

THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF THE FAMILY  
INSTITUTION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY FROM SELECTED  
IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT


The family institution represents the foundational unit and moral nucleus of human civilization. Both Islam and Christianity regard the family as a divinely ordained and sacred institution that nurtures individuals spiritually, socially, and morally. However, in the modern era, the family is undergoing one of the greatest crises in its history. The emergence and expansion of contemporary ideologies—particularly liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism—have redefined fundamental concepts of marriage, gender roles, and moral authority, thereby weakening traditional family values in both religious contexts. This study investigates the problems and challenges confronting the family institution from a comparative perspective between Islam and Christianity, focusing on ideological, social, and theological dimensions. The research adopts a qualitative, library-based methodology supported by descriptive, analytical, and critical approaches. Data were collected from both primary sources, such as the Qur'an and Hadith and the Bible, and secondary sources, including theological commentaries, scholarly writings, and contemporary academic debates. The analysis employs thematic and content analysis techniques to interpret and compare religious and ideological viewpoints. The findings reveal that, despite theological differences, both Islam and Christianity uphold the family as a divinely sanctioned institution aimed at ensuring moral order, social stability, and spiritual development. Nevertheless, several contemporary factors such as materialism, secularization, shifting gender norms, and the influence of modern ideologies have contributed to its weakening. Liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism have collectively undermined the traditional moral foundation of the family institution by promoting individual autonomy, gender fluidity, and relativistic ethics. This study offers an original contribution by presenting a comparative and critical analysis of how these ideologies challenge the family in both religions and by articulating a counter-narrative rooted in Islamic and Christian theological traditions. It argues for renewed engagement by religious scholars and communities to reinterpret family ethics while considering contemporary realities without compromising divine principles. The research concludes by proposing strategies to strengthen the family institution through moral education, spiritual awareness, and interfaith dialogue, thereby contributing to the preservation of the family as a cornerstone of faith and society.

## خلاصة البحث

تُعدّ مؤسسة الأسرة النواة الأساسية لمجتمعنا. يُولي الإسلام والمسيحية أهميةً بالغةً للأسرة كمؤسسةٍ إلهيةٍ مُقدّسة. فكلُّ إنسانٍ ينتمي إليها، ويُولد ويُرَبَّى ويُنشأ ويُهدى أخلاقياً في إطارها. ومع ذلك، شهدت هذه المؤسسة في الآونة الأخيرة أزمةً حادةً في تاريخها، وهي على وشك الانهيار. تُناقش هذه الدراسة بشكلٍ نقديٍّ مختلفَ المشاكل والتحديات التي تواجه مؤسسة الأسرة في كلِّ من الإسلام والمسيحية، مع التركيز بشكلٍ خاصٍّ على تأثير الأيديولوجيات الحديثة، كالليبرالية والنسوية وما بعد الحداثة. ولتحقيق هذه الغاية، اعتمدت الدراسة منهجيةً نوعيةً، واستُخدمت فيها بشكلٍ خاصٍّ المناهج الوصفية والتحليلية والنقدية. وقد حُلِّلت المصادر الأولية والثانوية، بما في ذلك النصوص الدينية في كلِّ من الإسلام والمسيحية، والتفاسير اللاهوتية، والدراسات العلمية. وتشير النتائج الأولية إلى أن كلاً من الإسلام والمسيحية ينظر إلى الأسرة كمؤسسةٍ إلهيةٍ مُقدّسة، مع اختلافٍ عن المنظور اللاهوتي. تكشف النتيجة أيضاً عن أسباب مختلفةٍ مسؤولة عن إضعاف الأسرة، بما في ذلك الجوانب الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والثقافية، وتعريف الأسرة وبنيتها الجديدة، ونقص المعرفة والفهم الديني، وإعطاء الأولوية للطموح المادي، إلخ. وفيما يتعلق بتأثير الأيديولوجيات الحديثة على الأسرة، تكشف الدراسة أن الليبرالية والنسوية وما بعد الحداثة لها تأثير سلبي هائل على الأسرة في كل من الإسلام والمسيحية، مما أدى إلى عدد من القضايا، بما في ذلك إعادة تعريف مفهوم الزواج والأسرة وبنيتها، وتفكك الأسرة، وأدوار الجنسين، والأهم من ذلك، أنها تؤدي إلى تراجع الأساس الأخلاقي التقليدي للأسرة. علاوة على ذلك، وُجد أن كلاً من وجهات النظر الإسلامية والمسيحية لديها سردية مضادة للأيديولوجيات الحديثة. من منظور الواقع الاجتماعي، تقترح الدراسة أنه في مواجهة الحقائق الاجتماعية، ينبغي على المجتمعات الدينية والعلماء الانخراط في نقاش نقدي حول تأثير الأيديولوجيات والأفكار الحديثة على الأسرة بدلاً من مجرد رفضها، والتركيز على وحدة الأسرة والروحانية والأخلاق والمساءلة. واختتمت الدراسة بتقديم عدد من التوصيات التي قد تسلط الضوء على تعزيز مؤسسة الأسرة في الإسلام والمسيحية.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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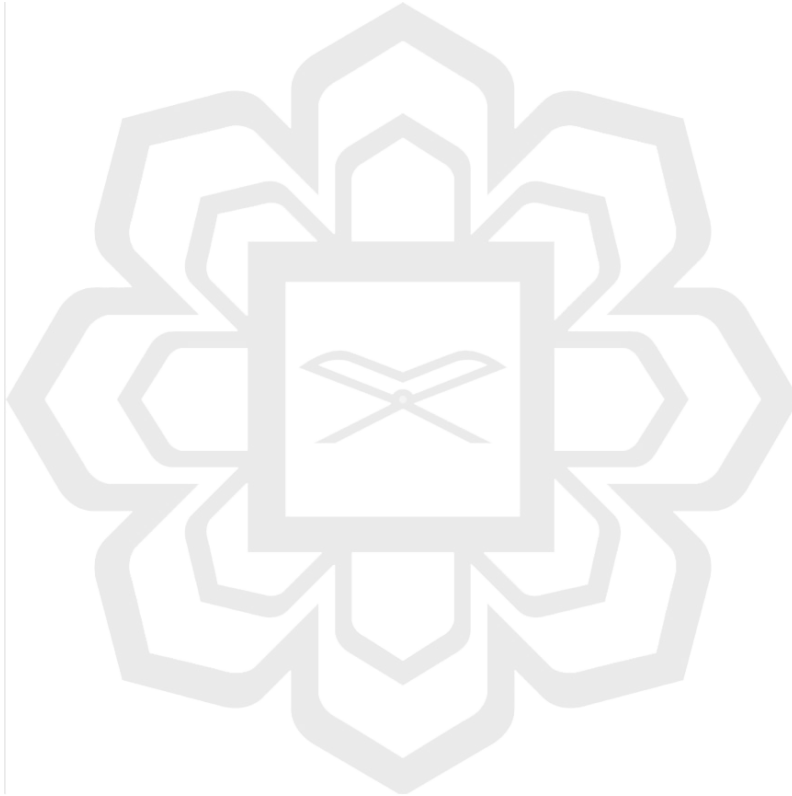
## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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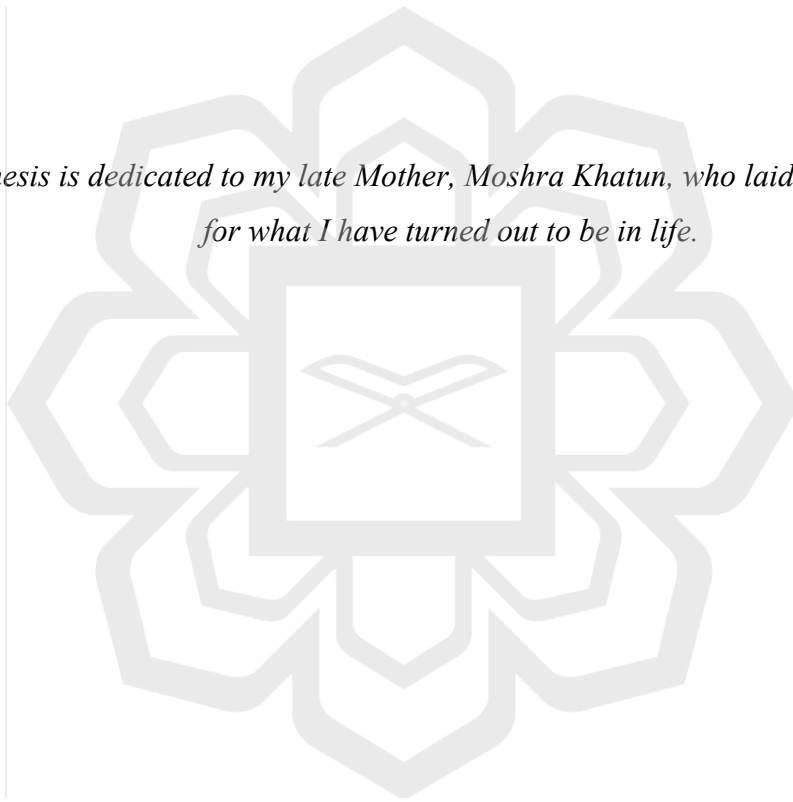
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*This thesis is dedicated to my late Mother, Moshra Khatun, who laid the foundation  
for what I have turned out to be in life.*



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The family is a fundamental institution of human civilization and the foundation of social stability. It begins with a lawful union between a man and a woman and serves vital functions such as reproduction, education, socialization, companionship, economic cooperation, and the preservation of moral and religious values. Although definitions of family vary across cultures, it is generally regarded as an environment where children are nurtured and shaped into morally responsible adults.<sup>1</sup> Various forms of family—monogamous, polygamous, patriarchal, matriarchal, extended, and nuclear—reflect the diversity of human societies.<sup>2</sup> Both Islam and Christianity, as Abrahamic religions, regard the family as sacred and divinely ordained.<sup>3</sup> This study explores how the family institution is viewed in both faiths, highlighting their convergences and distinctions, and examines how modern ideologies have challenged these traditional values.

#### **The Family Institution in Islam**

The foundation of the Islamic worldview is Tawhid—the Oneness of Allah—which integrates all aspects of life, including marriage and family. Belief in Tawhid unites moral, social, and spiritual dimensions, shaping the way Muslims understand life, responsibility, and worship. The Qur'an states:

"And your Allah is One Allah: there is no god but He, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."<sup>4</sup>

Islam is a comprehensive way of life (din), providing divine guidance for every human activity. As the Qur'an affirms:

---

<sup>1</sup> Femi Rufus Tinuola, *Chapter Eight the Family Institution*. (Research Gate, 2021). 107

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 109-112

<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup> Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Triologue of the Abrahamic faiths*. No. 1. (USA, International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991), 13

<sup>4</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Holy Qur'an, 2:163

"This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and chosen for you Islam as your religion."<sup>5</sup>

Marriage in Islam is both a legal and spiritual contract, providing the legitimate context for sexual relations and family formation. The Qur'an declares:

"And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may find tranquility in them, and He has placed between you love and mercy."<sup>6</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) described marriage as a part of his Sunnah, saying:

"Marriage is part of my Sunnah, and whoever does not follow my Sunnah has nothing to do with me."<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the family in Islam is a divinely regulated institution grounded in love, mercy, and moral responsibility. It fulfills spiritual, social, and biological needs while upholding divine guidance in every aspect of human life.

### **The Family Institution in Christianity**

In Christianity, the family is equally sacred, viewed as a divine institution established by God. The Book of Genesis records:

"The very first people on earth formed a family. From the beginning, God blessed and encouraged families, commanding Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28).<sup>8</sup>

Man and woman are created in the image of God, reflecting divine unity and relational love. Marriage symbolizes the covenantal relationship between Christ and the Church. The Christian family is, therefore, a setting for companionship, procreation, and spiritual development. The Apostle Paul emphasized family responsibility:

"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied faith and is worse than an unbeliever."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Holy Qur'an, 5:3

<sup>6</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Holy Qur'an, 30:21

<sup>7</sup> Sunan Ibn Majah 1846, In-book reference: Book 9, Hadith 2, English translation: Vol. 3, Book 9, Hadith 1846

<sup>8</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2011), Genesis 1:28.

<sup>9</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2011), 1 Timothy 5:8.

Thus, Christianity views family and marriage as the foundation of moral order, and sexual relations are permitted only within lawful marriage.

Islam and Christianity are paramount to family institutions, including marriage, relationships, sexuality, women's rights, equality, leadership, inheritance rights, etc. However, the family institution faces a mounting crisis from the rise of new cultures like LGBT and modern major ideologies like feminism, liberalism, and postmodernism. These ideologies criticize various aspects of the family institution, such as women's equal rights, inheritance rights in Islamic Sharia, freedom, women's leadership, mixed gender prayers, patriarchy, and influence, particularly among Muslim women across the world.

Talking about feminism. Feminism has no single meaning or definition. Its use and definition vary based on specific areas, contexts, perspectives, writers, and time. Some authors, for example, use the term "feminism" to describe a politically distinct movement in the United States and Europe, while others apply it to the concept of unfair treatment against women, although the specific instances of such discrimination are subject to debate. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines "feminism" as a complex and diverse set of beliefs that aim to achieve and understand the sexes' political, economic, cultural, and social equality. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that advocates for women's rights and interests".<sup>10</sup> Several feminist pioneers have attempted to improve women's rights and advance gender equality throughout history. These pioneers have defined feminism from their own perspective. For example, Mary Wollstonecraft defines feminism as "the doctrine of the equality of the sexes". She contends that women should have same rights as those enjoyed by males and that their moral and intellectual qualities should be equal to those of men.<sup>11</sup> According to Bell Hooks, "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression." She argues that gender, racial, socioeconomic, and other types of oppression must also be considered in feminist analysis.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> McAfee, Noelle, "Feminist Philosophy." In Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Edward N. Zalta. June 28, 2018. Accessed October 26, 2025. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/feminist-philosophy/>

<sup>11</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. (Yale University Press, 2014), 20

<sup>12</sup> Bell Hooks, *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. (South end press, Boston, USA, 1984), 24-26

Feminists contend that gender-based violence and discrimination have been committed against women historically and that they have been purposefully excluded from political, economic, and social power systems. From the historical perspective, the primary concern of feminism is to achieve women's equal rights in every aspect of an individual and society. The term "feminism" was first widely used in the mid-19th Century in the USA when women's rights emerged. It developed as a way for women to oppose and alter these power hierarchies and demand equality in all spheres of life. Moreover, it focuses on overcoming the discrimination against women in social, political, economic, and cultural.

The movement of women has four phases. In the USA and Europe, the first wave of feminism emerged around the middle of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Equal rights for women, particularly ensuring women's suffrage, were its main concerns.<sup>13</sup> The second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s and lasted until the nineteenth Century, focusing on social and cultural issues, including women's reproductive rights, occupational discrimination, and sexuality.<sup>14</sup> The third wave of feminism emerged in response to the failure of the second wave of feminism in the mid-90s. It challenged the second phase of the essentialist definition of femininity and focused on post-feminism definition, sexuality, and micro-politics.<sup>15</sup> The fourth phase of feminism began in 2012, focusing on sexual harassment, body shaming, rape culture, etc.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, different schools of thought about feminism provide a controversial definition of the ideology. It seems to many that ideology is based on assumption and self-evidence.<sup>17</sup>

Feminism views the family institution as a political entity, directly attacking both marriage and family. Family is man-made, and comparing families is unnatural imprisonment that is the cause of deterrence and mental illness. Socialist feminism argues that the relationship between husband and wife is one of the economic reasons

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<sup>13</sup> Rekha Pande, "The history of feminism and doing gender in India." *Revista Estudos Feministas* 26 (2018), 2

<sup>14</sup> Martha Rampton, "Four waves of feminism." *Pacific University Oregon* 25 (2015), 3

<sup>15</sup> Rekha Pande, "The history of feminism and doing gender in India." *Revista Estudos Feministas* 26 (2018), 3

<sup>16</sup> Britannica, Feminism, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism#ref216004>

<sup>17</sup> Zeenath Kausar, *Modern western political ideologies: An Islamic critique*. Second ed., (Kuala Lumpur, Pearson Malaysia Sdn Bhd, 2014), 147

behind marriage and sexual relations. Hence, they must be eradicated from society to free women. Moreover, socialist feminists like Charlotte see marriage as not a woman's choice but as forcing them only for the economic matter. She also mentioned that marriage is a false cheapener way of life.<sup>18</sup>

Other feminist socialists like Juliet Mitchell and Barrett McIntosh challenge Marriage, Family, and reproduction. Existentialist feminism blames marriage for women's loss of freedom and considers it a source of societal oppression. Another feminist school of thought, radical feminism, argues that marriage is a monetary coalition and that family intuition is patriarchy's central unit. Moreover, only the sexual revolution and reproductive technology are the way to sexual freedom, liberation from marriage and family, and familial institutions is unnecessary for sexual relations.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, radical feminism and gender feminism advocate eradicating reproduction, marriage, and motherhood and promoting artificial sex and family, like same-sex marriage, lesbianism, and homosexuality.<sup>20</sup>

The earlier discussion has taken place about the emergence of feminism and its views on the family institution in general. Let's now focus more specifically on how feminism views the family institution in both Islam and Christianity. It has been seen that when it comes to a family institution in Islam and Christianity, feminists, whether Islamic or non-Islamic, accuse, attack, and criticize various aspects of the family institution, particularly attack on the Muslim family institution such as women's equality rights, inheritance rights in Islamic Sharia, freedom, women leadership, mixed gender prayers, patriarchy, and influence women mainly Muslim women across the world. For example, Wadud claims that although the Qur'an states that men and women have equal rights, traditional interpretations of the Qur'an have frequently been used to defend patriarchal systems in the family and society and gender inequity.<sup>21</sup> She further asserts that the Qur'an endorses the notion of shared guardianship and accountability within the family. However, the Qur'an strongly emphasizes interdependence and care

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<sup>18</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Man-Made World; or, Our Androcentric Culture* (男人創造的世界 (又名男性中心的文化)). (Hyweb Technology Co. Ltd., 2011), 13-17

<sup>19</sup> Zeenath Kausar, *Feminist sexual politics and family deconstruction: An Islamic perspective*. (Kuala Lumpur, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2001), 5-7

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>21</sup> Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and woman: Rereading the sacred text from a woman's perspective*. (Oxford University Press, USA, 1999), 98

within the family, and the phrase "men are in charge of women" has been misrepresented. Islam's traditional views on marriage frequently perpetuate gender inequity and restrict women's rights.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, feminists such as Leila Ahmed, Kecia Ali, and Asma Barlas are concerned about Islamic inheritance laws and advocate reinterpreting the Qur'an. According to Leila Ahmed, Sharia inheritance laws are wholly oppressive to women and victimize women. Additionally, she writes, "The Qur'an discriminates against women in its inheritance laws."<sup>23</sup>

Christian family institutions face many problems, challenges, attacks, and threats from modern cultures and ideologies, particularly from feminism. One major criticism of feminism concerning the Christian family is that it frequently reinforces patriarchal norms and gender roles. According to Mary Kassian, traditional Christian views on gender roles frequently result in women being neglected within the family structure. The husband is the provider and leader, while the wife is the homemaker and support worker, which can limit women's opportunities and ability to fulfill their potential.<sup>24</sup> Bell Hooks also criticizes the Christian family for promoting the myth of the "good woman," who is submissive and obedient to her husband. She contends that to control women and uphold male supremacy. The Christian family promotes a view of womanhood built on the submissive wife, the selfless mother, and the virtue-filled daughter.<sup>25</sup> Feminist scholars also criticize the Christian family for prioritizing heteronormative relationships by excluding people who identify as LGBTQ+. According to Rosemary, the Christian family structure reinforces the heterosexual lifestyle, which might result in injustice against LGBTQ+ people.<sup>26</sup> Women's reproductive rights and autonomy have been attacked by feminists as being constrained by Christianity's objections to abortion and contraception. The anti-abortion and anti-

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 108-110

<sup>23</sup> Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America*. (Yale University Press, 2012), 219

<sup>24</sup> Mary Kassian, *The feminist mistake: The radical impact of feminism on church and culture*. (Crossway Books, 2005), 67

<sup>25</sup> Bell hooks, *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. (South End Press, 2000), 48

<sup>26</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God: Toward a feminist theology*. (Beacon Press, 1983), 125

contraception viewpoints in Christianity, according to Dorothy, are used to control women's bodies and restrict their options.<sup>27</sup>

Talking about liberalism. It is a political ideology that emerged in Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries in response to the social and political changes of the time. It emphasizes individual rights, civil liberties, and economic freedom.<sup>28</sup> Several reasons influenced the rise of liberalism. One was the development of capitalism and the middle class, which resulted in a greater focus on personal economic independence and property protection.<sup>29</sup> A further component was an increasing rejection of conventional sources of power, such as the monarchy and the church, which resulted in a higher priority on rationality and autonomy as an individual.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the late-nineteenth-century upheavals in America and France offered an example of the formation of liberal democracies.<sup>31</sup>

Liberalism is defined by its pioneers like John Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill. The political beliefs of John Lock, who argued that people have inherent rights to life, liberty, and property and that governments should be constrained to safeguard these rights, can be linked to the foundations of liberalism.<sup>32</sup> It is considered that Adam Smith is the founding father of classical liberalism. He emphasizes the individual liberty, limited government, and economic freedom of an individual without government intervention. He believed that “The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but only to have the law on nature for his rule.”<sup>33</sup> Liberal philosophy is dynamic and ever evolving, responding to the demands of the times rather than being a static set of beliefs. Several forms of liberalism, such as classical liberalism, social liberalism, and

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<sup>27</sup> Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. (Pantheon Books, New York, 1997), 82-83

<sup>28</sup> Michael Freedon, *Liberalism: A very short introduction*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 19

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Political ideologies: An introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 60

<sup>30</sup> Charles Larmore, *The Cambridge history of political thought, 1450-1700*. (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 427

<sup>31</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary political philosophy: An introduction*. (oxford: oxford University Press, 2002), 76

<sup>32</sup> John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. Edi. C.B Macpherson. (Hackett Publishing Company, Cambridge, 1980), 56

<sup>33</sup> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations: An inquiry into the nature and causes of the Wealth of Nations*. (Harriman House Limited, 2010), 633

modern liberalism, have emerged as responses to various historical contexts.<sup>34</sup> According to Mill, another liberalism theorist, liberalism is a principle that regulates variation and individualism. He contends that liberalism is founded on two core principles: the significance of individual freedom and the requirement to restrain the state's authority.<sup>35</sup>

Generally, for marriage and sexuality, liberalism argues that marriage must be generalized and that the state should allow and protect all forms of marriage, like same-sex marriage and lesbianism. Otherwise, citizens' equality will be threatened. However, political liberalism does not promote deconstructing traditional marriage and family institutions. On the other hand, liberals like Martha Nussbaum do not see any logic that homosexual marriage would attack the special status of heterosexual marriage.<sup>36</sup> It is noted that heterosexual marriage is a symbolic institution for marriage and obligations for religion in the history of the world. Tamara Metz agrees that liberalism necessitates the "disestablishment" of marriage. However, the essence of her argument is that government intervention in marriage undermines the liberal boundary between the public and private spheres. "With its countless public-private border crossings," she writes, "marriage undermines and unsettles one of liberalism's most cherished ways for defending liberty, equality, and fairness." Metz believes that the state's regulation of marriage is a direct breach of liberal freedom and privacy.<sup>37</sup> Regarding the Islamic and Christian family institutions, the view of feminism and liberalism are almost similar and can vary. Some liberal thinkers support reforms that advance gender equality and women's rights because they feel that patriarchal institutions and traditional gender roles in Muslim<sup>38</sup> and Christian<sup>39</sup> families restrict women's autonomy and equality, while other liberal philosophers defend Muslim women's right to wear religious clothing as a question of religious freedom and personal preference,<sup>40</sup> While some liberal

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Freeden, *Liberalism: A very short introduction*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2015), 19

<sup>35</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On liberty*. (Oxford University Press, 1998), 15

<sup>36</sup> John Rawls, "Political liberalism. (New York, Columbia University press, 1991), 191-194.

<sup>37</sup> Clare Chambers, "Feminism, liberalism and marriage." (UK, University of Cambridge, 2012), 18

<sup>38</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The middle path of moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic principle of wasatiyyah*. (Oxford University Press, 2015), 191

<sup>39</sup> Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *but she said: Feminist practices of biblical interpretation*. (Beacon Press, 1993), 145

<sup>40</sup> Reza Aslan, *God: A human history*. (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2019), 161

intellectuals oppose the traditional notions of the family for Christian families, they defend the freedom of LGBT people to create families and live in sexual partnerships.<sup>41</sup>

This study examines the family institution through the lens of postmodernism. Postmodernism is a dominant philosophical, intellectual, and cultural ideology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century in response to modernism. The main characteristic of postmodernism is widespread skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism, and a profound rejection of the enlightenment method of thought. Defining what is exactly postmodernism is intricate because it covers various disciplines comprising literature, architecture, art, music, technology, and so on.<sup>42</sup> However, the pioneers of postmodernism, including Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, are defined and argued about the rise of postmodernism from the historical context. Lyotard, one of the leading postmodernism theorists, defines postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives”. In the postmodern era, he contends, people have grown doubtful of grand narratives or meta-narratives that assert reveal a single, all-encompassing, objective truth about the universe. In the past, institutions like science, religion, and politics used these meta-narratives to support their claims of knowledge and authority, according to Lyotard.<sup>43</sup>

Postmodernism, according to Akbar Ahmed, is the theoretical and cultural viewpoint that resulted from the collapse of modernism and the failure of the grand Enlightenment narratives. To provide a voice to marginalized ideas and voices, it challenges dominant narratives and discourses by criticising hierarchy, authority, and dominance. It highlights the subjectivity of language and culture, the fragmentation of perception, and the uncertainty of absolute truth while opposing the absolutist claims of universal reason.<sup>44</sup>

The historical background of postmodernism is complex and multifaceted, with various political, social, cultural, and intellectual factors. Proponents of this ideology

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<sup>41</sup> Weeks, Jeffrey, Janet Holland, and Matthew Waites, *Sexualities and society: A reader*. (Polity Press, 2003), 244-254

<sup>42</sup> Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A very short introduction*. Vol. 74. (USA, Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-5

<sup>43</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Vol. 10. (USA, U of Minnesota Press, 1984.), xxiv

<sup>44</sup> Akhbar S.Ahmad, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*. (Routledge, 1992),3

have described the historical context in various ways. However, generally, postmodernism emerged to the limitations and failures of modernism, social and cultural changes, and so on. Hutcheon defines postmodernism as a reaction to the problems of representation and authority that arose after World War II and the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. She defines postmodernism as a critical and self-reflective method of cultural production that challenges modernist culture's assumptions and norms. In postmodernist art and literature, she emphasizes the value of satire, ridicule, and allusion.<sup>45</sup> Following Lyotard, the loss of grand modernist narratives like Progress and Enlightenment led to the emergence of postmodernism. According to him, postmodernism marked a shift away from metanarratives and towards short stories, and knowledge was now understood as multiple and subjective rather than universal or objective.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, Derrida stressed the function of language and the concept of deconstruction in postmodernism. He claimed that language is not a transparent or neutral medium but is intertwined with power relations and cultural norms. As a result, the interpretation and confrontation of the meaning of a book or cultural artifact are widespread.<sup>47</sup> Another postmodernist, Foucault, believes that power operates in society and changes our knowledge and perceptions of the world. He contended that knowledge is not unbiased or objective but is formed by power relations and customs.<sup>48</sup>

In general, postmodernists explain the family institution as useless in the postmodernism era. Ewelina argues that postmodernity rejects the ultimate truth and considers individualism people's fundamental right. Pluralism seriously affects people; as a result, marriage and family become outdated. In addition, *Ulrich Beck* states the same opinions that postmodernity focuses on people's rights and that people can make decisions in every aspect of life that reflect on the marriage and family institution.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, he states that the family institution became materialistic due to Postmodernism's influence. People consider marriage and family with a materialistic

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<sup>45</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The politics of postmodernism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edi., (London & New York, Routledge, 2002), 1-4

<sup>46</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Vol. 10. (USA, U of Minnesota Press, 1984.), xxiii

<sup>47</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology*. (John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 2

<sup>48</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. (Penguin, 1979), 194

<sup>49</sup> Ewelina M Mączka, "Some reflections on marriage and family in (post) modern social space." In *Theological Forum*, no. 22, (2021), 111-123.

view. The concept of God's obligation of marriage and family is absent in personal and social life.<sup>50</sup>

Specifically, postmodernist thinkers have different views on family institutions in Islam and Christianity. Lyotard asserts that both religions present the family concepts in diverse yet equally legitimate ways. According to him, while Christianity focuses more on the nuclear family, Islam insists on a patriarchal family structure that can be viewed as an affirmation of the family as a whole rather than an individualistic one.<sup>51</sup> Another postmodern scholar is Judith Butler. According to Butler, the family is a social institution that controls gender and sexuality. Furthermore, she maintains that the family is a normative organization that establishes parameters for controlling sexuality and gender, making it the scene of continual conflict and suffering.<sup>52</sup>

The discussion above suggests that the family institution is the most fundamental and divine institution in both Islam and Christianity. However, the family institution faces various problems and challenges due to modern cultures and ideologies, particularly the Muslim and Christian family institutions. Most importantly, there is no way to enjoy sex before marriage, according to both religions. Furthermore, modern ideologies such as feminism, liberalism and Postmodernism, all promote individualism, sexual freedom, and eradication or deconstruction of the marriage and family institution. However, this study attempts to examine the institution of the family in Islam and Christianity and modern ideologies behind the factors for the worse situation of the family institution.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study examines the problems and challenges facing family institutions in Islam and Christianity due to the rise of modern ideologies such as liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism.

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<sup>50</sup> *Family Crisis: Causes And Remedies in Postmodernism*, 4

<sup>51</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: A report of knowledge*. (Manchester University Press, 1984), 53

<sup>52</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (Routledge, 1990), 135

The institution of the family is the only institution to produce humans, continue the human generation, survive, and protect human civilization. It is a divine institution in Islam and Christianity. It is crucial to an individual and plays a vital role in a sustainable family, society, education, economy, country, and civilization. The emergence of ideologies such as Liberalism, Feminism, and Postmodernism poses significant challenges to the extent that the institution is on the verge of collapse.<sup>53</sup>

It is facing a severe crisis. It is also attacked by new cultures worldwide. These are post-marital, extra-marital, sex outside marriage, lesbianism, gay marriage, premarital, LGBT, homosexual, cohabitation, born of illegal children to unmarried couples, divorce, family rights, breakdown of the Family, abortion, and many more. The worrying factor is that homosexuality and other issues, as mentioned above, spread like an epidemic. According to a report by the *Pew Research Center*, 30 countries have legalized homosexuality and same-sex marriage which challenge religious aspects concerning the family institution. In addition, the acceptance of LGBT is increasing in many countries daily.<sup>54</sup> These trends challenge the existence of the family institution, and the severe consequences affect not only a particular society or religion but also the whole world.

Scholars, sociologists and experts are very concerned about the situation. Osman Bakar asserts that the traditional Family is under attack from all sides, particularly from the level of ideas and practices resulting from modern ideologies and philosophies and the numerous anti-traditional modern activities and cultures.<sup>55</sup> Pope Francis also stresses the concern about the worsening situation in the family. According to him, the family institution is under threat from inside the family and lack of religious education, such as irresponsibility of the parents to the family and outside contemporary ideological threat of globalization, relativism and secularism for example.<sup>56</sup> In addition,

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<sup>53</sup> Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, "Liberal Islam: An Analysis." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 24: 2 (2009), 44.

<sup>54</sup> David Masci, Elizabeth Podrebarac Sciupac And Michael Lipka, Same Sex Marriage Around The World. October 28, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/fact-sheet/gay-marriage-around-the-world/>

<sup>55</sup> Osman Bakar, Family Values, The Family Institution, And the Challenges of The Twenty-First Century: An Islamic Perspective. *Journal Of Islam and Civilizational Renewal*. Vo. 3, No, 1. (2011), 20-21

<sup>56</sup> A. L. V. A Reginald, "Contemporary Christian family life in the light of the teachings of *Amoris Laetitia*." *Journal of the Nanzan Academic Society Humanities and Natural Sciences* 13, (2017), 211-227.

Pope Francis sees homosexuality as an intrinsic disorder and has no grounds for it in God's plan for the family institution.

Furthermore, Val Farmer<sup>57</sup>, Becky Sweat<sup>58</sup>, and Alex Colvin<sup>59</sup> express their concern about the current situation of the institution of Family across the world. It is stated in their extensive research and from practical life experience that modern ideologies are the leading causes of the worse situation of the family institution today. Further, considerable research shows that due to the influence of modern ideologies like materialism, people are becoming impious, leading to violence, family breakdown, and unstable situations in every aspect of life.<sup>60</sup>

However, it is often stated that modern ideologies provide solutions to complex problems. The vital point is, have modern ideologies solved society's major problems like the breakdown of family institutions? What is the reality behind the reasons for the breakdown of family institutions? How have the various modern ideologies affected the family institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

Therefore, the study attempts to investigate how modern ideologies influence family institutions and affect the followers of Islam and Christianity.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The proposed research will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do Islam and Christianity define and interpret the concept, role, and function of the family institution?

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<sup>57</sup> Val Farmer, Modern Threats to Family Life. January 16, 2006. <http://www.valfarmer.com/article.ec?docID=895&topicID=239>

<sup>58</sup> Becky Sweat, Three Big Threats to Families. Life Hope and Truth. July/August 2017. <https://lifehopeandtruth.com/relationships/family/three-big-threats-to-families/>

<sup>59</sup> Alex Colvin, The Breakdown of the Family in Secular Society. <http://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Talks/Colvin/secular.htm>

<sup>60</sup> Becky Sweat, Three Big Threats to Families. Life Hope and Truth. July/August 2017. <https://lifehopeandtruth.com/relationships/family/three-big-threats-to-families/>

2. What are the major problems and Challenges that contribute to the weakening of the family institution in contemporary Muslim and Christian contexts?
3. How have Liberalism, Feminism, and Postmodernism influenced the understanding and structure of the family institution according to Islamic and Christian teachings?
4. What are Muslim and Christian scholars' responses to solving the family institution crisis in Islam and Christianity?

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research will attempt to achieve the following objectives:

1. The aim is to study the concept, role, and function of the family institution in Islam and Christianity.
2. To examine the major problems and challenges contributing to the weakening of the family institution in contemporary Muslim and Christian contexts.
3. To investigate the influence of Liberalism, Feminism, and Postmodernism on the family institution from Islamic and Christian teachings.
4. The aim of this study is to assess Muslim and Christian scholars' responses to solving the family institution crisis in Islam and Christianity.

#### **1.5 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

##### **Research Approach**

The study adopts a qualitative approach, which is interpretive and analytical in nature. This approach is appropriate for exploring religious concepts, moral principles and theological interpretations rather than measuring variables numerically. It enables the

researcher to examine texts, doctrines, and ideas critically to understand their implications for the family institution.

### **Research Design and Data Collection**

As a library-based study, data were gathered entirely from primary and secondary sources available in textual and digital repositories. Primary sources include the Qur'an, Hadith, the Bible, and classical theological works. Secondary sources consist of books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and other scholarly publications obtained from databases such as JSTOR, Springer Link, and IIUM's library collections.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed through content analysis and thematic analysis. The content analysis involved systemic reading of the texts to identify major ideas and recurring patterns related to the family institution. While thematic analysis categorized findings into key themes such as the concept of family, gender roles, and the ideological impact of liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism. Comparative interpretation was then applied to highlight convergences and divergences between Islamic and Christian perspectives.

### **Justification of Method**

The library-based qualitative design is appropriate because the study deals with conceptual, textual, and theological data rather than empirical phenomena. This method allows comprehensive and critical engagement with authoritative religious sources and modern intellectual thought, ensuring depth, accuracy, and contextual understanding.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In the contemporary world, the family institution—traditionally regarded as the foundation of moral and social order—faces serious challenges from modern ideologies such as Liberalism, Feminism, and Postmodernism. These ideologies often promote individualism, materialism, and moral relativism, which undermine the sacred concepts

of marriage, parenthood, and family unity as taught in Islam and Christianity. Despite the abundance of literature on modern ideologies and on religious family ethics separately, there remains a significant knowledge gap in comparative research that critically analyzes how these ideologies influence the family institution from both Islamic and Christian perspectives. This study addresses that gap by examining the convergences and divergences between Islamic and Christian teachings on family life while evaluating the impact of modern philosophical trends on these teachings.

By doing so, this research contributes to the field of comparative religion, theology, and family ethics in several ways. First, it clarifies how each faith conceptualizes family formation, marriage, parenting, and intergenerational responsibilities as divinely ordained duties. Second, it critically explains how modern intellectual currents distort or challenge these divine principles, offering insights into how religious families can resist such influences while preserving moral and spiritual values.

The findings of this study will benefit multiple groups. Academically, it will serve scholars and students of comparative religion, sociology of family, and ethics by providing a framework for interfaith understanding and dialogue. Religiously, it will assist Christian and Muslim communities in reaffirming the importance of family as a sacred institution grounded in divine law and moral accountability. Practically, policymakers and social leaders may utilize the study's findings to design family-related educational and social policies that promote cohesion, stability, and ethical responsibility in modern pluralistic societies.

Ultimately, by addressing the ideological and moral challenges confronting families today, this study seeks to contribute towards building spiritually conscious, ethically grounded, and socially sustainable family systems within both Muslim and Christian contexts.

## **SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study focuses on a comparative analysis of the family institution in Islam and Christianity, examining how liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism have influenced

the understanding and practice of family life within both faith traditions. The research limits itself to theological and philosophical perspectives as reflected in primary sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and the Bible, along with secondary scholarly interpretations. The geographical and cultural focus is on the Muslim and Christian contexts in contemporary societies, without undertaking empirical or ethnographic fieldwork.

However, the study acknowledges certain limitations. It does not attempt to cover all denominations within Christianity or all schools of thought within Islam but highlights representative theological viewpoints relevant to the research problem. Additionally, the study limits its discussion of modern ideologies to their intellectual and ethical implications, not their political or economic dimensions. These boundaries are established to maintain clarity, depth, and academic focus within the scope of a PhD study.

## 1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section intends to evaluate studies on the family institution in an attempt to investigate it from the perspectives of Islam and Christianity and select modern ideologies such as Feminism, Liberalism, and Postmodernism. Since this study looks at the perspectives of the two religions and selects ideologies, it is imperative to evaluate first the biblical explanation of the two Abrahamic religions about the family institution and then assess the writings and works of scholars and theologians on the matter.

Regarding Islam, the Qur'anic verses and Hadith and their exegeses have prioritized featuring the Islamic perspective on the family institution. Islam is a complete way of life clearly stated through numerous Qur'anic verses and Hadith. As a comprehensive code of life, Islam offers essential instructions and solutions for human beings concerning their faith (iman), personal lives, social interactions, political matters, and international issues. For instance, Allah says in the Qur'an:

This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Qur'an, *al-Maidah*: 3.

In another verse, Allah says:

And We have sent the Book to thee explaining all things, a guide, a Mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims.<sup>62</sup>

Most importantly, Islam focuses on the family as the most powerful institution. The family institution is structured and run based on the Islamic outlook of life and Islamic worldview. According to the Qur'an, Muslims must approach every action in life with the perceptions and consensus of the Almighty. This basic concept must be implemented within the family institution. Besides this, the basic Islamic principles of the family institution, such as the social contract, faith and family, marriage, and gender equality, are divinely inspired. Based on those principles, an Islamic family institution is perfected. Furthermore, according to the Qur'an and Hadith, the Islamic family's basic principle is marriage, which is the only way to produce a generation while fortifying unlawful relationships in society. Most importantly, there is no relationship before marriage in Islam, including having extra-marital affairs, living together, or having boyfriend-girlfriend relations.

Furthermore, marriage in Islam produces offspring and obedience to Allah's rules and spirituality. Islam also encourages the fulfilment of the natural urges of men and women through marriage; Islam even allows four marriages for an enabling man to stop illegal sexual activities in society. Hence, it is clear that Islam highly protects family values and norms.

In Christianity, the Old Testament and the New Testament are two distinct sections of the Bible. The Old Testament and the New Testament are thoroughly reviewed for this research, and since their writings are required for this research, we will also analyse Christian classical, medieval and contemporary texts. Undoubtedly, an emphasis on the family institution in both the Old and New Testaments is available in the scriptures of other religions. There are differences and changes in the value of family institution from the ancient era to the present, as mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament affirms the family institution as a source of divine blessings; the father is the head and the priest of the household, while the New

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<sup>62</sup> Qur'an, *al-Nahl*: 89.

Testament affirms the family institution as a fundamental unit of society.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, both scriptures are accordingly analyzed in the study.

### 1.7.1 The Family Institution from the Perspective of Islam

The family is Islam's fundamental religious, educational, social and spiritual institution. This institution provides a child with religious and societal knowledge that helps him/her lead a life based on religious and social teachings. Since Islam is only valid, authentic, complete and acceptable religion to Allah, the first and last religion, Allah has given the necessary instructions in His holy books and the Qur'an in numerous verses about the family institution since the creation of the first human family. Scholars have also produced numerous interpretations and literary works on the family institution. In this part, the researcher assesses the literature from an Islamic perspective.

Osman Bakar's "*Family Values, The Family Institution, and the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century: An Islamic Perspective*"<sup>64</sup> offers a clear perception of the family institution in Islam. This article's primary goal is to explain the idea of the family from an Islamic perspective, including its values, context and position as a multi-faceted organization. The writer demonstrates that the Islamic family unit, as projected by the Qur'an and as observed by Muslims throughout the history of Islam, serves as a socio-economic, educational and religious institution all at once. The author concludes by discussing the difficulties the family institution faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and offers many suggestions for addressing these difficulties.

Showkat Ahmad Wagay's article entitled "*Institution of Family in Islam*"<sup>65</sup> offers a thoughtful discussion on developing the family institution. Showkat attempts to discuss the objectives and functions of the family institution from an Islamic perspective. The institution of the family plays an essential part in Muslim society. Most importantly, it is a divinely inspired and ordained institution for Muslims in Islam. Islam

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<sup>63</sup> Brenda B. Colijn, "Family in the Bible: A brief survey" in *Ashland Theological Journal*, 36 (2004): 73-84.

<sup>64</sup> Osman Bakar, "Family values, the family institution, and the challenges of the twenty-first century: An Islamic perspective" in *ICR Journal* 3, No. 1, (2011): 13-36.

<sup>65</sup> Showkat Ahmad Wagay, *Institution of family in Islam. Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (2019).

inspires us to fulfill Allah's command and inspires us to accomplish the natural human urge for marriage. Marriage is the only Allah-permitted way for human beings to accomplish sexual desire and Allah's satisfaction.

Moreover, numerous social institutions defend the family institution and religion as the family institution and society have been interconnected since the creation of the first family in the world. The author argues that due to the breakdown of the family institution, Western society is facing disaster, and unfortunately, Muslim society is also severely suffering from the disaster due to the influence of the West. Although this study presents an Islamic perspective, further research is needed for a more profound understanding.

The article titled "*Islamic Family as a Concept and Institution and Its Historical Epistemology*",<sup>66</sup> written by Mehmet Bahaüddin Varol, explores the concept of the family institution and its historical epistemology and finds that the revelations and practical principles of the Prophet regarding life define the Islamic family institution. Moreover, the concept of family, how knowledge is produced within this framework, how knowledge is developed and presented to humanity, and how knowledge changes over time have all been studied. The author argues that Islam is the complete code of life and shapes all the institutions within a society with its dynamism. Despite the rapid changes faced by society, Islamic institutions could adapt to socially new situations or be provided with the appropriate tools to face the challenges in today's science and technological era. However, discussing family institutions in Muslim societies may still be tricky. The main problem with this unusual situation is the lack of social, political, economic and cultural areas that will give new shape to the whole society. It seems there is a need for more studies on the pragmatic development of Islamic family institutions within the Islamic worldview.

Rahma Bourqia's article "*The Role of the Family in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Islamic Point of View*"<sup>67</sup> offers a social science-based approach to religion, emphasizing how people utilize religion and how society accepts religious institutions as good customs,

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<sup>66</sup> Mehmet Bahaüddin Varol, "Islamic Family as a Concept and Institution and its Historical Epistemology", Necmettin Erbakan University Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Theology Department of Islamic History and Arts, (2020).

<sup>67</sup> Rahma Bourqia, *The Role of the Family in the 21st Century: An Islamic Point of View*. Ed. Helmut Reifeld. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. (2006).

behaviors and organizations in general. All monotheistic religions emphasize family and marriage due to their sacred significance. However, Islam gives more value to the family institution than other religions. The values Islam provides towards the family institution shape social institutions in Muslim countries. Many changes have occurred in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The author figures that the family in Muslim societies has changed in three aspects: how families are socialized, how people's status and roles within families are changing and how women are perceived. How do these social changes and cultural norms shape the family institution in the 21st Century?

Afiful Ikhwan, Oktio Frenki Biantoro and Ali Rohmad wrote the article entitled *The Role of the Family in Internalizing Islamic Values*. The authors present the importance and necessity of families in providing Islamic education, guidance and practices to Muslim children in this era of moral decadence. According to the authors, the family is essential in the development of the concept of morality (moral knowing), having an honest attitude (good feeling), and ethical behavior (moral behavior) because educational institutions do not always teach Islamic values. In addition, Islamic values are internalized into a child's mind and thoughts within three environments: the school, the family and the community. They conclude that the stages of family functioning in assimilating moral principles in early childhood are conducted through the phases of value modification, value transactions, value inculcation and value pervading with the improvement of factors of fully understanding, practicing and being.

Muhammad Khairul Islam and Rafikul Islam's work, *Strengthening Muslim Family Institution: A Management Perspective*,<sup>68</sup> is an essential article for this study. The article provides valuable insights into the Muslim family institution and contains the processes of strengthening Muslim family institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The authors suggest, the process of strengthening should be done through Quality Function Development (QFD) and the Analytic Hierarchy process. In conclusion, the authors present some factors based on the result of the study that would help Muslim family institutions avoid disaster and strengthen them morally and spiritually in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>68</sup> Muhammad Khairul Islam and Rafikul Islam, "Strengthening Muslim family institution: A management perspective" in *Pertanika Journal of Social Science & Humanities* 19, No. 1, (2011): 81-97.

Many studies have been done on family institutions from various perspectives, such as from a particular religious or modern ideological perspective, focusing their analyses on issues of social ills. Moreover, many studies have also been done on the condition of Muslim and Christian families in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This study scrutinizes the concept of the family from the social perspective in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, providing the essentials of the family by God Almighty. Secondly, the analysis examines the role of the family in fostering a sustainable community, highlighting the relationship between family and society in all aspects. The third approach analyses from today's family's objective perspective, evaluating the parents' role and skill development for sustainable family and community development. This remark has been made by recommending the survival and development of the family in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>69</sup>

One of the beneficial books for this study, *Family Life in Islam*,<sup>70</sup> was written by Khurshid Ahmed. Through this Book, the author presents the concepts of family life in Islam, its foundation, structures and principles. He comprehensively discusses the Islamic approach to the foundation of life, the vicegerency of human beings and their responsibilities based on Islamic rules and regulations. It also presents the importance of the institution of the family when facing various difficulties in contemporary times.

One of the principal conditions for forming a family is the woman. The rights of women in Islam are part of this study. A significant debate regarding women's rights in Islam is ongoing both within the Muslim community and among external critics, with feminists expressing particular concern about these rights. Though Islam is a complete way of life, feminists argue that Islam deprives women of their rights. More importantly, they claim that early traditional interpretations of the Qur'an did not solely interpret it from the perspective of women but from men's perspective. As a result, women are suffering in Muslim societies.

Such a book concerned with women's rights in Islam is entitled "*Qur'an and Women*",<sup>71</sup> written by Amina Wadud Muhsin. The book consists of four chapters, and the author begins with an introduction where she explains the perceptions and influence

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<sup>69</sup> Felicia Mbagwu, "Challenges facing the family for survival and sustainable community development in the 21st century", (2005).

<sup>70</sup> Khurshid Ahmad, *Family life in Islam*. (Islamabad, Islamic Foundation, 1974).

<sup>71</sup> Amina Wadud Muhsin, *Qur'an and Women: Rereading the sacred text from the women Perspective*. (New York, Oxford University Press), 1999.

of women in their interpretation of the Qur'an. The Book is also about the position of women in the Qur'an and the aspect of gender equality from the Qur'anic perspective. Wadud's primary objective is to show how the Qur'an applies to the lives of contemporary women by reading it from a female perspective and going through the context and the language to gain an understanding. According to her, no technique of Qur'anic exegesis is objective but subjective. Prior readings of the Qur'an were prejudiced and interpreted from the standpoint of men only. As a result, women in the Muslim community are deprived and have suffered. She defines three approaches to interpreting women in the Qur'an: traditional, reactivate and holistic. She claims that earlier interpretations of the Qur'an lack these three approaches, so the Qur'an must be reinterpreted.

### **1.7.2 The Family Institution from the Perspective of Christianity**

*Christianity and Families*<sup>72</sup> is an article written by David C. Dollahite. In this article, the author discusses the concept of marriage in Christianity and its importance in Christianity. There are three major groups in Christianity. Attention is given to each group's concept of the family institution and marriage as well as differences between them over the concept of the family institution. A little comparison has been made across the Abrahamic religions on the concept of the family institution. According to the author, the concept of the family institution is similar in Islam and Judaism, where it is based on the fundamental belief that marriage must be led with God's consciousness, while in Christianity, the life of Jesus and teachings must be at the foundation of a core belief in the family institution. Moreover, the family institution is considered a holy family. The home is a little church and a Christ-centered home. However, the author failed to compare the concept of the family institution between Islam and Christianity and to address it correctly and in detail.

*Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey*<sup>73</sup> is an important work to understand the concept of the family institution in Christianity. This article clearly describes the ancient Hebrew family, Greek family, Mediterranean family and, eventually, the family

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<sup>72</sup> David C. Dollahite, *Christianity and Families*. American Families of Faith. Research gate. (2016).

<sup>73</sup> Brenda B. Colijn, "Family in the Bible: A brief survey" in *Ashland Theological Journal* 36 (2004): 73-84.

institution in the Old and New Testament. In ancient times, the family was an extended one, but due to social change and over time, the concept of the extended family changed to build a nuclear family. According to the Old Testament, people would not be introduced as individuals but as part of a tribe, family, or clan. In a word, there was an entwined connection between the family and faith, and the family was the center of worship. It is clear how important the family institution was in ancient times. The author mentions many confusing issues under the Old Testament regarding God and family. It has also been seen that there are many similarities between the Old Testament and the New Testament. However, at the same time, there are many discrepancies between both Testaments on the issue of the family institution, such as the father of the family being the priest of the family in the Old Testament while the father is not the priest of the family but instead, all believers are priests, and Jesus is their highest priest in the New Testament.

The family is not just a unit to enjoy life in this world; it is an institution ordained by God. The family is a beneficial institution that supports both worldly life and spiritual connections. Since the creation of humans, Almighty God has created families as divine institutions. *The Christian Family between Tradition and Modernity*<sup>74</sup> is an excellent work written by Marian Vilciu to understand the family institution from the Christian point of view, and it is relevant to this research. The author discusses the family institution extensively from the Christian perspective and, most importantly, how it is suffering from the influence of modernity, how the family is declining, and the roles and responsibilities of family members. The main concern of this article is to show the connection between God and family in Christianity, but due to modernity, there is a tendency for sexual intercourse to occur outside of marriage in Christian society. Though this study is mainly from the Christian perspective, the limitations of this study are not presented well as a comparative study between traditional families and modernity and the impact of modernity on the traditional family institution.

The family institution has been fundamental and powerful since the creation of human beings. This is the only institution that helps a person to grow and develop morally, socially, spiritually and so on. Every religion and community has given

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<sup>74</sup> Marian Vilciu, "The Christian family between tradition and modernity" in *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research* (IFIJISR), 2018

importance to the family institution because the human generation would not exist without it. Unfortunately, family institutions have also been affected since the globalization of all social and religious institutions began. *The Place of Family and Family Values in World's Basic Religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism)*<sup>75</sup> is an excellent work to understand how the globalization process badly affects the family institution and the reason for its destruction. In this study, the author compares the family values between Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. The author claims that the process of globalization is the main reason for the destruction of the family institution today. The author argues that religion has excellent control and power to prevent the various aspects of human life, family values and institutions from the harmful influence and destruction due to globalization. Though religion has excellent control and power to prevent this influence and destruction, Christianity has failed to protect its family values and instead has allowed for the destruction of them. Even Buddhism has not given sufficient attention to saving family values. Islam is the only religion with vital elements to confront any negative impact and destruction of the family institution. Indeed, this is a good analysis of the destruction of family values through globalization. The depth of its theological argument, however, is not particularly noteworthy.

It is undeniable that Christianity has given much importance to family values, marriage, and morality, which are descriptions available in the Book of Genesis, the first Book of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament. *Genesis and Family Values*<sup>76</sup> is an article by David L. Peterson that describes family values from the Bible's perspective. The author mainly focuses on the values of the family in the Book of Genesis in the Bible. For instance, the author was concerned about the family institution, and the literature offers rich and weighty family principles. The author has stated that Genesis emphasizes the family in both the ancient past and the literature of the ancestors. Numerous characteristics of extra-biblical family literature are present throughout Genesis 12–50. In addition, he has highlighted three family values at play in ancestral literature: (1) the importance of defining the family in broad terms; (2) the value of familial continuity; and (3) the value of non-violent conflict resolution within

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<sup>75</sup> E. Bobyreva and O. Dmitrieva, "Place of family and family values in world's basic religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism)" in *International Conference on the Theory and Practice of Personality Formation in Modern Society Atlantis Press (ICTPPFMS 2018)*, 19-22.

<sup>76</sup> David L. Petersen, "Genesis and family values" in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, No. 1, (2005): 5-23.

the family. This study relates to this thesis, mainly explaining the Christian family in the Book of the Bible.

*The Family and Religion*<sup>77</sup> is a book chapter written by Gordon A. Babst that presents the role of religion in building and preserving the family, mainly focusing on religion and family institutions in contemporary society. The author attempts to analyse the family institution from the perspective of general traditions, various religious perspectives and the contemporary American family. He concludes in all of recorded human history, the family and religion have been entwined. He expresses that the family institution was based on religion in the ancient era. Nevertheless, the family has changed due to massive social and global changes since, in the past, the foundation of the American family institution was the teaching of religion. However, people ignore religion today, which consequently affects family institutions. Religion directly impacts the family in the same way it affects any other social institution; religion strengthens the dominant view of the nuclear family by bestowing it the quality of being morally good.

Today, in the era of Postmodernism, family institutions face much danger, like many other institutions in society. The consequences are family breakdown, immorality, sexual activities without marriage, etc. Stefan Florea wrote one of the articles entitled *The Christian Family in the Secularized Context of Our Society*. The author's primary objective is to assess the issues from a Christian perspective and to discuss how Christianity fits into the postmodern culture. Florea argues that although the family is considered a small church and a divine institution, modernity has impacted the family structure, leading to various problems such as sexual immorality, divorce, abortion, same-sex relationships, and more. In the concluding remarks, he emphasises Christianity's religious rules and obligations. Most importantly, Christian religious adherents disregard the rules and instead get involved in those immoral acts without any religious concern.

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<sup>77</sup> Gordon A. Babst, *The Family and Religion*. Political Science at Chapman University Digital Commons. (2007).

An essential work on the topic is entitled *Contemporary Christian Life in the Light of the Teachings of Amoris Laetitia*<sup>78</sup> developed by Riginald Alva SVD. In this text, the author presents the contemporary Christian family's situation from Amoris Laetitia's perspective. The author's primary concern is to reaffirm the importance of the family and deal with the problems challenging the family institution in modern society, particularly Christian families. The author concludes by underlining the spirituality and direction of Pope Francis for all pastors, leaders and Christian families to be realistic while dealing with the myriad issues affecting contemporary society.

One of the most comprehensive works on the topic is *The Family: A Christian Perspective on Contemporary Home*,<sup>79</sup> written by Jack O. Balswick, Judith K. Balswick and Thomas V. Frederick. This is an extensive collection of seven volumes. The family is perceptive and imparts substantial knowledge on issues about the modern family. It incorporates sociological, ethical, biblical, theological and clinical understanding to comprehend the modern family, which is distinctive from the Christian perspective. The Book starts with a biblical, theological and sociological look at family life. In order to comprehend marriage and family relationships in contemporary marriages, the writers uphold the relationality model (distinction and unity) throughout the entire Book as a critical ideal and significant theme. This Book's assessment of the issues of modernism and Postmodernism in marriages and family life is fascinating, covering the historical development of conceptions of marriage and family life as early as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This Book traces the evolution of the understanding of marriage and family life throughout history, covering topics like the advancement of the family, parenting and identity within the family, changing gender roles and sexuality, mate choice, romance and reality, extra-marital cohabitation communication at the center of family life, social dynamics of family life, family spirituality, marital sexuality and creating a solid Christian marriage in a postmodern society. The authors assert a vision of the individual's (self) happiness as they describe the break from the notion of marriage as an institution to the youth revolutionary movement of the 1960s. This Book presents marriage and family relationships as a dynamic system and a growing organism, which

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<sup>78</sup> A. L. V. A. Riginald, "Contemporary Christian family life in the light of the teachings of *Amoris Laetitia*" in *Journal of the Nanzan Academic Society Humanities and Natural Sciences* 13, (2017): 211-227.

<sup>79</sup> Jack O. Balswick, Judith K. Balswick, and Thomas V. Frederick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. (Baker Academic, 2021).

is excellent. This Book uses a concept known as “Family-Systems Theory” to describe how marriage and family relationships expand at various systems levels. Any recognizable whole made up of connected individual elements is defined as a system in this Book. This Book demonstrates that integration, flexibility, interaction and role framework in family relationships are crucial features that both form or break and destroy a family relationship based on clinical and sociological literature. The authors acknowledge the complexity of the evolution of human sexuality. Biology and the gender continuum of sexuality cannot explain gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer sexual orientations. The views that are prevalent in society have a significant impact on human sexuality. The Book’s conclusions are founded not only on current social science research, clinical insights and biblical truth but also on their own family life experiences and understanding of marital and family therapy for over forty years.

### **1.7.3 Family Institution from the Perspective of Feminism, Liberalism and Postmodernism**

#### **Feminism**

Zeenath Kausar, in her work, *Women between Family and Workplace: Islam and Feminist Perspectives*<sup>80</sup>, asserts that feminism favors women’s public participation over household work and provides complete freedom for all sexual orientations and modes of procreation while Islam considers the family as the fundamental institution and allows women to do the necessary while following Islamic rules and regulations. According to the author, the main demands of the feminists are the devaluation of the family institution and freedom of sexual activities in the name of women’s empowerment. She concludes that there is a misconception about the participation of women in social work and cooperation between wife and husband in household work. Women’s contributions should be recognized by society. More importantly, clarification should be done regarding the Islamic perspective on women’s participation in outside work and cultural norms.

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<sup>80</sup> Zeenath Kausar, *Women between family and workplace: Islamic and feminist perspectives*. (2000): 15-20.

Feminism and the dual-career family. Berlato<sup>81</sup> examines how feminist ideas have reshaped the organization of dual-career households, arguing that feminist discourse has both enabled greater labor-market participation by women and produced new tensions in couples' negotiations over care, career progression, and emotional labor; drawing on comparative qualitative case studies, the essay traces how tensions between egalitarian ideals and persistent structural constraints (occupational segregation, inflexible workplaces, and gendered norms) produce "echoes" of feminism that alter but do not fully resolve gendered divisions within the family. The paper's strength lies in its theoretically informed synthesis of feminist perspectives with empirical household data, which foregrounds the uneven translation of feminist norms into everyday practice; however, its reliance on purposive qualitative samples and its essayistic framing limit claims about prevalence or cross-national variance, and it treats religion and ideological difference only tangentially. The clear gap, therefore, is for mixed-method, comparative research that links feminist policy gains (parental leave, childcare provision) to household-level outcomes across distinct ideological contexts—explicitly comparing Christian and Muslim family settings—to show how institutional supports and value systems jointly enable or constrain the realization of feminist ideals in family life.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, in her work, *The Man-made World*<sup>82</sup>, is totally against man's dominant power in every aspect of life. She negatively presents the activities of men from personal life, family life, social life and so on. Notably, men significantly negatively affect women and the welfare of human civilization. The author discusses various issues in this Book, such as family, education, warfare, law, industry, economics, etc. She believes that men's dominating power causes grievous problems in society and for women. She emphasizes that society is androcentric. For example, concerning the family institution, she mentions that the family is a man-made autocracy. The author completely ignores marriage and the family system and asks why a family should exist. In the book, she blames men for everything, emphasizing women's equal rights in every aspect of life. Moreover, she does not believe in the biological differences between men and women.

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<sup>81</sup> Heliani Berlato, Danilo Andretta, and Thais Fernandes, "The Echoes of Feminism in the Dual-Career Family." *Gender, Work & Organization* 32, no. 5 (2025): 1823-1833.

<sup>82</sup> Perkins Charlotte, "The Man-Made World, or Our Androcentric Culture." (New York, NY Charlton, 1914).

Feminist identity, protective effects, and family socialization.<sup>83</sup> Recent empirical studies have questioned whether feminist identification functions as a protective psychosocial resource within family contexts, with Myers (2022) using large survey samples to show that feminist attitudes can buffer young women against harmful family-based body talk and related eating-disordered behaviors; the study demonstrates that feminist identity, when coupled with critical media literacy and supportive parental communication, reduces the internalization of oppressive gender norms. Methodologically, this work contributes robust, generalizable evidence about micro-level mechanisms linking feminist values to well-being, yet it is constrained by cross-sectional designs, Western-centric samples, and limited engagement with how religious commitments or conservative family ideologies mediate these protective effects. Hence, a pressing literature gap exists for longitudinal and cross-cultural investigations that examine how feminist identities interact with religiously informed family norms (Islamic and Christian) to produce divergent psychosocial outcomes for women and girls, and whether feminist resilience observed in Western contexts replicates in more religiously conservative settings.

Extensive research has been done on the feminists' perspective of the family institution by Zeenath Kausar in her Book entitled *Feminist Sexual Politics and Family Deconstruction: An Islamic Perspective*.<sup>84</sup> Seven chapters make up the Book. Several contemporary feminism schools are addressed and analyzed in the first chapter. Postmodern feminism, on the other hand, is covered and critically examined in the second chapter. The focus of both chapters is on the feminists' arguments for sexual liberalization, their analysis of how men oppress women and their recommendations for women's freedom. She emphasizes how modern and postmodern feminists politicize and undermine the critical institutions of society, marriage and family by reinterpreting modernists and postmodernists' various ideas and views.

Islam is a complete way of life. Almighty Allah has given complete guidance to the entire humanity through revelation. Through the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and the establishment of Islam as the only religion for humanity, all previous religions and

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<sup>83</sup> Taryn A Myers, "What about being a feminist is protective? An examination of constructs related to feminist beliefs as moderators of the relationship between media awareness and thin-ideal internalization." *Body Image* 41 (2022): 248-261.

<sup>84</sup> Zeenath Kausar, *Feminist sexual politics and family deconstruction: An Islamic perspective*. (Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2001).

revealed books have been cancelled. Furthermore, this evidence demonstrates the corruption of previously revealed books. Many ideologies have emerged throughout the history of humanity. Feminism is one of the ideologies that has emerged in Western society and promotes women's liberation. Many Muslims have been influenced by Western feminist theory and are raising their voices to free Muslim women across Muslim communities even though Islam has established the value and respect of Muslim women. Asma Barlas is one of the so-called Muslim feminists. Her Book is entitled *Believing Women in Islam Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*.<sup>85</sup> The Book comprises six chapters. The author's main argument is that although the Qur'an is not a patriarchal scripture, the interpreters of the Qur'an have interpreted it in favor of men. As a result, Muslim women have been deprived of their rightful rights. In Chapter Six, she discusses marriage and family institutions in Islam. She argues that the family institution in Islam is not patriarchal. The Holy Qur'an has given both spouses equal rights. However, the interpretation of the Qur'an presents the father as superior and states that he has ownership of the wife and children. Hence, it is necessary to reinterpret the Qur'an and establish women's equal rights.

### **Liberalism**

Liberal norms, family law, and institutional adaptation: Recent legal scholarship argues that liberal frameworks require family law and institutions to adapt to demographic, economic, and moral change; for example, Cahn's<sup>86</sup> analysis of family law for an aging society argues that liberal legal systems must center individual autonomy across the life course while addressing structural inequities—an argument that situates liberalism as both a normative ideal and a policy constraint shaping how families are recognized and supported. The article persuasively reframes family law debates around autonomy, longevity, and social justice and offers concrete implications for regulation of marriage, caregiving, and inheritance under liberal regimes; however, its normative orientation and emphasis on high-level legal reform underplay how differential cultural and religious commitments (notably Islamic and Christian family norms) interact with liberal legal reforms on the ground, and it lacks empirical comparative studies showing

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<sup>85</sup> Asma Barlas, *Believing women in Islam unreading patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an*. Texas, University of Texas Press. 2002).

<sup>86</sup> Naomi Cahn, Clare Huntington, and Elizabeth Scott, "Family Law for the One-Hundred-Year Life." *Yale LJ* 132 (2022): 1691.

how families from different faith communities actually experience or contest liberal law changes. Consequently, a key literature gap exists for empirically grounded comparative research that links liberal legal reforms to lived family outcomes across religiously distinct populations, thereby revealing whether and how liberal institutional change produces convergent or divergent effects in Christian versus Muslim family contexts.

The liberalization of sexuality is one of the widespread signs of Postmodernism. Men and women have absolute freedom where sexuality and freedom of choice are concerned. As a result, marriage and family no longer hold significance as a legal, social unit. Cohabitation has become a social norm. Agata Kozak, in her work, *Postmodern Changes in Marital and Family Life*<sup>87</sup>, argues that the legalization of premarital and extra-marital sex, as well as homosexual relationships, has undermined the status of marriage while also allowing for the creation of alternative relationship models. The author concludes the discussion by claiming that all illegal sexuality has caused postmodern sexual chaos.

political socialization, family and liberal values: Recent work on the intergenerational transmission of political ideology shows that family socialization is a robust conduit for liberal (and conservative) values and that parenting style and household relationships matter as much as macro-level politics; Weiss<sup>88</sup> analyzes representative survey data to demonstrate that parental political positions, warmth, and autonomy-supportive parenting predict children's left-right orientations into adulthood, indicating that liberal attitudes are not simply the product of institutions or education but are reproduced inside families through everyday practices and moral education. This paper's strength lies in its use of large, generalizable datasets and careful statistical controls, which clarify micro-mechanisms of value formation, yet its reliance on cross-sectional designs and predominantly Western samples constrains claims about causal direction and cross-cultural generality, and it pays limited attention to how institutional structures (welfare regimes, family law) or religious worldviews mediate the translation of liberal values into family behavior. Therefore, an important gap remains for

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<sup>87</sup> Agata Kozak, "Post-modern changes in marital and family life" in *Journal of Education Culture and Society* 2, No. 1 (2011): 73-79.

<sup>88</sup> Julia Weiss, "Intergenerational transmission of left-right ideology: A question of gender and parenting style?." *Frontiers in Political Science* 5 (2023): 1080543.

longitudinal, cross-national studies that join attitudinal data with contextual indicators (policy regimes, legal pluralism, religious commitment) to explain how liberal ideas are transmitted, adapted, or resisted within Christian and Muslim family settings.

An article entitled *Some Reflections on Marriage and Family in (Post) Modern Social Space*<sup>89</sup> written by Ewelina M. Mączka, analyses the social position of marriage and the family institution in postmodern society. She argues that this is a time of self-pleasure with various choices, individualism and less importance placed on religious rules and regulations; people do not even care about religion anymore. The author emphasizes the concern of Pope Francis on the menace of marriage and family institution in Christian society. In addition, people are looking for equal freedom and are very much influenced by various cultures, such as materialism, individualism, self-admiration and others. The consequences of these modern cultures are threatening the family's individual and fundamental social and religious institutions, such as spiritual emptiness and destruction. The author concludes that postmodern society challenges interpersonal relations, focusing on the artificial element in every aspect of life which affects marriage and family institutions.

In their work, *The Clash of Sexuality or Rhetoric of Human Rights: Exploring Same-Sex Marriage and Sustainable Human Development Nexus*,<sup>90</sup> Amadi Luke and Steve Wordu discuss various issues from the social perspective, such as sexuality, the debate of same-sex marriage, human rights and sustainable development. Homosexuality and same-sex marriage are increasing worldwide, and the followers are demanding to legalize both as fundamental rights; thus, many countries have legalized this sexual orientation and type of marriage. The authors argue that there is no alternative to marriage for sustainable human development and reproduction. Marriage between men and women is natural and a mandatory obligation in religion, which requires moral support and society's acceptance for legalization. With marriage, family and reproduction are intimately connected, while same-sex marriage has no valid definition, is not acceptable in every society, does not meet social norms and does not

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<sup>89</sup> Ewelina M Mączka, "Some reflections on marriage and family in (post) modern social space" in *Theological Forum*, No. 22, 111-123. (2021).

<sup>90</sup> Luke, Amadi, and Wordu Steve, "The clash of sexuality or rhetoric of human rights: Exploring same sex marriage and sustainable human development nexus" in *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies* 7, No. 1, (2016): 1-14.

fulfil the reproduction requirement. How will it be considered for sustainable human development? They also mention that same-sex marriage is deviant behavior, an illusion, paradoxical and contradictory.

One of the concepts of liberalism is political liberalism which concerns the personal freedom and rights of the people. Christie Hartley and Lory Watson, in their work *Political Liberalism, Marriage and the Family*<sup>91</sup>, discuss marriage and family from the liberal political perspective and based on which justification for marriage should be recognized by the liberal political ideology. According to the authors, there may be some societal justification for several types of legal marriage in particular contexts, given the fundamental interests of the populace. For instance, under some circumstances, legalizing marriage could be the most excellent method to safeguard the fundamental rights of women as individuals who can create relationships of their choosing. Alternatively, it is possible that some legal marriages can or should be recognized under some circumstances to create the social conditions required for homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals to live as free and equal citizens.

Clare Chambers, in *Feminism, Liberalism and Marriage*,<sup>92</sup> presents a comparative discussion about marriage from the perspective of two egalitarian ideologies of feminism and liberalism. The author argues that the most significant challenges to the institution of marriage are the feminists. The reform of the institution is not possible because it is not clear what the feminists exactly want to reform, and it worsens it for some other feminists. However, the only way to reconcile feminist narratives is to recognize the significance of marriage as both symbolic and institutional, which implies that feminists should support the legalization of marriage. According to the author, liberals should support the feminists' idea to abolish the state-recognized institution of marriage since both ideologies promote equality for all people. In a culture without legally recognized marriage, she also explores alternatives for controlling personal relationships, such as encouraging piecemeal regulation instead of comprehensive regulation, with the prospect of merging contractual arrangements with direct legislation. She concludes that governmental commands would be justified to

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<sup>91</sup> Hartley, Christie, and Lori Watson, "Political liberalism, marriage and the family" in *Law and Philosophy* 31, No. 2, (2012): 185-212.

<sup>92</sup> Clare Chambers, "Feminism, liberalism and marriage" in *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington DC*, (2012).

ensure equality and fairness between impacted individuals. The state would not support a specific type of connection in a manner that conflicts against individual freedom or government impartiality, and both feminists' and liberals' concerns would be addressed.

## **Postmodernism**

Christopher Butler's *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*<sup>93</sup> is one of the most notable books on postmodernism. The author presents an approachable and comprehensive explanation of postmodernism with diverse issues in this book. The book is divided into five chapters analyzing postmodernism's core concepts, historical context, and effects on many cultural disciplines such as literature, architecture, and film. Beginning with the cultural and intellectual turnover of the 20th Century, such as the emergence of mass media, the two world wars, and the cold war, Butler traces the foundations of postmodernism. The central tenets of postmodernism are then discussed, including the denial of grand narratives and metanarratives, the acceptance of diversity and difference, and the blending of high and low culture. Another theme Butler covers is the connection between postmodernism and poststructuralism, a related philosophical movement that emphasizes the fleeting nature of language and meaning. Additionally, Butler analyses the works of postmodern authors like Don DeLillo, Italo Calvino, and Luis Borges and provides insight into the influence of postmodernism on many cultural disciplines. Although the book does not thoroughly examine postmodernism, it is an excellent resource for understanding it and its effects on culture.

*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*<sup>94</sup> by Jean Francois Lyotard is a significant text that contributed to the postmodern era's definition. The book, first released in French in 1979, critiques the modernist notion of progress and the faith in big narratives or metanarratives that gave knowledge a sense of consistency and unity. The book has 14 chapters. The author claims in the first chapter that computer technology's advancement has fundamentally affected how knowledge is produced and communicated, resulting in knowledge fragmentation and the creation of new kinds of power. Lyotard concentrates on the connection between power and knowledge in the second chapter. He claims that knowledge is constantly connected to specific social and

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<sup>93</sup> Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A very short introduction*. (Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>94</sup> Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Eng. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Vol. 10, (Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

political objectives. According to Lyotard, the postmodern condition forces us to relinquish the notion of a single, objective truth and acknowledge the diversity of conflicting understandings. The third chapter investigates how language and communication impact our views of the world. According to Lyotard, the postmodern condition is marked by a breakdown of an image, in which old modes of expression and communication have given way to new forms such as advertising, television, and online. The Postmodern book *Condition* is a detailed examination of postmodernism that questions and criticizes the modernist notions of development, objectivity, and unification. Although the book has drawn criticism for its complicated and confusing language, it is nonetheless a crucial contribution to the growth of postmodern thinking.

In his work, *School and Family in the Postmodern World*, David Elkind<sup>95</sup> argues that many changes and transformations have happened from modernity to postmodernity, including in science, industry, language and others. More importantly, significant changes are happening in the family, changing it from a nuclear family to a permeable family. It should be noted that a permeable family is fluid and flexible where divorce, cohabitation, freedom of sex, remarriage, individual freedom, etc., occur frequently and are accepted by today's families and society.

Ernstberger and Adaawen<sup>96</sup> in their article published in *Emotion, Space & Society*, employed narrative inquiry to explore intergenerational notions of "home" within a transnational family, situating their work firmly within postmodern interpretivism. Their qualitative analysis highlighted how postmodern conditions—global mobility, identity pluralism, and cultural fragmentation—destabilize traditional conceptions of belonging and family unity. The study demonstrated how different generations negotiate emotional attachments to place and kinship under shifting postmodern realities, revealing the fluid, subjective nature of familial identity. Despite its depth and reflexivity, the research's reliance on a single-family case and auto-ethnographic data limits its broader applicability. Moreover, it lacks comparative insight into how ideological or religious frameworks influence these postmodern experiences of family and belonging. This exposes a scholarly gap for cross-religious

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<sup>95</sup> David Elkind, "School and family in the postmodern world." *Phi Delta Kappan* 77, no. 1 (1995): 8-14.

<sup>96</sup> del Carmen Ernstberger, Melissa, and Stephen Adaawen, "A transnational family story: A narrative inquiry on the emotional and intergenerational notions of 'home'." *Emotion, space and society* 48 (2023): 100967.

and cross-ideological studies that integrate postmodern theory with empirical evidence to understand how Islamic and Christian value systems mediate familial adaptation, identity, and emotional cohesion in a postmodern world.

Torres, Vallejo-Huanga, and Ramírez Ocaña<sup>97</sup> conducted a quantitative study on family functions and their transformation within a postmodern context, published in *Heliyon*. Using the APGAR family-function model, they examined 37 families and found a growing sense of dysfunctionality, linked to rapid sociocultural changes characteristic of postmodernity—individualism, fluid identities, and weakened traditional norms. The study, grounded in systems theory, revealed that families struggle to adapt to evolving social expectations, with communication, role distribution, and emotional cohesion increasingly fragmented. However, the research's cross-sectional design and limited sample restrict the generalizability of its findings, and the authors insufficiently defined postmodernism as a theoretical construct, using it mainly as a descriptive term rather than an analytical framework. Furthermore, the study overlooked religious or ideological dimensions that could mediate family adaptation to postmodern pressures. Thus, a significant literature gap remains regarding comparative, longitudinal, and ideologically grounded analyses—particularly across Islamic and Christian contexts—examining how postmodern social transformations reshape family structures, values, and cohesion.

In conclusion, based on the above literature review, it can be said that adequate data and information are available on the topic and reviewed literature will be further analyzed extensively. The family institution is the most fundamental in society and religion and is in a crisis today. Many writers, researchers and scholars have been discussing and analyzing various issues, including the family institution in Islam and Christianity and the different types of challenges faced by the family institution. Most importantly, some modern ideologies and cultures threaten the family institution, such as feminism, liberalism and Postmodernism. Although there has been considerable research on family institutions as ancient entities, this specific topic has not been thoroughly explored, indicating a research gap. Therefore, this study adds a new dimension to the family institution in Islam and Christianity and the impact of modern

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<sup>97</sup> Torres, Catya, Diego Vallejo-Huanga, and Ximena Ramírez Ocaña, "Quantitative evaluation of family functions and changes in a postmodern context." *Heliyon* 7, no. 6 (2021).

ideologies and cultures on the institution. In a nutshell, this study will focus mainly on analyzing the family institution from the perspective of Islam and Christianity and the effects of feminism, liberalism and Postmodernism on it.

## **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

### **Problems and Challenges**

In academic and social research, problems refer to the existing conditions, situations, or phenomena that hinder the proper functioning or achievement of desired goals within a system or institution. A problem is typically observable, measurable, and results from a gap between the current reality and the ideal state. In the context of family institution, problems may include rising divorce rates, domestic violence, lack of parental responsibility, or the erosion of moral and religious values that once sustained family cohesion. Thus, a problem signifies a concrete issue requiring analytical attention and practical intervention.

Conversely, challenges are the complex, often multifaceted obstacles that make addressing or solving these problems difficult. They represent broader social, economic, ideological, or cultural forces that test the capacity of individuals, communities, or institutions to maintain stability or progress. In family studies, challenges may include secularization, economic pressure, gender-role conflicts, liberal individualism, and the influence of digital media, which collectively reshape expectations and relationships within families.

Critically, while problems indicate what is wrong, challenges reflect why it is difficult to resolve those wrongs. Both are interrelated—effective solutions depend on understanding the structural, theological, and sociocultural challenges that underlie family problems in contemporary societies.

### **Family Institution**

The family institution refers to the foundational social unit established for the purpose of procreation, nurturing, and moral development of human beings. The family institution serves as the primary context that transmits values, beliefs, and ethical conduct across generations. In Islamic thought, the family (Arabic: usrah) is divinely

ordained, based on nikah (lawful marriage), and functions as a means of preserving faith, morality, and social harmony. The Qur'an describes marriage as a relationship founded on tranquility, love, and mercy (Qur'an 30:21).

In Christian theology, the family is likewise a divine institution, originating from the creation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:24), and it serves as a symbol of God's covenantal relationship with humanity. Both religions view the family not merely as a biological or social entity but as a spiritual and moral foundation of civilization. Thus, within this study, the "family institution" denotes the divinely guided structure of relationships and responsibilities among spouses, parents, and children, through which moral, spiritual, and social stability is ensured.

### **Liberalism**

Liberalism is a modern Western philosophical and political ideology emphasizing individual freedom, equality, and autonomy. It originated in the Enlightenment period, seeking to liberate individuals from traditional religious, political, and social authorities. In the context of social and family life, liberalism advocates for personal choice and self-determination, often prioritizing individual rights over collective moral or religious obligations.

From an Islamic and Christian moral standpoint, liberalism poses challenges by promoting secularism and moral relativism, thereby detaching the family from divine guidance. Within this study, liberalism refers to the worldview that emphasizes individual freedom and personal fulfillment, often at the expense of communal, spiritual, and traditional family values.

### **Feminism**

Feminism is a socio-political and intellectual movement advocating for women's rights and gender equality in social, political, and economic spheres. While its early waves sought justice and dignity for women against oppressive patriarchal structures, later feminist movements—particularly radical and postmodern feminism—challenged traditional family roles, marriage structures, and religiously defined gender norms.

In this research, feminism is understood not as the legitimate pursuit of justice and dignity for women, which Islam and Christianity both endorse, but as a modern

ideological movement that sometimes redefines gender, sexuality, and family relationships in ways that conflict with the theological and moral principles upheld by both religions.

### **Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is an intellectual movement that emerged in the mid-20th century, characterized by skepticism towards absolute truths, universal values, and meta-narratives, including religion and morality. It promotes pluralism, subjectivity, and cultural relativism, challenging the idea that there is any single, objective standard for truth or ethics.

In the context of family and religion, postmodernism leads to the deconstruction of traditional moral frameworks, legitimizing diverse family forms and lifestyles without reference to divine or natural law. Within this study, postmodernism refers to a worldview that relativizes truth and morality, thereby undermining the sacred and stable conception of the family in Islam and Christianity.

### **Modern Ideologies**

Modern ideologies refer collectively to intellectual movements that have emerged primarily from secular Western modernity—such as liberalism, feminism, secular humanism, and postmodernism—which redefine moral, social, and religious norms. In this research, modern ideologies are seen as forces contributing to the weakening of traditional family institutions by promoting individualism, moral relativism, and the detachment of family values from divine revelation.

### **Comparative Religion**

Comparative religion is an academic field that examines the beliefs, practices, and ethical teachings of different religious traditions to identify both convergences and distinctions. In this study, the term refers to the comparative analysis between Islam and Christianity concerning their theological, ethical, and social perspectives on the family institution.

### **Institution**

The term "institution" refers to an organized and structured system of social relations governed by norms, rules, and values that sustain social order and continuity. Within this study, the family institution is regarded as a moral and spiritual establishment instituted by God, through which humanity maintains moral order, procreation, and social cohesion.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE CONCEPT, ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE FAMILY INSTITUTION IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The family is universally recognized as the fundamental unit of human society and the cornerstone of moral, social, and spiritual life. In both Islam and Christianity, the family occupies a central place in the divine order, serving as the primary context for nurturing faith, transmitting values, and maintaining social harmony. This chapter examines the concept, role and function of the family institution as presented in Islamic and Christian teachings. It looks at how each religion defines the family, what its members should do, and how it helps keep moral and social order. Through this discussion, the chapter seeks to highlight both the convergences and distinctions in the two religious traditions, thereby providing a theological and moral framework for understanding the family's enduring significance in human civilization.

#### **2.2 THE CONCEPT AND ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY INSTITUTION**

The "family" institution has often been described in both sociological and theological terms as one of the fundamental building-blocks of human society. In religious traditions it is typically understood not simply as a social group but as a divinely sanctioned institution with ethical, spiritual and communal functions. In the context of the Abrahamic faiths—namely Islam and Christianity—the family is conceptualized as having both cosmic and historical origins, embedded in the divine creation narrative and then evolving in cultural settings. As Osman Bakar notes from an Islamic perspective, it is "first of all a religious institution since it is based on the principle of sacred marriage and ... exists to serve as an instrument to help man realize the twin goals

of his existence" in relation to God and to human society.<sup>98</sup> Thus the family institution is not accidental but intrinsic to the spiritual framework of these faiths.

### 2.2.1 The Concept of Family in Islam and Christianity: A Comparative Overview

In Islam, the family is often described as divinely ordained—not a human invention arising only from social evolution but established in the divine act of creation and thus bearing sacred status. For example, it is asserted that "the family is a divinely inspired and ordained institution. It did not evolve through human experimentation ... The human race is a product of this institution and not the other way around."<sup>99</sup> From that vantage the family is both a micro-cosm of society and a locus of worship, moral training, and socio-economic cooperation.<sup>100</sup>

In Christianity similarly the family is often regarded as the "first institution" created by God, pre-dating church and state.<sup>101</sup> The biblical narrative presents marriage and family (e.g., in Genesis) as part of the created order (Gen 1:27–28; 2:18–24).<sup>102</sup> Within Christian theological discourse the family is also conceived as the "domestic church," a context in which faith is nurtured, moral character developed, and relational life lived out.<sup>103</sup>

Comparatively, then, both traditions locate the family institution in creation (rather than mere cultural contingency) and both attribute to it both personal and communal responsibilities. However, there are key differences:

In Islam the family is more explicitly embedded within the legal-ethical framework of shari'ah and social obligations (e.g., rights of kin, inheritance, marriage regulations).<sup>104</sup> In Christianity, while such dimensions exist, the emphasis is often more on covenantal, sacramental and relational aspects (e.g., the family as an analogy of the

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<sup>98</sup> Osman Bakar, "Family values, the family institution, and the challenges of the twenty-first century: An Islamic perspective." *ICR Journal* 3, no. 1 (2011): 13-36.

<sup>99</sup> Khurshid Ahmad, *Family life in Islam*. Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1974.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>101</sup> See "The Family," Christian Library, accessed August 2025, <http://www.christianstudylibrary.org/article/family-1>

<sup>102</sup> Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18–24 (New International Version).

<sup>103</sup> William Messenger, "Theology of Work Project." Theology of Work Bible Commentary.

<sup>104</sup> Osman Bakar, *Family as a Concept and as an Institution in Islamic Social Thought* (Kuala Lumpur: IAIS, 2010), 8–9.

church and emphasis on mutual service and discipleship).<sup>105</sup> The scope of what constitutes the "family" may differ: in Islamic thought, extended kinship and the rights of relatives are often emphasized; in Christian contexts in modern Western discourse the nuclear family tends to be foregrounded, even though historically the "household" (oikos) included servants, dependents and extended kin.<sup>106</sup>

The underlying theological frameworks differ. For instance, in Christianity the notion of ion into the "family of God" and the ecclesial meaning of household codes (ὀικοῦς) shape the conceptualization of family; in Islam the model of the family is more directly integrated into the idea of the Muslim ummah and the socio-ethical ordering of society.<sup>107</sup> Thus, the two traditions share a robust view of family as foundational, but with different emphases in theological framing and institutional embedding.

## **2.2.2 Scriptural Foundations of the Family Institution**

### ***2.2.2.1 The Concept of Family in the Qur'an and Hadith***

The Qur'an and the prophetic traditions (Hadith) provide the primary scriptural basis for the family institution from the Islamic perspective. The Qur'an presents the creation of a paired humanity (male/female) as divine sign, e.g., "And of His signs is that He created for you mates from yourselves that you might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy" (Q 30:21).<sup>108</sup> Other verses address kinship and the rights of parents and children (e.g., Q 17:23–24).<sup>109</sup> The hadith literature complements this by emphasizing the family as the "first school" of moral training, the household as the locus of religious practice and the prophet's own example of family life (his relations with his wives and children).<sup>110</sup> Osman Bakar emphasizes that from the Qur'anic vantage the

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<sup>105</sup> "A Christian Perspective on the Family," Christian Library, accessed August 2025.

<sup>106</sup> "What is a Family?" Christian Library accessed August 2025.

<sup>107</sup> Carolyn Osiek, "The New Testament Teaching on Family," HTS Theological Studies 64, no. 1 (2008): 123–124.

<sup>108</sup> Qur'an 30:21 (trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali).

<sup>109</sup> Qur'an 17:23–24; see also Qur'an 4:1 and 24:32 on kinship and marriage.

<sup>110</sup> Ibraheem Shelash Al-Hawary, "The Education of Children in an Islamic Family Based on the Holy Qur'an," HTS Theological Studies 75, no. 4 (2019): 4.

"first human family ... is of divine origin" and that the stability of the family institution is a higher objective (maqāṣid) of Sharī'ah.<sup>111</sup>

From a critical perspective one can note some tensions and questions: The family model is normative (husband-wife-children) but in practice Islamic societies have varied family structures (e.g., polygyny, extended kin-networks). The scriptural model thus functions as a regulative ideal rather than a simply descriptive sociological category. Further, the weight of kinship rights, lineage, and inheritance in Islamic law means that the family is not only domestic-private but intimately social and legal.<sup>112</sup>

### ***2.2.2.2 The Concept of Family in the Bible: Old and New Testaments***

Christian scripture likewise provides foundational material. In the Old Testament the creation accounts (Gen 1:27–28; 2:18–24) frame marriage and procreation; patriarchal narratives (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) show families as key carriers of covenant identity and transmission of faith.<sup>113</sup> In the New Testament the household (ὄικος) becomes a key locus of Christian life: e.g., in Paul's letters the "household codes" (Eph 5:21–6:4; Col 3:18–4:1) regulate the relations of wife/husband, children/parents, slaves/masters.<sup>114</sup> Additionally the idea of Christians being adopted into the "family of God" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5) gives the concept a broader ecclesial dimension.<sup>115</sup> As one scholar notes, "the family has built-in authority structure ... all leadership is a form of ministry rather than of tyranny."<sup>116</sup>

Critically speaking, Christian scripture often balances the normative family model with a radical re-orientation: for example, Jesus of Nazareth's statements that one must "hate father and mother" (Luke 14:26) or that whoever does the will of God is his brother/sister (Mark 3:35) suggest that family boundaries may be superseded by

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<sup>111</sup> Osman Bakar, "Family as a Concept and as an Institution," 7-8.

<sup>112</sup> See "Concept of Family in Islam - Literature Review," 1Library, accessed August 2025.

<sup>113</sup> Samuel Warren Dike, *The Family in the History of Christianity*. WB Ketcham, 1886.

<sup>114</sup> "Family · Topical Bible: The Christian Family," BibleHub, accessed August 2025.

<sup>115</sup> Kleber Martins Gomes, "Church Support in Adoption: A Phenomenological Study of Brazilian Christian Protestant Nuclear Families Who Adopted Street Children." PhD diss., Beulah Heights University, 2025.

<sup>116</sup> "The Family," Christian Library.

commitment to Christ.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, the early Christian community welcomed whole households (Acts 16:15, 31–33) which suggests that the household served as the vehicle of faith transmission.<sup>118</sup> Thus the scriptural foundation is both sociological and theological: the family as historically rooted, yet re-interpreted in light of the gospel.

### 2.2.3 Theological Interpretations and Doctrinal Understandings

The theological discourse around the family institution involves doctrines of creation, covenant, sin, redemption, and eschatology. In Islam, the family is often framed as part of the divine scheme of vicegerency (*khilāfah*) and worship (*‘ubūdiyyah*)—the human being fulfills two primary relationships: to God and to fellow humans, and the family is the context in which these relationships are nurtured.<sup>119</sup> The family is thus not just a private domestic arrangement but a sacred institution.

In Christian theology, the family is likewise seen as an expression of God's relational nature: the triune God is often invoked as a "family" (Father, Son, Spirit) and the human family is seen as bearing the *imago Dei* in relational form.<sup>120</sup> The family is also a sacramental and ecclesial entity: marriage is often treated as a sacrament in many Christian traditions, and the family is a "domestic church."<sup>121</sup> The household thus becomes a site of worship, service and discipleship.

Doctrinally, these notions lead to understandings of authority, complementarity (husband/wife, parent/child), and the social mission of the family. But there are divergences and critical issues:

- Issues of patriarchy and gender roles: Christian "household codes" have been criticized for endorsing hierarchical family structures; similar critiques exist in Islamic discourse around *qiwāmah* (male responsibility) and familial rights.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Carolyn Osiek, "The New Testament teaching on family matters." *HTS: Theological Studies* 62, no. 3 (2006): 819-843.

<sup>118</sup> Carolyn Osiek, "The New Testament Teaching on Family," 125., 121–122.

<sup>119</sup> Osman Bakar, "Family Values," 1.

<sup>120</sup> "What is Family?" Christian Library.

<sup>121</sup> "A Theology of the Family," Faith Pulpit, accessed August 2025.

<sup>122</sup> See "Theological and Philosophic Differences Between Islam and Christianity," Reddit (note: popular-level critique), but more seriously see critical scholarship on gender in religious families.

- The interplay of individualism and communal obligation: modern societies placing emphasis on individual autonomy raises tensions for both traditions which view the family as reciprocal and interdependent.
- The extent to which the family institution is normative vs descriptive: e.g., in Christianity whether celibacy or single life has equal theological value; in Islam how polygyny, divorce, and blended families interact with the ideal model.
- The theological role of the family in salvation history: while Christianity emphasizes adoption into the family of God, Islam emphasizes lineage, kinship and socio-ethical continuity of the ummah. The doctrinal frameworks thus condition how the family is understood within each tradition's soteriology and communal theology.

In sum, theology gives the family institution both status and purpose but also raises critical questions about power, equality, modernity and the changing shape of households.

## **2.2.4 Historical Emergence and Development of the Family Institution**

### ***2.2.4.1 Early Islamic Family System***

Historically, the Islamic family system emerged in the Arabian context of the 7th century in which various kin-group and tribal patterns existed (e.g., polygyny, extended households, delegation of tribal responsibilities). The arrival of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and the revelation of the Qur'an and Sunna established standards concerning marriage, inheritance, kinship, the rights of orphans and women, and household regulation. The family thus became more systematized under Islamic jurisprudential (*fiqh*) frameworks.<sup>123</sup> For example, rights to maintenance, responsibilities of the husband and wife, and the moral duties of children are spelled out in classical juristic works. The family also served as a stabilizing institution in the formative Islamic

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<sup>123</sup> Bashir, Ghazala, Mrs Shazia, and Sonia Bari, "Family System of Islam and its Significance in Reformation of Society." *IQAN* 5, no. 1 (2022): 43-59.

ummah, as Bakar argues: "history has shown that the rise and fall of civilizations is not independent of the development of the family institution."<sup>124</sup>

A critical perspective would note that although the family was ideally modeled as monogamous and stable, in practice diverse family forms (polygyny, extended kin networks, stepfamilies) were present and continue to be. Moreover, modern forces (urbanization, globalization and migration) challenge traditional family structures in Muslim societies, raising questions about the adaptability of classical norms.<sup>125</sup>

#### ***2.2.4.2 The Family in Early and Medieval Christian Thought***

In Christian history, the family institution has roots in Greco-Roman households (oikos) and Jewish familial legacies. The early Christian church adopted the "household" as the primary social unit for community life (with entire families becoming Christian, Acts 16:15).<sup>126</sup> In the medieval period the Christian family was shaped by canon law (marriage as sacrament), feudal socio-economic structures (extended kin groups, guilds, and serf households), and church theology (Augustine and Aquinas on marriage and procreation). The family was simultaneously a domestic, economic, moral and religious unit.<sup>127</sup> For instance the Christian library article notes: "The family ... is the oldest and most basic of human institutions... The Bible stresses its importance as a spiritual unit and a training ground for mature adult character."<sup>128</sup>

Historically one critical observation is the shift from large extended households in pre-industrial society to nuclear families in the modern era. The transformation of the family's economic basis (from agricultural to industrial wage labor) changed its internal dynamics.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, Christianity's emphasis on the family as a domestic church contributed to a revisionist view of the family as both private and communal. But critics

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<sup>124</sup> Bakar, "Family as a Concept and as an Institution," 9.

<sup>125</sup> "Family | Theology of Work," section on fragmented family in modern context.

<sup>126</sup> "Family - A Christian Library Article," Christian Library.

<sup>127</sup> "The Christian Institution of the Family and the Role of Personality," accessed August 2025.

<sup>128</sup> "The Family," Christian Library.

<sup>129</sup> "Family," *Theology of Work Project*.

point out that idealized Christian family ideals often co-existed with significant patriarchal, hierarchical, and unequal structures.

### **2.2.5 Family as a Divine Institution: Doctrinal Convergence and Divergence**

From the foregoing, it is clear that both Islam and Christianity treat the family institution as divinely instituted—that is, an integral part of the created order, with normative moral and spiritual significance. Convergence includes:

- Acknowledgment that the family (husband-wife-children, parent-child relations, kinship) was part of the divine intention (e.g., creation narratives).
- The family as the context of moral education, socialization, and religious formation (both traditions treat the household as a place of values transmission).
- The family serves as a stabilizing social institution with responsibilities that extend beyond the individuals to society at large.

However, divergences remain:

- The underlying doctrinal frameworks differ: Christianity emphasizes the family considering redemption (adoption into God's family, the analogy of Christ–church relationships); Islam emphasizes the family in light of divine worship, community (ummah), legal-ethical obligations, and lineage.
- The scope of the normative model: While both traditions value the monogamous nuclear unit, Islam accommodates (and classical jurisprudence regulates) polygyny; Christianity historically has emphasized monogamy, although in practice extended families and complex kin structures existed.
- The locus of authority and relational ordering: In Islamic jurisprudence, a husband or father often has defined responsibilities and certain rights (e.g., *qiwamah*). In Christian household codes, while leadership is affirmed (Eph 5:22–33), they are often interpreted in terms of mutual submission and love, and modern Christian ethics increasingly criticize hierarchical interpretations.

- The integration of family within legal-social vs sacramental-ecclesial frameworks: The Islamic family institution is tightly bound with legal-jurisprudential regulation (marriage contract, inheritance, guardianship); the Christian family institution is frequently discussed within theological, sacramental and ecclesial terms (marriage as covenant, family as "domestic church"). Thus, the role of formal legal regulation differs in emphasis.

Critically, one must also note that while both traditions present an idealized family model, in real history the institution has been marked by social, economic, cultural, and gendered tensions: issues of divorce, remarriage, blended families, single-parent households, and the changing shape of kin networks challenge the normative model. Theologically this raises questions about the adequacy of traditional family models for contemporary societies, and whether both religious traditions need to reinterpret or reformulate their conceptions of family in light of changing sociological realities.

## **2.3 OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY INSTITUTION**

The family institution occupies a dual status in religious traditions: it is normative (prescribed and idealized) and functional (performing key roles for individuals and society). In both Islamic and Christian frameworks, the family is more than a private domestic unit—it carries moral, spiritual, social and economic significance. A critical analysis invites us to ask: What purposes does the family serve and how do those purposes interplay with religious, cultural and societal change? Below we examine those purposes under specific headings.

### **2.3.1 The Spiritual and Moral Objectives of the Family**

#### ***2.3.1.1 Marriage as a Sacred Covenant***

In both Islamic and Christian thought, marriage is not merely a legal contract or social custom but often a covenantal, sacred union with enduring significance. From the

Islamic side, marriage (nikāḥ) is frequently described as a divinely instituted bond, an act of worship and a foundation for the family. As one author summarizes:

"Islam regards the family and marital relationships as a divinely inspired institution that is noble and sacred ... the family is responsible for the preservation of the human race (procreation)."<sup>130</sup> Here the marriage bond is elevated beyond mere contract into a cosmic order. It is integrally linked to the twin goals of worship (‘ubūdiyyah) and vicegerency (khilāfah) in Islamic thought—that is, the human's relationship to God and to society.<sup>131</sup>

In Christian theology, marriage too is often presented as a holy covenant: the document *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) emphasizes that the family "finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity ... but also its mission" and that the family is an "intimate community of life and love".<sup>132</sup> The conjugal relationship is considered a symbol of Christ's love for the Church (Eph. 5:25–32), thus elevating the spousal bond to theological imagery.

Critically, however, this sacred framing also raises tensions. Both traditions must contend with the fact of divorce, non-traditional forms of family (single-parent, blended, cohabitation), and changing social norms. The ideal of a "lifelong covenant" may clash with lived realities, and thus the function of marriage as a "sacred covenant" becomes a normative horizon rather than a universal empirical description. Moreover, scholars in both traditions criticize the potential for hierarchy, patriarchy or gender-norm constraints embedded in covenantal marriage ideals.

### ***2.3.1.2 Family as a site of worship and Moral Formation***

Another spiritual/moral objective is the family as the first "school" of character, virtue and religious formation. In Islam, the household is where children learn prayer, ethics,

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<sup>130</sup> Mufti Kifayat Ullah, Atta Ur Rehman, and Muhammad Junaid Khan, "Family life as the foundation of islamic civilization." *Hamdard Islamicus* 46, no. 3 (2023): 9.

<sup>131</sup> Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as philosophy of Islamic law: a systems approach*. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2008.

<sup>132</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio: Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), no. 17–19.

and scripture, and where spouses support one another in faith.<sup>133</sup> The institution of family is described as an instrument to help human beings realize the "twin goals" of *hablun min Allah* (relationship with God) and *hablun min al-nas* (relationship with people).<sup>134</sup> Family thus becomes the locus where spiritual and moral life is lived, not simply taught.

In Christian tradition, similarly, the household is viewed as a "domestic church". Parents are called to instruct their children in the faith (Deut. 6:5–7), and the family bears the responsibility of moral formation.<sup>135</sup> The apostolic exhortation "Familiaris Consortio" emphasizes the family's vocation "to guard, reveal and communicate love" and to participate in the life and mission of the Church.<sup>136</sup> From a critical angle, one must ask: how effective is the family in this moral formation function in the face of secularization, competing cultural narratives, and diverse family forms? Furthermore, there is a risk of overly idealizing the family and placing burdens on parents that the wider community or society might share.

### 2.3.2 Procreation and Preservation of Lineage

A third objective is the perpetuation of human life, the preservation of lineage and the continuity of society. In Islamic discourse, the family is "the basis of the entire socio-cultural structure... a self-sustaining mechanism to ensure social, ideological and cultural stability."<sup>137</sup> The Qur'an repeatedly speaks of "offspring" and "progeny" as blessings (e.g., Q 16:72). The formation of a stable marriage and family is understood as the legitimate avenue for sexual fulfillment and childbearing.<sup>138</sup> From a maqāsid

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<sup>133</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Islamic family law reform: problems and prospects." *Icr Journal* 3, no. 1 (2011): 37-52.

<sup>134</sup> Samaneh Oladi and Samaneh Oladi Ghadikolaei, *Women, Faith, and Family: Reclaiming Gender Justice Through Religious Activism*. Univ of California Press, 2024.

<sup>135</sup> William P. Roberts, "The Family as Domestic Church: Contemporary Implications." *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives* (1996): 125-140.

<sup>136</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 17.

<sup>137</sup> Nizam Ubaidilah and Asmaul Husna. "Regulation of Maintenance in Islamic Family Law: Implications for Family Welfare." *International Journal of Health, Economics, and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* 5, no. 4 (2023): 601-612.

<sup>138</sup> Shabnam Banoo and Tanveer Ahmed. "Rules of marriage in Islam: A comprehensive analysis." *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovation Research (JETIR)* (2024).

(higher-objectives) perspective, preserving lineage (ḥifz al-nasl) is one of the essential aims of Sharī'ah.<sup>139</sup>

In Christian thought, procreation has also been a traditional purpose of marriage: the conjugal act ordered to children and the raising of those children in faith. As one popular theological framework suggests: "God created the institution of the family ... to provide companionship ... and have children."<sup>140</sup> Family is thus intertwined with generativity and the transmission of life and faith. A criticism arises when we consider low fertility, delayed parenthood, child-free families or same-sex couples: how do these challenges fit within traditional Christian frameworks, and what theological reconfigurations (if any) are needed? Additionally, preservation of lineage in both traditions is not simply biological but cultural: the transmission of belief, values, identity and community. One must also question how notions of lineage relate to extended kin, adopted children, or non-nuclear family forms.

### **2.3.3 Education, Nurturing, and Moral Upbringing**

Closely linked with procreation is the function of education and nurturing—the family as the primary environment for child development, moral and religious formation, and character building. Islamic scholarship affirms this: the family "creates a congenial context for the spiritual and emotional fulfillment of the spouses... initiates the new generations into the culture, tradition, and further evolution of their civilization."<sup>141</sup> One author lists educational impacts such as establishing the limits of Allah, achieving psychological peace and security, and the birth of righteous children.<sup>142</sup> Thus, the family is seen as an educator, socializer and value-transmitter.

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<sup>139</sup> Abdul Halim Ibrahim, Noor Naemah Abdul Rahman, Shaikh Mohd Saifuddeen, and Madiha Baharuddin. "Tri-parent baby technology and preservation of lineage: An analysis from the perspective of Maqasid al-Shari'ah based Islamic bioethics." *Science and engineering ethics* 25, no. 1 (2019): 129-142.

<sup>140</sup> Jakobus M Vorster, "Marriage and family in view of the doctrine of the covenant." *HTS Theological Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no. 3 (2016).

<sup>141</sup> Mustapha Abdullah Kuyatch, "Assessing the Relevance of a Muslim Family in the Modern Environment: A Review." *Assessing the Relevance of a Muslim Family in the Modern Environment: A Review (June 2, 2022)* (2022).

<sup>142</sup> Abid Nurhuda, "Islamic education in the family: concept, role, relationship, and parenting style." *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature* 2, no. 4 (2023): 359-368.

In Christian social theology, the family is similarly characterized as the "first and vital cell of society" charged with the upbringing of children as future citizens and Christians.<sup>143</sup> The family is the first place of socialization where children learn relational skills, moral norms, and social identity.<sup>144</sup> However, this raises questions about equity and social change: not all families are equally resourced or equipped for these educational tasks; issues of social stratification, gender inequality, and changing patterns of parenting challenge traditional ideals. Moreover, in pluralistic societies the question emerges as to how religious formation within the family engages with wider secular education and multicultural influences.

### 2.3.4 Economic Cooperation and Mutual Support

A further objective of the family institution is economic cooperation, mutual support, and security. From the Islamic perspective, the family is described as a socio-economic institution: it provides for reproduction, moral protection, and socialization and also acts as the "sheet-anchor of a system of socio-economic security."<sup>145</sup> The husband's duty to maintain the family, the mutual rights between relatives, and the obligations of kin (*birr al-wālidayn*, maintenance of orphans) are all part of this framework.<sup>146</sup> The family is not only a private unit but a node of economic rights and obligations.

In Christian tradition, the family is likewise recognized as an economic unit: children depend on parents, spouses support each other, and the family contributes to society's common beneficial activities. The theology emphasizes the family's contribution to social order and the common good (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207).<sup>147</sup> At the same time, the family is vulnerable to economic pressures: modern labor markets, globalization, changing gender roles mean that the traditional economic model (one breadwinner, one homemaker) is under strain. Nonetheless, one must ask:

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<sup>143</sup> Pontifical Council for the Family, *Charter of the Rights of the Family* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020), preamble.

<sup>144</sup> Corneliu Beneamin Buzguța, "The Morality of Christian Love: A Theological and Ethical Perspective." *SCIENTIA MORALITAS-International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 9, no. 2 (2024): 53-64.

<sup>145</sup> Mazhar Hussain, and Hafiz Falak shair Faizi, "Qur'anic Perspective on Family Life: Socio-Economic Study." *Al-Kashaf* 5, no. 01 (2025): 26-36.

<sup>146</sup> Mawloud Mohadi, "Normative Islamic conceptualizations of families and kinship through maqasid perspectives: A comprehensive literature study." *Malaysian J. Syariah & L.* 11 (2023): 290.

<sup>147</sup> US Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Image, 2012.

how do families adapt in contexts of poverty, single-parent households, migration, dual-earning spouses, and what does religious tradition say about these shifts?

### 2.3.5 The Family as a Means of Upholding Social Order and Moral Values

Another objective is the family's social function: maintaining social order, transmitting moral values, promoting cohesion, and stabilizing society. In Islam, the family institution is viewed as the foundation that connects past, present and future, preserving culture, lineage, faith, and providing emotional and psychological stability.<sup>148</sup> The family serves as a micro-society where values such as love, compassion, tranquility are realized.<sup>149</sup> In Christian sociology and theology, the family is called "society's basic unit" and anticipated to contribute to the humanization of social life.<sup>150</sup> One Christian ethicist writes: "The family ... helps preserve and transmit cultural values ... The chief means of humanization and personalization."<sup>151</sup>

Critically, however, one must ask about the limitations of the family as a social agent. Families may reproduce inequality, patriarchy, and social exclusion. Some scholarships (especially in sociology) argue that the family can be both a stabilizer and a site of conflict, oppression or dysfunction. Religious traditions need to account for the diversity of family forms (single-parent, divorced, same-sex, blended) and the potential of the family to evolve while retaining its core functions. Moreover, global societal changes (migration, urbanization, and digital communication) challenge traditional notions of kinship, support and inter-generational bonds.

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<sup>148</sup> Rusli Rusli, "The role of family in preventing social conflict in society from Islamic perspectives." *HUNafa Jurnal Studia Islamika* 17, no. 1 (2020): 108-122.

<sup>149</sup> Tariq Ramadan, "Islamic ethics: Sources, methodology and application." *Islamic Bioethics: Current Issues & Challenges* (2018): 1-21.

<sup>150</sup> Jack O. Balswick, Judith K. Balswick, and Thomas V. Frederick, *The family: A Christian perspective on the contemporary home*. Baker Academic, 2021.

<sup>151</sup> Stephen J McKinney, "Catholic social teaching, Catholic education and religious education." In *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools: Volume II: Learning and Leading in a Pluralist World*, pp. 393-403. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019.

### 2.3.6 Comparative Evaluation: The Family's Functional Role in Muslim and Christian Societies

By combining these elements, we can compare how Muslim and Christian societies conceptualize and operationalize the functional roles of the family.

**Convergence:** Both traditions affirm that the family is foundational for human life, moral formation, socialization of children, economic cooperation, and social stability. Both view marriage as a "sacred" or "covenantal" institution, both emphasize the transmission of faith and values, and both perceive the family as central to society.

**Divergences:**

- In Islamic discourse, the family is closely integrated with legal-jurisprudential frameworks (e.g., inheritance laws, maintenance obligations, kinship rights), and the family is part of the broader communal ummah. In Christian tradition, while legal frameworks exist, there is often a more pronounced sacramental, ecclesial and moral framing of the family (e.g., marriage as sacrament, family as "domestic church").
- The emphasis on lineage and procreation is particularly strong in Islamic formulations (preservation of *nasl*) and mapped into the *maqāsid* of *Sharī'ah*. Christian teaching emphasizes procreation but also elevates other forms of family (e.g., Christian commitment without children) and adopts a broader ecclesial metaphor of spiritual 'adoption'.
- The economic and social welfare role of the family is systematized in Islamic jurisprudence (maintenance obligation, kin rights) in a way that is integral to family theology. Christian social teaching recognizes the family's economic role but often places it alongside other institutions (church, state, social economy) rather than centering the family legally.
- Modern pluralism, secularization, and changing family forms (divorce, re-marriage, same-sex unions) are differently engaged in each tradition: Christian societies, particularly in the West, have undergone profound normative shifts; Muslim societies are also evolving but with stronger juridical continuities in numerous instances.

### Critical Issues:

- The idealized functions of the family may obscure inequalities (gender, class, ethnicity) within families. For example, the normative assumption of a heteronormative husband-wife-child unit may marginalize other forms of families.
- Social change (urbanization, mobility, digital life, dual-earning households) challenges some traditional functions (e.g., extended kin support, inter-generational co-residence, fixed gender roles). Both traditions must ask how to adapt their theology of family to these changes without losing core meaning.
- There is the question of whether the weight placed on the family as the primary moral agent is realistic in plural and secular societies: what is the role of the broader community, state, and church/mosque in supporting families?
- The focus on procreation and lineage may clash with demographic realities (declining fertility, child-free marriages) and pluralistic understandings of family (adoption, stepfamilies). Religious traditions thus need to reflect on whether their functional theology remains adequate or needs reformulation.

In sum, the family in both Muslim and Christian societies functions as a nexus of spiritual, moral, social, educational, economic and cultural roles. While the major objectives appear similar, the theological framing, legal embedding, and responsiveness to contemporary changes vary. A robust critical engagement invites both tradition and sociology to examine how these functions are lived out, how inclusive they are, and how they might be rearticulated in changing cultural contexts.

## **2.4 FAMILY STRUCTURE AND ROLES**

The family functions as both an empirical social unit and a theological locus. It is simultaneously constituted by cultural habits, legal prescriptions, and religious imaginations. In what follows, I first set out how Islam and Christianity conceive of family structure, then examined marriage and conjugal relations, parenting and child-rearing, authority and leadership in the household, and finally the role of the family in

religious identity formation. Critical questions — about power, gender, and change — are raised throughout.

## **2.4.1 The Islamic and Christian Conceptions of Family Structure**

### ***2.4.1.1 The Nuclear and Extended Family Systems***

Both traditions recognize the household as a primary social unit, but they do not establish a single, universal family form. Historically, the extended household (including parents, children, married sons, sometimes servants and dependents) was normative in the pre-modern Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds; later industrialization and urbanization favored smaller nuclear households. In Islamic textual discourse the marital unit (husband, wife and children) is central, yet familial obligations extend to wider kinship: rights of relatives, obligations toward orphans, and prescribed shares in inheritance indicate that the family is legally and morally embedded in a network that exceeds the nuclear cell.<sup>152</sup>

Christian sources likewise foreground the conjugal pair and their children while also inheriting the ancient Mediterranean model of the *oikos* (household), which encompassed extended relatives, clients and servants. Early Christian mission activity often converted entire households, a phenomenon that presupposes a broader household structure than the modern nuclear family.<sup>153</sup> Thus, both traditions can accommodate either nuclear or extended forms; differences arise in emphasis and juridical detail rather than in absolute family shape.

### ***2.4.1.2 Kinship and Community Relations***

Kinship functions as both a care network and a moral matrix. In Islam, kinship rights are articulated in legal norms: the Qur'an sets detailed rules of inheritance and insists on duties to parents and relatives, thus making kinship a matter of ethical obligation and

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<sup>152</sup> Qur'an, 30:21; 2:187; translations vary. See also the juridical discussion of kinship obligations in classical fiqh literature.

<sup>153</sup> See Acts 16 (household conversions); on the ancient Mediterranean household (*oikos*), see Caroline Humfress, *Households and the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

juridical order.<sup>154</sup> Community (ummah) concerns interact with family obligations: the family is the primary transmitter of social and religious norms to the next generation, and public institutions (mosques, community leaders) complement family functions.

Christian thought likewise situates the household within community structures (church, parish). The household is a place of spiritual formation, but it is also accountable to ecclesial life; sacramental and pastoral practices often assume family stability as a medium for faith transmission. The modern Christian emphasis on voluntary associations and the role of civil society modifies but does not remove the foundational role of kinship networks. In both faith worlds, kinship is not merely biological; it is the principal mechanism through which moral and social responsibilities are allocated.

## **2.4.2 Marriage and Conjugal Relations**

### ***2.4.2.1 Foundations of Marriage in Islam and Christianity***

Marriage in both religions is normatively a covenantal bond with moral and social ends. The Qur'anic depiction of spouses as garments to one another (Q. 2:187) and as sources of tranquility and mercy (Q. 30:21) frames marriage as relational and sacred; Hadith literature and juristic texts elaborate procedures and rights, thereby integrating marriage into a legal-ethical order.<sup>155</sup>

Christian foundations draw upon Genesis (creation narratives) and the New Testament (e.g., Christ's teaching, Pauline household instructions). Many Christian traditions treat marriage as a covenant and, in sacramental churches, as a sign of Christ's relationship to the Church (Eph. 5:25-33). Thus, theology and liturgy together give marriage a sacramental dignity in many Christian contexts. Both traditions, therefore,

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<sup>154</sup> Qur'an, 4:11–12 (inheritance shares); 17:23–24 (duties to parents).

<sup>155</sup> Qur'an, 30:21; see also Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim for prophetic examples of domestic life. On marriage as social institution in Islam, consult Kecia Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), which discusses formative jurisprudential development.

present marriage as more than a private arrangement; it is a social and often religiously sanctioned institution with communal significance.

#### ***2.4.2.2 Rights and Responsibilities of Husband and Wife***

Classical Islamic jurisprudence assigns distinct but complementary roles: maintenance and protection are typically framed as primary duties of the husband, while the wife's rights include maintenance, dignity, and specific marital rights delineated in law. The Qur'anic verse often cited in discussions of marital roles—commonly translated as affording men a form of responsibility or guardianship (*qiwāmah*) in the household—has been interpreted variably across juristic, theological and contemporary feminist readings.<sup>156</sup>

Christian household codes (e.g., Ephesians and Colossians) articulate mutual duties: wives are exhorted to respect their husbands, while husbands are commanded to love their wives sacrificially. Historically, this produced readings that foregrounded male headship; yet many modern Christian interpreters emphasize mutual submission and reciprocal love as normative. The practical outworking of rights and duties therefore varies widely across times and contexts. Importantly, both traditions embed marital responsibilities within broader moral frameworks so that duties are not merely private preferences but social and spiritual obligations.

#### ***2.4.2.3 Gender Complementarity versus Equality: A Critical Appraisal***

A central contemporary debate concerns whether households should be organized around "complementary" gender roles or egalitarian equality. Proponents of complementarity argue that distinct roles reflect created differences and mutual enrichment; critics respond that such frameworks can naturalize hierarchy and limit personal flourishing, particularly for women. Both religious traditions contain resources for defending either position. Within Islam, textual injunctions have been read to support both complementarity and a more egalitarian mutuality; modern jurists and

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<sup>156</sup> Qur'an, 4:34 (*qiwāmah*) and its contested translations and interpretations; see Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), for contemporary reinterpretations.

feminist scholars contest traditional interpretations that lead to women's subordination.<sup>157</sup> Likewise, Christianity houses both complementarian theologies (often grounded in readings of Pauline texts) and egalitarian theologies that emphasize mutual submission and gift-based ministry.<sup>158</sup>

Critically, complementarity and equality vary across communities. Cultural practices, economic necessities and political rights shape how theological principles are applied. In practice, many families blend elements: responsibilities may be differentiated in some domains (e.g., childcare) while partners share others (e.g., economic provision). The challenge for religious ethics is to articulate a model that preserves human dignity, enables flourishing, and resists the ossification of power imbalances.

### **2.4.3 Parenting and Child Rearing**

#### **2.4.3.1 Parents as *Murabbi* in Islam**

The Islamic concept of parental formation emphasizes the notion of *tarbiyyah* (nurture/formation). Parents are not only protectors but *murabbī*—educators and moral cultivators—charged with teaching religious duty, ethical conduct, and social competence. Classical and medieval texts (e.g., Al-Ghazālī's pedagogical writings) treat the household as a crucible for spiritual and intellectual development.<sup>159</sup> The prophetic model, likewise, provides examples of familial instruction and compassionate discipline. Contemporary Muslim scholars stress that *tarbiyyah* is holistic: it includes ritual training (prayer, fasting), moral formation (truthfulness, charity), and social skills (cordiality with kin).<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> For feminist critiques and re-readings in Islam, see Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>158</sup> On complementarian and egalitarian theologies in Christianity, see John Piper & Wayne Grudem (complementarian), and egalitarian responses in works such as N. T. Wright and others who emphasise mutual submission (see Ephesians commentary).

<sup>159</sup> Abu-Hamid Al Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali's Adapted Summary of Ihya Ulum al-Din: The Forty Principles of the Religion*. Turath Publishing, 2016.

<sup>160</sup> Al-Hawary, Sulieman Ibraheem Shelash, Tribhuwan Kumar, Harikumar Pallathadka, Shadia Hamoud Alshahrani, Hadi Abdul Nabi Muhammad Al-Tamimi, Iskandar Muda, and Nermeen Singer. "The

#### ***2.4.3.2 Biblical Principles of Parenting in Christianity***

Biblical parental instruction often cites Deuteronomy's command to teach children God's ways and Paul's exhortation to bring up children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). These texts highlight both moral inculcation and protection from excessive harshness. Christian tradition adds sacramental and catechetical dimensions: parents are expected to introduce children into the life of the church, baptize them (in many traditions), and form them in the practices of faith. Pastoral literature often frames parenting as a vocation marked by patience, for example, and prayerful guidance.<sup>161</sup>

#### ***2.4.3.3 Comparative Insights: Parental Authority and Spiritual Nurture***

Comparatively, both traditions grant parents significant authority and responsibility for spiritual nurture. Yet tensions arise. Where parental authority is emphasized, critics worry about authoritarianism; where autonomy is stressed, critics fear a weakening of communal moral formation. Contemporary realities—digital culture, schooling, peer influence—limit parental control and require cooperative institutions (schools, mosques, churches) to assist. Thus, a balanced model recognizes strong parental formation responsibilities while engaging wider educational networks for moral and religious formation.

#### **2.4.4 Family Authority and Leadership: Patriarchy, Hierarchy, and Partnership**

Authority in the household has been justified historically in hierarchical terms: paternal headship, elder authority, and formal gendered responsibilities. Such structures were embedded in legal codes, social norms and religious exegesis. Nevertheless, the nature and legitimacy of patriarchal structures require critical reassessment. Where patriarchy becomes dominant, it conflicts with foundational religious commitments to justice, compassion, and human dignity. Conversely, partnership models — emphasizing

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education of children in an Islamic family based on the Holy Qur'an." *HTS Theologise Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 2 (2023): 8273.

<sup>161</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Ephesians 6:4; see also the Catechism of the Catholic Church, §2221–2231 on the role of the family in Christian formation (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992).

shared leadership, mutual consultation and distributed responsibilities — find theological support in both traditions: prophetic examples of consultative family decision-making and Pauline appeal to mutual submission provide textual warrant.<sup>162</sup>

Practical households often fall between ideal types: hierarchical in some domains (e.g., ritual leadership) and partnership in others (e.g., economic decision-making). Contemporary scholarship calls for reformed models of authority: those that preserve order and care but refuse domination, that enable women's agency, and that protect children's welfare. Religious communities must therefore develop pastoral practices and juridical reforms that align authority with accountability.

#### **2.4.5 The Family and Religious Identity Formation**

The family is the primary laboratory of religious identity. Parents transmit language, ritual practice, narratives and moral imaginaries; siblings and extended kin provide the social scripts through which religious belonging is learned. In both Islam and Christianity, family rites of passage (birth, naming, marriage, and death) shape communal identity and memory. For many individuals, family socialization produces habitual religiosity—the everyday practices and embodied dispositions that constitute a lived faith. Nevertheless, identity formation is not unilateral. Children exercise agency, reinterpret inherited faith, and sometimes depart from parental religion. Migration, schooling, and media introduce alternative identities. Thus, families face a dual task: to root children in tradition while equipping them to engage plural societies critically and compassionately. Effective formation, therefore, requires dialogical pedagogy—one that combines narrative transmission, critical reflection, and relational trust.

### **2.5 FAMILY VALUES AND ETHICS**

The family is both an ethical laboratory and a moral teacher. Values that are learned, practiced, defended and occasionally repudiated within the household shape of

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<sup>162</sup> For theological critique of patriarchal authority and proposals for partnership models, see John Witte Jr., *The Western Case for Monogamy over Polygamy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), and feminist theological treatments across traditions.

individual character and social culture. In most religious traditions the family is not neutral: it is a mediated space where virtues are cultivated, obligations enforced, and identities reproduced. In Islam and Christianity alike, family ethics speak about love and duty, about desire and restraint, and about how private relationships become public goods. Below I examine the core virtues commonly invoked, then turn to contested issues (gender roles, sexual ethics), and finally offer a comparative reflection on convergence and doctrinal distinctions.

### 2.5.1 Love, Respect, and Compassion as Core Family Virtues

Love, respect and compassion form the ethical heart of family life. These virtues are repeatedly upheld in scripture and in classical moral theology. Love binds spouses and parents to children. Respect for safety and dignity and enjoin deference to elders and to parental authority. Compassion tempers justice with mercy; it moderates punishment and institutes forgiveness. In Islam the Qur'an idealizes conjugal love as a sign (āyah) of God's presence: spouses are "a garment" for one another and sources of tranquility and mercy (Q. 30:21). The ethical implication is clear: domestic relationships are to be shaped by tenderness and mutual protection. Similarly, the prophetic traditions emphasize kindness in the household, injunctions toward good treatment of wives and children, and special obligations to the weak (orphans, the elderly).<sup>163</sup>

Christian texts, likewise, place love at the center. The New Testament's command to love (agapē) is meant to govern all human relations; within the Christian household, love is both sacrificial and formative (Eph. 5:25; 1 Cor. 13). The medieval and modern Christian moral tradition built on these texts to argue that charity within the family is the prototype for social charity.<sup>164</sup> Yet the mere naming of virtues is not enough. A serious ethical account must explain how virtues are acquired, sustained and corrected. Families may fail to instantiate love or they may distort it into possessiveness. Respect can calcify into authoritarianism. Therefore, ethical reflection needs to be

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<sup>163</sup> Qur'an 30:21; see also the hadith literature on good treatment of family; for general treatment see Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

<sup>164</sup> See 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 5:25–33; for theological reflection on family and charity see Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

attended by practices, institutions and corrective mechanisms (law, community oversight, pastoral care) that help families approximate their ideals.

### 2.5.2 Gender Roles and Ethical Boundaries in Family Life

Gender roles remain one of the most contested elements of family ethics. Both traditions possess scriptural material that has been read to support distinct gendered roles; both also contain resources for egalitarian readings. Thus, the ethical question is not merely descriptive ("What do families do?") but normative ("What should families do?"). In classical Islamic legal discourse, gender-differentiated roles were theorized as complementary: men were often associated with public responsibility and household maintenance, while women were associated with domestic care and child rearing. The Qur'anic principle of *qiwāmah* (often translated as guardianship or responsibility) has been the locus of extended debate. Critics argue that certain readings institutionalize male superiority; defenders argue that *qiwāmah* institutes responsibility, not arbitrary power, and that Qur'anic ethics limits abuse and insists on just treatment.<sup>165</sup> Contemporary Muslim scholars and feminist theologians press for readings that highlight mutual rights and shared moral agency.<sup>166</sup>

Christianity exhibits a comparable dichotomy. Traditional interpretations of Pauline household teachings (e.g., Ephesians 5) were often mobilized to justify male headship and female submissiveness. Yet many modern Christian ethicists stress mutual submission and reciprocal love, arguing that historical interpretations must be read through the wider biblical witness to equality in Christ (Gal. 3:28).<sup>167</sup> A critical ethical boundary is this: whatever the theological justification for role differentiation, it must not sanction injustice. Distinguishing responsibility from dominance matters. Ethical frameworks must therefore protect autonomy and dignity, promote equitable

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<sup>165</sup> Qur'an 4:34 (on *qiwāmah*); for contested interpretations see also Asma Barlas, *Believing women in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an*. University of Texas Press, 2019.

<sup>166</sup> Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); see also Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>167</sup> Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. spck, 2013. See also John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Recovering biblical manhood and womanhood: A response to evangelical feminism*. Crossway, 2006.

distribution of burdens (childcare, economic labor), and offer mechanisms for redress when roles become instruments of oppression.

### **2.5.3 Sexual Ethics and the Regulation of Desire**

Sexuality lies at the crossroads of intimacy, identity and moral regulation. Religions have long regulated sexual desire because sex profoundly affects individuals and communities—through procreation, lineage, trust, and social order. The ethical framing typically distinguishes legitimate contexts for sexual expression and proscribes violations that threaten family integrity.

#### ***2.5.3.1 Marriage as the Legitimate Context of Sexuality***

Both Islam and Christianity affirm marriage as the normative context for sexual relations. The Qur'an repeatedly links marriage with legitimate sexual enjoyment and social stability; extramarital relations are forbidden (Q. 17:32), and sexual relations are sanctified within the marital contract. Hadith literature and classical law (*fiqh*) elaborate rules about consent, rights, and fidelity.<sup>168</sup> Christianity similarly anchors sexual ethics in the conjugal covenant. Traditional Christian teaching locates sexual intimacy within marriage and views procreation and mutual self-giving as central goods of the marital act. Across confessional divides, sexual norms serve to protect the sanctity of marriage and the welfare of offspring.<sup>169</sup>

#### ***2.5.3.2 Religious Prohibitions of Adultery, Fornication, and Same-Sex Relations***

Both traditions proscribe adultery and fornication. In the Bible, adultery is forbidden in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:14) and condemned throughout prophetic and New Testament

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<sup>168</sup> Qur'an 17:32, Sunan Ibn Majah 1850, book: Book 9, Hadith 6 English translation: Vol. 3, Book 9, Hadith 1850, See also Faizi, Hafiz Falak Shair, and Hafiz Sfarish Ali. "The core principles of Islamic jurisprudence within legal theory: A comprehensive analysis." *Online Journal of Research in Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2024): 57-72.

<sup>169</sup> Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7, see also US Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Image, 2012.

literature. In the Qur'an, sexual immorality (zinā) is similarly forbidden and is described as a social and spiritual corruption. Punitive prescriptions, communal stigma, and ethical teaching have historically combined to discourage infidelity.<sup>170</sup>

The issue of same-sex relationships is more complex and contested. Classical Islamic exegetical tradition treats the Lot narratives (Q. 7:80–81; 26:165–166) as condemnatory of same-sex acts and classical jurists generally prohibited male same-sex intercourse. Contemporary Muslim scholars, however diverge; some maintain classical prohibitions, while others reread texts considering modern understandings of sexual orientation and human rights, urging pastoral sensitivity and hermeneutical revision.<sup>171</sup>

Christian traditions have also historically condemned same-sex acts (drawing on Leviticus 18:22, Rom. 1:26–27 and other texts). Still, in recent decades large portion of global Christianity has revisited these readings. Some denominations embrace full inclusion and blessing of same-sex unions; others remain committed to traditional prohibitions and offer pastoral ministry aimed at chastity. Ethical divergence is thus both interpretive and ecclesial; it reflects different hermeneutical principles, anthropologies, and ecclesial priorities.<sup>172</sup> Critically, the regulation of desire raises difficult pastoral questions: how should communities balance doctrinal integrity and human dignity? How should law and pastoral practice address consensual adult relationships that fall outside traditional norms? These questions press both traditions to refine pastoral care, legal sanctions, and ethical rhetoric so as to avoid dehumanization while sustaining moral vision.

#### **2.5.4 Family as the Foundation of Moral and Spiritual Civilization**

Many theologians and social thinkers have argued that the family is the seedbed of civilization. Families transmit language, rituals, ethics and social memory. They

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<sup>170</sup> Exodus 20:14 (Decalogue); Leviticus 18 (laws on sexual relations); Qur'an 24:2 (punishment for zina), see also Witte, John. *From sacrament to contract: Marriage, religion, and law in the Western tradition*. Presbyterian Publishing Corp, 2012.

<sup>171</sup> Qur'an 7:80–81, see also Kecia Ali, *Sexual ethics and Islam: Feminist reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and jurisprudence*. Simon and Schuster, 2016.

<sup>172</sup> Mathew Kuefler, "Homoeroticism in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Acts, Identities, Cultures Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century, by John Boswell." *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1246-1266.

cultivate virtues conducive to civic life—trustworthiness, restraint, and mutual aid—and they reproduce those dispositions across generations. The moral capital that families produce arguably sustains institutions such as schools, markets and civil associations.

Islamic ethical discourse highlights the family's crucial role in upholding religion and social norms, viewing it as a safeguard against social deterioration. Christian social teaching similarly elevates the family as the "first society" and the primary locus for human formation.<sup>173</sup> Yet the celebratory rhetoric must be balanced with realism: families can also perpetuate injustice, abuse and parochialism. Thus, families are both conduits of moral civilization and potential sources of moral failure. Public institutions therefore have a responsibility to support healthy family life and to intervene where families harm vulnerable members.

#### **2.5.5 Comparative Reflection: Ethical Convergence and Doctrinal Distinctions**

When we juxtapose the two traditions we find considerable convergence: both elevate love, mutual respect and responsibility as family virtues; both place marriage at the center of sexual ethics; both proscribe adultery and value fidelity; and both regard the family as crucial for social stability. At the same time, doctrinal distinctions—rooted in scriptural exegesis, juridical tradition, sacramental theology and hermeneutical priorities—produce divergent applications, especially concerning gender roles and same-sex relations.

A critical comparative ethics must therefore do three things. First, it must identify shared goods (dignity, fidelity, care) that might ground common social policies and interfaith cooperation. Second, it must recognize legitimate theological differences without collapsing them into moral relativism. Third, it must insist on human dignity as

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<sup>173</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the catholic church*. 1994. See also Ganiyeva, Fatma. "The role of the family as a social institution in the formation of society in modern times." *Vakanivis-Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7, no. Sp. Issue (2022): 1566-1581.

a limiting principle: any family ethic that subordinates the person to abstract norms requires ethical scrutiny and, where necessary, reform.

## **2.6 THE ROLE OF FAMILY IN SOCIETY**

The family is more than a private cluster of relationships; it is a social institution whose influence radiates into culture, economy, education and public welfare. Historically it has anchored social order; today it continues to mediate the transmission of values and the distribution of care and resources. Yet this influence is double-edged: families can sustain thriving civic life and cultural continuity, or they can reproduce injustice and vulnerability. The paragraphs below unpack these claims under the headings you provided, weaving theological insight with up-to-date social science and policy literature.

### **2.6.1 Family as the Cornerstone of Social Structure**

Sociologists routinely treat the family as a primary building block of social organization. It supplies the first socializing environment for infants, organizes care work, and forms micro-networks that connect individuals to broader institutions. Simple as that statement may sound, its implications are large: stable family relationships reduce transaction costs in economies, foster social capital, and support the informal enforcement of norms. Recent syntheses emphasize that while family forms vary—nuclear, extended, single-parent, blended—the functional significance of families as sites of socialization and mutual support persists across contexts.<sup>174</sup> Policy actors recognize this role and frequently design interventions that presume family capacity to buffer shocks. But this expectation can be problematic where families lack resources; here, reliance on family as the primary social stabilizer may reproduce inequality.

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<sup>174</sup> Deborah Chambers and Pablo Gracia, *A sociology of family life: Change and diversity in intimate relations*. John Wiley & Sons, 2021.

International reports therefore call for combined strategies that support families alongside universal social protection.<sup>175</sup>

### **2.6.2 Family as a Source of Cultural Continuity and Civilizational Identity**

Families transmit language, rituals, foodways, and historical memory. Because the family is often the first arena where children learn normative narratives about who they are and where they come from, it functions as a carrier of cultural continuity. Studies on religious and ethnic transmission show that parental practice, family ritual, and intergenerational storytelling strongly predict young people's identity outcomes. In migration settings this function becomes especially salient: immigrant families frequently serve as cultural anchors in plural societies, negotiating between host-country norms and inherited ways of life.<sup>176</sup> However, cultural transmission is not mechanical. Children are agents. They negotiate, resist, and reformulate family heritage in light of schooling, peers, and digital media. Thus, continuity and change coexist families usually preserve core identities while adapting practices to new social ecologies.<sup>177</sup>

### **2.6.3 Economic Stability and Social Security through the Family**

Families have long functioned as economic units: pooling income, sharing risks, and caring for dependents. In many low- and middle-income countries the household is the primary safety net—remittances, intra-household labor allocation and collective consumption smooth shocks. Contemporary social-protection research underscores the complementarity between family support and formal programs: cash transfers, pensions, and social insurance increase household resilience, but they rarely substitute for the dense day-to-day mutual aid families provide. Policymakers therefore face a dual

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<sup>175</sup> Jamele Rigolini, "Social Protection and Labor: A key enabler for Climate Change adaptation and mitigation." (2022).

<sup>176</sup> Jesse Smith "Transmission of faith in families: The influence of religious ideology." *Sociology of religion* 82, no. 3 (2021): 332-356.

<sup>177</sup> White, Cindel JM, Michael Muthukrishna, and Ara Norenzayan, "Cultural similarity among coreligionists within and between countries." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 37 (2021): e2109650118.

task: strengthening public social protection while also enabling families to meet care and livelihood needs without undue burden.<sup>178</sup> Yet an important ethical and practical caveat exists. When families are overwhelmed—because of chronic poverty, migration, or demographic aging—reliance on them alone is insufficient. Recent global reports call for universal and gender-sensitive social protection to avoid offloading public responsibilities onto disproportionately burdened family members (often women).<sup>179</sup>

#### **2.6.4 The Family as an Educational and Moral Institution**

Families educate far more than basic skills; they inculcate moral sensibilities, civic dispositions, and relational repertoires. Parental religiosity, for example, remains one of the strongest predictors of children's later religious practice and identity; similarly, routine family practices—shared meals, storytelling, and caregiving—shape empathy, self-regulation and social competence. Educational systems and religious institutions therefore interact with family formation, but they cannot entirely replace the dense moral pedagogy that domestic life provides.<sup>180</sup> Significantly, the content and style of family moral education vary with social context: authoritativeness, warmth, and openness to dialogue produce different outcomes. Contemporary child development literature stresses that dialogical and responsive parenting best supports moral internalization in complex, plural societies.<sup>181</sup>

#### **2.6.5 The Family as a Social Safety Net: Care for the Elderly, Orphans, and Vulnerable**

Families are the frontline safety net for population segments often neglected by markets: the elderly, orphans, individuals with disabilities, and others who require sustained care.

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<sup>178</sup> Banerjee, Abhijit, Rema Hanna, Benjamin A. Olken, and Diana Sverdlin Lisker, "Social protection in the developing world." *Journal of Economic Literature* 62, no. 4 (2024): 1349-1421.

<sup>179</sup> Markus Kaltenborn, "Overcoming extreme poverty by social protection floors—approaches to closing the right to social security gap." *Law and Development Review* 10, no. 2 (2017): 237-273.

<sup>180</sup> Zammit, Isabelle, and Laura K. Taylor, "Stage 2 Registered Report: Parental and Children's Religiosity in Early Childhood: Implications for Transmission." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* (2024): 1-23.

<sup>181</sup> Vertel, Anton, Viktor Korolenko, Olha Shapovalova, and Tetiana Bereziuk, "The role of the family in the education and upbringing of children." *Cadernos de Educação Tecnologia e Sociedade* 17, no. se1 (2024): 54-64.

In many regions, kinship networks provide the principal care modalities—co-residence, home-based care, and inter-household transfers. This arrangement has virtues: relational continuity, cultural consonance, and responsiveness. But it also creates vulnerabilities: caregiver burnout, economic strain, and gaps when relatives are absent. Recent humanitarian and public health literatures document rising caregiver stress and gaps in eldercare, pressuring states and religious communities to design complementary services and respite supports.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, international child-welfare agencies emphasize that most children in alternative care settings are not orphans; rather, family breakdown, poverty and neglect push children into institutions. Thus, supporting families through cash assistance, parental counseling and community services is a priority to reduce unnecessary family separation.<sup>183</sup>

#### **2.6.6 Comparative Analysis: The Socio-Religious Function of Family in Islam and Christianity**

Both Islam and Christianity assign families pivotal socio-religious roles: transmitting faith, embodying moral teaching, and modeling communal life. Empirical research on religious transmission finds strong parental influence across traditions, although the specific practices—ritual prayer, scriptural instruction, pilgrimage, sacraments—differ and thus produce distinct modes of intergenerational transmission. Comparative studies also indicate that religion shapes family norms (e.g., obligations to elders, patterns of marriage, gender expectations) and that family practices, in turn, shape communal religious life.<sup>184</sup> However, differences of emphasis matter. Islamic social thought frequently embeds family obligations within legal frameworks (inheritance shares, kin duties), producing a juridical architecture around kinship. Christian social teaching often situates the family within sacramental and ecclesial life (e.g., the "domestic church"), which shapes pastoral priorities. Both frameworks can support robust family life; both, however, must also contend with modern challenges—secularization,

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<sup>182</sup> Emily K Abel, "Elder care in crisis: How the social safety net fails families." In *Elder Care in Crisis*. New York University Press, 2022.

<sup>183</sup> Petrowski, Nicole, Claudia Cappa, and Peter Gross, "Estimating the number of children in formal alternative care: Challenges and results." *Child abuse & neglect* 70 (2017): 388-398.

<sup>184</sup> Sakeef M Karim, "Islam and the Transmission of Cultural Identity in Four European Countries." *Social Forces* 103, no. 2 (2024): 756-779. See also Jesse Smith, "Transmission of faith in families: The influence of religious ideology." *Sociology of religion* 82, no. 3 (2021): 332-356.

migration, economic precarity—that reconfigure how the family can faithfully perform its social and religious functions. Comparative scholarship thus encourages mutual learning: policies that protect families' economic base; community practices that share caregiving burdens; and theological reflection that honors dignity while adapting forms of practice to new realities.<sup>185</sup>

## 2.7 CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO THE FAMILY INSTITUTION

Contemporary families live at an intersection of rapid social change, shifting moral vocabularies, and new technologies. Some changes are structural and demographic; others are ideational and normative. Together they press the family—long a repository of cultural continuity—into novel forms and dilemmas. Below I examine nine challenge-clusters you listed, assess their effects, and end with a comparative evaluation of Islamic and Christian family resilience.

### 2.7.1 Modernization, Urbanization, and Individualism

Modernization and urbanization change how families allocate time, space, and obligation. Where agrarian households pooled labor across generations, urban households often face spatial compression, higher living costs, and more fragmented kin networks. As people move to cities, household sizes shrink; social roles become redefined by market work rather than by kin-based subsistence. Simple cause-and-effect stories do not hold, however. Urban life can increase women's economic opportunities and children's schooling, while also producing loneliness, weakened neighborhood ties, and new forms of child supervision problems.

Individualism—understood as an ethos that prizes autonomy, self-fulfillment and personal choice—reshapes family expectations. People increasingly treat marriage

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<sup>185</sup> Gregory A. Smith, Alan Cooperman, Becca A. Alper, Besheer Mohamed, Chip Rotolo, Patricia Tevington, Justin Nortey, Asta Kallio, Jeff Diamant and Dalia Fahmy, 3. Identifying with a religion because of culture, ethnicity or family background. Pew Research Center. [https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/identifying-with-a-religion-because-of-culture-ethnicity-or-family-background/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/identifying-with-a-religion-because-of-culture-ethnicity-or-family-background/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) Banerjee, Abhijit, Rema Hanna, Benjamin A. Olken, and Diana Sverdlin Lisker, "Social protection in the developing world." *Journal of Economic Literature* 62, no. 4 (2024): 1349-1421.

and parenthood as projects of self-realization; obligations once rooted in duty are now negotiated as preferences. This has normative consequences: filial piety, multi-generational co-residence, and sacrificial caregiving are under strain where individual autonomy is prized. Empirically, large recent cross-national analyses show consistent links between urbanization, modern occupational structures and declines in traditional family co-residence.<sup>186</sup> Critically, scholars who proclaim the "death" of family overstate the case. Families adapt new household forms, childcare markets, and digital kin-networks often substitute for older arrangements. Still, adaptation is uneven and often gendered. The cost of adaptation—emotional labor and time poverty—falls disproportionately on family members, usually women.

### **2.7.2 Economic Pressures and Changing Gender Roles**

Economic precarity is one of the fiercest stressors on contemporary families. Housing costs, precarious employment, and insecure incomes force many households into survival strategies: multi-generational co-residence, longer working hours, or migration for labor. Economic pressure also reshapes gender roles. In many countries women's labor-force participation increased rapidly during the last decade. That is in itself a positive social gain; yet it often comes without commensurate redistribution of domestic labor. Recent labor-market and time-use studies reveal persistent gaps: even where women work full-time, they disproportionately shoulder housework and childcare.<sup>187</sup> The result is a tension between formal equality (equal participation in paid work) and substantive equality (equitable distribution of unpaid domestic labor). Policy responses—childcare subsidies, parental leave reform, and flexible work practices—matter, but they are patchy across states. Critically, when policy is absent or weak, the burden of reconciling paid work and care responsibilities lands on families, and particularly on women, amplifying gendered inequality.

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<sup>186</sup> Tapas Dey and Srinivas Goli, "Examining the Role of Modernization and Urbanization in Family Changes in India: Evidence from Panel Data Analyses." *Journal of Family History* (2025): 03631990251376548.

<sup>187</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap report 2023. [https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/in-full/gender-gaps-in-the-workforce/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/in-full/gender-gaps-in-the-workforce/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

### **2.7.3 Secularism and the Decline of Religious Authority**

Secularization—both as a decline in ritual practice and as a declining moral authority of institutions—reshapes the family's moral ecology. Where churches and mosques once supplied rituals, norms, and communal sanctions to protect family life, their diminished reach creates moral vacuums that are filled by markets, media, or individual preference. Recent global studies indicate patterned secular transitions in many countries; ritual participation declines before affiliation does, and younger cohorts often report lower religiosity.<sup>188</sup> That said, secularization is not monolithic. In some regions religiosity remains robust or even intensifies amid modernity. Moreover, the decline of institutional authority does not necessarily equal moral decline; it often entails pluralization of moral sources (therapists, influencers, NGOs). The family therefore faces a twofold challenge: losing a shared, authoritative language for duty while encountering a cacophony of competing normative claims.

### **2.7.4 The Impact of Liberalism, Feminism, and Postmodernism**

The combined intellectual currents of liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism have profoundly influenced family ethics and practices. Liberalism's emphasis on individual rights reframes marriage and parenting as matters of consent and contract. Feminism has rightly exposed patterns of domestic injustice and pressed for legal and social reforms—greater economic independence for women, protections against domestic violence, and rights to education and employment. Postmodern critiques dismantle metanarratives, challenge fixed gender identities, and question teleological visions of "the desirable family." These intellectual movements have been productive and disruptive in equal measures. They have advanced justice and autonomy. Yet they have also been weaponised in culture-war politics: progressive reforms trigger backlash, and in some contexts illiberal movements mobilize around "family values" to resist gender and sexual pluralism. A careful, critical stance recognizes both the liberating potential of these movements and the social dislocations that sometimes accompany rapid

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<sup>188</sup> Jörg Stolz, Nan Dirk de Graaf, Conrad Hackett, and Jean-Philippe Antonietti, "The three stages of religious decline around the world." *Nature Communications* 16, no. 1 (2025): 7202.

normative change. See recent analysis of the global politics of gender and family values.<sup>189</sup>

### **2.7.5 Technological Influence and Media Narratives**

Technology—smartphones, social platforms, and streaming services permeate family life. The intrusion of devices into family interactions ("technofence") reduces conversational time, fragments attention, and can impair attachment processes in children. On the other hand, technology facilitates new forms of family maintenance: video calls sustain long-distance grandparenting, parenting groups provide peer support and telework can increase schedule flexibility. Empirical reviews on parental smartphone use, digital parenting, and teen social media effects report mixed findings: there are measurable harms (sleep disturbance, anxiety, reduced attention), definite benefits (social support, learning resources), and, crucially, results that are context-dependent.<sup>190</sup> Media narratives—about "declining morals," "the end of marriage," or "digital youth ruined by screens"—simplify complex processes and often generate moral panic. A critical approach rejects technological determinism while urging real attention to how platforms monetize attention and shape family routines. Regulation, digital literacy education, and parental mediation strategies can mitigate harm, while posing a risk of leaving families to fend for themselves.

### **2.7.6 Globalization, Migration, and Cultural Hybridization**

Global flows of people, goods, and ideas create hybrid family ecologies. Migration splinters households—often producing transnational families with care duties distributed across borders. Diasporic families must negotiate host-country norms and homeland traditions, producing adaptive cultural hybrids: new rituals, reinterpreted religious practices, and innovative support networks. Migration can strengthen family ties (via remittances) and strain them (through separation). Policies on migration,

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<sup>189</sup> Saskia Brechenmacher, "The New Global Struggle Over Gender, Rights, and Family Values." (2025).

<sup>190</sup> Matea Bodrožić Selak, Marina Merkaš, and Ana Žulec Ivanković, "Effects of parents' smartphone use on children's emotions, behavior, and subjective well-being." *European journal of investigation in health, psychology and education* 15, no. 1 (2025): 8.

citizenship, and social provision profoundly shape these outcomes. Moreover, cultural hybridization also affects values: gender norms may liberalize, religious practices may become privatized, and culinary and linguistic practices blend. For religious communities, diaspora often spurs institutional innovation: satellite mosques, home-based congregations, and hybrid liturgy. In sum, globalization simultaneously pressures traditional family forms and creates space for creative resilience. Recent migration-family studies document these dynamics across regions.<sup>191</sup>

### **2.7.7 The Rise of Alternative Family Models (LGBTQ, Single Parenting, Cohabitation)**

The last decade has seen a visible rise in alternative family forms: same-sex parenting, single parenthood by choice, cohabitation, and blended families. Demographic research documents increasing percentages of adults identifying as LGBTQ and growing numbers of children raised in LGBTQ-parent families. Large, modern studies find that children of LGBTQ parents, when raised in supportive contexts, fare comparably on most developmental measures—although they can face legal and social disadvantages in hostile jurisdictions.<sup>192</sup> Single parenting and cohabitation are associated statistically with economic vulnerability in many contexts, but causation is complex: poverty can lead to family instability, just as instability can worsen economic outcomes. The policy implication is clear: social support, childcare, legal recognition—matter for family well-being regardless of form. Ethicists and religious leaders face challenging questions about how to uphold doctrinal convictions while preventing the marginalization of vulnerable families. The polarized public debates often obscure the lived realities of care and attachment that matter most for children

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<sup>191</sup> Zahir Shah and Fiaz Mahmood, "Urbanization and Its Impact on Traditional Family Structures in Pakistan." *Pakistan. J Soc Sci Perspect* 1, no. 1 (2024): 1-6.

<sup>192</sup> Williams Institute, More than 2.5 million LGBTQ adults are parenting children under the age of 18. [https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/lgbtq-parenting-2024-press-release/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/lgbtq-parenting-2024-press-release/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

### **2.7.8 Religious Responses and Theological Critiques**

Religious communities respond in diverse ways. Some double down on traditional norms, intensify pastoral discipline, and create countercultural movements that value classical family models. Others reinterpret texts, develop pastoral accommodations, and prioritize inclusion and support for non-traditional families. Theology itself is contested terrain: Conservative theologians emphasize continuity and doctrinal fidelity; while progressive theologians emphasize hermeneutical development and the primacy of human dignity. There is also a pragmatic dimension. Many faith communities have become providers of social services—running childcare centers, food banks, and eldercare programs—and thereby materially support families. Theologically, some argue that family resilience depends on sacramental and communal practices that cannot be replicated by state programs. Critics respond that religious nostrums risk romanticising the past and neglecting the need for legal protections, especially where religious patriarchy harms women and children. Recent interfaith and intra-faith debates mirror these tensions, and contemporary scholarship documents a spectrum of religious responses.<sup>193</sup>

### **2.7.9 Comparative Evaluation: Resilience of Islamic and Christian Family Models**

Both Islamic and Christian traditions possess resources for resilience. Their scriptural, liturgical and communal practices can supply meaning, ritual reinforcement, and intergenerational transmission. In many Muslim contexts, juridical structures (inheritance law, family law) embed family obligations into public order, which can stabilize kin networks; in many Christian contexts, parish-based social capital and sacramental life supply communal supports. However, resilience is not the same as inflexibility. The capacity to reinterpret norms in light of changing socio-economic realities matters greatly. Comparatively, Islamic family models—where family duties are juridically specified—can both protect dependents and, in some cases, ossify gendered hierarchies unless reformed. Christian models vary widely across denominations; some have adapted rapidly to inclusive family policies, while others maintain stricter boundaries. Where either tradition adopts a pastoral, dignity-centred

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<sup>193</sup> Saskia Brechenmacher, "The New Global Struggle Over Gender, Rights, and Family Values." (2025).

approach—one that combines doctrinal clarity with social compassion, families are better positioned to weather contemporary challenges. Where traditions become ideologically rigid, they risk alienating younger cohorts and shrinking their social base.

## **2.8 THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SHAPING ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC FAMILY**

Education and media are not neutral transmitters of information. Together they form a cultural infrastructure that shapes how people conceive of marriage, parenthood, gender, and the obligations that bind kin. Education socializes; media models. When both converge—school curricula endorsing family ideals and mass media dramatizing family life—a powerful normative ecology emerges. This ecology can stabilize family practices, or it can undermine them. Below I examine five sub-areas: family education and early value formation; religious and moral education; media representation of family and gender; digital culture and family morality; and strategic interventions to restore or renew religious values through education and media.

### **2.8.1 Family Education and Early Value Formation**

Family education—deliberate parental teaching, everyday routines, story-telling and disciplining practices—constitutes the earliest and most durable layer of moral socialization. Simple routines matter shared meals, bedtime stories and ritual observances repeatedly expose children to normative content and relational patterns that become internalized habits. Empirical studies continue to show that parental involvement in education and everyday family practices predict children's civic attitudes, empathy levels and later family orientations. For example, national surveys of parental involvement and homeschooling trends indicate shifts in how families mediate education and values in the post-pandemic era, with more parents taking active pedagogical roles.<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, family education is neither uniform nor fully insulated from external influences. Schools, peer groups, and digital spaces contest

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<sup>194</sup> Ellena Sempeles, Jiashan Cui, and Michelle McNamara, "Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2023. First Look. NCES 2024-113." *National Center for Education Statistics* (2024). 5

family narratives. In plural societies, parents may intentionally inculcate counter-cultural values; immigrant families often intensify value-transmission efforts to preserve heritage. Meanwhile, socioeconomic conditions mediate what parents can plausibly transmit: time poverty, precarious work and low resources attenuate parental capacities to sustain intensive value formation. In short: the family is primary but not omnipotent.

### **2.8.2 Religious and Moral Education as a Tool for Family Stability**

Religious and moral education—when authentic, reflective and practice-oriented—can contribute to family resilience. Both contemporary empirical work and recent interventions indicate that religious instruction (whether provided in the home, mosque/church, or faith-based schools) helps some families maintain cohesion, provides shared meaning, and offers dispute-resolution norms that reduce chronic conflict. Studies published in the last few years report positive associations between religious engagement, marital satisfaction, and family stability, although causation is complex and mediated by socioeconomic and cultural variables.<sup>195</sup> A critical caveat is required. Religious education can stabilize families only insofar as it upholds human dignity, gender justice and personal well-being. If religious instruction rigidly enforces hierarchical, patriarchal norms that suppress women's agencies or sanction violence, it ceases to be a stabilizing force and becomes part of pathology. Thus, the content and pedagogical style of religious education matter as much as its presence: dialogical, rights-sensitive, and psychologically informed programs outperform authoritarian catechesis in producing resilient households. Recent programmatic research shows that when faith communities combine pastoral care with social support, outcomes for marital adjustment and child well-being improve.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Sadam Fajar Shodiq, Anisa Dwi Makrufi, Asep Dahliyana, Nadira Putri Valencia, Fadhila Aisyah Nurunisa, and Limason Goselfa, "The impact of religious education in mitigating the effects of family environment on students' mental health." In *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 10, p. 1523461. Frontiers Media SA, 2025.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

### 2.8.3 Media Representation of Family and Gender Roles

Mass media—television, film, and streaming platforms—frames ordinary viewers' expectations about family life. Representation matters dramatically: who is shown as the caregiver, who is shown as the breadwinner, what kinds of families are visible, and which narratives receive sympathetic treatment. Systematic reviews of gender and media studies in the past five years document persistent stereotyping in some genres alongside progress in others (for instance, improved female lead representation in children's media, but continuing stereotyping in many family films).<sup>197</sup> It has been seen that media effects are neither totalizing nor trivial. Repeated exposure to stereotyped portrayals solidifies implicit norms; conversely, diverse, egalitarian representations can normalize shared parenting, non-traditional careers, and inclusive family forms. Importantly, production pipelines and industry practices matter: who writes, directs and funds media projects shapes the content that filters into family rooms. Thus, interventions aimed at representation (diversity initiatives, inclusive commissioning, and accountability research) can reshape the media ecology over time.<sup>198</sup>

### 2.8.4 Digital Culture and Its Influence on Family Morality

Digital culture has introduced both tools and risks for family moral life. On the tool side, online religious schooling, remote pastoral counseling, and video calls enable continued religious practice and intergenerational contact across distance. Research on "digital religion" highlights creative pedagogies—gamified religious lessons, short-form devotional content, and youth-oriented online communities—that help transmit faith in new modalities.<sup>199</sup> On the risk side, social media platforms commodify attention and often model affectively intense, comparison-driven life narratives that conflict with virtues of restraint, humility and relational presence. Empirical studies from different

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<sup>197</sup> Fabrizio Santoniccolo, Tommaso Trombetta, Maria Noemi Paradiso, and Luca Rollè. "Gender and media representations: A review of the literature on gender stereotypes, objectification and sexualization." *International journal of environmental research and public health* 20, no. 10 (2023): 5770.

<sup>198</sup> Rachel Barr, "Growing up in the digital age: Early learning and family media ecology." *Current directions in psychological science* 28, no. 4 (2019): 341-346.

<sup>199</sup> Constantin Grigore and Alexandra Cobzeanu, "The Impact of Digitalization on Religious Practices and Community Dynamics Following the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review." *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala* 17, no. 2 (2025): 302-343.

regions in the past three years show correlations between excessive adolescent screen time and declines in in-person family cohesion, increases in anxiety, and altered norms about intimacy—although causality is contested and context dependent.<sup>200</sup> However, a critical response requires nuance to be effective. Blanket techno-pessimism misses how marginalized families sometimes use digital tools as lifelines. Yet unregulated platforms contribute to moral disorientation; they normalize transactional intimacy and hypervisibility. Policy and pedagogical responses—digital literacy curricula, family media plans, limits on algorithmic amplification of harmful content—can protect vulnerable family moral ecologies while preserving the benefits of connection.

### **2.8.5 Strategies for Restoring Religious Values through Education and Media**

If a community seeks to revitalize religiously informed family values, a multi-pronged strategy is required. Single-track measures—like exhortatory sermons or paternalistic school modules—fail because they do not address structural, cultural and media factors simultaneously. Based on recent programmatic studies and policy reviews, effective strategy bundles include the following elements:

- **Curriculum Integration + Pedagogical Reform.** Embed values education across subjects (not just religious classes). Use dialogical and reflective pedagogies that encourage critical appropriation rather than rote assent. Pilot projects that combine family workshops with school curricula have demonstrated better internalization among youth.<sup>201</sup>
- **Faith-Community Media Production.** Religious communities should professionalize media output (podcasts, short films, and social campaigns) to compete credibly in attention markets. Recent studies on online religious education show that gamified, high-production-value content increases youth engagement.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Kabiru Jinjiri and Alabi Adetomi, "The impact of social media on family relationships (A Study of Jahi, Abuja)." *British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research* 4, no. 1 (2024): 52-73.

<sup>201</sup> Mariana Amelda, Lers Jonson, Kuiat Kafaur, Narandina Sharema, and Shalem Ahabadi. "Learning Strategies in Religious Education to Foster Spiritual Values Among Generation Z." *International Journal of Education Management and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2024): 50-62.

<sup>202</sup> Constantin Grigore and Alexandra Cobzeanu, "The Impact of Digitalization on Religious Practices and Community Dynamics Following the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review." *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala* 17, no. 2 (2025): 302-343.

- Parental Media Literacy and Family Media Plans. Equip parents with tools to mediate children's media consumption (co-viewing strategies, content curation, and digital time budgets) rather than solely policing devices. Interventions that teach parental mediation skills show improved family communication and reduced technoference.<sup>203</sup>
- Public–Private Partnerships for Ethical Media Regulation. Work with platforms and regulators to limit algorithmic promotion of extreme or sexualized content aimed at youth, and to encourage family-positive programming through tax credits or co-funding. Evidence suggests policy nudges can shift industry incentives over time.<sup>204</sup>
- Pastoral Practices Focused on Dignity and Gender Justice. Religious instruction must be married to practices that protect dignity—domestic violence prevention, legal literacy for women, and economic empowerment programs. Faith communities that couple ethical teaching with material support are more likely to secure both family stability and moral credibility.<sup>205</sup>

These strategies are not neutral technocratic fixes. They require theological clarity, institutional investment, and sustained partnerships between families, religious institutions, schools, and media producers. They also require reflexivity: efforts to "restore" must avoid coercive nostalgia and must recognize plural societal commitments to human rights and gender equality.

## 2.9 COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

This final comparative synthesis collects theological, ethical and social evidence to show where Islam and Christianity converge in their understanding of the family, and

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<sup>203</sup> Barge Gul Khalili, Rahima Qargha, and Tamanna Quraishi. "The Influence of Social Media Networks on Families Dynamics: Opportunities and Challenges." *APLIKATIF: Journal of Research Trends in Social Sciences and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2024): 1-11.

<sup>204</sup> USC Annenberg, Gender. School for communication and Journalism. [https://annenberg.usc.edu/research/annenberg-inclusion-initiative/gender?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://annenberg.usc.edu/research/annenberg-inclusion-initiative/gender?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>205</sup> Rasoul Raesi, Hossein Shamsi Gooshki, Abolfazl Khoshi, Seyed Hassan Saadat, Salman Daneshi and Kiavash Hushmandi, The Impact of Spiritual and Cultural Beliefs on Family Relationships and Marital Satisfaction in Religious Communities: A Systematic Review. *The Open Public Health Journal* (2025).

where they diverge in doctrine, praxis and institutional orientation. I first treat theological foundations, then ethical and social dimensions, proceed to areas of interfaith cooperation, and end with practical lessons for strengthening family institutions in contemporary societies. Wherever possible I interrogate claims rather than simply catalog them: similarities can mask crucial differences in emphasis; agreements on ends may conceal conflicting means.

### **2.9.1 Theological Foundation: Shared Principles and Distinct Doctrines**

At the broadest level both Islam and Christianity begin from a common observation: the family is embedded in divine purpose and human vocation. Scripture in both traditions locates marriage and kinship within the created order; thus, family life bears theological weight as well as social function. This shared orientation produces comparable moral priorities—fidelity, care for children, and respect for parents—that appear across both textual and pastoral traditions.<sup>206</sup> But the theological bases that undergird these shared priorities diverge in important ways. Christianity tends to frame family life within covenant and sacrament: marriage frequently functions as a sign of the Christ–Church relationship and the theology of adoption (the believer's incorporation into the "family of God") gives family metaphors unique soteriological force. Islam, by contrast, situates the family within law and communal ethics: family obligations are embedded in juristic rules (marriage contract, inheritance shares, guardianship), and family life is integrally connected to the normative ordering of the ummah.<sup>207</sup>

This difference matters. When a Christian ethicist emphasizes marriage as a sacrament, the primary concern is often spiritual formation and covenant fidelity; when an Islamic jurist stresses the legal contract and kin-rights, the emphasis shifts to social justice, maintenance obligations, and communal order. When doctrinal commitments collide with modern social developments such as questions about gender equality, divorce law, or recognition of alternative family models, the two emphases can overlap or diverge. Recent comparative scholarship shows that while both traditions retain

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<sup>206</sup> Greg J. Wurm, "Parallel trajectories and theorizations of religion and family in modernity: Toward an institutional logics perspective." *Theory and Society* 53, no. 4 (2024): 971-995.

<sup>207</sup> Jesse Smith, "Family and Religion in Flux: Relationship Complexity, Type of Religiosity, and Race/Ethnicity," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 86, no. 1 (Feb. 2024): 268–287

powerful family vocabularies, the institutional structures (sacramental ecclesiology vs. *sharīʿa*-inflected family law) shape how norms are enforced and revised.<sup>208</sup>

### 2.9.2 Ethical and Social Dimensions of Family Life

Ethically, both traditions commend certain core virtues, fidelity, care for the vulnerable, and generativity—but they approach moral reasoning differently. Christian moral theology often employs virtue ethics and covenantal responsibility, while also drawing on natural law from many Western traditions; contemporary Catholic and mainline Protestant teaching covers duties and rights through both theological and social-ethical lenses. Islamic family ethics frequently appeal to *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* (objectives of the law) and to scriptural-jurisprudential commentaries that prioritize protection of lineage, life, intellect, faith and property—each of which informs family law and practice.<sup>209</sup>

Socially, both faiths have historically been engines of social capital: worshiping communities supply networks, moral instruction, rites of passage and informal safety nets. In modern empirical terms, however, the link between religious belonging and family functioning is more complex than older equilibrium models suggested. Recent demographic and sociological studies document that religiosity remains a predictor of certain family outcomes (e.g., marriage rates, early childbearing, and certain forms of marital support), but the association is mediated by class, race/ethnicity, and local institutional strength. Put simply: religious resources help families when communities and institutions are robust; where religious life is privatized or fragmented, their stabilizing effect weakens.<sup>210</sup> A critical point follows ethical ideals are not self-implementing. Gendered divisions of labor, domestic violence, economic precarity and legal exclusions can all turn religious doctrines into instruments of injustice if they are left uninterrogated. Both traditions therefore face a normative task: to preserve the

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<sup>208</sup> Joy S. Hadden, “Addressing a Sibling Rivalry: In Seeking Effective Christian–Muslim Relations, to What Extent Can Comparative Theology Contribute? An Evangelical Christian Perspective,” *Religions* 16, no. 3 (2025): 297

<sup>209</sup> Pew Research Center, *2023–24 Religious Landscape Study: Executive Summary* (Pew Research Center, Feb. 26, 2025).

<sup>210</sup> Jesse Smith, “Family and Religion in Flux,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, and Greg Wurm, *Theory and Society*, passim; see also broader reviews of religion-family dynamics in recent issues of *Sociology of Religion* and *Journal of Family Theory & Review* (2021–2024).

moral goods associated with family life while reforming institutional practices that produce harm.

### 2.9.3 Areas of Cooperation and Dialogue between Islam and Christianity

Despite doctrinal differences, there are practical and theological points of contact that create opportunities for cooperation.

- **Shared Moral Goods.** Both traditions affirm the dignity of the human person, care for children and the poor, and the moral centrality of stable relationships. These shared goods form a natural basis for joint social initiatives—family counseling centers, anti-poverty programs, and campaigns against domestic violence. Interfaith partnerships on these fronts have grown in recent years and produce concrete results in community resilience.<sup>211</sup>
- **Theological and Practical Dialogue.** Comparative theology and scriptural reasoning—practices that foster mutual understanding while respecting doctrinal distinctives—have matured into useful methods for grappling with contested family issues (divorce, parental rights, child welfare). Newer work suggests the most fruitful engagements combine theological humility with social science evidence; dialogical formats that center lived experience (for instance, interfaith family testimonies) often reduce polemical heat and increase practical cooperation.<sup>212</sup>
- **Policy Collaboration.** On public policy issues—like social protection, childcare, eldercare—religious actors from both traditions sometimes converge, advocating for family-friendly legislation that respects religious

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<sup>211</sup> Joy S. Hadden, “Addressing a Sibling Rivalry,” *Religions* (2025); and multiple case studies of interfaith social service collaboration reported in *Religion, State & Society* and NGO reports (2021–2024).

<sup>212</sup> Joy S Hadden, "Addressing a Sibling Rivalry: In Seeking Effective Christian–Muslim Relations, to What Extent Can Comparative Theology Contribute? An Evangelical Christian Perspective." *Religions* 16, no. 3 (2025): 297.

freedom while protecting vulnerable members. Where networks are strong, such coalitions can effectively influence local and national policy.<sup>213</sup>

Notwithstanding, cooperation has limits. As recent studies show, interfaith collaboration is often easier at the level of social service than at the level of theological agreement. Theological differences about human nature, sin, salvation, and the role of law sometimes impede deeper consensus on identity-forming family practices.<sup>214</sup>

#### 2.9.4 Lessons for Strengthening Family Institutions in Modern Context

Using comparative evidence, several practical lessons emerge. These are not technical fixes; they are programmatic and ethical directions grounded in both tradition and social evidence.

- **Prioritize Institutional Supports Over Moralizing Rhetoric.** Families need concrete supports—paid parental leave, childcare, income security, accessible counseling—more than exhortatory sermons. Religious communities should pair moral teaching with material programs, otherwise moral claims ring hollow. Empirical work repeatedly shows policy and community support reduces family stress and improves child outcomes.<sup>215</sup>
- **Protect Human Dignity as a Non-Negotiable Baseline.** Any family policy or pastoral practice must safeguard the dignity and rights of spouses, children and other dependents. This means proactive protection against domestic violence, legal literacy for women and children, and an openness to reforming patriarchal structures that institutionalize harm. Theological commitments in both traditions can and should be marshalled for this end.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Claudia Olivetti and Barbara Petrongolo, "The economic consequences of family policies: lessons from a century of legislation in high-income countries." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 1 (2017): 205-230.

<sup>214</sup> Christabel Hellberg, "Collaboration of interreligious workers and the perception of help seekers in interreligious organizations." (2020).

<sup>215</sup> Shahra Razavi, "What does the UN have to say about family policy? Reflections on the ILO, UNICEF, and UN women." In *The Palgrave handbook of family policy*, pp. 87-115. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020.

<sup>216</sup> Anne Sofie Roald, "Feminist reinterpretation of Islamic sources: Muslim feminist theology in the light of the Christian tradition of feminist thought." In *Women and Islamization*, pp. 17-44. Routledge, 2021.

- Cultivate Interpretive Humility and Hermeneutical Openness. Both faiths possess internal resources for reform. Islamic legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh) and Christian theological traditions (e.g., ressourcement, historical-critical exegesis) provide mechanisms for reinterpretation. Faithful change is possible when communities engage texts seriously, listen to affected people, and use interdisciplinary evidence—legal, psychological, sociological—to guide reform.<sup>217</sup>
- Foster Interfaith Practical Coalitions. Where doctrinal differences are profound, cooperative action on shared social problems (poverty, domestic abuse, child welfare) builds trust and demonstrates mutual commitment to the common good. Practical cooperation also creates space for more reflective theological exchange over time.<sup>218</sup>
- Invest in Education and Pastoral Formation. Clergy and religious educators must be trained in contemporary family dynamics, trauma-informed pastoral care, gender justice, and public policy. Without such training, religious teaching risks being unsuitable or even harmful for contemporary family life. Program evaluations show that faith communities that invest in professional pastoral training yield stronger family outcomes.<sup>219</sup>

## 2.10 CONCLUSION

This comparative study has revealed that Islam and Christianity converge in affirming the family as a divinely grounded institution essential for moral formation, social stability, and human flourishing, yet they diverge in how these ideals are institutionalized and sustained. Both traditions uphold marriage, fidelity, and the

<sup>217</sup> A Almatar, "The Construction of an Alternative Interpretation of Sacred Texts among Saudi Scholars: A Hermeneutical Jurisprudential Approach." (2021).

<sup>218</sup> Azza Karam, "Interreligious Engagement as an Enabler of Gender Justice through the Common Good." *The Ecumenical Review* 75, no. 5 (2023): 451-464; see also Muhammad Islam, "Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue: Prophet Muḥammad's Correspondence, Dialogues and Covenants with Non-Muslims: Prophet Muḥammad's Correspondence, Dialogues and Covenants with Non-Muslims." *Al-Milal: Journal of Religion and Thought* 6, no. 2 (2024): 40-53.

<sup>219</sup> John Roberto, L. Kehrwald, J. Roberto, G. Roehlkepartian, and J. Roehlkepartian, "Families at the Center of Faith Formation." (2016): 27-52; see also R. Robert Creech, *Family systems and congregational life: A map for ministry*. Baker Academic, 2019.

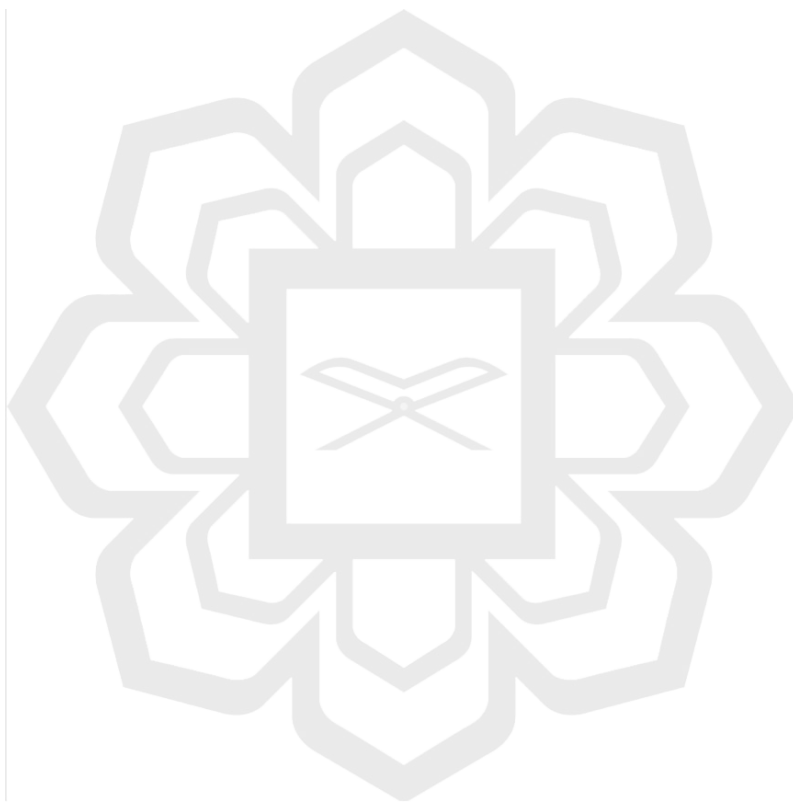
nurturing of children as sacred responsibilities, but while Christianity tends to express these ideals through covenantal and sacramental theology supported by ecclesial networks, Islam anchors them within juridical and communal structures regulated by *Sharī'ah*. These differing frameworks shape how each faith engages modern challenges such as gender equality, divorce, alternative family forms, and state intervention.

Critically, the findings caution against idealized portrayals of religious familism. Religious belief can indeed strengthen family resilience by offering meaning and moral direction, but its impact is contingent upon context. Where religious institutions integrate moral teaching with social protection, families flourish; where patriarchal or coercive interpretations dominate, religion may perpetuate harm. Recent empirical studies confirm that strong institutional support, not mere belief, correlates with healthier family outcomes.

Theologically, both Islam and Christianity possess interpretive flexibility that allows renewal without doctrinal compromise. Islamic scholarship, through *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* reasoning, provides a framework for reconciling revelation with social justice, while Christian theology's emphasis on human dignity and social doctrine invites reform towards equality within the household. Ethically, the study underscores that spiritual virtues such as love, mercy, and fidelity require institutional scaffolding—legal protection, equitable welfare systems, and gender-sensitive policies—to be realized in practice. Sociologically, the family must be understood as adaptive, negotiating the pressures of urbanization, migration, and digital media, which reconfigure gender roles and kinship patterns in complex, often uneven ways. The renewal of the family institution, therefore, demands a multidimensional strategy. Ethically, human dignity—especially of women and children—must remain central to any theological or political framework. Institutionally, both religious and state actors must invest in material support, legal protections, and pastoral education. Culturally, the media and educational systems must be mobilized to promote compassionate, justice-oriented family values and digital literacy. Finally, interfaith collaboration rooted in mutual respect can translate shared moral convictions into practical coalitions addressing poverty, abuse, and child welfare.

In sum, the preservation of the family in Islam and Christianity requires neither nostalgic retreat nor wholesale secular adaptation but a creative synthesis: one that

unites revelation and reason, faith and policy, tradition and reform. Only through such integrative renewal can the family remain, as both traditions affirm, the cornerstone of moral and social order in the modern world.



**CHAPTER THREE**

**PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES UNDERMINING THE FAMILY  
INSTITUTION IN CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM AND  
CHRISTIAN CONTEXTS**

**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Undoubtedly, it is considered that the family institution is a basic fundamental unit of society in both Islam and Christianity. The family is an institution where people get various teachings and support from their childhood such as religious, educational, worldly matters, ethical, spiritual, emotional, economic, and other matters. However, it is seen that the family institution is going through unprecedented mountains of problems and challenges from the inside and outside the institution, which indeed pose a threat to the existence of the institution and make worried followers of both Islam and Christianity.

According to the teachings of Islam and Christianity, the family is seen as a harmonious unit where marriage is a first step to forming a family, a place for nurturing children, and specific responsibilities of each family member have been given by the God, with husband and wife or gender roles clearly defined in the scriptures. Moreover, the solution to the family-related issues has been completely specified in the scriptures and the ultimate objective of the family is to create a peaceful and tranquil environment. Nevertheless, due to social processes like globalization, modern ideologies like secularism, modern technology, and social media, complex problems and challenges were created for the family institution. Furthermore, the emergence of various modern marriage and family systems poses a threat to the institution, which creates a crisis in the family institution.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the various problems and challenges that the family institution in Islam and Christianity is facing today. There are many issues such as the influence of modernity, postmodernism, feminism, and secularism that are behind the causes for weakening the family institution in both Islam and Christianity.

Additionally, higher divorce rates, the decline of marriage and the family, the breakdown of the traditional family, and acceptance of new forms of family such as same sex-marriage and family, and cohabitation are indeed considered root causes behind the crisis in the family institution. Moreover, interfaith marriage, particularly between Islam and Christianity cause complexities to the institution.

This chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the problems and challenges of the family institution and how both religions deal with contemporary complex problems and challenges facing the family and preserve its values.

### **3.2 CHALLENGES TO THE FAMILY INSTITUTION**

Secularism is one of the ideologies that have influenced individuals, religions and states over the past few centuries. It is widely known that secularism arose out of the conflict between church and state in the eighteenth century in the West.<sup>220</sup> It's difficult to formulate a precise definition of secularism. However, the Britannica definition can provide more clarification on the concept of secularism. According to Britannica, secularism is a worldview or political ideology, whose main goal is to take religion apart from the other spheres of human life and emphasize the non-religious side of human life. In a word, secularism means religion should be out of people's political life, but it should be practiced in personal life.<sup>221</sup> However, many believe that secularism is challenging the family institution in Islam and Christianity. In this part of the thesis, we are going to explore how secularism poses a challenge to the family institution.

#### **3.2.1 Secularism and its Influence on Declining Family Institution in Islam**

Secularism has a profound influence in declining the family institution in Islam. As we have mentioned earlier that secularism promotes isolating religion from people's social, political, and economic spheres. On the other hand, Islam is a complete way of life,

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<sup>220</sup> Siti Norhanani Binti Musni et. All., *Secularism: Freedom of Religion or Freedom from Religion?* Volume: 19, Special Issue, Geopolitics (Summer 2023, Quarterly), 123.

<sup>221</sup> Charles Preston, "secularism." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 19, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/secularism>.

including an individual's private life, family, and social, economic, and political life. In fact, Islam serves as a comprehensive system that encompasses every aspect of an individual's life. Therefore, it seems there is a basic conflict between Islam and secularism from the perspective of ideology. It is seen that since the emergence of secularism in the West, several Muslim majority countries have adopted the idea of secularism, separating religion from political life of a Muslim individual, though it is established in the west over the conflict between Church and state. In fact, secularism impacted almost all the Muslim majority countries, whether directly or indirectly, even many Muslim majority countries even placed secularism in the constitutions of countries. It is also evident that some Muslim majority countries have embraced both secularism and Islamic rules and regulations. As a result, there is a tension that arises between traditional Islamic values and secular ideology. Turkey tops the list of Muslim-majority countries that have implemented secularism as an ideology in the society and later other Muslim majority countries adopted this ideology such as Tunisia, Algeria, Bangladesh, where secular ideology took influence to diminish Islamic values and rules and regulations of personal and family law, although the constitution of some Muslim countries mentions the state religion as Islam or Islamic Republic like Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, scholars like Olivier Roy argue that though Islamic influence exists in the Muslim community, secularism has marginalized people's personal and family life in reality, which results in chaos in the family, including breakdown of the family.<sup>222</sup> The main objective of the secular reforms is to reduce the religious influence from the public institutions, in fact, the influence of it affects the private life of an individual and familial life. Saba Mahmood contends that although secularism promotes restricting religious influence only to the personal life, the reality is it significantly impacts religious piety and secular political and legal reforms make challenges to the Islamic Sharia law even its practice in the private life, which is evident in Muslim majority countries like Turkey and Tunisia, where secular law is the ultimate dominant power regarding the Islamic family law, inheritance, and marriage.<sup>223</sup> Additionally, secular gender equality seriously impact the Islamic rulings about the gender norms because secular ideology promotes that men and women are equal in every aspect of life, while

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<sup>222</sup> Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*. (Harvard University Press, 1994), 12

<sup>223</sup> Johnson, Jessica, and Ian Fairweather, *An Analysis of Saba Mahmood's Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. (Macat Library, 2017), 7-11

Islam teaches that a woman will receive half of a man's property in terms of inheritance and that the husband will be the head of the family for example.

Marriage is a social and religious contract between a man and woman in Islam, which is the beginning of forming a family institution. In fact, the marriage is a duty for every able man and woman. Moreover, marriage is essential for an individual, families, and the community for making relationships in society. On the other hand, secularism encourages the idea that marriage is a matter of personal choice that promotes even a religious person to see marriage from the perspective of religious duty.<sup>224</sup> As a result, it is evident that the marriage rate dramatically decreased in the Muslim majority countries and rapidly increased the rate of divorce, which we have discussed in the following section. Moreover, secular laws replaced Muslim family laws in numerous Muslim majority countries, which indeed helped to increase cohabitation and reduce the pressure towards marriage of an unmarried individual.

### **3.2.2 Secularism and its Influence in Declining the Family Institution in Christianity**

As we have discussed earlier, secularism has emerged in the West due to conflict between religion and state, and its main objective is to separate religion from political life and government institutions, rather religion should be preserved only for practicing in an individual's private life. Many studies have done research on how secularism plays a pivotal role in decreasing influence in the social, political, and economic life of an individual and institution in the Western societies. However, according to the studies, though secularism propagates its influence limit to the political sphere of society, in fact it affects the individual life which includes the decline of a person's religiosity and family institution. Many scholars argue that mass secularization leads to a decline in prayer within the Church and the family institution, raising concerns about the future of these institutions. Eberstadt argues that the result of secularization is a decline in the significance of the nuclear family and reproduction, whereas the West is suffering from

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<sup>224</sup> Sarah Beresford, "Seeking Secularism: Resisting Religiosity in Marriage and Divorce-A Comparative Study of England and America." *Web JCLI* 3 (2011), 2-3. See also the following reference, Aniruddha Das. "Secularism, family ties and loneliness: a multilevel longitudinal study of ten European societies." *Social Science Research* 101 (2022): 102619.

a population crisis, childbearing, and religiosity. She also argues that the Protestant Churches have contributed to their own because of accepting divorce, artificial birth control, and homosexuality in the community. He claims that the root cause of these negative effects on individuals and families is that Western Christian countries are losing God and the main culprit behind this is secularism. She concludes that family relationships such as pregnancy, parents' relations etc. are sacred, therefore, religiosity is paramount before everything to maintain these family factors. Additionally, she argues that believers and nonbelievers should be concerned about secularization because religiosity can contribute to building a healthy individual and society.<sup>225</sup>

One of the consequences of secularization is the cultural shift in the Christian societies regarding the understanding and practice of marriages. Although marriage is considered as a sacred covenant between a man and woman with a lifelong contract, the secularization cause views marriage as just a personal choice, it is not a lifelong contract between two people, and it is no longer a sacramental institution from the religious perspective. In addition to that the various non-traditional marriage cultures such as same-sex-marriage, single-parent families, and blended family systems have been working as contributing factors to shift the view that marriage is a traditional and sacred institution in the Christianity. Moreover, secular values often emphasize the priority of personal development, career development, and personal satisfaction, which ultimately result in decreasing birth rate, having fewer children, and delaying marriage in many Christian societies.<sup>226</sup> Hence, it can be concluded that secularization has had a massive effect on Christian believers and societies in faith, declining attendance at Church for prayer, declining marriage, and the family institution.

### **3.3 MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY**

#### **3.3.1 Reasons for Declining in Muslim and Christian Communities**

Marriage in Islam is one of the most fundamental acts. Marriage not only legalizes legal sexual intercourse, but also it is a way to form a family, generate children, and establish

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<sup>225</sup> Mary Eberstad, "How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization.", Review, Kilcrease, Bethany. (2014): 234-236.

<sup>226</sup> Coontz Stephanie. *Marriage, a history: How love conquered marriage*. Penguin, 2006. 247

a moral civilization. The root of the marriage is in the Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet (PBUH), where a Muslim man and woman receive necessary guidance for getting married and forming a family. Most importantly, the main objective of the marriage is achieving peace and tranquility between husband and wife, according to the teaching of the Qur'an and hadith. However, it is seen that marriage and fertility are declining tremendously in the Muslim communities for various reasons such as financial difficulties, changing social norms, the influence of secularism and so on.

Marriage is a word that may make people interested in getting into it regardless of men and women, religion or ethnicity. When it comes to marriage in the Muslim communities, marriage is given paramount importance as outlined in the Qur'an and Hadith. Additionally, numerous books and articles have been written and numerous lectures produced and they promote it through various means including YouTube and social media to encourage marriage among the Muslims across the world. However, the research shows that a significant number of Muslims are unmarried across the Muslim community but why? This question is raised by the scholars, community leaders, parents, and family. For more clarification on the trend of declining marriage, it is essential to look at a survey report done by the Pew Research Center. According to the PRC, a vast number of Muslims are unmarried in the USA, where 53 percent of adult Muslims are married while 33 percent of Muslims have never been married. It is evident that among 33 percent 8 percent are divorced or separated, 4 percent are unmarried but living with a partner, and 1 percent are widowed. Muslims who were born outside of the United States had a far higher marriage rate than Muslims who were born here which is 70 vs. 29 percent.<sup>227</sup> Saudi Arabia is considered as a leading conservative Muslim country across the Muslim world. However, a survey report found an outrageous number of young Muslims are unmarried in the country. Over 66 per cent of the Saudis Muslim population between the ages of 15 and 34 are not married, according to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics, a government organization in charge of compiling data and conducting nationwide surveys.<sup>228</sup> The report also shows that, men

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<sup>227</sup> Pew Research Center. [https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/07/26/demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/#:~:text=Roughly%20half%20\(53%25\)%20of,than%20the%20U.S.%20general%20public.](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/07/26/demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/#:~:text=Roughly%20half%20(53%25)%20of,than%20the%20U.S.%20general%20public.) July 26, 2017.

<sup>228</sup> Middle East Monitor. 66% young Saudis are single. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200810-66-of-young-saudis-are-single/>. Retrived, August 10, 2020.

make up a much larger percentage of single people than do women. When comparing the two sexes, the research indicated that just 56% of women and 75.6% of males had never married.<sup>229</sup> Another survey has been done on the marriage situation of Muslims in the Muslim-majority country of Indonesia by the Statista Research Department, which shows that the rate of marriage has dramatically declined from 2014 to 2023. In 2014, the married rate was 2.11 while it declined to 1.58 in 2023. Additionally, from 2014 to 2023, the percentage of marriages was fluctuating, but it did not reach the rate of 2014.<sup>230</sup> Hence, it could be safe to say that marriage is declining among the Muslim community.

When it comes to the reason behind declining marriage, the major reason appears to be economic pressure. Undeniably, today the world is going through an economic crisis, which has severely impacted every aspect of life including marriage and living. People's lives are becoming more expensive these days, affecting marriage in all aspects of life. When a young man wants to get married, he must need strong financial stability to maintain various costs, including *Mahr* (a compulsory sum of money a husband must give to his wife), wedding costs, living cost, a house, and many other issues. Hence, in this economic crisis it is very difficult for an adult to manage a huge amount of money to complete a marriage. Additionally, the unemployment rate is very high. Instead of interest in marriage of young, unmarried people, because of economic crisis and unemployment, people cannot get married. Moreover, another key factor is the poverty problem that already exists in nations with the mostly Muslims, making it harder for people to afford marriage and starting families. A study has been done on the reason of extensive changes in marriage and family in the Arab countries and found that financial crises and poverty have a severe impact on the declining marriage rate and the ability to form a family. Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, The Arab Emirates, Egypt, Qatar, and Kuwait have seen tremendous changes in marriage, though those countries are considered as traditionally conservative. It is evident that marriage is considered as a pride, recognition, and prestige in the Arab culture. Additionally, marriage served as a social and economic contract between two families to establish a new family unit. Nevertheless, according to a study, this marriage concept and rite have changed in the

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> The Statista Research Department. Number of Muslim marriages in Indonesia from 2014 to 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/705540/number-of-muslim-marriages-in-indonesia/#statisticContainer>. March 26, 2024.

Arab regions and economics and poverty are the key factors behind these major changes. Traditionally, Arab women got married when they were in their teens or early 20s. But in several areas of the region, including Kuwait, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates, early marriage has drastically decreased in recent decades. In Kuwait and Libya, the percentage of married women aged 15 to 19 was over 40% in the early 1970s; however, by the mid-1990s, these numbers had decreased to 1% and 5%, respectively. In the United Arab Emirates, the percentage of married women aged 15 to 19 fell from 57% in 1975 to 8% by 1995, indicating an even greater rate of decline. Additionally, another trend has shown that the number of women getting married late or never getting married is increasing day by day in the Arab countries. Women are getting married later in life—some in their late 20s or early 30s—and some are not getting married at all in the region. The proportion of married women in Tunisia, Algeria, and Lebanon ages 15 to 19 is just 1 to 4 percent, whereas the number of single women in these nations ages 35 to 39 is currently between 15 and 21 percent. the proportion of unmarried women in the 35-39 age group.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, young people in the Arab world go through financial hardship and they are scarce to maintain wedding expenses. Usually, the groom has to arrange the wedding ceremony, housing, cost of gifts, etc., indeed, which is very difficult to manage for a youth and his family. Moreover, when unemployment rate is high, marriage is unimaginable for several young people. As a result of economic crisis and unemployment, it impacts various aspects of an individual youth, family, and society. They are delaying marriage, losing interest in getting married, remaining single in their entire lives, and so on.<sup>232</sup> Hence, it can be said that the Muslim societies are shifting, economic pressure is impacting on marriage.

Another study revealed that fertility levels have been declining dramatically in the Muslim majority countries over the last three decades.<sup>233</sup> Once it was a norm for a Muslim couple to have five to ten children, while a Muslim couple is afraid to have

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<sup>231</sup> Hoda Rashad, Magued Osman, and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, *Marriage in the Arab world*. Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2005. 1-2. See also, Tahirah Nailah. "The Muslim Marriage Crisis: How Re-Establishing Islamic Principles Can Help Muslims Find Love and Marriage." *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice* 5, no. 1 (2024): 114-118. See also, Onn Winckler, "The Fertility Revolution of the Arab Countries Following the Arab Spring." *Middle East Policy* 30, no. 4 (2023): 26-41.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>233</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, *Waning Crescent: Slipping Birth Rates in the Muslim World*. June 11, 2012. <https://www.aei.org/articles/waning-crescent-slipping-birth-rates-in-the-muslim-world/#:~:text=Muslim%20majority%20countries%20apparently%20tend,use%2C%20and%20desired%20fertility%20constant>.

more than two children today because of financial difficulties. Today, a husband and wife think about what and how they will grow and maintain the expenses of having more children, which no Muslim couple thought about around three decades ago. In addition, couples are using various systems to protect against having children including condoms. However, it is irrefutable that living costs have a great impact in various aspects of our lives, which influences us not to have more children. Indeed, it is alarming for Muslim families and society. According to the Pew Research Centre, fertility rates have significantly decreased in numerous nations with most Muslims, such as Indonesia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Turkey, and Tunisia. From 4.3 children per woman in 1990–1995 to an estimated 2.9 children in 2010–15, the average total fertility rate for all 49 Muslim-majority nations has decreased. Overall, it is anticipated that during the following 20 years, fertility rates in these Muslim-majority nations will continue to decline, albeit not nearly as sharply. In 2020-25, they will drop to 2.6 children per woman, and in 2030-35, they will drop to 2.3 children, perhaps exceeding the rate of replacement.<sup>234</sup>

### **3.3.2 Causes of Declining Marriage and Fertility in Christianity**

Marriage and fertility are both of paramount importance in Christianity because these are ways to regenerate human life in the world. Additionally, marriage and fertility both are sacred and obligatory in the religion. Hence, marriage and fertility are essential from the perspective of human civilization and religion. However, various academic studies and surveys report a decline in these two crucial aspects of religion and civilization in recent decades. According to several studies, there are several causes behind the decline of these issues such as economic hardship, social and cultural changes, government policies, the impact of globalization and secularization, and changes in gender roles. Financial hardship is one of the key factors behind the decline of marriage and fertility rates. We see that living expenses are rising across the world, which impacts every sphere of our lives, including marriage. Millions of young people cannot afford various

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<sup>234</sup> Pew Research Centre. Future of the global Muslim population, main factors driving population growth. January 27, 2011. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-main-factors/#:~:text=Over%20the%20next%20%20years%2C%20fertility%20rates%20in%20these%20Muslim,and%20possibly%20reaching%20replacement%20levels.>

costs these days such as the cost of a marriage ceremony, the ability to give gifts to the bride, housing cost, etc due to the financial crisis, which is figured out as the main obstacle for young people for marriage, however, they are interested in getting married. Additionally, due to economic pressure and unemployment, young people are worried about getting married, maintaining family cost, and raising children.<sup>235</sup> A study shows that in Christian majority countries like the USA and Europe, the marriage rate is declining drastically, which concerns religious personalities. All religious groups—including evangelicals—have dropping marriage rates in the United States. For instance, the percentage of married evangelicals between the ages of 20 and 39 fell to 51% in 2018 from 56% in 2014.<sup>236</sup> Marriage and fertility are intricately linked. It is not possible to expect fertility without marriage. According to a study, the fertility rate has been declining rapidly across Europe and America in recent decades. Unemployment, financial crisis, and decline of religious influence in society are found as the causes for the decline of fertility.<sup>237</sup>

### 3.3.3 Changes in Society and Gender Norms

Today's society and women's roles are changing rapidly across the world including in Christian majority areas or countries in the Europe and North America, which is ultimately the result of declining marriage and fertility. Women are enjoying more freedom, individualistic, prepare to work outside the home. Additionally, women focus on their career building and are busy to building a successful professional life, which causes delayed marriage, even after a particular age they lose interest in getting married or face difficulties in finding a perfect life partner, which results in remaining single their whole life. According to many studies such as Goldscheider et al figured out that changing massive gender norms and the participation of females in the workforce

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<sup>235</sup> Dimiter Philipov and Caroline Berghammer. "Religion and fertility ideals, intentions and behaviour: A comparative study of European countries." *Vienna yearbook of population research* (2007): 271-305. 11

<sup>236</sup> Colin Smothers, Marriage in Rapid Decline, Even Among Evangelicals. CBMW.ORG. The Council on Biblical manhood and womanhood. July 30, 2020. <https://cbmw.org/2020/07/30/marriage-in-rapid-decline-even-among-evangelicals/>

<sup>237</sup> Frejka, Tomas, and Charles F. Westoff, "Religion, Religiousness and Fertility in the US and in Europe: Religion, religiosité et fécondité aux Etats-Unis et en Europe." (*European Journal of Population/Revue européenne de démographie* 24, 2008), 06

widely accounts for lower marriage rates and fertility in society as a whole.<sup>238</sup> Religious influence has a massive influence in every aspect of our life, including marriage, family, and fertility. It is evident that due to the **influence of secularism** in Christian life, the religious influence, has declined which has caused the importance of religiosity in life, to decline as well as the obligatory aspect of religion such as marriage and fertility. It is noted that secularism propagates that practicing religion is a private matter, it has nothing to do with society, which directly impacts religious individuals. As a result, people lose the importance of having marriage, forming family, having children etc. According to study, today's society is more secular undoubtedly and people are not interested in following Christian rules and regulations of marriage and family life, even several people believe that religion is conflicting or backdated. Hence, religious norms do not fit in the modern world.<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, studies by McQuillan show that due to the greater secularization of society, rate of marriage, tradition of large families, and having many children are reduced today.<sup>240</sup> It is undeniable that we are living in an individualistic society. We often hear people shout about individual rights and it is becoming a kind of norm today. It is seen that **individualism** has tremendous impact on declining marriage and the fertility rate. Personal freedom and career development of an individual have been placed over everything including traditional marriage and the family. And this trend is seen most powerfully in the Western society and families, which ultimately led to a rise in cohabitation, remaining single, enjoying sexual life without marriage, and forming small family units. Therefore, it can be concluded that individualism and personal autonomy are responsible for reducing number of marriages and fertility in modern society.<sup>241</sup> It is figured out by study that **government policies** are behind one of the reasons for declining fertility. Today, many Christian majority countries impose policies to reduce fertility. On the other hand, several people are protesting for individual rights for abortion, that we have seen in the Christian majority

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<sup>238</sup> Goldscheider, Frances, Eva Bernhardt, and Trude Lappegård, "The gender revolution: A framework for understanding changing family and demographic behavior." (*Population and development review* 41, no. 2, 2015), 207-239.

<sup>239</sup> Quinn Galbraith, Christina Riley, Alexandra Carlisle, and Heather Kelley, "Surviving Secular Society: How Religious Families Maintain Faith through Community and Parenting Practices." (2020), 2

<sup>240</sup> Kevin McQuillan, "When does religion influence fertility?." *Population and development review* 30, no. 1 (2004): 25-56. 28

<sup>241</sup> Ron Lesthaeghe, "The unfolding story of the second demographic transition." *Population and development review* 36, no. 2 (2010): 211-251.

country like USA in recent years. Moreover, many government NGOs are propagating for family planning and contraception, which results in reducing the fertility rate.<sup>242</sup>

### 3.3.4 Fertility Decline and its Effects on the Muslim and Christian Community

The decline in fertility has a significant impact on **the population growth** of both the Muslim and Christian communities, and the world. Population is essential for the functioning of religion, the economy, industry, and society. It is impossible to practice any religion without people, as religion exists for the people, and it is they who implement religious rules and regulations in their lives and communities. According to several studies, both Muslim and Christian populations are decreasing due to declining fertility rates, which poses a potential threat to both religions. A study by Aboulghasem et al. shows that the global total fertility rate (TFR) has declined over the past seven decades, with a consistent reduction since 1950. In 1950, the TFR was 4.97, but it dropped to 2.31 by 2019, which is an alarming trend for Islam, Christianity, and the world at large. Furthermore, in 1950, the average woman gave birth to five children, while by 1990, the number had fallen to fewer than three children. Therefore, scholars are concerned about the ongoing decline in population growth and believe that if the TFR continues to decrease, it could pose a serious threat to religion and the global population.<sup>243</sup> The second most significant impact of the decline of the fertility is **weakening the care of the elderly people family system** in the family in Islam and Christianity. It is evident that in the majority of developing and poor countries, elderly people work and live with their children and children take care of them when they are unable to work. Since the family is a social institution, it is viewed that family is an important institution of society and taking care of the elderly is a positive side for any society. Unfortunately, this care of elderly family system is going to erode the effect of declining fertility. Additionally, due to decline of fertility, in many countries there is a population crisis, and even elderly parents have no children to care for. It is reported

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<sup>242</sup> Goldscheider, Frances, Eva Bernhardt, and Trude Lappegård, "The gender revolution: A framework for understanding changing family and demographic behavior." (*Population and development review* 41, no. 2, 2015), 215-16

<sup>243</sup> Aboulghasem Pourreza, Ahmad Sadeghi, Mostafa Amini-Rarani, Rahim Khodayari-Zarnaq, and Hasan Jafari. "Contributing factors to the total fertility rate declining trend in the Middle East and North Africa: a systemic review." *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition* 40 (2021): 1-7.

that elderly people hire people in Japan to gossip and spend time since there is no other family member to make conversation or spend time with, which is indeed a threat for the family and society. Furthermore, declining fertility results in increasing aging and due to the aging older people are increasing, on the other hand, the number of young people is declining day by day. As a result, the traditional family system is weakening and elderly people are deprived of care.<sup>244</sup> In addition to fertility decline weakening the care of the elderly people family system, **declining fertility or reduced fertility without valid reason has ethical concerns in Islam**. Islam does not allow birth control or contraception rather Islam teaches that one of the paramount objectives of the marriage is preservation of human species and reproduction is essential to continue human existence on earth. Moreover, Islam encourages reproducing more and more children regardless of male or female.<sup>245</sup> Most importantly, in one of the famous Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) encourages to marrying girls who are loving and fertile and Prophet (PBUH) will be proud of the great number of ummah.<sup>246</sup> Therefore, it is clear that Islam has ethical concern about the controlling fertility without a valid reason and Islam encourages fertility and reproduction of human species. Likewise, Christianity encourages for reproduction. Many verses of the Bible mentioned children as precious gifts and considered fertility a blessing from the God. In fact, the family and procreation with the effort of mother and father are mentioned as a sanctity of the marriage in the Christianity.<sup>247</sup> In brief, it is true that today giving birth and raising children are difficult and expensive, however, they have paramount importance and blessings in marriage, family, Islam and Christianity, and the world at large.

### 3.3.5 Divorce and Family Breakdown

The Muslim community has seen an apparent rise in rates of divorce recently. We will now examine the complex causes of this increasing trend because of the extensive conversations this phenomenon has prompted. With this thorough investigation, we

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<sup>244</sup> John Knodel, Napaporn Chayovan, and Siriwan Siriboon. "The impact of fertility decline on familial support for the elderly: An illustration from Thailand." *Population and Development Review* (1992): 79-103. 02

<sup>245</sup> Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*. Al-Falah Foundation. 2001. 193

<sup>246</sup> Sunan Abu Dawud. Book 5, Hadith no. 2045

<sup>247</sup> Joseph W Francis, "The Christian and assisted procreation." *Baptist Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (2000): 1-2.

hope to clarify the several aspects that are causing divorce rates among Muslims to increase. If we compare the family with a flower of garden, an ideal institution, a unit of nation building, a civilization, and the production house of all humanity. Unfortunately, this beautiful institution is facing mountain crisis in its history for various reasons, such as divorce and family breakdown, which are kinds of epidemics across the world regardless of religion, ethnicity, area, etc.

### 3.4 ROOT CAUSES OF DIVORCE IN THE FAMILY IN ISLAM

It is seen from the various reports, surveys, and interviews on the reason of divorce in the family in Islam that it has multifaceted root causes such as religious, cultural, individual, and economic factors. It is noted that divorce or *talaq* is the least permitted way in Islam to breakdown the marriage, which means when all the doors of restoration of the relationship between husband and wife are completely closed, all the efforts or steps for the reuniting have failed, then divorce is the only option for separation between husband and wife. There are 57 Muslim countries across the world. All the Muslim countries have been facing challenges from divorce, of course, reasons for divorce vary from country to country, culture to culture, society to society, and an individual to individual. A study has been conducted on divorce in the Arab world, such as in Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Lebanon, etc. by the Egyptian Cabinet's Information and Decision Support Center found that the root cause of the divorce in the Arab countries is freedom of women's decision-making power. Basant Ossama, a sociology professor from Egypt residing in Kuwait, attributes the rise in divorce rates to women's growing capacity to express their opinions and exercise their autonomy, which was not the case in previous years. She also states that "With the achievement of education and the establishment of independent careers, women now have the means to sustain themselves financially when they choose to get a divorce."<sup>248</sup>

According to a study in countries like Malaysia incompatibility is the leading root cause for the breakdown of marriage with other root causes. Islam teaches Muslims to be careful while choosing a spouse. However, many marriages happen without

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<sup>248</sup> Debbie Mohnblatt, Divorce rates are increasing in the Arab World. Here's why. The Media Line. <https://themedialine.org/life-lines/divorce-rates-in-the-arab-world-are-increasing-heres-why/#:~:text=A%20study%20by%20the%20Egyptian,Jordan%20and%2037%25%20in%20Qatar.>

compatibility between husband and wife in various aspects such as religiosity, goals of life, values etc. Lack of compatibility can create conflict, violence, and frustration between husband and wife, which ultimately contributes to breakdown the marriage. In 2014, the National Population and Family Development Board conducted the Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey (MPFS-5), which revealed that the primary reason for divorce in Malaysia is "incompatibility," accounting for 35.3 percent of all causes.<sup>249</sup> Islam does not allow sexual intimacy before marriage and after marriage except between legal spouses. However, it is seen that extramarital relations are the root causes in some Muslim countries. According to many governments and non-government surveys or interview-based studies, the breakdown of marriage has skyrocketed in recent years in Bangladesh and its leading contributor is extramarital relationships. It means a significant percentage of married couples maintain relationships outside of marriage, either husband or wife, which ultimately results in the breakdown of marriage. It should be noted that most breakdowns of marriage happen in cities in Bangladesh. According to daily newspaper report, extramarital relationships are the major cause of divorce in Bangladesh, and this was the reason cited by 23% of the respondents in the survey.<sup>250</sup>

Saudi Arabia is considered the birthplace of Islam where Muhammad (PBUH) founded Islam. Various reports indicate that the Saudi Muslim family has undergone many changes in recent decades, and divorce is one of them. A survey that was compiled by the General Authority of Statistics in Saudi Arabia indicates that approximately 37 percent of marriages in the kingdom result in either divorce or separation. According to the data, individuals who have recently tied the knot account for more than sixty percent of all divorces.<sup>251</sup> It is evident that Saudi Arabia remains a very traditional society, the institution of marriage and divorce being significantly shaped by custom and familial bonds. The state's Islamic courts maintain jurisdiction over matters pertaining to marriage and divorce. Contrasting with the increasing number of divorce cases in Saudi

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<sup>249</sup> Luqman Zakariyah & Siti Nurafiqah Sapardi, High Rate of Divorce among Muslims in Malaysia: A Study of Legal Reconciliation and Islamic Matrimonial Dispute Remedy. (IIUM Repository & Malaymail, 2016), 4

<sup>250</sup> Rajib Ahmed, Extramarital relationships are the main reason for divorce. Prothom Alo English. Feb 09, 2024. <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/bi48k3yakr>

<sup>251</sup> Sumanto Al Qurtuby. Why is the divorce rate so high in Saudi Arabia? The Jakarta Post. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2024/03/23/why-is-the-divorce-rate-so-high-in-saudi-arabia.html#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20report%20from,divorce%20cases%20in%20Saudi%20Arabia>

Arabia, the number of marriage cases has been following a contrary trend. Furthermore, a significant proportion of women, whether Saudi or non-Saudi, in the kingdom were married during the age range of 15 to 18. Nevertheless, the trend is shifting as an increasing number of women choose to embark on professional employment and pursue advanced education. The point should be noted that over the past few years, Saudi Arabia has implemented several significant social reforms, which have resulted in a shift in the role that women play in the public sphere. As of the month of June 2018, women were finally granted the legal right to drive, after years of being prohibited from doing so. Although the number of women working in the economy has increased over the course of the past few years, there are industries that attract a greater number of women than others. In Saudi Arabia, it is acceptable to claim that the country is gradually becoming more receptive to the participation of women in a greater number of public issues.<sup>252</sup>

Indonesia is the largest country in the world. It has a big impact on Asia and the world. However, it is evident that the trend of divorce is rapidly increased in Indonesia in the past several decades, which concerns scholars and religious people. Several studies have been reported to find the reasons behind the high divorce rate. One of the research projects has been conducted to study the root causes of divorce between 2014 to 2017, where it is seen that the cause of divorce is changing every year. For example, in 2014, the leading cause of divorce was economic factors while the cause of divorce was obligations and financial factors in 2015. The report also shows that the leading cause of divorce remained the same from 2014 to 2017. It is also found that though the leading cause of divorce changed between 2014 to 2017, however, the leading cause of divorce was related to financial problems mostly during that period.<sup>253</sup> A significant contributing aspect to the rise in divorces is the increasing economic difficulty that Muslim households experience. Stress related to money can have a severe negative impact on marriages, causing arguments and, eventually, divorces. Couples struggle to support their families in the face of rising living expenses, frequently at the price of

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<sup>252</sup> Statistics Research Department. Number of divorce cases in Saudi Arabia from 2011 to 2020. Statista. Sep 6, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/940280/saudi-arabia-number-of-divorces/#:~:text=Since%202011%2C%20the%20number%20of%20divorces%20in,society%2C%20where%20marriages%20and%20divorce%20are%20heavily>

<sup>253</sup> Yadi Fahmi Arifudin. "Three Major Factors that Cause Divorce and Its Solution in Islam." *Al Mashalih – Journal Of Islamic Law* | Volume 1, No. 1, June 2018. 5

their personal well-being. Islam teaches that a man should support his family by seeing to all the household's needs, including his wife and children. Women working and contributing to expenses for their families has become more common due to the issue of the cost of living. Relationship strain may arise if the man is unable to perform his obligations in accordance with Islamic principles, as more women are taking on the role of primary breadwinner. In today's global world, interfaith weddings have increased in frequency from when they were once uncommon. Although diversity can strengthen bonds between people, it can also provide difficulties, especially when adjusting to disparities in cultural norms and beliefs. Conflicts between religious and moral beliefs might cause marital stress and raise the divorce rate among Muslims. For the benefit of the spouse, returning to Islam is frequently perceived as a means of getting the spouse's family to approve of the couple's relationship, although it is frequently done with no real conviction or desire to adhere to the principles of the faith. Children are raised in two different cultures, with no apparent distinction between them as they celebrate Christmas and Ramadan in one month and Eid in another. In addition, differences may arise between two Muslims even though they are of the same faith due to factors such as the town or city in which they were raised, whether they are South Asian or Arab, the upbringing of their parents, their educational background, and their devotion to Islamic customs.<sup>254</sup> Moreover, many studies found that the root causes of divorce in the Muslim countries are lack of communication between husband and wife, family interference which means husband or wife gets divorced due to the influence of relatives, domestic violence and lack of commitment. These are root causes that have been identified behind the breakdown of the marriage in the Muslim societies.

### **3.4.1 Rising Divorce Rates**

Divorce is skyrocketed in numerous Muslim countries and across the Muslim community in general. The findings of the study show that the divorce rate is very high in Arab world in recent years. According to an Information and Decision Support Center report by the Egyptian Cabinet, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar have the highest

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<sup>254</sup> Versuslaw. The Rise of Divorce in the Muslim Community: Unveiling the factors behind the increase. <https://www.versuslaw.co.uk/news/the-rise-of-divorce-in-the-muslim-community-unveiling-the-factors-behind-the-increase/>

divorce rates among Arab nations. In Kuwait, 48% of marriages end in divorce, compared to 40% in Egypt, 37.2% in Jordan, and 37% in Qatar. With 34%, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates come next.<sup>255</sup> It is seen that divorce rates are increasing rapidly in Asian Muslim communities though it depends very significantly on countries and regions. For example, divorce cases sharply increased in Malaysia from 2021 to 2022, where figures rose to 62,890 from 43,936 in 2021. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), the divorce cases rose to 43.1 per cent by 2022 while most cases were from the Muslim community.<sup>256</sup> Indonesia is a top Muslim majority country in the world. A study indicates that the rate of divorce is rapidly increasing in Indonesia. According to the study by the Statista Research Department, approximately 463,654 divorces involving Muslim weddings occurred in 2023; this number represents a decline from the previous year. Divorces reached an all-time high in 2022, marking the turning point of the previous ten years. An increase in divorce cases suggested that the practice was becoming more widely accepted. Nevertheless, divorce can have negative effects in Indonesia, particularly for women.<sup>257</sup> Another Muslim majority country Bangladesh where divorce is increasing among the Muslim community. According to a survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, in 2022, the divorce rate has increased from 0.7 to 1.4 per a 1000 compared to the year 2021.<sup>258</sup> Therefore, the above studies showed that the divorce rate is increasing in the Muslim country and survey institutions indicate that this divorce trend will increase more in the future, which is indeed alarming for the Muslim community.

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<sup>255</sup> Debbie Mohnblatt, Divorce rates in the Arab world increasing. Here's why. <https://themedialine.org/life-lines/divorce-rates-in-the-arab-world-are-increasing-heres-why/#:~:text=A%20study%20by%20the%20Egyptian,Jordan%20and%2037%25%20in%20Qatar.>

<sup>256</sup> Rhea Yasmine Alis Haizan, 26 Nov 2023. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/malaysia-divorce-cases-muslim-marriage-covid-pandemic-lockdown-polygamy-3943771#:~:text=Figures%20released%20on%20Thursday%2046%2C138%20cases%20involved%20Muslim%20couples> (Nov, 2023)

<sup>257</sup> Number of Muslim divorces in Indonesia 2014-2023 Published by Statista Research Department, Mar 25, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/705558/number-of-muslim-divorces-in-indonesia/>

<sup>258</sup> SM Najmus Sakib. Divorce rate in Bangladesh doubled last year: Survey. 13.06.2023 m <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/divorce-rate-in-bangladesh-doubled-last-year-survey/2921735>

### 3.4.2 Root Causes of Divorce in Christianity

Marriage is an important part of life. According to Christianity, man and woman are the image of God. Man cannot live alone, and marriage is under the God's plan for the human being. Therefore, the unity is compulsory between man and woman to free loneliness and serve the God through its humanity. Additionally, it is believed that Christian marriage is founded by God, it is also called godly marriage, and it is a contract between a man and woman for forever. Hence, it is not allowed to end up for any reasons.<sup>259</sup> However, it is figured out by the study of various government and non-governmental organization that there are many profound root causes behind the high divorce rate in the Christianity. Which makes the Christian community concerned and worried about the future of this holy institution marriage. This point should be noted that it is often assumed that the Christian marriage system is quite strong to prevent divorce. However, the recent study shows that a significant percentage of marriages are ending in divorce. The shocking fact that over 25% of Christian marriages end in divorce was uncovered by recent research. The religious communities around the world are concerned about the stability of marriages because this number has increased dramatically in recent years.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, it is of paramount importance to figure out the factors contributing to the high rate of divorce in Christianity. One of the major factors identified for the high divorce is **the social and cultural shifting**. Firstly, it is important to understand that we are living in a changing world, every aspect of our life changing, including an individual, social, cultural, ideological, and so on. These changes influence our life particularly attack on our faith, which make a believer to shift and adapt the new world order. In addition, due to the influence of social and cultural changes, a Christian's traditional faith, teachings, and lose the value over the changing social and cultural norms. For example, Christianity teaches a Christian that marriage is a lifelong commitment, and divorce will not be acceptable for any reason. Nevertheless, when modern popular slogans such as individual freedom, self-fulfillment, individual happiness, and freedom of choice influence a society, then people's religious beliefs shift to those factors, which ultimately lead to an increase in the loss of the religious roles and regulations, and values in an individual life and family,

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<sup>259</sup> Zerihun Necho Chali, "Causes, Impacts and Solution of Christian Divorce." ResearchGate, (2024), 1

<sup>260</sup> P.C Longworth Law Firm, Christian Divorce Rates. <https://www.myhoustondivorce.lawyer/christian-divorce/rates/#:~:text=reduce%20its%20prevalence.,Recent%20Statistics%20on%20Christian%20Divorce,the%20state%20of%20marital%20stability>. Retrived September 24, 2024.

and its final result contributes to making a holy marriage into a divorce in society.<sup>261</sup> According to the Andrew Root, the modern western society is suffering from the lifelong commitment and he called it as a “crisis of commitment”. For marriage, lifelong commitment is compulsory. In fact, people are not interested to maintaining lifelong commitment and a concept grows that marriage, family, and children are burden, rather they prioritize personal fulfillment, which leads to ending a marriage to divorce.<sup>262</sup> On the basis of Paul R. Amato’s research, **economic and financial insecurity** are one of the major reasons of divorce in the Christian community. It is pointed out that economic crisis, unemployment, and debt are leading to marital uncertainty in a family. A husband’s responsibility is providing economic support to the family, including housing and food cost, raising children, and taking care of elderly parents. In a word, husband is responsible for fulfilling the needs of the family. When a husband cannot provide enough for the family, then it creates conflict between both spouses, which eventually impacts marital relationships and ends up with divorce. Hence, it can be said that economic crisis may lead to serious causes for the breakdown of the family.<sup>263</sup> According to the teaching of the Bible, infidelity is completely prohibited in Christianity.<sup>264</sup> Studies have found that **adultery** remains a vital reason in Christianity for the divorce. Infidelity is a kind of silent killer, which destroys the faith and understanding between spouses, and the holiness of the marriage and relationships. Unfortunately, this prohibited matter appears as an epidemic in the Christian community. As a result, we can see a significant number of divorces.<sup>265</sup> It can be concluded that both spouses must be committed and faithful to each other and maintain religious rules and regulations. According to the teaching of Christianity, marital life should be maintained between both spouses through the mutual understanding, love, respect, and cooperation. However, **violence and abusive relationships** are pointed out as one of the main factors for the breakdown of the family in Christianity. In many conservative Christian families, violence occurs over the control of the family because

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<sup>261</sup> Andrew Root, *The relational pastor: Sharing in Christ by sharing ourselves*. InterVarsity Press, 2013. 45

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Paul R Amato, "Research on divorce: Continuing trends and new developments." *Journal of marriage and family* 72, no. 3 (2010): 650-666.

<sup>264</sup> Mathew 19:9

<sup>265</sup> Wilmoth, Janet, and Gregor Koso, "Does marital history matter? Marital status and wealth outcomes among preretirement adults." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no. 1 (2002): 254-268.

conservative husbands believe that wife and children ought to submit to the husband including every matter relating to the family since husband is the only provider to the family, which leads to violence between husband and wife. Additionally, many husbands are involved with abusing, beating, and torturing wives either psychologically or physically. And due to this violence and abusive relationship, a significant number of women escape from the marital relationship and choose the divorce as a solution.<sup>266</sup>

### **3.5 REDIFINITION OF THE FAMILY STRUCTURE**

#### **3.5.1 Non-Traditional Family Structure in Contemporary Society**

The traditional family is known as the extended or nuclear family from the history of the world. It is the only widely acceptable family system historically. However, with the development of the world, the family system has been changing or shifting into various non-traditional family systems in the contemporary world such as same sex families, single-parent families, cohabiting families, blended families and so on. Most importantly, these family structures have been spreading like an epidemic across the world particularly in the European countries and America. Additionally, more than thirty countries have legalized these non-traditional family systems both in Muslim and Christian majority countries and the proponents of these family structures are demanding for legalization in many countries across the world.<sup>267</sup> The conventional family is no longer usual, according to a survey. Non-traditional family structures are found in 80% of American homes. A single parent raising a child alone, cohabitation, same-sex families, grandparenting, and polygamy, are just a few examples of non-traditional or alternative family structures. Moreover, gay and lesbian systems are increasing across the world.<sup>268</sup> In fact, non-traditional family systems have not appeared in the many cases, particularly in the Muslim majority countries but they do exist in societies, people do not express them due to strict religious law and conservative family

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<sup>266</sup> Church-Hill Amadi-Nche, The Role Of Christianity In Preventing Domestic Violence Among Christian Families Among The Ikwerre People Of The Niger Delta. ResearchGate, (2022), 2.

<sup>267</sup> Drew DeSilver, In places where same-sex marriages are legal, how many married same-sex couples are there? June 13, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/13/in-places-where-same-sex-marriages-are-legal-how-many-married-same-sex-couples-are-there/>

<sup>268</sup> Ulie A. Dialessi-Lafley, Non-traditional Family Structures Challenge Modern Society. July 5, 2024. <https://businesswest.com/blog/non-traditional-family-structures-challenge-modern-society/>

and society. Furthermore, studies have found that various lifestyles of men and women have contributed to this non-traditional family system. Moreover, career development, the impact of the large number of women joining in the workforce, delayed marriages, and changes in gender norms in the secular, developed, and more liberal societies are responsible for these family structures.<sup>269</sup>

A single parent's family structure is one of the common family structures in contemporary society. It is seen that this single parent's family is often commonly led by a woman. As we have discussed about the impact of high divorce rate and research indicates that several men particularly women remain unmarried after their first marriage, and non-marital childbirth and childbearing, and rising divorce are the behind the reason for this family structures in society. It is evident that single parents suffer from various challenges such as financial, emotional, and social. However, the socioeconomic factors are causing suffering for single parents according to the research outcome. Additionally, many countries have legalized and accepted single parent families so that difficulties of these families can be reduced.<sup>270</sup> Another family structure is stepfamilies which are also known as blended families in society. A stepfamily is referred to by the dictionary of Cambridge, a family made up of two individuals along with the child(ren) from a prior relationship of one or both of them.<sup>271</sup> When it comes to relationships, these family structures face challenges in the family and society. The relationships conflict happens among the biological parents, stepparents, and children in various issues for example loyalty, integration of different parenting styles, and discipline etc. In fact, children from previous relationships are the main victims of stepfamilies. Naturally, a stepfather or mother cannot accept a child from a previous relationship. As a result, there is conflict between husband and wife in the family and even in some cases the child has to die as a victim of this conflict.<sup>272</sup> Cohabitation is one of the problems of modern times. This has become an epidemic today. The most unfortunate thing is that this is not considered an illicit relationship between a couple. Cohabitation got accepted, normalized, and legalized in society, particularly in western

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<sup>269</sup> Kathleen Gerson, "The unfinished revolution: How a new generation is reshaping family, work, and gender in America." (2010), 46

<sup>270</sup> Sara McLanahan and Gary D. Sandefur, *Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps.* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 7

<sup>271</sup> Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stepfamily>

<sup>272</sup> Lawrence Hganong and Marilyn Coleman, "Stepfamily relationships." (*Development, dynamics, and interventions*, 2004), 270.

society. The cohabitation implies when a man and woman live together without legal marriage relationships. The primary matter of concern is that it is one of the main reasons for declining marriage among the young generation in society. According to a Pew Research Center study, a significant number of Americans are involved with cohabitation.<sup>273</sup> Additionally, several other relationships are correlated with shake ups such as friends with benefits, where man and woman build and maintain relationships only for enjoying sexual pleasure and have no commitment or aim to progress the relationships to get married. However, this cohabitation trend often can be seen among the young generation, who give priority to the development of their careers, and personal freedom, and avoid relationships of marriage and responsibilities. Because cohabitators believe that cohabitation is better for physical intimacy, while marriage is full of responsibilities. Hence, it is an easy way for the enjoyment of sexual life without personal freedom or with any commitment or responsibility like marriage. On the other hand, cohabiting couples are deprived of from various marriage related issues such as the social and religious legitimacy of relationships, dowry opportunities for women, property rights, inheritance, and child custody etc. Moreover, cohabiting couples are deprived of family opportunities such as financial security and emotional support. However, cohabitation relationships are temporary. As a result, these illegitimate relationships end up with frustration and benefits. It can be concluded that although cohabitation is unethical from the religious perspective, this family structure is getting more acceptance and legitimacy in societies in the Muslim and Christian society.<sup>274</sup>

### **3.5.2 The Role of Extended Family and Community in Addressing Modern Challenges**

The family institution is a historical institution that began with the first man and woman Adam and Eve in this world. Since the beginning of this institution, it has faced

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<sup>273</sup> Katherine Schaeffer, For Valentine's Day, facts about marriage and dating in the U.S. February 8, 2024. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/02/08/for-valentines-day-facts-about-marriage-and-dating-in-the-us/#:~:text=Overall%2C%2069%25%20of%20Americans%20say,with%2028%25%20of%20straight%20adults.>

<sup>274</sup> Brienna Perelli-Harris, Monika Mynarska, Ann Berrington, Caroline Berghammer, Ann Evans, Olga Isupova, Renske Keizer, Andreas Klärner, Trude Lappegård, and Daniele Vignoli. "Towards a new understanding of cohabitation: Insights from focus group research across Europe and Australia." *Demographic research* 31 (2014): 1043-1078.

numerous problems and challenges over time. However, this pivotal institution is facing the biggest crisis in its history of emergence in modern times. Extended family structures are the main family structure historically. It has vital importance in supporting society and the economy, and upholding cultural values. In fact, this extended family structure becomes less influential due to the impact of modernity, globalization, and urbanization. Nevertheless, it is still relevant to face challenges of contemporary times. ancient institution. Even a hundred years ago family structure meant only a joint family system where parents, brothers, sisters, children and relatives all lived together. Most importantly, this family system was a blessing for social and economic support for every member of the family. Because this family tradition played a special role in financial support of the family, child rearing and emotional support. For example, when a member of the family suffered from unemployment, the joint family would support him financially. Additionally, the joint family played a special role in providing emotional and social support. It has seen that the support of the extended family has still existed among low-income family and religious South Asian and African Muslim and Christian families, while modern society is promoting only for the financial independence of an individual. This cannot be overstated the economic and social support is more relevant today, when the whole world is going through economic crisis, which affects every family particularly middle income and low-income families regardless of religion and region.<sup>275</sup>

The extended family is the main building block to inject moral and cultural values into children. After the birth of a child, he or she raises his parents and other family members, who play the vital role of teaching children ethical, religious, and cultural norms. Of course, parents must be religious in practical life for the impact of their teaching on the children since they are considered children's first teachers after they are born in this world. It is indisputable that this moral and cultural continuity is paramount for the children today, when the world is suffering from moral degradation, particularly in the secular society, where the impact of modernity and globalization makes people less concerned about morality, and the practice of religious rules and regulations. In addition, the transfer of morality and cultural norms is essential when

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<sup>275</sup> Jean-Marie Baland, Isabelle Bonjean, Catherine Guirkinger, and Roberta Ziparo. "The economic consequences of mutual help in extended families." *Journal of Development Economics* 123 (2016): 38-56.

non-traditional family structures and activities, avoidance of religious rules about the family, and family breakdown become a normal matter in the contemporary world. Moreover, the grandparents and elderly relatives play central role in the extended family in socializing children's morality in practice and social rules and regulations, particularly it can be seen in the more conservative Muslim religious family.<sup>276</sup> The extended family is most relevant today in addressing modern challenges. As we have discussed earlier that there are many non-traditional, agnostic, secular, ethical and culturally insignificant from the religious perspective family structures that emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, those are regularly influencing people, particularly young generations to follow their concept of life. In these circumstances the extended family can be a vital building block to make children conscious about the danger of those family structures and their norms. Moreover, while the rate of divorce is rapidly rising, single parents families are becoming more common, and fertility is declining, the extended family, especially grandparents, can play a key role in providing necessary childcare and economic support for the children, which we cannot expect any other form of family system in the modern world. The grandparents' social, psychological, and financial role is essential in the urban areas today, when high living costs are making difficult for people to lead their lives smoothly, particularly for single parents. In addition to the support of grandparents, interfaith and multicultural societies also pose challenges to the extended family, yet it is difficult to find an alternative to the extended family when addressing these challenges. Moreover, while interfaith marriage is more common in many pluralistic societies, which causes concern, conflict, and sometimes creates misunderstanding among the religions, extended family can play a key role in creating a multicultural, inclusive environment and space in the family for understanding different cultures and religions.<sup>277</sup>

Another influential aspect of the extended family is the mental and social cohesion support in challenging modern challenges. According to the study, today people are going through various mental problems such as anxiety, depression, and other emotional and psychological challenges, which creates a grave obstacle to living a normal life and many people even resort to suicide to avoid mental problems, although

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<sup>276</sup> Al-Krenawi, Alean, and John R. Graham, "Culturally sensitive social work practice with Arab clients in mental health settings." *Health & Social Work* 25, no. 1 (2000): 9-22.

<sup>277</sup> Livia Sz. Oláh, Irena E. Kotowska, and Rudolf Richter, *The new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies*. Springer International Publishing, 2018. 41

it is not a solution. Hence, many believe that extended family can play a crucial role in reducing this emotional and psychological illness and be essential mediators when a family member goes through crisis time. Studies show that the nuclear families face various problems and challenges such as migration of family, family breakdown, detachment from the relative, economic pressure, and suffering from the other's assistance in crisis times. On the other hand, extended families can play a crucial role in providing necessary support for managing these challenges. Additionally, it is almost impossible to expect non-traditional families when a family member suffers from challenges because non-traditional families often emphasize on independence, freedom of choice, and so on.<sup>278</sup> Hence, it can be concluded that the extended family can be a better option to address modern challenges.

### **3.6 INTERFAITH MARRIAGE AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY**

The contemporary world is multireligious and multicultural. People of one religion marrying people of another religion has become a common thing in different parts of the world despite differences and challenges in religion, culture, and legitimacy, particularly between Islam and Christianity. The following discussion addresses the challenges of interfaith marriage between Islam and Christianity. It is important to highlight the approaches to interfaith in Islamic and Christian teachings before exploring the problems and challenges.

#### **3.6.1 Approaches to Interfaith Marriages in Islamic and Christian Teachings**

Islamic law is divinely revealed by the God, and it is originated by the God. And Islamic law has been revealed to establish justice and rule the society. Moreover, the Qur'an and Hadith are the sources of Islamic law, where the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for twenty-three long years and a hadith is a statement made by the Prophet (PBUH) that is passed down to the following generation after being recounted by his companions. In addition, the Qur'an is revealed more than fourteen

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<sup>278</sup> Maria Vidal de Haymes, Jessica Martone, Lina Muñoz, and Susan Grossman. "Family cohesion and social support: Protective factors for acculturation stress among low-acclimated Mexican migrants." *Journal of Poverty* 15, no. 4 (2011): 403-426.

hundred years ago. However, the important point is it is often argued that some verses of the Qur'an do not adapt to the current modern times and contexts, especially regarding women's equal rights and interfaith marriages. And this debate is not only made by non-Muslims but also by a group of Muslims and they want to reform Islamic Sharia Law in line with modern society. On the other hand, Islam is a complete system of life, which is appropriate regardless of time and context. As Allah said in the Qur'an, "I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My blessing upon you, and chosen Islam as Deen (religion and a way of life) for you."<sup>279</sup>

While studying interfaith marriage in Islam, one can observe a debate between traditional Islamic scholars and modern Islamic scholars. According to the traditional Islamic scholars interpretation, a Muslim man or woman cannot marry a non-Muslim, which means *people of the book* (Jews and Christians) because they have deviated from the true faith of the Prophets Ibrahim and Isa (peace be upon them), while some modern Islamic scholars argue that marriage can be allowed with people of the book, however, it should be with conditions such as children must be raised with Islamic rules and regulations. On the other hand, Islam strictly forbids marrying an atheist, idolater, or polytheist.<sup>280</sup>

In Christianity, marriage has an important aspect. It is called that husband and wife are one flesh, marriage is a gift from the God, and it has spiritual relationships between husband, wife and Christ.<sup>281</sup> However, it is evident that there are various arguments about interfaith marriage in the Christianity. The conservative group of the Christianity is opposing the interreligious marriage, although liberal and progressive Christians opine that everyone has the right to get married according to their choice regardless of religious affiliation. Because love has no boundary in the modern multireligious society and they are citing reference from the Bible 1 Corinthians 7:14–15 and those denominations against it often cite reference from the bible's verse 2

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<sup>279</sup> Al-Qur'an, 5:3

<sup>280</sup> Alex B Leeman, "Interfaith marriage in Islam: An examination of the legal theory behind the traditional and reformist positions." *Ind. LJ* 84 (2009): 743.

<sup>281</sup> J. M Vorster, "Christian ethical perspectives on marriage and family life in modern Western culture." *HTS: Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (2008): 463-481. (Philippians 5:21-33)

Corinthians 6:14–15.<sup>282</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that Christianity is much more open to accepting mixed marriage than Islam.

### 3.6.2 Challenges of Interfaith Marriages between Muslims and Christians

Islam and Christianity are called Abrahamic religions, and both religions have a long history of living side by side despite differences in various issues such as interfaith marriage. Many problems and challenges are seen between these two religions in interfaith marriage. One of the most crucial challenges is **doctrinal and legal challenges**. The followers of Islam and Christianity face difficulties when it comes to interfaith marriage from the perspective of faith such as marriage, family, women rights etc. Although Islam considers that marriage is a duty for every eligible Muslim, particularly for men, whereas marriage is considered as a covenant, divorce is not allowed under any circumstances, and women are seen as the source of all sin in Christianity. Marriage to a non-Muslim is prohibited in Islam, though it is controversial among the traditional and modern Muslim scholars. Because it causes various problems such as conflict between spouses due to their different faiths, raising children, and acceptance matters from the family.<sup>283</sup>

It is evident that one of the main concerns of the interfaith marriage between Islam and Christianity is the **crisis of identity and cultural integration**. Because if both husband and wife have strong religious faith and practice, it may lead to a complex situation regarding the domination within the household. Additionally, this identity and cultural crisis can be seen in the conservative Muslim families and majority Muslim societies, where husband is the dominant power in the family. As a Muslim majority country, Indonesia can be a good example for this crisis. According to the study, due to the strong religious faith and practice, the Muslim majority dominant society, and Islamic family law, the interfaith couple is facing a serious identity and cultural crisis. Moreover, societal pressure is high to adapt Islamic faith and rules and regulations for either husband or wife, on the other hand, a Christian husband or wife also faces similar

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<sup>282</sup>ChristianTraditions.<https://webpages.scu.edu/ftp/jdrimmer/story%202.html#:~:text=The%20Christia n%20view%20on%20interfaith,despite%20the%20person's%20religious%20affiliation>.

<sup>283</sup> Leeman, "Interfaith marriage in Islam, 743.

social and cultural pressure to practice Christian rules and regulations. At the end, there is conflict and suffering among the interfaith couples and the end of marriage.<sup>284</sup>

Interfaith marriage is common in many parts of the multi-religious world. Interreligious marriages have increased the number of problems and challenges that create complications for couples, families and society at large. However, one of the most vulnerable challenges of Muslim and Christian marriage is the **religious upbringing of children**. Children are important regardless of marriage and family arrangements. More important is what religion they grow up with. In fact, one of the main directives of every religion towards parents is to bring up their children from childhood in their own religious beliefs. When it comes to interfaith marriage, it has appeared as the biggest problem and matter of tension that on which religious basis children will be raised and whether they will follow the faith and practices of the father or mother. However, from an Islamic perspective and *Sharia*, children must be raised following Islam, even in the context of interfaith marriage, while similarly Christian religious doctrine emphasizes to baptism and raising children following its instruction from a very early age. Additionally, this debate is not limited to religion but also extends to child education, culture, and family ties. When parents fail to find a logical solution to this problem, there is a strong possibility of marriage breakdown and in many cases, it culminates in divorce.<sup>285</sup> Interfaith marriage couples may face **legal and institutional barriers**. And these barriers can be posed by the Muslim society and Christian society. Although a Muslim man can marry a woman from the *people of the book* community, a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry a Christian or Jewish man because it is strictly prohibited by the Islamic Sharia law. Most importantly, though several Muslim countries run on or have influence of the western secular law, however, Islamic law has much more influence over the western secular law when it comes to issues such as interfaith marriage, inheritance rights, child custody, divorce, and so on. Hence, interfaith couples may face challenges of legal and institutional barriers. On the other hand, Muslim spouses may face complexity in the Christian majority society for the acceptance of Muslim spouses because mostly legally, institutionally, and religiously conservative Christians oppose the marriage of a Christian man or woman to the other

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<sup>284</sup> Yoko. Wong and Xian Seng. Neo, Exploring the Role of Cultural Adaptation in Interfaith Marriages: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Psychosociological Research in Family and Culture* 2:4 (2024) 21-27

<sup>285</sup> John R Bowen, "On British Islam: Religion, Law, and Everyday Practice in Shari'ah Councils." (2016): 1-288.

religious man or woman, even though liberal and modern Christians emphasize and accept interreligious marriage over the legal and institutional barriers. Because they often recognize people's personal choice, individual freedom, and love of a man and woman regardless of religious affiliation.<sup>286</sup>

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to investigate the problems and challenges facing the family institution in both Islam and Christianity. In this chapter, a comprehensive analysis has done, and it is found that economic instability, social-cultural influence, and secularism are the leading cause for declining the value of marriage, family, and fertility rate in both religions. The findings also suggest that, besides the economic hardship of declining marriage and family problems, extramarital affairs, communication problems, lack of knowledge to solve problems, and non-traditional marriage and family systems are making a crisis in the family institution. Moreover, massive number of women's participation in the workforce causes unsustainable relationships between husband and wife and changing gender roles are playing significant role in shaping traditional family structure. Social policy makers should make strategic plans by considering those problems and challenges in the family institution. Finally, it can be concluded that there are multifaceted problems and challenges in deteriorating the family institution in Islam and Christianity such as financial difficulties in the family, communication gaps between husband and wife, understanding problems, and being unskilled in resolving family issues. Therefore, policy makers, family specialists, and religious scholars should address these problems and challenges with possible solutions for a successful long marriage, relationships, and sustainable family. It is very difficult to assume the future of the family institution, but this study attempts to provide and address the deep-rooted problems and challenges in the family institution in Islam and Christianity.

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<sup>286</sup> John Witte, *The Western case for monogamy over polygamy*. Cambridge University Press, 2015. 21

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **THE INFLUENCE OF LIBERALISM, FEMINISM, AND POSTMODERNISM ON THE FAMILY INSTITUTION IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Family is the most important unit of our society. It is the only generation through which human beings generate, grow up, and nurture. Islam and Christianity both religions give paramount importance on the family institution, which we have discussed in the earlier chapter. However, today the family institution is going through many problems across the world. On the other hand, various artificial forms of family systems have been emerged across the world other than the traditional or original family system in the history of the world such as LGBT families. Many believe that behind the critical problem of the family is modern ideologies such as liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism. Because these are the ideologies that influence the family institution to deconstruct the family. According to the pioneers and supporters of said ideologies, family is socially constructed and due to this family women are facing various hurdles. The most matter of concern is that sex should be free, and it cannot be stuck in the form of a family system according to the concept of said ideologies particularly from the concept of feminism. However, the aim of this chapter is to investigate how liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism influence and affect the family institution in both religions Islam and Christianity.

### **4.2 UNDERSTANDING LIBERALISM, FEMINISM, AND POSTMODERNISM**

#### **4.2.1 Definition and Key Concepts**

##### ***4.2.1.1 Liberalism: Core Principles and Historical Development***

Though the main aim of this chapter is to investigate the impact of modern ideologies such as liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism on the family institution in both Islam

and Christianity. However, it is most relevant to discuss the concept and principles of those said ideologies before figuring out their impact. The origin of the word *liberal* came from the Latin word *liber*, which means free. Moreover, the word *liber* is the root of the word *liberty* and *libertine*, which means the quality or state of being free and one leading a dissolute life respectively.<sup>287</sup> The word *liberalism* was first used in 1815. However, it has been seen that the meaning and use of the word *liberal* have been shifting through history. For example, *Liberal* was being used by people in the 18th century to denote things that were "not strict or rigid." The Merriam-Webster dictionary defined liberalism in various ways such as a modern Protestant movement and an economic, and political theory that promotes intellectual freedom and the spiritual and ethical aspects of Christianity. Additionally, it encourages individual freedom, the self-regulating market, and political and civil liberties.<sup>288</sup> In a word, liberalism is such a philosophical and political movement, which promotes individual freedom in every aspect of human beings, and it believes that the state is the main power to provide or obstruct individual liberty.

For more clarification about the concept of liberalism, it can be said that liberalism is a political theory that considers the protection and enhancement of individual freedom to be the primary concern of political discourse. Liberals believe that the government is required to safeguard individuals from being hurt by other people; nevertheless, they are also aware that the government itself can be a potential danger to individual liberty. When we discuss about the founder of the ideology of liberalism, the first name that comes to mind is the English philosopher, John Locke. He first proposed the theory of liberalism. He comes up with a way to run a government based on people's natural rights and their consent, and Adam Smith, a Scottish economist and philosopher who said that societies do best when people are free to go after their own interests in an economy where private companies own the means for making goods and there are viable markets that are not controlled by the government or monopolies owned by private firms. However, the question is why it was necessary to invent the theory of liberalism. According to historical evidence, there are two aspects behind the emergence of liberalism from western cultures. One of the initial differences

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<sup>287</sup> Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "liberalism," accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/liberalism>.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

is that Western civilization places a greater focus on individuality than other civilizations do, which places more importance on position, caste, and tradition. Individuals have been drowned in and subject to their clan, tribe, ethnic group, or monarchy over a significant portion of the history of the world. Liberalism is the conclusion of advances in Western culture that developed a sense of the centrality of human independence, a freedom of the individual from total obedience to the group, and an acknowledgment of the strong hold of norms, regulations, and control. Regarding this partiaspecteralism is a reference to the liberation of oneself. Additionally, the idea of adversarial, which refers to the practice of competition in European politics and economics, is a significant factor that has an impact on liberalism.<sup>289</sup> During elections, this rivalry takes place between political parties; during legal procedures, it takes place between the defense and the prosecution; and in the market system, it takes place between business sellers. A dynamic social order is the result of adversarial relationships.

Since its inception, liberalism has stood on and propagated several core principles, although there have been strong criticisms of them throughout history. One of the core principles of liberalism is individual liberty. According to liberalism, every individual has the right to take decisions about his/her happiness and life as long as that individual does not harm others.<sup>290</sup> Another principle of liberalism is equality. It asserts that every individual has an equal opportunity right regardless of race, ethnicity, group or religion. It is considered that this principle is leading to reform in various sectors including political, social, and civil rights. Liberalism promotes the rules of law and democracy. It emphasizes that every citizen of society must follow rule of law and power must be established through the majority's mandate, even for powerful figures of society such as the prime ministers and presidents. This liberal principle is of paramount importance to establish rules of law for any society. However, establishment of rule of law is possible only through the government. Otherwise, powerless people have to face suppression by the powerful people in society.

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<sup>289</sup> Ball, T. , Minogue. Kenneth , Dagger, . Richard and Girvetz, . Harry K.. "liberalism." Encyclopedia Britannica, July 30, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberalism>.

<sup>290</sup> Bikalpo an Alternative. Understanding core principles of liberalism. <https://bikalpa.org/blog/understanding-the-core-principle-of-liberalism/>

#### 4.2.2 Waves of Feminism and Central Ideas

Feminism is one of the most influential ideologies in modern times. It has a wide impact on the whole world and society. Most importantly, it has had a profound effect on every religion in the world particularly in the family of Islam and Christianity. Since the birth of the feminist movement, many articles and books have been written on the feminism and its activities. Its promoters define feminism in various ways in various contexts throughout history. However, there are complicated and various definitions of feminism because different branches of feminism define feminism based on their belief, history, and culture. Simply, it can be said that there is no straightforward definition of feminism until today. However, the Merriam-webster dictionary defines feminism is the belief in and promotion of equal political, economic, and social rights for both sexes. It is typically demonstrated by organized efforts to advance the interests and rights of females.<sup>291</sup> Chaman Nahal defines feminism in his article entitled “Feminism in English Fiction” as the belief that feminism is

This describes a mode of existence in which a woman is free from the dependency syndrome. There is a dependency syndrome: whether it is the husband or the father or the community or whether it is a religious group, ethnic group. When women free themselves of the dependence syndrome and lead a normal life, my idea of feminism materializes.<sup>292</sup>

Owen M. Fiss defines in his article titled “What is feminism” that feminism is a set of beliefs and ideas that belong to the broad social and political movement to achieve greater equality for women”<sup>293</sup> So, it may be consider that achieving equality is a core intent of the feminism.

The main objective of the feminism movement is for equal rights like men in every sphere of life particularly in social, economic, and political. It has been seen that the main theory behind the feminist movement is the denial of equal rights by men. According to the proponents of feminism, women have been marginalized since the beginning of the world. Women have been considered as a second class in society and this belief is not established by the natural feminine characteristics but rather is done by

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<sup>291</sup> “Feminism.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism>. Accessed 15 Aug. 2024.

<sup>292</sup> Chaman Nahal, "Feminism in English fiction: forms and variations." (*Feminism and Recent fiction in English*, 1991), 14-21

<sup>293</sup> Owen M Fiss, "What is feminism." (*Ariz. St. LJ* 26, 1994), 413. 1

a purposeful control of men.<sup>294</sup> Therefore, the feminist movement can be considered a social, political, and economic equality of men and women.<sup>295</sup> The ideology attempts to describe the subjugation of women and investigates several techniques, reasons, and repercussions that can be used to eliminate disparities in society. To accomplish the goal of achieving equality, dignity, rights, liberation, and independence of women, it is necessary to make such efforts.<sup>296</sup> The history of modern feminism is divided into four waves. Each wave has a specific goal to achieve and a designated time. For example, long story short, the first wave of feminist movement occurred between the early 1800s and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And it was spread into limited continents and countries namely Europe, North America, Egypt, Iran, and India. In this period and wave feminists promote for equal rights in various areas such as women's rights for limited work, education, reproduction, marital status, and so on. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the main objective of the first wave was women's right to vote. In addition, the first wave was associated with *women's suffrage*, which works for women rights.<sup>297</sup> The second wave of the feminist movement was active from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. It emerged to implement the equal legal and social rights of women. During this period a literary revolution took place for the establishment of women's rights. Because during this time many writers wrote, published and promoted many books for women's rights which played a role in preserving women's rights in the academic arena. For example, Simone de Beauvoir's phrase "one is not born a woman but becomes one" operated as an axiom for the wave's effort toward relaxing the social idiom of femininity.<sup>298</sup> The third wave of feminism is just a continuation of the second wave. Because it was in response to what was seen as the shortcomings of the second wave of feminism, the third wave feminist movement emerged as a continuation and reaction. Beginning in the 1990s, this movement eventually branched out into postcolonial feminism, ecofeminism, and gender studies at the same time. A number of feminist intellectuals who were linked with this movement campaigned for social justice

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<sup>294</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. Trans and edi. by H.M. Parshley. (London. Lowe & Brydone LTD. 1953), 10

<sup>295</sup> Lillian Adawo et all, *History of feminism in kenya*. (International Development Cooperation (AECID), 2011), 4

<sup>296</sup> Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist thought: A more comprehensive introduction*. (Routledge, 2018), 188

<sup>297</sup> Ania Malinowska, "Waves of feminism." (*The international encyclopedia of gender, media, and communication* 1, 2020), 1-7. 3

<sup>298</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The second sex*. (London, UK: Jonathan Cape.1949/1956), 273

for women. The pioneers and followers of feminism believe that the fourth wave of feminism is ongoing, which began in 2012. This wave started a campaign against the sexual harassment and assault women face in their workplaces and it associated with modern technology and networking tools such as Facebook, Instagram, and other network tools. It should be noted that organization like “Every sexism” and “Me too” are correlated with this wave of feminism.<sup>299</sup> Hence, It can be concluded that feminism is a social, political, philosophical, and economic movement, which fundamental theory is to ensure women equal right in every aspect of life particularly in the areas of social, political, and economic life.

#### 4.2.3 Postmodernism: Characteristics and Philosophical Underpinnings

It has been seen that there is no specific definition while the researcher was trying to figure out the concept of postmodernism. However, it can be said that postmodernism is a multifaceted, intellectual, and philosophical movement that emerged in response to modernism. The movement emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it focuses on the skepticism, relativism, and denial or deconstruction of universal truth.<sup>300</sup> The term "postmodern" refers to advanced advancements in fields such as economics, science, technology, and the humanities. It arose when modernism became outdated and established as the great story. According to Jean- François Lyotard,

Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences, but that progress in turn presupposes it. The obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably to the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers its great voyages, and its great goal.<sup>301</sup>

Britanica defines postmodernism as a Western philosophy, postmodernism refers to a movement that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century and was marked

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<sup>299</sup> Javeed Ahmad Raina, "Feminism: An Overview." (*International Journal of Research* 4, no. 13, 2017), 4

<sup>300</sup> Anup Kumar Kapoor, Chatali, and Subir, Post modernism. [https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/epgpdata/uploads/epgp\\_content/S000001AN/P001113/M013452/ET/145758827828ET.pdf](https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/epgpdata/uploads/epgp_content/S000001AN/P001113/M013452/ET/145758827828ET.pdf)

<sup>301</sup> Jean- François Lyotard, "The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge." (USA, U of Minnesota, 1984), xxiv

by a broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and a keen awareness of the role that ideology plays in a political and economic power struggle.<sup>302</sup> Talking about characteristics of Postmodernism, it has several characteristics, that could clarify more about the concept of postmodernism. One of the fundamental characteristics of postmodernism is skepticism towards grand narratives or meta-narratives, which explain about the human existence, the purpose of human life, culture, and so on. While Postmodernists reject these ideas or are doubtful or unbelieving about the grand narratives or meta-narratives, why? They argue that grand narratives are made by those who are in power or culturally constructed to control society and often they use those as a tool to silence or control other voices. Lyotard argues that postmodernism is “incredulity towards meta-narratives”.<sup>303</sup> He asserts that modern beliefs in progress, rationality, and the power of science are universality not valid but rather socially constructed.

Another important characteristic of postmodernism is deconstruction. It is an analysis approach developed by Jacques Derrida. Textual analysis is a method of examining written works, such as books, speeches, or any form of communication, to identify inconsistencies, uncertainties, and omissions in their meaning. According to deconstruction theory, language is inherently unstable and words lack fixed and definitive meanings. On the contrary, meanings are constantly changing and have the potential to conflict with one another. Derrida highlights the instability of language and impossibility of fixed meaning, illustrating how texts undercut their claims to coherence and unity.<sup>304</sup> In short, language is not fixed and clear. Moreover, meaning can change and even conflict with itself, and most importantly, it helps, i.e, deconstruct, the hidden problems and shows that text might not fully support its own message.

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<sup>302</sup> Duignan, B. "Postmodernism." Encyclopedia Britannica, July 29, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>.

<sup>303</sup> Jean- François Lyotard, "The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge." (USA, U of Minnesota, 1984), xxiv

<sup>304</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology*. (Jhu Press, 2016), 165

## 4.3 THE IMPACT OF LIBERALISM ON THE FAMILY INSTITUTION

### 4.3.1 Liberalism and the Family in Islam

As we have discussed, the fundamental aspects of liberalism are individual rights, freedom, and equality. It has been seen that those characteristics have significantly affected many social institutions including the family. However, there is a major debate and critical examination between liberal values and Islamic family values. For example, according to liberal principles, an individual has right to freedom of choice in every sphere of life including decisions about marriage, sex, family, divorce and gender roles, while family is considered as a collective unit with practicing roles and responsibilities based on the Islamic principles. From marriage proposal to family formation, adoption, duties of wife to husband, duties of husband to wife, duties of wife to husband, duties of parents to children and duties of children to parents in Islam. Here a family is formed based on unity, cooperation, love, discussion and consultation. In addition, family is considered the most fundamental institution in society and it serves as a support for an individual in various aspects such as economic, educational, and spiritual guidance.<sup>305</sup> For example, one of a man's fundamental responsibility is providing for or fulfilling necessities of his family (Al-Qur'an, 4:34), on the other hand, women have particular duties to the family such as maintaining obedience to their husband and taking care of children. (Qur'an, 2:233). Therefore, there is a conflict between individual autonomy and the value of family in Islam.

According to the believers of liberalism, since an individual has the right to choose whatever he/she wants, state must allow same sex marriage and preserve it. However, traditional heterosexual marriage contains a significant symbol because it is based on religion. According to the heterosexual person, marriage has a symbolic value, it must remain as an institution and preserve it. Most importantly, marriage has a sacred value, and it has special importance as an identity to religious or secular people. In addition, religious people argue that if marriage is extended to same sex or homosexuals, it would undermine the special status of heterosexual marriage.<sup>306</sup> Hence, heterosexual or traditional marriage should be preserved and should not allow same sex

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<sup>305</sup> Khurshid Ahmad, *Family life in Islam*. (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1974), 15

<sup>306</sup> Clare Chambers, "Feminism, liberalism and marriage." (*Washington DC*, in *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*, 2012), 11

marriage. In this response, Martha Nussbaum argues that opposition to same-sex marriage is miserable, and illogical and she says,

Why should it be thought that recognition of same-sex marriage would ruin heterosexual marriages? It is difficult even to identify the logic behind this thought. Is the idea that heterosexuals are so unhappy with the institution of marriage that they will all rush out and choose same-sex unions if they are made available? Surely that is highly unlikely. Or is the idea that in some nebulous way the institution will be degraded or demeaned, made shameful, by contact with that which is shameful? This seems the most likely of the "defense of marriage" idea, and yet the mechanism by which something "good" becomes shameful by proximity to something allegedly shameful is reminiscent of the magical thinking involved in disgust, with its core ideas of contamination and contagion.<sup>307</sup>

It has been seen that the gender roles of liberalism have significant impact on the gender roles in the family. Liberalism promotes women's equal rights in every sphere of society including the workforce, education, and family. Moreover, liberalism claims that Islam undermines the equal roles of women and interpretation of the Qur'an has been done from traditional and male perspective. Hence, Qur'an should be reinterpreted and preserve women equal rights.<sup>308</sup> However, the fact is there is nothing in Islam to support liberals allegations regarding Muslim women status in the family and society. The reality is Muslim women are enjoying equal rights, living in the family, and in society. A Muslim woman has equal rights to access education as she wishes, having equal job opportunities, equal rights in the family, and empowerment in her life. In addition, the Qur'an and Hadith mention equal rewards for good deeds of both men and women, addressing men as well as women. Most importantly, men and women are mentioned as equal in the sight of Allah in the context of fearing of Allah.<sup>309</sup> Integration of liberal principles into Muslim family in areas such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. According to liberal principles, Muslim family law should be reformed in alignment with liberal principles of equality and justice to ensure women rights and protection. Moreover, liberalism propagates that sharia law is obsolete and not compatible with modern needs. Hence, sharia law should be eradicated, and secular law should be replaced. Furthermore, liberals seek to reinterpret and develop new legislation

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<sup>307</sup> Martha C Nussbaum, "Hiding from humanity: Disgust, shame, and the law." In *Hiding from Humanity*. (Princeton University Press, 2009), 258-9.

<sup>308</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil, Revised Edition: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. (Vol. 423, Indiana University Press, 1987), 57

<sup>309</sup> University I Oslo, The role of Muslim women in an Islamic society. <https://www.uio.no> › MONA4522

in sharia law that will fulfill need of modern society by using Islamic principles and values. It is figured out that due to the propagation of liberals to reinterpret Muslim family law, some Muslim majority countries have reformed sharia law to make balance with liberal principles such as Tunisia and Morocco. In addition, due to the influence of liberalism on the reform of Islamic family law, a number of Muslim and non-Muslim activists are kind of fighting in various ways to reform Islamic family law in favor of western secular law by claiming that it does not guarantee women equal rights.<sup>310</sup> Thus, Islamic family law should be either reformed or eradicated.

#### **4.3.2 Liberalism and the Family in Christianity**

As we have discussed the ideology of liberalism, which prioritizes the rights of individuals, personal autonomy, and individual treatment, has had a profound influence on the conventional Christian perspectives towards the institution of the family. Throughout the history, Christian doctrine has advocated for a family framework that emphasizes on authoritarian roles, where husband assumes the position of authority within the household, while the wife and children occupy less dominant positions. Nevertheless, with the increasing prevalence of liberal ideas, Christian communities have witnessed a transition towards an egalitarian family structure. This movement is apparent in the rising acknowledgement of shared obligations between married partners, the escalating participation of women in authoritative positions within the Church, and the scrutiny of conventional gender norms. These modifications caused discussions among Christian communities over the alignment of liberalism with biblical principles concerning the family.<sup>311</sup> Liberalism seriously affects Christian families in the context of marriage, divorce, and abortion since its principle is individual freedom and choice. The influence of liberalism has not only affected the individual but has also affected both governments and individuals even in many Christian countries, they have passed the law by allowing same sex marriage based on the individual freedom. As a result, extramarital sex is on the rise, married couples are breaking up, marriage rates are down,

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<sup>310</sup> John L Esposito, *Women in Muslim family law*. (Syracuse University Press, 2001), x

<sup>311</sup> James Davison Hunter, *Culture wars: The struggle to control the family, art, education, law, and politics in America*. (Avalon Publishing, 1992), 171

and abortions are on the rise, which are ominous signs for a society.<sup>312</sup> Because of this, many people fear that the Christian marriage and family system will be in crisis in the future.

Liberalism's characteristics, such as individual freedom of choice have significantly impacted on the Christian family law. Every religion has particular rules and regulations to implement various activities, including marriage, family, and society. It is figured out that Christian family jurisprudence had significant impact on the Christian family law, family customs, and secular law even until twenty centuries. However, due to the secular and individualistic approach, many believe that this influence of Christian jurisprudence is now dead and illogical. In addition, it is considered that behind the decline of influence of Christian jurisprudence is that it was based on the Christian, which is not applicable publicly. Scholars like Maria Antokolskaiya and Harry Kruse argue that Christian jurisprudence was based on the mystique, dogmatism, and supra natural. As a result, Christian jurisprudence lost its influence on the Christian family and secular law. Another reason has been found that is directly relevant with our study is that Christian family law was influenced by individualism and liberalism, where both ideologies insist on the freedom of choice, freedom of self-expression, and autonomy.<sup>313</sup> Consequently, Christian jurisprudence became kind of useless on the family and secular law, and it became individualistic over the community.

#### **4.4 THE IMPACT OF FEMINISM ON THE FAMILY INSTITUTION**

Undoubtedly, feminism has a grave impact on family institutions. It is evidence that the family institution has gone through problem across the history, but the institution is going through a bigger crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than in the past and behind this crisis feminism is the most to blame because it directly attacked the family institution and propagated for the destruction of the family. Even this ideology does not recognize the existence of the family on the earth in general and particularly the Muslim family institution. The Islamic family institution is not only attacked and impacted severely by

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<sup>312</sup> Lisa Sowie Cahill, "Family: A Christian social perspective." (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), xi

<sup>313</sup> Don S Browning, "Modern Law and Christian Jurisprudence on Marriage and Family." (*Emory LJ* 58, 2008), 1-3

the western feminists but also attacked by feminists in the Muslim community influenced by the western feminists. At this stage of study, it is important to point out various modern schools of feminism and their arguments. Generally, feminism is a social and political movement that originated in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and its aim and objectives are to define and establish the equal rights of women in every sphere of life particularly personal, social, political, and economic. Feminism has many branches such as liberal feminism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, existentialist feminism, radical feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and gender feminism or neo-Marxist feminism. It is noted that there are many schools of feminism, but their objective is the same which is the establishment of women equal rights.

One of the aspects of the liberal feminism is encouraging women to come outside of the house and to join as a workforce for the independence and empowerment of women. According to feminist women like Betty Friedan, women should leave housework and join the workforce because household work or duty will never finish as a wife and mother, which is the main obstacle for the independence and empowerment of women.<sup>314</sup> Friedan asserts that women who work in house have no goal in life and sees them as a problem. It is figured out that due to the influence of this type of concept hundreds and thousands of women came out of their homes and joined workforce, which ultimately not only affected housework but also affected husbands and children instead of wives or mothers helping financially with the income. Moreover, when a woman or wife or mother joins workforce, she has to face the double challenges of work such as housework and work outside, which may be detrimental to her health.

From the first family of the world, women had an important role in household work. After marriage, women have to do a lot of household work as the husband is busy with income outside the home. Childbearing, child rearing, and housework have been considered women's responsibility since ancient times. Most importantly, the woman or parent is valued after the birth of a child and the home as the primary school. Because from the birth of a child till it reaches adulthood, parents, especially the mothers must teach the social, family, religious and cultural norms including manners. Research data shows that more than 50% of mothers work outside their home. As a result, they are

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<sup>314</sup> Zinat Kausar, *Feminist sexual politics and family deconstruction: An Islamic perspective*. (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2001), 3-4

unable to take on double responsibilities and balance both homework and outside work.<sup>315</sup> Furthermore, the data from the research also indicates that this phenomenon contributes to the rising divorce rate. Married women are burdened with additional responsibilities in comparison to their unmarried counterparts. The time a woman must spend at home may be reduced while she is employed outside, which may result in her marriage failing. Children will also be a concern. A woman will spend most of her time at work, and upon her return, she will be fatigued. This will result in a lack of time to rear a child and to fulfill her responsibilities as a wife. The impact of a wife's employment on the household is not limited to husbands; rather, it also affects the child. It was noted in *Working Mothers: Cognitive and Behavioral Effects on Children* that research was conducted among families who labor outside.<sup>316</sup> Family deconstruction. It is figured out that different feminists see that family is the main obstacle to establishing women's equal rights in every aspect of life. Different feminists argue and promote their concept differently based on their assumption. They never believe or recognize the value of marriage, family, reproduction, pregnancy, childbearing and childrearing, and even the biological status of women and biological needs and sexual urges and reality. In addition, feminists see that man is not necessary for women. Hence, the institution of marriage and family should not exist, or it needs to be deconstructed. For instance, socialist feminists contend that marriage is a big bargain for life, marriage, and sexual relations between husband and wife are economic, and women are facing repression because of patriarchy and capitalism. Moreover, existentialist feminists claim that marriage, childbearing, and childrearing are the main cause of women's enslavement. Feminists like Simone De Beauvoir assert that,

One is not born but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.<sup>317</sup>

Furthermore, sex is political, pregnancy is barbaric, and mothering is the root cause of all the evils; marriage is a financial alliance, and family is the chief institution

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<sup>315</sup> Barton D. Schmitt, MD. *Mothers Working Outside at Home*, 2013.3 published by RelayHealth

<sup>316</sup> Amanda DeJong, "Working mothers: cognitive and behavioral effects on children." *The Journal of Undergraduate Research* 8, no. 1 (2010). 78-9

<sup>317</sup> Simone De Beauvoir. "The second sex." In *Classic and Contemporary Readings in Sociology*, Routledge. (2014). 118-123.

of patriarchy, according to the radical feminists. Hence, it is important to remove heterosexuals' marriage and replace it with an artificial system for reproduction and lesbianism, homosexuality, and transsexuality should be accepted as norms. Eventually, all the mechanisms will lead to the elimination of sexual differences.

It is seen that different branches of feminism disregard the recognition of and promotion against marriage, family, sexuality, and reproduction, and it has huge impact on the family institution in general and particularly on the family in Islam. We may refute feminisms from the logical perspective. Sexuality is an important aspect, and it is a natural urgency of human life even in the life of animals whether someone recognizes it or not. And the reality of sexual intercourse naturally happens between a man and woman. In addition, this natural reality has begun since the beginning of the world between a man and woman. One of the processes of reproduction is sexual intercourse and this is the only way to produce human beings, and this rule or process has been in place since the beginning of the world. Hence, it can be said that those feminists promoting against reproduction and sexuality are indeed, going against their own nature and reality. Moreover, feminism emerged around four hundred years ago. Since the beginning of the world, men and women have been accepting these as a norm and physically and mentally fulfilling and satisfying. When men and women recognize and accept this natural urgency as a norm and reality of their life and when a group of people stand against these, in fact, they violate those people's right to personal choice, and physical, and mental peace, which is not acceptable. Additionally, our world is enormous. This vast world of ours needs people for various needs like knowledge, science, new inventions that make life easier for people, manufacturing and running industries, etc. It has been seen that the overall population of the world is decreasing, in many countries of the world including Japan, production is being disrupted in various fields due to lack of population, there is only one person in many families, there is a lack of people to form a family, etc. It clearly means a decrease in the birth rate or lack of sexuality, and reproduction is responsible for all these issues.

It has been seen from the data of Pew research studies that marriage is declining across the world, including among Muslim men and women and women prioritize two things basically in the context of marriage such as education and economic situation, which may be considered a significant impact of feminism's negative propagation

against marriage, sexuality, reproduction, and family institution in Islam. According to Pew research, marriage has changed significantly in the last few decades as women have become more educated and earned more money than men. In addition to these disproportionate advances, gender roles have changed when it comes to both the traits of a good spouse and the monetary advantages of matrimony.<sup>318</sup> Hence, it can be said that the concept of marriage is diverting a sacred institution to only take and gain. It is important that marriage, sexuality, reproduction, and family are considered as sacred institutions of mainstream religions including Islam. Now, if the concept of sacred institution shifts into only worldly matter, it may concern and become a threat to the existence of the institution. Furthermore, marriage and the family institution or heterosexual marriage are considered as an identity for a Muslim individual and a religion in themselves. Feminists argue that femininity, marriage, sexuality, reproduction, motherhood, birth, and childrearing are all man made and socially constructed. Then a Muslim individual can feel confusion and an identity crisis, people may feel pressured from gender differences, and it may cause misperception in the case of healthcare, where gender identity is most important.

It is needed to discuss separately about the Muslim feminists in the Muslim society. The biggest influence of the feminism is the creation of the Muslim feminist's group in the Muslim community. It is pointed out that the claim and blame of both western and Muslim feminists are almost similar. We have earlier discussed the demand of western feminism. According to the Muslim feminist's contention, Muslim women are suffering from patriarchal family systems, veiling, and unequal rights which is given in the Qur'an and Hadith and are particularly deprived of equal inheritance rights. Most importantly, Muslim feminists claim that the main reason behind the backwardness of Muslim women is the patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith. Hence, it is important to reinterpret Qur'an and hadith from the women perspective to implement equal rights of Muslim women. It is undeniable that through the propagation of electronic, print, and social media networking, and writing books and magazines, feminists can attract many Muslim women to agree with their demand. Additionally, they have formed many feminist organizations with various names in the Muslim

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<sup>318</sup> Richard Fry and D'Vera Cohn. Women, Men and the New Economics of Marriage. Pew Research centre. Retrived January 19, 2010. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2010/01/19/women-men-and-the-new-economics-of-marriage/>

community. Some of the champion Muslim feminists are Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, Asman Barlas, and so on. However, due to the direct impact of Muslim feminists' movement, Muslim community is divided in the name of Muslim feminists and fundamental Muslim women, which is sometimes the cause of chaos in society particularly on social media. It is seen that Muslim family law regarding divorce, polygamy, and inheritance law is being severely tested due to the impact of Muslim feminists' movement in some Muslim majority countries such as Malaysia, Tunisia, Morocco, and Bangladesh. When writing this thesis, a group of Muslim feminists were protesting and submitted a written demand to the government to reform the Muslim family law in Bangladesh, i.e. to give equal rights to sons and daughters in property.

It is seen that Muslim feminism severely attacks on the Muslim family law and there is a conflict between sharia and feminism. Muslim feminism encounters traditional Muslim family law in some areas such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and custody rights. Muslim feminism argues that Islamic family law gives priority to men over women while Islam gives an equal right to both men and women. Moreover, Qur'anic verses on marriage, divorce and inheritance have been interpreted from a patriarchal and male perspective, depriving women of their equal rights.<sup>319</sup> It should be noted that, women receive half of the wealth in inheritance compared to men, while men receive double in inheritance. Muslim feminists contend that this ruling of Islamic law was based on the specific context and this law should be reinterpreted based on the modern context to reflect gender equality.<sup>320</sup> In addition, due to the influence of Muslim feminists regarding equal rights, a few Muslim countries including Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Indonesia have reformed and balanced Islamic family law to give women more rights instead of protest from the mainstream Muslim. Also, Muslim feminists are keeping continuous pressure on other Muslim majority countries governments to reform and balance Muslim family law for both men's and women's equal rights such as Bangladesh.

*Moudawana* is considered a measurement for women rights and a symbol of their position in society in Morocco. The government brought major reform with the

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<sup>319</sup> Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Muslim women's quest for equality: Between Islamic law and feminism." (*Critical inquiry* 32, no. 4, 2006), 629-645.

<sup>320</sup> Mounira Charrad, *States and women's rights: The making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. (California, Univ of California Press, 2001), 2

influence of Muslim feminists to give women more rights in areas like marriage, divorce and custody. According to the reformed *Moudawana*, mutual consent is required in the context of marriage, wife and husband have equal grounds for divorce, and wife has more rights regarding child custody and guardianship.<sup>321</sup> Another Muslim family law reform has happened in Tunisia. In 1956, Tunisia passed a law to abolish polygamy and give women equal rights. Additionally, the Tunisian government introduced a new law where Muslim women are allowed to get married to non-Muslims in the name of strengthening women equal rights.<sup>322</sup> It is considered that due to the influence of feminists' activism Egypt and the world's largest Muslim country Indonesia reformed the Muslim family law. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the, Egyptian government passed a law that allowed women to divorce their husbands unilaterally whereas women were not permitted to divorce their husband before individually and Muslim feminists see this as their victory.<sup>323</sup> In 1974, the Indonesian government introduced reform in the case of marriage in Muslim family law particularly in polygamous marriage. According to the reformed law, husband must require the first wife's approval and court endorsement in the case of more than one marriage.<sup>324</sup> However, imposing secular law over the sharia rulings is common in many Muslim communities.

It can be concluded that though feminists from outside and inside Muslim community are propagating for women equal rights and as we have seen some Muslim majority countries government have introduced reforms in the context of marriage, divorce, polygamy, and custody by the influence of feminist movement, however, it is seen that Islam is the only religion that ensured women rights and dignity; women even preserved more rights and respect in some aspects compared to men in the Muslim community. It is evident that women used to face oppression, exploitation, and hatred; they were used as sexual products and even their own fathers used to bury baby girl

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<sup>321</sup> Mounira M Charrad, "Family law reforms in the Arab world: Tunisia and Morocco." (*New York*, 2012).

<sup>322</sup> Charrad Mounira, *States and women's rights: The making of postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. (Univ of California Press, 2001)

<sup>323</sup> Nadia Sonneveld, *Khul'Divorce in Egypt: Public Debates, Judicial Practices, and Everyday Life*. (Cairo, American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 3

<sup>324</sup> R. Michael Feener, *Muslim legal thought in modern Indonesia*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007)

after birth before the advent of Islam.<sup>325</sup> When Islam was established in the Arab Peninsular, it ensured women as daughters, mothers, and wives, and the following Hadith can be the best example regarding this issue; One of the Hadith of Prophet (PBUH) narrated by His wife 'A'isha is

that a woman entered her house with two of her daughters. She asked for charity, but 'A'isha could not find anything except a date which was given to her. The woman divided it between her two daughters and did not eat any herself. Then she got up and left. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to the house, 'A'isha told him about what had happened, and he declared that when the woman was brought to account (on the Day of Judgment) about her two daughters they would act as a screen for her from the fires of Hell.<sup>326</sup>

The above hadith focuses on the needs of children and the protection of good deeds, which will help in the day of judgement.

#### **4.5 FEMINISM AND FAMILY IN CHRISTIANITY**

It is seen that feminism has an acute effect on families in Christianity in various areas such as sexuality, gender roles, marriage, parenting, and so on. In Christianity, it is considered that the family system is patriarchal, where the man is the head of the household and wife will take care of household activities such as childrearing. The feminist movement has challenged this family system and promotes for gender equality, shared responsibilities, and mutual respect between husband and wife in the family. According to the Ephesians 5:22 the wife has the responsibility to submit to her husband and as it is mentioned, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord." Feminists protest these narratives and argue that these interpretations were based on the context like historical and cultural, which does not fit in the modern prevalent circumstances. Moreover, feminist's theologians argue that earlier interpretation of the Bible were from the male perspective. Hence, it is paramount to reinterpret those family related verses in the Bible to ensure women's equal rights, both

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<sup>325</sup> Sayyid Abul A'láal-Maudūdī, *Purdah and the Status of Woman in Islam*. (Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 1996), 7-9

<sup>326</sup> Muhammad Ibn Isa al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' at-Tirmidhi* 1915, Book 27, Hadith 21, English translation: Vol. 4, Book 1, Hadith 1915.

partners are equally responsible for every sphere of family and society.<sup>327</sup> In addition, feminism has significantly affected the marriage and parenting in Christian family. According to feminist critique, the interpretation of some verses relating to the family can undermine and limit of women's equal rights in areas such as education, employment, and church leadership and the interpretation of those verses by feminism has brought changes in understanding and practices on those areas in Christian family understanding and practices. In addition to the influence of feminism on the interpretation of childrearing, parenting, and the responsibilities of both mother and father have shaped Christian families and women are enjoying equal rights in the family.<sup>328</sup> Furthermore, feminists see that marriage and domestic family issues are the abusive for the women, which is threat to equal rights of women in the family. Feminists argue that the Christian community should reevaluate the teaching of Christianity on the marriage, family and the sanctity of the institution to ensure women's rights in the family. According to the authors, physician, and psychiatrist, due to pushing women and propagation on the equal rights of women, the ultimate result we can see is on the birthrate, marriage, sexuality, and fertility across the world. Today, many countries such as Japan, China, and Spain are suffering from fertility and population crises. Because women are enjoying full freedom, and their body is their choice. The consequence is women are not interested in getting married and childbearing, and many men cannot locate women to become married. In fact, the institution like marriage becomes non-compulsory to women and unstable, men and women see relationships is a kind of fun and traumatic. In short, the institution of marriage is transforming rapidly, and the idea of marriage is losing its importance to the men and women due to the negative propagation of the feminism, and ultimate result of this transformation will be the suffering of the Christian community and society in general.<sup>329</sup> Sexuality and reproduction are considered one of the main objectives of marriage which is central of the family life in the Christianity. However, the influence of feminism shaped this aspect in Christianity and feminists argue that women have rights to make decision over their bodies in sexuality, intimacy, pleasure, and so on. As a result, women have encouraged to make decision on the use of contraceptives, family planning, reproduction, and control upon the teaching of Christianity regarding the above-

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<sup>327</sup> Samantha Gerstein, "Feminist Biblical Interpretation." (*Capstone Project*, 2012), 2-3

<sup>328</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and redemption: A theological history*. (Fortress Press, 2011), 37

<sup>329</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a history: How love conquered marriage*. (Penguin, 2006), 1-6

mentioned issues. It means the teachings of Christianity on those issues are no longer influential, rather women can make choices.<sup>330</sup> It can be concluded that feminism is propagating to establish women equal rights in areas such as marriage, sexuality, reproduction, childrearing, parenting, and so on. Most importantly, feminism has reinterpreted family related verses in the bible and emphasizes the practice in family life for both men and women based on feminists' interpretation. Additionally, feminists argue that reinterpretation of the feminism will ensure women equal rights. Therefore, it can be said that familial rules and regulations of Christianity have significantly influenced by the feminist's interpretation of the Bible.

#### **4.6 THE IMPACT OF POSTMODERNISM ON THE FAMILY INSTITUTION**

It is paramount to discuss the concept of postmodernism before examining its influence on the family in Islam. We are living in a postmodern era, which has affected almost all cultures and every aspect of human life. The characteristics of postmodernism include skepticism towards grand narratives and objective truth, as well as the promotion of deconstruction of established ideologies. Additionally, postmodernism encourages relativism and pluralism, both of which challenge the core beliefs of Islam. Islam, on the other hand, is understood as a final and complete way of life, the only true religion from Allah, embodying universal truth. Allah has revealed the Qur'an for the guidance of all humanity, addressing the existence of humanity, the meaning and purpose of human life, and providing an absolute truth. The Qur'an is seen as the ultimate source of truth, offering a moral and ethical foundation for believers. These elements are foundational to Islamic belief and practice.<sup>331</sup> Therefore, a conflict arises between Islam and postmodernism. While Islam emphasizes a singular, absolute truth, postmodernism promotes the idea that truth is subjective and culturally constructed, challenging the universal claims of Islam.

The above discussion indicates that postmodernism does not recognize the absolute truth, which means it is skeptical about the Islam. When postmodernism does not recognize the Islam, it shows that it does not recognize any aspects of religion.

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<sup>330</sup> D. Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*. (Basil Blackwell, 1990), 128

<sup>331</sup> Abdul Wahid Hamid, *Islam the natural way*. (London: Mels, 1989), 13

Nonetheless, it is important to discuss postmodernism's view and its impact on the institution of family in Islam. One of the characteristics of postmodernism is **relativism**, which challenge the Islamic concept of moral values that govern family in Islam. It is noted that relativism rejects absolute truth, which means there is no fixed or universal truth, rather truth is based on the individual belief and culture, which cannot be fit or acceptable to other persons, cultures, or societies.<sup>332</sup> Hence, there is a basic conflict between Islamic core belief and relativism. According to the Islamic belief system, family is one of the most important divine institutions which is regulated through the certain rules and regulations directed by the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). In addition, the rules and regulations in areas like responsibilities state that husband and wife have rights over each other, and parents and children have rights over each other, all the aspects are deemed ordained by divine entity. However, many scholars and intellectuals criticize the concept of postmodern relativism. Public intellectuals like Ziauddin Sardar argues that postmodernism's relativism impairs the God-ordained values, rules and regulations regarding the family institution in Islam.<sup>333</sup> Further he points out that postmodernism's such interpretation can cause a breakdown of the family and its pertinent functions by the questioning its universal values and acceptance.

Furthermore, according to the teaching of Islam, family plays a paramount role in fulfilling the purpose of human life from the broader understanding of life. Additionally, the family is just not a matter to take into consideration as a social institution or a place for reproduction of future generations, or sexuality, rather it is a global community, even if it is considered a small civilization in the Muslim Ummah, which plays an important role in transmitting moral and religious teachings of Islam since childhood of children. Nevertheless, it is seen that **postmodernism has a skeptical idea and propagates it towards grand narratives**, including religious metanarratives, which eventually pose threat to the Islamic worldview of the family institution. Muslim scholars like Abdul Wahid Hamid discuss in his work entitled "Islam the Natural Way" about the challenges of contemporary threat towards the Islamic belief system, including postmodernism's narratives towards religious belief. He argues that Islam is a complete system of life, it is not a time-bound religion that

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<sup>332</sup>Vocabulary.com.Relativism.<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/relativism#:~:text=Relativism%20is%20the%20belief%20that,a%20lot%20of%20people%20uncomfortable>.

<sup>333</sup> Ziauddin Sadar, Islam, Postmodernism and other futures. Edi. Sohail Inayatullah and Gail Boxwell. (London, Pluto Press, 2003), 132-133

after a certain time, will lose its value rather it is a universal, complete way of life. He also argues that God is not created by the imagination of an individual or community and that if someone leaves belief in the existence of God or does not believe in the existence of God, the universality of the existence of God will be questioned.<sup>334</sup> It is seen that **postmodernism's idea of the deconstruction of gender roles** directly challenge traditional gender roles in Islam. Men, women, and children have responsibilities on one another in the context of marriage and family which is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith. Nevertheless, postmodernism advocates against the traditional gender roles of husband and wife and emphasizes deconstruction of the traditional family system, establishment of women equal rights in the family, and spread and acceptance of new forms of family systems such as same-sex marriage and family, which some argue undermines the traditional heterosexual marriage and family system, and destabilizes the most important social building block the family institution. On the other hand, feminist like Asma Barlas criticize that the postmodernism's concept of the deconstruction of traditional gender roles indeed will help to decrease the value of the family and its religious background authority structure, while Islamic feminism is propagating the reinterpretation of those verses in the Qur'an and Hadiths applicable towards gender roles in Islam. Moreover, postmodernism's idea of deconstruction or rejection of traditional family and gender roles may bring harmful consequences to the destabilization of the family unit in the Muslim community.<sup>335</sup>

**Postmodernism often advocates for individual freedom and personal choice**, which conflicts with the family system in Islam. The family is a collective unit and institution in Islam where parents, children, brothers, sisters, and in some contexts other relatives live under the same roof. In addition, family is an institution where everyone has responsibilities for one another, building and maintaining relationships with mutual understanding and cooperation. The most important point is family is an environment where each member works for fulfillment in various aspects of life including education, economy, physical, psychological, religious, and so on. At the same time, family institution in Islam ensures an individual's rights, security, and ownership. It is seen that though Mohammad Hashim Kamali clearly did not criticize

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<sup>334</sup> Abdul Wahid Hamid, *Islam the natural way*. (London: Mels, 1989), 3-4

<sup>335</sup> Asma Barlas, *Believing women in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an*. (University of Texas Press, 2019)

the influence of the negative impact of postmodernism on the marriage and family in his book entitled “The Right to Life, Security, Privacy and Ownership in Islam”, conversely, his discussion indicates the individual freedom secured in Islam and mostly in the family in Islam, and impact of modern ideology which could lead weakening the family in Islam.<sup>336</sup>

## **4.7 POSTMODERNISM AND THE FAMILY IN CHRISTIANITY**

### **4.7.1 Gender Identity Crisis**

The largest impact of postmodernism is the gender identity crisis that has threatened the existence of an individual, family, society, state, and the entire human race. The family and mankind have gone through many terrible problems since the beginning of the world, perhaps none more so than the gender identity crisis in the time of postmodernity. If any Christian parent in Western society is asked what crisis the Western Christian family is going through today, they will unhesitatingly say that it is the gender identity crisis. A few days ago a video went viral on social media where a father was seen crying on a television show and saying that “he was a beautiful man”, where his son was introduced as transgender.<sup>337</sup> Another viral video shows that a mother is arguing with a school teacher in a school for teaching kids about gender identity and saying, “We don't pay taxes to teach kids about transgender”.<sup>338</sup> Another incident reported that a marine officer told his friend that “My 12-year-old daughter just told my wife and me that she is transgender. What do you think I should do?”.<sup>339</sup> These are a few incidents we mentioned here to show the circumstances of the gender crisis in a Christian-dominant country like America. In addition, changing gender becomes a norm and spreads like an epidemic in many western Christian-leading societies in postmodern times, where biological gender identity is a kind of joke. Even gender confusion is seen on many

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<sup>336</sup> H Kamali, "The Right to Life, Security, Privacy and Ownership in Islam (Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society); Mahmood, T.(ed.) (1993)." Human Rights in Islamic Law (2007).

<sup>337</sup> Dr. Phil, A Dad Struggles with Meeting His Daughter as a Woman for the first time. Youtube. [https://youtube.com/shorts/iz-Vz\\_FjOTY?si=uCK6gRQupC4UiOqI](https://youtube.com/shorts/iz-Vz_FjOTY?si=uCK6gRQupC4UiOqI)

<sup>338</sup> France 24 English. Skit of ‘Mom’ ripping down Pride flag in classroom creates LGBT misinformation. Youtube. [https://youtu.be/7w\\_nweodKm0?si=q3U4CwTWxGw2HZnY](https://youtu.be/7w_nweodKm0?si=q3U4CwTWxGw2HZnY)

<sup>339</sup> Gary Yagel, Wisely Protecting Your Child from Gender Confusion. The Ministry of Gary Yagel. On 10 April, 2021. <https://forgingbonds.org/blog/detail/wisely-protecting-your-child-from-gender-confusion>

Western universities' application forms where it is asked if your gender is identified or not beside the male and female identity options. Moreover, changing gender from a born boy to a girl or transgender identity and from a girl to a boy has become common in today's world. Many believe that this happens when postmodernism advocates that "my body is my choice" and "the individual is the final authority for the truth", and there is no absolute truth, no objective truth, rather universal truth and morality are socially and culturally constructed.<sup>340</sup> Therefore, the gender identity crisis makes Christian parents and families worry; also, they are afraid about the future generation.

#### **4.7.2 Decline in Marriage and Childbearing**

It is seen by analyzing a few survey reports that postmodernism has tremendous impact on declining marriage, birth rate, and childbearing. Marriage is a prerequisite for family formation, which is important in Christianity and in society in general. However, the marriage institution is weakening day by day due to influence of postmodernism. According to a Pew Research Center study, marriage and birth rate are declining rapidly in the US, which concern the majority of Protestant and Catholic Christians, and they opined that it has a negative impact on the religion and Christian-leading country like the US.<sup>341</sup> Another report shows that the average age at marriage is higher, the divorce rate has doubled since 1960, the number of children born outside of marriage has skyrocketed, and the number of people living together before they get married has also risen. There are now about 34% more children born outside of marriage than there were in 1980, up from 18.4%. At least 1.2 million babies are born in the United States every year to parents who have not been married in the last three generations in the postmodern times.<sup>342</sup> Which indicates how badly it is affecting the family institution.

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<sup>340</sup> Phil Hunt, Parenting in a Post Modern World. TGC. August 27, 2020. [https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/conference\\_media/parenting-in-a-post-modern-world/](https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/parenting-in-a-post-modern-world/)

<sup>341</sup> Gregory A. Smith, Across U.S. Religious Groups, More See Decline of Marriage as Negative Than Positive. September 14, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/14/across-us-religious-groups-more-see-decline-of-marriage-as-negative-than-positive/>

<sup>342</sup> Michael G Lawler, "Christian Marriage and Family in the Postmodern World." (*Sacred Heart University Review* 20, no. 1, 2010), 1

### **4.7.3 Under Attack: Bible Authority**

As the impact of postmodernism spread throughout the Christian belief system, the Bible's authority came under attack due to the skepticism of postmodernism towards grand narratives because it influences people to reinterpret or even to reject the biblical teachings about various areas such as marriage, family, sexuality, and reproduction, which indeed insists on making up to adapt a pluralistic view and a less traditional outlook to the family life in the Christianity. Many Christian theologians criticize and express their concern about this development. However, Christian theologian Albert Mohler criticizes about the reinterpretation approach of postmodernism on the family issues, and he argues that postmodernism's characteristics of relativism and denial of objective truth will indeed destabilize the Bible's authoritative role in faith and practice, which will ultimately lead to a decline in the traditional belief and practice in the family institution in the Christianity.<sup>343</sup>

### **4.7.4 The challenge facing us in Postmodern Times is parenting.**

It is pointed out that parents, teachers, pastors, and other authorities are claiming that due to the influence of postmodernism's authoritative approach, children are believing in equal individual authority. They no longer believe religious rules and regulations regarding their parents guided by the Bible, while parents are the most important facilitator of children's lives to build their future and raise them as religious personalities based on the biblical teachings. As a result, according to parents and pastors, children are gradually destroying their lives by being diverted from the true faith and submission to God.<sup>344</sup> Which is led by postmodern ideology. However, it is a parent's essential responsibility to protect children from the current social ills and raise them following the guidance of scripture even in the dark time.

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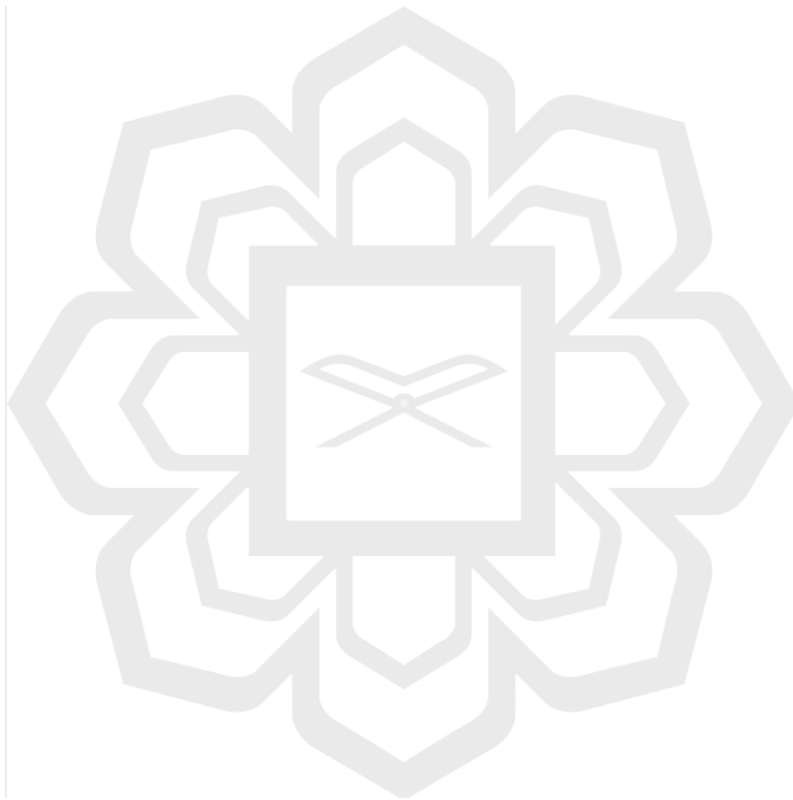
<sup>343</sup> R. Albert Mohler, *The Disappearance of God: Dangerous Beliefs in the New Spiritual Openness*. (Multnomah, 2009), xiii

<sup>344</sup> Phil Hunt. Parenting in a Post Modern World. TGC. August 27, 2020. [https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/conference\\_media/parenting-in-a-post-modern-world/](https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/parenting-in-a-post-modern-world/) . See also, Gary Yagel. Wisely Protecting Your child from gender confusion. On 10 April, 2021. <https://forgingbonds.org/blog/detail/wisely-protecting-your-child-from-gender-confusion>

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

As it is mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, our main objective was to explore the impact of the selected ideologies such as liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism, on the family institution in both Abrahamic religions Islam and Christianity. Additionally, we wanted to see how these ideologies challenged the family institution and to point out the responses of both religions within their context. However, after a thorough examination, it is found that liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism have profound effects on the family institution of both religions Islam and Christianity and more precisely, liberalism emphasizes the individual rights and autonomy that have led to redefining the family roles and made chaos and confusion within the context of both religions. On the other hand, feminism promotes reforming family law to safeguard equal rights for both men and women. Most importantly, radical feminism's propagation about to reconstruct or destroy or obliterate to the heterosexual marriage and family institution and to establish new form of marriage such as same sex-marriage and family, and its politics to challenge to the traditional patriarchal family structure in particular have led to tension and debate in the family institution. Moreover, more specifically, not to mention Islamic feminists who are campaigning widely in Muslim society for women's rights reinterpretations of Qur'anic verses and hadiths that confuse the Muslim family and society, question the rules of the Qur'an and Hadiths, and cause confusion among Muslim women about the rules of Islam and, in a word, It has created conflict in Muslim family and society. Postmodernism, with its characteristic skepticism and rejection of absolute truth and grand narratives, and its promotion of relativism and pluralism, has further led to make conflict with the fundamental beliefs of both religions Islam and Christianity. The analysis shows the profound influence of modern ideologies on both religious institutions, which brought huge changes in family dynamics, and revealed both compliance and tensions due to responses to the modern ideological challenges, however, there is still concern among the religious personality about the future of family institutions. It is seen that definitely both religions' family institutions have suffered from the attack of these ideologies, however, when it comes to responses against the challenges, Islamic family law has shown the strongest resistance. On the contrary, the Christian family institution experienced grave consequences under the influence of postmodernism in particular. Nevertheless, the concern remains about the effect of these ideologies on our future generations and how

they will resist or accept based on religious teachings in their lives. It can be concluded that the impact of liberalism, feminism, and postmodernism on the family institution is complex, and their influence may shape our family and society at large continuously.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# RESPONSES OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS TO THE FAMILY INSTITUTION CRISIS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Indisputably, the family institution in both Islam and Christianity is facing a crisis in contemporary time. The family is going through crisis from various perspectives, such as ideological, social, and within the family institution. As we have discussed previously that ideologies such as feminism, liberalism, and postmodernism result in the internal problems and challenges such as breaking the structure of the traditional family, high rate of divorce, extramarital affairs, financial crises, delay marriage, and so on. Additionally, due to the influence of modern ideologies, the family institution is weakening and declining in its values in society across the globe, particularly its impact on the family institution in Islam and Christianity.

The family institution in both Islam and Christianity is considered as a divinely ordained institution since it is pivotal for the well-being of an individual and society. For Islam, the family is considered as a part of life, which is guided by the Qur'an and Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) since the Islam is a complete way of life. In addition, the family is considered a center for spiritual, educational, social, and religious teachings. Similarly, the family is seen as a sacred unit and marriage is a covenant in the Christianity. Hence, addressing the family crisis in both religions is essential since both religions are facing significant difficulties, and preservation of the values of both religions is paramount for the welfare of an individual, the world population, and religion.

Until today, much research has been conducted on various issues related to the family institution in both Islam and Christianity. The main objective of this chapter is to explore how the prominent Muslim and Christian scholars have come up with the solution to the crisis of the family in Islam and Christianity.

## 5.2 MUSLIM SCHOLARS' RESPONSES TO THE FAMILY CRISIS

### 5.2.1 Islamic Teachings on Preserving Family Values

As discussed previously, the family institution is facing difficulties, weakening gradually, and increasingly losing its values and influence in many societies across the world. Many factors including modern materialistic ideologies, philosophies, and social, political, religious and economic factors are leading to this crisis. Nonetheless, early Muslim scholars and contemporary Muslim scholars have been addressed many solutions to difficult marriage and difficult familial issues. In addition, many scholars, researchers, and students are conducting research, both theoretical and fieldwork, relating to marriage and family issues. What is important to note here is that earlier and contemporary Muslim scholars have shown solutions to marriage and family crises based on guidance from the Qur'an and Hadith. For more clarification, it is relevant to mention here that Islam is a complete way of life, which means Al-Qur'an and Hadith have given guidelines for solving every problem of human life and these guidelines are not related to any particular time or context but are suitable for all ages and all contexts. Moreover, every aspect of human life is interconnected including marriage, sexuality, and family from the *Tawhidic* paradigm, which indicates the unity of God, unity of life and its purpose, and so on. It can be stated more clearly that every person who believes in *Tawheed* will take the teachings of Islam to solve the problems of life and get the guidance from the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>345</sup> Hence, Islamic teaching is crucial and intertwined in preserving family values from the perspective of *Tawheed* and Islam is a complete way of life.

If we look at the Qur'an and Hadith of the messenger of Allah's vision about the family, it appears that it roots the mutual rights and responsibilities, which emphasizes the love, compassion, kindness, mutual understanding, and justice in the family, which began through the marriage of a man and woman. However, modern Muslim scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasize returning to the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith to challenge modern ideologies and solve family crises, that influence the family institution such as individualism, materialism, and breakdown of the family. According to the Seyyed Hossein Nasr, devaluation of the

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<sup>345</sup> Zinat Kausar, *Feminist sexual politics and family deconstruction: An Islamic perspective*. (Kuala Lumpur, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2001), 127

spirituality and the rise of secularism have a detrimental impact on the family. He also argues that the influence of individualism and material aspirations leads to the crisis in the family, including the breakdown of the family, unstable relationships between husband and wife, rising divorce rate, and so on. From Nasr's point of view, the family crisis can be overcome by reviving Islamic ethics, which will create an ideal family environment through spiritual development and moral value creation. Moreover, Nasr opines that preservation of the family values in the challenges of the modern world within the Islamic teachings and framework will not only mitigate the family's difficult issues but also save societies from the destructive trends in societies.<sup>346</sup> A prominent Muslim scholar, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, emphasizes on the gender roles explained in the Qur'an. He argues that Qur'an guides us for cooperation among the spouses and other family members instead of competition, which is propagated by the modern ideologies such as feminism. Moreover, Allah SWT has provided guidance in the Qur'an on the specific tasks and responsibilities for both spouses such as men's responsibility for providing all the necessary things for the fulfillment of the family and women supposed responsibility for nurturing for the family including taking care of the husband and children, indeed, which is a crucial designation for an ideal, sustainable, and balanced family structure in Muslim societies. Al-Qaradawi claim that feminism is making a family crisis and leading to conflict and confusion within the family in Islam, which eventually, threatens the preservation of the family values. According to him, revival, implementation, and preservation of the framework of Islamic values are essential according to Islamic teachings. He further asserts that; Islamic teachings and those family values can play a vital role in responding to the pressure of modernity and creating a stable environment.<sup>347</sup> Another prominent Muslim scholar Abul A'la Maududi stressed on the *qiwamah* or men's guardianship, in his book titled *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam and the Family Structure in Islam*. He argues that the concept of the guardianship is not about a status of superiority of men over women within the family, rather it is a guidance about the Islamic social system and the responsibility of the men to maintain the necessary fulfillment of the family as a protector. Moreover, Maududi lectures that the concept of the *qiwamah* is to provide a framework which promotes and protects the rights of the family members. On the other

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<sup>346</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the modern world*. (London & New York, KPI), 1987.

<sup>347</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The status of women in Islam*. Islamic Incorporated, 1997.

hand, feminists inside and outside of Islam and Muslim community attack the Islam with this social and family system of Islam.

According to their criticism, the concept of the *qiwamah* is an outdated and oppressive concept, as a result, Muslim women are neglected from their rights, while Muslim scholars view that this concept is misunderstood, misrepresented, and misinterpreted, which leads to controversy, chaos, breakdown of the family, and an unstable situation in the family. But it is clear and fair according to the Islamic teachings. Moreover, Muslim scholars view that, if the concept of *qiwamah* is understood correctly, it will lead to fostering protection and mutual understanding within the family. So, what is the solution to this unwanted situation in the family? According to the Maududi, it is essential to return and restore this Qur'anic principle and understand and practice accordingly for a balance and cohesion in family relations, and preservation of the family values.<sup>348</sup> In brief, the Islamic teachings is paramount in preserving the family values in Islam but of course they should be interpreted having in mind and thought, the time and context.

### **5.2.2 Role of Sharia Law in Family Life**

Islam as a complete way of life, provides solutions for every problem and crisis in human life. Sharia law plays a vital role in preserving family values and resolving issues within the Islamic family institution. It offers specific guidelines on family-related matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and the mutual rights and responsibilities of spouses and children. Most importantly, all sharia rules aim to protect family values, stability, and social harmony. According to the view of the scholars, following sharia principles ensures a peaceful and prosperous family life and helps to address modern challenges against family. One of the prominent Muslim scholars in contemporary time, Yusuf al-Qaradawi points out that sharia guidelines foster a balanced and supportive environment for every family member. Conflict between husband and wife has become a routine matter in today's society. Even a simple issue creates a lot of big problems in the family which does not lead to divorce. And when there is a divorce between husband

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<sup>348</sup> Sayyid Abul A'laal-Maudūdi, *Purdah and the Status of Woman in Islam*. (Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 1996), 94

and wife, apart from the suffering of both, the children suffer the most. Al-Qaradawi argues that if Sharia law could be implemented in the family, conflicts would be greatly reduced, which would play an important role in preserving the value of the Muslim family. In addition, when there is a movement to change or ban Sharia law, all sorts of conflicts arise. It is important to accept and practice that Allah Ta'ala has assigned certain responsibilities to all members of the family such as a husband to meet the needs of the wife and children while the wife takes care of the household chores. Any attempt to change this provision influenced by modern ideologies starts conflict in the family, which ultimately leads to disruption, tension and an unstable environment. Hence, it is essential to return to the sharia principles for a stable, peaceful, and sustainable family environment, according to Al-Qaradawi.<sup>349</sup> Therefore, welfare lies in following the rulings of Islam. Hence, Sharia ruling should be cultivated between the husband and wife, and within the family.

Khaled Abou El Fadl offers the viewpoint that Shari'a influence on family life extends beyond dogmatic regulations and includes moral guidelines that prioritize justice and empathy. In his book titled *Speaking God's name*, he makes the case that the Qur'anic principles of kindness (ihsan) and mercy (rahmah) should be the foundation of Sharia's family regulations, as he sees these principles as essential to creating wholesome family bonds. Moreover, he argues for an implementation of Sharia that is consistent with justice and respect for one another, criticizing literalist interpretations of the law that enforce strict and harsh methods. According to Abou El Fadl, to protect the welfare of the family, Sharia law's recommendations on issues like divorce and conflict resolution must be applied compliantly. For him, the goal of Sharia in family life is to establish a setting of peace, safety, and support for one another, and which can be accomplished by using both its moral and legal aspects.<sup>350</sup> It is well known that prominent feminist in the Muslim community, Fatima Mernissi is critical about the certain interpretations of the Sharia, she believes that if Sharia is understood from the perspective of equality and justice, it can serve as a beacon of ethics for family relationships. She contends that to address the current family concerns, Sharia's precepts can be applied in a way that is gender-equitable and modern. To preserve

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<sup>349</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The lawful and the prohibited in Islam*. (Al-Falah Foundation, 1984), 145

<sup>350</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*. (London, Oneworld Publications, 2014), 264

women's rights in marriage and give them more autonomy while upholding Islamic moral principles, Mernissi supports a reinterpretation of Sharia. According to her, women can be empowered within the family structure and healthier family atmosphere can result from a balanced reading of Sharia that neither completely embraces secular principles nor firmly adheres to obsolete conceptions.<sup>351</sup> If Sharia's tenets are modified to accommodate contemporary gender dynamics while upholding Islamic norms, Mernissi believes it can provide answers to the family dilemma.

### **5.2.3 Addressing the Impact of Feminism and Modernity**

As mentioned above, family institution has been facing heavy assault by the reformist and liberal ideologies in the history of the world. In fact, religion first came under attack by the modern ideologies in the West since the Enlightenment, and later their influence spread gradually across the world, including the Muslim community. Most importantly, the attack of modern ideologies was not limited to religion but gradually began to attack other social and religious institutions, such as the family institution. These assaults spread rapidly in the era of modernism, postmodernism, globalization, artificial intelligence, and social media which resulted in the crisis and weakening of the family institution regardless of religion. Feminism is one of the most controversial yet influential ideologies of today. Although feminism was first born in the West, it gradually spread throughout the world. Later, a group of women from the Muslim community started a movement in the Muslim community under the name of the so-called Muslim Women's Rights Movement, influenced by the feminists of the West. Nevertheless, as we have discussed elsewhere, feminism's main target is deconstructing the religion and religious institutions, including the family, in the name of women's rights and empowerment. Scholars like Haifaa Jawad believe that when modern secular ideologies influence religion and religion no longer has the power to compete with secular ideologies, they target the basic principles of Islam and as Islam is a traditional fundamental religion, modern ideologies still could not make significant influence on

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<sup>351</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil, Revised Edition: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. Vol. 423. (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1987), 57

the Islam and Muslim societies. Nevertheless, she believes that the influence of secular ideology is gradually deepening in the Muslim societies. As she opined that,

To talk of a religious ideology, such as Islamic feminism or feminist Islam, is a fundamental contradiction in terms and betrays confusion about the essence of religion, which is divine revelation.<sup>352</sup>

As we have mentioned somewhere about Muslim feminists, who propagate for equal women rights of Muslim women, reinterpret some Qur'anic verses relating to women, and integrate traditional understanding from the feminist's perspective, which is one of the serious problems in the Muslim community. Many Muslim scholars have responded to the feminist application. According to Haifaa Jawad, Muslim feminists argue that these demands are inappropriate for two reasons. Firstly, Muslim feminists are propagating from a human perspective. In fact, all the ideologies have emerged from the human brain, which is often unfit for the society, particularly in Muslim societies. On the other hand, Islam is a Din (complete and comprehensive way of life), which is established with revealed knowledge. She concluded that integration between human-produced ideology and revealed religious ruling is not possible. Hence, the impact of feminist philosophy and activities should be addressed in the Muslim community for the betterment of the Ummah.<sup>353</sup> Another Muslim woman scholar and Professor Zeenath Kausar has provided an in-depth discussion about the feminism, its impact, and solutions in her book titled "*Feminist Sexual Politics*". She pointed out that what feminism is doing is all about sexual politics and family deconstruction in the name of women rights in every aspect of society. In addition, the objective of feminism is to normalize sexual activities, deconstruct the family institution, remove the idea of traditional religious heterosexual marriages in society, and form the idea of artificial marriage, family and relationship in society. She believes that feminist propaganda is one of the major problems for the family and society. In addition, she has provided some solutions to get out of the family crisis. According to the Zeenath Kausar, Muslim family problems are not a separate problem, but they are a problem like economic, social and political problem, which means that every problem is inextricably linked to one another. Therefore, there is no reason to look at it separately. As he said,

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<sup>352</sup> Haifaa Jawad, The Fundamental contradiction of Islamic feminism. (Renovation, The journal of Zaytuna College, 2023)

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

Familial problems in Muslim societies cannot be studied in isolation from all other problems of the Muslim Ummah. All the problems of the Muslim Ummah, whether economic, political, social, educational, familial or any other are not only related to each other but are also rooted in one basic problem – the dilution of Muslim thought.<sup>354</sup>

Even now, the family seems to be in crisis. According to various reports, almost every Muslim country's divorce rate is very high, and it's happening every minute; extramarital affairs are on the rise; illegal relationships like cohabitation, and sugar daddy, and sugar mummy relationships are on the rise; and young Muslim men and women are engaging in same-sex relationships, but they do not bring up the issue due to conservative families and society. The relationships are not revealing, but in reality they are constantly forming in Muslim society. Therefore, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the Muslim family is under threat, and this problem is more serious than political and economic problems.

However, Zeenath Kausar's main argument is Muslim thought should be deconstructed in solving the family crisis. From her perspective, Islam has given men the responsibility of financial management of the family. She interprets that by the term *Qawwamun*, "it did not mean men will dominate over the wife and children and there is no place of such interpretation of patriarchal or matriarchal, but rather family relationships, particularly the relationship between husband and wife should be based on the Shura and it should be applied to every aspect of the family and social issue. In addition, she emphasizes the *ijtihad* to resolve contemporary social and family problems and challenges. She claims that *ijtehad* is one of the important aspects of Islam, however, the traditional Muslim scholars keep away from the *ijtehad* and depend on the past Muslim scholar's interpretation in solving social and family issues. The Qur'an can be interpreted according to the time and context while keeping the spirit of the Qur'an in order to solve problems and change the society according to the message of the Qur'an.<sup>355</sup> Hence, it can be said that we should cultivate and design our life based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, including solutions for family life.

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<sup>354</sup> Zeenath Kausar, *Feminist Sexual politics and family deconstruction: an Islamic Perspective*. (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2001), 153.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155

#### **5.2.4 Islamization of the Family**

Islamization of the family is the biggest challenge in contemporary times according to Muslim scholars. Needless to say, that our mind, thought, and lifestyle have significantly been influenced by the various western ideologies, cultures, and lifestyles, which affected every aspect of Muslim life, including individuals and families. Most importantly, the Western influence, widely affected by social media and globalization, has helped to spread and dominate this Western influence. Moreover, its first and foremost victim is the Muslim youth, especially the generation born after the 2000s. While the researcher was writing this part of the thesis, a video was suggested in front of him about male escorts in Bangladesh from YouTube. The surprising thing is that for the first time, the researcher learned that this type of unethical practice is spreading in a Muslim-dominated country like Bangladesh. Moreover, various newspapers and television channels often report that girls from one district go to the houses of girls from other districts and fast to get married and protest on the streets with placards for gay rights. It is easy to imagine how much Muslim youth are influenced by Western ideology, lifestyle, culture and social media and are far away from the Islamic way of life and legitimate relationships. Islamizing the family is one of the solutions offered by Muslim scholars of the past and present to resolve the Muslim family crisis. When we talk about Islamization it is a gradual process, and it will start from a person's personal life to family life. In short, the entire life of a Muslim will be Islamized. That is, according to the rules of Islam, every aspect of life will be governed, including marriage, family formation, husband-wife relationships and parenting. Because Muslim scholars believe and various studies have shown that individuals and families who are not Islamized cause a major crisis in the family.

Zeenath Kausar argues that the process of the Islamization should be started from the individual Muslim thought. Because, as we have discussed earlier that Muslim thought was massively westernized by the western ideology and philosophy, which resulted in a crisis in the Muslim family. Zeenat Kausar believes that in order to Islamize the family one must first Islamize Muslim thought or dewesternize Muslim thought because as we have discussed earlier that Muslim thought is widely influenced by the western ideologies and philosophy. When thought goes through on the process of Islamization, then there will be an easy-to-practice Islamic rules and regulations for an

individual Muslim, which will impact family life, including marriage, husband-wife relationships, sexual life, parenting and so on. Most importantly, when one practices the family rules of Islam in one's thoughts and in one's real life, a person becomes engaged in marriage, conjugal relations, and sexual life, and all the duties of husband and wife towards each other. They will not perform for any worldly gain but rather perform with the aim of *Ibadah* and attaining the pleasure of Allah. On the other hand, it is seen that most of the relationships starting from marriage in contemporary times are aimed at worldly gain which is one of the reasons for family breakup and this aspiration is on the part of both the husband and the wife. When marriage, sexuality, conjugal relations are worshiped and worldly pursuits are the main objective instead of attaining the pleasure of Allah, all sorts of problems arise in the family. At some point the marriage breaks down which is happening at a large rate in Muslim families. For example, although according to Islamic law the husband should pay the *mahr* to the wife, on the other hand, in many Muslim societies, the woman's family is required to pay money and other things. And when the woman's family is unable to provide for the needs of the husband and his family, conflict between the husband and wife begins, leading to family breakdown. Hence, Islamization of the family is crucial in the Muslim community. The Islamization process needs to start from the childhood of a Muslim and the family especially the parents can play a major role in educating a person about Islam and implementing it in their personal life. When a Muslim is brought up with the teachings and rules of Islam from childhood, it will influence every aspect of life, including marital life. And this can hopefully play a major role in alleviating the family crisis. Furthermore, another process of Islamization of the family can be learned through symposiums, seminars, and workshops where education on how to Islamize a person's thoughts, marriage, spousal relationship, sexual life, and parenting is imparted.

### **5.2.5 Integration of Family Education in National Curriculum**

Integration of family education in the national curriculum is essential for a sustainable marriage and the family. Undoubtedly, the family is the main building block of society, an institution, and small civilization for all of humanity since the beginning of the world. Human existence cannot be imagined without family. In this regard, it seems that every person in the world will surely agree. However, integrating family education into the

national education system for sustainable marriage, husband-wife relationship, ideal parenting and building a sustainable society is the urgent need of contemporary times when the family institution is on the verge of collapse, which we have shown during previous discussion. In this critical crisis of the family institution, many Muslim scholars and social experts advocate integrating the Islamic family education into the educational curriculum to address and mitigate family crises within the Muslim community. The main aim of this approach is to strengthen family values, free family from the western ideological influence, and particularly to raise a young generation with teaching of Islamic family education including marriage, family, rules, responsibilities, family values and moral aspects, along with other education. In addition, many scholars argue that with the implantation of the Islamic family values from an early age, a young Muslim can be better equipped to face inside and outside challenges of the family institution and maintain a strong and sustainable family.

Al-Qur'an and Hadith are the main sources of Islamic family education, which provide a complete, appropriate, maintainable, sustainable, balanced, and peaceful guidance for the family education. Additionally, when students receive Islamic family education with the regular education, they can be taught Islamic ethics, which will direct them to learn compassion, kindness, a sense of family responsibility, and mutual understanding within the family. Though prominent Muslim scholar Al-Ghazali did not focus explicitly on the family institution in his book titled *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, his discussion on the morality and social responsibility indirectly provides valuable insights that can play a vital role in the family life. Moreover, his work points out self-discipline, compassion, and moral responsibilities to each other, which can be advantageous for forming a strong family institution. It is evident that mutual respect, trust, pure love, and patience are not the causes of disaster in marriage and family life. Saving families from disaster requires a lot of kindness, compassion, shura, patience and respect for each other. When young people will receive education on the marriage and family rules and duties, it may lead to reduced inappropriate behavior and activities such as individualistic lifestyles, Western ideological influence on them, and neglecting the familial duties, which cause chaos and breakdown of the family institution.<sup>356</sup> Therefore, it can be said that integration of Islamic family teaching is paramount for a

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<sup>356</sup> Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Etiquette of Marriage, The Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Trans, Madelain Farah. Volum 2, (Al-Ghazali.org, 2007), <https://www.ghazali.org/works/marriage.htm>

peaceful and sustainable family. Osman Bakar argues that the traditional family institution is facing a crisis from the perspective of philosophy, practical and western lifestyles, which are resulting in worse situations in the family institution.<sup>357</sup> He stresses that the modern artificial family is rising increasingly and getting accepted and tolerated in society. He proposes that to overcome this crisis it is imperative to emphasize Quranic education on the value of family and family institutions which will play an important role in building a sustainable family.

Furthermore, today, Islam is being misrepresented all over the world, especially in the West, and this misunderstanding is made easier by the proliferation of social media and globalization. Even Muslims misunderstand Islam due to a lack of knowledge about Islam. From this one thing can be inferred that the education a person receives from family, classmates, and social media may not be authentic, rather there is more chance of misinformation. For example, in Western society, Muslim women are presented as enemies of Islam and Islam has deprived women of their rights, which misrepresents Islam. Not only this, artificial and non-religious relationships have increased in popularity and acceptance in society, which is an ominous sign for Muslim youth and families. which indicates that the education a Muslim receives from family and informally is not sufficient and requires institutionalized or integrated Islamic family education. Muhammad Qutb argues that Islamic family education can address the contemporary family crisis such as misunderstanding of gender roles in Islam, husband and wife's roles in the family, parenting, conflict management, marriage and family management, and handling and solving critical issues within the marriage and family.<sup>358</sup> A prominent Pakistani Muslim scholar Khurshid Ahmad is concerned about solving the family crises in the Muslim community. Though he did not discuss exclusively relating to the integration of the Islamic family education in the educational system, however, he presents an outline and in-depth analysis on the solving the family problems and challenges, which can be used as a foundation for the integration of family education for a sustainable and practical marriage and the family. Moreover, Khurshid Ahmad began his argument by approaching the idea that *Tawhid* is the foundation of human life and he consistently discussed about the vicegerency of Allah, human beings

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<sup>357</sup> Osman Bakar, "Family values, the family institution, and the challenges of the twenty-first century: An Islamic perspective." (*ICR Journal* 3, no. 1, 2011), 13-36.

<sup>358</sup> Muhammad Qutb, *Islam-The Misunderstood Religion*, (International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, 2006), 131

as a Khalifa of Allah, marriage, family, husband and wife relationships, and showed that the family is not a single entity, rather it is a holistic institution. For the implementation of these outlines and discussions, integration into the education curriculum can be considered the most relevant and practical approach indeed.<sup>359</sup> Hence, integration of the family education is a timely and essential element in solving the family crisis.

### **5.2.6 An Academy for Training on the Management of Marital and Familial Issues**

Undoubtedly, the family is a paramount institution of our society, however, there are not enough academies and training centers to acquire knowledge and training to manage familial and marriage issues, though we can see many less important institutions exist in our society. If our scholars and policy makers could build some institutions to study family and training, there is a possibility to reduce marriage and family issues in society, which could lead to a peaceful and long-lasting marriage and family.

## **5.3 CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS' RESPONSES TO THE FAMILY CRISIS**

The Christian family is going through perhaps the most critical time in terms of religion. We have observed a close relationship between religion and family relations. As long as the followers of a religion live by the religion as the sole guide in their lives, the religious rules regarding the family are also well practiced in that religion and society. This is because the family is not only a social institution but also a religious institution.

Needless to mention here that how the family institution is facing a mountain crisis in the Christianity as it is discussed in the earlier chapter. It is evident that from the eighteenth century onwards, the Western world gradually separated church and state due to historical processes that began with the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Adherence to established Christianity has been steadily declining since the middle of the 20th century. In a movement known as secularization, "unchurched spirituality," which is defined as the practice of observing different spiritual ideas without following

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<sup>359</sup> Khurshid Ahmad, *Family life in Islam*. (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1974), 5

a particular religion, is becoming more and more popular.<sup>360</sup> According to Pew Research Center, although Christianity is currently the largest religion in the world, the number of Christians and its practice is gradually declining in the West overall<sup>361</sup> and it happens when people do not give priority to religious rules and regulations; in fact, they do not practice other institutions of religion as well, such as the family. Moreover, when the impact of religion in life and society declines, other ideologies can gain influence; it has been seen in various studies that the family institution in Christianity is on the verge of collapsing. Additionally, artificial, unnatural, and non-religious cultures and lifestyles are dominating in the lives of numerous western people.

However, many Christian scholars have expressed their concern about the crisis in the family and addressed how the family value can be protected in the face of contemporary challenges through the Christian teachings and values. They figure out that some ways can help resolve the family crisis, including returning to the foundational Christian values, strengthening the family roles as a central path, and progressing covenantal relationships. It has been seen that Pope Francis is currently very active in addressing the family crisis as seen in his various programs addressing the family crisis. For example, at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences Plenary Session, Pope Francis speaks to attendees and emphasizes the need to rediscover the beauty and worth of family life despite changes and protracted crises that impact families. According to him, "prolonged and multiple crises" are straining family life, and "social changes are altering the living conditions of marriages and families all over the world." He stresses that instead of numerous challenges facing the family institution it is pertinent to "rediscover the value of the family as the source and origin of the social order, as the vital cell of a fraternal society capable of caring for the common home." The Pope emphasized that

The Church's social thinking helps us to understand this relational love appropriate to the family, as the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*

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<sup>360</sup> Paul Silas Peterson, *The Decline of Established Christianity in the Western World*. (Routledge, 2019), pp. 46, 76, 84.

<sup>361</sup> "Being Christian in Western Europe" (PDF), Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. 29 May 2018. Retrieved 11 November 2021.

has sought to do, following in the wake of the great tradition, but with that tradition, taking a step forward.<sup>362</sup>

Moreover, Pope Francis underlined that social, economic, and cultural programs that promote family unity must be supported by all countries.<sup>363</sup> It can be concluded from the discussion of Pope Francis that he is very concerned about the family crisis and that he strongly wants to restore the lost value of the family despite the myriad social challenges or changes. Also, there is no substitute for family religious practices to bring unity in the family, to sustain the family, to strengthen the relationship between the family members. In order to overcome the family crisis, he emphasized on the relationship of Christians with the church, that is, when people come to worship in the church, they will be discussed and inspired on other topics including family matters, which can lead them to practice family-related ordinances in individual and family life. Perhaps it will play an important role in eliminating the family crisis.

One of the Christian theologians, Pastor Timothy Keller argues that covenantal marriage and family can play vital role in addressing the contemporary family crisis.<sup>364</sup> Marriage in the Christianity is not just a marriage to live together as a man and woman together, rather it is a lifelong commitment between a man and woman who are in love and faithful to each other. Moreover, it is believed that Christ and his church's relationship is meant to be reflected in the covenant.<sup>365</sup> According to the Bible, therefore they are no longer two, but one flesh. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."<sup>366</sup> It means a human cannot break a marriage, which is done with a covenant, rather only God can end a marriage by death. Keller stresses that the root of Christian marriage is covenant rather than a contract between a man and woman and when marriage is based on the covenant, it indicates divine love and sacrifice rather than worldly happiness. According to the author, marriage is done between a man and

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<sup>362</sup> Vatican News staff reporter, Pope Francis: Rediscover the value of family life. Retrieved November 11, 2024. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-04/pope-francis-rediscover-the-value-of-family-life.html>

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The meaning of marriage: Facing the complexities of commitment with the wisdom of God*. (Penguin, 2011), 91

<sup>365</sup> Robert Jones, Marriage as a Covenant. (Biblical Counseling Coalition, 2024). Retrieved November 11, 2024. <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2024/01/08/marriage-as-a-covenant/#:~:text=On%20August%2027%2C%20my%20wife,woman%20to%20fulfill%20God's%20purposes.>

<sup>366</sup> King James version, Matthew, 19:6.

a woman from the perspective of covenant, which will lead to love and commitment and reduce the rate of divorce and breakdown of the family. Christian teachings, according to Keller, can counter the individualistic tendencies in society which cause the family problems by highlighting compassion and cooperative assistance.<sup>367</sup>

Johon Paul 11 addresses the crisis of the family institution from the perspective of Catholicism. Emphasizing the importance of the family, he compared it to the domestic church, saying that it should be considered a small faith community. John Paul argues that the family should be the model for various things such as love, faith, and moral integrity.<sup>368</sup> In addition, he urged families to view family relationships as a mission to serve God and society. Secularization has had profound negative impact on every aspect of our life including the family. John Paul 11 believes that secularization is the main cause of the family crisis. To solve the family crisis, he suggests that there is must restore Christian values within the family, which will lead to counter the impact of secularism. Moreover, he encourages and emphasizes that parents raise children based on the faith value since children are the future generation, who will resist all the societal evils that contribute in weakening the family.

Furthermore, it is undeniable that our society is changing constantly, and it has a paramount effect on individual, social and religious institutions like marriage, sexuality and family. Many scholars, theologians, and ethicists argue that religious ethics can play a crucial role in dealing with challenges that come with social changes and make the family weak. To solve family crisis, one of the Christian theologian and ethicist, David Gushee argues that Christian ethics can be used in fighting against cultural trends that undermine the bonds between families. Moreover, he emphasizes that Christian ethics can play an important role in guiding and eradicating family crisis against modern challenges such as materialism and individualism. He argues that Christian families need to focus on Christian ethics and make Jesus' teaching central to everything, including marriage, sexuality, and family. Gushee concludes by suggesting that Christians should practice Christian ethical principles in personal and family life, which may contribute to strengthening family bonding by avoiding factors that cause

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<sup>367</sup> *The meaning of marriage*, 104

<sup>368</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Consortio, Familiaris, The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*. (1981). (Papal documents condensed by Deacon William Wagner) First Published in the St. Bartholomew Bulletin: December, 2010).

family problems.<sup>369</sup> Undeniably, the role of community and Church have significant influence in various aspects of Christians lives, although the conflict between church and state that began during the Enlightenment in the 16th century has reduced the importance of church and religion in people's lives and society and gradually increased the influence of secularism. However, theologian like Stanley Hauerwas argues that Church and community support are paramount in reducing tension and solving family problems in the Christian community.<sup>370</sup> He believes that families cannot flourish in isolation and the Church should provide various support for the families such as spiritual guidance, shared values, and communal relationships etc. Hauerwas asserts that by offering a network of accountability and support, this collaborative assistance network will contribute to enhancing the families. Family crises are frequently caused by societal pressures, but he contends that families based on these principles are more durable and better able to handle them.

Among contemporary Christian thinkers, John Witte Jr. has provided one of the most sophisticated legal-theological responses to the crisis of the modern Christian family. Witte asserts that the deterioration of the family institution in the West represents not only a moral or cultural crisis but also a collapse of the legal, educational, and civic structures that previously upheld Christian conceptions of marriage and kinship. In his recent work *Faith, Freedom, and Family: New Studies in Law and Religion* (2022), he argues that the modern family has become "juridically fragile" due to the overextension of individual autonomy and the erosion of institutional supports that historically protected marital and parental commitments.<sup>371</sup> For Witte, Christian theology must rediscover the public dimension of marriage and family, not simply as private moral arrangements but as social institutions that require legal recognition and communal investment. He therefore proposes a renewed partnership between law, religion, and education, where religious institutions cooperate with the state to craft policies that uphold family stability — including equitable divorce laws, parental support programs, and civic education that instills relational virtues.

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<sup>369</sup> David P Gushee, and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom ethics: Following Jesus in contemporary context*. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 263-264

<sup>370</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*. Edit. by John Berkman, Michael G. Cartwright. (Duke University Press Books, 2001), 187

<sup>371</sup> John Witte Jr., *Faith, Freedom, and Family: New Studies in Law and Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 15–20.

Witte's approach is deeply historical, drawing on the Reformation legacy of covenantal marriage as a public good while adapting it to plural, rights-based societies. His vision resists both secular relativism and religious isolationism by arguing for a juridical pluralism in which religious moral insights inform public policy without imposing confessional dogma. Yet his proposal is not without tension. While his emphasis on institutional reform is commendable, critics note that his framework may overlook the intimate, emotional, and gendered dynamics that shape family life in practice. Law, after all, can establish structures but cannot cultivate love, fidelity, or empathy. Furthermore, Witte's legal optimism sometimes underplays the socio-economic inequalities that destabilize families, particularly in neoliberal economies where state welfare systems are weak. Nevertheless, his intervention is vital in reasserting that families do not flourish in a legal or civic vacuum and that Christian theology must continue to speak to the structural conditions that sustain or corrode family life.<sup>372</sup>

In contrast to Witte's institutional lens, Russell D. Moore—a theologian and public ethicist—approaches the family crisis primarily as a problem of pastoral formation and cultural disorientation. Writing from a pastoral and evangelical standpoint, Moore identifies the fragmentation of the Christian family as a symptom of the deeper moral confusion of late modernity. He argues that technological hyperconnectivity, consumerism, and the therapeutic individualism of contemporary Western culture have hollowed out the relational depth once sustained by faith and communal life.<sup>373</sup> In his recent reflections, Moore asserts that churches must move beyond culture-war rhetoric and recover their vocation as communities of formation, where moral and emotional resilience is cultivated through spiritual discipline, mentorship, and liturgical practice. The failure, he argues, lies in the church's reduction of marriage and parenting to moral slogans rather than lifelong discipleship practices supported by pastoral care, education, and communal solidarity.

Moore's response is thus inherently pastoral and relational. He calls for a reorientation of Christian ministry toward equipping pastors and lay leaders to

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<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 145–150.

<sup>373</sup> Russell D. Moore, “A Christian Response to Gen Z's Mental Health Crisis,” *The Russell Moore Show / RussellMoore.com*, June 26, 2024, <https://www.russellmoore.com/2024/06/26/a-christian-response-to-gen-zs-mental-health-crisis/>

understand the complexities of contemporary family life — including trauma, gender dynamics, and mental health — through rigorous theological and psychological training.<sup>374</sup> His emphasis on "trauma-informed" and "relationally intelligent" ministry reflects a shift from moral exhortation to compassionate accompaniment. Moreover, Moore insists that Christian communities must address not only moral lapses but also structural pressures such as economic precarity and technological distraction that shape family behavior. In this sense, he envisions the church not merely as a moral guardian but as a therapeutic and pedagogical space that can rehabilitate the relational imagination of its members.

While Moore's response is compelling in its pastoral realism, it is not immune to criticism. His analysis tends to remain within the ecclesial domain, and some scholars question whether church-based initiatives can sufficiently address the macro-level economic and cultural forces that contribute to family instability. Nevertheless, his contribution is invaluable for its reminder that the family crisis is not simply a legal or political failure but a crisis of formation — of how individuals learn to love, commit, and forgive within the concrete rhythms of domestic and ecclesial life. His call for renewed pastoral professionalism — integrating theology, psychology, and community care — offers a humane corrective to both secular therapeutic culture and rigid doctrinarism.<sup>375</sup>

## 5.4 CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of Muslim and Christian scholars' responses to the crisis of the family institution reveals both shared moral concerns and distinctive theological frameworks. Both traditions regard the family as divinely ordained and foundational to human civilization, yet they differ in diagnosing the causes of its decline and in proposing remedies suited to their religious and socio-cultural contexts.

Among contemporary Muslim scholars, figures such as Mohammad Hashim Kamali and Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasize that the weakening of the Muslim family

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Russell D. Moore, *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America* (New York: Random House, 2023), 108–112.

stems from moral dislocation, secular influence, and the neglect of divine guidance. Their proposed solutions call for a revival of Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings as the ethical and spiritual foundation of family life. They argue that the family must be re-Islamized through the reapplication of Shariah principles, particularly those relating to justice, mutual rights, and moral education. This Islamization of the family entails not only legal reform but also moral renewal, ensuring that familial relationships reflect taqwā (God-consciousness) and the higher objectives of Islamic law (maqāsid al-sharī'ah). Kamali especially points out that one must balance fidelity to divine norms with contextual adaptation to contemporary realities, whereas Qaradawi stresses moral resistance to Western secularism and materialism that erode Islamic family values.

In contrast, Christian scholars such as John Witte Jr. and Russell D. Moore approach the family crisis through theological and sociocultural reconstruction. Witte calls for a renewed partnership between law, religion, and education to restore the public and covenantal nature of marriage, contending that families cannot flourish in a purely privatized moral framework. Moore, by contrast, locates the crisis within pastoral and moral formation, urging churches to become communities of discipleship and care that nurture emotional resilience and relational integrity. Both Muslim and Christian scholars thus converge in viewing the family not merely as a private association but as a moral institution vital for the preservation of faith and social order. Yet their methods diverge: Muslim reformers advocate the re-centering of divine revelation and the Islamization of social ethics, while Christian thinkers call for renewed institutional and pastoral formation within pluralistic societies.

Ultimately, the comparative study underscores that the restoration of the family institution requires both structural and spiritual renewal. Whether through the revival of Qur'anic guidance or the reform of Christian pastoral practice, both traditions affirm that authentic familial stability depends upon reuniting faith, morality, and social responsibility within the life of the family.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 6.1 SUMMARY

The family institution, long regarded as the cornerstone of human civilization, is currently confronting an unprecedented crisis that surpasses any challenges it has faced in the past. Although the family has historically endured various transformations and pressures, the current situation—characterized by moral disintegration, ideological confusion, and the erosion of traditional values—marks a critical juncture between modernity and tradition. This alarming state of the family institution has become a global concern for religious scholars, academics, policymakers, and social thinkers, regardless of religion, culture, or geography. As societies search for viable solutions to restore family stability, this study was undertaken to critically examine the causes of the family crisis and explore possible remedies from the perspectives of Islam and Christianity. The principal aim of this research was to analyze the problems and challenges facing the family institution in both Islam and Christianity and to investigate the influence of modern ideologies—particularly Liberalism, Feminism, and Postmodernism—on its stability and moral structure. To achieve these objectives, the study employed a qualitative, library-based methodology, analyzing theological, religious, philosophical, and social texts to identify and evaluate the core challenges and ideological influences shaping the modern family.

The findings reveal that the value and sanctity of the family have significantly declined worldwide, leading to a noticeable decrease in marriage rates, family cohesion, and reproduction—factors that are contributing to social and demographic crises across societies. Regardless of contextual differences, both Islam and Christianity regard the family as a divinely established and sacred institution, vital for spiritual development, moral cultivation, and social cohesion. The study shows that the Islamic family system is grounded in *nikāḥ* (marriage) as a sacred contract based on mutual understanding, love (*mawaddah*), mercy (*raḥmah*), and consultation (*shūrā*), whereas Christianity views marriage as a covenant reflecting the union between Christ and the Church, emphasizing fidelity, selflessness, and mutual care.

However, both traditions have witnessed a gradual erosion of their theological and moral foundations, as the spiritual meaning of marriage, parenting, and family responsibility has faded among their followers. Historically and religiously, both Islam and Christianity have upheld an extended and patriarchal family model, although they do not entirely prohibit the nuclear structure. Importantly, the study finds that marriage is the only legitimate framework for sexual relations in both religions, and modern alternative forms of sexuality and marriage are strictly prohibited. While Islam permits divorce as a last resort after reconciliation efforts, Christianity traditionally prohibits it, viewing marriage as an unbreakable covenant.

The research identifies several internal and external challenges contributing to the weakening of family structures, including financial stress, poor communication between spouses, lack of moral education, and inadequate family management skills. Externally, modern ideologies such as Liberalism, Feminism, secularism, and Postmodernism have exerted profound influence by redefining moral values, gender relations, and family norms. Among them, radical feminism has been particularly destructive, as it seeks to dismantle heterosexual marriage and traditional family roles, promoting sexual freedom and rejecting reproductive responsibilities. Liberalism emphasizes individual autonomy over collective moral duty, while Postmodernism denies universal truths, thereby undermining religion's moral authority and destabilizing the theological basis of family institutions. One of the key findings of this study is that Islamic family law (fiqh al-usrah) provides a strong resistance against both internal dysfunctions and external ideological assaults through its comprehensive ethical and legal framework. In contrast, Christian family ethics, although spiritually profound, lack a unified theological and legal system for regulating family matters, leading to inconsistency and vulnerability in contemporary Christian family life.

Finally, the research underscores that both Muslim and Christian scholars strongly advocate for a return to the foundational teachings of their respective faiths to counter the ongoing family crisis. They emphasize moral education, spiritual renewal, mutual responsibility, and adherence to divine guidance as essential remedies. The study concludes that revitalizing the family institution requires a holistic approach that integrates religious principles, moral education, interfaith dialogue, and community

awareness, thereby ensuring that the family remains the enduring foundation of faith, morality, and civilization.

## 6.2 CONCLUSION

This study examined the concept, role, and function of the family institution in Islam and Christianity; explored the major problems and challenges contributing to its weakening; investigated the influence of modern ideologies such as Liberalism, Feminism, and postmodernism; and assessed the responses of Muslim and Christian scholars to these challenges. The analysis revealed that, despite their theological differences, both religions consider the family a divinely instituted and sacred foundation of social and moral life.

In Islam, the family is grounded in *nikāḥ* (marriage) and built upon love (*mawaddah*), mercy (*raḥmah*), and mutual rights and responsibilities between husband and wife. The Qur'an and Sunnah provide a comprehensive legal, ethical, and spiritual framework to preserve the stability of the family. Similarly, Christianity upholds the family as a sacred covenant modeled on the relationship between Christ and the Church, emphasizing mutual love, respect, and care. While Christian theology offers profound moral and spiritual teachings on family life, it relies heavily on interpretive traditions rather than a codified legal framework as found in Islam.

However, both traditions face serious contemporary challenges. The rise of secularism, materialism, and modern ideologies, particularly Liberalism, Feminism, and postmodernism—has redefined gender roles, moral norms, and the concept of marriage. These ideologies prioritize individual autonomy and subjective morality over divine commandments, leading to an erosion of traditional family values, rising divorce rates, and declining respect for parental and marital responsibilities.

The comparative analysis shows that while Islam provides a complete divine code regulating all aspects of family life, Christianity emphasizes moral guidance and covenantal ethics without a uniform legal structure. Yet both religions converge on the belief that the stability of the family is essential to human flourishing, social harmony, and spiritual development. Moreover, the study found that Muslim and Christian

scholars have long recognized these challenges and responded through theological reaffirmation and moral advocacy. However, their responses often remain general or theoretical, lacking contextual application to contemporary realities influenced by globalization, digital culture, and ideological pluralism. Hence, a renewed, context-sensitive engagement is required—one that translates classical teachings into practical guidance for modern believers.

In summary, the family institution remains central to sustaining faith, morality, and civilization. While modern ideologies attempt to redefine or relativize the family, Islam and Christianity continue to offer profound, timeless principles that can restore moral order and social balance. The preservation and revitalization of the family require not only theological reaffirmation but also active collaboration between religious scholars, policymakers, educators, and communities.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend the following areas for future research in light of the findings and limitations of this study. These suggestions align directly with the objectives of this research and aim to deepen understanding and provide actionable pathways for future scholarships and policy:

#### **1. Contextual and Empirical Studies on Family Practices:**

Future research should conduct fieldwork among Muslim and Christian families to examine how contemporary believers interpret and practice religious teachings on marriage, parenting, and gender roles. This will complement the present library-based study with lived experiences and sociological insights.

#### **2. Ideological Influence on Youth and Family Dynamics:**

Further studies should explore how Liberalism, Feminism, and Postmodernism specifically influence youth attitudes towards marriage, sexuality, and family formation within Muslim and Christian contexts.

### **3. Comparative Legal and Ethical Frameworks:**

Research should investigate the differences and similarities between Islamic family law (fiqh al-usrah) and Christian canon law, focusing on how these frameworks can be adapted to address current family crises without compromising theological integrity.

### **4. Role of Religious Education in Strengthening Families:**

Studies can analyze the effectiveness of faith-based family education programs, premarital counseling, and moral curricula in shaping family resilience within both religious traditions.

### **5. Interfaith and Policy-Oriented Research:**

Future research should assess the role of interfaith dialogue and collaboration between Islamic and Christian institutions in promoting family stability, social ethics, and public policy reforms.

### **6. Impact of Globalization and Digital Culture:**

Scholars should examine how social media, consumerism, and global cultural trends reshape family relationships and values, and how religious teachings can offer a counterbalance.

### **7. Theological Responses to Modern Ideologies:**

A more specialized theological inquiry is needed into how Muslim and Christian thinkers reinterpret classical doctrines to respond to ideological challenges such as gender fluidity, moral relativism, and secular individualism.

### **8. Comparative Study on Women's Roles and Empowerment:**

Given the controversies surrounding feminism, future work should critically analyze how Islam and Christianity envision women's empowerment within the sacred framework of the family, contrasting it with secular feminist discourse.

By addressing these areas, future research can extend the present study's contributions from conceptual and theological analysis to practical, policy-oriented, and community-based strategies that ensure the preservation and revitalization of the family institution in both Islam and Christianity.

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