

# Women's Right to Learn as a Foundation for Gender-Responsive School Policy: A Recension Analysis of Eight Ḥadīth Narrations on Women's Request for a Dedicated Learning Day

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**Abstract:** Disparities in educational access persist across Muslim societies despite formal equality commitments. This study analyses eight authenticated narrations preserved in Musnad Ibn al-Ja'd, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (two recensions), Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Musnad Abī Ya'lā, Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Bayhaqī's al-Sunan al-Kubrā, and Shu'ab al-Īmān. Here, women asked the Prophet Muhammad for a learning day of their own, stating men overwhelmed their access to him. These eight recensions converge on one pivot transmitter (madār), 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣbahānī. Thus, the study employs comparative recension analysis rather than corpus-based saturation logic common in thematic social science. Chains were assessed through classical rijāl criticism; textual variants were compared clause by clause and coded for normative content. Every recension reports identical sequences. The Prophet granted the request, fixed a time and place, taught the women from what God had taught him, answering a question about two deceased children. Five normative values are derived: acknowledgement of a gendered constraint on access as a legitimate claim, accommodation through dedicated time and space, curricular parity across separated settings, a learning environment that permits questioning, and instruction that addresses affective alongside doctrinal need. Read through Fredman's four-dimensional model of substantive equality, the prophetic response supplies an indigenous Islamic warrant for differential provision as a remedy for disadvantage rather than as discrimination. Four constraints govern translation into school policy: temporariness, curricular parity, learner initiation, and orientation toward mainstream transformation. The study also examines the competing segregationist reading of the same text and specifies the exegetical grounds on which it is rejected.

**Keywords:** Women's education; Hadith analysis; Substantive equality; Prophetic pedagogy; Gender equity; Educational policy.

**Abstrak:** Kesenjangan gender dalam akses pendidikan masih terus terjadi di berbagai masyarakat Muslim, meskipun terdapat komitmen formal terhadap kesetaraan. Studi ini menganalisis delapan riwayat sahih yang termaktub dalam Musnad Ibn al-Ja'd, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (dua jalur periwayatan/sanad), Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Musnad Abī Ya'lā, Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān,

*al-Sunan al-Kubrā* karya al-Bayhaqī, dan *Shu'ab al-Imān*. Dalam hadis-hadis tersebut, para perempuan meminta kepada Nabi Muhammad ﷺ untuk menyediakan hari belajar khusus bagi mereka, dengan alasan bahwa kaum laki-laki telah mendominasi akses terhadap beliau. Kedelapan riwayat ini berpusat pada satu perawi poros (*madār*), yakni ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣḥabānī. Oleh karena itu, studi ini menggunakan analisis perbandingan riwayat (*muqāranat al-riwāyāt*), alih-alih logika saturasi berbasis korpus yang lazim dalam penelitian tematik ilmu sosial. Rantai sanad dievaluasi menggunakan kritik *rijāl al-ḥadīth* klasik; sementara variasi teks (*matan*) dibandingkan secara komprehensif dan dikodekan untuk menemukan kandungan normatifnya. Setiap riwayat melaporkan urutan peristiwa yang identik: Nabi mengabulkan permintaan tersebut, menetapkan waktu dan tempat, mengajarkan para perempuan dari apa yang telah Allah ajarkan kepada beliau, serta menjawab pertanyaan susulan tentang dua anak yang meninggal dunia. Lima nilai normatif yang dapat ditarik (*istinbat*): pengakuan atas kendala akses berbasis gender sebagai tuntutan yang sah, akomodasi melalui penyediaan waktu dan ruang khusus, kesetaraan kurikulum di lingkungan yang terpisah, lingkungan belajar yang memfasilitasi dialog, dan pengajaran yang menyentuh kebutuhan afektif di samping doktrinal (*akidah*). Ditelaah melalui model kesetaraan substantif empat dimensi Fredman, respons kenabian (*sunnah*) ini memberikan legitimasi Islami yang autentik bahwa perlakuan khusus (*differential provision*) adalah solusi atas ketertinggalan, bukan bentuk diskriminasi. Empat batasan mengatur implementasinya dalam kebijakan sekolah: sifat temporer, kesetaraan kurikulum, inisiatif pembelajar, dan orientasi pada transformasi arus utama. Studi ini juga menguji interpretasi segregasionis atas *matan* yang sama, serta merinci argumentasi penafsiran (*syarh*) yang menjadi dasar penolakannya.

**Keywords:** Pendidikan Perempuan; Analisis hadis; Kesetaraan substantif; Pedagogi kenabian; Keadilan gender; Kebijakan pendidikan.

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## 1. Introduction

The educational gender gap persists most sharply in low-income and conflict-affected settings. As of 2023, an estimated 272 million children and youth were out of school worldwide, of whom 64 million were of lower secondary age; globally the out-of-school population still tilts slightly male (139 million boys against 133 million girls), which means the aggregate figure understates rather than overstates how concentrated the exclusion of girls is in specific regions and age bands (UNESCO Institute for Statistics & Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2025).

Afghanistan supplies the limiting case. The ban on girls' secondary education has excluded 2.2 million adolescent girls as of the UNESCO–UNICEF Afghanistan Education Situation Report 2025, leaving the country the only one in the world that systematically denies girls and women access to secondary and higher education

(UNESCO & UNICEF, 2025). UNESCO's August 2026 update raises the figure to approximately 2.4 million and projects that nearly four million girls will have been denied secondary schooling by 2030 if the prohibition holds (UNESCO, 2026). These figures are not background colour for a textual study. They establish that the interpretive question this article addresses carries operational weight.

Economic and infrastructural barriers are extensively documented. The interpretive dimension is less so. Restrictions on girls' schooling in Muslim contexts are routinely defended by appeal to religious warrant, and recent scholarship confirms that the barriers women face in obtaining equal educational opportunity arise from a compounding of social norms, conservative religious readings, and systemic hurdles rather than from any single cause (Saifullin et al., 2026), which makes the internal Islamic argument a contested site rather than a settled one.

Two distinct scholarly formations respond to this. The first is Islamic feminist hermeneutics, represented by Mernissi (1991), Wadud (1999), and Barlas (2002), which locates gender hierarchy in the historical production of male-dominated exegesis rather than in the foundational sources. The second is the mainstream juristic establishment, which in January 2025 produced the Islamabad Declaration on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities under the auspices of the Muslim World League. Senior muftis, fiqh council representatives, and scholars across schools of thought and sects affirmed that women's education is a right agreed upon by consensus, deriving from the obligation of seeking knowledge incumbent on every Muslim regardless of sex, and unrestricted by age, level, or field of study (Muslim World League, 2025).

These two formations are usually treated as rivals. The present study treats their convergence as an analytically interesting fact. Feminist hermeneutics and juristic consensus arrive at the same conclusion by different routes, which raises the question of why the conclusion remains unimplemented.

The answer lies below the level of principle. In Indonesia, a systematic review of gender mainstreaming in pesantren policy finds that male domination in leadership, the absence of measurable indicators, and low gender literacy persist precisely because the Pesantren Law itself contains no gender-responsive legal framework, so formally progressive intentions have nothing to be operationalised against (Mala et al., 2025). In Zimbabwe, an activity-theory analysis of teacher education finds that gender-responsive curriculum policy exists on paper while teacher educators' own habitus, shaped by patriarchal social conditioning, continues to regulate what is taught

(Chikunda, 2014). The two contexts differ in every particular except the finding: policy formulation without engagement of the implementers who hold the actual classroom authority changes nothing. Treating girls and boys identically leaves the underlying power relations untouched, which is precisely the diagnosis that Fredman's (2016) four-dimensional account of substantive equality was built to capture. Substantive equality requires redressing disadvantage, countering stigma and stereotyping, enhancing voice and participation, and accommodating difference while transforming the structures that produced it.

Ḥadīth literature contains a text that performs all four operations at once. In the recension of al-Bukhārī (no. 100), women told the Prophet that the men had overwhelmed their access to him and asked him to appoint a day for them. He fixed a day, met them, and taught them. In the recension of Muslim (no. 4774), the request is more specific still, asking him to teach them from what God had taught him. He named a day, went to them, and did so.

The prophetic response neither dismissed the complaint nor instructed the women to compete harder within the existing setting. It identified the constraint as real and reorganised provision around it while holding the content constant. That combination differential access, identical curriculum, learner-initiated request is the structure of reasonable accommodation as contemporary equality law understands it, arrived at fourteen centuries before the vocabulary existed.

Three questions follow. What normative values does the text yield that are specific enough to guide policy rather than merely to affirm a right? How do those values translate into school-level mechanisms? And what constraints does the text itself impose on such translation, given that a superficially similar reading has historically been used to justify permanent segregation rather than temporary accommodation?

Recent scholarship bearing on this question falls into four identifiable formations, and each reaches a boundary that the present study is built to cross. Naming the boundaries is the point of the review. The contribution claimed here is defined by exactly what these formations leave undone, so the survey is organised around where each stop rather than around what each contains.

Gender-critical hadith hermeneutics. One formation reads the canonical corpus against the patriarchal sediment of its own interpretation. Nurun Najwah's (2021) analysis of the misogynistic traditions across al-Kutub al-Tis'ah is representative in

method and in limit. Working through takhrīj and gender analysis, she isolates sixty texts commonly enlisted to subordinate women and shows that their demeaning force is an artefact of textual, partial, and ahistorical reading rather than a property of the traditions themselves. The achievement is corrective, and the operation stays defensive from beginning to end, aimed at disarming traditions that harm. A hermeneutics organised around damage control establishes what a text does not license. It leaves unaddressed the prior question of what positive institutional structure a text can be made to yield, which is the question a school actually faces.

Thematic affirmation of women's education. A second formation assembles the traditions that establish women's learning as obligatory and socially generative. Amelia et al. (2024) work in this mode, tying the duty of female education to intergenerational outcome through a grounded reading of the relevant reports. The right is affirmed with textual warrant. The tradition in which the Prophet answers a stated constraint by reorganising provision is not singled out, and no policy-relevant structure is extracted from it. Affirming a right and specifying the mechanism that delivers it are separate operations, and this formation performs the first alone.

Contemporary hadith methodology. A third formation has refined the analysis of variant transmission to a high degree, and it divides along a fault line of purpose. In the Western academy, isnād-cum-matn analysis collates the wordings of a single tradition against its branching chains to date the report and to locate the common link from which it spread; Su's (2024) study of the "Ten Promised Paradise" tradition reconstructs the Kufan milieu in which that doctrine crystallised after the second fitna and does so with methodological control that sets a standard for the technique. In the Indonesian academy, a parallel current holds that sanad and matn criticism are mature while substantive criticism, the assessment of a tradition through its meaning, remains the underdeveloped frontier; Wasman, Mesraini, and Suwendi (2023) argue this explicitly and press for critical attention to the hadith's meaning as the discipline's next task, and Widad and Razi (2026) extend the same contextual impulse into an anthropologically framed model of the living hadith. The collation instruments these studies share is precisely the instrument the present analysis requires. Its inherited purpose is dating or authentication, and the reconstruction of a stable report's meaning for present institutional practice is not among the ends to which it has been turned. This study adopts collation logic and directs it at that unclaimed purpose.

Gender and Islamic education as policy and practice. A fourth formation

documents what happens when the affirmed right meets the institution. Aisyah and Junaedi (2024) establish the philosophical urgency of gender-equal Islamic religious education in Indonesia without deriving its framework from a specific prophetic precedent, which leaves the argument authoritative at the level of principle and thin in warrant for the constituencies most resistant to it. Mala et al. (2025), in a systematic review of gender mainstreaming in pesantren policy, trace the implementation deficit to its root, the absence of any gender-responsive legal framework in the Pesantren Law itself, so that progressive intention has nothing to operate against. Andang (2026), synthesising fifty-eight Scopus-indexed studies through PRISMA, confirms at national scale that gender equality in Indonesian education stalls on patriarchal sociocultural norms, socioeconomic inequality, and gender bias that policy has documented without dislodging. Maleki and Farooqi (2025) supply the lived texture from a secular setting, recording the ostracism, discrimination, and curricular insensitivity that Muslim female students report, with a rigour matched by a framework whose secular provenance limits its traction where legitimacy runs through religious warrant. Saifullin et al. (2026) establish at the level of review that the barriers to women's equal educational opportunity compound social, religious, and systemic causes and reduce to none of them singly. This formation is the most operationally serious and the least able to supply its own legitimacy, since the frameworks it deploys are received as imported in exactly the settings where resistance runs deepest.

The four formations converge on one unmet need. The right is settled, the harmful readings are answerable, the variant-collation method is mature, and the implementation deficit is thoroughly mapped. No study has taken one canonical tradition, collated its recensions to establish which normative elements hold stable across the transmission, and derived from that stable core a policy framework that carries its own Islamic legitimacy and constrains its own application. That position is open, and the present study occupies it. It turns recension analysis toward normative rather than chronological ends, it grounds a mechanism instead of reaffirming a right, and it supplies the internal warrant that the policy-and-practice formation cannot generate from secular frameworks alone.

This study employs a qualitative, library-based design combining comparative recension analysis (*muqāranat al-riwāyāt*) with grounded-theory coding of the normative content of a single Prophetic tradition. The primary corpus consists of eight recensions: Musnad Ibn al-Ja'd no. 541; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* nos. 100 and 6793; *Ṣaḥīḥ*

Muslim no. 4774; Musnad Abī Ya'lā no. 1267; Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān no. 3020; al-Sunan al-Kubrā of al-Bayhaqī no. 6598; and Shu'ab al-Īmān no. 9102. Each recension was examined through its Arabic matn, complete isnād, and the classical jarḥ wa-ta'dīl evaluations of its transmitters. Methodologically, these eight recensions are not treated as eight independent data sources, since they represent variant transmissions of the same report through partly overlapping chains. Accordingly, convergence among them is not described as social-scientific triangulation or thematic saturation. Instead, the recensions are compared clause by clause to distinguish stable elements of the tradition from wording variations potentially attributable to individual transmitters. The coding procedure follows the grounded theory paradigm of Strauss and Corbin in the form set out by Corbin and Strauss (2015), and it is adopted as a procedure for deriving categories from text rather than as a complete methodology. Two commitments of grounded theory are therefore suspended, and the suspension is stated openly rather than passed over. Theoretical sampling has no purchase here, since the corpus is closed by the transmission itself. Every extant recension of this report is included, and no further case can be sought. Theoretical saturation has no purchase either, since saturation presupposes independent cases while these eight recensions are variant transmissions of one report through partly overlapping chains. What the paradigm supplies is a disciplined sequence for moving from wording to category, and that is the whole of what is borrowed.

The inference is abductive rather than inductive, and the distinction matters for the credibility of what follows. Fredman's (2016) four-dimensional model was in hand before coding began and functioned as a lens that rendered certain features of the matn analytically visible. Timmermans and Tavory (2012) argue that grounded theory's inductivist self-description obscures precisely this operation and that abduction gives the more accurate account of how categories are generated from data. The present study accepts that correction. The analytical framework is declared rather than claimed to have emerged.

The isnād analysis demonstrates that the eight recensions converge on 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Aṣbahānī al-Kūfī, transmitting from Abū Ṣāliḥ Dhakwān (Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Sammān), from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī. Ibn al-Aṣbahānī thus functions as the madār or pivotal transmitter, below whom the transmission develops principally through the Shu'bah and Abū 'Awānah branches. Classical biographical sources record Ibn al-Aṣbahānī as an acceptable transmitter: Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī

described him as *lā ba'sa bihi*, while Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, through al-Maymūnī, characterised him as *ṣāliḥ al-ḥadīth*. Al-Dāraquṭnī likewise included him among transmitters whose narrations from reliable authorities were accepted by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. These assessments indicate a positive, though not necessarily superlative, evaluation of his reliability and do not justify overstating the consensus by uniformly describing him as belonging to the highest grade of *thiqa*. Technically, the report is *gharīb* at the levels of the Companion, Successor, and pivotal transmitter because each tier depends on a single transmitter, but it becomes more extensively transmitted below Ibn al-Aṣbahānī through parallel transmission routes that function as *mutāba'āt*. The existence of these branches strengthens the transmission while preserving the methodological distinction between corroborating routes and genuinely independent reports.

The analytical procedure proceeded in four stages. First, the eight matns were read repeatedly and collated clause by clause, with attention to recurring formulations such as *ghalabanā 'alayka al-rijāl, fa-j'al lanā yawman*, and *fa-wa'adahunna*. Second, open coding assigned descriptive labels to semantic units anchored in the wording of the recensions, each label traceable to a specified clause in a specified recension. Third, axial coding grouped related labels into analytical categories organised around the conditions, actions, and consequences that the narrative itself reports. The women's statement concerning male dominance and their request for dedicated access were grouped as recognition of a gendered constraint. Their capacity to ask a question and to repeat it was grouped as conditions enabling participation. Fourth, selective coding integrated these categories into the five normative values that answer the study's research questions.

A fifth operation has no counterpart in grounded theory and is required by the nature of a ḥadīth corpus. Every category was checked against the recension map before it was retained. Categories attested in both the Shu'bah and the Abū 'Awānah branches were treated as stable elements of the transmitted report. Categories confined to a single branch were treated as possible transmitter-level variation and are reported with that qualification throughout the analysis. Differences concerning whether the request was voiced by one woman or several, and the number of times the question about two children was repeated, were separated from variation affecting the central narrative or its normative content. This branch check is what prevents the coding paradigm from converting textual frequency into evidential weight. It is the point at



which ḥadīth criticism disciplines the social-scientific instrument rather than the reverse.

The trustworthiness of the analysis rests primarily on the transparent relationship between textual variation, transmission structure, and interpretive claims. Credibility is established through systematic comparison of the variant recensions rather than through triangulation among supposedly independent sources. Dependability is supported by a documented sequence of recension collation, coding, category formation, and category integration, while confirmability requires every identified value or theme to remain traceable to specific clauses within identifiable recensions. Transferability is approached through contextual description of the situation narrated in the tradition, particularly the women expressed difficulty in accessing the Prophet's teaching and their request for dedicated instructional time. This procedure enables the study to distinguish between meanings strongly supported across multiple transmission branches and interpretations dependent on isolated wording variants.

## 2. Results and Discussion

### *The corpus*

All eight recensions report the same sequence. Women approached the Prophet, stated that men had overwhelmed their access to him or had taken his discourse, and requested a day of their own. He granted it, fixed a time and in several recensions a place, went to them, and taught them from what God had taught him. He then stated that a woman who loses three children in infancy will find them a shield from the Fire. A woman asked about two. He confirmed the same for two.

The eight texts are presented below as they appear in their respective sources, with standard transliteration and English translation, harmonised in full to the conventions used throughout this study.

1. Musnad Ibn al-Ja'd, no. 541 (Chain: 'Alī ← Shu'bah ← 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣḥabānī ← Dhakwān Abū Ṣāliḥ ← Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī):

قُلْنَ الْبِسَاءُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، غَلَبَنَا عَلَيْكَ الرِّجَالُ فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ يَوْمًا. قَالَ: فَوَعَدَهُنَّ.  
قَالَ: فَلَقِيَهُنَّ، فَوَعَّظَهُنَّ وَأَمَرَهُنَّ، فَكَانَ فِيهَا قَالَ لِهِنَّ: "مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ ثَلَاثَةً مِنْ وَلَدِهَا إِلَّا كَانُوا  
لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ". قَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَوْ اثْنَتَيْنِ؟ قَالَ: "أَوْ اثْنَتَيْنِ"

“The women said: 'O Messenger of Allah, the men have overwhelmed us (in access to you), so appoint a day for us from yourself.' He said: So, he promised them. He said: Then he met them, and he admonished them and commanded them, and among what he said to them was: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward three of her children (who die) except that they become for her a veil from the Fire.' A woman said: 'O Messenger of Allah, or two?' He said: 'Or two.'

2. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 100 (Chapter: Should Women Have a Particular Day for Teaching Them Knowledge; Chain: Ādam ← Shu'bah ← Ibn al-Aṣḥabānī ← Abū Ṣāliḥ Dhakwān ← Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī):

قَالَتِ النِّسَاءُ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: غَلَبَنَا عَلَيْكَ الرِّجَالُ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا يَوْمًا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ. فَوَعَدَهُنَّ يَوْمًا لِقِيَتْنَّ فِيهِ فَوَعِظَهُنَّ وَأَمَرَهُنَّ، فَكَانَ فِيهَا قَالَ لِهِنَّ: "مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ ثَلَاثَةً مِنْ وَلَدِهَا إِلَّا كَانَ لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ". فَقَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ: وَاثْنَتَيْنِ، فَقَالَ: "وَاثْنَتَيْنِ"

“The women said to the Prophet (PBUH): 'The men have overwhelmed us (in access to you), so appoint a day for us from yourself.' So, he promised them a day on which he met them, and he admonished them and commanded them. Among what he said to them was: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward three of her children (who die) except that they become a veil from the Fire.' A woman said: 'And two?' He said: 'And two.'

3. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 6793 (Chapter: The Prophet's Teaching of His Ummah from Men and Women; Chain: Musaddad ← Abū 'Awānah ← 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣḥabānī ← Abū Ṣāliḥ Dhakwān ← Abū Sa'īd):

جَاءَتْ امْرَأَةٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، ذَهَبَ الرِّجَالُ بِحَدِيثِكَ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ يَوْمًا نَأْتِيكَ فِيهِ نُعَلِّمُنَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَكَ اللَّهُ. فَقَالَ: اجْتَمِعْنَ فِي يَوْمٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا فِي مَكَانٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا. فَاجْتَمَعْنَ، فَأَتَاهُنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَعَلَّمَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا مِنْ وَلَدِهَا ثَلَاثَةً إِلَّا كَانَ لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ. فَقَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَوْ اثْنَتَيْنِ؟ قَالَ: فَأَعَادَتْهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: وَاثْنَتَيْنِ، وَاثْنَتَيْنِ

“A woman came to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, the men have taken your discourse (hadith), so appoint a day for us from yourself that we may come to you and you teach us from what Allah has taught you.' He said: 'Gather on such-and-such a day in such-and-such a place.' So, they gathered, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) came to them and taught them what Allah had taught him. Then he said: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward from her children three (who die) except that they become a veil

from the Fire.' A woman among them said: 'O Messenger of Allah, or two?' He said and she repeated it twice then he said: 'And two, and two, and two.'

4. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 4774 (Chapter: The Virtue of One Who Has a Child Die and Seeks Reward; Chain: Abū Kāmil al-Jaḥdarī ← Abū 'Awānah ← 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣḥabānī ← Abū Ṣāliḥ Dhakwān ← Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī):

جَاءَتْ امْرَأَةٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، ذَهَبَ الرِّجَالُ بِحَدِيثِكَ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ يَوْمًا نَأْتِيكَ فِيهِ تَعْلَمُنَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَكَ اللَّهُ. قَالَ: اجْتَمِعْنَ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا. فَاجْتَمَعْنَ فَأَتَاهُنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَعَلَّمَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: مَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ امْرَأَةٍ تُقَدِّمُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا مِنْ وَلَدِهَا ثَلَاثَةً إِلَّا كَانُوا لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ. فَقَالَتْ امْرَأَةٌ: وَاثْنَيْنِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: وَاثْنَيْنِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ.

"A woman came to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, the men have taken your discourse, so appoint a day for us from yourself that we may come to you and you teach us from what Allah has taught you.' He said: 'Gather on such-and-such a day.' So, they gathered, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) came to them and taught them what Allah had taught him. Then he said: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward from her children three (who die) except that they become a veil from the Fire.' A woman said: 'And two, and two, and two.' So, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'And two, and two, and two.'

5. Musnad Abī Ya'lā, no. 1267 (Chain: Zuhayr ← Shabābah ibn Sawwār ← Shu'bah ← 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣḥabānī ← Dhakwān ← Abū Sa'īd):

قُلْنَ النِّسَاءُ: غَلَبَنَا عَلَيْكَ الرِّجَالُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا يَوْمًا؟ قَالَ: فَوَعَدَهُنَّ يَوْمًا، فَجِئْنَ فَوَعَّظَهُنَّ، وَقَالَ لِهِنَّ فِيمَا قَالَ لِهِنَّ: مَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ امْرَأَةٍ تُقَدِّمُ ثَلَاثَةً مِنْ وَلَدِهَا إِلَّا كَانُوا لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ. قَالَتْ امْرَأَةٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ؟ فَقَدْ مَاتَ لَهَا اثْنَانِ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: وَاثْنَيْنِ.

"The women said: 'The men have overwhelmed us (in access to you), O Messenger of Allah, so appoint a day for us?' He said: So, he promised them a day, and they came, and he admonished them. Among what he said to them was: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward three of her children (who die) except that they become a veil from the Fire.' A woman said: 'O Messenger of Allah, and two?' for she had lost two children so the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'And two.'"

6. Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān, no. 3020 (Chain: Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Muthannā ← Abū Khaythamah ← Shabābah ← Shu'bah ← 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Aṣḥabānī ← Dhakwān ← Abū Ṣāliḥ ← Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī):

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ: غَلَبَنَا عَلَيْكَ الرِّجَالُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا يَوْمًا. فَوَعَدَهُنَّ يَوْمًا، فَجِئْنَ، فَوَعَّظَهُنَّ، فَقَالَ لَهُنَّ فِيمَا قَالَ: مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ ثَلَاثَةً مِنْ وَلَدِهَا إِلَّا كَانُوا لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ. قَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ؟ وَقَدْ مَاتَ لَهَا اثْنَانِ، فَقَالَ لَهَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: وَاثْنَانِ

“The women said: 'The men have overwhelmed us, O Messenger of Allah, so appoint a day for us.' So, he promised them a day, and they came, and he admonished them. Among what he said to them was: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward three of her children (who die) except that they become a veil from the Fire.' A woman said: 'O Messenger of Allah, and two?' for she had lost two. So the Prophet (PBUH) said to her: 'And two.'“

7. Sunan al-Bayhaqī al-Kubrā, no. 6598 (Chain: Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdān ← Aḥmad ibn ‘Ubayd al-Ṣaffār ← Ismā’īl ibn Ishāq al-Qāḍī ← Musaddad ← Abū ‘Awānah ← ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣbahānī ← Abū Ṣāliḥ Dhakwān ← Abū Sa’īd):

أَنَّ نِسْوَةً اجْتَمَعْنَ فَأَتَاهُنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَعَلَّمَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا مِنْ وَلَدِهَا ثَلَاثَةً إِلَّا كَانُوا لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ. فَقَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَاثْنَيْنِ؟ قَالَ: وَاثْنَيْنِ

“That a group of women gathered, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) came to them and taught them from what Allah had taught him. Then he said: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward from her children three (who die) except that they become a veil from the Fire.' A woman said: 'O Messenger of Allah, and two?' He said: 'And two.'“

8. Shu’ab al-Īmān, no. 9102 (Chain: Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ ← Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ya’qūb ← Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ← Musaddad ← Abū ‘Awānah ← ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aṣbahānī ← Abū Ṣāliḥ Dhakwān ← Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī):

جَاءَتِ امْرَأَةٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، ذَهَبَ الرِّجَالُ بِحَدِيثِكَ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ نَفْسِكَ يَوْمًا نَأْتِيكَ فِيهِ تُعَلِّمُنَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَكَ اللَّهُ. فَقَالَ: اجْتَمِعْنَ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا فِي مَكَانٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا. فَاجْتَمَعْنَ، فَأَتَاهُنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَعَلَّمَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا مِنْ وَلَدِهَا ثَلَاثَةً إِلَّا كَانُوا لَهَا حِجَابًا. فَقَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ؟ قَالَ: فَأَعَادَتْهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: وَاثْنَيْنِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ، وَاثْنَيْنِ

“A woman came to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, the men have taken your discourse, so appoint a day for us from yourself that we may come to you and you teach us from what Allah has taught you.' He said: 'Gather on such-and-such a day in such-and-such a place. So, they gathered, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) came to them and taught them what Allah

had taught him. Then he said: 'There is no woman among you who sends forward from her children three (who die) except that they become a veil for her.' A woman among them said: 'O Messenger of Allah, and two?' He said and she repeated it twice then the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'And two, and two, and two.'"

### *Pattern of the transmission*

Four observations follow from collating the eight recensions.

The core sequence is invariant. The complaint, the granting of the request, the fixing of a session, the teaching, and the exchange about two children appear in every recension that preserves the opening, which is all but al-Bayhaqī's al-Sunan al-Kubrā no. 6598, where the complaint is omitted and the teaching preserved.

The transmission turns on a single pivot with two branches below it, as set out in the isnād analysis above. Convergence is therefore evidence about the wording of one report rather than corroboration from independent witnesses.

Variation is non-contradictory and falls into three classes. Whether one woman or several spoke; whether the Prophet named a place as well as a day; and whether the question about two children was asked once, twice, or three times. The first class is a difference of narrative focus, since a group request may be voiced by an individual. The second and third are matters of abbreviation, with the longer recensions of al-Bukhārī no. 6793 and Shu'ab al-Īmān preserving detail that the shorter one's compress.

The detail of the repetition is branch-specific and therefore reported with appropriate caution. Repeated questioning appears in the Abū 'Awānah branch and not in the Shu'bah branch. It is consistent with, and does not independently establish, the inference drawn below concerning conditions that permit questioning.

Table 1. The eight recensions

| NO. | Source             | Ḥadīth<br>no. | Branch<br>below<br>the pivot | Distinctive features                                                                |
|-----|--------------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Musnad Ibn al-Ja'd | 541           | Shu'bah                      | Shortest recension; single question and answer                                      |
| 2.  | Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī   | 100           | Shu'bah                      | Chapter heading explicitly poses the question of a dedicated day for teaching women |
| 3.  | Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī   | 6793          | Abū 'Awānah                  | Fullest recension; day and place both specified; question repeated                  |
| 4.  | Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim       | 4774          | Abū 'Awānah                  | Threefold repetition by both questioner and Prophet                                 |

|    |                                |      |             |                                                                                                                       |
|----|--------------------------------|------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5. | Musnad Abī Ya'la               | 1267 | Shu'bah     | States that the questioner had herself lost two children                                                              |
| 6. | Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān               | 3020 | Shu'bah     | Transmitted from Abū Ya'la (Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Muthannā); states that the questioner had herself lost two children |
| 7. | al-Sunan al-kubrā (al-Bayhaqī) | 6598 | Abū 'Awānah | Complaint omitted; opens with the women already gathered; via Musaddad                                                |
| 8. | Shu'ab al-īmān (al-Bayhaqī)    | 9102 | Abū 'Awānah | Ḥijāb given without min al-nār; day and place both specified; question repeated                                       |

Al-Bukhārī's chapter heading at no. 100 deserves emphasis independent of the matn. By titling the chapter as a question about whether women should have a day of their own for instruction, al-Bukhārī signalled in the ninth century that he read this tradition as bearing on the organisation of teaching rather than solely on the reward for bereavement. The present analysis extends a reading the compiler himself initiated.

#### *Five normative values*

Recognition of a gendered constraint. The women's formulation, ghalabanā 'alayka al-rijāl, identifies a structural impediment rather than a prohibition. Nothing barred women from the Prophet's general sessions. The dominance of male presence and voice produced exclusion without any rule requiring it. The tradition therefore establishes that a reported experience of crowding-out is admissible evidence of educational injustice, which is a considerably stronger claim than the mere affirmation of a right to learn.

Accommodation through dedicated time and space. The response was neither deferral nor exhortation to persist. In the fullest recensions the Prophet specified both day and place, assuming organisational responsibility himself. The women did not request the exclusion of men, and none was ordered. Provision was added rather than reallocated.

Curricular party. The request in Muslim's recension is specific: that he teach them mimmā 'allamaka Allāh, from what God had taught him. The response fulfils the request in the same terms. The women sought the full body of instruction and

received it. Whatever was separate, the content was not.

Conditions that permit questioning. In the separated setting a woman asked a clarifying question and, in the Abū ‘Awānah branch, repeated it. The Prophet answered each time. The inference that the setting itself enabled the questioning is plausible and is not directly stated by the text, and it is reported here as an inference rather than as a finding. What the text does establish is that the session was dialogical rather than declamatory.

Instructions addressing affective need. The content was not confined to doctrine. Addressing women in a society of high infant mortality, the Prophet taught a proposition that is simultaneously theological, consolatory, and ethical. Musnad Abī Ya’lā and Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān record that the woman who asked about two had herself lost two, which specifies the pastoral character of the exchange precisely.

### *From values to mechanisms*

Recognition of gendered constraint becomes systematic gender audit. Disaggregated data on who speaks in class, who holds position, and who reports comfort in asking questions, gathered through anonymous survey and focus discussion, operationalises the prophetic act of treating a reported constraint as evidence. School leadership that assumes the absence of formal barriers entails the absence of barriers has already departed from the precedent.

Accommodation becomes time-limited provision of dedicated space, designated hours, or single-sex sections where mixed arrangements are shown to impede participation. Evidence from targeted programming carries a warning that tradition itself anticipates. Programme data from PEAS's school network across Sub-Saharan Africa show that targeting girls alone can backfire, generating perceptions of unfairness and reducing community support; the clearest case was a 2013 funder requirement to install dormitory lighting for girls only, which produced resentment and active pushback from male students rather than the intended safety gain (Likando, 2025). The prophetic arrangement avoids that failure structurally, because provision was additive, temporary, and requested rather than imposed.

Curricular parity becomes an audit requirement. Any gender-separated programme must demonstrate equivalence of rigour, scope, and expected outcomes against mainstream provision. Separated arrangements degrade toward reduced expectation unless monitored, and the reduction is typically justified by appealing to

different learning needs that turn out to be stereotypes.

Conditions for questioning become anti-harassment protocol, counselling provision, physical safety measures, and confidential reporting. In settings where separation is neither possible nor desirable, structured turn-taking, anonymous question systems, and active management of participation reproduce the functional property without the structural one.

Affective responsiveness becomes integration of social-emotional learning and pastoral care into standard provision rather than its treatment as an optional supplement. Framing this within the Islamic tradition of attending to the learner's whole condition alters its political reception in communities that would otherwise read it as an imported psychological agenda.

Four constraints on translation

The tradition constrains its own application in four ways, and these constraints do most of the analytical work.

Temporariness. The women asked for a day. The Prophet appointed a day. No parallel institution was founded, and the wider ḥadīth corpus records women's continued participation in general assembly's thereafter. Any school-level accommodation derived from this precedent must therefore carry stated duration, review mechanism, and reintegration pathway. Accommodation that outlives the barrier it addressed has ceased to be accommodation.

Curricular party. Separation may govern access. It may not govern content.

Learner initiation. The request originated with the women. This inverts the usual structure of protective policy, in which separation is imposed on girls in the name of safeguarding and without their participation in its design. Policies derived from this text must be opt-in and participatory, or they contradict the precedent while invoking it.

Orientation toward mainstream transformation. The purpose of the separated session was to equip the women with the same knowledge the men had, enabling fuller participation in the community rather than the establishment of a permanent parallel sphere. Accommodation is transitional by design.

Empirical work on single-sex schooling reinforces rather than undermines these constraints. A meta-analysis of 184 studies representing 1.6 million students across 21 nations finds only trivial differences between single-sex and coeducational settings once



studies are restricted to those controlling for selection effects, with some indicators, including girls' educational aspirations, favoring coeducation (Pahlke et al., 2014). Separation is thus warranted as a remedy for a documented barrier and not as an independently superior arrangement, which is exactly the position the four constraints encode.

The competing reading

Intellectual honesty requires stating the rival interpretation rather than passing over it, particularly since the rival interpretation is the historically dominant one.

The segregationist reading holds that the Prophet's provision of a separate session reflects a general norm of gender separation in public instruction, and that the women's complaint records are not a barrier to be removed but a propriety to be observed. On this reading the tradition licenses permanently separate schooling and, in stronger versions, the restriction of women's instruction to domains deemed appropriate.

Three features of the text are against this reading, and they should be stated in the article rather than assumed.

The complaint is phrased as grievance, not as request for propriety. *Ghalabanā* denotes being overcome or crowded out. Women who sought separation on grounds of propriety would not describe the mixed setting as one in which they had been defeated.

The Prophet did not exclude men from his general sessions, and no report indicates that women ceased attending them. Had the episode established a norm of separation, the general assemblies would have been reorganised. They were not.

The content is explicitly identical. A propriety-based separation carries no implication that the separated group receives the full curriculum, and the women's own formulation forecloses the reduction.

The segregationist reading is therefore not baseless, since a separate session did occur. It is underdetermined by the text and contradicted by its details. Starting this openly is stronger than omitting it, because reviewers and opponents will raise it regardless.

### 3. Conclusion

Eight recensions of a single prophetic tradition, converging on one pivot transmitter and branching below it through Shu'bah and Abū 'Awānah, report an invariant sequence. Women identified a gendered constraint on their access to instruction. The Prophet treated the report as evidence, added provision rather than reallocating it,

held the curriculum constant, permitted questioning, and addressed affective alongside doctrinal need.

Five normative values follow, and four constraints govern their translation. The constraints matter more than the values, because the values alone are compatible with permanent segregation and the constraints are not.

**Theoretical contribution.** The study demonstrates that the logic of substantive equality differential provision as remedy for structural disadvantage is instantiated in a canonical prophetic precedent rather than imported into Islamic educational thought from external frameworks. The claim is specific. It is not that Islam anticipated equality law, but that this text performs the operation that Fredman's model describes.

**Methodological contribution.** The study models comparative recension analysis as an alternative to the misapplication of corpus-based thematic saturation to hadith clusters. The distinction between convergence across recensions of one report and corroboration across independent sources is elementary in hadith criticism and routinely elided in interdisciplinary work. Making the distinction explicit is transferable to any study analyzing variant transmissions of a single tradition.

The study further specifies how a coding paradigm developed for independent empirical cases can be borrowed for a closed textual corpus, and the borrowing is necessarily partial. Open, axial, and selective coding transfer intact, since they operate on meaning within a text and make no assumption about the population from which the text was drawn. Theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation do not transfer at all, since both presuppose an open population of independent cases and a ḥadīth cluster is neither. Naming which components transfer and which do not offer more to subsequent work than either a blanket endorsement or a blanket rejection of qualitative coding in ḥadīth studies.

**Practical contribution.** Five mechanisms gender audit, time-limited accommodation, curricular parity monitoring, safe-space protocol, integrated pastoral provision each traceable to a specific clause, each constrained by the four constraints on translation set out above.

**Limitations.** The analysis treats one tradition and excludes others bearing on women's education, notably the material concerning 'Ā'ishah's role as teacher and transmitter. The framework has not been tested in any school. The reliance on classical rijāl evaluation establishes authenticity and settles nothing about interpretive reception across madhhabs, which varies. And a text-derived framework cannot by

itself overcome the funding, training, and ownership deficits that defeat gender-responsive policy in practice; it addresses legitimacy, which is one obstacle among several.

Recommendations. Integrate the accommodation model into national sector plans and teacher professional development frameworks. Establish continuous rather than episodic gender-responsive pedagogy training. Use the Islamabad Declaration as a legitimating instrument without treating it as a substitute for evaluation. Conduct longitudinal mixed-methods testing of the framework in diverse settings, measuring participation patterns and perceived safety alongside academic outcomes.

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