

Gender Justice as Axiology: An Epistemological Reconstruction from Islamic Thought and Contemporary Philosophy

Nasirin¹, Fahmi¹, Panggih Widodo¹, Hirman Jayadi¹, Siti Nurkholilah¹,
Mohammad Nizar¹, Achmad Soib¹, Wildan Fahri Nadil Khoir¹

¹Graduate School, Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

This article examines gender justice as an axiological problem through an epistemological reconstruction that integrates Islamic thought and contemporary philosophy. Departing from the assumption that gender inequality is not merely a social phenomenon but also a product of epistemic distortion, the study argues that dominant knowledge systems have historically shaped unequal power relations and value hierarchies. Using a qualitative descriptive–analytical method and a philosophical-hermeneutical approach, this research explores key concepts in Islamic epistemology particularly *tawhīd*, *khilāfah*, and *rahmah* alongside critical perspectives from contemporary philosophy, including feminist theory and the ethics of care. The findings reveal that Islamic epistemology, when interpreted through an integrative and *maqāṣid*-oriented framework, offers a comprehensive axiological foundation for gender justice that unites spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. This framework emphasizes ontological equality, moral responsibility, and relational interdependence as fundamental principles. At the same time, the study identifies significant epistemic convergence with contemporary philosophical approaches, particularly in their critique of domination, their emphasis on care and relational ethics, and their rejection of reductionist and patriarchal paradigms. The article concludes that reconstructing gender justice as an axiological project enables a more holistic and transformative framework that is both normatively grounded and contextually relevant. Such an approach not only bridges Islamic and Western intellectual traditions but also contributes to the development of a more just and ethically responsive discourse on gender in contemporary society.

Keywords: Gender Justice, Axiology, Islamic Epistemology, Feminist Theory, Ethics of Care.

INTRODUCTION

Gender justice remains one of the most contested and urgent issues in contemporary global discourse. Despite significant advancements in legal frameworks and social awareness, gender inequality continues to manifest in various structural, cultural, and epistemic forms across societies. Reports from international organizations consistently demonstrate persistent disparities in access to education, economic participation, political representation, and social recognition (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). These inequalities are often addressed through sociological and policy-oriented approaches; however, such approaches tend to overlook a more fundamental dimension of the problem, namely its epistemological and axiological roots.

At its core, gender injustice is not merely a consequence of unequal social arrangements but also a product of historically constructed systems of knowledge and value that shape perceptions of identity, authority, and normativity. Feminist theorists have long argued that dominant epistemologies are embedded within power structures that privilege certain voices while marginalizing others, leading to what has been described as “epistemic

injustice” (Fricker, 2007). Similarly, Michel Foucault’s analysis of power/knowledge relations highlights how knowledge production is inseparable from mechanisms of domination and control (Foucault, 1980). In this context, gender inequality must be understood not only as a social issue but as an epistemic and axiological problem that requires critical reconstruction at the level of knowledge and values.

Within Islamic intellectual tradition, the question of gender justice has often been framed within theological, legal, and ethical discourses. Classical interpretations of the Qur’an and Islamic law have, in many cases, reflected socio-historical contexts that shaped particular understandings of gender roles and relations. While these interpretations have provided important normative frameworks, they have also been critiqued for insufficiently addressing contemporary concerns regarding equality, agency, and justice (Barlas, 2002). This has led to a growing body of scholarship that seeks to reinterpret Islamic sources through more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches, emphasizing the ethical and universal dimensions of the Qur’anic message (Wadud, 1999).

A key development in this regard is the emergence of *maqāṣid*-oriented approaches to Islamic epistemology, which prioritize the higher objectives of the Shari‘ah such as justice, welfare, and human dignity. Scholars have argued that these objectives provide a dynamic framework for re-evaluating normative interpretations in light of changing social realities (Auda, 2008). Within this framework, concepts such as *taḥīd* (divine unity), *khilāfah* (human stewardship), and *rahmah* (compassion) offer a rich axiological foundation for understanding gender relations in a way that transcends rigid hierarchies and emphasizes ethical responsibility and relational balance.

At the same time, contemporary philosophical discourse particularly feminist theory and the ethics of care has developed critical perspectives that challenge dominant paradigms of rationality, autonomy, and objectivity. Feminist epistemology critiques androcentric biases in knowledge production, while the ethics of care emphasizes relationality, interdependence, and moral responsibility as central to ethical life (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 2006). These approaches resonate in significant ways with Islamic ethical concepts, suggesting the possibility of a productive dialogue between different epistemic traditions. Despite these parallel developments, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the systematic integration of Islamic epistemology and contemporary philosophy in constructing a comprehensive framework of gender justice. Most existing studies tend to focus either on Islamic reinterpretation or on Western feminist critique in isolation, without exploring their potential convergence at the level of axiological foundations. As a result, the discourse often remains fragmented and lacks a unified conceptual framework capable of addressing both normative and structural dimensions of gender inequality.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining gender justice as an axiological problem through an epistemological reconstruction that integrates Islamic thought and contemporary philosophy. Rather than framing the relationship between these traditions in terms of influence or opposition, the study adopts a dialogical approach that emphasizes epistemic convergence and complementary insights. By analyzing key concepts within Islamic epistemology alongside critical perspectives from contemporary philosophy, this research aims to develop a more holistic and philosophically grounded understanding of gender justice.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to reposition gender justice within a broader axiological framework that bridges spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. Such an approach not only contributes to the advancement of interdisciplinary scholarship but also offers a more robust foundation for addressing gender inequality in contemporary society. In doing so, the study underscores the importance of rethinking both knowledge and values as integral components in the pursuit of justice.

METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in a descriptive–analytical method to examine gender justice as an axiological problem through the convergence of Islamic epistemology and contemporary philosophical thought. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this inquiry, as it facilitates an in-depth exploration of abstract concepts, interpretive frameworks, and normative structures that cannot be reduced to numerical representation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). By emphasizing meaning-making and interpretive analysis, this study seeks to uncover the epistemological and axiological foundations that shape discourses on gender justice.

Methodologically, the research adopts a library-based approach (*dirāsah maktabiyyah*), relying on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include foundational Islamic texts, particularly the Qur’an and major works within the Islamic intellectual tradition, as well as key philosophical writings in contemporary thought, especially feminist theory and ethics. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and prior studies that engage with issues of gender, epistemology, and ethics. These materials are critically examined to identify patterns of reasoning, underlying assumptions, and normative orientations within each epistemic tradition (Bowen, 2009; Zed, 2008).

The analytical strategy combines conceptual and comparative approaches. Conceptual analysis is employed to clarify central terms such as “gender justice,” “axiology,” and “epistemology,” examining how these concepts are constructed and operationalized across different intellectual contexts (Audi, 2015). Comparative analysis, meanwhile, is used to explore the relationship between Islamic and Western philosophical traditions, not in terms of historical influence, but in terms of epistemic convergence and methodological alignment. This approach allows the study to transcend reductionist binaries and instead identify shared normative concerns and complementary insights (Ritonga & Saputra, 2025; Siddiqi, 2021).

At the conceptual level, this study is grounded in an integrative epistemological framework that views knowledge as emerging from the dynamic interaction between revelation, reason, and experience. Within Islamic epistemology, this interaction is reflected in the interplay between *bayānī* (textual), *burhānī* (rational-demonstrative), and *tajribī* (empirical) modes of knowing (Al-Jabiri, 1991; Lombard, 2024). These epistemic modes are not treated as mutually exclusive, but as complementary dimensions that collectively produce a holistic understanding of reality. Such an integrative model provides a robust foundation for reinterpreting gender-related issues in a manner that is both normatively grounded and contextually responsive.

In parallel, the study engages with contemporary philosophical frameworks, particularly feminist epistemology and the ethics of care. Feminist epistemology challenges the assumption of value-neutral knowledge by demonstrating how epistemic practices are often shaped by gendered power relations, resulting in forms of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007; Harding, 1991). Meanwhile, the ethics of care emphasizes relationality, interdependence, and moral responsibility as central to ethical life, offering an alternative to abstract and individualistic models of justice (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 2006). These perspectives are incorporated into the analytical framework to highlight points of convergence with Islamic ethical principles such as justice (*‘adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and human dignity (*karāmah*).

Rather than pursuing a historical–causal analysis of intellectual influence, this study adopts a dialogical and reconstructive approach. It seeks to identify parallel intellectual trajectories and shared ethical concerns between Islamic thought and contemporary philosophy. This

dialogical framework enables the articulation of gender justice not merely as a legal or sociological issue, but as an axiological construct rooted in the interplay of knowledge, values, and ethical responsibility (Auda, 2008; Barlas, 2002).

Ultimately, this methodological and conceptual framework allows the study to develop a model of gender justice that is both philosophically rigorous and contextually relevant. By integrating multiple epistemic perspectives, the research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of justice that transcends disciplinary boundaries and fosters constructive dialogue between diverse intellectual traditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Epistemology, Power, and the Construction of Gender Inequality

The findings of this study indicate that gender inequality is not merely a socio-cultural phenomenon but is deeply embedded within epistemological structures that govern the production, validation, and circulation of knowledge. Within dominant intellectual traditions, knowledge has historically been constructed through androcentric frameworks that privilege male experiences while marginalizing women's voices and perspectives. This condition aligns with what Fricker (2007) conceptualizes as *epistemic injustice*, in which individuals or groups are systematically undermined in their capacity as knowers due to identity-based prejudice. Such injustice operates not only at the interpersonal level but also within institutional and structural domains that shape credibility, authority, and recognition (Medina, 2013; Dotson, 2011).

From a philosophical perspective, this epistemic imbalance is closely associated with the historical dominance of rationalist and positivist paradigms in Western thought. These paradigms emphasize objectivity, abstraction, and detachment as criteria of valid knowledge, often privileging forms of reasoning that are presented as universal but are in fact situated within specific socio-historical contexts (Harding, 1991; Code, 1995). Feminist epistemologists have demonstrated that claims of neutrality frequently conceal implicit biases that privilege dominant groups while excluding alternative ways of knowing, particularly those grounded in lived experience and relational contexts (Longino, 1990; Anderson, 2020).

In this regard, feminist epistemology emerges as a critical corrective that exposes the power-laden nature of knowledge production. It challenges the assumption that knowledge can be separated from social position, arguing instead that all knowledge is situated and shaped by relations of power, identity, and experience (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991). The concept of *situated knowledge* highlights that marginalized perspectives, including those of women, are not epistemically inferior but rather provide crucial insights into social realities that dominant frameworks fail to capture (Haraway, 1988). Consequently, the exclusion of such perspectives results not only in social injustice but also in epistemic impoverishment.

A central mechanism through which gendered epistemic injustice operates is testimonial injustice, in which speakers are assigned diminished credibility due to gender bias, and hermeneutical injustice, in which gaps in collective interpretive resources hinder the ability of marginalized groups to articulate their experiences (Fricker, 2007). Empirical and philosophical studies have shown that these forms of injustice are pervasive across various domains, including academia, law, healthcare, and public discourse (Carel & Kidd, 2014; Pohlhaus, 2012). For instance, women's experiences of discrimination or violence are often dismissed or trivialized due to entrenched stereotypes, while the conceptual vocabulary necessary to describe such experiences may be underdeveloped or socially marginalized.

Moreover, contemporary scholarship highlights the intersectional nature of epistemic injustice, demonstrating that gender inequality is intensified when it intersects with other axes of identity such as race, class, and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). Intersectionality reveals that epistemic marginalization is not uniform but varies across different social positions, thereby complicating simplistic accounts of gender inequality. This perspective underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of how knowledge, power, and identity interact in the construction of social hierarchies (Collins, 2000; Fricker, 2007).

At the institutional level, epistemic injustice is reinforced through disciplinary norms, evaluative standards, and practices of knowledge production that privilege certain forms of reasoning and expression. Academic institutions, for example, often valorize detached, impersonal styles of argumentation that align with traditional conceptions of rationality, while devaluing narrative, experiential, or relational modes of knowledge that are frequently associated with marginalized groups (Code, 1995; Anderson, 2020). This dynamic contributes to the reproduction of gender inequality within knowledge-producing institutions and limits the diversity of epistemic contributions (Dotson, 2011).

Recent developments further indicate that epistemic injustice is increasingly mediated through digital and technological systems. Algorithmic bias, data gaps, and platform governance structures can reproduce and even amplify existing gender inequalities by shaping what information is visible, credible, and accessible (Noble, 2018; Criado Perez, 2019). These developments highlight that epistemic injustice is not static but evolves alongside technological transformations, requiring continuous critical engagement.

Taken together, these findings support the argument that gender injustice is fundamentally a manifestation of epistemological asymmetry, in which unequal participation in knowledge production leads to unequal recognition, authority, and value attribution. Addressing gender inequality therefore necessitates not only social and institutional reforms but also a critical reconstruction of epistemological frameworks that define what counts as knowledge and who is recognized as a legitimate knower (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013).

In this sense, gender justice must be reconceptualized as an axiological issue that concerns the distribution of epistemic value and recognition within society. It requires a transformation of both knowledge systems and value structures, enabling more inclusive, relational, and ethically grounded forms of understanding. Such a transformation opens the possibility for a more just epistemic order in which diverse voices are recognized as essential contributors to knowledge and social progress.

Islamic Epistemology and the Ethical Foundations of Gender Justice

In contrast to epistemological paradigms that privilege abstraction, detachment, and value-neutrality, Islamic epistemology offers an integrative framework that combines revelation, rational inquiry, and ethical responsibility as mutually reinforcing dimensions of knowledge. Rather than positing a dichotomy between fact and value, Islamic thought situates knowledge within a moral ontology grounded in *tawhīd* (divine unity), which affirms the interconnectedness of all existence and orients human action toward justice (*'adl*) and compassion (*rahmah*) (Auda, 2008; Lombard, 2024). This ontological foundation implies that knowledge is never merely descriptive or instrumental but is inherently normative, carrying ethical implications for both individual conduct and social organization (Nasr, 2006; Siddiqi, 2021).

From this perspective, the Qur'anic worldview articulates a holistic epistemic vision in which knowing is inseparable from being and acting. Knowledge is not pursued solely for cognitive mastery or technical control over reality, as often emphasized in modern scientific paradigms, but for the realization of moral responsibility and the promotion of collective well-being (*maṣlahah*) (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2019). This integrative orientation challenges

the fragmentation characteristic of modern epistemologies, where knowledge is frequently detached from ethical considerations and reduced to a tool of domination, control, or utility (Lumbard, 2024; Nasr, 2006). In this sense, Islamic epistemology resists what has been described as the “instrumentalization of knowledge,” re-centering it within a moral and spiritual horizon.

Within this framework, the concept of *khilāfah* (human stewardship) occupies a central position in articulating the ethical foundations of gender justice. As a Qur’anic principle, *khilāfah* signifies the role of human beings as moral agents entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining balance, justice, and order within creation. Crucially, this responsibility is not gender-specific but universal, applying equally to all human beings regardless of biological or social distinctions (Barlas, 2002; Wadud, 1999). By framing human agency in terms of trust (*amānah*) and accountability (*mas’ūliyyah*), the concept of *khilāfah* fundamentally challenges hierarchical constructions of gender that assign differential moral worth or authority based on socially constructed categories.

This universalization of moral agency has significant epistemological implications. It reconfigures the subject of knowledge from a gendered and hierarchical entity into an ethically accountable being whose legitimacy is grounded in responsibility rather than domination. In this sense, Islamic epistemology implicitly resists epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) by affirming the moral and epistemic agency of all human beings. Such a framework opens space for more inclusive forms of knowledge production, where women are not merely objects of discourse but active participants in shaping epistemic and ethical narratives (Barlas, 2002; Wadud, 1999).

Furthermore, the Qur’anic notion of justice (*‘adl*) extends beyond formal equality to encompass relational balance, proportionality, and ethical responsibility. Justice, in this sense, is not limited to distributive fairness but constitutes an axiological principle that governs the moral structure of social relations (Siddiqi, 2021). This broader understanding resonates with contemporary philosophical critiques that emphasize substantive rather than formal equality, highlighting the importance of context, structural conditions, and lived experience in determining what counts as just (Young, 1990; Nussbaum, 2000; Anderson, 2020). By integrating these dimensions, Islamic epistemology provides a multidimensional conception of justice that is both normatively grounded and contextually sensitive.

The maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah framework further reinforces this ethical foundation by offering a dynamic and purposive approach to interpretation. Rather than adhering rigidly to literalist readings, maqāṣid-oriented thought prioritizes higher objectives such as the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), dignity (*karāmah*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*), and welfare (*maṣlahah*) (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2019). This teleological orientation enables a reinterpretation of normative texts that is responsive to changing social realities while remaining anchored in core ethical principles. In the context of gender justice, this approach allows for a critical re-evaluation of inherited interpretations that may perpetuate inequality, opening space for more inclusive and egalitarian readings that align with the overarching ethical vision of the Qur’an (Barlas, 2002; Wadud, 1999).

Moreover, the epistemological structure of Islamic thought characterized by the integration of *bayānī* (textual), *burhānī* (rational), and *‘irfānī* (experiential) modes of knowing (Al-Jabiri, 1991) further enriches its capacity to address complex social issues such as gender justice. This plural epistemic framework acknowledges that knowledge emerges not only from textual interpretation and rational analysis but also from lived experience and moral intuition. Such an approach resonates with contemporary developments in feminist epistemology, particularly the emphasis on situated knowledge and the recognition of marginalized experiences as valid sources of insight (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991).

In addition, recent scholarship has highlighted the compatibility of Islamic epistemology with critical and reflexive approaches to knowledge. Rather than being static or dogmatic, Islamic epistemology is inherently dynamic, characterized by interpretive plurality (*ikhtilāf*) and methodological openness (*ijtihad*), which allow it to engage constructively with modern philosophical and ethical discourses (Lumbard, 2024; Siddiqi, 2021). This adaptability is particularly crucial in addressing contemporary issues such as gender justice, where rigid or reductionist approaches often fail to capture the complexity of lived realities.

Taken together, these elements demonstrate that Islamic epistemology, when approached through an integrative and maqāṣid-based lens, provides a robust and multidimensional ethical foundation for gender justice. It transcends the limitations of both rigid legalism and abstract universalism by grounding justice in a framework that is simultaneously spiritual, ethical, and socially responsive. In doing so, it offers not only a normative vision of gender justice but also an epistemological paradigm capable of supporting its realization in diverse and changing contexts.

Epistemic Convergence and the Reconstruction of Gender Justice

One of the central findings of this study is the presence of a profound epistemic convergence between Islamic thought and contemporary philosophical frameworks, particularly feminist epistemology and the ethics of care. This convergence should not be interpreted as a linear historical influence or causal transmission of ideas, but rather as a parallel intellectual evolution in which distinct traditions arrive at analogous insights in response to shared ethical and existential concerns surrounding justice, knowledge, and human dignity (Siddiqi, 2021; Ritonga & Saputra, 2025). In this sense, convergence reflects what may be termed a *trans-traditional alignment of epistemic sensibilities*, where different knowledge systems independently develop compatible normative orientations.

At the methodological level, both traditions exhibit a significant shift away from epistemological reductionism toward integrative and reflexive models of knowledge. Feminist epistemology, for instance, critiques the long-standing assumption of value-neutral and universal knowledge by emphasizing *situated knowledge*, relational understanding, and epistemic accountability (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991; Anderson, 2020). Knowledge, in this framework, is always embedded within social locations, power relations, and lived experiences. Similarly, Islamic epistemology advances a pluralistic structure of knowing through the integration of *bayānī* (textual), *burhānī* (rational-demonstrative), and *tajribī* (empirical) modes of knowledge (Al-Jabiri, 1991; Lumbard, 2024). This triadic epistemic model reflects an inherent recognition that truth cannot be fully apprehended through a single methodological lens, but must instead emerge through the interaction of revelation, reason, and experience.

The convergence here is not merely structural but also philosophical. Both frameworks reject the illusion of detached objectivity and instead affirm that knowledge is inseparable from ethical responsibility and social context (Fricker, 2007; Code, 1995). In doing so, they challenge dominant epistemologies that obscure the role of power in shaping what counts as legitimate knowledge. This shared critique provides a strong epistemological basis for addressing gender injustice as a form of epistemic marginalization, where certain voices are systematically excluded from knowledge production and validation.

At the ethical level, the convergence becomes even more pronounced and conceptually significant. The ethics of care, as articulated by Gilligan (1982) and further developed by Held (2006), foregrounds relationality, interdependence, and responsibility as the core principles of ethical life. It challenges abstract, rule-based moral theories by emphasizing the importance of context, empathy, and responsiveness to the needs of others. This ethical orientation resonates deeply with Islamic moral concepts such as *rahmah* (compassion),

amānah (trust), and *‘adl* (justice), all of which are grounded in a relational understanding of human existence (Auda, 2008; Lombard, 2024).

In both traditions, ethics is not conceived as a system of isolated rules but as a dynamic practice of maintaining balance within a network of relationships. This relational ontology undermines individualistic and hierarchical models of ethics that prioritize autonomy and domination, replacing them with a framework centered on mutual care, ethical reciprocity, and moral accountability. Consequently, gender justice within this paradigm is not reduced to formal equality but is understood as the cultivation of equitable and compassionate relationships that recognize the dignity and agency of all individuals.

Furthermore, both frameworks articulate a critical stance toward structures of domination and asymmetrical power relations. Feminist theory exposes how epistemic, social, and institutional structures reproduce gender inequality through mechanisms of exclusion, silencing, and misrecognition (Fricker, 2007; Young, 1990). In parallel, Islamic ethical thought emphasizes the moral imperative to uphold justice and prevent harm (*dar’ al-mafāsīd*), positioning injustice as a violation of both divine order and human dignity (Barlas, 2002; Auda, 2008). This shared normative commitment to justice establishes a common ethical ground upon which meaningful dialogue between the two traditions can be constructed.

Importantly, this convergence also extends to the level of epistemic agency and moral subjectivity. Both traditions challenge passive conceptions of individuals as mere recipients of knowledge or norms. Instead, they affirm the role of human beings as active moral agents who participate in the construction, interpretation, and transformation of knowledge. In Islamic epistemology, this is reflected in the concept of *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), which allows for continuous reinterpretation of normative texts in light of changing contexts (Siddiqi, 2021). Similarly, feminist epistemology emphasizes reflexivity and critical engagement as essential components of knowledge production (Anderson, 2020).

This alignment reinforces the idea that gender justice cannot be achieved through static or prescriptive frameworks, but requires an ongoing process of epistemic and ethical reconstruction. It demands a reconfiguration of both knowledge systems and value structures, enabling more inclusive and equitable forms of understanding and social organization.

The convergence identified in this study thus creates a fertile intellectual space for reconstructing gender justice as an explicitly axiological framework. Rather than positioning Islamic and Western perspectives as inherently oppositional, this study demonstrates that they can be brought into a productive and dialogical relationship. Such a dialogue does not entail the homogenization of differences, but rather a mutual enrichment in which each tradition contributes its unique insights while remaining open to critical engagement.

Within this reconstructed framework, gender justice is no longer conceived merely as a legal or policy-driven objective, but as a moral orientation rooted in the interplay between knowledge, values, and ethical responsibility. It becomes an axiological project that seeks to transform not only social structures but also the underlying epistemic assumptions that sustain inequality. By integrating diverse epistemic traditions, this approach enables the development of a more comprehensive, philosophically grounded, and ethically transformative understanding of justice.

In this sense, epistemic convergence functions not only as an analytical finding but also as a normative pathway. It offers a foundation for reimagining gender justice in a way that transcends disciplinary boundaries, bridges cultural divides, and responds more effectively to the complexities of contemporary social life. Ultimately, this convergence underscores

the possibility of constructing a shared ethical horizon in which justice is grounded not in domination or exclusion, but in relationality, responsibility, and the recognition of human dignity.

Gender Justice as an Axiological Framework

Building on the identified epistemic convergence, this study conceptualizes gender justice as a fundamentally axiological construct grounded in the dynamic interplay between knowledge, value, and ethical orientation. Within this framework, justice cannot be reduced to a merely legal, procedural, or distributive principle; rather, it must be understood as a *normative horizon* that shapes how individuals and societies interpret difference, assign value, and structure social relations (Fricker, 2007; Nussbaum, 2000). Gender justice, therefore, operates not only at the level of institutional arrangements but at the deeper level of *meaning-making*, where epistemic recognition and moral valuation intersect.

From an axiological standpoint, gender justice entails the recognition of intrinsic human dignity (*karāmah*), the cultivation of equitable and non-dominating relationships, and the development of ethical responsibility grounded in relational awareness. This orientation resonates profoundly with Islamic ethical teachings, in which human dignity is conceived as an ontological given bestowed upon all human beings (*laqad karramnā banī Adam*), thereby establishing a universal foundation for moral equality and accountability (Barlas, 2002; Auda, 2008). At the same time, it aligns with contemporary philosophical critiques of domination and structural inequality, particularly within feminist theory and the ethics of care, which emphasize vulnerability, interdependence, and responsiveness as central to ethical life (Held, 2006; Butler, 2004).

Importantly, this axiological framing redefines justice as a relational and value-laden practice, rather than a static or purely distributive condition. Justice is not merely about equal allocation of resources or rights, but about sustaining relationships that affirm dignity, prevent domination, and enable mutual flourishing. In this sense, gender justice becomes inseparable from the ethical quality of social interactions, requiring a continuous negotiation of values within specific historical and cultural contexts.

Moreover, conceiving gender justice as an axiological framework enables a critical shift from formal equality toward substantive and context-sensitive justice. While formal equality assumes that equal treatment ensures fairness, it often obscures structural inequalities and ignores differences in social positioning, power, and access (Young, 1990). An axiological approach, by contrast, foregrounds *relational justice*, emphasizing that fairness must be evaluated in light of lived realities, historical conditions, and systemic constraints (Nussbaum, 2000; Anderson, 2020). This perspective allows for a more nuanced engagement with gender inequality, recognizing that justice requires not only equal outcomes but also the transformation of the underlying conditions that produce inequality. In addition, the axiological perspective highlights the necessity of ethical transformation at both individual and collective levels. Gender justice cannot be fully realized through institutional reform alone; it requires a reconfiguration of value systems, cultural imaginaries, and epistemological assumptions that sustain inequality (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013). This includes critically interrogating dominant constructions of authority, rationality, and legitimacy, which have historically privileged certain voices while marginalizing others (Harding, 1991; Haraway, 1988). In this regard, gender justice becomes an ongoing ethical project, one that demands reflexivity, critical awareness, and normative reconstruction.

Furthermore, this framework underscores the mutual constitution of epistemology and axiology. Knowledge systems shape what is considered valuable, credible, and meaningful, while value systems determine which forms of knowledge are recognized and legitimized. Consequently, addressing gender injustice requires transforming both epistemic structures

and value orientations simultaneously. Efforts to democratize knowledge production by amplifying marginalized voices and recognizing diverse forms of knowing must be accompanied by a reorientation of values toward justice, dignity, and care (Dotson, 2011; Anderson, 2020). In this sense, gender justice emerges as a site of *reciprocal transformation* between knowing and valuing.

At a deeper philosophical level, this axiological reconstruction challenges the dominance of instrumental rationality that has historically shaped modern social systems. By re-centering ethical values such as dignity, care, and responsibility, it proposes an alternative vision of social order grounded in moral interdependence rather than domination. This aligns with broader critiques of modernity that call for a rebalancing between rationality and ethics, knowledge and value, power and responsibility (Nussbaum, 2000; Butler, 2004). Ultimately, understanding gender justice as an axiological framework allows for a more comprehensive and integrative approach that bridges structural, cultural, and ethical dimensions of social life. It positions gender justice not merely as a social or political objective, but as a normative and civilizational project—one that seeks to transform how societies define value, recognize dignity, and organize human relationships. Such an approach opens the possibility for developing a more inclusive, humane, and relationally grounded conception of justice, capable of responding to the complexities of contemporary society while remaining anchored in enduring ethical principles.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that gender justice cannot be adequately understood solely as a social or legal issue, but must be approached as an axiological problem rooted in deeper epistemological structures. The persistence of gender inequality reflects not only institutional and cultural disparities, but also historically embedded systems of knowledge that shape how authority, identity, and value are constructed. Consequently, any meaningful effort to address gender injustice requires a critical reconstruction of both epistemological assumptions and underlying value frameworks.

The analysis reveals that Islamic epistemology, particularly when articulated through an integrative and maqāṣid-oriented approach, offers a comprehensive ethical foundation for gender justice. By combining revelation, rational inquiry, and experiential awareness, this framework emphasizes justice (*‘adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and human dignity (*karāmah*) as central moral principles. These values provide a normative basis for reinterpreting gender relations in a way that is both faithful to the ethical spirit of the Qur’an and responsive to contemporary challenges.

Furthermore, this study identifies a significant epistemic convergence between Islamic thought and contemporary philosophical perspectives, especially feminist epistemology and the ethics of care. This convergence is evident in their shared critique of value-neutral knowledge, their emphasis on relationality and responsibility, and their commitment to ethical reconstruction. Rather than positioning these traditions in opposition, the study demonstrates that they can be engaged dialogically to produce a more inclusive and philosophically robust understanding of justice.

Building on this convergence, the study proposes that gender justice be conceptualized as an axiological framework that integrates knowledge, values, and ethical responsibility. Within this framework, justice is not limited to formal equality but encompasses the cultivation of equitable relationships, the recognition of human dignity, and the commitment to moral accountability. Such an approach allows for a more holistic and context-sensitive understanding of justice that transcends disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of developing integrative and dialogical approaches in addressing contemporary issues of gender inequality. By bridging Islamic epistemology and modern philosophical discourse, it contributes to the construction of a normative framework that is both intellectually rigorous and ethically grounded. Ultimately, rethinking gender justice as an axiological construct opens new possibilities for advancing a more just, inclusive, and humane social order.

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