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CO-EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: REVIEW AND WAY FORWARD FOR A SUITABLE MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Co-education as an educational system is widely adopted in almost all developed countries as well as in many of the underdeveloped nations. It plays a pulsating role in shaping modern societies by promoting human development, developing social skills, promoting understanding between genders, inspiring respect for assorted viewpoints and helping in advancement across diverse fields. Despite its growing acceptance, concerns have been raised by certain societal, religious segments and educational experts regarding its overuse without considering contextual, cultural, and religious differences. There is an ongoing debate about whether the co-education model is universally suitable, or it requires alternative models or needs some minor changes in the existing model in religious societies and other contemporary communities of the world. This study considers the views of contemporary supporters of enlightened moderation who are fully in favor of co-education. It also examines the concept of co-education through a religious lens of different religions, specifically referencing the Holy Quran, the Holy Prophet () Sunna / Hadith, and the opinions of well-known Islamic scholars who either present a fully a separate educational system for males and females or supporting a modified suitable co-educational system that align with Islamic principles. The primary objectives of the study were to assess perceptions of co-education within an Islamic framework, explore its social and academic impact on male and female students, and propose a culturally appropriate and religiously acceptable educational model for both male and female. The study employed a descriptive research design using a mixed-methods approach that combined in-depth study of literature review, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Due to scarcity of resources, the study was delimited to educational institutions in Islamabad and Rawalpindi regions. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. The data was gathered from educational institutions including male and female students, their teachers and parents as well as administrators of the renowned educational institutions. Suitable statistical tools mean & percentages were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that co-education has both advantages and disadvantages. Some literature reviews, and findings of the research tools of the study support it in isolation. Also, data analysis of some respondents advocates it as it fosters gender understanding, competitiveness, and shared learning. Whereas some also raises concerns regarding social distractions, cultural and religious sensitivities, and challenges for female students. Some findings show mixed results and support combine male and female education with certain acceptable conditions. After analysis, it was found that co-education has pros and cons and needs a suitable and sustainable system to fulfill the contemporary social, cultural and religious aspects. Based on these insights, the study offers some recommendations to address existing challenges and ensure a more effective, respectful, and inclusive co-educational environment which suits both male and female students. It offers valuable implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, and institutional heads who seek to harmonize modern educational practices with religious values. Future research is encouraged to explore this complex topic further, particularly across different society in general and Islamic society in particular.

Keywords

Co-education, Religious perspective, religious scholars, Contemporary perspective, Suitable model, The Holy Quran, The Holy Prophets ()

Introduction

Education plays a key role in all fields of life. It is necessary for socio-economic development of nations, acting as a foundation for personal growth, societal transformation, enhance inter-harmony, and national progress. Among various educational models, co-education-where male and female students are educated together has gained prominence globally due to its perceived benefits such as enhanced socialization, reduced gender biases, and improved academic competitiveness (Shaikh, 2013; Hussain & Salfi, 2011). Many developed countries have embraced co-education as a standard system, viewing it as a catalyst for promoting equality and preparing students for real-world environments. However, the applicability and suitability of co-education are not universally accepted, especially in conservative and religious societies where cultural norms, gender dynamics, and religious values influence educational practices. In Pakistan, a country founded on Islamic principles, the concept of co-education remains a subject of ongoing debate. While some segments of society support co-education as a means of modernization, others argue for gender-segregated education to maintain religious and cultural integrity (Ali, 2012; Qureshi, 2019). Islamic literature, including the Quran and Sunnah, along with the interpretations of respected Islamic scholars, provides their own views on the permissibility and structure of co-education. In the modern world of innovations, some scholars advocate for a blended model that allows interaction within defined moral and ethical boundaries, while others emphasize complete segregation to uphold modesty and prevent social complications (Khan, 2017; Farooq, 2015). In recent years, voices aligned with enlightened moderation have attempted to reconcile Islamic teachings with contemporary educational demands, proposing contextually relevant and faith-sensitive models of co-education. Despite numerous discussions, empirical research examining the current state of co-education in Pakistan particularly from an Islamic perspective remains limited. This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring the perceptions of students, educators, and religious scholars in the Islamabad and Rawalpindi regions. It further identifies the challenges faced by both genders in co-educational settings and proposes a model that is socially, culturally, and religiously appropriate for Pakistan. This research is timely and significant as it provides insights into how Islamic values can coexist with modern education practices. By drawing on both traditional Islamic thought and contemporary perspectives, the study aims to contribute to policy formation and institutional development in Pakistan's educational sector. Islam highly values learning, as reflected in the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in Surah Al-Alaq, which commands "Iqra" (اقْرَأْ), highlighting the divine importance of reading and acquiring knowledge. Both men and women in the early Muslim community actively engaged in education. However, with the rise of modern educational systems and co-educational institutions, discussions have emerged about their alignment with Islamic principles, particularly regarding modesty (حِيا), gender interaction (اِحْتِلاط), and public morality (ضابطة اخلاق). On one side, supporters of co-education argue that the Quran and Sunnah emphasize the universality of the pursuit of knowledge, the spiritual and intellectual equality of men and women, and the practical necessity of interaction for societal progress. On the other side, critics express concerns that co-education may create situations that compromise the Islamic principles of modesty, lead to inappropriate interactions and expose students to undue temptation. This paper endeavors to examine these issues in depth by first reviewing Quranic Ayat, then analyzing relevant Aḥadith, and finally outlining the juristic opinions of the four great

schools of Sunni jurisprudence. In doing so, the goal is to present a balanced picture of the textual and scholarly evidence that informs the contemporary debate on co-education in Islam. The Islamic teachings place great importance on knowledge and scholars. The Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasized the high status of those who share their knowledge with others and the great reward they receive from Allah. This paper does not claim to be the final word on the subject but aims to provide a balanced foundation for further scholarly discussion. It is important to note that many of the scriptural texts do not explicitly mention co-education as a modern concept. Instead, arguments are derived from general principles on the pursuit of knowledge, the status and dignity of both genders, guidelines on modesty, and the regulation of mixed gatherings. Scholars have long debated the practical application of these principles, and our discussion reflects a range of interpretative positions. This research paper is divided into three major sections. It includes, an analysis of Quranic verses (Ayat) presenting arguments both in favour of and against co-education, with complete Arabic texts, English translations, and references. A presentation of authentic Prophetic traditions (Aḥadith) from the Sunnah that similarly offer arguments in favour of co-education and otherwise, including full Arabic texts and references and an overview of the positions of the four great Sunni jurisprudential schools (Fuqahā-e ‘Arba‘a: Hanafī, Maliki, Shafī‘i, and Hanbali) regarding the study. It also contains analysis of contemporary societies and their co-education system. Lastly, it also analyzes prominent educationists, teachers, students, and their parents’ view on co-education

Problem Statement

Despite the widespread adoption of co-education systems across the globe, including many Muslim-majority societies, its universal applicability remains contested due to religious, cultural, and societal concerns. While proponents highlight benefits such as improved gender understanding, academic competitiveness, and collaborative learning, critics particularly within Islamic communities raise concerns rooted in religious teachings, apprehensions over modesty, social distractions, and potential adverse impacts on female students. There exists a significant gap in reconciling modern educational practices with Islamic values, as limited empirical research addresses the perceptions of co-education within an Islamic framework, especially in the context of varying interpretations of the Quran, Hadith, and opinions of Islamic scholars. Furthermore, there is insufficient exploration of contextually appropriate models that respect religious sensitivities while promoting inclusive and effective learning environments. This study seeks to investigate these divergent perspectives and provide a balanced and suitable model, evidence-based understanding of co-education's suitability in Muslim societies, particularly in Pakistan and others in general.

Contribution of the Study to the Existing Literature

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of literature by bridging the gap between contemporary educational practices and Islamic educational philosophy, particularly in the context of co-education in Pakistan. While previous studies have explored the general perceptions of co-education or examined its social impact, limited research has holistically analyzed the concept from a religious, cultural, and academic standpoint grounded in Islamic teachings and the lived realities of students and educators in Pakistan. One of the key contributions of this study is its integrative approach, combining insights from the Quran, Hadith, and opinions of classical and modern Islamic scholars with empirical data gathered from students,

teachers, and religious figures. This blend of qualitative and quantitative data enhances the depth of analysis and offers a comprehensive understanding of how co-education is perceived and practiced in a society where religion plays a central role in public life. Moreover, the study moves beyond binary arguments for or against co-education and instead proposes a nuanced, context-sensitive educational model that seeks to balance Islamic principles with the practical needs of modern education. By including the voices of both male and female students, as well as educationists and religious scholars, the study ensures a holistic perspective that can guide policymakers, curriculum developers, and institutional administrators. Additionally, this research contributes to the evolving discourse on educational reform in Muslim-majority countries. It provides a framework for other scholars interested in examining co-education within faith-based contexts and encourages further academic inquiry into how religious values can coexist with global educational trends. In summary, this study adds to the limited but growing literature that seeks to reconcile Islamic educational ideals with contemporary pedagogical practices. It offers practical recommendations, theoretical insights, and a faith-sensitive model of co-education that can serve as a foundation for future research and policy development.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the concept of co-education through the lens of Islamic teachings, including references from the Quran, Hadith, scholarly interpretations and contemporary religious societies.
- To investigate the views of students, teachers, parents and educational administrators, regarding the appropriateness and impact of co-education in Pakistan.
- To develop a culturally responsive and religiously acceptable co-education model suitable for the overall Muslims in general and specific in Pakistani educational context.

Research Questions

- How is co-education addressed in Islamic sources such as the Quran and Hadith, and what are the prevailing views of Islamic scholars and contemporary religious societies on its permissibility?
- What are the perspectives of students, teachers, parents and educational administrators on the effectiveness and suitability of co-education in Pakistan?
- What possible modifications or alternative models can be proposed to ensure that co-education aligns with Islamic values while meeting contemporary educational needs?

Literature Review

The concept of **co-education**-the integrated education of male and female students within the same institutional settings-has a long history in the Western world. It is widely regarded as a means to promote **gender equality**, **social cohesion**, and **collaborative learning**. Western educational theorists and psychologists have contributed extensively to the debate on the **benefits**, **challenges**, and **best practices** related to co-education, offering a spectrum of perspectives that inform the ongoing discourse globally, including in countries like Pakistan. Co-education became more widespread in the 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe and North America, largely influenced by movements for **women's rights** and **universal education**. The model was seen as a **progressive step** toward dismantling gender barriers and promoting equal access to education (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). Early proponents argued that co-education would foster mutual understanding, reduce gender stereotypes, and prepare students for real-world, mixed-gender environments. **Constructivist theories** (e.g., Vygotsky, Piaget) support collaborative learning environments, suggesting that

learning is enhanced through social interaction. Co-educational settings, according to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, provide broader contexts for cognitive development through peer collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, **John Dewey's** philosophy of experiential education emphasized democratic learning spaces where both genders contribute equally to the learning process, reinforcing the idea of co-education as an instrument of social progress (Dewey, 1916). Research from Western contexts suggests that co-education can foster; **Improved interpersonal skills** (Jackson, 2002), **Greater gender sensitivity**, and **Higher levels of self-confidence** in both boys and girls (Younger & Warrington, 2006). However, some studies raise concerns about **gender-based classroom dynamics**, where one gender may dominate discussions or teacher attention (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). These findings indicate that while co-education can be beneficial, it requires **teacher awareness, gender-sensitive pedagogy, and institutional support** to ensure equity.

In Western academia, there has been significant research comparing **single-sex** and **co-educational** systems. While co-education is the dominant model in most Western countries, some studies suggest that single-sex education may benefit certain students, especially in minimizing **gender stereotypes** in subject choices (e.g., girls in STEM or boys in languages) (Sax, 2005; Riordan, 1990). However, the consensus leans toward the idea that **well-managed co-educational environments** produce equally strong academic and social outcomes when compared to single-sex schools (Pahlke, Hyde, & Allison, 2014). Western scholars also emphasize the importance of **cultural relevance** in education. While co-education may be effective in secular, egalitarian societies, its direct application in more **conservative or religiously inclined cultures** (like Pakistan) may require contextual adaptation. This idea aligns with the **critical pedagogy approach** (Freire, 1970), which advocates for education systems that reflect the cultural and ethical values of the communities they serve. Western literature on co-education supports the model as a means of promoting **gender equality, social integration, and academic collaboration**. However, it also recognizes that **co-education is not a one-size-fits-all model**. Successful implementation depends on careful consideration of **social norms, classroom practices, and student needs**. For societies like Pakistan, where cultural and religious values play a significant role in educational policy, insights from the Western model can be adapted—not simply adopted to create **inclusive yet respectful learning environments** that align with local expectations. Co-education is widely discussed in modern educational discourse as a catalyst for fostering equality, mutual respect, and real-world preparedness. Rooted in theories of social learning, inclusivity, and 21st-century skills development, modern perspectives advocate for educational models that prepare learners for diverse, collaborative environments. As societies evolve toward more inclusive and progressive frameworks, the co-education model has come under both support and scrutiny within modern educational paradigms. One of the core arguments for co-education in modern times is its alignment with the promotion of 21st-century skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Co-educational settings simulate real-world environments where individuals of all genders must work together, fostering mutual understanding and preparing students for future workplaces. Modern educational institutions are expected to build social and emotional competencies, and co-education offers a platform to cultivate emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills (CASEL, 2020). According to the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), education should go beyond content mastery to prepare students for life and work in a globally interconnected world something that co-education, when well-managed,

supports effectively. Modern pedagogy emphasizes constructivist learning environments, where learners construct knowledge through experience and interaction (Bruner, 1996). Co-education supports this by encouraging diverse perspectives, promoting peer learning, and nurturing a culture of shared inquiry. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) also reinforces the value of social interaction in learning, which co-educational classrooms naturally enable (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, cooperative learning strategies, a hallmark of modern instructional practices, are often more dynamic in gender-mixed settings, where diverse viewpoints enrich classroom discussions (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Contemporary education policies increasingly emphasize gender equity as a fundamental goal. Co-education is considered a practical approach to dismantling gender stereotypes and fostering an inclusive mindset from an early age (UNESCO, 2017). Scholars such as Francis & Skelton (2005) argue that while challenges exist in co-educational settings, they also offer an opportunity to challenge and reframe traditional gender roles through curriculum design and teacher intervention. However, gender-sensitive pedagogy is crucial. Without deliberate efforts to address hidden curricula and gender bias, co-education may reinforce rather than reduce inequalities (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Thus, teacher training and school culture play vital roles in ensuring the success of co-educational systems in modern settings. Research shows that student engagement increases in environments where students feel respected, valued, and safe. Co-educational classrooms can promote positive peer interactions, especially when supported by inclusive policies and counseling services (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009). However, studies also indicate that adolescents may experience peer pressure, harassment, or identity struggles in co-ed settings if not managed carefully (American Psychological Association, 2007). Therefore, modern perspectives stress the need for strong guidance and discipline frameworks alongside co-education. The rise of blended and digital learning environments has further expanded the scope of co-education. Online classrooms naturally promote mixed-gender collaboration, providing a more level playing field for participation and expression (Means et al., 2010). Modern educational technology encourages inclusive dialogue and peer interaction, making co-education more adaptable and accessible in the digital age. From a modern educational standpoint, co-education is seen as a progressive, inclusive model that prepares students for collaborative, gender-diverse environments. While it has the potential to enhance learning outcomes, promote equity, and develop social competencies, its effectiveness hinges on thoughtful implementation, teacher training, and sensitivity to socio-cultural contexts. For countries like Pakistan, modern insights can be blended with cultural values to develop a hybrid model that upholds both educational excellence and societal acceptability. Co-education, the practice of educating male and female students together, has been a subject of considerable debate in Islamic societies. The issue gains heightened significance in countries like Pakistan, where religion, culture, and education are deeply intertwined. While modern education systems often promote co-education as a means of fostering gender equality and effective social integration, the Islamic perspective offers a more nuanced view that varies based on interpretations of religious texts and scholarly opinions.

Literature available on internet reveal that mainstream Christian denominations, including Catholicism and Protestantism, largely endorse co-education. This support is grounded in the belief in the spiritual and moral equality of all people. Galatians 3:28 emphasizes that in Christ, "there is neither male nor female," suggesting that education should not be restricted based on gender. Christian schools and universities around the world often practice co-education, asserting that it fosters

mutual respect, collaboration, and understanding between genders. Some conservative Christian communities, such as the Amish and certain Evangelical sects, are cautious about co-education. They argue that mixed-gender settings, especially during adolescence, may compromise moral values and lead to inappropriate interactions. These groups often prefer single-gender schooling to reinforce traditional gender roles and avoid moral temptation. Hinduism, particularly in its modern form, supports co-education. Ancient texts like the *Rigveda* mention learned women such as Gargi and Maitreyi, indicating that women were involved in scholarly pursuits. In modern India and other Hindu-majority regions, co-education is widely accepted and encouraged as a means of promoting gender equality. The emphasis in Hinduism on the pursuit of *vidya* (knowledge) for all supports the notion that educational opportunities should not be divided along gender lines. Orthodox interpretations may view co-education with suspicion, especially in conservative communities where traditional gender roles are strongly emphasized. Some conservative Hindus argue that co-education may distract students from studies and contradict ideals of modesty and decorum. Thus, they advocate gender-segregated education, especially in secondary and higher education. Buddhism fundamentally supports the idea of equal access to education for all, regardless of gender. The Buddha allowed women to join the monastic community and study the Dharma, a groundbreaking act in the historical context. Most Buddhist-majority countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Japan have no religious restrictions on co-education, and many educational institutions are co-educational. While Buddhism is generally open to co-education, traditional monastic rules (as outlined in the Vinaya Pitaka) encourage physical separation of monks and nuns to prevent attachment and maintain focus on spiritual development. These rules do not directly oppose co-education in secular contexts but do reflect a more cautious attitude within religious institutions. Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism support co-education, viewing it as a means of fostering equality and mutual understanding. These communities often run co-educational schools where boys and girls learn both secular and religious subjects together. The emphasis is on creating inclusive educational environments that reflect contemporary values of gender equality. Orthodox Judaism generally favors gender-segregated education, especially in religious instruction. Based on interpretations of Talmudic law and the importance of modesty, Orthodox communities argue that co-education could lead to moral distractions and compromise religious values. Boys and girls are often taught separately, particularly after early childhood. Sikhism strongly supports the education of both boys and girls and promotes gender equality in all spheres of life. The Sikh Gurus emphasized the equal status of women, and Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, challenged gender discrimination. Sikh institutions, including many schools and colleges in Punjab and abroad, commonly practice co-education. The principle of equality is central to Sikhism, as stated in Guru Granth Sahib: “*In the woman, man is conceived; to the woman he is born.*” (Guru Granth Sahib, Ang 473). Sikhism does not doctrinally oppose co-education. However, in rare cases, certain conservative communities may prefer single-gender schooling for cultural, not religious, reasons. These preferences are usually influenced more by regional or familial traditions than Sikh theological teachings.

The debate surrounding co-education in Islamic societies, particularly in Pakistan, continues to generate considerable academic interest. The discourse largely revolves around the compatibility of mixed-gender educational settings with Islamic values and societal norms. Muhammad Wahaj Khan (2014), in his article *Co-Education in Islam*, presents a religiously grounded argument against co-education.

He draws extensively from the Qur'an and Hadith to highlight the importance Islam places on modesty, gender segregation, and appropriate interaction between men and women. Khan posits that the Islamic framework does not support co-education as it may lead to moral decline, distraction in learning, and social challenges. His stance suggests that a gender-segregated education system aligns more faithfully with Islamic teachings. Supporting this religiously informed perspective, Shahid Iqbal et al. (2023), in their study on *Obstacles to Co-Education in Pakistan*, identify a mix of cultural conservatism, patriarchal values, and religious beliefs as the primary barriers to implementing co-education effectively. Their literature-based analysis reveals that in many parts of Pakistan, especially rural areas, co-education is perceived as a threat to cultural and moral values. Consequently, girls' education is disproportionately affected due to parental fears about mixed-gender environments. Asia Khatoun and colleagues (2023) broaden the lens by examining the broader Muslim world in their paper *The Impact of Islam as a Religion Regarding Co-Education and Gender Equality in Muslim Countries*. They discuss how interpretations of Islamic teachings influence policies and public opinion on gender integration in educational settings. While acknowledging that Islam encourages education for all, the authors point out that gender mixing is often viewed with suspicion and is subject to cultural interpretations of religious texts, which can limit women's access to equal educational opportunities. From a structural and reformative viewpoint, Noman Khalid et al. offer a comparative review of the prevailing education system versus the Islamic education system. Their study argues for educational reforms that align with Islamic values, such as curriculum Islamization and gender segregation. They emphasize that adopting such reforms can create a more spiritually and morally coherent educational environment for Muslim students, reflecting the holistic goals of Islamic education. On the other hand, Gulfam Hassan et al. (2022) take a more empirical and student-centered approach in their research *How Do Students Perceive Co-Education in Universities of The Punjab-Pakistan?* Their findings reveal a dichotomy in students' perceptions. While many students acknowledge that co-education enhances academic competition and interpersonal skills, concerns remain about adherence to Islamic ethical conduct. This suggests that while some university students are open to co-education, they still expect it to operate within Islamic moral boundaries. Collectively, these studies highlight that the co-education system in Pakistan is viewed through a complex interplay of religion, culture, and modernity. The religious critique often stems from the perceived erosion of Islamic moral principles in mixed-gender settings, while cultural conservatism further entrenches resistance to the system. At the same time, some empirical evidence indicates a gradual shift in student perspectives, especially in urban areas, where co-education is seen as academically beneficial but ethically sensitive.

Islamic Perspective on the Co-education System

Islam emphasizes the importance of modesty, respect, and gender boundaries in public and private interactions. Verses from the Qur'an provide general guidelines for male-female interaction. For example: *Surah An-Nur (24:30–31) commands believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty. Surah Al-Ahzab (33:59) advises women to draw their outer garments around themselves to be recognized and not harassed.* These verses have often been interpreted by scholars to support gender segregation in various public settings, including education. However, others interpret these verses as promoting ethical conduct rather than absolute

separation. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established an inclusive approach to education. While educational sessions in mosques were generally gender-sensitive, women were not excluded from acquiring knowledge. According to Hadith: “*Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim*” (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith 224). Notably, Aisha (RA), one of the Prophet’s wives, was a prominent scholar and teacher for both men and women, suggesting that Islam encourages female education and acknowledges the role of women as educators. However, teaching and learning were conducted within culturally appropriate and respectful environments. Islamic scholars have offered divergent views on co-education. Traditional scholars often discourage mixed-gender education beyond a certain age due to the risk of moral corruption (fitnah) and emphasize the need for separate spaces to preserve modesty and prevent distractions. Maulana Maududi, a renowned Islamic scholar, supported women’s education but emphasized that it should not compromise Islamic ethics and social responsibilities. In contrast, modernist scholars like Fazlur Rahman and Javed Ahmad Ghamidi argue for a more contextual interpretation, suggesting that co-education is permissible if Islamic values of decency and respect are maintained. The idea of “Enlightened Moderation”, introduced by former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, attempted to reconcile Islamic principles with modernity. Proponents of this view argue for co-education with safeguards, such as proper dress codes, ethical behavior, and institutional monitoring. Scholars from Islamic universities in countries like Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia have also endorsed gender-inclusive education models that adhere to Islamic decorum. Research has shown that in Pakistani co-educational institutions, female students often experience challenges such as: Social anxiety and discomfort, Hesitancy in class participation, Gender-based discrimination, and Lack of gender-sensitive facilities (Farooq & Shah, 2008). These issues are often cited by critics of co-education who argue for either gender-segregated schooling or modified co-educational environments based on Islamic ethics. The Islamic perspective on co-education is not monolithic. While the core principles emphasize modesty and respect, interpretations vary across traditional and modernist scholars. The Qur’an and Hadith do not explicitly prohibit co-education but advocate ethical behavior and social boundaries. In contemporary contexts, many scholars and policymakers argue for a contextual, balanced approach that allows co-education within an Islamic ethical framework. This study contributes to this ongoing discourse by evaluating the model of co-education practiced in Pakistan and proposing a suitable model grounded in Islamic principles and modern educational needs.

Importance of Education in Islam (for both men and women): Islam strongly emphasizes the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge for both men and women, as reflected in the Quranic verse:

﴿مَنْ عَمِلْ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

“Whoever does righteous deeds whether a man or a woman while being a true believer in Islamic Monotheism, We will surely grant them a good and fulfilling life in this world, with dignity, contentment, and lawful sustenance. And in the Hereafter, We will certainly reward them according to the best of their actions, granting them Paradise”.

This verse establishes the principle of gender equality in terms of righteous deeds and rewards, which undoubtedly includes the pursuit of knowledge. Since righteousness and good deeds stem from knowledge, it becomes evident that education is equally

significant for both men and women in Islam.

Education as an Obligation for Both Genders: Islam does not differentiate between men and women when it comes to seeking knowledge. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

{عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ وَوَأَضَعُ الْعِلْمَ عِنْدَ غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ كَمَقْلَدِ الْخَنَازِيرِ الْجَوْهَرَ وَاللُّؤْلُؤَ وَالذَّهَبَ}

Anas ibn Malik reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim. As for the one who shares knowledge with those who are unworthy of it, it is like placing pearls, gold, and precious gems before swine." (Ibn Majah:224).

This Hadith further supports the Quranic principle that men and women have an equal right and responsibility to pursue education. Ignorance is considered a barrier to righteousness, and education serves as the foundation for moral, intellectual, and spiritual development. Therefore, depriving women of education contradicts Islamic teachings. This means that some knowledge is required for every individual Muslim, while other types of knowledge are a communal responsibility. The essential knowledge that every Muslim must learn includes what is necessary to practice their faith correctly. Beyond that, further knowledge such as deeper religious understanding and teaching others is a communal duty. If some people take on this role, the rest are not held accountable for it. Allah Almighty says in the Quran:

{وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ}

"It is not appropriate for all the believers to go out to battle at the same time. Rather, from every group among them, some should stay behind to gain a deep understanding of the religion, so they can teach and warn their people when they return, in order that they may become mindful and cautious".

This verse (Surah At-Tawbah 9:122) highlights the balance between two essential duties in Islam: Striving in the path of Allah (Jihad) and acquiring religious knowledge (Ilm). It establishes an important principle that not all believers should engage in battle simultaneously. Instead, a portion of the community should dedicate themselves to deepening their understanding of the faith and conveying it to others. The verse in question uses the term "المؤمنون" (the believers), which in classical Arabic is in the masculine plural form. However, in Arabic grammar the masculine plural is commonly used as a generic form to refer to groups that include both men and women. Therefore, despite its form, the term is understood to encompass all true believers rather than indicating a restriction to one gender. In this ayah, the use of "المؤمنون" is a reflection of Arabic grammatical norms rather than an indication that Allah is referring exclusively to one gender. The verse speaks about the collective responsibility of the believers regardless of gender to ensure the community's preparedness both in defense and in the nurturing of religious knowledge.

Key Reflections on the Verse

Balanced Approach to Duty. The verse emphasizes that both military defense and religious education are vital for the Muslim community. While some engage in physical struggle for the protection of Islam, others must stay behind to acquire and spread religious knowledge. This ensures a continuous cycle of learning and guidance.

The Significance of Islamic Scholarship. [لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ] (to obtain understanding in the religion) underscores the necessity of deep comprehension of Islamic teachings. It encourages the pursuit of religious knowledge as a duty that strengthens faith and moral consciousness. The Prophet (SAW) said:

{مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا قَاسِمٌ وَاللَّهُ يُعْطِي، وَلَنْ تَرَالَ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ قَائِمَةً عَلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ لَا يَصُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ}

“If Allah intends good for someone, He grants them understanding of the religion. I am only a distributor, but it is Allah who gives. And remember, this nation (the true followers of Islam) will continue to adhere firmly to Allah’s guidance, and those who oppose or follow other paths will not harm them, until Allah’s command (the Day of Judgment) comes to pass”.

The Role of Scholars in Society. The phrase [وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ] (to warn their people) signifies the scholars’ responsibility to educate and guide the community. Their role is not limited to personal growth but extends to enlightening others, ensuring that the society remains on the right path.

Preventing Religious Negligence. The ultimate objective is that [لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ] (so that they might be cautious). A well-informed society remains aware of its religious obligations and avoids falling into ignorance, which can lead to moral and spiritual decline. As-Sa’di states that "لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ" indicates the ultimate goal of religious education is to keep society aware of its duties and prevent moral decline.

Contemporary Relevance. In modern times, this verse highlights the importance of specialization in knowledge. While some dedicate themselves to serving the community in defense and governance, others should focus on religious education, teaching, and moral guidance. This balance ensures that the Muslim Ummah remains strong both spiritually and practically. Thus, this verse is a strong reminder of the necessity of acquiring and spreading Islamic knowledge alongside other responsibilities, ensuring a holistic and well-functioning society.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said:

{مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَبْتَغِي فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَلَكَ اللَّهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا مِنْ طُرُقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَتَضَعُ أَجْنِحَتَهَا رِضًا لِطَالِبِ الْعِلْمِ وَإِنَّ الْعَالِمَ لَيَسْتَعْفِرُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبْتَانُ فِي جَوْفِ الْمَاءِ وَإِنَّ فَضْلَ الْعَالِمِ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْلِ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ عَلَى سَائِرِ الْكَوَاكِبِ وَإِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَإِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُورَثُوا دِينَارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا وَرَثُوا الْعِلْمَ فَمَنْ أَخَذَهُ أَخَذَ بِحِطِّ وَافِرٍ}

“Whoever sets out on a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will guide him along a path leading to Paradise. The angels lower their wings out of pleasure for the seeker of knowledge. All the beings in the heavens and on the earth even the fish in the depths of the sea ask forgiveness for the one who possesses knowledge. The rank of the scholar over the devout worshipper is like the brightness of the full moon”

compared to the stars. The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets, and the Prophets did not leave behind gold or silver; rather, they left behind knowledge. Whoever acquires it has indeed received a great share”.

This means that all creatures pray for the forgiveness of those who seek knowledge, as they bring light and guidance to people, teaching them their religious duties and leading them to Allah’s path. Since angels seek forgiveness for all believers, they do so even more for those who seek and spread beneficial knowledge. Another hadith, reported by Abu Umamah al-Bahili (RA), highlights the significance of gaining knowledge:

{ عَنْ أَبِي أُمَامَةَ الْبَاهِلِيِّ، قَالَ ذَكَرَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَجُلَانِ أَحَدُهُمَا عَابِدٌ وَالْآخَرُ عَالِمٌ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " فَضَّلْتُ الْعَالِمَ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْنِي عَلَى أَدْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ وَأَهْلَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ حَتَّى النَّمْلَةَ فِي جُحْرِهَا وَحَتَّى الْحُوتَ لِيُصَلُّوا عَلَى مُعَلِّمِ النَّاسِ الْخَيْرِ }

“Two men were mentioned in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ): one was a devout worshiper, and the other a scholar. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “The scholar is superior to the worshiper just as I am superior to the least among you.” He then added, “Indeed, Allah, His angels, and all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth even the ant in its hole and the fish in the sea send blessings upon the one who teaches people goodness”.

This shows that scholars and seekers of knowledge hold a special status when they learn and teach what benefits people in their faith, daily lives, and afterlife. The Prophet (peace be upon him) clearly highlighted the great value of scholars in Islam.

The Role of Women in Spreading Knowledge. Throughout Islamic history, women have played a crucial role in both acquiring and spreading knowledge. Islamic history is rich with examples of women who played pivotal roles in acquiring and spreading knowledge. Here are some notable figures: **Aisha bint Abi Bakr (RA)** a wife of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) one of the most prominent scholars in Islam, narrated **2,210 hadiths** and was consulted by companions on religious matters. **Sahih al-Bukhari** and **Sahih Muslim** include numerous hadiths narrated by her. **Umm Salama (RA)** a wife of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and an authority in **Hadith and Fiqh** narrated **approximately 378 hadiths**. After the Prophet's (SAW) passing, many companions, including Ibn Abbas, Abu Hurairah, and others, sought Umm Salama’s (RA) advice on religious matters. **Ibn Hajar in Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba** states that she was among the most knowledgeable women of her time. **Umm Darda al-Sughra** a renowned scholar in the **7th century**, Umm Darda (RA) taught hadith and fiqh in **Damascus and Jerusalem**, even **Caliph Abdul Malik ibn Marwan** studied under her. Fatima al-Fihri, a Tunisian-born woman, founded Al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco, in 859 CE as a mosque and a center of learning, which later evolved into a full-fledged university. Shuhda al-Baghdadiyya was a leading **hadith scholar and calligrapher in 12th-century Baghdad**, known as "**Fakhr an-Nisa**" (**Pride of Women**) for her scholarly contributions. **Zaynab bint Sulayman (d. 142 AH / 759 CE)** a prominent Hadith scholar and teacher in **Mecca**, she trained many students, including men and women. **Fatima bint Muhammad al-Samarqandi (d. 581 AH / 1185 CE)** A jurist and scholar of the **Hanafi school of thought**, she wrote legal verdicts (fatwas) and taught jurisprudence alongside her husband, **Ala’ al-Din al-Kasani**. **Umm Hani Mariam bint Abd al-Karim al-Hanbali (d. 778 AH / 1376 CE)** An expert in **Hadith and Tafsir**, she was known for issuing religious verdicts and teaching in major learning centers of Damascus. Fatima al-Fudayliyya was a distinguished scholar in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) and Hadith. She had a

profound interest in Hadith studies, obtaining numerous diplomas from esteemed scholars, which established her reputation as a significant muhadditha (Hadith scholar). Her expertise extended to Usul al-Fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) and Tafsir (Quranic exegesis). Her lectures in Mecca attracted many eminent scholars, including Umar al-Hanafi and Muhammad Salih, who received certifications from her. Her students praised her piety, righteousness, and ascetic lifestyle. Additionally, she was renowned for her exceptional calligraphy skills. Towards the end of her life, Fatima al-Fudayliyya settled in Mecca, where she taught at the Masjid al-Haram, one of the most sacred mosques in Islam. Her teaching sessions were well-attended by scholars and students from various regions, reflecting her esteemed position in the Islamic scholarly community. In Mecca, she established a public library, contributing significantly to the preservation and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Her dedication to education and scholarship left a lasting impact on contemporary Islamic studies.

Arguments in Favor of Co-Education from the Qur'an

Quranic Perspectives on Co-Education: In this section we present a set of arguments derived from the Qur'an. Because the Qur'an does not mention "co-education" explicitly, our discussion relies on principles regarding the pursuit of knowledge, gender equality in creation, and prescribed guidelines for social interaction. We begin with arguments that are interpreted as supporting co-education, followed by those that some scholars have used to argue in favour of gender separation in educational contexts.

The Concept of Co-Education in Islam: **The question of co-education (men and women studying together) is often debated in the Islamic context. While Islam supports equal educational rights, it also emphasizes modesty, morality, and the preservation of social ethics. The Quran advises both men and women to observe modest behavior. Allah Almighty says in the Quran:**

﴿قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ بَعْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ. وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَعْضُنَّ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ بُعُولَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّبِيعِينَ غَيْرَ أُولَى الإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

“O Prophet (ﷺ), instruct the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their chastity; that is more pure for them. Surely, Allah is fully aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and safeguard their chastity, and not to display their beauty except what is naturally visible. They should draw their veils over their chests and not expose their hidden adornments except to their husbands, their fathers, their fathers-in-law, their sons, their stepsons, their brothers, their nephews (whether from brothers or sisters), their fellow women, their bondwomen, male attendants with no physical desire, or children who are unaware of women’s private aspects. Furthermore, they should not walk in a way that draws attention to their concealed adornments. All of you, O believers, turn to Allah in repentance so that you may attain success”.

This verse highlights the importance of maintaining Islamic ethical guidelines in all aspects of life, including education. In an environment where these values are upheld

such as proper dress codes, respectful interaction, and the avoidance of immoral behaviour co-education may not be inherently problematic. However, if co-education leads to moral corruption, inappropriate interactions, or the dilution of Islamic values, then alternative methods of education (such as gender-segregated learning) may be preferable.

The Universal Command to Seek Knowledge: The pursuit of knowledge holds a central place in Islam, emphasized from the very first revelation to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Allah Almighty said in the Qur'an: -

﴿اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ. خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ. اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ﴾

“Recite in the name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clinging clot. Recite, for your Lord is Most Generous. The One who taught by the pen. Taught mankind what he did not know”.

The command to "Read" highlights the divine instruction for intellectual and spiritual growth, underscoring the significance of learning as a fundamental duty of all Muslims. The above-mentioned verses from Surah Al-Alaq illustrate how Allah, the Most Generous, not only created mankind but also endowed them with the ability to acquire knowledge through reading and writing, shaping human civilization through divine guidance. There is no gender-specific limitation in this command and the directive applies universally. The absence of a mention of segregation implies that learning is a communal duty open to both men and women.

Equality in Creation: The concept of equality in creation is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, emphasizing the shared origin of all human beings. Allah Almighty said in the Qur'an:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً. وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

“O humanity, be mindful of your Lord who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the two spread countless men and women. So be conscious of Allah through whom you seek your mutual rights and respect the ties of kinship. Surely, Allah is always watching over you”.

This verse highlights that humanity originates from a single soul, underscoring the fundamental equality between men and women. It serves as a reminder that distinctions based on race, gender or inheritance hold no weight in the sight of Allah, and that all individuals are accountable to Him for their actions. This principle of equality supports the idea that both genders should have equal access to educational opportunities.

Mutual Cooperation in Righteous Deeds: Mutual cooperation in righteous deeds is a fundamental principle in Islam, emphasizing collective efforts toward goodness and moral integrity. The Quran highlights this concept in the following verse: -

﴿وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ﴾

“Work together in goodness and piety, but do not support one another in sin and wrongdoing”.

The following verse also illustrates this principle, beautifully: -

﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيَطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

“The believing men and women are supporters of one another. They encourage what is right, forbid what is wrong, establish prayer, give zakāh, and obey Allah and His Messenger. These are the ones whom Allah will show mercy. Indeed, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise”.

These verses call for cooperation in righteousness and piety without making any distinction between genders. Its message that both men and women are equally responsible for and capable of contributing to moral and intellectual endeavors can be interpreted as an implicit endorsement of co-education. In other words, the emphasis on mutual assistance and collective pursuit of virtue suggests that segregating educational opportunities by gender is not supported by the inclusive spirit of these verses. This perspective aligns with contemporary debates on co-education, where the focus is on creating learning environments that nurture collaboration, shared responsibility, and equal participation for all.

The Equal Reward for Righteous Men and Women: In the Qur'anic tradition, divine guidance consistently emphasizes that the path to spiritual success is open to all, irrespective of gender. Both men and women, when exhibiting core virtues such as faith, obedience, truthfulness, and humility, are equally entitled to forgiveness and a magnificent reward from Allah. This following verse serves as a profound reminder that spiritual merit is measured by one's actions and devotion rather than by gender: -

﴿إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

“Indeed, the Muslim men and women, the believing men and women, the obedient men and women, the truthful men and women, the patient men and women, the humble men and women, the charitable men and women, the fasting men and women, the men and women who guard their chastity, and those who frequently remember Allah Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward”.

This verse lists pairs of qualities “Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women,” and so forth to underscore that righteousness and piety are not gender specific. By paralleling the virtues expected of both men and women, it reinforces the idea that both are equally accountable and equally capable of attaining divine mercy. The comprehensive language reflects a broader Islamic teaching that the intrinsic value of every individual is determined by their character and commitment to ethical conduct, making the promise of forgiveness and reward a universal opportunity for all believers.

Diversity and the Unity of Humanity: The Quran beautifully articulates the principle that our differences are meant to foster understanding rather than division. It reminds us that every human being regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background is created with dignity and purpose. In this context, the following verse offers a timeless reminder of how mutual diversity ultimately unites humanity in the pursuit of righteousness: -

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

“O humanity, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is the most righteous. Truly, Allah is All-Knowing and Well-Acquainted”.

The verse encourages interaction and mutual understanding among different peoples and genders. It implicitly supports the idea that mixing for the purpose of learning and personal development is part of Allah’s design for human society.

Shared Access to Divine Signs and Guidance: As humans examine the world around them, they are invited to recognize the Divine proofs embedded in the natural world. The phenomena of creation ranging from the mystical bodies and the earth’s wonders to the movement of winds and the spread of life offer clear signs serving as guidance for those who reflect deeply. Allah Almighty said in the Qur’an: -

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفَلَكَ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ﴾

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the changing of night and day, in the ships that sail across the sea carrying things beneficial to humanity, in the rain that Allah sends down from the sky to revive the earth after its death, in the creatures of all kinds that He has spread across it, and in the shifting of the winds and the clouds held between the sky and the earth, there are clear signs for people who reflect and understand”.

This scriptural passage encourages every individual to contemplate the manifestations of Allah throughout the universe. As these signs are accessible to all, irrespective of gender, they affirm the principle that the pursuit of knowledge is a universal right.

Equal Spiritual Rewards for All: This following verse encapsulates the essence of divine impartiality, affirming that every act of righteousness, whether by a man or a woman, is met with equal reward:-

﴿فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرَ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ بِعَصْمِكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَالذَّيِّنَ هَاجِرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُودُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأَكْفِرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ﴾

“So their Lord responded to them, saying, "I will never let the deeds of any of you go to waste, whether male or female. You are all members of one another. Those who emigrated, were driven from their homes, endured harm for My sake, fought, and were martyred indeed, I will forgive their wrongdoings and admit them into Gardens beneath which rivers flow (in Paradise), as a reward from Allah. And with Allah is the best of rewards”.

This verse affirms that spiritual and worldly rewards from Allah do not depend on one’s gender. The universal promise of reward supports equal opportunities including education for all believers.

The Endowment of Wisdom and Knowledge: Wisdom and knowledge are

bestowed by Allah irrespective of gender. As such, the institution of learning, if founded on the principles of modesty and respect can accommodate both genders to benefit from the divine gift of wisdom. The following verse emphasizes that divine wisdom is not earned by merit alone but granted freely by Allah to whomever He wills: -

﴿يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

“He bestows wisdom (Hikmah) upon whom He wills, and the one who is granted wisdom is truly blessed with abundant goodness. However, none will take heed except those endowed with understanding”.

The passage asserts that divine enlightenment is an inclusive gift, granted without discrimination and available to anyone who seeks it. The verse underscores that the ability to grasp profound insight is not determined by human effort or merit but is bestowed solely by Allah, highlighting that true understanding is a matter of interest rather than gender or social status. Consequently, educational environments designed with modesty and respect can effectively nurture this divine gift in all individuals, fostering a community where the pursuit of knowledge is both universal and deeply transformative.

Historical Precedence of Mixed Assemblies: Throughout Islamic history, gatherings were not only centers for social interaction but also hubs for intellectual exchange and communal growth. The verse addresses the believers collectively in contexts of social assembly: -

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ﴾

“O you who believe, when you are instructed to make space in gatherings, make room and spread out. Allah will provide you with ample space from His mercy. And when you are called to stand up for prayer, for Jihad (struggle in Allah's cause), or for any other virtuous act stand up. Allah will elevate in rank those of you who believe and those who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is fully aware of what you do”.

The above verse condenses this enduring tradition by urging believers to create space for one another within their assemblies. This instruction goes beyond a mere call for physical accommodation. It symbolizes the openness and mutual respect that characterized early Islamic community life. The absence of gender-specific instructions here suggests that early Muslim gatherings (including those for learning) were not fundamentally segregated, thereby supporting mixed-gender educational environments.

Recognition of Women's Piety and Merit: The merit of one's faith and deeds is not bound by gender. The following verse captures a fundamental principle in Islamic teaching that the path to Paradise is accessible to every believer who engages in righteous actions, regardless of being male or female: -

﴿وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَبِيًّا﴾

“Whoever performs righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer, will enter Paradise and will not be wronged in the slightest, not even the equivalent of a speck on a date seed”.

This verse emphasizes that both men and women should seek knowledge and do good deeds, as they are equally accountable before Allah. It highlights the importance of providing equal educational opportunities to help both genders grow intellectually and morally. It also makes it clear that a person's worth is based on faith and righteousness, not gender. By mentioning both “male and female,” the verse affirms that men and women have equal spiritual potential and responsibilities.

The Collective Duty of the Muslim Ummah: At the core of the Muslim community’s mission lies an enduring responsibility to embody and promote divine guidance in every aspect of life. Allah Almighty said in the Qur’an: -

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِّنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

“You are the best nation ever brought forth for humanity; you enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in Allah. If the people of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them; among them are some who have faith, but the majority are disobedient and rebellious against Allah's commands”.

The verse underscores the inclusive responsibility bestowed upon every member of the community, men and women alike, to uphold moral values and act as beacons of guidance. The task of moral leadership is not limited by gender. It emphasizes that the strength of the ummah lies in its collective action, a unity that integrates diverse perspectives and contributions. Every believer, irrespective of gender, is called upon to participate actively in this noble endeavor.

Arguments from the Qur’an Interpreted as Cautions Against Co- Education

Scholars who express reservations about mixed-gender educational settings often draw upon Qur’anic guidelines on modesty, decorum, and boundaries between the sexes. Although these verses are not explicitly about education, they have been interpreted by some to suggest the need for separation to prevent moral compromise.

Commands on Lowering the Gaze and Guarding Modesty: The Qur’anic injunctions in Surah An-Nur lay out a clear framework for personal conduct by instructing both men and women to lower their gaze and safeguard their chastity. Allah Almighty said in the Qur’an: -

﴿قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ﴾

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and safeguard their chastity. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is aware of what they do”.

﴿وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and safeguard their chastity, and not to reveal their adornments except what naturally appears. They should place their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornments except to their

husbands, fathers, fathers-in-law, sons, stepsons, brothers, nephews, other women, those whom their right hands possess, male attendants who have no desire, or children who are unaware of the private aspects of women. They should not stamp their feet in a way that reveals what they conceal of their adornment. And all of you, O believers, turn to Allah in repentance, so that you may be successful”.

These verses are often referenced in contemporary debates, particularly in discussions surrounding co-education. Criticizers argue that mixed gender settings may complicate the adherence to the modesty guidelines outlined in these passages, as the presence of the opposite sex could potentially lead to behaviors deemed inappropriate. However, many scholars emphasize that the underlying principles of modesty are not confined solely to gender-segregated contexts. Instead, they advocate for approaches that balance traditional values with modern social realities. By focusing on intention and context, it is possible to create educational and social environments where the spirit of these commandments promoting respect, self-control and dignity remains intact, even within a mixed-gender framework. Beyond the literal command to lower the gaze, commentators (such as Ibn Kathir) have noted that the instructions in these verses serve to protect society from fitnah (moral trials) that may arise from excessive mixing. Supporters of gender segregated education argue that separating male and female students minimizes the risk of behavior that might compromise Islamic ethical standards.

The Concept of a Partition in Social Interactions: The concept of a partition in social interactions, as outlined in the following Qur’anic verse, serves as an ethical guideline for establishing respectful boundaries between men and women: -

﴿وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ﴾

“When you request anything from his wives, ask them from behind a screen. This is purer for both your hearts and their hearts”.

By proposing a visible or symbolic barrier such as ‘a screen’ the passage emphasizes its role in preserving order and protecting the sanctity of intimate relationships. This approach mirrors a broader Islamic commitment to fostering modesty, honor and mutual regard in every interpersonal encounter. The guidance specifies that requests directed to one's wife should occur from behind a screen, a practice that transcends a mere physical setup to serve as a symbolic reminder of the need to keep hearts unblemished. Endorsing such a partition, the text illustrates how maintaining respectful distance can prevent excessive familiarity and safeguard emotional integrity. In modern terms, this concept advocates for establishing clear boundaries in relationships, thereby ensuring interactions that honor personal space and emotional well-being.

The Emphasis on Distinct Social Roles: The following verse outlines a divinely ordained framework for gender roles within the family structure. Allah Almighty said in the Qur’an: -

﴿الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْعَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُورَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ فَإِنِ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا﴾

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has made some of

them excel over others, and because they provide for them from their resources. Therefore, the righteous women are obedient to Allah and to their husbands, and they protect what Allah has commanded them to guard, such as their chastity and their husband's property, in his absence. As for those women whose conduct you find objectionable, first advise them, then refuse to share their beds, and as a last resort, lightly discipline them, if it is beneficial. However, if they return to obedience, do not seek to harm them. Indeed, Allah is the Most High, the Most Great”.

The verse indicates that men, given their divine role and duty as providers, are responsible for protecting and running the household. Women, on the other hand, are seen as keepers of family honour and are given tasks that support the overall social and moral structure of Islam. Each gender plays a unique role in the well-being of both the family and society. Men are expected to act as protectors and providers with accountability, while women are valued as the guardians of the home and honor, though their roles differ.

Guidelines for the Prophet’s Family as a Model: The guidelines provided for the Prophet’s family serve as a divine blueprint for conduct that is both deeply personal and broadly exemplary. Allah Almighty said in the Qur’an:-

﴿يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ ۚ إِن اتَّبَعْتُنَّ فَلَا تَحْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ ۚ قَبِطَمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ۚ وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى ۚ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

“O wives of the Prophet, you are unlike any other women. If you fear Allah, do not speak in a soft manner to men, lest those in whose hearts is a disease should desire you. Instead, speak with appropriate speech. Remain in your homes and do not display yourselves as in the days of ignorance. Establish prayer, give zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only intends to remove sin from you, O people of the Prophet's household, and to purify you with thorough purification”.

These guidelines, given to the Prophet’s wives, set a high standard of behavior that goes beyond normal social expectations. They stress the importance of being modest, speaking respectfully, and staying committed to spiritual practices. These rules not only protect the honor of the Prophet’s family but also teach valuable lessons on faith and social duty for everyone. The first verse advises the Prophet’s wives to be cautious in their interactions so that their words remain respectful and clear, preventing any misunderstanding that might lead to improper desires. This shows the need for personal integrity and proper behavior in public. The second verse supports these ideas by urging them to stay at home and avoid the fancy displays of earlier times. Along with the emphasis on prayer, charity, and obedience, these guidelines highlight how personal devotion goes hand in hand with community responsibility. Together, they show how the Prophet’s family was meant to serve as a living example of high Islamic morals, balancing personal spirituality with public ethics, and continue to inspire Muslims to live a balanced and principled life.

Emphasis on the Sanctity of Private Spaces: Respect for personal boundaries and private spaces is a fundamental aspect of Islamic teachings. The Quran emphasizes the importance of seeking permission before entering someone’s home, underscoring the values of privacy, respect, and mutual dignity. This principle fosters

social harmony and safeguards personal wellbeing by ensuring that interactions are conducted with courtesy and consideration. Al mighty said in the Qur'an: -

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَهْلِهَا ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾

"O you who believe, do not enter houses other than your own until you have sought permission and offered greetings to those within. This is more virtuous for you, so that you may heed this guidance."

This verse highlights the ethical framework governing social interactions, particularly regarding privacy and personal space. By instructing believers to seek permission and offer greetings before entering another's home, the Quran establishes a norm of respect and awareness in social conduct. This teaching not only upholds personal dignity but also strengthens trust and cohesion within the community. In contemporary times, this principle extends beyond physical spaces to digital interactions, reinforcing the need for consent and respect in all forms of communication. Although this verse refers primarily to the concept of privacy in one's dwelling, its underlying principle that certain spaces should be reserved for one gender to prevent impropriety, has been extended to include educational and other public spaces.

The Preservation of Modesty Through Controlled Interaction: Throughout the Qur'an, there is a recurring emphasis on safeguarding modesty and preventing moral lapses. Critics of co-education contend that even if the pursuit of knowledge is universal, the risk of violating the delicate balance of modesty increases when males and females share the same physical space. This argument is based on a cumulative understanding of Quranic verses that guide believers to exercise discretion in their social conduct. For instance, Surah An-Nur instructs believing men and women to lower their gaze and protect their modesty, while Surah Al-Ahzab directs believers to address the Prophet's wives from behind a barrier, emphasizing the importance of maintaining purity in both their hearts and theirs. These teachings collectively underscore the principle of cautious and respectful interaction.

Arguments in Favour of Co- Education from the Sunnah

Sunnah (Aḥadith) Perspectives on Co- Education: The Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is replete with teachings on the pursuit of knowledge, the conduct between genders, and the importance of safeguarding modesty. In this section, it is important to present Aḥadith that have been interpreted by scholars to support and, in other cases, to caution against the mixing of genders in educational settings.

The Obligation of Seeking Knowledge for Every Muslim:

{طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ}

"Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim".

This well-known hadith makes no distinction between male and female; thus, it establishes a foundational principle that both genders must pursue knowledge. The inherent universality of the obligation supports the idea that co-educational settings may be acceptable if conducted with the proper Islamic decorum.

The Virtue of Learning and Teaching:

{خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ}

“The best among you is he who learns the Qur’ān and teaches it”.

As this hadith praises both the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, it implies that learning is a communal duty. Female scholars such as Ayesha (رضي الله عنها) who narrated many ahadith serve as exemplars of this tradition, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of women’s participation in educational environments.

The Prophet’s Encouragement of Mixed Gatherings for Learning: In the following paragraphs some authentic Ahadith are presented that collectively emphasize Islamic commitment to education for all, offering clear evidence from the Sunnah that men and women can seek knowledge together in a dignified and respectful manner.

Women Attended Public Sermons of the Prophet (SAW):

{عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ، قَالَتِ النِّسَاءُ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ غَلَبْنَا عَلَيْكَ الرَّجَالَ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا يَوْمًا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ. فَوَعَدَهُنَّ يَوْمًا لَقِيَهُنَّ فِيهِ، فَوَعظَهُنَّ وَأَمَرَهُنَّ، فَكَانَ فِيهَا قَال لُهُنَّ " مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ ثَلَاثَةَ مِنْ وَلَدِهَا إِلَّا كَانَ لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ ". فَقَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ وَاثْنَيْنِ فَقَالَ " وَاثْنَيْنِ }

“Narrated Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri: A group of women approached the Prophet (ﷺ) and requested that he dedicate a day for them, as men occupied most of his time. In response, he allocated a day to instruct them in religious matters. During one such gathering, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A woman who loses three of her children will be protected by them from the Hellfire." A woman then asked, "What if only two die?" He replied, "Even two will shield her."

This Hadith indicates that women were keen on education and that the Prophet (ﷺ) facilitated their learning. Although a separate day was allocated, this does not negate the fact that women attended general sermons, proving that men and women could learn together.

Women Attended the Mosque for Learning:

{عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّ أَسْمَاءَ، سَأَلَتِ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ غُسْلِ الْمَحِيضِ فَقَالَ " تَأْخُذُ إِحْدَاكُنَّ مَاءَهَا وَسِدْرَتَهَا فَتَطَهَّرُ فَتُحْسِنُ الطُّهُورَ ثُمَّ تَصُبُّ عَلَى رَأْسِهَا فَتَدْلُكُهُ دَلْكًا شَدِيدًا حَتَّى تَبْلُغَ شُؤنَ رَأْسِهَا ثُمَّ تَصُبُّ عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ . ثُمَّ تَأْخُذُ فِرْصَةً مُمَسَّكَةً فَتَطَهَّرُ بِهَا " . فَقَالَتْ أَسْمَاءُ وَكَيْفَ تَطَهَّرُ بِهَا فَقَالَ " سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ تَطَهَّرِينَ بِهَا " . فَقَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ كَأَنِّي أَخْفِي ذَلِكَ تَتَّبِعِينَ أَثَرَ الدَّمِ . وَسَأَلْتُهُ عَنْ غُسْلِ الْجَنَابَةِ فَقَالَ " تَأْخُذُ مَاءً فَتَطَهَّرُ فَتُحْسِنُ الطُّهُورَ - أَوْ تَبْلُغُ الطُّهُورَ - ثُمَّ تَصُبُّ عَلَى رَأْسِهَا فَتَدْلُكُهُ حَتَّى تَبْلُغَ شُؤنَ رَأْسِهَا ثُمَّ تُفِيضُ عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ " فَقَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ نِعْمَ النِّسَاءُ الْأَنْصَارُ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَمْنَعُهُنَّ الْحَيَاءُ أَنْ يَتَفَقَّهُنَّ فِي الدِّينِ }

“A’isha (RA) reported: Asma (daughter of Shakal) asked the Messenger of Allah () about washing after menstruation. He said: Everyone amongst you should use water (mixed with the leaves of) the lote-tree and cleanse herself well, and then pour water on her head and rub it vigorously till it reaches the roots of the hair. Then she should pour water on it. Afterwards she should take a piece of cotton smeared with musk and cleanse herself with it. Asma’ said: How should she cleanse herself with the help of that? Upon this he (the Messenger of Allah) observed: Praise be to Allah, she should cleanse herself. A’isha said in a subdued tone that she should apply it to the trace of blood. She (Asma) then further asked about bathing after sexual intercourse. The

Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said: She should take water and cleanse herself well or complete the ablution and then (pour water) on her head and rub it till it reaches the roots of the hair (of her) head and then pour water on her. 'A'isha said: "How good are the women of Ansar (helpers) that their shyness does not prevent them from learning religion." This Hadith emphasizes that women were encouraged to seek knowledge. Since the Prophet (ﷺ) did not impose gender segregation in public learning, this supports the idea of co-education".

Men and Women Asked Questions in the Same Gatherings:

{عَنْ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ، قَالَتْ جَاءَتْ أُمَّ سَلِيمٍ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ، فَهَلْ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ مِنْ غُسْلِ إِذَا اخْتَلَمَتْ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِذَا رَأَتْ الْمَاءَ " . فَعَطَّتْ أُمَّ سَلَمَةَ - تَغْنِي وَجْهَهَا - وَقَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَتَحْتَلِمُ الْمَرْأَةُ قَالَ "نَعَمْ تَرَبَّتْ يَمِينُكَ فِيمَ يُشْبِهُهَا وَلَدَهَا}

“Narrated Umm Salamah (RA): Umm Sulaym approached the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and said, "Indeed, Allah does not shy away from the truth. Is it obligatory for a woman to perform ghusl (ritual bath) if she experiences a nocturnal emission (wet dream)?" The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "Yes, if she observes the discharge." Umm Salamah then covered her face out of modesty and asked, "O Messenger of Allah, does a woman indeed have such a discharge?" He responded, "Yes, may your right hand be dusted (an Arabic expression indicating affirmation), and that is why a child may resemble their mother." This incident demonstrates that during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) men and women were present in the same gathering, where women freely asked questions and received direct answers. This indicates that co-educational settings for religious instruction were permissible and practiced under his guidance.”

The Prophet (SAW) Addressed Men and Women Together in Eid Sermons:

{حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَطَاءٌ، عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ قَامَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمَ الْفِطْرِ، فَصَلَّى فَبَدَأَ بِالصَّلَاةِ ثُمَّ خَطَبَ، فَلَمَّا فَرَغَ نَزَلَ فَأَتَى النِّسَاءَ، فَذَكَرَهُنَّ وَهُوَ يَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَى يَدِ بِلَالٍ وَبِلَالٌ بِاسِطٌ ثَوْبُهُ، يُلْقِي فِيهِ النِّسَاءُ الصَّدَقَةَ. قُلْتُ لِعَطَاءٍ زَكَاةُ يَوْمِ الْفِطْرِ قَالَ لَا وَلَكِنْ صَدَقَةٌ يَتَصَدَّقْنَ حِينَئِذٍ، تُلْقِي فَتَحَهَا وَيُلْقِينَ. قُلْتُ أَتَرَى حَقًّا عَلَى الْإِمَامِ ذَلِكَ وَيُذَكِّرُهُنَّ قَالَ إِنَّهُ لِحَقٌّ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يَفْعَلُونَهُ}

Narration from Ibn Juraij: ‘Ata’ reported to me that he heard Jabir bin ‘Abdullah state: "The Prophet (ﷺ) rose to perform the Eid al-Fitr prayer. He first led the prayer, then delivered the sermon. Upon concluding the sermon, he descended from the pulpit and approached the women to counsel them while leaning on Bilal's arm. Bilal had extended his garment to collect the charitable donations the women were offering." I inquired of ‘Ata’, "Was this the Zakat al-Fitr?" He clarified, "No, these were voluntary alms given spontaneously at that moment. One woman contributed her finger ring, and others followed suit with their donations." I further asked ‘Ata’, "Do you consider it obligatory for the Imam to address and advise the women during Eid?" He affirmed, "Undoubtedly, it is incumbent upon religious leaders to do so – and why should they neglect this duty?"

This Hadith shows that men and women listened to sermons together. The Prophet (SAW) specifically addressed women afterward, highlighting the importance of their inclusion in educational gatherings.

Women Were Teachers for Men:

{عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى، قَالَ مَا أَشْكَلْنَا عَلَيْنَا أَصْحَابَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَدِيثٌ قَطُّ فَسَأَلْنَا عَائِشَةَ إِلَّا وَجَدْنَا عِنْدَهَا مِنْهُ عِلْمًا }

Narrated Abu Musa (RA): "Never was a Hadith unclear to us, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, and we asked 'Aishah' except that we found some knowledge concerning it with her."

This Hadith proves that women taught men, indicating that co-educational learning settings were acceptable.

The Prophet (SAW) Encouraged Women's Active Participation in Society:

[عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، قَالَ كَانَتْ امْرَأَةٌ لِعُمَرَ تَشْهَدُ صَلَاةَ الصُّبْحِ وَالْعِشَاءِ فِي الْجَمَاعَةِ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ، فَقِيلَ لَهَا لِمَ تَخْرُجِينَ وَقَدْ تَعْلَمِينَ أَنَّ عُمَرَ يَكْرَهُ ذَلِكَ وَيَعَارُ قَالَتْ وَمَا يَمْنَعُهُ أَنْ يَنْهَانِي قَالَ يَمْنَعُهُ قَوْلُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَا تَمْنَعُوا إِمَاءَ اللَّهِ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ]

"Narration from Ibn 'Umar (RA): One of the wives of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA) would regularly attend the Fajr and 'Isha prayers in congregation at the mosque. When she was questioned about her insistence on going despite 'Umar's disapproval given his strong sense of protective honor (ghaira) she responded, "What prevents him from forbidding me?" Another person answered, "The saying of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)'Do not prevent the female servants of Allah from visiting the mosques of Allah' is what restrains him."

Since mosques were centres of learning, this Hadith supports the idea of co-education by allowing women to engage in learning environments alongside men.

Women Participated in Military Training Alongside Men:

[عَنْ أُمِّ عَطِيَّةَ الْأَنْصَارِيَّةِ، قَالَتْ غَزَوْتُ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَبْعَ غَزَوَاتٍ أَخْلَفُهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ فَأَصْنَعُ لَهُمُ الطَّعَامَ وَأَدَاوِي الْجُرْحَى وَأَقُومُ عَلَى الْمَرْضَى]

Narration from Umm 'Atiyya al-Ansariyya (RA): She reported: "I accompanied the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in seven military expeditions. During these campaigns, I would remain at the men's base camp, where I prepared meals for them, tended to their injuries, and cared for the ailing."

Women's participation in battles required them to receive training and education alongside men, supporting the notion of co-education.

The Prophet (SAW) Taught Both Men and Women the Same Religious Duties:

[عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ كَانَ الرَّجَالُ وَالنِّسَاءُ يَتَوَضَّئُونَ فِي زَمَانِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جَمِيعًا]

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Umar:

"During the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) men and women used to perform ablution together."

This Hadith indicates that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not impose strict gender segregation,

suggesting that co-education is permissible.

{ مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَطْلُبُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ }

"For whoever travels a path seeking knowledge, Allah facilitates for them the way to Paradise."

Although the hadith does not address gender directly, its universal wording suggests that the pursuit of knowledge is a communal effort. Many scholars argue that if the environment encourages modest behaviour, there is no intrinsic prohibition against mixed gender classes.

Opinions of the Four Imams (Fuqaha-e-Arba'a) on Co-Education:

Co-education, which refers to men and women studying together in the same educational institutions, is a modern educational system. The opinions of the four great jurists (Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, may Allah have mercy on them) vary in detail but generally emphasize the importance of adhering to Islamic principles regarding gender interaction.

Hanafi School of Thought:

According to the Hanafi school, men and women should avoid unnecessary interaction, as it may lead to moral corruption (fitnah). Imam Abu Hanifa (RA) holds that it is prohibited for women to have unnecessary interaction with non-mahram (unrelated) men. However, if education is conducted while maintaining proper Islamic guidelines such as observing hijab and maintaining a segregated environment it would be permissible. Imam Sarakhsi states that women should avoid situations where they might come into unnecessary contact with non-mahram men. Imam Ibn Nujaym mentions that women should not attend places where there is a risk of fitnah (moral corruption).

Maliki School of Thought:

Imam Malik (RA) also holds that unnecessary interaction between men and women is prohibited. However, if women receive education in a separate setting or while observing strict hijab, it is permissible. The Maliki school also discourages co-education, especially in situations where it may lead to moral corruption. Imam Qurtubi states that free mixing of men and women is forbidden in Islam.

Shafi'i School of Thought:

In the Shafi'i school, free mixing between men and women is also discouraged. Imam Shafi'i (RA) emphasizes that if proper Islamic conditions are met such as maintaining modesty and segregation then women can acquire education. However, co-education that violates Islamic guidelines is impermissible. Ibn Hajar al-Haytami states that interaction between men and women should be avoided where there is a possibility of fitnah. Imam Nawawi mentions that women are encouraged to stay in environments that protect their modesty, and co-education may go against this principle.

Hanbali School of Thought:

According to Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (RA), protecting women's honor and modesty is of utmost importance. Free mixing of men and women is discouraged, but if education takes place while adhering to Islamic principles such as separate seating arrangements, hijab observance, and avoiding unnecessary interaction—then it would be permissible. Ibn Qudamah states that women should avoid situations where they might be exposed to non-mahram men. Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that women should be protected from situations that may endanger their faith and modesty.

Abul A'la Maududi's Pardah and the Status of Women in Islam

Abul A'la Maududi (1903–1979) was a prominent Islamic scholar and founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami movement in Pakistan. His book, *Pardah and the Status of Women in Islam*, addresses the concept of pardah (veil or seclusion) and elaborates on the roles and responsibilities of women within an Islamic framework. Maududi emphasizes that pardah is not merely a physical veil but a comprehensive system designed to protect societal morals by regulating interactions between men and women. He argues that such measures prevent moral corruption and maintain societal harmony. He outlines distinct roles for men and women, asserting that these roles are complementary. According to Maududi, men are primarily responsible for providing for the family, while women's primary domain is the home, focusing on child-rearing and household management. Maududi critiques Western notions of gender equality and co-education, suggesting that they lead to the erosion of moral values and the breakdown of family structures. He advocates for an Islamic system that upholds modesty and defined gender roles.

Sayyid Qutb's Fi Zilal al-Qur'an

Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) was an influential Egyptian Islamic theorist and a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood. His seminal work, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an), is a comprehensive tafsir (exegesis) of the Qur'an, reflecting on its application to contemporary issues. Qutb emphasizes that Islam promotes a balanced approach to social interactions, encouraging modesty and caution to prevent moral lapses. He interprets Qur'anic verses to advocate for environments that minimize unnecessary mixing of genders, thereby safeguarding individual and communal piety. He underscores the importance of vigilance in matters of faith, suggesting that mixed-gender environments can lead to distractions from religious duties. Qutb advocates for societal structures that support individuals in maintaining their religious commitments without undue temptation. Both scholars, through their works, highlight the significance of modesty and structured gender interactions in Islam, advocating for societal norms that align with Islamic teachings to preserve moral and social integrity.

Research Methodology

This study employed a **descriptive research design** with a **mixed-methods approach**, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to investigate the concept of co-education within an Islamic framework and assess its academic and social implications in the Pakistani context. The methodology was designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue by integrating textual analysis, empirical data, and stakeholder perspectives. The research design is

descriptive and exploratory, allowing for both in-depth analysis of religious texts and empirical investigation of perceptions from key stakeholders. A **mixed-methods approach** was adopted to triangulate findings, enrich insights, and ensure reliability and validity of the results. Data was collected from two main sources: **Primary Data**: Gathered through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. **Secondary Data**: Collected via an extensive review of classical Islamic sources including the Holy Quran, Hadith, and jurisprudential opinions of the four major Muslim schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali) and some other Muslims school of thoughts. Also analyse the other religions point of view on co-education. Also took modern educational theories and relevant academic literature. The population included; Male and female students their parents, Teachers and some educationists / administrators of educational institutions. Due to resource constraints, the study was **delimited** to institutions located in the **Islamabad and Rawalpindi regions**. A **purposive sampling technique** was employed to select participants who were knowledgeable or experienced in the subject matter, ensuring the inclusion of diverse yet relevant viewpoints. Given the nature of this study, which aims to explore perceptions of co-education within an Islamic framework across various stakeholder groups, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure the inclusion of informed and relevant participants. The study was delimited to educational institutions within the Islamabad and Rawalpindi regions due to logistical and resource considerations.

Sampling

A total of **160 participants** were selected, representing a cross-section of key groups including students, teachers, parents, and institutional administrators. The **student sample** comprised **100 individuals**, equally divided between male and female participants (50 each), to ensure a balanced representation of gender-specific experiences and views within co-educational settings. Total **30 teachers (both male and female)** were selected. To capture family-level and cultural expectations, **20 parents** were included, with an even split between fathers and mothers (10 each). Additionally, **10 institutional administrators** were selected to provide policy-level and administrative viewpoints on how co-education is implemented, managed, and potentially reformed within institutions. The diversity of participants ensured a holistic understanding of the issue and supported the mixed-methods approach adopted in the study.

Study Tools

Questionnaires were developed and administered to students, parents, and teachers to gather quantitative data on perceptions and experiences regarding co-education. **Semi-structured interviews** were conducted with institutional administrators to gain deeper qualitative insights. **Content analysis** was used to examine Islamic religious texts, including selected **Quranic verses** and **Ahadith**, regarding co-education. Also, content analysis was made of other religions point of view about coeducation. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using **statistical tools**, such as frequency distribution and percentage analysis, to identify common trends and perceptions. Qualitative data from content analysis and interviews were analyzed to extract key insights and recurring themes regarding religious and educational perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were upheld throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, assured of confidentiality, and given the right to withdraw at any stage. Religious texts and interpretations were cited to ensure respect for Islamic scholarship and diversity of opinions of other religions. However, all religions and views are respectable, so any error or omission may be accepted and corrected.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to educational institutions in the Islamabad and Rawalpindi regions. As such, the findings may not fully reflect the perceptions and realities of individuals from other regions of Pakistan or other nations, especially rural areas or provinces with different cultural and religious dynamics.

The use of purposive sampling, while appropriate for targeting informed respondents, may limit the generalizability of the results. The selected participants may not represent the full diversity of views present in the broader population.

The study relied on available literature and contents analysis, self-reported data collected through questionnaires and interviews, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Respondents might have given answers they believed were expected, especially in a culturally sensitive topic like co-education.

While the study employed a mixed-methods approach, the quantitative component was limited in scope due to resource constraints. More advanced statistical methods or a larger sample size could have enhanced the robustness of quantitative findings.

The study includes interpretations of Quranic verses, Hadith, and juristic opinions. However, the interpretation of religious texts can vary significantly among scholars and schools of thought. This variability could influence how findings are perceived by different religious communities.

The study primarily targeted to college / university level institutions and did not extend its scope to schools or vocational training centers where co-education dynamics might differ significantly.

Findings of the Study

The following findings were made:

(a) Analysis Based on Existing Literature

After detailed examination and through the lens of modern and contemporary educational thoughts, it was revealed and found a dynamic and evolving landscape regarding the co-education system. The co-education system is widely accepted and practiced in most modern societies across the globe, regardless of cultural or religious backgrounds. This shift is largely attributed to increasing awareness of gender equality, legal reforms, and the practical advantages of inclusive education. Co-education is now the standard in most public education systems in countries such as the United States, Canada, the UK, Australia, India, and other various European and Southeast Asian nations. Contemporary perspectives emphasize co-education as a powerful tool for promoting gender equality. By learning together, boys and girls develop mutual respect, empathy, and collaboration skills from an early age. It helps dismantle traditional gender stereotypes, fosters inclusive

thinking, and prepares students for real-world, mixed-gender environments in workplaces and social settings. Co-education proved as two wheels of a cart and is associated with improved interpersonal skills and mutual understanding to cope with the life challenges in a fruitful way. Students learn to communicate effectively with peers of the opposite gender, which contributes to better teamwork, emotional intelligence, and social development. These skills are crucial in modern, diverse, and interconnected societies. Research indicates that co-educational settings can foster healthy academic competition and motivation among learners. Exposure to diverse perspectives enhances classroom discussions, critical thinking, and creativity. Mixed-gender classrooms also mirror the diversity of modern workplaces, better preparing students for professional collaboration to achieve the desired objectives in a more befitting manner. Co-education contributes to balanced personality development by encouraging tolerance, adaptability, and cooperation among students. Exposure to different viewpoints broadens students' understanding of gender roles and helps in building inclusive attitudes. National and international education policies like UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development goals support gender-inclusive education systems. Modern curricula increasingly focus on values such as respect, equality, and anti-discrimination, which align naturally with the principles of co-education. Despite its advantages, co-education still faces challenges in some advanced and underdeveloped communities due to numerous problems such as due to natural inclination towards opposite genders, chances of harassment, wastages of time, lack of maturity, cultural, religious, diversion of attention towards study, discrimination between gender or traditional concerns etc. In such contexts, co-education may be limited or implemented with certain gender-based restrictions or behavioral codes, reflecting a tension between tradition and modernity. The rise of digital and blended learning environments has further blurred gender-based educational boundaries, allowing for more inclusive and equitable access to education. Co-education is no longer confined to physical classrooms, and online platforms now offer collaborative spaces for both genders, reflecting the realities of modern education which has both advantages as well as disadvantages.

(b) Analysis of Views of Religion Islam and Some Other Religions about Co-Education

The study found that The Quran and Hadith do not clearly ban co-education, but Islamic teachings discourage it because of concerns about interaction between genders and maintaining moral values. Although co-education is not directly forbidden in Shariah, the general Islamic viewpoint is that it is better to avoid it, and that having separate classrooms for boys and girls is preferred. Teachings / opinions of some Muslim schools of thoughts (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali) provide interpretive guidance on gender interaction, often leaning toward segregation in educational environments to maintain Islamic moral boundaries. Some support gender-segregated education, while others advocate a modified co-educational model that upholds Islamic ethics permitting male and female interaction under controlled, respectful, and morally safe conditions. Some scholars and respondents expressed concern that co-education may compromise Islamic modesty, lead to inappropriate interactions, or distract students, particularly females. Some other Muslims school of thoughts do not have a single, unified stance on co-education, many within them generally favour co-education, emphasizing the importance of knowledge acquisition and the potential for learning and understanding in a mixed-gender environment. Some scholars argue that co-education can foster a more balanced and inclusive learning environment, potentially leading to better outcomes for both boys and girls.

Christianity shows a range of views on co-education. Conservative traditions like Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy often favor single-sex education to promote modesty and moral discipline. However, many Protestant and Reformist denominations, especially in the West, support co-education, aligning with gender equality and educational reform. While the Bible does not specify school structure, it promotes values such as respect and discipline, which can be applied in both settings. Hinduism reflects diverse practices. In ancient times, education was mostly for upper-caste males, though female scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi also existed. Today, co-education is widely accepted in Hindu-majority areas, although some traditional institutions still prefer gender segregation. Hindu philosophy views knowledge as universal, and reformers like Swami Vivekananda and Gandhi supported equal education for both sexes. Judaism varies by denomination. Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox communities maintain gender-segregated schools, guided by modesty laws and traditional roles. In contrast, Conservative and Reform Judaism

support co-education, especially in secular subjects. Though scripture doesn't dictate school format, Jewish teachings emphasize lifelong learning and are increasingly interpreted to support educational equality. Sikhism fully supports gender equality in education. From its beginning, Sikhism has upheld women's right to learn, with no restrictions on co-education. Most Sikh institutions are co-ed, reflecting the religion's emphasis on equality, unity (Ik Onkar), and mutual respect. Buddhism encourages learning for both genders as part of the path to enlightenment. While early monastic education was male-focused, women were later allowed to join monastic learning. Today, co-education is widely accepted in Buddhist countries, though some monastic settings still maintain gender separation. Doctrinally, Buddhism supports education for all without gender bias.

(c) Analysis of Study Population / Sample

Responses of Male Students

65% of male students supported co-education for promoting gender understanding, confidence, and competitiveness. 25% expressed concerns about distractions and cultural incompatibilities in co-educational settings. 10% preferred gender segregation based on religious considerations. A majority of male students showed inclination towards co-education influenced by modern trends of social equity and career readiness.

Responses of Female Students

48 % of female students supported co-education under certain regulated conditions (e.g., modest dress codes, ethical boundaries). 40 % opposed it, citing psychological discomfort, lack of participation, and vulnerability / discrimination. 12% remained neutral and undecided. Female students favored a modified co-education system that aligns with cultural and religious values, showing a desire for balance between modern education and modesty / equality.

Responses of Male Teachers

62% of male teachers viewed co-education positively, focusing on academic performance and classroom discipline. 28% highlighted potential ethical and religious issues. 10% proposed flexible models with separation in certain activities. Most male teachers supported co-education from an academic viewpoint, advocating for policy boundaries to uphold Islamic ethics and moral / social values.

Responses of Female Teachers

54% agreed that co-education can empower female students, develop their confidence and enhance mutual respect. 36% expressed safety and modesty concerns in mixed environments. 10% supported blended models like gender-based seating or separated class sections. Mostly, female teachers demonstrated support in favor of coeducation within modern educational frameworks.

Views of Parents

50 % of fathers supported co-education, believing it prepares students for real-world settings. 38% expressed religious and moral apprehensions. 12 % were unsure or deferred the decision to the student's comfort. Fathers are inclined toward a pragmatic and competitive worldview, emphasizing career development. On the other hand, 48% of mothers supported co-education for its convenience and academic benefits. 42% preferred separate schooling due to protective instincts and cultural upbringing. 10% sought institutional reassurances about moral, ethical safeguards and gender discrimination. Mothers showed more protective and cautious attitudes, advocating for safeguards in co-educational models.

Views of Educational Administrators

70% of administrators supported co-education. aligned with Islamic ethical boundaries. 20% disagreed with co-education suggested reforms in curriculum and classroom management for mixed settings. 10% preferred gender-segregated education citing religious uniformity. Most administrators supported a faith-sensitive modern co-educational model, encouraging reforms rather than rejection.

Discussion

The findings of this study present a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of co-education as viewed through religious, cultural, and modern educational perspectives. The research highlights that while co-education is a widely adopted system globally, its acceptance and implementation vary significantly depending on religious interpretations, societal norms, and modern educational philosophies. From an Islamic standpoint, the diversity of opinions among scholars ranging from strict segregation to conditional support of co-education reflects the tension between traditional

jurisprudence and contemporary educational demands. The emphasis on modesty (حيا) and gender interaction (اختلاط) in classical Islamic sources presents challenges for co-education, but modern scholars in the light of different variable like contemporary circumstances, resources, compulsions etc have increasingly advocated for co-educational settings that respect Islamic ethical boundaries. Christian perspectives exhibit a spectrum as well, from conservative denominations favoring gender segregation to liberal traditions fully embracing co-education in the name of equality, respect, and shared moral development. This mirrors the evolution of Western education systems, especially in Protestant-majority nations, where co-education has become standard practice. Hinduism, lacking central authority, provides historical evidence of both gender exclusion and inclusion. Contemporary Hindu-majority societies like India show strong legal and societal support for co-education, influenced by reformist leaders like Swami Vivekananda. Similar inclusive attitudes are found in Sikhism and Buddhism. Sikhism's foundational principle of gender equality supports co-education unequivocally, while Buddhism's focus on wisdom and liberation for both genders lends doctrinal support to inclusive education systems. Jewish views remain denominationally divided. Orthodox communities strictly observe gender segregation, while Reform and Conservative sectors support co-education, especially for secular subjects. This duality demonstrates the influence of cultural adaptation in educational practice within religious frameworks. From a modern educational lens, co-education is overwhelmingly supported for its role in promoting gender equality, interpersonal development, and readiness for real-world experiences. It enables boys and girls to develop mutual respect, enhances communication skills, encourages healthy competition, and contributes to personality development. These benefits align with global education goals set by organizations such as UNESCO, which advocate for inclusive, gender-balanced educational environments. The study also reveals that, despite widespread global acceptance, co-education continues to face resistance in more conservative or traditionalist communities. This resistance is largely rooted in concerns about modesty, distraction, and moral boundaries. However, the findings indicate that such concerns can be addressed through culturally sensitive and ethically grounded implementations of co-education which fulfil best suited and acceptable to all.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the co-education system is a complex yet evolving aspect of global educational discourse, shaped by religious values, cultural traditions, and modern pedagogical practices. The findings indicate that while co-education is widely practiced and supported in many regions and religions today, its acceptance is not universal and varies across communities. From a religious perspective, traditional views particularly in Orthodox Judaism, conservative Christianity, and classical Islamic jurisprudence tend to prefer gender-segregated education. Their concerns center around moral discipline, modesty, and preserving cultural values. However, reformist and modern interpretations within these religions, as well as in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, increasingly recognize the value of co-education, especially when implemented with ethical considerations and cultural sensitivity. The modern and contemporary educational outlook strongly favors co-education for its benefits in promoting gender equality, interpersonal development, and preparation for real-world challenges. It encourages a collaborative learning environment that supports respect, inclusion, and mutual understanding between genders. Furthermore, the study reveals varying degrees of support for co-education among different segments of society, including male and female students, teachers, parents (single mothers and fathers), and educationists. While some stakeholders voice concerns related to discipline, distraction, and cultural values, the majority perceive co-education as an effective and progressive system, provided it operates within a framework that upholds moral and ethical standards. In essence, co-education, when structured thoughtfully and implemented with due regard for religious sensitivities and societal values, can significantly contribute to academic success, personality development, and the fostering of inclusive, respectful communities. The key lies in balancing traditional values with contemporary needs in an educational framework that supports equity, ethics, and excellence.

Recommendations for Suitable Model

Based on the findings, discussion, and conclusion of the study, the following **recommendations** for suitable model are proposed:

- Educational institutions and policymakers should develop and implement co-education systems that align cultural and religious values. Ethical guidelines regarding modesty, behavior, and interaction should be clearly communicated and practiced easing concerns among conservative communities.
- To foster broader acceptance of co-education, it is recommended that educational authorities engage in constructive dialogue with religious scholars, community leaders, and parents. This will help clarify misconceptions and highlight the compatibility of co-education with moral development and religious teachings when implemented appropriately.
- Teachers should receive professional development in managing mixed-gender classrooms, emphasizing respect, inclusivity, and equal participation. Special attention should be given to addressing biases and promoting a safe, respectful learning environment for all students.
- Sufficient funds may be allocated. School infrastructure and classroom settings should be designed to support both learning and ethical behavior. Separate recreational areas, codes of conduct, and monitoring systems can help maintain discipline and decorum without compromising the benefits of co-education.
- Embedding moral education into the curriculum can address concerns related to behavior and discipline in co-educational settings. This includes teachings on respect, empathy, cooperation, and mutual understanding among genders.
- Where there is strong resistance to co-education, authorities might consider providing both single-sex and co-educational options in parallel. This approach acknowledges diverse perspectives while still supporting inclusive education.
- Government and non-government organizations should launch awareness campaigns to educate the public about the advantages of co-education, dispel myths, and highlight successful examples from different religious and cultural contexts.
- Continued academic research should be encouraged to explore how co-education impacts students' academic performance, behavior, psychological well-being, and religious values across various societies and education levels.
- Schools should actively engage parents, particularly single mothers and fathers, in decision-making processes and educational support initiatives to ensure their perspectives are considered and their concerns are addressed within co-educational settings.
- Educationists must be equipped with knowledge and tools to advocate for inclusive and balanced education systems. They should lead discourse on educational reform, ensuring co-education is both effective and culturally sensitive.
- A team of qualified religious scholars, experts and educationist in Quran, Hadith, Islamic Fiqa may be tasked to formulate recommendations and devise a model of Co-Education which fulfill all requirements of the modern world and the keep the happiness of Allah Almighty.

Future Study

Future research is recommended and encouraged to explore this complex and vast topic across different societies of the world in general and Islamic society, particular Pakistan in specific.

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