

# Maintenance and Marital Gift: Empowering Muslim Women Through Unlaboured Source

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## Abstract

This study focuses on women's empowerment through unlabored sources. The core values of the Islamic legal system include the protection of women and children, the distribution of wealth, and resource allocation to male and female Muslims. These sources include monetary support available for wives during marriage, divorce, and after divorce, among others. The researchers used content analysis to collect relevant data and generate the themes. The discussion is on available literature about sources of empowerment in Islam for women with reference to the institutions of marriage and divorce. Prior search was for the researcher to establish the relevance of the information and data for analysis of the subject matter. The data were collected from multiple sources, and a varied interpretation was done based on the research objectives. The study found that women's empowerment in Islam goes beyond the process by which women have greater control over tangible but includes non-tangible resources that guarantee autonomy over household decision-making. The study contributes to knowledge on Islamic ways of women's empowerment, which is completely different from the conventional way. This may assist development agents and authorities of non-Islamic societies to give these ways of empowering women, thus without labour or moving out to struggle before she is empowered. The study on women's empowerment was limited to only existing literature, so putting attributes or features into categories presented some challenges, generalizing the results to be analyzed with caution.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Foundation, Accountable, Obligations, Spiritual, Bride-price

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## 1. Introduction

Women contribute substantially to the socioeconomic development of nations and therefore the need to empower them cannot be questioned. As such, both developed and developing countries consider the empowerment of women as an important part of economic development strategies. According to some scholars, empowerment is the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them (Nugroho, & Chowdhury, 2015; Kabeer 2001; cited in Tanmoyee Banerjee (Chatterjee) and Chandralekha Ghosh 2012). This explains why various governments develop national policies for the empowerment of women in order to promote their socioeconomic advancement to enable them to realize their full potential. It is assumed that access to financial services by women can contribute to economic productivity and social well-being. However, that does not automatically empower women due to the lack of radical structural transformation in some communities that true empowerment entails (Banerjee, & Ghosh, 2012). With empowerment, women play a crucial role in decision-making both at the home and community levels. They are also able to feed, clothe and shelter themselves (Nugroho, & Chowdhury, 2015). Muslim societies are cognizant of the fact that society may achieve the full usage of the available resources without the full participation and integration of women into the process of socioeconomic development. Studies revealed that the role and responsibility of women as mothers, caretakers, and agents of community development can serve as a source of poverty alleviation for their communities and the nation at large (World Bank, 2011; McCarthy, 2017). Women should therefore be considered partners in socioeconomic and environmental sustainability.

The assumptions about Muslim women are often, as explained by some authors, ill-conceived, misinformed, and grossly misrepresented (Jawad, & Benn, 2002). It is revealed that most of the non-Islamic societies are biased due to this misinformation that made them fail to understand that the problem of Muslim women is not purely religious but a sociocultural issue, thus religion used by a patriarchal society (Jawad, & Benn, 2002;). As such

non-Islamic societies still have issues with the key aspects of Islamic law on marriage, divorce, polygamy, sexuality, and family honor perceived as seriously affecting Muslim women's rights and empowerment. In this case, interpreting Islamic sources in the context of justice between men and women can be considered a way of enhancing the empowerment of women (Rashid, 2014; Arnez, 2010). The cultural or patriarchal interpretation of issues rather than Islamic interpretation can be blamed for the problems encountered by Muslim women in society (Jawad, & Benn, 2002; Duderija, 2014). For instance, the dissolution of marriage or divorce based on this interpretation makes it difficult for the women involved to live a decent life. To avoid these inconveniences after divorce or during the marriage, there is a long process for Muslim women for justifications to be made before, during, and after divorce. The aspects of Islamic law have dealt with issues that are seen as problems for Muslim women but turn out to be the source of their empowerment. In a situation of a successful divorce, Islam prescribed *Mut'at al-Talaq* (post-divorce financial support) for Muslim women to avoid difficulties due to financial reasons (Jawad, & Benn, 2002; Duderija, 2014). The rationale is to avoid the fear of divorce's consequences, such as the difficulty in earning a livelihood or not being allowed to participate in societal activities (Rashid, 2014; Arnez, 2010).

This study focuses on unlabored financial support enjoyed by women during marriage and divorce, and after divorce in Islam as sources of empowerment as well as their legal rights to own and manage property is explored. The *Qur'an* admonished both women and men in terms of moral autonomy, encouraging good deeds and forbidding bad deeds which in a way empowered woman spiritually. The *Qur'an* contains concepts like *al-adl* (justice), *qist* (equity), *ihsan* (moral excellence), *rahmah* (mercy), and *wasatiyya* (moderation) which constitute a source of empowerment for Muslim women (Duderija, 2014). Conventionally, wealth accumulation, control of finance, and equal pay are indicative of empowerment (Cornwall, 2014; McCarthy, 2017) but the present study focuses on how women are empowered through unlabored sources.

## 2. Methodology

The empowerment of Muslim women is a debatable issue in recent literature. There is a less or inadequate empirical study on unlabored sources of empowerment. To gather authentic data, researchers used direct and summative qualitative content analysis research methods to generate the research findings. The study focused on the welfare system with reference to the institutions of marriage and divorce as a source of empowerment.

Data collection was spread to include prominent databases provided by Taylor and Frances, Emerald, Elsevier, and Pro-Quest among others. By using certain keywords, the emphasis was on identifying relevant and appropriate literature on unlabored sources of empowerment. Scholarly articles published between (except in the background of the study) 2010 and 2020 were considered to be analyzed.

A preliminary exploratory search revealed high research publications in certain periods. As such, the researcher chose 2010 as the base year to gather data. The scope of the search was extended to include subject headings like women empowerment in Islam to avoid biases. Researchers engaged in an extensive discussion to resolve all opposing views.

The researchers relied on existing literature to develop the initial codes before the analysis of the data. Additional codes were developed during the analysis where the initial codes were revised and refined. The data were analyzed in line with the objectives of the study. After several readings and analyses, the researchers generated themes from the secondary data based on the frequency of appearances.

The study focused on Muslim women and empowerment through unlabored sources as such, publications were selected through scholarly work in the form of academic journal papers, conference papers, theses, and book/book chapters which explain the nature of empowerment.

## 3. Findings

The main aim of this study was to assess the unlabored source of empowerment of Muslim women. The study sought to explain empowerment that is somehow different from the conventional perspective of empowerment through avenues like businesses, income, education, house level decision making among others. The themes below were generated based on the analysis of data.

### 3.1 Spiritual empowerment

The empowerment of Muslims (men and women) is demonstrated in the word *Khalifa* (vicegerent) as stated in the *Qur'an*. As such the foundation of empowerment of Muslim women can be derived from her status as *Khalifa*. Based on this, Islam demands the empowerment of both males and females, thus women's

empowerment is very important. Islam teaches that ‘Allah is One, He has no partner, and Muslim men and women are His honored servants.’ The *Qur’an* has not mentioned that women should always stay at home or should not be allowed to work outside the house (Bhattacharya, 2014). There is no question about the impotence of women being considered independent since men and women are responsible and accountable for their deeds in the same ways. Muslim women are also free to acquire beneficial knowledge to empower themselves spiritually (Rashid, 2014; Arnez, 2010; Duderija, 2014). The Holy *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah* (practice) provides a clear path or way for self-actualization and prosperity. The *Qur’an* constantly reminds mankind of the need to wash away the accumulated sins of the day and night with forgiveness and pardon (Rashid, 2014; Shah, 2013; Mohiuddin, 2012). Besides, the *Qur’an* also gave many rights to women and spelled them out in detail on how to resolve tensions associated with the marginalization of particular social groups (Grine, 2014).

*“And among His signs is this that He created from you mates from amongst yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts; verily in that are signs for those who reflect”* (Qur’an, 30: 21).

Quite apart, the *Sunnah* constitutes a broader method of life in keeping the physical organs and senses stable, which also acts to purify the heart and soul (Shah, 2013; Grine, 2014; Aziz, & Ambreen, 2016). The *Qur’an* treats women with dignity and accords them equal status with men in doing good and forbidding bad deeds which in a way serves as a source of spiritual empowerment. Spiritually empowered women enjoy a great deal of bolstered achievements and distinction as they are able to maintain their lives and extend love to their children and husbands with respect for their marital relations (Barlas, 2019; Badran, 2016). Muslim women with this level of spirituality choose to be successful mothers who enjoy the role of a homemaker and know that their entitlement cannot be taken away. This leads to social inclusiveness as Muslim women feel valued and have opportunities for full social and economic participation in the life of their community. It is clearly stated in the *Qur’an* that:

*“And do not covet what Allah has given some of you more than others: the Men shall have their due share according to what they have earned and the Women shall have their share according to what they have earned. So pray to Allah for his bounty; most surely Allah has perfect knowledge of everything.”* (Qur’an, 4: 32)

Most Muslim women find it hard to believe that success in life is to embracing a whole-heartedly non-Islamic way of life at the expense of the entirety of Islamic values to earn status and respect in society (Bhattacharya, 2014; Hasso, 2009). The male responsibility for the provision of housing, economic maintenance of women and children as well as child support in situations of divorce are emphasized in Islamic jurisprudence (Ali, 2015; Hasso, 2009; Bhattacharya, 2014). Thus, most Muslim women do not accept the assertion of complete gender equality which is not in line with the principle of Islam. Abdullah et al., (2015) indicated that a husband has a responsibility in Islam to ensure the physical and emotional security of the wife. Other sources of empowerment are the extra favors Muslim women also enjoy in *salat*, *jihad*, and *haji*, these are not granted to men which means that Islam does not discriminate against women but rather empowers them in various ways. The most respected in the sight of Allah are the most righteous amongst you (*Qur’an*, 49: 13) (Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016). The relevance of verse 34 of *Surah al-Nisa*: “Men are in charge of women because Allah has given the one superiority over the other and because they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth” (*Qur’an*, 4: 34) (Bhattacharya, 2014). The Prophet (*ṣal-Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) had special consideration for the honor, dignity, and rights of women (Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016). Islam encourages the acquisition of knowledge for both male and female Muslims as part of *Ibadah* (worship). Knowledge leads to empowerment and once women are empowered, they can take part in decision making which enhances their well-being and development (Nugroho, & Chowdhury, 2015). The first four verses of the *Qur’an*, 96: 1-4 are enough to justify as it states: “Read in the name of your Lord who created .... Read, and your Lord is the most Generous, who taught by the pen” (Bhattacharya, 2014). Invariably, Nugroho and Chowdhury (2015) think that it is the traditional and cultural beliefs and other impediments rather than Islam that curtailed the participation of women in some Muslim societies and access to these unlabored empowerment resources.

### 3.2 Divorce and Post-Divorce Financial Support

In the event of divorce, the father and mother have the responsibility to provide for the needs of the children. Studies revealed that fathers have financial obligations thus supporting the children and the ex-wife. (Rashid, 2014; Arnez, 2010). For instance, the right of divorced wives to claim support from their former husbands is clearly stated in the Malaysian Islamic Family Law, and in a situation of default, the husband may be penalized. Besides, another situation under which the wife can report for divorce includes *ta’lik talak* thus cases where the wife is maltreated, abandoned, or case of insufficient financial support from her husband (Parker, Riyani, & Nolan, 2016; Huis, 2010). It is a well-established rule that maintenance should be extended to a Muslim wife

during marriage and after divorce during the *iddat* period (Rahman, & Sirazi, 2018; Bhattacharya, 2014). This waiting period *iddah* is prescribed for the wife after divorce (Q. 2:234) to give time for possible conflict resolution and to guarantee the paternity of the child in case the woman was pregnant. During *iddah*, maintenance is prescribed for a divorced Muslim woman (Q. 2:241) in form of monetary support, shelter, and kindness from the husband and/or relatives and family of the husband (Q. 2:240, 2:233, 65:6) (Huis, 2010; Rashid, 2014; Arnez, 2010). The Islamic law on divorced women is contained in the *Qur'anic* interpretation below (Ali, trans. 1979).

*"... for divorced women financial support should be provided on a reasonable (scale). This is a duty on the righteous". (Qur'an 2: 241)*

The rights to property by women after the provision of divorce monetary support are guaranteed in *Shariah* as shown in the *Qur'an: Surah 2 Verse 241* above (Rahman, & Sirazi, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2015). For instance, financial support for divorced women is clear in Islam as shown in the above *Qur'anic* verse (Ali, trans. 1979 cited in Abdullah, Monsoor, Johari, & Mohd Radzi, 2015). A divorced married woman in Islam receives a certain amount of monetary support from the ex-husband to assist the woman to begin a new life on her own. The elaboration of Islamic law is through the interpretation of the different schools of thought like Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, and Hanbali. So every Muslim society adheres to a particular school of thought as such the law on monetary support in marriage and post-divorce depends on certain guidelines of that school of thought. For instance, the Hanafi School of Islamic Law recommends financial support during post-divorce based on the social position of the couple while the Shafi'i School of Islamic Law considers only the position of the husband (Abdullah et al., 2015; Shahid 2013). In the context of Malaysia, Muslims follow the Shafi'i School of Islamic Law prescribed the financial support award based on the economic status of the husband. The important point is that maintenance is an obligatory duty for a husband to provide (Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016) to his wife due to the marital relationship between them. As explained by Shahid (2013), marriage in Islam mandates the rights and fulfillment of certain prescribed obligations like '*nafaqah*' or maintenance, binding on the man to provide for his wife. The husband is supposed to provide maintenance in marriage and in the event of divorce up to the expiration of the *iddah* period (Rahman, & Sirazi, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2015). The deferred dower in Islam is considered a support guarantee for divorced women (Abdullah, et al., 2015). *Qur'an Surah 65 Verse 6* established the rights of a wife to maintenance during marriage and the *iddah* period which compels husbands to maintain their wives after divorce for three months as stated in the *Qur'an* below:

*"Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods ..."* (Qur'an, 2: 228).

According to Abdullah et al. (2015), women have the rights to divorce, custody, and claims to make after divorce as per the Islamic Family Law thus women are allowed visits or meeting with children. Even though divorce is placed at the hand of the husband, a Muslim woman has the right to seek divorce either from him or through the *Sharia* court when the husband refuses.

### 3.3 Social empowerment

Women are empowered when encouraged to live independent economic life devoid of discrimination and bottlenecks, reminded about correct behavior based on Islamic teachings, take good care of their reproductive health, and seek guidance from Allah (Rashid, 2014; Arnez, 2010). The idea of making information on economic, social, cultural, and symbolic interpretation available is useful for empowerment. For instance, capacity building in the form of the acquisition of knowledge, language, and embodied habits are forms of skills acquired culturally for the purpose of socialization, especially for children. With this, Muslim women are able to mobilize different sorts of skills and capacities to be able to build their identity as socialization agents and respectable members of their communities. They mobilize social capital from social resources and networks such as families, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and the larger community that a person can draw upon (Parker et al., 2016; Awan, 2012; Maxwell, Foley, Taylor, & Burton, 2013). The *Qur'an Surah 4 Verse 34* below made it clear that the husband is responsible for the upkeep of the wife and children:

*"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means..."* (Qur'an 4: 34)

The word 'protector' refers to an individual being responsible for someone else thus in this case protection of the woman's interest, business, and or affairs. This makes society a socially inclusive one where everybody –men and women- feel valued and have opportunities for full social and economic participation in the life of their community (Australian Government, 2011; Maxwell, et al., 2013; Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016). The *Qur'an* is emphatic on the responsibilities of husbands to avoid the possible familial challenges women might encounter in marriage and when separated or divorced. As such the position of women in Islam is strengthened in the Islamic

family law in relation to social and financial matters as a way of empowerment.

The determinants of women's socioeconomic position in most Muslim societies include, but are not limited to, being able to inherit, own property, control income, acquire assets, take part in socioeconomic activities, have a share of their husband's incomes and the right to control property (Abdullah, et al., 2014; Booley, 2014). In the event of an unbearable marriage relationship, Islamic Law grants the couple the right to abrogate their marriage contract upon which the husband compensates the wife with the *mu'akhar al sadaq* (belated dower) and provides maintenance that befits the woman's socioeconomic well-being (Samaha, 2017). The *Qur'an* in verse 71 of *Surah al Tawbah* tasked both men and women as follows: "The believers, men, and women, are *walis* protecting friends or guardians of one another; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; they establish regular prayers, pay *zakat* -obligatory charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger" (Bhattacharya, 2014; Duderija, 2014a). Islam took the empowerment needs like economic, sociocultural, interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological dimensions seriously.

### 3.4 Empowerment through mahr

The duties and responsibilities of members of an Islamic household are clearly addressed. For instance, the husband is considered the head of the family, and wives is the household manager in marriage laws in most Muslim communities. Marriage is strongly recommended in the *Qur'an* (Q. 24:32), in relation to an individual's chastity (Q. 4:25) which can be considered as an act of *ibadah* (worship) and social action *mu'amalah* (Opwis, 2016; Parker et al., 2016). The marital duties and rights are described in the *Qur'an* to be shared in a mutual manner (Q. 4:19, 30:21, 66:6) (Parker et al., 2016). Marriage in Islam is called *nikah*, and can as well stand for sexual intercourse (Arab. *wath'*, *dlom'*). It also referred to the marriage contract, 'and between the couples and the bride represented with *mahr* (dower) by her guardian (*wali*), as a gift (Q. 4:4, 20, 24, 25) (Opwis, 2016; Idrus, 2011; Parker et al., 2016; Butt, 2008). In way of empowerment, *mahr* which can be in the form of property or money is handed over to the wife by the bridegroom in recognition of the marriage as her entitlement or it may be passed/handed over through the parents. by the bridegroom in recognition of the marriage. It is the responsibility of the husband in Islam to cater to the physical and psychological well-being of the wife throughout their marriage life (Abdullah, et al., 2015). The parents of the bride also present dowry which could be in the form of money, goods, or estate to take to her husband at marriage' thus some family property is given to the daughter by the parent upon her marriage (Nurmila, 2009; Parker et al., 2016; Butt, 2008). As explained, the validity of Islamic marriage requires a prospective husband or wife, guardianship *wali*, two witnesses, the offer and acceptance *ijab* and *qabul* to be put in place (Al-Jaziry n.d.: 32). The consensus among most jurists on the basic complimentary duties for husband and wife include financial support *nafaqa* and obedience *ta'a* respectively (Iswarini, 2011; Cammack, Young, and Heaton, 2008; Parker et al., 2016; Butt, 2008). In Islam, females are entitled to *mahr* and maintenance (Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016). The principle of equality in many *Qur'anic* verses advocates believing males and females deserve to be treated and charged equally in order to reap equal rewards (Samaha, 2017).

## 4 Discussion

As a source of empowering Muslim women, *Tawhīd* that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad (*pbuh*) is His prophet plays an important role in relation to their relationships and well-being in the society (Mohiuddin, 2012; Opwis, 2016; Duderija, 2014a). Again, the *Qur'anic* concept of *khalifa* does not refer to only males. Being just and righteous is a way to get *taqwā* on earth in order to establish equal relationships in marriage and other aspects of life (Opwis, 2016; Aziz, & Ambreen, 2016). This is a clear demonstration that men and women make a meaningful contribution in the private and public spheres to enhance their well-being in life. As such, encouraging male and female to excel in their endeavor serve as a source of empowerment (Duderija, 2014a, 2014b). In this regard, women and men are promised a reward for good deeds and punishment for wrong deeds in Islam especially in respect of marriage and divorce. This implies that the husband and the wife enjoy equal social and legal rights without any discrimination or preferential treatment (Booley, 2014). Islam accords men and women equal honor with the only difference that may exist between them being the level of consciousness of Allah *taqwa* or the level of obedience to Allah (Duderija, 2014b; Bhattacharya, 2014; Opwis, 2016; Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016)). Thus, it is the degree of *taqwā* that shows the distinction between man and woman in Islam (Q. 49:13).

The duty or responsibility to maintenance of a wife is compulsory in Islam even if the woman is capable or earns a regular income. It means that the husband's responsibility is to maintain the wife or pay the *mahr* as required and does not cease even if the woman earns more than the man. In the same way, the woman is not obliged to maintain the husband unless she willingly decides to support him. Muslim women are expected to be submissive to their husbands and to remain under their husband's roofs for maintenance as prescribed (Mahmood, 2013;

Rahman, & Sirazi, 2018;). Ali, (1985) explained that all the just and reasonable instructions of the husband as stated in the Holy *Quran* and the *Sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet as fundamental sources of Islamic law need to be obeyed by the wife. In this sense, Muslim men are directed in the *Qur'an* to pay financial support to their divorced wives during *iddat*. With this directive, divorced women have the right to maintain for themselves and the minors for the reason of breastfeeding the baby (Rahman, et al., 2018). Bhattacharya, (2014) culture plays an important role in determining how women are treated during and after divorce in most Muslim communities. The cultural and religious practices of some Muslim societies are inseparable as Islamic religious texts are wrongly interpreted in those cultural contexts. According to studies (Bhattacharya, 2014; Abdullah, 2015), post-divorce financial provisions remained largely untouched despite those ramifications. In order to empower women, constraints like lack of opportunity to participate actively in the public sphere, inadequate incomes to support the family, high rate of illiteracy among women, and ignored in household decision-making among others should be seriously dealt with under Islamic law. These conditions and wrong interpretations make it difficult for Muslim women to enjoy their rights abundantly in the *Qur'an* in terms of justice for the enhancement of the human being. On this note, (Bhattacharya, 2014) distinguished between Islam and culture with the explanation that Islam is never an impediment to the welfare and empowerment of women. They separated cultural practices from religion in order to champion the rights and empowerment of women within the framework of Islam (Bhattacharya, 2014; Rahman, et al., 2018). Quite apart, women have the right to file for divorce in court, take child custody and make some claims after divorce especially when they faced familial problems due to the failure of the husbands to carry out their duties as prescribed in the *Qur'an* (Abdullah, 2015).

There is no doubt that women are instruments for socialization, social change, and development and their empowerment will be of great benefit to humanity. Considering this, Islamic law prescribed for husbands supports their wives in various ways even though the interpretation of some of these injunctions is influenced by culture and traditions. For instance, the interpretation of *Qawamah* in the *Qur'an* 4:34 in various ways such as a ruler, manager, protector, supporter, or one in charge suggests male superiority as understood by some interpreters. The superiority could be insignificant when *qawwam* is loosely interpreted as “those who run around to earn” since it is only about function and not related to biological superiority or inferiority Booley, (2014). Invariably, that may also imply that Muslim women who earn an income can be *qawwam* as such it is empowering when interpreted appropriately. The above quotation is an indication that marriage is compassion and love which constitute the core Islamic values and are clear recognition accorded to women. By implication, the status of women and how to treat them is based on the interpretations of the main sources of Islam. For instance, it is clear in the *Qur'an*, 74 Verse 38 that women are neither placed under undue restrictions on their activities nor required to completely hide. According to Samaha (2017), Muslim women have the right to safeguard their socioeconomic and spiritual status by adhering to both marriage and divorce as ordained by Allah “Retain wives honorably or release them with clemency” (*Qur'anic* 2 verse 229) to maintain equilibrium in the relationship. As Rahman, & Sirazi, (2018) explained the relevant verses that indicate the rights of divorced women at the time of the divorce and the *iddat* period. They explained further that by law the husband needs to provide food, clothing, accommodation, and other necessities of life. The *Qur'an* made provision of maintenance to divorced wives an obligation on Muslim men as expressed in the duty of the righteous in *Qur'an* 2 Verse 241: “For divorced women maintenance (should be provided) on a reasonable (scale). This is a duty on the righteous.”

Efforts in empowering women have been made in most Muslim countries. The *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* are the main sources of Islamic law covering issues of marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody, guardianship, and inheritance as well as the consequences, (Booley, 2014; Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016)). For instance, a lot of concerns have been raised by reformers pointing at matters like marrying more than one wife, *talaq* (divorce), registration of marriage and divorce, and the minimum age for marriage claimed to affect women's well-being (Opwis, 2016; Duderija, 2014a). However, a Muslim woman has the right to share in the inheritance of her deceased parents as well as an independent personality which demonstrates a source of empowerment. This explains why a Muslim woman after marriage continues to enjoy their rights as an individual and therefore restricts the husband's right over the wife excluding her personal property, the marital gift (her dower), or any income earned. Studies suggest that the wife's financial security is guaranteed when the husband provides the *mahr* marital gift in addition to other gifts like ornaments, monetary in form of capital, or property of any form from parents (Ali et al., 2018; Ali, 2016). These constitute sources of empowerment in the sense that the husband cannot under any circumstance take them from the wife. Muslim women also have the right to own property and lawful earnings and thus have the right to protect their property against any interference from the husband, brother, or father. On the contrary, studies suggest that women's economic position in non-Islamic society depends on the ownership of means of production, inheritance of estate or landed properties and control of income-earning assets, participation in economic activities, having control over or sharing husband's bank account and the right to control property (Abdullah, Mohd Radzi, Johari, & Dastagir, 2014).

## 5 Conclusion

Conventionally, empowerment of individuals includes the process that requires resources to facilitate, for instance, the ability of women to make choices leading to outcomes with direct implications for their welfare. While the conventional way of empowering women considers education and material resources as an entry point, Islam has unlabored support in addition as a way of empowerment. Muslims are all the time conscious of the issue of halal and haram in their daily activities as both men and women need to take appropriate action before Allah. Thus, empowerment in Islam goes beyond material resources or employment status as these are the only conditions under which empowerment is likely to occur. The spiritual needs of mankind are considered part of empowerment in Islam and therefore Muslim women feel empowered when these needs are met. The moral autonomy of women and men, the promotion of good and forbidding evil, and the concept of marriage, justice, and family life support lead to empowerment in Islam. The husband under Islamic law is identified as the protector and provider because Allah has given the husband more (strength) than the wife and thus grants women the right to maintenance from men. It is clearly stated in Islam that all members of society have equal rights and obligations before Allah. Thus, the principle of Islam is concerned with the rights and obligations of women and men and not gender or superiority. Therefore, there are gender-specific rights and duties in Islam which can help explain the empowerment of Muslim women. The gift to the wife by the husband at the time of marriage is for her to spend at her own free will. Besides, divorced women may be able to establish themselves or start a new life from the maintenance provided by the husbands and when they are pregnant the husband has to spend on them (wife and unborn child) until they give birth. All these unlabored sources create an environment that promotes the advancement, development, and empowerment of women to realize their full potential. These make the conventional way of empowering women somehow problematic considering that some source of empowerment may lead to extortion from women's earnings through high interest rate which in fact is against the tenants of Islam.

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