

Women and Hadith: A Thematic Study

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ABSTRACT

A thousand years ago, women had a significant role in preserving Hadith of the Prophet and were reported to have had little problems in narrating Hadith, compared to men. Women at that time had equal rights to learn from the Prophet and their contributions to the study of Hadith are something that needs to be acknowledged and appreciated. As a thematic study, this paper aims to address two important themes: first, women who narrated Hadith and second, narrations of Hadith related to women. This paper analyses types of interest among those influential women who were involved in the narration of Hadith, and simultaneously examine the content of Hadith related to women's issues, which were interpreted either positively or negatively. Furthermore, this paper will explore if there is gender bias or misogynistic discourse found in Hadith literature since there are arguments that Hadith demean women's rights and their status in Islam. The methodology used in this research is qualitatively based on data collections from two authoritative books on Hadith; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, and the analytical-critical-approach is used to evaluate the related Hadith. The research outcomes found that (a) most of Hadith narrated by women are not gender biased, (b) numbers of non-anti-women Hadith are higher than anti-women Hadith, and (c) Hadith that has been used to oppress women are probably misunderstood and misinterpreted.

INTRODUCTION

A thousand years ago, the role of women in preserving Hadith at the time of the Prophet was undeniably important. Women were acknowledged for their huge contribution to Hadith even after his death, and their efforts in learning and practicing the messages brought by the Prophet need to be emulated. Hadith emphasised how women interacted with the Prophet. At this time, there was no difference in gender to seek and gain knowledge, as mentioned in Hadith: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim" (*Sunan Ibn Mājah*). Although certain Hadiths argued about whether women could pursue knowledge, the encouragement given to them to learn and gain knowledge is more valid and stronger than not. Hadith such as "Do not give them (women) [access to] rooms, and do not teach them how to write, rather teach them spinning, and Surat al-Nūr"; "Do not teach your women writing, and do not keep them in the upper chambers. . ."; and reports that women should stay at home, are known to be rejected by a large number of scholars and jurists (Abou El- Fadl, 2001; Sayeed, 2011).

Men and women attended official or unofficial classes conducted by the Prophet in the mosque, his house, or other places. However, women at that time were brave to request a special session with the Prophet, as they said to him, 'the men take more of your time than we do, so appoint us a day with you.' The Prophet obliged to conduct special classes for the women (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*; *Musnad Ahmad*). Their discussions with the Prophet covered many aspects, including private and sensitive subjects and, they discussed more topics compared to combined classes with men. Their shyness did not stop them from learning more from the Prophet, as expressed by 'Aisha who said: "The best of women

are the women of the Anṣār; shyness did not prevent them from becoming knowledgeable about their religion” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). They were very committed and the Prophet also gave them opportunities to ask any questions and answered them patiently.

These women were scholars, who were specialised like their male counterparts in teaching the sciences of Hadith by transmitting canonical collections of them and actively taking responsibility for the learning process of their students, and later known as *al-Muḥaddithāt* (Abou-Bakr, 2003; Nadwi, 2007). They were also known as *al-Shaykhah*, *al-Khayyirah*, *al-Jalīlah*, *al-Ṣālihah*, *al-Musannadah*, *al-Muḥibbah fī al-Hadīth* (Deraman, 2007), and were given the titles of *Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ* (lady of ministers), *Sitt al-Fuqahāʾ* (lady of jurists), *Sitt al-ʿUlamāʾ* (lady of scholars), *Sitt al-Qudā* (lady of judges) and others (Abou-Bakr, 2003).

Women at the time of the Prophet were known to have had an elevated standing following their involvement in social and educational projects. Although most of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and Successors (*tābiʾīn*) who collected, memorized and preserved Hadith were men, women too undertook special roles in this work and were involved in the transmission of Hadith. As transmitters, they were no different from men because the main condition of an authentic Hadith, according to Ibn al-Ṣalah (d. 643AH/1245CE) is not the gender of its transmitter but that it should have “... a continuous *isnād*, made up of reporters of trustworthy memory from similar authorities and which is found to be free from any irregularities (i.e. in the text or *matn*) or defects (i.e. in the *sanad*).” Interestingly, the number of women transmitters of Hadith rose to more than eight thousand and the actual number, according to Akram Nadwi (2007), was even higher. Their important role as female narrators led to their supervising the studies of the Companions and to their narrations’ being accepted by various scholars. Among the latter are Imam al-Zuhri (d. 124 AH/741 CE), Imam Malik bin Anas (d.179 AH/795 CE), Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.241 AH/855 CE), Imam Abu Sa’d al-Sam’aani (d.562 AH/1172 CE), Al-Hafidh Ibn ‘Asakir (d.571 AH/1176 CE), Imam Ibn al-Jawzi (d.597 AH/1201 CE), Imam al-Dhahabi (d.748 AH/1347 CE), Imam Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalani (d.852/1448 CE) and much more (Al-Salman, 2007; Nadwi, 2007).

WOMEN NARRATORS

The generations of *al-Muḥaddithat* began from women at the time of the Prophet and were acknowledged throughout the fifteenth century. Until this time, no single bad report was heard regarding them, only compliments from great and famous scholars. For example, Imam al-Dhahabi (d.748 AH/1347 CE) said in his book *Mizān al-ʿItidāl*, ‘I have not known of any woman who was accused of falsifying Hadith.’ Imam al-Shawkani also commented, ‘It is not reported by any of the scholars that he rejected Hadith narrated by a woman because the narrator was a female.’ These statements show that the women scholars who contributed to the role of narrator or transmitter had a reputation for justice, truthfulness, and

trustworthiness in knowledge and narration. Interestingly, Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) was among the earliest scholars who addressed the special place of female transmitters in the chain of Hadith (Sayeed, 2011). Then scholars such as Jonathan Berkey (1992), Zubayr Siddiqi (1993), Ruth Roded (1994), Hisham Kabbani and Laleh Bakhtiar (1998), Abou-Bakr (2003), Asma Sayeed (2005) and the most current works of Akram Nadwi (2007) began to highlight the women's contributions.

The findings on the numbers of women narrators of Hadith were continuously changing and kept increasing from time to time. Ibn Sa'ad in his *Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, for example, mentioned more than 700 women narrators, while Ibn Hajar highlighted a total of 1543 women narrators in his *al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣahāba* (Abou-Bakr, 2003). Although Akram Nadwi (2007) has compiled more than 8000 names of women scholars of Hadith, only approximately 2000 of them are among the women Companions in which 130 Hadiths are recorded in the Six Books. Imam al-Bukhari has 31 Companions in his *Ṣahih*, 36 Companions in *Ṣahīḥ Muslim*, 75 Companions in *Sunan Abū Dawūd*, 46 Companions in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 65 Companions in *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, and 60 Companions in *Sunan Ibn Mājah*. The total number of women's Hadiths in the Six Books is 2764 Hadiths, of which 2539 are from the Companions. The most prominent woman companion is 'Aishah, the youngest wife of the Prophet, who spent most of her time with him and narrated 2210 Hadiths. Her narrations are considered special and unique, for the majority of them were directly narrated from the Prophet, and there are more subjects related to domestic affairs than other topics. 'Aisha's personality was praised and her knowledge recognised, as al-Zuhri recorded, "If the knowledge of all women and that of the Mothers of the Believers were to be gathered in one place, that of 'Aisha would be superior." Shifa' bint Abdullah, who mastered the art of writing and had been personally requested by the Prophet to teach his wife, Hafsa to write mentioned, 'Aishah who also can write encouraged her niece 'Aisha bint Talhah to help her reply letters of those people who visited her and sent letters to her (*Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī*). Not only that, Umm Darda' was known as *Fāqīhah* was also well acquainted with the art of writing and has been recorded. Names like Umm Salamah, Asmā', Umm Habībah, Maymūna and others were also recognised as those who were actively involved in transmitting and preserving Hadith of the Prophet.

As narrators of Hadith, they not only listened to Hadith directly or indirectly from the Prophet but were also involved in receiving and transmitting Hadith from one person to another. The methods of transmission practised by the women were no different from the methods used by the men, which are *samā'*, *qirā'ah*, *ijāzah*, *munāwalah*, *mukātabah*, *i'lām al-rāwī*, *wasīyya*, *wijādah* (Nadwi, 2007; Siddiqi, 1993a). However, most of the women narrators; listened to Hadith (*sama'*), repeated the memorized Hadith (*qirā'ah*), received some written traditions, either in person or correspondence (*mukātabah*), and transmitted Hadith to others (*ijāzah*) (Abou-Bakr, 2003). The first method *samā'* refers to the reading of

a teacher in delivering Hadith to the students who listen for the purpose of comprehension, understanding or recording and documentation (Abdullah & Abdul Manas, 2009; Azami, 1977). This method is the highest way of transmission for the narrator, who is directly listening to either the Prophet or his companions. For example, ‘A’isha reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah seeking refuge from the trial of Dajjal (Antichrist) in prayer (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 25/587). Khaula bint Hakim Sulamiyya reported: I heard Allah’s Messenger as saying: “When anyone lands at a place and then says: ‘I seek refuge in the Perfect Word of Allah from the evil of what He has created,’ nothing would harm him until he marches from that place” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 48/2708). An example of Hadith where female narrators learned from other narrators is Safiyya bint Abu’ Ubaid who reported that she heard Hafsa daughter of Umar (Allah be pleased with them), (and) wife of Allah’s Prophet (may peace be upon him), narrating a Hadith like this from Allah’s Apostle (may peace be upon him). She made this addition: “She should abstain from adorning herself (in the case of the death of her husband) for four months and ten days. (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 18/1490).

The second method, *qirā’a*, refers to the reading by students to the teachers, who listen to confirm the memorizations of the students regarding Hadith of the Prophet (Abdullah & Abdul Manas, 2009; Azami, 1977). Alternatively, one may analyse traditions, or compare his copy to what is being mentioned (Siddiqi, 1993a). This method has been not practiced during the lifetime of the Prophet, but only centuries after his death when books on Hadith were written. It has been reported that many distinguished male scholars have read to Karimah al-Marwaziyyah such as al- Khatīb al-Baghdādī who read the whole of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to her in five days, and Abu al-Waqt ‘Abd al-Awwal ibn ‘Isā ibn Shu’ayb al-Harawī read the Juz’ Bībā bint ‘Abd al-Samad al-Harthamiyyah with her. A large number of people have read to Sitt al-Wuzarā’ bint al-Munajjā, Zaynab bint al- Kamal and Fatimah bint Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādi (Nadwi, 2007). Students of Hadith also received and transmitted Hadith through mukātabah, or correspondence, which is to receive certain written traditions from a scholar, either in person or by correspondence, with or without his permission and to narrate them to others (Siddiqi, 1993a). An early example of a woman using this method was Umm ‘Abdillah bint Abī Hāshim who wrote to the Companion, al-Nu’mān ibn Bashīr asking him Zayd ibn Khārijah narrated in his last moments of life. In effect, she was asking for a report of what al-Nu’mān ibn Bashīr ‘heard,’ and he replied to her in detail in a letter (Nadwi, 2007). Another example of correspondence is al-Dhahabi, who was unable to receive Hadith directly from Sayyidah bint Musa al-Maraniyyah during her travels to Syria and Egypt. He received Hadith through correspondence (Nadwi, 2007). Receiving and transmitting Hadith among women narrators was *ijāzah*, which is permission given by teachers to the students after evaluating their ability to convey Hadith accordingly. It was a very popular method in the later centuries when women

scholars of Hadith gave ijāzah either in spoken or written forms. Among those who practiced this method were Sitt al-Katabah bint ‘Ali ibn Yahyā ibn ‘Ali al-Tarrāh and Umm Muhammad Zaynan bint Ahmad ibn Umar al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 720). The content of the ijāzah usually included the name of teachers and students (Nadwi, 2007). However, these methods of transmission are not popular anymore since there are no more transmitters of Hadith, either men or women, in today’s world. Only through scholars, experts, or students does Hadith still exist.

NARRATIONS CONCERNING ON WOMEN

Women’s issues were among the favourite topics discussed by the Prophet and had gained attention among Hadith transmitters from one generation to another generation. Hadiths related to women had not only been narrated by women but also transmitted by men as they spent more time with the Prophet compared to women. There are ongoing efforts among scholars to compile the narrations and traditions specifically related to women since the third and fourth centuries, and publications related to women and Hadith (Mahrizi & Najafi (Trans.), n.d.). Among the earliest books are:

1. *Kitāb al-Nikāh, Kitāb al-Nisā’* and *Kitāb al-Wildān* of Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Husayn Ibn Hasan Ibn Dowil al-Qummi (d.153H).
2. *Al- Nisā’ al-Ma’rūfāt fī Quraysh*, by Abū Mundhir Hishām Ibn Muhammad al-Kalbī (d.205H).
3. *Ummahāt al-Nabī, Kitāb Munāqadāt al-Shu’arā’, Akhbār al-Nisā’, Kitāb Manākih Farazaq, Kitāb al-Makr, Kitāb man Tazawwajah min Nisā’ al-Khulafā’* and other books written by written by Abū al-Hasan ‘Ali al-Madā’inī. *Al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā* by Ibn Sa’d, and *Kitāb al-Nisā’ wa al-Walah* compiled by Muhammad Ibn Mas’ūd al-Ayyashi al-Samarqandi.
4. *Kitāb Ahkām al-Nisā’* authored by Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.241H), and *Kitāb al- Nisā’* by Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Barqī (d.274H).
5. *‘Uyūn al-Akhbār*; written by Ibn Qutaybah (d.276H) which dedication for women’s affairs can be found in its fourth volume, and *Kitāb al-Nisā’ wa ma jā’a fī hinnah min al- Akhbār*; by Ibn al-Munajjim (d.300H).

These books have compiled all topics related to women regarding general and specific issues. Most of these compilations not only focus on Hadith but also include explanations from many subjects: *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis); *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence); *sīrah* (biography); as well as contemporary issues. However, books compiled only on Hadith related to women are limited in number. For instance, *Mawsū’ah Ahādīth al-Mar’ah fī al-Kutub al-Sittah*, compiled by ‘Ādil ibn Hasan al-Hamd (1432H), and *Sūrat al-Mar’ah fī al-Hadīth al-Nabawī*, written by Rizān ‘Abduh al-Hakīm (2008). From the discussion of Hadith of the Prophet about women, five themes emerge; Hadith on a particular person (woman); Hadith on particular tribe or group of women; rewards and punishments for women; special rules

dedicated from the Prophet to women; and character and symbol of women.

First, there are Hadiths specifically mention the name of a particular person to highlight either her strength or weaknesses, but most of them show the good side of the person. For example, ‘Ali narrated that he heard the Prophet saying, “Mary, the daughter of ‘Imran, was the best among the women of the world of her time) and Khadija is the best amongst the women (of this nation)” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri*, 60/103; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 44/101). Another narration by Abū Mūsā al- Ash’ari adds the name of Āsiah, wife of Pharaoh, and ‘Aishah, wife of Prophet Muhammad (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri*, 62/116; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 44/102; *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, 29/3280). Particular names were also mentioned in Hadith with the purpose of telling who were involved during important occasions, such as at the time of pledge of allegiance to the Prophet. Umm ‘Atiyyah narrated that one of the conditions during the pledge giving was not to wail, but it was not fulfilled except by five women and they are Umm Sulaim, Umm al- ‘Ala,’ the daughter of Abi Sabra (the wife of Mu’adh), and two other women; or the daughter of Abi Sabra and the wife of Mu’adh and another woman (*Ṣaḥīḥ al- Bukhāri* 23/65).

Second, similarly to the names of persons, certain Hadith specifically mention any names of groups and the tribe of women belonged to indicate their allegiance. As noted before regarding the women of Ansar, they were praised by ‘Aishah, “How good are the women of Ansar that their shyness did not prevent them from learning religion” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 3/649). Women of Quraysh were also praised by the Prophet that “they are the kindest women to their children in their childhood and responsible in handling the property of their husbands” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* 67/20). Another narration said, “they are kind to the orphans” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 44/285;289). However, there is a Hadith narrated by ‘Aishah that the women of the Bani Israil were forbidden to enter the mosques, she said, “If the Messenger of Allah had seen what women do now, he would have forbidden them to go into the mosques, just as the women of the Bani Israil were forbidden.” Yahya ibn Said that he asked Amra, “Were the women of the Bani Israil forbidden to go into the mosque?” and she said, “Yes” (*Muwatta’ Malik*, 14/15).

Third, the theme of Hadith related to women also includes rewards for the goodness of women. For instance, ‘A’isha reported Allah’s Messenger as saying: “When a woman gives in charity some of the food in her house, without causing any damage, there is a reward for her for whatever she has given, and a reward for her husband for what he has earned. The same applies to the trustee. In no respect does one diminish the reward of the other” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 25/1024). A woman who died while bringing up daughters will be given rewards, as the Prophet said, “A woman whose three children died would be screened from the Hell Fire by them,” a woman who heard asked the Prophet, ‘If two died?’ The Prophet replied, “Even two (would save her from the Fire)” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* 23/341). Women who did not follow Islamic teaching are also mentioned in Hadith. For example, Abu Hurayra said, “Women who are naked

even though they are wearing clothes, go astray and make others go astray, and they will not enter the Garden and, they will not find its scent, and its scent is experienced from as far as distance travelled in five hundred years” (Muwaṭṭa’ Mālik, 48/7). A wife who betrays her husband will also be punished, as said by the Prophet, “I was shown the Hell Fire and that the majority of its dwellers were women who were ungrateful.” It was asked, “Do they disbelieve in Allah? (or are they ungrateful to Allah?).” He replied, “They are ungrateful to their husbands and are ungrateful for the favours and the good (charitable deeds) done to them, if you have always been good (benevolent) to one of them and, then she sees something in you (not of her liking), she will say, ‘I have never received any good from you” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* 2/29).

Fourth, Hadith also mentions special rules that are applicable only to women. For example, topics on menstruation will be only understood by women, but the Prophet still mentions the do’s and don’ts, as narrated by Umm ‘Atiyya, “Women who are menstruating, could present themselves at religious gathering and invocation of Muslims but should keep away from the prayer-place” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri*, 15/97), the same Hadith has also been narrated by Hafsa (*Sunan al-Nasa’i*, 2/390). Women are also prohibited from praying during menstruation, ‘Aisha said that the Prophet narrated, “When the time of menstruation comes, stop praying, and when it goes, perform Ghusl (bath)” (*Sunan al-Nasa’i*, 1/202; 3/351). The rules after giving birth are also applied only to women; Umm Salamah said, “At the time of the Messenger, women in postnatal bleeding (after childbirth) used to wait for forty days, and we used to put aromatic herbs called wars on our faces because of freckles” (*Sunan Ibn Mājah*, 3/648). Besides that, if Jihad for men is to participate in the battles, ‘Aishah narrated that the Prophet has said, “The best Jihad (for women) is Hajj Mabruṛ (Hajj which is done according to the Prophet’s Tradition is accepted by Allah)” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri*, 26/595; 54/48; 29/48).

The fifth and the last is character and symbol of women, as mentioned in Hadith. Women, as referred to in Hadith, have been symbolized with many things, either good or bad. For example, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar narrated that the Prophet said, “Evil omen is in three things: The horse, the woman, and the house.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* 67/31; *Sunan al-Nasa’i* 28/9). Other Hadith describes that women is like a rib. Abu Hurayra reported the Prophet as saying: “Woman is like a rib. When you attempt to straighten it, you will break it. And if you leave her alone, you would benefit by her, and crookedness will remain in her” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 8/3466). A Hadith like this is also reported by another chain of narrators. Besides that, ‘Aisha was angry towards Hadith that says, “Prayer is annulled by a dog, a donkey and a woman (if they pass in front of the praying people.” She said, “You have made us (i.e., women) dogs. I saw the Prophet praying while I used to lie in my bed between him and the Qibla. Whenever I was in need of something, I would slip away, for I disliked to face him.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* 1:9:490). The character of women also

has been described in Hadith, such as Hadith that advises on how to choose the woman as a wife. Abdullah ibn ‘Amr narrated that the Prophet said: “Do not marry women for their beauty for it may lead to their doom. Do not marry them for their wealth, for it may lead them to fall into sin. Rather, marry them for her religion” (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 11/1859). Women also have been characterized as a lack of intellect and intelligence as reported by Abu Sa’id al-Khudri in a Hadith: The women asked, “O Allah’s Apostle! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?” He said, “Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?” They replied in the affirmative. He said, “This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn’t it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?” The woman replied in the affirmative. He said, “This is the deficiency in her religion.” (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1: 6: 301)

All of the examples mentioned above, undeniably help women to know further on what the Prophet said on women, but not all Hadiths are readily accepted. Hadiths that contain all the goodness and praises of the women will not raise any issues and problems. However, if there are doubt and uncertainty found in the particular Hadith that may contradict the logical reason; or is against the common senses, or for the women’s interest and nature, it might be questioned and has the potential to be re-evaluated and re-interpreted. According to Mernissi (1991a), all Hadiths, including the authentic are open to question and must be re-examined, not to mention misogynistic Hadith that may be fabricated and manipulated by the male Companions of the Prophet. Her examination of misogyny in the traditions became a starting point to be continued by other activists in individual or group form. Besides, the traditions of women became an attraction and were used as a medium to question and suspect the role of Hadith as a legal source in Islam.

ANTI-WOMEN HADITH?

Among the ground of debates on women in Islam are the negative references to them and their rights in the content of the Prophetic traditions, which has recently become an issue highlighted by contemporary scholars and researchers. The authority of Hadith as the source of Islamic law was questioned by many movements, particularly those who aim to eradicate the negative symbol on women as inferior to men, and they are rejecting any Hadith interpretations that are negatively labelled as misogyny (anti-women). However, is Hadith intrinsically hostile to women? While this question raises concerns among both Muslim and non-Muslim communities, it receives little attention in published academic discussions. Nonetheless, prejudice against the images of women presented in Hadith literature has led to negative interpretations. Calling Hadith as ‘anti-women’ furthermore contributes to the view that women in Islam are oppressed, secluded, exploited and mistreated, simultaneously promoting the patriarchal nature of Muslim society (Afshari, 1994; Hasan, 2012).

The ‘anti-women’ epithet was also popularly known as misogyny. Misogyny can be defined as a

hatred of women (Allen, 2001) and the term was used theologically – though not sociologically – in many writings on discrimination against women, categorizing them as subordinate to men. The label of misogyny or anti-women is parallel with “patriarchalism theological oriented” and “male-dominated religious epistemology,” due to the belief that Hadith had been previously interpreted based on patriarchal cultures and traditions (Ramli et al., 2013). According to Umar (1999), the term ‘misogyny’ resulted from the popular understanding of the early concept of creation, which distinguished between men and women. It had been interpreted to suggest that women must occupy a secondary place, lower than men, showing their inferiority to them, due to a Hadith which says that “woman is created from a man’s rib” as reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. The understanding of this Hadith was that women totally depend on men, which later became a cultural norm. Men were believed to be superior legally, domestically and intellectually to women. This interpretation not only derived from Muslim customs but also from Jewish and Christian traditions (Hassan, 1987; Barlas, 2002). However, this concept of creation in Hadiths arguably contradicts that in the Qur’an, where all creation is described as originating from “*Nutfah* (male and female drops of semen)” (The Qur’an, 80: 17-19). Thus, it is not men alone who contribute to the creation of humanity.

In this study, the term ‘anti-women’ Hadith covers all aspects of discrimination against women, whether directly or indirectly, as mentioned in the texts. These kinds of Hadith were never identified during the Prophet’s time, but two subsequent events occurred, raising the issue of gender bias in these texts. First, one of the Prophet’s wives, Ummu Salamah, was reported to have questioned the Prophet about gender bias in the Qur’an, since many of its verses address men rather than women. The Prophet received a revelation from God to answer this question, as stated in the Qur’an: Chapter 33, verse 53. Second, ‘Aisha, the Prophet’s youngest wife, once revealed, about a Hadith, which said that prayer may be annulled because of a dog, a donkey, and women, that this Hadith contradicts the practices of the Prophet. Both stories show the Prophet’s sensitivity to any prejudice that might seem to discredit or undermine the position of women. However, more challenges than this are raised these days than in the past because the Prophet could then guide the curiosity of a community and solve their problems during his time. After his death, issues relating to equality and justice for women started to appear gradually. Women’s rights began to be restricted, and there was confusion between religious and cultural practices, which have provoked continuous debate to this day. The problem increased when the role of Hadith became questionable since negative images of women were claimed to exist in Hadith literature and collections. These adverse perceptions of women began in consequence of certain personal interpretations and had divided opinions among Muslims, later strengthening the anti-women sentiment of many

religious texts.

But, is it true that such ‘anti-women’ discourse can be traced in the words of the Prophet? It is crucial to understand that the central problem for any Hadith is its authenticity (Hallaq, 1999). The authenticity of a Hadith depends on several factors, among which are the reliability and credibility of its reporters and the link between one reporter and another. If the chain of narrators is interrupted, Hadith may be considered less authentic and hence, dubious (Ahmad Khan, 2007; K. Amin, 2005). Some Hadiths compiled in the literature were deemed to be not being entirely genuine after Muslim scholars such as ‘Ali al-Madini (d. 233), al-Nisaburi (d. 405) and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d.852/1448 CE) introduced certain conditions for authenticating them (Kamali, 2005). These scholars then classified the collected items as *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound), *ḥasan* (good), *ḍa‘īf* (weak) or *mawḍū‘* (fabricated). The ‘anti-women’ Hadiths are not in an easily accepted category, but they have been debated seriously when found within the authentic Hadith collections, such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. These two books have always been regarded by Sunni Muslims as the most reliable books after the Qur’an. Although most of the Hadiths in these books are sound and genuine (*ṣaḥīḥ*), it has been claimed that Bukhari in his book evaluated the authenticity of a Hadith on the basis of its *sanad* (chain of narrators) and ignored the *matn* (text) (Ali, S. M. 2004). This is because there are certain Hadiths in his book which disagrees with the Qur’an. In addition, Bukhari has also been accused of being ‘anti-women’ for considering misogynistic Hadiths as authentic in his collections (Malik, 2010; Peru, 2014), and for verifying some transmitters of Hadith, in particular, Abu Hurayrah, who had been labelled ‘anti-women’ (Mernissi, 1991a; Malik, 2010). In addition to *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, other Hadith collections also met a similar challenge that they indirectly support the ‘anti-women’ message. But calling all Hadith as ‘anti-women’ and ‘misogynistic’ (Mernissi, 1991; Ahmad, 1997) casts doubt on their connection with the Prophet and besmirches the image of Islam.

Historically, many Hadiths expressing women’s inferiority and subordination were claimed to be fabricated during the Abbasid Empire (Hamdan, 2009) there is no such question on the authoritative status of Hadith related to the inferiority of women except until eighteenth century (Stowasser, 1994). Hasan (2012) also asserted that with the spread of Islam to other cultures, such as Persian, Byzantine and Greek cultures, Muslims began to borrow and follow some misogynistic practices from those societies, and later embedded these views in the social practices of many Muslim countries. Thus, the misogyny or anti-women were thought to be neither teaching of Islam nor the Sunnah of the Prophet. Remarkably, Juynboll (1996) was among the first came with the term ‘woman-demeaning’ and ‘woman-unfriendly’ statements in his *isnād*-critical methods of six Hadiths. However, one of the earliest works to analyse the anti-women Hadith are two works of Riffat Hassan, *Equal before Allah? Woman-man Equality in the Islamic Tradition* (1987); and *Rights of Women within Islamic Countries* (1989). In both, she examines Hadith says that

“woman is created from a man’s rib” or “like a rib” as reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* and *Muslim*. Although Hadith is regarded as authentic, her analysis reveals a contradiction between the text of Hadith and that of the Qur’an, and she notes that because Hadith was narrated by only one person, it must, therefore, be rejected. She also opposes the content of Hadith because it implies that women are a weaker creation than men, allowing men to feel more justified in oppressing women. Besides, she doubts the authenticity of Hadith and believes that Hadith has mainly been interpreted by men who have influenced the ‘anti-women’ tendency in Hadiths. Moroccan feminist and sociologist Fatima Mernissi exposed that many Hadith are widely used to uphold misogynist constriction of Islam in her book, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam* (1991). She concentrates on Hadith concerning women and focuses on the reliability of *sanad*, claiming that some of the narrators of Hadith, such as Abū Hurayrah can be labelled as misogynist or ‘anti-women.’ Her analysis focuses on the misogynistic Hadith, which relegates women to the position of dogs and donkeys, and critically re-evaluates Hadith, which forbid women to take part in leadership. Revealing the evidence from historical and linguistic aspects, she claims that both kinds of Hadith may not be authentic. Although her method of evaluation follows the rules of the traditional science of Hadith and is accepted by certain scholars, she is sometimes influenced by the modern sociological method to come up with provocative conclusions. Moreover, Mernissi has claimed to include political and personal reasoning in her reinterpretations, which leads her work to be either praised or criticized, because they indirectly contribute to the friction between the two genders in Muslim society.

The ‘anti-women’ label or gender oppression in Islam, in fact, is one of the features of Islamophobia, as claimed by Mahmudul Hasan in *Feminism as Islamophobia: A Review of the Misogyny Charges Against Islam* (2012). In his opinion, although feminism promotes gender justice and women’s liberation, it must not cause religious hatred because, for him, the charge of misogyny in Islamic literature has had no positive impact on Muslims generally, and on Muslim women in particular. This view has been supported by Afshari in *Egalitarian Islam and the Misogynist Islamic Tradition: A Critique of the Feminist Reinterpretation of Islamic History and Heritage* (1994). He agrees that feminist and modernist reinterpretations of misogynistic traditions only contribute to today’s intellectual and social crisis rather than providing any useful resolution of the problem. He also points out that feminists’ intentions to uphold women’s rights in Islam would be much more successful if no attempts were made to delete historical explanations of Islamic texts, for each Hadith is usually narrated for a valid reason. In contrast, Suyatno (2009) finds that the arguments of feminism on gender inequality in Islamic sources have called Muslims to ponder deeply on this issue. At the same time, she notes that Hadiths claimed as ‘anti-women’ have indirectly affected the propensity of men to discriminate against women in social and political matters.

These Hadiths have also been misunderstood when the society relies on nothing but the interpretations of their leaders without fully understanding the meaning of Hadiths concerned. Fahham (2007) also considers this problem and concludes that misapprehensions have resulted from religious leaders taking the wrong approach in interpreting a particular Hadith. The culture and traditions of society also contribute to prejudice and a patriarchal interpretation of Hadith (Ilyas, Sodik, & Rohmaniyah, 2005).

Nevertheless, Alfisyah (2001) and Ramli and Abdul Rahim (2011) claim that no 'anti-women' Hadith exists; such bias results merely from the popular understanding and interpretation of certain Hadiths that treat women negatively, as accepted by certain cultures. This claim appeared because the Prophet during his lifetime never adopted a formal 'anti-women' stance and, further, the function of a Hadith is not to create hatred and prejudice against women but to serve equal justice towards both genders. Many scholars believe that no 'anti-women' Hadith at all existed at the time of the Prophet; they emerged only after his death (Afshari, 1994), but unfortunately, no reason for their emergence has been discussed. In this situation, the present research will fill those gaps by discovering the existence of 'anti-women' discourse in numbers of Hadith collections and revealing the logical and historical explanation for their inclusion.

Many researchers who attempt to analyse and evaluate selected 'anti-women' Hadith fail to provide a comprehensive survey of the 'anti-women' discourse in Hadith literature. For instance, Roded in *Women in Islam and the Middle East: A Reader* (1999) has gathered some 'anti-women' Hadiths, but they are all derived from a single collection, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Only four of them actually contain 'anti-women' discourse. Suyatno also discusses four 'anti-women' Hadith in *Threatening Misogyny Hadith* (2009), but analyses only one Hadith critically in her study. Muhamed Ali, Ibrahim and Sayska analyse three Hadiths in their paper '*Anti Women' Hadith Related to Marriage: A Critical Study of Liberal Feminists* (2011). However, they do not aim to study the existence of 'anti-women' sentiment in Hadith literature but to respond to allegation and wrong assumptions around the related Hadiths by analysing their *sanad* and *matn*. Most other studies also select very limited numbers of Hadiths that touch on the theme and objective. Interestingly, while Asma Barlas (2002) discusses the patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an in her book, she also points to the existence of 'anti-women' discourse in Hadiths. She has discovered that only about six misogynistic ahādith were accepted as *ṣaḥīḥ* (reliable) out of 70,000 assembled. However, there must be a reason why those misogynistic Hadiths can be considered as *ṣaḥīḥ*, but there is no further explanation except she wonders at the ignorance of people on the positive side of Hadith in protecting the rights of women.

Although the actual number of 'anti-women' Hadith has not yet been established, in reliable collections of Hadith there are eight popular reports which have repeatedly been claimed to contain 'anti-

women' discourse. First, a Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: “And I advise you to take care of the women, for they are created from a rib and the most crooked portion of the rib is its upper part. If you try to straighten it, it will break and if you leave it, it will remain crooked, so I urge you to take care of the women.” This Hadith has been widely discussed by traditional and modern scholars. The chain of transmission of this Hadith is doubted (Hassan, 1987) and its content could be rejected because it was claimed to contradict the content of the Qur'an (Hassan, 1987; Nik Badlishah and Kaprawi, 2013). However, this Hadith cannot easily be interpreted without a better understanding in the methodology of Hadith criticism because fundamentally, it shows no intention of subordinating the status of women. Some scholars emphasize that the creation of Eve, which it mentions, does not represent her as inferior, nor does it humiliate women (Ramli and Abdul Rahim, 2011). Besides, from a positive point of view, this Hadith can be understood as an encouragement for men to treat women in a more caring and loving way (Abou El-Fadl, 2001).

Second, a Hadith quoted in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Sunan al-Nasa'i* and *Musnad Ahmad*, is transmitted by Abu Bakra: “Never will succeed such a nation as makes a woman their ruler.” Many past and present scholars have rejected women's ruling a nation on the basis of this Hadith by understanding only its literal meaning (Abdullah, 2012). The rejection was based on a single narrator – of dubious credibility – who transmitted Hadith twenty-five years after he claimed to have heard it from the Prophet (Mernissi, 1991a; Abou El-Fadl, 2001). In fact, Muslim history has acknowledged numbers of women leaders, such as Balqis, Queen of Sheba, who is mentioned not only in the Qur'an (chapter 27, verse 23) but also in the Bible (Green, 2001; Adamu, 2009). There are many issues to be discussed in relation to this Hadith.

Third, narrated by Abu Hurayrah in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: “Prayer is annulled by a dog, a donkey and a woman (if they pass in front of the person who is praying).” This Hadith must be interpreted in the right context and cannot with certainty be evaluated as authentic or inauthentic, although some scholars have agreed to its status. This is because this Hadith has negative implications and may lead to false interpretations and social schism (Abou El-Fadl, 2001). Mernissi (1991a), however, rejects this Hadith outright, claiming that the narrator of this Hadith had a personal problem with women and it probably did not descend originally from the Prophet. The evidence for this is that 'Aisha, his wife, also questioned the content of this Hadith, finding it to contradict logical reason (Ali, S. M. 2004).

Fourth, narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and Ibn 'Abbas in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, also narrated by Ibn 'Umar in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and *Sunan Ibn Majah* and by Abu Hurayrah in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*: “I was shown Hellfire and that the majority of its dwellers were women who were ungrateful.” This Hadith has been categorized among the 'anti-women' ones due to its gender bias (Roded, 1999). However, some scholars have tried to look deeper into the content of this Hadith because it does not mean that women commit

sins more often than men do and are later punished and tortured in Hell (Muhamed Ali, Ibrahim and, Sayska, 2011).

Fifth, a Hadith narrated by Abū Sa'id al-Khudri in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: “Is not the testimony of a woman worth only half that of a man?” This Hadith supports the sentiments of the previous ones. It arouses arguments related to women’s intellect and intelligence. Hadith suggests that men are intellectually better than women. The claim that women are inherently deficient in religion and reason is debatable because, in that case, their deficiency ought to be admitted when they act as transmitters of Hadith, but no one disputes their capacity to do this (Fadel, 1997). Nevertheless, this Hadith is in line with the message of the Qur’an (2: 282) that women psychologically and intellectually need more support than men do.

Sixth, narrated by Qays bin Sa'ad in *Sunan Abu Dawud* and also narrated by Abu Hurayrah in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*: “Had I ordered a person to prostrate to someone rather than Allah, I would have ordered the wife to prostrate to her husband.” This Hadith also has several different versions in *Musnad Ahmad*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, *Sunan al-Nasā'i* and *Sunan Ibn Hibban*. Some scholars have identified it as a weak Hadith as it is literally against reason and has serious social and moral implications (Ali, S. M. 2004; Nik Badlishah and Kaprawi, 2013). However, the term ‘prostrate’ in its *matn* has generally been misunderstood, and it is important to know what reason lies behind the narration before making any critical assumptions (Abou El-Fadl, 2001; Muhamed Ali, Ibrahim, and Sayska, 2011).

Seventh, “When a man calls his wife for sexual intimacy, and she refuses him, and thus he spends the night in anger, then the angels curse her until morning.” This Hadith is narrated by Abu Hurayrah alone, in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan Abū Dāwud* and *Musnad Ahmad*. The different version of the *matn* of this Hadith: “By God, a woman cannot fulfil her obligations to God until she fulfils her obligations to her husband and if he asks for her (i.e., for sex) while she is on a camel’s back, she cannot deny him (his pleasure).” Since this Hadith has been regarded as sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*), many factors should be taken into account in analysing it, in order to avoid misinterpreting its content (Muhamed Ali, Ibrahim and Sayska, 2011).

Eighth, a Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: “If there is an evil omen in anything, it is in the house, the woman and the horse.” While ‘Aisha argued about the third Hadith noted above, there is no trace of her refuting this Hadith in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* because the full version of this Hadith, as mentioned by al-Zarkashi, is: “May Allah refute the Jews; they say three things bring bad luck: the house, women, and the horse.” It shows that Bukhari accepts the content of this misogynistic Hadith since he cites it three times in his book (Mernissi, 1991a). Although ‘Aisha herself declared that this Hadith was not genuine, it is important to discover what is meant by ‘woman’ in this regard. In addition,

Abou El-Fadl (2001) tells us that this Hadith “served as the grazing ground for some of the most virulent anti-women rhetoric in Islamic history”; thus, its authenticity remains questionable.

The above examples show that ‘anti-women’ discourse of negative meaning and interpretation exists in Hadith literature. However, although some ‘anti-women’ Hadith have been analysed and debated at length, in surveying the ‘anti-women’ Hadith, none of the previous studies have collected them all and categorised them according to their authenticity. So, this study serves as a beginning to conduct complete further research on the unexplored topic of women and hadith.

CONCLUSION

This study provides insight into the contributions of women in the transmission and preservation of Hadith, and also the collections of Hadith that have been compiled relating to women’s issues. Hadith originally came from the Prophet and has been narrated by both men and women, but has been criticized due to the patriarchal culture and misogynistic nature in the Muslim world. This study also gave a short description of the question: if women contributed as much as men, why are their positions vis-à-vis the aHadith contested? We were told that women at the time of the Prophet were not restricted at home or secluded from society. They sought knowledge, participated in warfare and related activities and also managed businesses and occupations as much as their male counterparts. Today, these positive images of Muslim women are underrepresented; instead, women are characterized as submissive creatures and are oppressed by socio-economic changes. Their roles have been limited in some sense, and they are not given equal opportunity to take part in enforcing Islamic laws and conducts. Muslim women, in particular, who are responsible as wives and mothers, are bound by their home activities, and their husbands became their priority. These diminished images have been interpreted to suggest that all women in Islam are subordinate to men, a state of affairs which has gradually extended from the eighth century AD to the present (Saadawi, 1982). Islamic laws, customs, and texts are among the factors that are blamed for the injustices against women (Mernissi, 1987).

The religious texts, most of all, have been claimed to enshrine adverse images and the mistreatment of women and partly account for the way in which women have been negatively treated in some Muslim cultures. For this reason, the present study looks in particular at Hadith and its interpretations, which are hostile to women, whether directly or indirectly; it asks whether this hostility can be traced to the Prophet or was it perhaps invented by the transmitters of Hadiths. This study only provides a few examples of how Hadiths have been interpreted by modern scholars without looking in-depth or offering a new interpretation. So future studies can produce the current approach to re-evaluate the so-called ‘anti-women’ Hadiths. At the same time, the study aims to bring attention to the fact that women have a vital role in Islam, as shown in Hadith literature because the negative images of women

found in Hadith are in contradiction to their major contributions in this field of study. It can be concluded that Hadith does not originally intend to promote gender bias or inequality, but there are certain factors like historical circumstances, social consequences, and textual understanding that might influence the interpretation of ‘anti-women’ discourse in Hadith.

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