

Abstract

This study deals, in general, with the phenomenon of wife beating as it was addressed in the holy Quran verses, which recognized the guardianship of men over women and permitted the man to beat his disobedient wife. More specifically, the study tackles the issue by means of a comparative study of the numerous analytical literatures that were formulated by Arab male and female feminist theorists regarding the concerned holy Quran verses.

Furthermore, an analysis was provided of the divergent positions taken by Arab, male and female, feminist theorists of both wife beating and the status of women in Islam as it appeared in numerous publications. My analysis dealt with the topic by placing it within a socio-historical context that was dominant in Arab societies prior and after the emergence of Islam.

In addition to that, a quantitative field work research was carried out regarding the issues that were analyzed in the thesis. Intensive interviews were conducted with a sample of ten adults (five men and five women) who hold Islamic religious functions. Their cultural stands regarding the phenomenon of wife beating and the status of women were investigated in the context of the holy Quran verses. An analysis and interpretation were provided of the positions of the sample members regarding the divergent concepts included in the Quran verses such as: guardianship, preferential treatment, wife disobedience, husband disobedience and wife beating.

Consequently, the study will provide a socio-historical comparative analysis of modern feminist literature that dealt with the status of the Arab woman, prior and after the

emergence of Islam as it appeared specifically inside the cities of Macca and Yathrib in the Arabian Peninsula.

The comparative analysis is very important for the understanding of both the holy Quran verses on guardianship and the status of women as it was tackled in Islamic gender issues. It is needed for the clarification of the socio-economic and politico-cultural circumstances under which the holy Quran verses came and permitted the husband to beat his disobedient wife.

Finally, this study will further deal with the phenomenon of modern interpretative Islamic Feminism which has appeared among Arab feminists who provided divergent interpretations for the holy Quran verses that permitted wife beating. They attempted to come out with a solution that presented a progressive interpretation of the holy Quran verses.

Based on this solution, an attempt was made to legislate an Islamic law that denies, in an absolute manner, the occurrence of beating of women and wives. This came as an affirmation of the Arab Islamic identity versus Western orientalist accusations that accuse the Arab Islamic culture of having holy verses that verify women inferiority. This attempt coincided with the growth of reactionary Salafi Islamic movements that call for both the inferiority of women and their status in the Islamic religion.