



Progressive Islam in Practice

GIRLS' EDUCATION & ISLAM

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WHAT DOES ISLAM SAY ABOUT GIRLS' EDUCATION?

In traditional Islamic theological stances, women have the same rights as men when it comes to pursuing an education. Additionally, education is a divine command, deemed necessary for the realization of *maqasid* (the governance, rulings of law, and the objective to create harmony with others) and *masalih mursalah* (public good). It is also generally acknowledged that commandments from the Qur'an apply to all, regardless of gender identity. Therefore, any commandment directed at 'man' or 'mankind' to pursue an education would apply to women as well.

"And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned."

QURAN 17:36

DID GIRLS HAVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION DURING THE TIME OF THE PROPHET (PBUH)?

During the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), he ensured that access to education was equitable across genders in accordance with Quranic teachings. He held classes specifically for women and also encouraged his wives and daughters to focus on their education. In fact, his wives, notably Aishah and Umm Salama, made significant contributions to Islamic scholarship. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also established the first school in the history of Islam, where both boys and girls were taught to read and write.

"One who treads a path
in search of knowledge
has his path to Paradise
made easy by God."

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)
RIYADH US-SALEHEEN

WHY IS EDUCATION SO IMPORTANT IN ISLAM?

In Islam, education is perceived to be one of the primary components for a Muslim to become a well-informed, thoughtful, and compassionate practitioner of the faith. Receiving education is also considered to be one of the cardinal rights in Islam, falling under the banner of mind/intellect and forming a sacred whole alongside family, property, sanctity of life, honor, and *deen* (religion). To prevent a Muslim from obtaining an education is to interfere with their *akhirah* (afterlife) – is impeding their obligation to become more well-rounded human beings, and in essence, Muslims.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

- **43% of** Muslim women worldwide have no formal schooling, compared with 30% of Muslim men.
- Muslim women around the world lag behind Muslim men in average years of schooling by **a year and a half** (4.9 years vs. 6.4 years)
- **10%** of Muslim men have post-secondary degrees, compared with **6%** of Muslim women.
- Muslim women have had a larger increase in average years of schooling, from **2.5 years** among the oldest Muslim women, to **6.1 years** among the youngest, a gain of **3.6 years**.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT MUSLIM GIRLS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION?

- Helps build stronger economies and decreases poverty.
- Increasing literacy rates is a key instrument for a healthy society, as it enables one to make well-informed decisions.
- Improves population health, as increased access to information leads to mothers protecting their children better from disease and improving the nutritional intake of their children.
- Assists communities recovering from conflicts, helping to restore it in a more sustainable manner.
- Leads to happier and healthier families, which leads to happier, healthier, and stronger societies.

IF SOMEONE SAYS GIRLS SHOULDN'T GO TO SCHOOL, WHAT TEXTS CAN I POINT THEM TO?

- "So only those of His servants who have knowledge (of these realities with a vision and outlook) fear Him. Surely, Allah is Almighty, Most Forgiving." (35:28)
- "There is no god but He: That is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endowed with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise" (3:18)
- "...And when ye are told to rise up, rise up. Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) Knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do." (58:11)
- Ibn Abbas reported that the captives on the day of the Battle of Badr could not find money to ransom themselves. So, the Prophet (PBUH) made their ransom that they teach the children of the Ansar how to write.
- Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said "The acquisition of knowledge is binding on all Muslims (both men and women without any discrimination)." (Ibn Maja in al-Sunan, 1:81:224)

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