

# Al-Huda International Influencing Lifestyle of Urban Women Through Islamic Religious Learning

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## Abstract

This research entitled “The role of Islamic education in developing and educating females: A case study of Al-Huda Institute, Islamabad” answers several questions regarding the increasing trend of acquiring Islamic education for urban women and how Al Huda is playing its part in it. The research objectives are to investigate the reasons behind the increasing trend of seeking Islamic education by urban/rural women. It will also investigate and analyze the impact of Islamic education on the lives and lifestyles of women acquired by Al-Huda and finally investigate the role of Al-Huda in the development of women’s lifestyles. An effort has been made to comprehend and reveal the variables behind developing and educating for the Islamic part not just urban but rural females too, and the component that Al Huda is experienced in practicing these females. The circumstances of Al Huda are portrayed since it is a standout amongst the most well-known otherworldly organizations offering the requirements of females. Looking at the Al Huda, the research talks about the impact of Islamic education and its way into developing and improving the lifestyles of females. The reason for doing this analysis is to assess the steadily improving notoriety of otherworldly scholastic organizations, other than the conventional madrasas, which furnish an energizing and magnificent aggregation of sciences and anthropological subjects. The results from the investigation uncover that females are drawn towards getting Islamic parts because of an open mixture of components, for example, the most up to date comprehensive and across-the-nation occasions; absence of Islamic learning; singular regard for understanding Islam all the more completely; and occurrence of a method for lifestyle upgrading occasion. Ladies are running across to select Al Huda on account of its novel view which centers fundamentally on joining Muslims to Allah by making the learners aware of their moral obligations and the quality of Islam for self-development. Al Huda has progressed to impact the method for the lifestyle of numerous females by offering them a stage to grasp Islam and work at it. The practicing of Islam furnished by Al Huda is not a trend that may vanish inevitably, yet is a reason behind the distinction in the method for the lifestyle of numerous females who have encountered progressions both identifiable and not-so-noticeable, for example, changes in outfits (reception of Hijab), changes in aggregation, avoiding Un Islamic customs and

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festivals. Al Huda is experiencing a discriminating feature in changing and making the method for the lifestyle of city females effective.

**Keywords:** Hijab, Madaras, Al-Huda, Development, Education, Women, Female Islamic education

## Introduction

A famous Muslim poet Hafiz Ibrahim said, “Mother is a school, if well prepared; an entire healthy society is prepared.” Islam honors the education of women as important as giving education to men. Therefore, under Islamic religious laws, the education of women is regarded as a key indicator of societal success. Not only are educated women better able to manage their personal lives, but their family lives as well. Educated females can nurture their kids in a better way than uneducated women. Preventing a Muslim woman from seeking education is un-Islamic and unethical. The importance of education can be depicted by the fact that the very first revelation of the Quran was “Iqra” meaning “to learn”. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH also emphasized the importance of education for both men and women in various Ahadith. “The search for knowledge is a duty for every Muslim (male or female)” and “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave” are two very famous hadiths that delineate the significance of education for both men and women. Therefore, Islam privileges women as much as men with the capacity to learn, understand, and seek education as much as they can. Islamic education is the pillar of Muslim educational development. Seeking knowledge and its practical application is mandatory for every Muslim man and woman. The modes of Islamic knowledge delivery include Mosques and “Madrasas” (Arabic terms for Islamic institutes). These educational foundations are not restricted to men only, rather females have also been directed to seek knowledge and benefit from these institutes for centuries. Madrasa has had a significant role in Muslim societies for centuries as it has been the source of education for Islamic societies without any discrimination of religion, race, or gender. Thus, Madrasas produced numerous renowned scholars in all fields of study, including religion, science, and other disciplines (Rehman, 2004).

Over the years, education has gradually been accepted as an important right of women; however, this is restricted mostly to the urban centers of Pakistan. This is

why the literacy rate of the country is still very low. Another trend that has been prevalent in society is that Islamic education has become a secondary discipline in educational institutes all over the country. This trend is more prominent in urban cities where professional and scientific education has taken precedence over Islamic education. Islamic education is largely limited to the Diniyat/ Islamiyat course which is compulsory from Class I up to B. A/ B. Sc (Anzar, 2003). On the other hand, there are hundreds of Madrasas operators in the country which are filled with boys and girls from poor families or rural areas. The enlightened moderation wave that hit the country over the last decade increased the gap between the Madrasa and the secular educational institutes. People from wealthy and educated families rarely join traditional Madrasas because of the autocratic and rigid educational techniques used by these Madrasas. The number of girls and women joining such Madrasas is even smaller. The government statistics are also incomplete and do not present accurate facts and figures of the women joining these Madrasas.

Another wave that has hit the urban areas of the country, including Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi is the emergence of Islamic Institutes that offer Islamic education to men and women in a way that is much different than the traditional Madras culture. These institutes are aimed at equipping men and women with Islamic education to strengthen the society which is crumbling down due to weakening values and religion system. Some of the famous Islamic educational institutes include Al Huda International, Minhajul Quran, and Al Mawrid Institute, which is attracting more and more people from the educated classes, including doctors, engineers, professors, and people from all walks of life. Al Huda International is one of those religious institutions, which have amalgamated old and new forms of knowledge and have attracted women from the middle and upper classes of the urban population. The objective of Al Huda, guided by the founder and owner, Dr. Farhat Hashmi, is to educate women belonging to different professions and educate them about Islamic teachings and practices so that our society may prosper and flourish (Naveed & Mohyuddin 2013).

The relationship between the ideology of Pakistan and religion, Islam has been the sole reason behind the formation of the country. Islamic teachings and principles provide the code of life for Muslims. The development of a viable and prosperous society requires that Islamic education is delivered to the masses, specifically females who are the builders of the society. Women have been actively participating in the acquisition of Islamic education due to the recent Islamic education

movements specifically targeted to attract women in urban areas belonging to educated, wealthy families. Al Huda International is also one of those movements whose religious discourse has been attracting women by the flock. These women, who hail from wealthy, educated middle and upper-class families, are joining Al Huda to enhance their understanding of the religion and connect with Allah. These women have different reasons for joining the institute, but their objective is the same, i.e. To find a way to connect to the religion which is different from the typical Madras.

This research addresses the questions regarding the role of Al Huda in educating urban Pakistani women about the religion. The Al Huda movement has had a major influence on the lives of its students, and thus it raises the question as to how Al Huda has modeled itself to cater to the needs of Islamic education of women. This particular research topic has been chosen to understand and explain the changing trend amongst urban women to seek Islamic education from institutes that do not follow the teaching style and philosophy of the traditional madrasa; how the institute effectively addresses their educational needs; how the lives of these women are being transformed by seeking religious education; and how Al Huda is performing its role in helping educated, wealthy females to find a way to practice and incorporate Islam into their daily lives.

This research paper presents an ethnographic case study of Al Huda Institute, Islamabad wing. The purpose of this research is to investigate how Al Huda has been successful in attracting women from the urban population of Islamabad; and how has it transformed the lives of women by educating them and equipping them with Islamic education. In doing so, the changes in lifestyle, attitudes, and behaviors of these women are investigated to understand the contribution of Al Huda to female Islamic education in Pakistan.

The increasing trend of Islamic education amongst well-educated, modern, and wealthy women is quite recent in our Pakistani society. This trend was triggered by the changing societal values, norms, and culture as well as changing world conditions. Since 9/11, Islam has become one of the fastest-growing religions in the world. At the same time, recent fads like 'enlightened moderation', 'terrorism', 'extremism', and 'suicide bombings' have made Muslim men and women, especially those belonging to wealthy socioeconomic classes, wonder what exactly Islam is about. It is much more than praying five times a day and fasting 30 days in the month

of Ramadan. Thus, the increasing popularity of religious, educational institutes, other than the traditional madrasas, is an interesting and intriguing social science and anthropological topic of research. More specifically, women belonging to modern and educated families are adopting Islamic ways of life (like covering their heads, quitting the practice of listening to music, etc.). Understanding why, how, and what factors behind these transformations are necessary to completely conceptualize this change.

### **General Islamic Perspectives on Women's Education**

Islamic sayings are not exclusive of the significance of women's education. To study the role of a woman in Islam, it includes examining her role from different dimensions (Karin, 2006 p. 200). The role of women in Islam can be observed in Islamic texts, history, and the cultural magnitudes of the Muslim world. The Holy Qur'an gives an equal place for men and women. Not only this, in the Quran, (4:34) it is stated that "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard." This shows very clearly that the superiority of men is determined only in terms of strength; since men have maintained women.

### **Female Education and Islamic Teachings**

Women were not encouraged to study and they were not allowed to attend classes formally; women were allowed in mosques and madrasas to attend only casual sermons (Leila, 1992). For example, historians like Ibn al-Tuwayr and al-Muṣabbiḥī noted the presence of women at the Fatimid "sessions of wisdom" (Virani, 2007). Furthermore, in Iran it was noted that women and men were equally allowed to attend religious sermons, and women, belonging to Ismailies had directly attended many sermons, given by the Imam (Virani, 2007). The 12th century was not a very favorable area for women learners to be credited as Islamic scholars. The number of female scholars immensely increased over this century. In the fifteenth century, an Islamic scholar Al-Sakhawi composed a biographical dictionary (containing 12 volumes) for Muslim women scholars (Maya, 1997). Muslim female scholars increased with time. A prominent name among them is Zahra Hussain (female scholar), who is an example of a female Muslim (Assaad, 2003).

**A Word from Islamic History Regarding Islamic Female Education:**

From the beginning, when Islam came into Arabia and made its place, female education along with other rights and status remained a prominent subject and received significant attention. Khan (1981) determines that female education in the Islamic world owes to Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) wives, Khadijah and Aisha; where the former was a successful businesswoman and the latter in history is marked as a celebrated hadith scholar and military leader. They played a very significant role in educating the females and guiding them toward their rights. These honored ladies, playing their role as guides and teachers, taught Muslim women in the era of the Prophet (PBUH). After the spread of early Islamic teachings, people coming later also played their role in this regard. Females have always been an important pillar of the foundation for Islamic education institutes and guiding women toward their fundamental rights (Eeqbal, 2010). For example, the foundation stone of Fatima al Fihri of the University of Al Karaouine in 859 CE is a prominent illustration (Maria, 2000). In Muslim dynasties after the initial Muslim era, the successors played a crucial role. For example, as discussed above, in the times of the Ayyubid dynasty in the 12th and 13th centuries, 160 madrasas and mosques were founded in Damascus. Women contributed here through Waqf (charitable trust or trust law, for nearly 26 institutes). The royal patrons of these institutes also included females (Lindsay, 2005). Some negative propaganda around the world is made against Islam by highlighting the self-made issue of 'gender inequality' around the world, considering it as a disparity in educational opportunities between males and females in Muslim societies (Zohra, 2000). Throughout the world, female education is regarded as the basis of success, and economic, social, and political advancements are considered useless without it for society (Eeqbal, 2010). It makes up nearly 50% of the overall society's macro factors contributing in development. The religion of Islam gives women all their fundamental rights and advocates female education as one of the basic rights. All religions and specifically Islam give equal rights to women and the acquisition of knowledge is not restricted to men only; rather, "ilm" is considered as an important factor for women as well (Raheeq, 2009).

Allah Almighty says, "Likewise, we have sent you (Our) Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) from amongst yourselves who recites to you Our Revelations and purifies and sanctifies (your hearts and ill-commanding selves) and teaches you the Book and inculcates in your logic and wisdom and enlightens you (on the

mysteries of spiritual gnosis and divine truth) which you did not know.” [Al-Baqara, 2:151.]

From the Qur’an and Sahih Hadith, it is clear that the acquisition of knowledge is mandatory for women similarly as it is obligatory for men. There are many examples from the Seerah of Prophet (PBUH) which show that he arranged special education arrangements and training for women. It is narrated by Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that some of the women came to the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) and said that men have gone ahead of us (here they were referring to the acquisition of knowledge). Therefore, the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) fixed and arranged a day in the week for them for education and training purposes. He (blessings and peace be upon him) would advise them, educate and train them to the path of Allah Almighty [Narrated by al-Bukhari in al-Sahih, 1:50].

#### ❖ Importance of Islamic Education

Women’s Islamic education is very necessary; because it not only makes a woman stronger but also provides an enormous awareness about solving challenging issues of daily life. They find out the answer to their all problems with the help of the holy Quran and Sunnah (of Holy Prophet PBHU) (Aisha and Fatima, 1978; p. 23). Islamic education provides numerous benefits to a woman. These women can make better decisions about their marriage, it opens many opportunities for women to boost up in society and assists them in enhancing their skills in Islamic subjects and joining an academic field as teachers; furthermore, they also earn uncountable Sawab (A spiritual worth) not only for themselves but for their relatives as well (Leila, 1994; p. 102; Roded, 1994). The sole purpose of the ‘Madrasa’ creation is very high; which includes shaping society into a disciplined place, by shaping an individual character by learning about life and hereafter (Farooqi, 2011).

#### Contributors of Deeni Madaris/Religious Schools in Female Islamic Education

In the historical development of Islamic society, Madrasah has played a very distinguished part. The Muslims of South Asia have been associated with Madrasah for a very long time (Ela, 2009). This specifically improved and augmented at times of the post-independence era. Historically, madrasahs were the first institutes for imparting education; hence they well played their roles. Farooq (2012) states that these institutes spread Islamic teachings to a large geographical area played their role in increasing the literacy rate, strengthened people’s beliefs in Islamic teaching, and most importantly, provided training to prospective civil servants (Zohra, 2000).

Studying Islamic education as a subject is mandatory up to the bachelor's level for both male and female students. Also, there are many Madrasas in Pakistan that provide Islamic education to the people. Over the past two decades, there has been tremendous growth in the number of Madaris in Pakistan from 136 Madrasas at the time of partition, to around 14,072 Madrasas in 2007 (till May 28, 2007). According to estimated figures, nearly 1.5 million children, both male and female, are attending these institutions.

#### ❖ **Female Islamic Education in Pakistan**

Khosrow (2001) determines that the subject of female education in Islam still requires research and extensive focus. This shows that religious education for women has not yet received its due attention. The researcher discusses that the existing situation of the rate of Islamic education for females needs improvement and progress. He argues that the media has been more focused on 'boys' madaris' than female institutes which made it display an incomplete picture. There is yet the requirement of a higher focus on female education in the region. It has been examined that societal success is not possible without an educated woman.

#### ❖ **Importance of Madrasah Education**

Khan (1981) illustrates that in Islam, Madaris play a significant role in education and knowledge spread. For example, in Madina, by the time of the Prophet (PBUH), 9 such mosques imparted education. Apart from this, 20 other mosques were used for knowledge exchange and education purposes in Arabia.

Bano (2007) describes the role of Madras in Islam that these madrasas can play their role in a very distinguished way for a longer time; provided, they base their teachings on the correct interpretation of Islamic teachings. These teachings display augmented the spirit of humans and serving society. Bano (2007) presents some statistics by determining that madrasas in Pakistan are playing an important role in raising literacy levels; however, it still requires attention. Bano (2007) believes that the literacy rate is an important indicator of societal success and improved human capital. However, the female population requires great attention from a literacy rate perspective, which is quite low for this gender; specifically, in Pakistan. Madrasahs have improved literacy rates in developing countries and continue to play their parts.

## **Contribution of Islamic Female Education in the Life of Women**

Girls entering into Islamic institutes come across specially designed curricula within the education system which leaves very lasting prints on the overall lives of these females. Farooq (2012) argues that, unlike uneducated women, 'Madaris' girls play their role with discipline as mothers, sisters, or wives. Some traditionalist circles view that it is very difficult to carry and transmit the Islamic foundations of centuries back to the new generation (Haifaa, 1998). But madrasas are properly devoted to transmitting this which is an extended civilized task. One of the major tasks that these women (specifically the mothers) are exposed to after going through madrasa education is to preserve and promote Islamic teachings (Yvonne and John, 1997, p. 132-135). They also witness and learn practically that the character-building teachings, which they receive from Islamic education-delivering institutes essentially correct the actions and improve the moral standards of society to a large extent (Elizabeth and Anne, 1997). Women undergoing Islamic institutes advocate that all those females after receiving Islamic education become aware of their rights. Because of this, they recognize their true status and roles and ultimately, they are empowered (Zohra, 2003). In short, in Islam, female education has remained a subject of utmost importance. Islam has given women their right status and the rights of women have most significantly been upgraded after the advent of Islam. In the religion of Islam, female education is regarded as important as the education of men. Madaris are the pillar of knowledge dissemination and in many countries around the world; Madaris are playing their role in increasing the literacy rate. Females are benefiting from these institutes; since they do not only play their role in delivering knowledge but building character and shaping society. Without educated women, the thought of a successful society is not possible (Naveed & Mohyuddin 2013). In Pakistan, many institutes in different cities are working to specifically educate women under Islamic way of teaching. Despite this, the numbers of these institutes are not sufficient and due attention is required from government and other agencies to play their role in this manner.

## **Al Huda International**

In 1994, Al-Huda opened its first Islamic Educational School in Islamabad. It gradually spread its branches in Lahore and Karachi within the next few years and by now the network is spread over almost 70 urban locations of Pakistan. So far, a total of more than 15,000 graduates have been reached, who have completed one or

more of the Al-Huda courses whilst a lot more take the lessons without formally being enrolled. In addition to this Al-Huda teaching sessions are spread over the Pakistani community residing in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. A woman called Dr. Farhat Hashmi initiated this movement. The teaching methodology of Al-Huda is much more popular to the extent that the number of audiences can be numbered in the thousands. The message is widespread through every possible media resource ranging from audio cassettes, radio, and television to websites and books. The main focus of the Al-Huda curriculum is on Quranic text and Hadith, inclusive of Arabic to Urdu translation accompanied by Hashmi's commentary covering every possible aspect. The sole purpose of these lessons is to guide the woman of today toward leading their lives based on Islamic teachings and principles and also to spread this knowledge around. (Hashmi 2006) Interpretations of Farhat Hashmi are marked by the Ahl-I Hadith subdivision of the Sunni sect of Islam in South Asia. This particular school of thought believes in rejecting most practices accustomed to prefer based on texts and individual responsibility, identified by the religion. Hashmi is also a strong believer and preacher of educating women in non-religious fields. She strongly advocates the immense importance of logic and scientific reasoning, to illustrate this approach she uses modern marketing and management techniques to organize and run Al-Huda smoothly.

#### ❖ Objectives of Al-Huda

The sole objective of Al Huda Institute is to bring affordable Islamic education in the national (Urdu) and International (English) languages for people. Quran and Sunnah are the most prominent parts of the teaching delivered by the foundation. The institute targets the well-off, elite class of society who are educated. The reason behind the beginning of this institute is the affiliation of Dr. Hashmi with Jamiat in her early years. Furthermore, she felt that it was important to provide a platform for women from the middle and upper class where they could understand Islam and find a way to apply Islam to their lives. Due to the stereotypical perception of traditional madrasa, people from wealthy and educated classes do not want to join them. Furthermore, the segregation of Islamic and secular education in the traditional Madaras is also a hindering factor for this socioeconomic class. On the other hand, Dr. Hashmi, who herself is a foreign-educated woman, considers both types of education necessary for survival in today's world. This idea is very prominent in the objectives and core values of the institution.

### ❖ **The Role of Al Huda in the Revival of Islamic Education amongst Urban Women**

Al Huda follows the strategy of educating women about the Islamic teachings in a way that can help them apply those teachings to their own lives, reform themselves, and share the acquired knowledge with others including their families and friends (Hashmi, 2006). At the same time, Al Huda also emphasizes the importance of non-religious education amongst women as it helps in gaining scientific reasoning and logic. This is why modern educational tools like management studies and marketing skills are also taught at the institute (Mushtaq, 2010). This amalgamation of Islamic and modern education has been one of the primary factors in attracting urban women from Islamabad to join the Institute. It was observed during the research that many of these women belong to educated middle and upper middle classes. These women when they become part of the institute not only learn from the institute, but also contribute back in terms of taking up administrative positions in the institute, volunteering in social events organized by the institute, and taking part in other formal and informal activities. The wealthier women also make donations to the institute to keep the institute running and help in its expansion, which is seen through its branches in the US and Canada. One of the major influences on the female students is the personality of the owner and forerunner of Al Huda, Ms. Farhat Hashmi, who is seen by many women as their role model and they try to emulate her. Social organization which commands the social relationships and interactions amongst the women is also an important factor to be considered while understanding the impact of Islamic education on urban women. This topic discusses the results and findings about Islamic education among urban women in general, and the role of Al Huda in particular.

### ❖ **Inclination towards Acquiring Islamic Education**

Over the last few years, Pakistani society has experienced a new wave of Enlightened Moderation whereby Madrasas are being highly criticized by academics, researchers, and more specifically international researchers. They are not only criticized for promoting fundamentalism, extremism, and violence but also are accused of being the training camps for the Taliban. At the other end of the picture is the increasing number of educated Pakistani families who are rediscovering Islam and trying to incorporate religious teachings into their daily lives. During the research, it was found that the recent wave of war against terror and US raids on Muslim countries was one of the reasons that raised many questions in the minds of the educated middle or upper-income classes. One respondent, Maha, who

belongs to a well of families residing in Islamabad, said that the events of the past decade increased her interest in learning more about Islam and led to her religious inquiry.

**Table 1: Inclination toward acquiring Islamic education**

1= very strong to 5= not at all	1	2	3	4	5
Personal Interest in religious education from an early age	2	5	13	20	10
Post-9/11 global and national events	23	14	10	3	0
Family pressure	0	3	11	9	27
Lack of knowledge of Islam led to religious inquiry	17	10	15	7	3
Some particular life-changing, or thought-changing event of your life	4	6	13	12	15
Other					

Source: Field Data

The table shows the responses of the study sample. It can be seen that the unfolding of recent events is one of the major contributors to motivating women to study Islam. Since the study targeted women belonging to educated, middle-income, and high-income classes, the results revealed that many of them did not have much interest in Islam from the early years of their lives, but developed the interest in later years. Family pressure, however, did not influence the decision to pursue Islamic education amongst this socioeconomic class of women. Another important factor that was identified by the study sample was the lack of Islamic education and many unanswered questions about religion that increased interest in the acquisition of Islamic education. While some of the students also cited that some personal incidents also proved to be life-changing and motivated them to study Islam. A 21-year-old respondent, Javeria, said that the reason she was convinced to study Islam is that she finds the Quran intriguing and interesting. While studying science at her college, she learned that the Quran is not only about religion and the code of life, but also explains science, mathematics, and other scientific fields of study. This linkage of the Quran with every aspect of science motivated her to study Islam at a deeper level. Another respondent, Mrs. Rahat cited that she was in search of a method of understanding Islam, but did not find the traditional Madrasas appealing and in line with the needs of the present era.

#### ❖ Transforming the Lives by Al Huda International

Ahmed (2009) in her book pointed out that one of the most visible changes that urban women are going through is the adoption of the veil, head covering, Abaya

(body covering with a large gown), and deeming music and cultural rituals observed in rituals like weddings and death un-Islamic and Biddat (religious innovation not in keeping with the true Islamic principles). These changes are brought about when these women start understanding Islam and seek Islamic education in formal or informal ways. Islam is a complete code of life and guides its followers in every aspect of social, cultural, individual, and group life. According to Dr. Farhat Hashmi, the objective of Al Huda is to present a precise, practicable, and easily comprehensible version of Islam that can motivate Muslim women to incorporate Islamic practices into their daily lives. The objective of learning Islam is not only to develop the fear of Allah, but also to find a way to connect with Allah, find peace within oneself, and develop a lifestyle that is in line with Islamic principles and guidelines. This lifestyle is not only a simpler and better way to spend life but is also a more successful pattern of life.

This part of my presentation discusses the findings of the survey about the impact of Al Huda in transforming the lives of urban females. This chapter will cover different aspects of lifestyle, including the visible ones (for example adoption of the Hijab, giving up activities like listening to music, watching entertainment shows and movies on TV, and abandoning un-Islamic rituals and practices prevalent in the society), as well as invisible ones (attitude and behavior towards life in general, giving up habits of lying, backbiting, and developing traits like tolerance, patience, contentment etc.)

#### ❖ **Visible Changes in the Lifestyle**

Participants revealed that once they got connected to God, they found it easier to adopt virtuous traits and practices that are characteristic of Islamic teachings. These transformations include the adoption of the veil (Hijab) by many of the women, and giving up many un-Islamic activities like listening to music and watching movies and entertainment shows on television. The table below shows the frequency distribution of responses about the obvious lifestyle changes. As shown in the table, the majority of the female students (90%) stated that they felt changes in their lifestyle after they learned Islam in greater detail at Al Huda. Only 10% of the respondents claimed that they did not feel any obvious or prominent change within themselves as a result of joining Al Huda. These women either had Islamic education from other institutes as well and thus found the education at Al Huda just an extension of their existing Islamic knowledge, or had not experienced any visible change in dressing, attire, social circle, ritual and cultural practices, or so forth.

**Table 2: Obvious Change after Attaining Islamic Education at Al Huda**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	45	90.0	90.0
No	5	10.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

### ❖ Impact on Observance of Namaz and Other Pillars of Islam

Namaz forms one of the most important pillars of Islam. It is our belief as Muslims that after death, the first question asked on judgment will be about Namaz. 80% of the respondents claimed that they had become more particular and efficient in terms of offering prayer five times a day and fulfilling other pillars of Islam as well 14% of the respondents said that they try to fulfill their religious obligations, but do not fulfill them completely. Only 6% of them said that there had been no change in their observance of the five pillars of the religion.

**Table 3: Observance of Namaz and Other Pillars of Islam**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	40	80.0	80.0
No	3	6.0	86.0
To some extent	7	14.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

### ❖ Changes in Attire

Dress is the most prominent part of a person's exterior personality. The women studied in Al Huda, as mentioned time and again, hail from the educated and wealthy class of Islamabad. The women of Islamabad are not only fashion-conscious but also very liberal about their dress and clothing. Interestingly, the most prominent and quickest change observed amongst the females joining Al Huda for education was the changes in their attires. Nearly half the respondents (46%) were found to have added Scarf and Abaya in their attire. 14% started covering their head and hair with a scarf; 26% added Chadar (shawl) to their dressing; while 12% started observing the Hijab by wearing Burqa. Only 1 respondent claimed that she did not

change anything in her attire after joining the institute. The figures show that 98% of the females did experience a positive change in their attires and dressing since joining the institute.

**Table 4: Changes in Attire**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Scarf	7	14.0	14.0
Scarf and Abaya	23	46.0	60.0
Chadar	13	26.0	86.0
Burqa	6	12.0	98.0
None of the above	1	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

❖ **Abandonment of Music/ Films/TV**

Approximately half of the respondents claimed that they had quit listening to music and watching entertainment shows on TV and in movies. 48% of the respondents had quit all of these completely, while 44% claimed that they had given up these practices to some extent, but not fully. Only 8% of the respondents said that they had not quit any of these three activities in their daily lives. This depicts that music and television are majorly affected by Islamic knowledge as they take humans away from the remembrance of Allah.

**Table 5: Giving Up Music/ Films/TV**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	24	48.0	48.0
No	4	8.0	56.0
To some extent	22	44.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

❖ **Change in Social Circle**

A social circle constitutes a group of socially interacting people. In a social circle, a person is in contact with all the members of that circle due to a common theme shared by these people. This can be a common ideology, educational background, social, and cultural norms and values, interests or traditions, etc. It is an adage that a man is known by the company he keeps. Thus, a person becomes a part of a certain social circle or group because he or she identifies himself or herself with that group.

It is important to note that while there do exist many differences amongst the people belonging to a certain social circle, they do share mutual values and thoughts that bind them together. A common element, also identified by Ahmad (2009), during her research on Al Huda, and other researchers studying Islamic institutions is the change in social circles by many people once they acquire religious education. 94% of the respondents were found to have experienced a change in the social circle to which they belong. These changes were in terms of the addition of new social circles to their social life.

**Table 6: Changes in Social Circle**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	47	94.0	94.0
No	2	4.0	98.0
Do not know	1	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

When asked of the respondents, if they quit being part of the social circles in which they moved before joining Al Huda and found new groups, or retained the older ones, 50% of them agreed that they did experience a change in their social circle by quitting many of the old ones. A further investigation revealed that this change was largely driven by the transformed lifestyle and ideology of these women. 50% of the respondents, however, claimed that they did not experience any changes in social circles, but added new groups to their social circles which share their Islamic practices and ideology.

**Table 7: Quitting or Retaining Old Social Circles**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	25	50.0	50.0
No	25	50.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

During the survey, it was also found that these women had transformed preferences with regards to making friends and adding people to their social circles, after

acquiring religious education. All the respondents were of the view that they now preferred friends and people in their social circles who understood the importance of Islam in their lives. 38% of the respondents said they now preferred friends who are at least moderately religious; 32% preferred extremely religious friends; while 30% believed that they are content with their friends who at least practice 5 pillars of Islam. The respondents in favor of highly religious friends and people believed that friends are a great influence in a person's life and thus moving into the company of highly religious people will make them practice Islam in a better way. On the other hand, the women who were fine with the people who prayed 5 times a day and performed other basic pillars of Islam claimed that Islam teaches tolerance and flexibility. Therefore, humans cannot judge a person on his or her piety or proximity to Allah. Therefore, they are satisfied as long as their friends fulfill the basic requirements of Islam.

**Table 8: Preference of Friends after Acquiring Islamic Education**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely religious	16	32.0	32.0
Moderately religious	19	38.0	70.0
At least practicing five pillars of Islam	15	30.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

❖ **Attitude and Behavior Transformation**

Apart from these transformations, the respondents testified that they observed changes in their attitude towards life, and their behavior towards interacting with others. It was cited by many of the women that they feel a difference in even very small things pertaining to their lives. Mushtaq (2010) in her study on Al Huda also observed that this transformation extended from the individual to the collective experience, and thus acted as a binding force for the students of Al Huda. Ahmad (2009) states in her book that Al Huda's motivated discourse which is seen in the interpretation of the Quran is designed in a way that makes the students think and ponder, and make them aware of their moral obligations, influence their behavior, and encourage them to exercise control over themselves and engage in self-forming and self-exploring activities to attain piety and virtuousness characteristic of a true Muslim.

### ❖ Changes Observed in Dealing with Others:

Islam emphasizes much more on the obligations, humans have towards fellow human beings, as compared to the obligations towards Allah. This is why Huqooqullbad are important to fulfill in order to please Allah. One of the facets of Islamic education delivered at Al Huda is its emphasis towards understanding one's responsibilities and obligations towards others. This is also developed through motivating students to organize social welfare events and participating in welfare activities. By translating the teachings of Islam into an easily practicable tool, Al Huda tries to shape up the behavior of its students. 64% of the respondents reported that they felt a change in the way they dealt with others. These dealings not only include the communication and the ways of interaction with each other, but also include developing the sense of responsibility towards fulfilling Huqooqullbad. 28% of the respondents claimed that the change they felt was limited to a certain extent and did not affect all their dealings with others. Only 8% believed that they did not feel any change in their behavior towards others.

**Table 9: Behaviour towards Others**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	32	64.0	64.0
No	4	8.0	72.0
To some extent	14	28.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

### ❖ Development of Traits like Humility and Patience

Humility, patience, contentment, honesty, and tolerance, are just a few of the important traits that Islam propagates through its teachings. The concept of an Islamic institute is incomplete without its emphasis on the personal development of a human being. The teachers and the owner of Al Huda give huge importance to the development of these traits which are essential for personal growth and development, and to achieve piety and virtuousness. 44% of the respondents claimed that they had observed that the teachings at Al Huda had helped them develop these traits which are characteristic of a true Muslim. 405 believed that they had accomplished this task to a certain extent and are still striving to become better

Muslims. 16% claimed that the teaching style at Al Huda did not influence or help them in the development of traits like humility and patience.

**Table 10: Personal Development Traits**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	22	44.0	44.0
No	8	16.0	60.0
To some extent	20	40.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

❖ **Tolerance for Others’ Mistakes and Weaknesses**

The religion of peace, and the religion of tolerance- this is Islam. As discussed in one of the previous chapters, Al Huda’s pedagogy follows toleration, a flexible regime in which people from all different schools of thought are welcomed. Teachers are specially trained to make sure there do not arise any disputes about differences among the students. Forgiving others for their mistakes and weaknesses is a trait of Allah Almighty. Therefore, great importance is given to Al Huda to teach its students to be tolerant and forgiving. More than half of the students showed that they had developed the habit of forgiving others for their mistakes because they believed that it is Allah who is the ultimate judge. 62% of the respondents claimed that they either let go of the people’s mistakes or forgive them. 22% claimed that they find it more appropriate to make the other person realize his/ her mistake and thus avoid doing it in the future. 16% claimed that although they do believe in forgiving, they make others realize their mistakes for their benefit.

**Table 11: Tolerance for Others’ Mistakes**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Let go	8	16.0	16.0
Forgive	23	46.0	62.0
Make them realize their blunder	11	22.0	84.0
Forgive and make them realize	8	16.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	50	100.0	

❖ **Curtailment of Bad Habits**

Bad habits like backbiting, lying, deception, and jealousy are more common among women as compared to men. It was, therefore, asked of the respondents if they were successful in curtailing their bad habits which are a very common part of our social life now. By studying Hadith and Sunnah, in addition to the Quran, one can quit

many bad habits. Al Huda's drive to educate urban women also focuses on these aspects of their personalities. Almost half of the respondents (46%) claimed that they are working on abandoning bad habits like lying, hypocrisy, jealousy, backbiting, etc. which eat up a person's Iman and Aamal. 40% of the respondents believed that they had been successful in curtailing these habits, while 14% believed that up till now they had not succeeded in doing so.

**Table 12: Curtailing Bad Habits**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	20	40.0	40.0
No	7	14.0	54.0
I am still working on it	23	46.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

#### ❖ Fulfillment of Obligations as Mother/ Wife/ Daughter/ Sister

Islam holds women in high regard. Their place in Islamic society in the form of mother, daughter, sister, or wife has great significance and moral dignity. Opposite to the general belief that women are subjugated in Islam by men, Allah has given women special roles to perform. By fulfilling their duties towards their family, women do not become men's servants but rather earn rewards from Allah. The recent trend of modernization, which has led to the evolution of many feminist movements has dismantled the right concept of women in Islam. Al Huda has therefore taken it into its hands to teach women how to become better Muslims, and better human beings by fulfilling their duties towards their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. 84% of the respondents reported that they felt they had better realize their roles as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters. The respondents pointed out that by understanding the rewards Allah offers them as a result of serving their families; they feel more motivated to take care of their families. Moreover, Islamic education had helped them understand how to deal with their husbands and raise their children in a better and Islamic manner. 12% of respondents did not feel any change in their dealings with their family members, while 4% were unsure of any influence Al Huda had on their dealings with their husbands, sons, fathers, or brothers.

**Table 13: Obligations Towards Family**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	42	84.0	84.0
No	6	12.0	96.0
Do not Know	2	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

### ❖ Perceived Quality of Life as A Result of Joining Al Huda

Quality of life refers to the general well-being of individuals or societies. In this context, quality of life refers to the sociological and psychological aspects of well-being. Since Muslims believe that Islam is the complete code of life, thus the quality of life can be improved by following the teachings of Islam. By incorporating Islamic teachings in daily and routine tasks, and dealings, one can become more pious and righteous. When asked, 78% of the respondents claimed that they had experienced an improvement in the perceived quality of their life as a result of joining Al Huda and learning more about Islam. On the other hand, 22% said that they did not find any considerable difference. One of the focus group participants, Hina, reported that she believed that her life had improved because she felt more contented and happier about the blessings of Allah than she had ever before. She added that life is a transient journey for us Muslims, and therefore it is our responsibility to spend it according to the will of Allah. Thus, she believed that by following the path of Allah, she felt that she had added quality to her life. Samina, another respondent was of the view that she perceived her life to be the same because it is a gift of Allah which she had always treasured.

**Table 14: Perceived Impact on Life as a Result of Joining Al-Huda**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Better life	39	78.0	78.0
Same as Before	11	22.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Field Data

## Conclusion

The essential destinations of ladies' training are to equip them for the living and passionate parts of their parts as girls, sisters, wives, and moms. So, they require an

alternate kind of instruction. Ladies need to transmit society to the cutting edge (both young men and young ladies). As somebody has rightly said: "When you show a man, you just taught an individual; when you teach a child, you taught a family; however, when you teach a lady, you taught the entire country".

The lady's part in the family is a significant one because it is in the family that the up-and-coming era of Muslims is raised. The lady as the mother has the vital part as the early Socializer and teacher of the youngsters. This part has a dependable impact on the conduct, character, and mentality of what's to come era of the Muslims.

Ladies have assumed a huge part in the social and learned progression of Islam. Numerous Muslim ladies achieved famous positions in the experimental and artistic calling. History is a witness to this all.

The part of female researchers of hadith is exceptional in mankind's history, preceding our advanced times. There is no parallel to this extraordinary and profitable pretended by female researchers in the advancement, safeguarding, and scattering of Islamic learning.

In the right time of Islamic history, numerous female researchers had extremely noteworthy parts of the Islamic world. Case in point "A'isha (r.a.), the Prophet's (saws) wife was a standout amongst the most renowned Muslim researchers. Not only was she exceptionally insightful, but she had an outstanding memory. That is the reason she was viewed as a standout amongst the most paramount wellsprings of Hadith. It has been expressed in some Islamic reports that the Prophet (saws) advised the Muslims to go to 'Aisha (r.a.) for direction and taking in of religious obligations. The Prophet (saws) additionally advised the Muslims to believe 'Aisha's (r.a.) showing and direction.

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