



Gender and Contemporary Social Worlds

Hamid Parsania¹ , Abolfazl Eghbali² 

1. Professor, Department of sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. Email: h.parsania@ut.ac.ir
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Women and Family Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Economy, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author) Email: a.eghbali@alzahra.ac.ir

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 14 February 2025 Received in revised form: 20 May 2025 Accepted: 24 May 2025 Published online: 22 June 2025</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Fundamental Methodology, Gender, Islam, Modernity, Social Worlds.</i></p>	<p>Discussions surrounding women, gender, and their social manifestations have historically posed significant challenges for the Islamic world. Various intellectual and social approaches - each grounded in distinct semantic systems - have addressed these issues from different perspectives. A macroscopic analysis reveals that two dominant semantic paradigms, Islam and modernity, underlie these approaches. The present study aims to examine these perspectives, analyze their underlying semantic systems, and conceptualize gender-based approaches within the framework of social worlds. This is an applied study, methodologically situated in the domain of qualitative research. The conceptual framework is based on the theory of social worlds, and the fundamental methodology is employed to explore the development of these discourses in the theoretical and socio-political spheres of Iranian society. According to the findings, key components of the Islamic theory of gender include gender essentialism, the social extension of gender, social systematization based on couplehood, and gender as an existential capacity. The epistemological foundations of this social world are rooted in Javaheri jurisprudence and transcendental wisdom, while its non-epistemological (cognitive) contexts include the social and political developments of the Constitutional Era and the Islamic Revolution of Iran. In contrast, the feminist theory of gender is characterized by concepts such as gender constructionism, transsexuality, gender fluidity, gender as a mechanism of domination, and the rejection of gender's social extensions. Its epistemological contexts include Western feminist thought and the neo-religious and intellectual movements within Islamic societies, while its non-epistemological contexts in Iran are shaped by the legal inequalities between men and women and the political transformations of the 1970s.</p>
<p>Cite this article: Parsania, H. and Eghbali, A. (2025). Gender and Contemporary Social Worlds. <i>Journal of Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers</i>, 15(2): 1-21. https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2025.390502.1775</p>	



© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2025.390502.1775>

1. Introduction

In contemporary Islamic thought, various approaches to gender and its social manifestations can be identified, each grounded in distinct semantic systems. A macroscopic analysis reveals the influence of two dominant semantic paradigms—Islam and modernity—underpinning these perspectives. Each of these paradigms shapes policymaking and governance practices in different ways, guiding decisions and policies related to social and cultural matters based on their unique conceptual frameworks. A precise and comprehensive understanding of these paradigms—along with an investigation into how they have evolved and been interpreted within the historical and geographical contexts of Islamic societies, particularly Iranian society—can provide deeper insights for critical engagement. Accordingly, this research seeks to examine these approaches, analyze their underlying semantic systems, conceptualize gender-oriented paradigms within the framework of "social worlds," and explore their existential foundations within the context of Islamic thought through the lens of fundamental methodology theory.

2. Methodology

This study is developmental in nature and methodologically situated within the domain of qualitative research. It employs the logic of fundamental methodology to analyze how gender-focused social worlds are constituted. Different theories, concepts, or methodologies can be used to examine the formation of scientific theories; one such framework is fundamental methodology, which may be defined as: "A set of foundational principles and axioms upon which a scientific theory is established, providing the structure and trajectory for scientific development—referred to as fundamental methodology."

3. Findings

Islam and modernity, as two major "social worlds," each offer distinct semantic systems for conceptualizing gender. The Islamic social world is a dynamic, expanding system embedded in the history and geography of global civilizations. Conversely, modernity—emerging in the Western context during the Renaissance and subsequent socio-political transformations—has become a globally influential paradigm, extending its reach into the intellectual and social structures of Islamic societies. In this research, the term "Islamic theory of gender" is used to represent the Islamic semantic system on gender, while "feminist theory of gender" refers to the semantic framework of modernity. After identifying the central components of both theories, the study proceeds to analyze their epistemological and non-epistemological existential contexts within the realm of contemporary Islamic thought using the framework of fundamental methodology.

4. Conclusion

The contemporary landscape of Islamic thought features diverse discourses and paradigms on gender, each rooted in its own semantic system. This study examined two major paradigms—Islamic and modern—that structure conceptualizations of gender within their respective social worlds. The Islamic social world regarding gender is characterized by core concepts such as gender justice, contextual development and legislation, feminine capacity, primacy of human essence over gender, and inherent gender differences. At the symbolic level, this world is organized around a gender-oriented axis, while at the normative level, it emphasizes values such as chastity and gender boundaries, timely marriage, primacy of the family, gender-based division of roles, high fertility, rejection of gender-based domination, and women's social responsibility. The epistemological foundations of this worldview include Javaheri jurisprudence and transcendent theosophy, while its non-epistemological foundations in Iran include the Constitutional Revolution and the Islamic Revolution.

The modern social world, on the other hand, also offers a gender-focused paradigm, centered on key concepts such as equality, anti-domination, gender constructivism, historical oppression, gender similarity, and alienation. It encompasses multiple layers—symbols, values, and actions—with corresponding implications for gender roles. At the symbolic level, it is structured around feminism, and at the level of values and norms, it promotes equal rights for men and women, de-gendering of labor roles, selective

marriage, low fertility, and women's public participation. Its epistemological foundations include Western feminist thought and the neo-religious intellectual movements in Islamic societies, while non-epistemological foundations in Iran involve the legal inequalities between men and women and the political transformations of the 1970s.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Considerations: This article is derived from the Corresponding Author's PhD dissertation titled "Relations between woman and society" in University of Tehran.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

The Holy Quran

Abu Zaid, N. (2008). *The concept of the text*. Beirut: Al-Marqez Al-Shaqafi Al-Arabi Al-Dar Al-Bayda.

Alasvand, F. (2011). *Woman in Islam*. Qom: Women and Family Research Institute.

Ayatollahi, Z. (2007). *Women, religion and politics*. Tehran: Women's Cultural and Social Council.

Barrett, M., & Philips, A. (1992). *Destabilizing theory: Contemporary feminist debates*. London: Polity Press.

Barrett, M. (1989). *Women's oppression today*. Halton Press.

Ben, S. L. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bernard, J. (1981). The good provider role: Its rise and fall. *American Psychologist*.

Bostan, H. (2006). *Islam and gender differences*. Qom: Seminary and University Research Center.

Bostan, H. (2009). *Islam and sociology of the family*. Qom: Seminary and University Research Center.

Bostan, H. (2012). An attempt to provide an Islamic framework for the sociology of gender. *Islam and Social Sciences Quarterly*, 8.

Chalmers, A. (2008). *What is science* (S. Zibakalam, Trans.). Tehran: Samat.

Cheraghikotiani, I. (2009). *Family, Islam and feminism*. Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute (RA).

Cohen, T. (2017). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (S. Zibakalam, Trans.). Tehran: Samat.

Connell, R. (2010). Transsexual women and feminist thought: Toward new understanding and new politics. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 37(4), 857–881.

De Beauvoir, S. (1975). *The second sex* (H. M. Parsley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.

Delphy, C. (2003). Rethinking sex and gender. In *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspective*. New York: Routledge.

Faludi, S. (1993). If women are equal to men, then why? (Z. Zahedi, Trans.). *Women's Magazine*, 12.

Firestone, S. (1970). The dialectic of sex. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *The second wave*. New York & London: Routledge.

Friedan, B. (1963). *The feminine mystique*. New York: Dell.

Gharavi, S. (2004). Introducing contemporary Mu'tazilites. *Hekmat-e Sina Quarterly*, 24–25.

Giddens, A. (2007). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Habermas, J. (2014). *Globalization and the future of democracy* (K. Poladi, Trans.). Tehran: Center Publishing.

Ham, M., & Gamble, S. (2003). *A dictionary of feminist theories* (F. Mohajer & N. A. Khorasani, Trans.). Tehran: Tose Publishing.

Hashemian, S. M. H., Parsania, H., & Seyyed Mohseni, S. M. (2019). Implications of the theory of social worlds in reconstructing the discourse analysis of Laclau and Mouffe (Introduction to the theory of native discourse). *Quarterly Journal of Epistemological Studies at the Islamic University*, 4.

- Hurr Ameli, M. b. H. (1416 AH). *Shiite tools for details of Sharia issues*. Qom: Al-Bayt Institute for the Revival of Heritage.
- Jackson, S. (1999). *Heterosexuality in question*. London: Sage.
- Jabri, M. A. (1991). *Heritage and modernity* (1st ed.). Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies.
- Jabri, M. A. (2013). *Introduction to the Holy Quran in the definition of the Quran* (4th ed.). Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies.
- James, S. (2003). Feminism (A. Yazdani, Trans.). In *Feminism and feminist sciences: A collection of articles*. Qom: Women and Family Research Center.
- Javadi Ameli, A. (1990). *Thematic commentary on the Holy Quran: Vol. 12. Nature in the Quran* (M. R. Mostafapour, Ed.). Qom: Israa.
- Javadi Ameli, A. (2007). *Woman in the mirror of glory and beauty*. Qom: Israa Publications.
- Kersey-Matusiak, G. (2012). *Delivering culturally competent nursing care*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Khomeini, S. R. (2009). *Sahifeh Noor*. Tehran: The Office of Editing and Publishing the Works of Imam (RA).
- Kulaini, M. I. Y. (1997). *Al-Kafi*. Qom: Dar al-Hadith for Printing and Publishing.
- Majlisi, M. B. (1993). *Bihar al-Anwar*. Beirut: Al-Wafa Institute.
- Mesbah Yazdi, M. T. (1993). *Anthropology in the Quran*. Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute.
- Michel, A. (2003). *Women's social movement* (H. Zanjani Zadeh, Trans.). Mashhad: Nika.
- Millett, K. (1970). *Sexual politics*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Mirkhani, E. A. S. (2001). *A new approach to family relations*. Tehran: Safir Sobh.
- Moshirzadeh, H. (2003). *From movement to social theory*. Tehran: Shiraz.
- Motahari, M. (2003). *Women's rights system in Islam*. Tehran: Sadra.
- Motahari, M. (2006). *An introduction to the Islamic worldview*. Tehran: Sadra.
- Myers, A. (2018). Trans terminology seems like it's changing all the time. *Slate Magazine*.
- Nouri Tabarsi, H. I. M. T. (1401 AH). *Mustadrak al-Wasayl and Mustanbat al-Masayel*. Qom: Al-Bayt Institute for the Revival of Heritage.
- Oakley, A. (1976). *Woman's work: The housewife, past and present*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Parsania, H. (2005). A critical approach to Islamic philosophy on the relationship between reason and gender. *Hoora*, 14.
- Parsania, H. (2012). *Social worlds*. Qom: Kitab Farda.
- Parsania, H. (2013). Theory and culture: Fundamental methodology for the development of scientific theories. *Radaab Farhang*, 23.
- Parsania, H., & Eghbali, A. (2018). Fundamental methodology of feminist theory in Iran. *Journal of Methodology of Humanities*, 23.
- Parsania, H., & Soltani, M. (2011). Rereading the social worlds of phenomenological sociology based on transcendental wisdom. *Quarterly Journal of Cultural and Social Knowledge*, 1.
- Rauf, H. (1998). *Women's political participation* (M. Armin, Trans.). Tehran: Qatra.
- Reed, E. (1999). Does a woman's destiny determine her physical structure? (R. Danesh, Trans.). Tehran: Danesh.
- Richardson, D. (1996). *Theorizing heterosexuality: Telling it straight*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Ritzer, G. (1995). *Sociological theory in the contemporary era* (M. Salasi, Trans.). Tehran: Elmi.
- Rowbotham, S. (1973). *Woman's consciousness, man's world*. New Orleans: Pelican.
- Saduq, M. I. A. (1413 AH). *Man la'ihadrah al-Faqih*. Qom: Qom Seminary Teachers' Association.
- Sadeghi-Fasaei, S., & Eghbali, A. (2010). Discursive reading of sexual controversies in Iran. *Women in Culture and Art Quarterly*, 12(1).
- Sadeghi-Fasaei, S., & Erfanmanesh, I. (2012). Situational analysis and discourse analysis of social theorizing of the ideal family model in Iran. *Quarterly Journal of Strategic Women's Studies*, 58.
- Salarifar, M. R. (2008). *Family in the perspective of Islam and psychology*. Qom: Bostan Ketab.

- Sinclair, K. (2013). *About whoever: The social imprint on identity and orientation*. [Paperback].
- Steinem, G. (1970). Women's right. Presented at Women's Rights Workshop, New York.
- Tabarsi, F. I. H. (1408 AH). *Makarem al-Akhlaq*. Beirut: Dar al-Hura'a.
- Tabataba'i, M. H. (1370). *Al-Mizan fi al-Tafsir al-Quran*. Tehran: Allama Tabataba'i Scientific Foundation.
- Vincent, B. (2020). *Non-binary genders: Navigating communities, identities, and healthcare*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Ziba'nejad, M. R. (2012). *Gender identity and roles*. Qom: Women and Family Research Institute.