. See (Al-Ghamdi, 2012; Jabr, 2021; Al-Atta, 2020; Al-Zahrani & Al-Hamami, 2020; Hakiem, 2021, Hind Al-Mazer, 2017), and Al-Shalqi, 2020).

[347] The professors in the ICC appear to prioritise the transmission of pre-determined knowledge over fostering an open, reflective dialogue with students. Professors practice indoctrination and preaching as key components in the authorised and hierarchical transmission of pre-determined knowledge. This approach reflects a clear intent to shape students' perspectives on sensitive issues related to women's rights within Islam through a one-sided, authoritative narrative. The result is an educational environment where professors "deposit" information into students' minds, reinforcing a passive learning role and preventing students from expressing their opinions or ideas. This ultimately limits opportunities for critical thinking and problem-posing (Haavelsrud, 2008). This power dynamic perpetuates entrenched social norms, hindering active participation and the potential for meaningful educational reform.

[348] Abou Al Fadl (2001) and Al-Alwani (2012) critique how (religious) authoritarian voices have shaped gender roles, overlooking Islam's emphasis on justice and balance in family dynamics (see 2.4).

gendered norms by limiting critical discussions on women's rights, as students may internalise the belief that questioning established narratives equates to questioning Allah's will, creating a chilling effect on intellectual curiosity and critical engagement, reinforcing the Banking Model (Hamdan, 2005, p.12). While existing research critiques the banking model and rote learning in Saudi education, it often overlooks how religious legitimacy further entrenches these limitations, making the ICC model particularly resistant to reform and critical reflection on gender issues. This approach positions women's roles as divinely ordained, rigid, and unchangeable. By framing knowledge as sacrosanct, the ICC perpetuates gender inequality and stifles the critical thinking skills needed to challenge societal norms and foster meaningful dialogue (Rugh, 2002; Al-Zahrani, 2020). Professors further did not make a much better effort to analyse the sacralised texts. Their teaching strategies reinforced the sacralisation of specific interpretations by promoting passive learning methods in the classroom (Al-Turkey; Hamdan,2012; Mustafa, 2017).

This study extends that while prioritising the religious texts as the main source of teachings as the fourth wave asserts[349], rights framed through sacralised discourse or abstract legalistic terms support the Banking Model; they become detached from women's lived realities, making it difficult for students to see their practical relevance or to assert rights that are not explicitly articulated within a sacralised framework. As a result, this approach

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[349] The Islamic framework of women's rights asserted by the fourth wave prioritises divine revelation as the ultimate source of legislation and the "ultimate truth" (Al-Juhany, 2015). Some religious texts related to faith (*Al-Aquida*) are indeed sacralised. As Al-Zahrani (2020) and others note, memorisation and indoctrination in Islamic education were historically seen as necessary to preserve the divine texts from Qurʾān and Sunnah. However, a dynamic, reflective, and participatory approach is needed to reflect on the sacred texts related to practice and jurisprudence to implement them in contemporary life and social behaviour (Hamdan, 2012).

not only reinforces existing gender norms but also creates barriers to challenging them, as rights remain distant, theoretical constructs rather than tools for social empowerment. The study's findings align with Khir-Allah (2024) that critical thinking and human reasoning are encouraged in Islam in order to derive contextual applications of Islamic law; yet, this process should follow the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology[350].

Professors may avoid critical thinking due to their concerns about losing control over conversations they cannot fully monitor[351]. This reluctance reflects an adherence to a hierarchical dynamic, where knowledge, whether included in the ICC or provided by professors, is seen as fixed and unquestionable, prioritising control over fostering critical knowledge, as seen in one-sided teaching strategies[352]. By framing this approach as the "best method," professors reinforce the authoritative structure in the classroom, preventing meaningful discourse, which could otherwise allow students to question and reconsider the content. By acting as the final authority and dismissing the value of student input and critical thinking, the committee contribute to a top-down educational approach, which creates what Freire (1970) calls a "culture of silence."[353] This authoritative proximity to

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[350] (See 2.2.3)

[351] (See 6.5.4)

[352] A professor may focus solely on presenting polygamy's benefits or intended purpose, avoiding student objections or broader discussions on its contrasts in Saudi social praxis. This limits the students' ability to challenge the material and reduces their role to passive recipients of information.

[353] This model discourages students from questioning or contributing to knowledge development. This hierarchical dynamic may be influenced by the disproportionate representation of male professors (6:2) on the ICC committee, who developed the curriculum without consulting other faculty members or students.

students and lack of collaboration reinforces a one-sided, authoritarian approach to teaching that neglects students' voices.

Although Al-Alwani (2012) asserts that the Islamic frame of reference provides comprehensive and detailed interpretations of the key concepts in WRPI through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology[354], the ICC, in this analysis, introduces complex *Fiqh* terms and technical jargon without adequate explanation, reinforcing the Banking Model of education. In such an environment, students cannot critically reflect on or challenge the presented concepts because they lack a complete understanding of the underlying meanings and values that shape them (Haavelsrud, 2008). For example, terms such as "polygamy" or "guardianship" (*Al-Qiwāmah*) carry deep societal and jurisprudential connotations that go beyond their technical definitions, explained in Section 3.3. Without a clear explanation of the values and historical contexts[355] embedded in these terms, students cannot fully grasp the implications of these concepts or question their relevance in contemporary society. Professors' reliance on complex terms without context or explanation further entrenches this knowledge hierarchy, where their control over the meaning and interpretation of terms reinforces the professor's authority. Moreover, when students are not given the space to question or reflect on the deeper meaning of terms and concepts, they are prevented from understanding their relevance and applications in their own lives, discouraging students

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[354] (See Chapter 3)

[355] "Historical practices" here refer to how these concepts have been understood and applied across different historical periods. This includes both the application of Islamic teachings (*Sunna*), comprising the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH), as well as the broader socio-cultural and political traditions that shaped their interpretation. While the *Sunna* provided foundational ethical and legal principles, historical contexts influenced how these principles were implemented, sometimes aligning with or diverging from their original intent.

from questioning the societal norms that these terms represent. Without an understanding of the Islamic value systems attached to terms such as polygamy or guardianship, students are left to accept the traditional interpretations of these concepts as the "truth" rather than critically analysing their role in contemporary gender dynamics (Hamdan, 2012).

Studies, such as those by Hamdan (2005, 2012) and others, indicate that educational strategies within the ICC reinforce gender inequalities and limit women's agency by discouraging critical engagement with social norms, leading to confusion between cultural practices and religious teachings explained in Section 2.4[356]. Without tools to critically engage with these concepts and rights, students struggle to distinguish between cultural traditions and Islamic teachings on women's rights, fostering uncritical acceptance of restrictive gender roles. This highlights a fundamental issue: content on women's rights alone is insufficient for education to serve as a vehicle for empowerment. While many liberal feminist perspectives emphasise education as key to advancing women's rights, they often overlook how cultural-specific education functions in practice and facilitates meaningful social change (Khir-Allah,2024). This aligns with Kabeer's (1999) argument on women's empowerment that empowerment is not merely about granting or learning abstract freedoms; it must also account for the values, beliefs, and cultural contexts that give meaning to them[357]. The ICC, for instance, aims to incorporate women's rights. Yet, its method precludes meaningful engagement through sacralised discourse, technical

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[356] (Bryan, 2012; Mulhem et al., 2019; Al-Alwani, 2012).
[357] (See 2.3)

language, and context-separation, leaving rights as abstract, inaccessible concepts rather than actionable tools for social transformation.

8.3. Critical Awareness and Praxis: Stagnation in Awareness of Women's Rights

Even though the Saudi Vision 2030 aims for what Frier argues as transformational education in women's rights, the ICC structure and teaching strategies prove to 1) maintain the status quo, 2) avoid problem-posing that connects the religious teachings to praxis, and 3) underestimate the critical consciousness and critical thinking competences in the WRPI discussion.

8.3.1. Epistemic Taboo and Silenced Discussion: Maintaining Status Quo

In transformative education, the goal is not simply to transmit knowledge but to foster critical thinking, challenge entrenched assumptions, and empower individuals to engage with concepts to lead to meaningful societal change (Tibbitts, 2005). However, the absence of comprehensive religious definitions of the key terms concerning women's rights within the ICC educational contexts creates a sense of epistemic taboo, especially when discourse sacralisation prevails over critically questioning these concepts and terms[358]. When

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[358] The analysis points out a significant gap in how the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology is applied, or, instead, not applied, within the curriculum. Such a gap plays a crucial role in shaping the interpretation of women's rights in a way that often aligns with culturally ingrained stereotypes, especially by male students, rather than the original Islamic teachings guaranteed in the *Sharīʿah* (Abdul Raùf, 2015; Abou El Fadl, 2001; Hamdan, 2005, 2012). The *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology encourages a return to the sources, engaging students in a deep analysis of Islamic jurisprudence and critical thinking on its applications. *Al-Taʾṣīl* reduces intellectual ambiguities and broadens the epistemological understanding of women's rights by linking religious texts with *Maqāṣid Al-Sharah* and real-world lived realities (Al-Alwani, 2012). This methodology transforms theoretical principles into enforceable laws safeguarding women's rights and achieving justice and human dignity (Al-Qahtani, 2020).

professors bypass the *Al-Taʾṣīl*-based explanation, students can interpret these terms through prevailing cultural norms, often distorting the original *Sharīʿah* intent (Mansour, 2014; Al-Ghunaim, 2020). In this case, the ICC education follows Bourdieu's Cultural Reproduction theory (1930-2002), where the syllabi and professors reproduce the structure of power relationships, in this case, between genders. However, suppose students are taught these key terms through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, following scholars like Raysoni (2019) and Al-Alwani (2012)[359], in that case, students are empowered to explore the comprehensive epistemological definition of these concepts from the Islamic framework, to identify the social behaviour that puts these concepts in practice and to think critically and comparatively.

Some discussions during the class remain silenced, such as in polygamy[360]. Students have acknowledged that professors either silenced the discussion or defended it by highlighting its benefits, ignoring the social dynamics and conflicts. This silencing suggests that the issue is not solely about the sacralisation of the practice but might also reflect the professors' inability to engage with and discuss such a term critically, knowing that the professor who defends it is in a polygamous marriage herself[361].

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359 Both highlight the significance of *Al-Taʾṣīl* in providing a comprehensive framework for addressing women's issues.
[360] It is one of the most disturbing concepts for many young Muslim women. The ICC did not comprehensively introduce the term in line with the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology. Instead, the ICC included gender-biased *Al-Taʾṣīl-less* discourse, employing a selective method in choosing religious texts, empowering certain socially dominant practices and frames surrounding polygamy and the women involved in it.
[361] Instead of encouraging students to engage critically with the *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, which emphasises justice, equality, and the preservation of human dignity in polygamy, professors may inadvertently reinforce the cultural norms that shape these discussions.

By not providing the proper framework for understanding the complexities of women's rights, key terms and concepts within Islamic teachings and *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, the curriculum reinforces the cultural status quo. Even though the Islamic framework of women's rights is a coherent epistemological approach that addresses all aspects of gender relations and women's issues comprehensively (Al-Marrakshi, 2023), this silence on deep theological contexts leads to Intellectual fragmentation[362]. Students are left with an incomplete, distorted understanding of women's rights. They might ignore rights that belong to them, demand rights that are their responsibilities, or learn to accept simplified, one-dimensional definitions of complex terms without being encouraged to question or delve deeper into their religious underpinnings. In turn, students might be disempowered to rethink how these practices should be adapted or reinterpreted to align with broader social justice goals within the Saudi and global contexts.

What is particularly important to point out is that these discussions' silence does not stem from the content being religious or sacred, as secular feminists argue[363]. Neither is it because Saudi Arabia's institutional politics silence women's rights discourse, as proved by the reforms in the shed of Vision 2030[364]. As said previously, Islam provides a comprehensive framework for women's rights discussion; the silencing of the key terms might be related to pedagogical shortness that maintains the social order and the dominant gender norms. To break this cycle, educators must adopt a pedagogy that challenges these

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[362] The selective approach identified in the ICC is similar to the selective approach followed by Islamic feminism identified by the fourth wave (see 2.2.3).
[363] (See 2.2.1)
[364] (See 1.4)

dominant practices and empowers students to engage with Islamic teachings to promote justice, equality, and women's empowerment. Applying the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, which encourages deep engagement with the primary texts and a context-sensitive interpretation of Islamic law, is essential for fostering a generation of students who are not merely recipients of cultural norms but active participants in rethinking women's rights within an Islamic framework.

8.3.2. The Absence of Problem-Posing: Hindering Transformational Education

The ICC fails to equip students with the tools necessary to interrogate dominant social norms that have shaped interpretations of women's rights[365]. Three shortness around the problem-posing implementation in the ICC content and its teaching strategies are identified: 1) overlooking the Prophet's (PBUH) *Sunnah* in gender relations, 2) oversimplification of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* of gender roles and teachings within the Islamic value system, 3) excluding the legal reforms within Vision 2030 form the ICC content.

The lack of comprehensive *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology is not limited to the fragmented knowledge around the key concept definition in WRPI. The lack of such methodology hinders transformational education as it broadens the gap between theory and praxis. The ICC ignored the problem-posing teaching strategies when it overlooked the Prophet's (PBUH) *Sunnah*, the second most important source of Islamic knowledge, where religious

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[365] Islamic education considers critical thinking as the primary tool for effective learning by which every aspect of life can be questioned and solved through the teachings of *Qurʾān* and *Sunnah*, leading to emancipation and social and personal transformation (Gilani-Williams, 2014, p,25).

teachings were revealed and implemented in the first Muslim society[366]. By missing this foundational aspect, the ICC dropped the opportunity to introduce students to a problem-posing approach that contextualises women's rights discussions within both historical and contemporary realities. Rather than engaging students in a critical exploration of how these concepts were practised in the Prophet's time and how they have been shaped over centuries, the ICC isolates theoretical discussions from their lived applications, limiting students' ability to develop a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings on gender relations.

Gender dynamics in Saudi Arabia are influenced by prevailing traditions, tribal customs, and recent legal reforms aimed at Vision 2030[367]. However, instead of addressing the interplay between these social forces and religious teachings, the ICC presents Islamic rulings in a vacuum, detached from the challenges and transformations occurring within society. This decontextualisation prevents students from critically engaging with how outdated customs, some rooted in pre-Islamic *(Jāhilīyah)* traditions rather than Islamic teachings (Al-Alwani, 2012; Saeed, 2019)[368], continue to influence gender relations. The ICC fails to facilitate meaningful social transformation through education without identifying these social behaviours and critically analysing their divergence from Islamic principles.

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[366] The Prophet's (PBUH) life, his interactions with his wives, and the social and family dynamics he fostered among his companions are essential for understanding how these gender-based key concepts, such as *Al-Qiwāmah*, polygamy, divorce and obedience, were initially applied and lived through.
[367] (See 1.4 and 2.4)
[368] (See 3.4.3)

The ICC and its teaching strategies have overlooked *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* as another crucial framework for fostering problem-posing education[369]. The ICC fails to incorporate contemporary applications of *Fiqh* and legal reforms in Saudi Arabia, thereby limiting women students' ability to analyse religious teachings beyond rigid literalism. Instead of empowering them to navigate the ethical objectives of Islamic law within their lived realities, the curriculum reinforces static interpretations that fail to address the evolving socio-legal landscape. This omission creates a gap between the theoretical discussions in the curriculum and the transformative potential of Islamic teachings, leaving students without the intellectual tools necessary to engage critically with religious discourse on gender justice.

Moreover, ignoring recent legal reforms, many of which aim to empower women by reclaiming their rights following Islamic principles (Personal Status Law, 2022)[370], further exacerbates this educational problem-posing gap[371]. They are often overlooked by professors who may be unaware of these legal advancements themselves. This disconnects between legal progress and religious education leaves female students uninformed about their rights, preventing them from recognising the legal tools available to support their empowerment. Without awareness of the laws that uphold their rights in accordance with

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[369] *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, which encapsulates the higher objectives of Islamic law, bridges Islamic teachings and contemporary legal implementations of women's rights (Al-Rumi, 2008; Al-Sha'rawi, 1998; Karim, 2021). By integrating this methodology, students could critically re-read and reinterpret religious texts concerning gender relations, human rights, and social justice (Awdah, 2011; Al-Juhany, 2015).

[370] (see 1.4)

[371] For instance, reforms granting women greater rights in custody disputes, alimony regardless of their financial standing, and financial rights for divorced women are absent from the ICC's content (see Articles 44, 53 and 127 in Personal Status Law, 2022).

Islamic principles, they remain unable to challenge restrictive gender norms, assert their agency, or participate in the broader movement for social transformation in gender relations.

As a result, the ICC not only provides an incomplete and sometimes biased knowledge of women's rights but also limits the potential for social transformation through education. Addressing these issues requires a curriculum that integrates the Prophet's practised *Sunnah* and *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* as a foundational analytical tool while incorporating discussions on contemporary legal reforms to ensure that students develop both a critical awareness of the contemporary challenges and injustices, their religious rights, and the knowledge to assert them in real-world contexts.

8.3.3. Lost Between Critical Consciousness and Critical Thinking: Discussion Battles and Identity Crisis

Through their lived experiences, Saudi women students have already developed a profound critical consciousness; they could identify the multi-layered injustices embedded in the social applications of *Al-Qiwāmah*, marriage, obedience and divorce. Professors and students could recognise the disparities between the epistemological frameworks of secular feminism and the Islamic framework[372], both opting for a comprehensive following to the Islamic framework of women's rights as an effective solution to achieve justice and equity

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[372] See the epistemological differences between these approaches in (2.2)

in gender relations. Students could differentiate between religious principles and cultural practices, understanding that gender relations in their society are often dictated by gender-biased traditional customs rather than original Islamic teachings (Hamdan, 2012). However, while they possess awareness, they lack critical thinking skills in the Islamic women's rights framework. The ICC's content, discourse, and teaching strategies contribute to this imbalance[373]. On several occasions, professors provided personally biased explanations or recycled cultural norms on the key concepts in WRPI instead of challenging them in the classroom discussions, infringing the Accountability Model of Tibbit (2002)[374]. Wijaya (2019) explained that professors with no critical thinking training and with long teaching experience fall into the "illusion of knowledge" in which professors are stuck in traditional teaching, transmitting outdated content or knowledge. This aligns with Al-Zahrani and Al-Hamami's (2020) and Omar's (2020) statement that social institutions often reinforce traditional narratives about women's roles if no proper training and improvements are made.

The question on the effectiveness of the ICC education in fostering women's rights awareness and women's agency was avoided by professors. They might be hesitant to critique the curriculum due to their internalisation of these societal norms or fear of

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[373] Instead of fostering analytical engagement with key Islamic concepts through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, which would involve grounding discussions in scriptural sources and contextual applications in the Prophet's Sunnah, the ICC presents selective interpretations that align with dominant patriarchal norms.

374 The "Accountability Model" in Tibbitts' theory links transformative education to individuals' professional roles, focusing on how their knowledge, attitudes, and actions to uphold human rights norms affect their work. Thus, this model prioritises understanding human rights laws and tools for government accountability over personal transformation. It assumes learners who see HRE's relevance to their roles may adjust their behaviours to reduce human rights violations (Tibbitts, 2002; Aldawood, 2020).

challenging culturally sensitive issues within a conservative context. Students acknowledge that although they acquired fragmented knowledge from the ICC classes, their critical thinking competencies were developed outside the classroom, such as being involved in discussions at home, with friends or in media. For students, prior knowledge and personal experiences are the tools that enable them to formulate an understanding of women's rights awareness within broader societal contexts rather than the classroom content and discussions.

Women students experience an identity crisis as they navigate their deep sense of belonging to religious texts and their intrinsic acceptance of Islamic teachings while simultaneously resisting dominant cultural interpretations that often distort these principles. In their search for justice, they attempt to reconcile their faith with a more equitable understanding of women's rights. Yet, they struggle to find an interpretation that comprehensively reflects their religious identity and pursuit of justice. This absence of a just and faith-aligned interpretation creates an epistemological disorder, or a "false awareness", within the discussion of women's rights in Islam, as external influences, such as TV shows and social media trends, often rely on non-religious or secular frames of reference, such as "feminism", discovering later its incompatibility with the Islamic teachings[375].

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[375] This epistemological disorder leads to unbalanced critical thinking, distorted discussions, and an identity crisis in which students are forced to question their sense of belonging and identity, as reflected in the analysis((Sulaiman,2002; Al-Huthali, 2011; Al-Humoud, 2010)

Such a crisis often makes discussions tense and confrontational, as students either become defensive or resist re-evaluating their prior knowledge, even when their understanding is extreme or inaccurate (Alharbi, 2023). For instance, some students reject the institution of marriage entirely due to misinterpretations of Islamic values surrounding it, reflecting a reactionary stance rather than a critically structured perspective. This resistance and polarisation contradict the principles of a peaceful transformative educational model (Bajaj, 2011; Tibbitts, 2002)[376], which seeks to foster open, reflective, and justice-oriented discussions rather than reinforcing antagonism and intellectual rigidity (Ghunaim, 2020; Karmesh, 2019; Saeed, 2019).

8.4. Dehumanisation in Education: Concealing Women as Right-Holders

Dehumanisation[377] in the ICC is intrinsically linked to the refusal to recognise women as equal right-holders, framing women's values as secondary to men's or subordinating their needs to male authority (Qaradaghi, 2016; Lentz, 1999). It perpetuates a systemic injustice that denies women their full humanity. By ignoring or distorting Islamic principles of justice and equity[378], such curricula legitimise the marginalisation of women, creating a feedback loop where educational practices sustain societal norms and, in turn, shape educational content (Danesh, 2020; Osler and Yahya, 2013)[379]. This cyclical process

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[376] (See 4.4)
[377] Dehumanisation in education refers to the systematic denial of individuals' dignity, agency, and rights, reducing them to passive recipients of knowledge or subordinate entities within hierarchical structures (Shah, 2006).
[378] (See 3.2.2)
[379] (See 2.4, 3.4.3)

entrenches gender inequalities, making it imperative to address dehumanisation in education as a critical step toward achieving transformative gender justice.

Dehumanisation in ICC education is identified in 1) the monopolised and biased discourse explaining the key terms in WRPI discussion, recycling dominant stereotypes on women, and 2) the concealment of women as right-holders by selectively choosing the religious texts in the discussion. The discussion of this section ends by pointing out the broader social implications (outcome) of the dehumanisation of women in ICC education.

8.4.1. Monopolised and Male-Centred Discourse: Recycling Gender Stereotypes

The ICC reinforces male-centric narratives portraying men as the primary "holders of rights and authority" while sidelining or minimising the complexity of women's rights. It promotes the idea of men having dominant roles in both the family and society while positioning women in secondary, subservient roles[380]. Such male-centred discourse by professors masks the traditional systematic oppression by religious rhetoric, strategically labelling resistance as sin to suppress critical engagement and maintain social order by maintaining gender hierarchies.

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[380] While some professors acknowledged the male-centred bias in the ICC, others reinforced it, particularly in discussions on polygamy, *Al-Qiwāmah*, or a professor's use of *Birr Al-Wālidayn* as a tool to enforce fathers' authority and conceal daughters as right-holders in the family (dutifulness to the parents), without addressing the corresponding rights and responsibilities of women as equals.

In addition to the fragmented knowledge flaw in ICC, it recycles and reinforces the dominant gender roles and stereotypes of women's agency, dignity, and values[381]. This framing contradicts essential Islamic principles such as *ʿAdl* (justice), *Iḥsān* (excellence in conduct), and *Mawaddah* (compassion and affection), which emphasise equity, peace, mutual care, and balance in family relationships (Al-Rumi, 2008; Karmesh, 2019)[382]. Such selective framing reinforces male authority derived from *Jāhilīyah* practices while overlooking the *Qurʾānic* objective of challenging these male-centred norms. The *Qurʾān* promotes equitable partnership (*Al-Shūrā*) and upholds justice, benevolence, and compassion between men and women (Ezzat, 2020)[383].The findings align with Al-Sanabary's description of the Saudi educational system as "a microcosm of Saudi Arabian society" (1994, p. 141), perpetuating gender divisions and power hierarchies instead of raising critical thinking about rights discussion. Sociocultural Saudi norms shape this imbalance as the gender-biased discourse aligns with broader patterns observed in Saudi society, where male-centred structures remain deeply entrenched, and the social norms are shaped by a blend of religion and tribal culture, obscuring the distinction between Islamic principles and traditional practices (Hamdan, 2005; Al-Alhareth, 2015)[384].   Gender representation is also male-centred in the educational staff and curricula (Saudi National

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[381] The ICC's biased discourse, selective content presentation, bypassed *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, and lack of critical engagement maintain a monopoly on gender narratives that uphold male entitlement while diminishing women's value as full right-holders.

[382] For instance, the ICC discussion neglects the husband's reciprocal role in fulfilling his wife's material and emotional needs in exchange for her obedience. While Islamic teachings stress mutual understanding and cooperation between spouses, ensuring that obedience functions within a framework of justice, love, and care (Al-Dasuqi, 2002), the ICC presents it as a one-sided duty, failing to clarify its limitations within Islamic law (Al-Alwani, 2012). It omits key aspects of women's agency, particularly in financial and personal decisions (Al-Eid, 2006; Naseef,1995), fostering the misconception that obedience applies to all aspects of a woman's life.

[383] See the Islamic Framework to women's rights in (3.2)

[384] (See 2.4.1)

Observatory at the Family Affairs Council, 2022), which reinforces male entitlement and domination in syllable structure. This is visible in the ICC committee, which is comprised of six men and only two women. There should be more women participants in the committee to encounter the male-centred discourse in the book. These women should enjoy critical thinking competencies as much as critical awareness; their voices must be heard and respected (Karimullah, 2023), as they would be the ambassadors of women students' voices against women's dehumanisation and male prioritisation of right-holders in the ICC.

8.4.2. Concealing Muslim Women's Dignity and Value: De-humanization in Women's Rights Education

Islamic teachings emphasise human dignity, justice, and equality as fundamental principles, ensuring that men and women are honoured and valued (Al-Eid, 2006; Al-Alwani,2012)[385]. However, despite these foundational Islamic principles, the ICC largely neglects or distorts the recognition of women's dignity and value, replacing the Islamic model of justice with a rigid socio-cultural framework that prioritises male authority.

Students observed that the ICC limits its discussion of women's worth to their roles as ideal wives rather than as autonomous individuals with spiritual, intellectual, and social rights

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[385] By establishing rights within the framework of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah*, Islam safeguards women's dignity, granting them independent financial, educational, and social rights (Darraz, 2012; Saeed, 2019). The Prophet *Muhammad*'s (PBUH)teachings further reinforced this by advocating for just treatment, mutual respect, and the recognition of women as equal participants in societal and familial affairs through *Al-Taqwā* (piety), *Iḥsān* (kindness), and *Maʿrūf* (good conduct) Islamic values (Al-Alwani,2012) and others. (see 3.2.2)

(Al-Alwani, 2012). This distortion is evident in the ICC's discussion on dowry[386] and guardianship[387], polygamy, obedience, and divorce. By selectively emphasising male authority while downplaying male duties, the ICC conditions women to internalise service to their husbands as the ultimate measure of their virtue rather than fostering an awareness of their inherent rights (Doumato, 1992; Hamdan, 2005).

The biased discourse within the ICC, which diminishes women's dignity and their role as right-holders, has far-reaching consequences that extend beyond the classroom. This systemic dehumanisation of women, taught to both men and women students, shapes cognitive and emotional perceptions of gender roles and justice in ways that reinforce inequality. Therefore, the absence of women's dignity in the discourse profoundly influences male students' framing of gender roles. These young men, who will later become professionals, husbands, and fathers, are conditioned to see women not as independent rights-holders but as dependents primarily tied to male authority. The selective emphasis

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[386] Where the focus shifts from honouring women's rights in marriage to advocating for reduced dowries, aligning with male economic concerns rather than the Islamic principle of Mahr as a symbol of respect and honour (Al-Eid, 2006). Even the Prophetic narrative related to Mahr is presented through a male-centric lens, diverting attention from women's value (women as rights-holders) to male convenience. In marriage discussions, women's responsibilities are heavily emphasised as obligations without equal acknowledgement of a husband's responsibilities, thus undermining *Qurʾān* guidance on mutual rights (The *Qurʾʾan*, 2:228). See the dowry through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology in (3.3.3), from participants perspective (6.3.5), in the ICC (7.3.2).

[387] Guardianship is explained as a system of control rather than a framework of responsibility and protection (Al-Shaʿrawi, 1998; Baht, 2018; Karim, 2021). The ICC portrays women's education and independence as contingent upon male approval, reducing their aspirations to secondary considerations to meet men's needs. Statements such as "he (husband) should be respected, revered, obeyed, and appreciated" (p. 97) and "she (wife) should maximise what the husband brings to his home and family, whether little or much" (p. 81) reinforce a one-sided dependency model rather than a reciprocal partnership. See the guardianship through *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology in (3.3.2), from participants perspective (6.3.4), in the ICC (7.3.4).

on men's rights without an equivalent discussion of men's responsibilities fosters entitlement and a skewed understanding of gender relations.

Men who grow up internalising these notions may struggle to acknowledge women's autonomy and contributions to society. When women assert their rights, they are often dismissed as being rebellious against Islamic teachings or accused of adopting imported Western ideologies (Alharbi,2023). This perception is reinforced in familial structures where fathers usually delegate authority to sons over their sisters, reinforcing male superiority and female subordination (Al-Otaian,2005). This dynamic perpetuates systemic gender injustice that continues to shape societal norms long after the formal education of students ends (Alhajri et al., 2022).

The ICC's failure to recognise women as equal rights holders has profound psychological consequences for female students. When women are consistently depicted as subordinate, their self-perception and sense of dignity erode (Karimullah, 2023). Many female students internalise feelings of gender-inferiority, leading to diminished self-worth and limited aspirations. Women accept minimal gestures of appreciation as sufficient rather than recognising their full spectrum of rights under Islamic principles. A participant recounted how societal disrespect, and the perception of women as second-class citizens led her and her close friends to develop resentment toward their gender identity. These emotions reflect

the profound psychological harm inflicted by a discourse that denies women their full Islamic rights (Yamani, 2000; Al-Abdullatif, 2009; Al-Qahtani, 2015)[388].

The ICC fosters an adversarial dynamic between genders by teaching women that their worth, guaranteed by the Islamic framework, is contingent upon their obedience and compliance (Al-harbi, 2023; Al-hajri et al., 2022; Bawazeer, 2014). This tension is reflected in social discourse, particularly on digital platforms, where men and women react in ways that reveal a significant lack of rights awareness (Alhajri et al., 2022). Women, seeking to reclaim their dignity and rights, often express anger and resentment, while men respond with defensiveness, striving to maintain their traditional authoritarian position. These dynamic transforms gender relations into a struggle for dominance rather than a cooperative engagement based on mutual respect and justice[389].

By failing to instil an equitable understanding of rights and responsibilities among both male and female students, the ICC not only undermines women's dignity but also sows the seeds of long-term societal discord (Alhajri et al., 2022), hindering the prospects for lasting peace.

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[388] The ICC's portrayal of women's primary religious duties to prioritise their husbands' needs over their own further exacerbates this issue. Women are emotionally burdened by maintaining marital harmony, while men are not held to similar standards (Al-Dasuqi, 2002). The ICC frames Islamic teachings as providing solutions to men's needs without acknowledging women's needs or the emotional impact of some practices on women, reinforcing a culture where women's feelings are dismissed rather than validated. This neglect fosters internalised oppression, diminishing women's capacity to advocate for their rights and reinforcing the notion that they must endure emotional hardship as a religious duty.

[389] See the emphasised values in the Islamic approach to women0s rights (3.2.2)

8.5. Education as a Political Act

Education is inherently political, shaping individuals' understanding of rights, justice, and societal roles through the governing, collective or political frame of reference (Freire, 1970). Within the framework of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has taken significant steps to promote women's empowerment through legal and educational reforms[390]. Yet, their impact remains hindered by the persistent male-dominated structure of academic institutions and the biased content of the ICC, which continues to reinforce male-centred narratives[391]. This contradiction highlights a more profound political issue: while reforms provide a policy framework for change, their implementation requires addressing entrenched ideological and institutional resistance (El-Essa, 2018).

A meaningful transformation in gender education necessitates the integration of specialists in legal studies, gender studies, Islamic jurisprudence, and pedagogy, all of whom must be well-versed in the Islamic framework of reference and the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology. Without a multi-disciplinary and inclusive approach, the education system risks reinforcing outdated gender roles rather than fostering a balanced, rights-based understanding of gender dynamics within Islam (Hamdan,2012). Consequently, forming mixed-gender and

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[390] including establishing the Family Affairs Council and the Women's Committee, increased female representation in Al-Shūrā Council, deputy ministerial roles, and ambassadorships, and several educational reforms, including expanding female participation across all educational sectors, appointing women to leadership roles, including deputy ministers and general directors in the Ministry of Education. Reforms also include initiatives to enhance female teachers' professional practices, support women's leadership in research and innovation, and introduce new academic programs, such as engineering, nationwide universities. These initiatives aim to enhance gender justice among young generations (see 1.4)
[391] (See 3.4.3).

inclusive committees is not just an educational necessity, it is a political act that challenges established hierarchies and aligns with the state's commitment to gender-inclusive reforms. This approach echoes the vision of former Minister of Education El-Essa (2018), who emphasised that Saudi Arabia's education system must adopt a new philosophy balancing Islamic and ethical education with intellectual and behavioural skills, ensuring individuals are productive and competitive amid political, economic, and social transformations.[392]

Resistance to such educational reforms often stems from a fear of social instability and concerns that increased gender justice might threaten male authority within traditional family and social structures (Al-Suwaida, 2016)[393]. This fear, however, should not be an obstacle but rather a point of discussion within an Islamic ethical framework. Islam fundamentally upholds justice (*'Adl*) and *Al-Taqwā* (God-consciousness)[394], placing responsibility on individuals, particularly those in power, to ensure fair treatment and uphold rights (El-Essa, 2018). By framing women's empowerment within Islamic principles, reform efforts align with peace education (Gilani-Williams, 2014), as Freire's theory outlines, where social order and stability are maintained through transformative education (Raihani,2020). This shift in discourse is crucial for peaceful social transformation, as it fosters a gradual yet sustainable restructuring of gender norms,

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[392] (See 3.4.3)
[393] (See 4.3.1)
[394] (See 3.2.2)

mitigating resistance and preventing reactionary pushback that perceives reform as a threat to social cohesion (El-Essa, 2018)[395].

The educational politics within Vision 2030 added new subjects to the curriculum to foster critical thinking skills and conflict-resolution strategies within students (Al-Otaibi, 2020). However, these competencies are missed in gender education and women's rights in the ICC. There should be a political desire to enable men and women students to navigate gender-related challenges, implementing critical thinking and critical consciousness as part of the ICC structure. Today's students will be the active citizens of tomorrow, shaping family structures, workplace dynamics, and broader societal interactions. They risk perpetuating existing inequalities rather than transforming them if they are not adequately prepared to engage with conflicting interests between genders in family and social contexts.

To achieve this, the ICC must move beyond passive learning and encourage analytical comparisons between global gender approaches and the Islamic rights framework. Exposure to dominant global discourses on women's rights should not be seen as a threat to the Islamic frame of reference but rather as a learning opportunity (Khir-Allah, 2021, 2024). By understanding competing ideological frameworks in global discourse and social media, students can develop a comprehensive, well-reasoned perspective that strengthens their appreciation of Islamic principles on marriage, divorce, obedience, rights, and duties (Khir-Allah, 2024). This comparative approach enables them to recognise the strengths of

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[395] See Peace value in Rights discussion in (3.2.2), Peace Education in (4.4), and Peace Education in Islam in (4.4.3)

the Islamic framework, not as an abstract set of rules but as a dynamic and just system that prioritises social harmony, peace and fairness.

For education to serve as a transformative force, reforms must go beyond policy announcements and be effectively implemented in curriculum design and specialised teachers' training led by experts (Al-Suwaida, 2016; El-Essa, 2018). The gap between Vision 2030's objectives and classroom realities underscore the need for a more inclusive, justice-oriented approach that integrates Islamic ethical principles with contemporary pedagogical practices[396]. Addressing gender in education is not merely a social or religious issue. It is a political responsibility that demands strategic, well-informed interventions to create an education system and training courses for professors that foster peaceful and effective transformative education.

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[396] Al-Sanad (2017) found that the notions of rights in university curricula and how they are received are insufficient to build knowledge of rights (see 3.4.3).

<div align="center">**Chapter Nine**</div>

<div align="center">**Conclusion**</div>

9.1. Introduction:

The limitations of the ICC's pedagogical framework become even more pronounced when compared to Tibbitts' emphasis on the transformative potential of education. Where problem-posing education cultivates critical consciousness by encouraging learners to interrogate social realities, the ICC's reliance on rote memorisation and non-participatory methods stifles intellectual agency. This pedagogical gap hinders the realisation of Saudi Vision 2030's objectives, particularly in fostering a generation capable of critically engaging with contemporary gender challenges and achieving gender justice through the peace principles (justice, balance, respect, affection, and dignity) guaranteed by the Islamic framework.

The interwoven dynamics of the Banking Model, sacralised discourse, and gender role reinforcement within Islamic education underscore the urgency of pedagogical reform, which aligns with Vision 2030. Without a concerted effort to transition toward a critical, inquiry-driven educational paradigm, the ICC will remain a conduit for the reproduction of gender-injustice structures rather than a platform for awareness and social empowerment. The future of women's rights education in Saudi Arabia must serve as a tool for liberation rather than subjugation.

9.2. Justification, Originality, Research Implementation

9.2.1. Literature Review:

The literature review serves as a foundational component of this study by mapping the evolution of women's rights advocacy through the four-wave framework, particularly emphasising the Islamic approach to gender justice in the Middle East countries. Drawing on the works of Al-Juhany (2015), Al-Marrakshi (2020), and Khir-Allah (2024), this review highlights how Muslim scholarship has engaged with gender justice discourse, offering an Islamic framework that aligns with both religious principles and contemporary justice imperatives[397].

Understanding this perspective is critical for analysing women's rights education. By distinguishing between Western-secular, Arabic-secular, and Arabic-Muslim approaches, it facilitates the identification of the underpinning approach of Islamic education on gender justice, which is instrumental in critically examining the ICC's engagement with women's rights. It allows for a nuanced assessment of whether the ICC upholds a faith-based justice model that aligns with Islamic principles, following *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* through the application of the *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, or whether it reinforces restrictive interpretations that perpetuate patriarchal norms. Moreover, the literature review enables an evaluation of the extent to which the ICC presents a balanced, contextually grounded vision of women's rights or selectively invokes religious discourse to maintain existing gender hierarchies. Thus, rather than a mere theoretical backdrop, the literature review is a critical analytical

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[397] (See 2.2.3).

tool that refines the study's research questions on how the ICC conceptualises, frames, and disseminates knowledge on gender justice in Saudi society.

9.2.2. The Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework of this research is divided into two parts. Chapter Three explores the Islamic epistemological framework to women's rights discussion[398], the value system[399] and the definition of the key concepts involved in women's discussion following *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology[400]. This framework is essential for the fundamental approach in assessing women's rights, integrating *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah* as a tool to contextualise the key concepts in women's rights discussions. By grounding definitions on *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, this theoretical foundation is crucial for the broader analysis of the ICC in KAS University, as it ensures that the assessment is not only socio-culturally relevant but rather epistemologically rigorous, bridging the gap between Islamic teachings and contemporary gender justice discourse in Saudi Arabia. The second theoretical framework, Chapter Four, focuses on Education, and it is grounded in Critical Pedagogy (CP), which seeks to transform educational practices by challenging existing power structures and promoting social justice. CP emphasises the role of education in fostering critical thinking, empowering marginalised groups, and transforming both societal and individual consciousness. This framework is applied within the Islamic education context, integrating

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[398] (See 3.2.1 and 3.2.3)
[399] (See 3.2.2).
[400] (See 3.3).

the values of peace, justice, and gender equality as fundamental principles. Using HRE models of transformation, this research explores how the Saudi religious education system can bridge the gap between Islamic principles of women's rights and existing social patterns, particularly in gender relations.

The originality of this approach lies in its fusion of CP, a Western-originated educational theory, with an Islamic framework for women's rights and teachings that inherently promote peace and justice. The framework is comprehensive as it incorporates Islamic values, such as those found in the *Qurʾān* and *Sunna*, with a pedagogical model that encourages critical reflection on gender roles and societal norms. This integration offers a unique opportunity to create an educational environment that fosters mutual respect, gender equality, and social harmony. The need for such a framework is evident, as it provides a culturally relevant approach to peace education tailored to the sociopolitical realities of Muslim-majority societies, such as Saudi Arabia, while promoting universal values of justice and equity (Alnufaishan, 2020)[401].

9.3. Addressing the Research Questions:

This study critically examined the ICC's role in raising awareness about women's rights, fostering gender justice, and promoting critical thinking within the Saudi educational context. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of how the ICC's content, structure, and pedagogy interact with students' and professors' perceptions, as well as the broader

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[401] (See 3.2.2).

socio-legal transformations occurring under Vision 2030. The analysis of the ICC curriculum, alongside qualitative data from students and professors, directly addresses the research questions by highlighting both the strengths and limitations of the current educational framework.

First, regarding the perception of ICC content and teaching strategies (*RQ1*), findings revealed a significant gap between the intended purpose of the ICC in fostering critical awareness of women's rights and its actual pedagogical impact. While the curriculum presents women's rights within the Islamic framework, it does so through a rigid structure that often sacralises specific interpretations of gender roles. Professors and students largely perceived the ICC as reinforcing traditional gender norms rather than encouraging critical engagement. The predominance of rote learning, combined with the lack of dialogical pedagogy, limits the curriculum's potential to develop students' critical thinking skills in relation to gender justice. Thus, rather than acting as a transformative educational tool, the ICC often maintains existing sociocultural constraints, highlighting the need for pedagogical reforms that integrate *Tadabbur* (reflective thinking) and *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodologies to cultivate a deeper, more analytical engagement with Islamic teachings.

Second, the study examined how the ICC's structure and discourse align with the Islamic approach to gender justice and women's rights proposed by the fourth wave (*RQ2*). The analysis revealed that while the ICC frames gender discourse within an Islamic paradigm, it often conflates religious teachings with historical and cultural traditions, reinforcing male-centric interpretations that do not fully reflect the principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* (higher objectives of Islamic law). This misalignment has significant implications for the ICC's effectiveness in addressing contemporary

legal and social reforms in Saudi Arabia. As the country undergoes substantial legal transformations, including new policies aimed at empowering women, the ICC's discourse remains largely detached from these developments, creating a disconnect between educational narratives and real-world applications. This research highlights the necessity of integrating a more dynamic, contextually relevant approach to gender justice within the ICC framework—one that remains faithful to Islamic teachings while engaging with the evolving socio-legal landscape.

Finally, the study explored how the intersection of Islamic education and critical pedagogy can empower students to challenge gender injustices and contribute to societal change (*RQ3*). The findings indicate that while the ICC has the potential to serve as a platform for transformative education, its current structure does not effectively facilitate this role. Freirean critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of dialogical learning and problem-posing education in fostering social change, yet the ICC primarily relies on passive learning methods that discourage critical discourse. However, as argued in this study, Islamic epistemology itself provides an alternative framework for fostering critical engagement through *Tadabbur*, which, when implemented through *Al-Taʾṣīl*, can serve as an internal mechanism for intellectual and social transformation. The findings suggest that by integrating these methodologies, the ICC could evolve into a more effective educational tool that not only raises awareness of women's rights but also equips students with the analytical skills necessary to engage with gender justice issues in both theoretical and practical contexts.

Overall, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic education and women's rights by demonstrating the critical need for pedagogical and curricular reforms within the ICC. The findings underscore that while the ICC serves as an important mechanism for teaching gender rights within an Islamic framework, its impact is hindered by rigid pedagogical approaches and the conflation of

religious knowledge with cultural norms. Addressing these limitations requires a conscious effort to activate the internal mechanisms of Islamic critical thinking through *Al-Taʾṣīl*, ensuring that the ICC fosters a meaningful, justice-oriented engagement with women's rights that aligns with both Islamic principles and contemporary societal transformations.

9.4. Recommendation for Vision 2030 Reforms: Towards effective and Comprehensive WRPI education in the ICC

Addressing these pedagogical shortcomings necessitates a structural shift toward a transformative educational model. The *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, if applied with a genuine commitment to critical engagement, could provide a nuanced framework for reconciling religious knowledge with contemporary gender justice discourse. It is the only methodology by which the flaws and shortcomings in the ICC are addressed. This shift requires not only a reconsideration of curriculum content but also a reformation of teaching strategies, including the training of professors in dialogical, student-centred, and online (Alghamdi and El-Hassan, 2022)[402] pedagogies. Furthermore, creating inclusive learning environments where students, particularly women, can participate actively in knowledge production is imperative to dismantle entrenched epistemic hierarchies.

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[402] The Department proposed an initiative to bridge the gap between these pedagogical challenges by facilitating the Blackboard to supplement learning. However, professors still have not used it. This could be due to academic staff not believing in its effectiveness, students not knowing about these materials, the resources not being appealing, or professors' lack of training on implementing these resources in the ICC content. This highlights the importance of professors' training in designing interactive online classes in which they can follow dynamic teaching strategies and take advantage of the tools provided by the platform. Especially noting that one of Vision 2030's goals is to incorporate technology in the academic environment.

9.5. Key contribution

A key contribution of this study is its interdisciplinary positioning. It sits at the intersection of two significant fields: women's rights and education. Bridging these areas provides insights into how Islamic education can promote a more nuanced and balanced understanding of gender justice in Saudi Arabia. While previous scholarship has extensively discussed women's rights from legal, theological, or sociopolitical perspectives, this study adds a critical pedagogical dimension by focusing on how comprehensive Islamic education can be leveraged to foster women's awareness and empowerment.

Addressing women's rights through the lens of education rather than legal or political advocacy alone opens new avenues for meaningful, culturally grounded reform. The study highlights that sustainable change begins with education and that curricula are foundational in shaping societal values and attitudes. It also sheds light on the importance of cultural and religious identities in women's empowerment.

The study also stresses the crucial role of cultural and religious identities in women's empowerment, emphasising that any practical approach to women's rights education must be culturally inclusive and contextually relevant. Cultural inclusivity ensures that empowerment efforts do not impose external frameworks that may be perceived as foreign or incompatible with local values. Instead, it fosters a sense of ownership and legitimacy among women, making the discourse on rights more accessible and actionable. In the Islamic framework of women's rights, men are allies, not the enemy or the opposite.

Moreover, women's rights are inevitably a gender rights discussion in which gender differences and a system of rights and responsibility are recognised.

Another key finding of this study is that providing knowledge about women's empowerment is insufficient. For transformational education on women's rights, this knowledge must be accompanied by critical thinking skills, contextual analysis, and an understanding of social dynamics that enable women to apply theoretical concepts in practice. Within the framework of Islamic education, empowerment should go beyond simply teaching women's rights within the Islamic framework; it must equip learners with the ability to critically engage with religious texts, societal norms, and historical contexts to contextualise these rights within their lived realities. The study underscores the importance of integrating analytical tools that help women navigate and challenge restrictive interpretations while grounding their understanding in the original Islamic principles. By fostering critical engagement, the ICC can move from a knowledge-based approach to a transformative educational model that empowers women to implement their rights within their social, cultural, and religious contexts.

9.6. Limitations

Like any research, this study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, it is a single case study, which limits its generalisability. While the findings of this study are specific to the context of Saudi Arabia, several elements of the research may be generalisable to other Islamic educational settings. For instance, the challenges of integrating critical thinking within traditional religious frameworks and the critique of

passive learning methods are issues that may resonate across other Muslim-majority countries where similar educational practices might exist. However, the unique socio-political context of Saudi Arabia, particularly regarding Vision 2030 and the recent legal reforms, limits the direct applicability of the findings in countries with different political landscapes or educational structures. Future research could explore similar frameworks in different cultural and legal contexts to assess the broader relevance of the findings.

Another key limitation is the absence of male voices. This research focused exclusively on female students and professors, meaning that the perspectives of male students, educators, and policymakers remain unexplored. Given the emphasis within women's rights advocacy on the role of male allies and champions, understanding male perceptions of the ICC's portrayal of women's rights would provide a more comprehensive picture. Future studies should incorporate male perspectives to assess whether their views align with or diverge from those of female students.

9.7. The Researcher's Reflexivity on the Research Process

Conducting this study has been an intellectually rigorous and reflective journey. It required navigating complex ideological, cultural, and educational frameworks while maintaining a critical yet respectful approach to Islamic framework and education. One of the most challenging aspects was detaching the researcher's identity from the research, identifying her own cultural bias, and addressing it. The analysis opened new horizons in the researcher's perspective, providing a clearer understanding of the complexities surrounding women's rights education. It also offered valuable insights into where reforms should begin,

highlighting key areas within the ICC that require structural and content-based improvements to align more effectively with principles of justice, inclusivity, and authentic Islamic teachings on women's rights[403].

9.8 Future Research

Future research should build upon this study's insights by engaging male perspectives, assessing long-term impacts, and testing alternative educational frameworks. By doing so, scholars and educators can continue to refine and improve how Islamic education addresses gender justice, ultimately contributing to broader efforts toward social transformation.

9.9. Conclusion

This study has critically examined the role of the Islamic Culture Curriculum (ICC) in shaping students' awareness and understanding of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. By analysing the curriculum's content, interviewing students and professors, and situating the findings within the broader discourse on Women's Rights discussion, transformational education, Critical pedagogy and peace education, this research has highlighted both the strengths and limitations of the current educational framework in addressing women's rights in Saudi Arabia at KSA University.

The analysis reveals a deeply entrenched pedagogical structure that operates at the intersection of Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Tibbitt's three models of HRE. The interplay

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[403] See Methodology Chapter: (5.7)

between preaching, indoctrination and women's dehumanisation sustains a mode of education that is not merely passive but structurally inhibitive to critical engagement, particularly concerning gender roles discourse and women's rights awareness. The didactic rigidity of the ICC does not exist in isolation; instead, it functions, along with professors' (traditional and male-centred) teaching strategies, within a broader epistemic and ideological framework that sanctifies discourse, constructs knowledge as immutable, and reproduces hierarchical gender norms through educational practices.

Central to this issue is the authoritative role of the professor, who serves as the unchallenged custodian of knowledge, rendering students mere recipients. This knowledge-transmission model, as Freire critiques, fosters a "culture of silence," where students internalise dominant narratives without the agency to question or reinterpret them. Within the ICC, this silencing extends to treating explanations on religious texts and jurisprudential concepts, often presented with sacralised rigidity rather than as subjects for contextual analysis and critical reflection. Consequently, the educational process reinforces male-centred readings of religious texts, precluding alternative, contextual or just interpretations from achieving a shift in the educational sphere and, subsequently, social interaction.

This epistemic structure manifests in several interconnected ways. First, the sacralisation of discourse elevates specific interpretations of religious texts to an unquestionable status, conflating historical, cultural, and theological perspectives into a singular, rigid narrative that does not follow *Al-Taʾṣīl* methodology, impeding students' ability to engage in a critical discussion on WRPI. Second, the presence of epistemic taboos within the ICC

creates an intellectual vacuum wherein contextual and vital engagement with gender justice and women's rights remains largely absent. The failure to define key jurisprudential terms in accessible language further entrenches the perception that questioning or reinterpreting gender-dominant norms is beyond the scope of legitimate discourse. Third, this exclusionary model dehumanises the discourse on women's rights by treating gender justice as a peripheral concern rather than an intrinsic aspect of Islamic ethical and legal thought. The absence of women's agency discussion within Islamic teachings in the ICC perpetuates their marginalisation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Leaflets

Title of the proposed study: The Role of the Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi Universities in Promoting Women's Rights.

You are invited to participate in a research study by Salwa Bajabir, a PhD student at the Theology and Religious Studies Department (University of Birmingham, UK). The study focuses on the Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi Universities in promoting women's rights. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others. Please ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

Salwa Bajabir

Title of the research: The Role of the Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi Universities in Promoting Women's Rights.

The research aims to explore women's rights in the Islamic culture curriculum of Saudi universities.

Why have you been chosen for the interview?

You have been chosen to participate in the study because you are a female Saudi national who teaches/studies the Islamic culture curriculum in Saudi higher education.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Participating in the interview carries no significant risks. The University of Birmingham's Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee has approved the research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your perspectives and insights will enable the researcher to complete her PhD.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be expected to be part of a one-on-one interview in a secure and convenient place. The duration of the interview will be

approximately one hour. You are free to withdraw within 14 days after interviewing because afterwards, the analysis will begin for dissertation writing purposes. You can seek further clarification from the researcher if there is anything which you need help understanding before participating. You will be audio-recorded during the research.

Will my participation in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, your participation will be confidential. The data will be dealt with carefully and anonymised. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data, which will be stored securely and disposed of within ten years after the completion of the study.

Will you be paid to participate in the research?

No payment will be made for taking part in the research.

Will the outcome of the research be published?

The research outcome will be published in a PhD thesis and academic journals.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau funds the research.

Contact for further information:

PGR: Salwa Bajabir

Email: sxb1481@student.bham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Katherine Brown

Email: k.e.brown@bham.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Title of the proposed study: The Role of the Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi Universities in Promoting Women's Rights.

Please complete and sign this consent form if you are happy to participate.

This information is being collected as part of a research project to explore women's rights in the Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi universities. This is part of a PhD research supervised by the Theology and Religious Studies Department at the University of Birmingham. The information you supply and that may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into an encrypted filing system or database and accessed only by authorised personnel involved in the project. The University of Birmingham will retain the information, and it will only be used for research purposes. By supplying this information, you consent to the University storing your information for the above purposes. The University of Birmingham will process the information following the Data Protection Act 2018 provisions. Data will be dealt with carefully and anonymised. The audio recordings will be stored in the Research Data Store in an encrypted form at Birmingham Environment for Academic Research (BEAR), a secure University IT system. Only the researcher and the supervisor have access to it. No identifiable personal data will be published. Participants can withdraw within 14 days of interviewing because the analysis will begin for dissertation writing purposes. However, the Data will be disposed of within ten years after the completion of the study.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information leaflet for this study.

- I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time until the end of data collection.

- I understand that my data will be processed for the purposes detailed above following the Data Protection Act 2018.

- Based on the above, I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant..........................

Date...............   Signature....................

Name of researcher/ Salwa Bajabir

Date: Signature: Salwa

A copy of the signed and dated consent form and the participant information leaflet should be given to the participant and retained by the researcher to be kept securely on file.

نموذج الموافقة

عنوان الدراسة المقترحة دور منهج الثقافة الإسلامية في الجامعات السعودية في تعزيز حقوق المرأة

يرجى إكمال نموذج الموافقة هذا وتوقيعه إذا كنت سعيدا بالمشاركة.

يتم جمع هذه المعلومات كجزء من مشروع بحثي معني باستكشاف حقوق المرأة في منهج الثقافة الإسلامية. هذا جزء من بحث الدكتوراه الذي يشرف عليه قسم اللاهوت والدراسات الدينية في جامعة برمنغهام. سيتم إدخال المعلومات التي تقدمها والتي يمكن جمعها كجزء من مشروع البحث في نظام حفظ ملفات أو قاعدة بيانات مشفرة ولن يتم الوصول إليها إلا من قبل الموظفين المصرح لهم المشاركين في المشروع. ستحتفظ جامعة برمنغهام بالمعلومات، وسيتم استخدامها فقط لأغراض البحث. من خلال توفير هذه المعلومات، فإنك توافق على قيام الجامعة بتخزين معلوماتك للأغراض المذكورة أعلاه. ستقوم جامعة برمنغهام بمعالجة المعلومات وفقا لأحكام قانون حماية البيانات لعام 2018. سيتم التعامل مع البيانات بعناية ومجهولة المصدر. سيتم تخزين التسجيل الصوتي في مخزن بيانات الأبحاث في شكل مشفر في بيئة ( )، وهو نظام آمن لتكنولوجيا المعلومات بالجامعة. فقط الباحث والمشرف BEARبرمنغهام يمكنهم للبحث الأكاديمي الوصول إليها. لن يتم نشر أي بيانات شخصية يمكن التعرف عليها. يحق للمشارك الانسحاب في غضون 14 يوما من إجراء المقابلة لأن التحليل سيبدأ لأغراض كتابة الأطروحة. ومع ذلك، سيتم التخلص من البيانات في غضون عشر سنوات بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة.

1. أؤكد أنني قرأت وفهمت نشرة معلومات المشاركين لهذه الدراسة.
2. لقد أتيحت لي الفرصة لطرح الأسئلة إذا لزم الأمر وحصلت على إجابات مرضية.
3. أفهم أن مشاركتي تطوعية وأنني حر في الانسحاب في أي وقت حتى نهاية جمع البيانات.
4. أفهم أنه ستتم معالجة بياناتي للأغراض المفصلة أعلاه وفقا لقانون حماية البيانات لعام 2018.
5. بناء على ما سبق، أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

اسم المشارك...........................

تاريخ................   توقيع.....................

اسم الباحثة/ سلوى باجابر

التاريخ: التوقيع: سلوى

يجب إعطاء نسخة من نموذج الموافقة الموقع والمؤرخ ونشرة معلومات المشارك إلى المشارك والاحتفاظ بها من قبل

الباحث ليتم الاحتفاظ بها بشكل آمن في الملف.

Appendix 3: Application for Ethical Review ERN_20-0621

Dear Dr Shanneik

Re: "The Role of the Islamic Culture Curriculum in Saudi Universities in Promoting Women's Rights"

Application for Ethical Review ERN_20-0621

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that this study now has full ethical approval.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Application for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application form (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx) to confirm that this

guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing your application for ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

Kind regards

Susan   Cottam

Research Ethics Manager

Research Support Group

C Block Dome

Aston Webb Building

University of Birmingham

Edgbaston B15 2TT

Tel: 0121 414 8825

Email: s.l.cottam@bham.ac.uk

Web: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/RSS/Research-Support-Group/integrity-ethics-governance/Research-Ethics/index.aspx

Appendix 4: Contact email_For Students

بـــــــــــــــم الله الرحـــــمن الرحـــيم

المكرمة الطالبة   حفظها الله

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته....

تتقدم لكم الباحثة سلوى سعيد باجابر/ بخالص الشكر والتقدير على قبولكم المشاركة في الدراسة بعنوان:" دور التعليم الإسلامي في تعزيز حقوق المرأة"، وذلك كمتطلب أساسي لنيل درجة الدكتوراة من قسم اللاهوت والأديان/ الدراسات الإسلامية من جامعة برمنغهام في المملكة المتحدة. وحيث أنكم أحد أفراد مجتمع الدراسة تشكر الباحثة لكم قبول المقابلة وتأمل التفضل بالإجابة على الأسئلة البيانات الخاصة بكم، علما بأن الإجابة لن تستخدم إلا في أغراض البحث العلمي ويتعامل معها بسرية تامة.

وتفضلوا سعادتكم بقبول وافر التحية والتقدير.

الباحثة	سلوى سعيد باجابر
البريد الإلكتروني	Sxb1481@student.bham.ac.uk
رقم الجوال	0504318509

Researcher Salwa Said Bajaber thanks you and appreciates your acceptance of participation in the study entitled: "The Role of Islamic Education in the Promotion of Women's Rights", as an essential requirement for a doctoral degree from the Department of Theology and Religions/Islamic Studies of the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Since you are a member of the study community, you thank the researcher for accepting the interview and hope to answer your data questions. The answers will only be used for scientific research and handled with complete confidentiality.

بيانات ومعلومات

أ- البطاقة الشخصية:

	الاسم
	العمر

الايميل	
وضع الطالبة الدراسي	☐ طالبة جامعية حاليا ☐ خريجة (عدد السنوات ....)

ب- الوضع الاجتماعي

حدد ي الحالة الاجتماعية من خلال الخيارات التالية

☐ عزباء

☐ متزوجة

☐ مطلقة

☐ أرملة

☐ غيره وضحي..............

ج- الوضع العائلي

عدد أفراد أسرة الطالبة: الذكور ( ) الإناث ( ).

ترتيبها في أسرتها: ( )

هل تعيش الطالبة مع والديها:

☐ نعم

☐ لا

إذا كانت الإجابة بلا يرجى التوضيح مع من ولماذا؟ ....

في حالة الطالبة المتزوجة: هل تعيش الطالبة مع زوجها:

☐ نعم

☐ لا

إذا كانت الإجابة بلا يرجى التوضيح لماذا؟ ....

د- الوضع الأسري الاجتماعي

حددي الحالة الأسرية الاجتماعية الأسرية من خلال الخيارات التالية

☐ أبوين وأبناء في بيت واحد

☐ أبوين منفصلين

☐ أم معلقة

☐ أب معدد

☐ مستقلة عن الأبوين

☐ غير ذلك ارجو التوضيح ....

هل هناك أي تاريخ أسري في التعدي على حق من حقوق المرأة؟

☐ لا

☐ نعم (.) من الأب   (.) من الأخوان   (.) غيرهم

كيف، أرجو التوضيح ....

و- الوضع التعليمي

تلقت الطالبة مراحل التعليم السابقة داخل المملكة

☐ نعم.

☐ لا

ارجو التوضيح

....

التخصص الجامعي: ....

● سبب اختيار التخصص:

☐ ليس علاقة بحقوق المرأة

☐ له علاقة بحقوق المرأة

أرجو التوضيح...

مستوى تعليم الأب خلال الخيارات التالية

☐ غير متعلم

☐ ابتدائي

☐ متوسط

☐ ثانوي

☐ جامعي وما فوق

مستوى تعليم الأم خلال الخيارات التالية

☐ غير متعلم

☐ ابتدائي

☐ متوسط

☐ ثانوي

☐ جامعي وما فوق

درس أحد الوالدين خارج المملكة:

☐ نعم.

☐ لا

ارجو التوضيح ....

The interview questions

Interview Q	
Sub-questions will contribute to answering this main question. Introduction • Do you believe that Saudi women are aware of their rights?	هل تعتقدين أن المرأة السعودية واعية بحقوقها؟ ما هي مبادئ حقوق المرأة؟ ما مدى أهمية تنمية وعي الطالبات بحقوق المرأة؟ لماذا؟ كيف؟

	هل تعتقدين أن التربية الإسلامية، مثل الثقافة الإسلامية، مصدر مهم لتوعية الطالبات بحقوقهن؟ لماذا؟
• What are the principles of women's rights?	
• How important is it to develop female students' awareness of women's rights? Why? How?	هل تعتقدين أن الثقافة الإسلامية كافية لزيادة وعي الطالبات بحقوقهن؟ لماذا/لما لا؟
• Do you think Islamic education, such as Islamic Culture, is a significant source for educating female students about their rights? Why?	
• Do you think Islamic Culture is sufficient to increase female students' awareness of their rights? Why/why not?	
•	
ICC	إلى أي مدى تغطي الثقافة الإسلامية مبادئ حقوق المرأة في إنتاج المعرفة والوعي؟
• To what extent does Islamic Culture cover the principles of women's rights to	ماذا علمتك الثقافة الإسلامية عن حقوق المرأة؟
	كيف تناقش الثقافة الإسلامية موضوع حقوق المرأة؟

produce knowledge and awareness? • What did Islamic Culture inform you about women's rights? • How does the Islamic Culture discuss the topic of women's rights? • What is the impact of the method of presenting women's rights topics in the Islamic Culture on producing knowledge and awareness? • What are the challenges associated with teaching and learning that might limit women's rights in Islamic Culture? • Does the topic of women's rights in the Islamic Culture	ما أثر أسلوب عرض موضوعات حقوق المرأة في الثقافة الإسلامية على إنتاج المعرفة والوعي؟ ما هي التحديات المرتبطة بالتعليم والتعلم والتي قد تحد من حقوق المرأة في الثقافة الإسلامية؟ هل يرتبط موضوع حقوق المرأة في الثقافة الإسلامية بالواقع الاجتماعي؟ كيف؟ هل تناقش الثقافة الإسلامية موضوع حقوق المرأة مع مراعاة السياق الإسلامي وسياق التطبيقات الواقعية للمرأة السعودية؟ هل تسلط الثقافة الإسلامية الضوء على الاختلافات الثقافية في مناقشة موضوع حقوق المرأة؟ كيف؟

<table>
<tr>
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هل يزود محتوى الثقافة الإسلامية طالبات الجامعات بالمهارات اللازمة للتعرف على مشاكل حقوق المرأة والبحث عن حلول بديلة؟

هل تعتقدين أن مادة الثقافة الإسلامية تتأثر بالأعراف الاجتماعية من حيث حقوق المرأة؟

إذا كانت الإجابة بالنفي ، فلماذا. إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، أي نوع من الأعراف الاجتماعية؟

هل تعتقدين أن الثقافة الإسلامية يمكن أن تتحدى مثل هذه الأعراف الاجتماعية فيما يتعلق بحقوق المرأة؟ كيف؟

هل تعتقدين أن الثقافة الإسلامية أدت إلى نقص الوعي بالحقوق ، وبالتالي السماح للمرأة السعودية بالبقاء مضطهدة في المجتمع السعودي؟

</td>
<td>

correlated with social reality? How?

- Does the Islamic Culture discuss the topic of women's rights with considering the Islamic context and the real-life applications context Saudi women?

- Does the Islamic Culture shade light on cultural differences in discussing the topic of women's rights? How?

- Does the Islamic Culture content equip university girl students with the skills to identify women's rights problems and seek alternative solutions?

- Do you think that Islamic Culture material is impacted by social norms in terms of women's rights?

- If no, why not. If yes, What kind of social norms?

</td>
</tr>
</table>

- Do you think that Islamic Culture can challenge such social norms in terms of women's rights? How? - Do you think that Islamic Culture led to a lack of awareness of rights, thus, allowing Saudi women to remain oppressed in Saudi society?	
Teachers: - Do you think that the Islamic Culture content along with teaching strategies equipped female university students understanding of their rights in accordance with the religious and social context? - If the curriculum is inadequate in covering	هل تعتقدين أن محتوى الثقافة الإسلامية واستراتيجيات التدريس زود الطالبات الجامعيات بفهم حقوقهن وفقا للسياق الديني والاجتماعي؟ إذا كان المنهج غير كاف في تغطية قضايا حقوق المرأة، مثل وضع القضية في سياقها الديني أو المجتمعي، أو ربطها بالواقع الاجتماعي، فهل تحاول المعلمة تعويض ذلك في الفصل؟ ما هي الاستراتيجيات والممارسات التربوية في التدريس المستخدمة في فصول الثقافة الإسلامية على سبيل المثال هل هي تلقين أم حوار أم عرض وغيرها؟ هل يمكنك مشاركة أي منها؟

women's rights issues, such as setting the issue in its religious or societal context, or associate it with social reality does the teacher try to compensate for this in class?	ما هي استراتيجيات التدريس في الفصول الدراسية التي تعتقدين أنها الأكثر فعالية لتدريس حقوق المرأة؟ لماذا؟ هل تعتقد أن النهج التعليمي التقليدي قادر على معالجة معظم القضايا الاجتماعية في السياق السعودي؟ ما هو تأثير هذه الاستراتيجيات على وعي طالبات الجامعات السعوديات بحقوقهن؟
• What are the educational strategies and practices in teaching used in the Islamic Culture classroom for example is it Indoctrination, dialogue or presentation and others? Could you share any of them? • Which classroom's teaching strategies do you think are most effective for teaching women's rights? why?	فيما يتعلق بمشاكل حقوق المرأة في السياق السعودي، كيف يمكنك تحفيز طلابك على حل مثل هذه القضايا؟ هل تعتقدين أن الاعتراف بالاختلافات الثقافية فيما يتعلق بحقوق المرأة قد يخدم في تعزيز حقوق المرأة؟ ما فائدة أن تكون طالبات الجامعات على دراية بمشاكل حقوق المرأة في سياقهن الاجتماعي؟ ما مدى فعالية وضع حقوق المرأة في سياقها من حيث زيادة وعي الطالبات بحقوقهن؟ هل تعتقدين أن الثقافة الإسلامية زودت طالبات الجامعات بالوعي بحقوقهن إلى الحد الذي يمكنهن من اتخاذ

• Do you think that the traditional educational approach able to address most social issues in Saudi context? • What is the impact of these strategies on the awareness of Saudi female university students of their rights? • In terms of women's rights problems in the Saudi context, how could you motivate your students to solve such issues? • Do you think that recognising cultural differences in terms of women's rights might serve in promoting women's rights?	قرارات تتجاوز الخيارات المتاحة المحدودة وتقييم الخيارات البديلة؟

• What is the benefit for female university students to be aware of women's rights problems in their social context? • How effective is contextualizing women's rights in terms of raising female students' awareness of their rights? • Do you think that the Islamic Culture equipped female university students with consciousness of their rights to the extent that they can make decisions beyond the limited available options and assess alternative options? •	

Students: o What is the benefit for female university students to be aware of women's rights problems in their social context? • What do you think about your teachers' methods in teaching women's rights topic? • Could you provide examples of teaching methods? • What is the impact of these strategies in providing Saudi female students with knowledge and awareness of their rights? • Do you think that Islamic Culture's female students can analyse and evaluate	ما فائدة أن تكون طالبات الجامعات على دراية بمشاكل حقوق المرأة في سياقهن الاجتماعي؟ ما رأيك في أساليب معلميكم في تدريس مادة حقوق المرأة؟ هل يمكنك تقديم أمثلة على طرق التدريس؟ ما هو أثر هذه الاستراتيجيات في تزويد الطالبات السعوديات بالمعرفة والوعي بحقوقهن؟ هل تعتقدين أن طالبات الثقافة الإسلامية يمكنهن تحليل وتقييم حقوق المرأة في السياق الإسلامي؟ هل تعتقدين أن بعض الممارسات التعليمية أدت إلى نقص الوعي بالحقوق ، وبالتالي السماح للمرأة السعودية بالبقاء مضطهدة في المجتمع السعودي؟

women's rights in the Islamic context?	
• Do you think that some of teaching practices led to a lack of awareness of rights, thus, allowing Saudi women to remain oppressed in Saudi society?	كيف يفكر المعلمون والطالبات في إمكانات الثقافة الإسلامية في زيادة وعي المرأة بحقوقها؟ ما هي المصادر الأساسية البديلة لتعلم / تعليم حقوق المرأة؟ ما هي الاستراتيجيات والممارسات التعليمية المناسبة في تعلم / تدريس حقوق المرأة في فصل الثقافة الإسلامية لزيادة الوعي بحقوق المرأة؟ إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن الثقافة الإسلامية يمكن أن تزيد من الوعي بحقوق المرأة وتدعم المرأة والتغيير الاجتماعي
• How do teachers and students think about the potential of the Islamic Culture in raising women's awareness of their rights? • What are the alternative essential Sources to learn/teach women's rights?	بشكل عام؟ بعد دراسة أو تدريس منهج الثقافة هل انت قادرة على، المشاركة بنجاح في مناقشة أو نقد يتعلق بحقوق المرأة في الإسلام؟

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• What are the appropriate educational strategies and practices in learning/teaching women's rights in the Islamic Culture classroom to raise awareness of women's rights? • To what extent do you think that Islamic Culture can increase awareness of women's rights and support women and social change in general? • After studying or teaching ICC, are you able to successfully engage in a discussion or criticism related to women's rights in Islam?	

Appendix 5: Researcher's memo

ourth week

Salwa Bajabir (PhD Dept of Theol + Relig FT)
To: Katherine Brown (Theology and Religion)
Thu 02/03/2023 20:07

The fourth week of my fieldwork had passed. My work was far less than usual due to suffering from Covid. My energy was very low; however, I managed to transcribe two interviews. I hope to restart my work more actively next week.

Katherine Brown (Theology and Religion)
To: Salwa Bajabir (PhD Dept of Theol + Relig FT)
Thu 02/03/2023 20:25

Thank you Salwa. Look after your health

Sent from Outlook for iOS

Salwa Bajabir (PhD Dept of Theol + Relig FT)
To: Katherine Brown (Theology and Religion)
Thu 16/03/2023 23:11

After transcription, I found some unclear points in each interview. Therefore, I decided to provide the participants with transcribed interview scripts for their verification.

I asked Each participant to clarify the highlighted sentences, and I gave them two weeks to verify their transcribed interviews. At this stage, each participant was given a choice to delete or add any information.

In addition, this week, the facilitation mission letter was sent to me to establish the teachers' interviews. I'm glad I conducted a zoom interview with the first teacher this week. I await the others to respond to my email about their convenient interview time.

Salwa Bajabir (PhD Dept of Theol + Relig FT)
To: Katherine Brown (Theology and Religion)

Fri 10/03/2023 11:22

I was busy transcribing the students' interviews. Next week I will complete transcription; in addition, I will attend two online workshops. The first is about thematic analysis, and the other is about writing a thesis.

Salwa Bajabir (PhD Dept of Theol + Relig FT)
To: Katherine Brown (Theology and Religion)

Tue 18/04/2023 05:46

Dear Dr Katherine,
I apologize for delay sending.

I had scheduled interviews with two teachers; one completed the interview, while the other postponed it until after Ramadan. I believe it will be easier than doing interviews during Ramadan.

Consequently, I started writing in the methodology chapter. I began it three months ago but did not finish it.

In the next two weeks, I anticipate focusing on writing in addition to conducting the final interview and then returning to the United Kingdom.

My regards
Salwa

Appendix 6: Identification and indexing

Revised Frameworks and coding

Catagories/Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Understanding and awareness	• Social norms • Providing knowledge of women's rights. • The ICC content • Contextual the concepts of women's rights • Cultural differences	الدائرة الأولى: السياق المجتمعي: • صوره وآثاره • مفاهيم لها ارتباط بالوعي (الحق، القوامة،طاعة الزوج، الخلع ،الطلاق...) • عرض الاختلافات الثقافية بين المجتمعات • العدل والمساواة • الذكورية والنسوية • المحتوى • الانطباع العام على المنهج • هيكلة المواضيع و اللغة المستخدمة
	• Islamic education and women's rights	الدائرة الثانية: مؤسسة التعليم:

Concepts and contexts of women's rights	- Analysing and deconstructing social reality - Assessing the interpersonal relationships. - Challenges - Outcome expectations	- دورالتعليم الإسلامي في رفع الوعي بحقوق المرأة - ربط المحتوى بالواقع - رفع الوعي بمفاهيم حقوق المرأة - العلاقات والنظام الاسري - التحديات الفكرية - التوقعات العلمية - تعليم بناء المواقف - تأسيس معنى السلام
Education Strategies	- Dialogue - Exchange knowledge - Identifying agents - Taking actions Problem-solving - Identifying problems	- الدائرة الثالثة: المعلم - الاعتراف بالمشكلات المجتمعية - طريقة التدريس المتبعة :الحوار، الوعظ والتلقين. - الآراء الشخصية - الربط بالواقع

The third Framework

Catadories/Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Awareness and knowledge of women's rights	•Measuring awareness: professors and students response •The ICC and the knowledge of women's rights in Islam •The reformation and the awareness/confusion •The ICC's Role in Women's Rights Awareness	•The impact of women's new laws on Gender Relations •The Impact of Fatwa Changes on Awareness •Promoting Women's Rights Awareness.
	•The first theme: The ICC Content:	•Language/ Structuring
Building opinions and attitudes	•The second theme: Multifaceted Challenges in Education Context:	• Challenges related to the dominance of social norm: • Factors affecting the provision of knowledge

	1. Socio-cultural Restrictions Challenges.	of women's rights in Islamic Education • Reflecting Saudi social context in the ICC content: • The challenges related to the nonrecognition of social problems
Educational practices	Intellectual bias challenges	• The biased presentation style favouring men's interests: • Selective quoting of religious texts to suit men's interests: • The societal context's impact on the professors themselves
	3. Critical Awareness Challenge	• linking the ICC content with social reality:

		• Bridging the Gap between Education and Legal Practices on Women's Rights
	4. Pedagogical Challenges	
	•The third theme: Concepts related to women's rights awareness. •	Islamic concepts/ Imported concepts
	The fourth theme: The practical outcome expectations:	• The Outcomes of Islamic Education in the Saudi Education System in Producing Knowledge about Women's Rights: • The Impact of Saudi Islamic Curricula on

		Women's Rights Education • Building well-informed positions and opinions • Peace in interpersonal relationships

Appendix 7: Charting

Appendix 8: Mapping

Appendix 9: Journal reflexive

سلوى ، كوني جيداً ... الحفاظ على كياد

- التأثير عن النظ لبث برامة
- عدم صيانة الحديث مو ستأجير
- حله ساعات الاصام
- حلها النقشه
- تحفيز الكبير بأن شغل
- العهم دسي محكم ولنتات،

Appendix 10: Suras and Verses

The Sura	The Verse	الآيات من القرآن الكريم
2	30	"وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۖ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾"
2	31	"وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾"
2	187	" هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۚ"
2	228	﴿٢٢٨﴾ "" وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ
2	231	" وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ ۚ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ"
2	232	" وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَن يَنكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ"
2	233	" وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ ۖ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَن يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ ۚ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَّهُ بِوَلَدِهِ ۚ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَٰلِكَ ۗ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَن تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا ۗ"

		وَإِنْ أَرَدتُّمْ أَن تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُم مَّا آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٣﴾"
2	237	﴿٢٣٧﴾"" وَلَا تَنسَوُا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ
4	1	" يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾"
4	3	" وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُم مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ ۖ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ﴿٣﴾"
4	4	" وَآتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۚ فَإِن طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَن شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَّرِيئًا ﴿٤﴾""
4	19	" يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَن تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرْهًا ۖ وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَن يَأْتِينَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ فَإِن كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾"
4	20	" وَإِنْ أَرَدتُّمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۚ أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٢٠﴾"
4	21	" وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنكُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٢١﴾""
4	34	" الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ"

4	35	" وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِن يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾
4	124	" وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾"
4	129	وَلَن تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَن تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ۚ وَإِن تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾"
4	135	" يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۖ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا ۚ وَإِن تَلْوُوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا"﴿١٣٥﴾
5	8	" يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۚ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ"﴿٨﴾
6	127	﴿١٢٧﴾"" لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلَامِ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ
6	165	" وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ"﴿١٦٥﴾
16	90	۞ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ "" يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ"﴿٩٠﴾

16	97	مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ "
17	70	وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٧٠﴾ "
20	114	" وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾ "
30	21	وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ "
39	9	" قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٩﴾ "
49	9	" وَأَقْسِطُوا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾ "
49	13	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾ "
51	56	" وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾ "
59	23	هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ "

65	1	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ ۖ لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِن بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا أَن يَأْتِينَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَن يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ ۚ لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ أَمْرًا ﴿١﴾
65	6	أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنتُم مِّن وُجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ ۚ وَإِن كُنَّ أُولَاتِ حَمْلٍ فَأَنفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ ۖ وَأْتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُم بِمَعْرُوفٍ ۖ وَإِن تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسَتُرْضِعُ لَهُ أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٦﴾
65	7	لِيُنفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ ۖ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ ۚ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا ۚ سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا ﴿٧﴾

Appendix 11: MAXQDA certificate

MAXQDA
The Art of Data Analysis

Certificate

Salwa Bajabir

has successfully attended the workshops

Coaching and Starter Workshops – MAXQDA 2024

where the following exercises were taught and practiced in MAXQDA:

- Create and prepare projects
- Create codes
- Code text segments
- Retrieve coded segments
- Create and manage memos
- Analysis and visualisation
- AI Assist

Online on October 19, October 25, November 16, December 2, and December 19, 2023

Alaa Alkhadeer

Professional MAXQDA Trainer