

## **Role of Muslim women in decision-making: a case study of Mawanella**

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This research aims to evaluate the Role of women in independent decision making from family to the society in *Mawanella* and to analyse the disparity between Islamic texts and the popular practices.

This study was carried out within a diverse Muslim population of 598 families. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews with key informants and case studies. The structured questionnaire survey was conducted with 100 respondents. The sample for the questionnaire survey was selected through the stratified random sampling method based on gender, socioeconomic background, education level and affiliation to religious organisations.

The purposive sampling was used for in-depth interviews that provided qualitative data regarding the individuality and status of women. The case studies were done using snowball sampling in order to obtain more subjective aspects of the position of women in decision making.

The results and findings of this study revealed that women despite their social and economic status prefer to be financially independent. Though women are respected, they are often deprived of making decisions as individuals, regarding crucial life events such as choosing a partner in marriage, continuing their higher education and opting to work. It was also found out that the women's participation in social activities is also limited. The decisions regarding the society are often made by men and women are seldom consulted.

Although the pure Islamic teachings recognise women whether married or unmarried as individuals of self-worth, the popular Muslim culture seldom allows women to enjoy that properly. The measures to minimise the blockades for women moving forward should seriously be taken into consideration. Islamic movements must reconsider broadening of their vision and hierarchical structure accommodating more women's participation and on diverse fields.

As one-half of the community, women should not be deprived of the right to take part in the decision-making process of the *Mosque* nor in participating in activities of social interest. The researcher suggests that women representation in the form of an advisory committee in *Qazicourts* and *Mosques* would be a good move towards enabling social mobility of women.

Unfortunately, as our society relies so much on the power and strength of the authority of men, there has been a continuous struggle among women even for their authoritative rights enshrined in the Quran and authentic hadiths.

The researcher feels that it is important to identify these types of common problems and dilemmas that a Muslim woman faces due to the un-authoritative customs and beliefs of the Sri Lankan Muslim society and try to bring out the 'voice of the voiceless' by trying to figure out how they feel towards the capitalization of men in the forefront even when many women are much capable of discharging the same duties without any disruption.