

## Promoting Gender Equality within Islamic Tradition via Contextualist Approach

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**Abstract :** The importance of advancing women's rights is closely intertwined with the development of civil society and the institutionalization of democracy in Middle Eastern countries. There is indeed an intimate relationship between the process of democratization and promoting gender equality, since democracy necessitates equality between men and women. In order to advance the issue of gender equality, what is required is a solid theoretical framework which has its roots in the reexamination of pre-modern interpretation of certain Qur'anic passages that seem to have given men more rights than it gives women. This paper suggests that those Muslim scholars who adopt a contextualist approach to the Qur'anic text and its interpretation provide a solid theoretical background for improving women's rights. Indeed, the aim of the paper is to discuss how the contextualist approach to the Qur'anic text and its interpretation given by a number of prominent scholars is capable of promoting the issue of gender equality. The paper concludes that since (1) much of the gender inequality found in the primary sources of Islam as well as pre-modern Muslim writings is rooted in the natural cultural norms and standards of early Islamic societies and (2) since the context of today's world is so different from that of the pre-modern era, the proposed models provide a solid theoretical framework for promoting women's rights and gender equality.

**Keywords :** contextualism, gender equality, Islam, the rights of women

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