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Analyzing The Inclination Toward Adornment In Women And Men Based On Socio-Cultural Differences With Reference To Verses 18 Of Surah Az-Zukhruf And 31 Of Surah An-Nur

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Abstract

Adornment, as a manifestation of beauty and attraction, is examined in this study from a Quranic perspective, with a focus on verse 18 of Surah Az-Zukhruf and verse 31 of Surah An-Nur. The aim is to analyze the differing tendencies toward adornment in women and men and its influence on individual and social identity. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis method and drawing upon authoritative exegeses (Al-Mizan, Majma' al-Bayan) alongside contemporary sources, the study investigates whether the inclination toward adornment is innate or acquired, the role of socio-historical contexts, and the relationship between external and internal forms of adornment. Findings indicate that the tendency toward adornment is inherently present in both genders, yet it is more prominent in women due to their significant familial and social roles. While affirming this inclination, the Quranic verses emphasize its regulation within the framework of Islamic ethics in order to prevent social deviation. By analyzing contemporary expressions of adornment—such as fashion trends and cosmetic surgeries—and critiquing traditional perspectives, this study contributes to redefining gender identity and strengthening familial bonds. The ultimate goal is to provide a framework for a deeper understanding of how adornment affects social and familial structures in contemporary Islamic societies.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

The concept of adornment and beautification is one of the fundamental elements in shaping both individual and social identity. Beyond mere physical attractiveness, it reflects cultural affiliation, social roles, and gender interactions within historical and cultural contexts. From an Islamic perspective, adornment also holds significant importance and is addressed in the Qur'an with a nuanced and multidimensional approach. Verses 18 of Surah Az-Zukhruf and 31 of Surah An-Nur specifically articulate the Qur'anic view on adornment in relation to gender differences. Verse 18 of Az-Zukhruf, while critiquing pre-Islamic attitudes, reflects a particular cultural perception of women and adornment; in contrast, verse 31 of An-Nur outlines the legal boundaries of adornment, emphasizing the role of religious norms in regulating gender relations. The inclination toward adornment in both women and men, in addition to biological and psychological factors, is profoundly influenced by cultural and social structures. Women often perceive adornment as a means of identity formation and gaining social acceptance, whereas men tend to associate it with power and status. This study adopts an interpretive and interdisciplinary approach, seeking a deeper understanding of the gendered representation of adornment in the Qur'an and its socio-cultural dimensions, based on an analysis of the aforementioned verses.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative content analysis and a thematic-interpretive approach to examine Qur'anic concepts related to the inclination toward adornment in women and men, focusing specifically on verses 18 of Surah Az-Zukhruf and 31 of Surah An-Nur. The verses are analyzed within their historical and cultural context using authoritative Shi'a exegeses, such as *Al-Mizan* by Allama Tabataba'i and *Majma' al-Bayan* by Tabrisi, which, due to their linguistic, contextual, and thematic precision, enable a more comprehensive interpretation of the subject of adornment. Furthermore, to facilitate comparative analysis and deepen the understanding of cultural and psychological underpinnings, scholarly sources from the fields of sociology of religion, gender psychology, and cultural studies are utilized. The data are conceptually categorized and analyzed according to key components such as the innate or acquired nature of the inclination, the role of social context, and the relationship between adornment and individual/social identity. The validity of findings is ensured through cross-source triangulation and interdisciplinary integration, contributing to the coherence of the results with the research aims of elucidating the semantic and social dimensions of adornment.

Results and Discussion

The findings reveal that the Qur'an presents a distinct perspective on the inclination toward adornment in women and men. While verse 18 of Surah Az-Zukhruf points to women's natural and socially reinforced tendency toward adornment—interpreting it within both innate and cultural frameworks—verses related to men, such as verse 14 of Surah Al-Imran and verse 8 of Surah An-Nahl, link men's desires more closely to symbols of power, wealth, and social standing. The Qur'an treats adornment as a multi-layered concept, encompassing both material attractions (such as gold, clothing, and transport) and spiritual adornments like faith. Comparative analysis of the verses and Shi'a commentaries indicates that, for women, adornment is more often associated with identity expression, emotional connection, and social interaction, whereas for men it functions as a symbol of dominance and status-seeking. These differences in meaning and function stem from inherent distinctions between the sexes, while also being shaped by education and cultural context. The results of this study suggest that the inclination toward adornment is an innate human trait—particularly pronounced in women—that is analyzed in the Qur'an through a systematic and ethically grounded approach. The Qur'an recognizes this inclination and guides it within the bounds of religious and social norms, seeking a balance between external and internal forms of beauty through verses 18 of Az-Zukhruf and 31 of An-Nur. Although women are more prone to outward adornment, this tendency, when rightly directed, can reinforce moral and familial identity. Conversely, in men, adornment appears more as an expression of authority and a measure of social success. The Qur'an, by critiquing excessive self-display (*tabarruj*) and promoting inner beauty, provides an ethical framework for managing this desire. Adopting an integrative approach, this study challenges reductionist views of women and emphasizes the roles of education, culture, and religion in properly shaping the inclination toward adornment. It also opens the door to broader research in the fields of gender studies and Islamic education..