

## **Islamic Appraisal of Women’s Participation in Handwork Business for Economic Development in Doma LGA, Nasarawa State.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the Islamic perspective on women’s participation in handwork business as a means of promoting economic development in Doma, Nasarawa state. Using mixed-method approach, the study investigates the Islamic principles and values that influence women’s involvement in handwork business, and explores the economic benefits of women’s participation in this sector. The study findings have implications for policy makers, entrepreneurs and Islamic leaders seeking to promote economic development and women’s empowerment in Doma, Nasarawa state. The findings of this study reveal that Islamic teachings support women’s participation in economic activities; including handwork business can make a significant contribution to economic development of Doma. And recommends that policy makers and stakeholders take steps to promote and support women’s involvement in this sector. The study also identifies the challenges faced by women in handwork business and provides recommendations for promoting their participation.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Women participation in handwork businesses such as tailoring, local sauce production (*daddawa*), sieve making, food and catering, rearing animals, hairdressing and plating, soap and cream making etc. has significantly contributed to economic growth in various communities. In Doma Nasarawa State, many women engaged in these activities as a means of livelihood, contributing to family welfare and community development. However, there is a need to examine these economic engagements from Islamic perspective, particularly regarding their acceptability, challenges and prospects within the framework of Islamic teachings.

The Islamic appraisal of women participation in handwork for economic development of Doma, Local Government Area of Nasarawa State is deeply rooted in the principles of equity, justice, and the holistic well-being of society. Islam, as a comprehensive way of life, encourages both men and women to engage in productive activities that contribute to their personal and communal economic stability.

The Quran and Hadith provide clear guidance on the value of work, emphasizing that lawful labor is not only a means of sustenance but also a form of worship. Women, in particular, are granted the right to own property, inherit wealth, and engage in business, as evidenced by the Qur’anic verse:

For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned (Q4:32).

Historically, women in Islamic societies have actively participated in various forms of handwork, such as weaving, crafting, and trade, demonstrating that their economic contributions are both permissible and commendable. This participation aligns with Islamic teachings that promote self-reliance, dignity, and the equitable distribution of resources, ensuring that women play a vital role in achieving economic prosperity while adhering to the moral and ethical standards prescribed by Islam.

### **Literature Review**

In Islamic teachings, there is no prohibition against women contributing economically, and there is a rich history of women engaging in trade, craftsmanship, and handwork. The involvement of women in handwork, such as weaving, tailoring, pottery, and other artisanal activities, is often seen as an avenue for economic independence and social empowerment. Islamic principles provide a

comprehensive framework that supports women's active participation in economic activities, as long as the work aligns with ethical and moral guidelines prescribed in Islam. This study explores the Islamic perspective on women's participation in handwork as a means of economic development, examining how the faith's teachings promote and regulate female involvement in such activities. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of economic prosperity and self-sufficiency for all individuals, regardless of gender. The Quran and Hadith provide numerous references encouraging work and productivity as a means of achieving personal and societal well-being. For instance, the Quran states:

And say, do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger and the believers (Q9:105)

This verse underscores the value of action and effort, including handwork, as a form of worship and contribution to society. Women, in particular, are not excluded from this mandate. Islamic history is replete with examples of women who engaged in various forms of labor, including trade, craftsmanship, and agriculture, demonstrating that their participation in economic activities is not only permissible but also commendable (Al-Qaradawi, 45). The Islamic tradition has long recognized the economic contributions of women. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), women were actively involved in various forms of handwork and trade. For example, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (RA), the Prophet's first wife, was a successful businesswoman who managed her own trade caravans.

She used to send her trading goods to the foreign country through male partners; the capital was hers, while the men were equal partners in the profits. Her economic independence and participation in commerce are often cited as evidence of Islam's endorsement of women's economic roles. Women were given the right to own their personal properties for example, a woman can buy, keep, and sell property, whether she is married or not. She can make decision like a man about her properties without any restrictions. Also women can go out of the house for the purpose of carrying out any national, welfare, economic, social, educational and literary activities covering with her full modesty. The justification of women leaving home for economic role is also clear from the prophetic sayings:

Aisha (RA) Narrated, once Sada bint Zam went out at night for some need, and Umar saw her, and recognized her, he said (to her) by Allah, O Sada! You cannot hide yourself from us. So she returned to the Prophet (SAW) and mentioned that to him while he was sitting in my apartment taking his supper and holding a bone covered with meat in his hand. Then the divine inspiration was revealed to him and when that state was over, he (the Prophet SAW) was saying O women! You have been allowed by Allah to go out for you needs (Bukhari, H: 5237).

The above Hadith indicate that women can move out of their houses in connection with their occupation and commercial activities. Several women companions showed their strong standing in participating in the economic sector. Rufayda al-Aslamiyyah works as a doctor and manager of the first Islamic hospital, Samra al-Asadiya and Al-Shifa also works as supervisors who oversee trading activities in the Medina market, women have economic independence. They can do praiseworthy actions recommended by religion, such as giving alms and helping the orphans, as shown by Zainab bint Jahsy, the Prophet's wife. She worked tanning animal skins and used her income to finance the orphans and the needy. Besides, work also stimulates reasoning activities to think. Thus, working not only for the sake of women's financial gain or to meet the needs of themselves and their families but also to carryout religious order, the description above shows that the Prophet (SAW) carried out women's economic empowerment by starting with his efforts to eliminate subordination of women. He empowered them to participate with men in the economy by establishing women's rights in financial and management of property and oversee the implementation of providing economic rights for women in the life of the Muslim community at that time. Women's economic empowerment and protection of women's property rights also continued to be considered after the demised of the Prophet (SAW).

In Islam, any lawful work undertaken with the intention of earning a halal (permissible) livelihood is considered a form of *Ibadat* (worship). This includes handwork, which can range from crafting goods to engaging in agricultural labor. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said,

No one has ever eaten food better than that which he eats from the work of his own hands (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 34, Hadith 286)

This Hadith underscores the dignity and spiritual reward associated with manual labor. For women, engaging in handwork not only contributes to their economic prosperity but also serves as a means of fulfilling their religious obligations. By participating in such activities, women can achieve financial independence while earning divine pleasure (Al-Ghazali, 8). Islam places a strong emphasis on the economic empowerment of women, as evidenced by their rights to own property, inherit wealth, and engage in business. The Quran explicitly grants women the right to their earnings, stating,

For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned (Quran 4:32)

This verse affirms the legitimacy of women's economic activities, including handwork, as a means of earning a livelihood. By participating in handwork, women can contribute to their households' financial stability and, by extension, the broader economy. This empowerment aligns with Islamic principles of justice and equity, ensuring that women have the opportunity to thrive economically (Hassan, 28).

While Islam encourages women to participate in economic activities, it also emphasizes the importance of balancing work with family responsibilities. The Quran and Hadith provide guidance on maintaining harmony between these roles. For instance, the Quran states,

And live with them in kindness (Quran 4:19), highlighting the importance of family relationships. Women who engage in handwork can often do so in a manner that accommodates their domestic duties, such as by working from home or setting flexible hours. This balance ensures that their economic participation does not come at the expense of their familial obligations, thereby aligning with Islamic teachings on the holistic well-being of individuals and society (Badawi, 17).

Al-Khater (78) presents an empirical study on the economic impact of women's involvement in handwork in several Muslim-majority countries. The research demonstrates that when women engage in handcrafts, they not only enhance their financial independence but also contribute to their community's economic growth. The study identifies several key factors that influence women's ability to succeed in handwork, such as access to resources, education and market opportunities. Women who had received training in craftwork and entrepreneurship were found to be more likely to run small businesses that generated a stable income. Moreover, the research emphasized that Islamic teachings, particularly the concept of zakat (aims giving), encouraged women to reinvest their earnings into community welfare, thus strengthening the social fabric of their communities.

Abdulmannan & others (9) in their work titled *the role of women in Islamic perspective* state that women have granted great status and dignity in Islam. Islam is the only religion which has provided women proper economic, family and social rights. It is clear that Muslim women have demonstrated their skills and abilities in all walks of life. There is no corner of Islamic sciences and arts in which women did not play role, women can play socio-economic role if they may remain in the limit of Islamic law (Shariah). Islam guarantees the dignity of women and prevents them from immoral role such as adultery, stealing, and so on. Islamic concept of women's empowerment, security, dignity and socio-economic is a beacon of light for the whole world.

Also Hassan (89) investigates *the social and economic benefits of handwork for women in rural Islamic communities*. The findings suggest that handwork, such as quilting, sewing and carpet weaving provides women with significant economic opportunities, particularly in areas where formal employment options for women are limited.

Zafar (126) in his work "*Asar-e-Rawan Sirtat ulal-nabi (SAW)*" elaborate that a woman was given the right to own her personal property one and a half thousand years ago, For example, a woman can buy, keep, and sell her property, whether she is married or unmarried. She can make all the decisions like a man about her property without restriction

Ummul Farida & Abdulraman Kasdi (1) in their work titled *economic empowerment of women in the hadith and application* state that, discrimination against women's role in the economic sector based on Islamic teachings are still common. The economic empowerment of women during the life time of Prophet (SAW) took place with women by giving them their right including those in the economy. Also, it aims to interpret the implementation of the Prophetic teachings related to economics role.

#### **Women's Participation in Handwork:**

This refers to the active involvement of women in creating, producing, or manufacturing goods through manual skills, crafts, or artisanal work. In the context of this study, handwork encompasses traditional

and modern crafts such as weaving, tailoring, bead-making, and manufacturing of soap, cream, etc. forms of artisan work undertaken by women as a means of livelihood.

### **Economic Development**

Economic prosperity, in the context of this study, refers to the financial well-being and economic stability that women achieve through their participation in handwork activities. It includes income generation, financial independence, and the enhancement of the overall economic conditions of the individual woman, her family, and, in some cases, her community.

### **Handwork:**

Handwork refers to the practice of creating or producing goods using manual skills. In the context of this study, it involves women's engagement in craft-based activities that can be used for self-sufficiency, income generation, or contributing to the household economy.

### **Islamic Economic Principles:**

These are the guiding principles in Islamic finance and economic activities that emphasize fairness, ethical conduct, and social welfare. These principles cover concepts such as lawful (halal) earnings, the prohibition of interest (riba), fair trade practices, and the importance of charity (zakat).

### **Empowerment:**

Empowerment refers to the process by which women gain the skills, confidence, and economic independence to contribute to their families' well-being and the community through their broader involvement in handwork.

The participation of women in handwork has far-reaching social and economic benefits, both for individuals and communities. Economically, it contributes to poverty alleviation and the overall prosperity of society. Socially, it fosters a sense of self-worth and independence among women, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to their households and communities. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) emphasized the importance of self-reliance and productivity, stating that:

The upper hand is better than the lower hand (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 24, Hadith 508).

This Hadith encourages individuals, including women, to strive for economic self-sufficiency through lawful means, such as handwork, rather than relying on charity (Esposito, 45).

Islam provides clear guidelines for ethical work practices, which apply equally to men and women. These include honesty, fairness, and the prohibition of exploitation. The Quran states, O you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent (Quran 4:29).

Women engaged in handwork are expected to adhere to these principles, ensuring that their economic activities are conducted with integrity and respect for others' rights. By doing so, they not only contribute to their own prosperity but also uphold the moral and ethical standards prescribed by Islam (Rahman, 15). Despite the Islamic endorsement of women's economic participation, women in many Muslim-majority societies face challenges in accessing opportunities for handwork. These challenges may include cultural barriers, lack of resources, or limited access to markets. However, Islam provides a framework for addressing these issues by promoting education, skill development, and equitable access to resources. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said,

Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 1 Hadith 224).

This Hadith underscores the importance of education and skill acquisition, which are essential for women to excel in handwork and other economic activities (Mernissi, 19). The Islamic community plays a crucial role in supporting women's participation in handwork and other economic activities. This support can take various forms, such as providing training, creating market opportunities, and ensuring fair wages. The Quran emphasizes the importance of mutual support and cooperation, stating,

And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression (Quran 5:2)

By fostering an environment that encourages women's economic participation, the community can help them achieve prosperity while adhering to Islamic principles. This collective effort not only benefits individual women but also strengthens the overall economy and social fabric (Siddiqi, 5)

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design employed for this research is qualitative. Therefore, the study adopted a mix of both descriptive and historical surveys in analyze its data. This is because it explores into the historical aspect of women participation in handwork businesses in Nasarawa State. The methods

adopted are narrative and descriptive. The methods adopted by researcher in data collection are both primary and secondary methods of data collection.

Interview and personal observation as primary source of data collection was used by the researcher. So, also relevant verses from the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith of The Prophet (SAW) were also used. While the secondary methods include library materials, both published and unpublished materials i.e. books, journals, newspaper, articles, inter sources etc. were used.

## RESULT AND FINDINGS

### A Brief history of Doma local Government Area

Doma, Nasarawa State: Doma is a local government area in Nasarawa state, North central Nigeria, its headquarters are in the town of Doma. It has an Area of 2,714km and had a population of 139,607 in the 2006 census. The postal code of the area is 950. Odu and Amiri is the annual festival in Doma local government, farming is the occupation of most Alago people who are the predominant tribe in Doma. The kingdom of Doma was founded in 1232 by Andoma Osabonya Ogoshi and lasted until 1901 when it became part of British protectorate of northern Nigeria (en.wikipedia.org). Nasarawa State Capital in the North, Awe LGA in the North East, Kokona LGA in the North West, Nasarawa LGA in the West and Makurdi LGA in Benue State in the South.

### Type of Hand Work Engaged by Muslims Women of Doma

Women in Doma, Nasarawa State, are making significant contributions to the local economy through various commercial activities. These entrepreneurial endeavors not only generate income but also showcase their skills, creativity, and determination. Let's take a closer look at some of these activities:

1. **Food and Catering:** Women in Doma operate food stalls, restaurants, and catering services, offering traditional dishes and snacks. They prepare local delicacies, such as *tuwon shinkafa* and *miyan wake*, *madidi*, *tuwon masara* and *miyan kuka*, *masa*, *garaugarau*, *awara* and others, which are popular among the community. They also process and sell morning drink such as *kunu* (pap) and *akara*, soya beans milk. The women in Doma also used groundnut to processed groundnut oil, roasted groundnut and *kulikuli*. This provides sustenance for families and generates revenue (Usman 41).
2. **Farming:** Farming was one of the dominant activities of people of Doma in Nasarawa state. Many women in Doma engage in farming, cultivating crops like yam, rice, maize, millet, guinecorn, beans and vegetables. They also used to processed grains which must be done prior to consumption; the grain serves as source of food to individual. They work tirelessly to ensure food security and surplus produce for sale. Farming not only provides income but also contributes to the community's food supply (Usman 39).
3. **Muanufacturing of Soap and Cream:** Some Muslim women in Doma have ventured into soap and cream production, creating products for local consumption, using natural ingredients; they manufacture soap, lotion, and cream, which is locally called *Sabulun salo* (black soap). *Mankade* (shea butter) and *Aledi* (palm kanel oil), which are very effective as local cream and detergent to replace the modern cream. Which are sold in markets and shops, this initiative promotes hygiene, skin care, and economic growth.
4. **Hair Dressing and Plaiting:** Women in Doma offer hairdressing services, including braiding, weaving, and styling. They cater to women, the women in normal circumstances remain at their residence or do home services, the hair platter was referred to as (*maikitso*) providing various hairstyles and beauty treatments. This activity showcases their creativity and skill.
5. **Production of Local Sauce (Daddawa):** *Daddawa*, a popular local condiment, is produced by women in Doma. They ferment locust beans to create this flavorful sauce, which is used in various dishes. *Daddawa* production is a significant commercial activity, generating income and promoting local cuisine.
6. **Production of Sieve:** Women in Doma craft sieves from local materials like wire mesh and wooden frames. These sieves are used for sifting and sorting grains, flour, and other food items. This activity demonstrates their resourcefulness and ingenuity.

7. **Tailoring:** Tailoring is another commercial activity undertaken by women in Doma. They design, cut, and sew traditional and modern clothing, including dresses, shirts, and trousers. This venture showcases their creativity and skill, providing clothing for the community.

These commercial activities undertaken by women in Doma, Nasarawa State, are a testament to their entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and determination. By engaging in these ventures, they contribute to the local economy, promote cultural heritage, and empower themselves and their communities.

### **Perception of Muslim women on handwork business in Doma LGA**

In an interview with Aishat in Doma, Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, she expressed her opinion that women participate in various handwork businesses, such as textile and fashion, weaving and designs, tailoring, food and cosmetics, local sauce production traditional such as *daddawa*, and manufacturing of soap and cream products for local consumption. She also explains that Islam teaches women to participate in business and economic activities. She further explained that Women are allowed to work and earn an income, as exemplified by the Prophet's wife, Khadijah, who was a successful businesswoman. In an interview with Habiba on the impact of women's participation in hand working business in Doma L.G.A she expresses her opinion that many women in Doma LGA engage in handwork businesses as a primary source of income. This participation provides them with steady income, enabling them to meet daily household needs, pay school fees, access healthcare, and support extended families. Financial independence improves women's confidence and bargaining power both in their homes and communities.

In an interview with Maimunatu who engage in soap making she explain her opinion that soap making generate income sources, and reduce household poverty alleviation, in communities where formal employment is scarce, soap becomes a sustainable livelihood in the area. Women often reinvest profits into their businesses or family welfare, leading to long-term poverty alleviation.

In an interview with Fatima on the impact of hand work business, in Doma Local Government Area especially in tailoring she explain her view that women acquire practical skills (tailoring) that are in demand within and outside their immediate environment. She further explained that many women in Doma LGA also train apprentices, which multiplies the effect of empowerment and reduces unemployment among young girls.

During an interview with Safiya, on the challenges and constraints faced by women in handwork business in Doma LGA she said that most women lack the startup capital or access to start or expand their businesses. Traditional financial institutions often require collateral, which many women do not have. She further explained that many women lack proper business management skills, limiting their ability to scale or diversify their handwork businesses.

In an interview with Farida on way out to the challenges and constraints faced by women in hand work business in Doma LGA she said that, women in Doma Local Government Area (LGA) of Nasarawa state should actively engage in handwork businesses such as tailoring, knitting, soap making, food and catering, hair dressing, and local crafts, and so on. She also explained that government should Increase awareness campaigns about skill acquisition programs for women. She further explained should include policy-making by involving women in local economic planning. And establish women development centers in Doma for coordination and empowerment programs.

### **Key Findings**

1. The study revealed that Islam does not prohibit women from engaging in legitimate economic activities such as tailoring, soap marking, crafts, hair dressing, and food processing, provided they observe Islamic principles like modesty, honesty, and avoidance of prohibited transactions (*riba* and gambling).
2. Women in Doma, Nasarawa state who engage in handwork businesses significantly contribute to family upkeep, children's education, healthcare, and food security. Their earnings reduce dependency on husbands and foster economic balance within households.
3. The findings showed that women's participation in small-scale handwork businesses plays a vital role in poverty alleviation by providing self-employment, generating income, and reducing reliance on government jobs or seasonal farming.

4. Handwork businesses empower women through skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development. Islamic teachings encourage productive work, and women's skills in crafts, tailoring, and traditional handwork serve as tools for self-reliance and community development.
5. The study further revealed that, women's involvement in handwork businesses not only benefits their households but also stimulates the local economy of Doma LGA and Nasarawa state at large. Their products create local markets, promote trade networks, and contribute to the internally generated revenue (IGR) of the state.
6. The study found that despite Islam allow women to participate in handwork businesses, some women still face cultural restrictions, gender barriers, and misinterpretation of religious texts, which discourage their full participation in business ventures. This sometimes limits their economic contribution. However, the study also notes challenges such as inadequate capital, lack of access to modern training, and limited market opportunities, which hinder women from fully maximizing their economic potential.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, an Islamic appraisal of this participation confirms its legitimacy and importance, as long as it is carried out within Islamic ethical guidelines. Empowering women through training, access to finance, and supportive policies will not only uplift families but also accelerate the overall economic development of Doma LGA and Nasarawa State.

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