



# **SILENCING THE SILENCE OF PALESTINE: EPISTEMOLOGY OF PEACE FROM THE VOICES OF MUSLIM WOMEN**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Palestine has experienced a prolonged humanitarian crisis that has generated diverse forms of social and spiritual response. Within this context, Palestinian women are frequently documented not only as affected populations but also as actors engaged in everyday practices of education, care, and moral positioning. This study examines the epistemology of peace in Islam by analyzing how such practices are represented in scholarly literature and institutional reports, focusing on how peace-related knowledge is articulated through lived experience rather than abstract theological ideals. Using qualitative library research with a social hermeneutic approach, this study analyzes academic publications, humanitarian reports, and documented women's narratives to identify recurring patterns related to compassion (rahmah), justice ('adl), and ethical action. The analysis shows that women's experiences contribute to the construction of peace-oriented meanings through educational initiatives, family-based resilience, and digitally mediated advocacy. At the same time, these experiences reveal variations, constraints, and tensions shaped by structural violence and limited access to resources, indicating that peace practices are context-dependent rather than uniform. This study contributes theoretically by clarifying how women's lived experiences function as an epistemological category within Islamic peace studies, distinct from purely normative theology. Practically, it offers an analytical framework for understanding empathetic da'wah, education, and digital engagement as discursive and symbolic forms of humanitarian advocacy, while acknowledging the study's reliance on secondary sources and its limited capacity to represent the full diversity of Palestinian women's experiences.

**Keywords:** Palestine; muslim women; epistemology of peace; empathetic da'wah; digital communication

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The prolonged conflict in Palestine has been widely examined in humanitarian, political, and security-oriented scholarship. Previous studies have documented patterns of violence, displacement, and structural injustice, as well as various forms of social resilience emerging in response to prolonged conflict. Within this body of literature, Palestinian women are frequently discussed in relation to caregiving, education, community organization, and peace-oriented practices. However, these roles are predominantly framed in ethical, moral, or sociopolitical terms,

rather than examined as sources of epistemological insight within Islamic thought. This tendency leaves unresolved questions regarding how women's lived experiences contribute to the formation of knowledge about peace, rather than merely illustrating moral virtues or humanitarian values.

Research by Richter-Devroe (2018) highlights Palestinian women's engagement in everyday political resistance through education, community organization, and the maintenance of family stability. Similarly, Sharoni (2002) emphasizes women's contributions to alternative peace narratives and conflict transformation through relational and value-based practices. While these studies successfully foreground women's agency, they largely approach women's experiences as sociopolitical phenomena. They do not sufficiently address how such experiences function epistemologically namely, how lived practices generate, shape, and transmit knowledge about peace. As a result, peace is often treated as an ethical goal or political outcome, rather than as an epistemic process rooted in lived experience.

This study addresses this gap by situating Palestinian women's experiences within the framework of Islamic epistemology. In Islamic intellectual tradition, knowledge (*'ilm*) is not derived solely from rational inquiry or textual interpretation, but also from embodied practice, moral struggle, and engagement with lived reality. Peace, within this perspective, is understood not merely as the absence of conflict, but as a moral and social condition grounded in justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and responsibility toward human dignity. The Qur'anic principle of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (QS. Al-Anbiya [21]:107) reflects this orientation by positioning peace as a comprehensive ethical framework rather than a purely political state. Experiences become epistemological when they inform moral reasoning, ethical judgment, and social orientation within this framework.

Despite this epistemological foundation, existing studies on Islamic peace tend to emphasize normative theology or ethical discourse, with limited attention to experiential knowledge particularly women's experiences as epistemic sources. Experiences such as sustaining family life under siege, maintaining education amid instability, and negotiating daily survival are often acknowledged as expressions of patience and resilience, yet rarely analyzed as processes of knowledge production. This lack of conceptual distinction between epistemology, ethics, and theology creates analytical ambiguity, which this study seeks to address.

The role of digital practices further illustrates this limitation. Studies by Hirji (2021) and Meidina (2023) show that Muslim women use digital platforms for *da'wah*, identity articulation, and humanitarian advocacy. However, these works largely approach digital activism as a communicative or mobilizational practice. They do not sufficiently explain how digital narratives function as epistemic spaces in which experiences are articulated, interpreted, and collectively validated as knowledge. This study conceptualizes digital engagement as a mediated epistemological process, through which lived experiences are transformed into shared moral and spiritual knowledge within global publics.

Education constitutes another important epistemic domain. Lopes Cardozo (2022) emphasizes women's leadership in education within conflict settings, highlighting their role in fostering resilience and hope. In Islamic thought, education encompasses *ta'lim* (knowledge transmission), *ta'dib* (ethical formation), and *tazkiyah* (spiritual refinement). While previous studies acknowledge these dimensions, they often treat them normatively rather than epistemologically. This study examines how educational practices function as mechanisms through which peace-oriented knowledge is cultivated and transmitted across generations.

This research does not treat Palestinian women as a homogeneous group. Instead, it recognizes internal diversity shaped by social roles, historical contexts, and lived conditions. Rather than idealizing women's experiences, the analysis focuses on recurring epistemic patterns identified in the literature, while remaining attentive to contextual variation and analytical limitations.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how Palestinian women's lived experiences function as epistemological sources of peace within Islamic thought. Using a conceptual–hermeneutic qualitative approach based on systematic library research, the study examines scholarly literature, religious texts, and documented narratives to explore how peace is constructed, interpreted, and transmitted through experience. The novelty of this study lies in repositioning women's experiences from moral illustration or advocacy narratives to epistemological contributions, thereby offering a more analytically grounded framework for contemporary Islamic peace studies.

## **2. METHODS**

This study adopts a conceptual–hermeneutic qualitative research design based on systematic library research. The primary orientation of the study is conceptual and interpretive, aiming to examine how peace is constructed epistemologically within Islamic thought through representations of Palestinian women's lived experiences in academic literature, religious texts, and documented narratives. Qualitative inquiry provides the general research framework, while hermeneutics functions as the main analytical method. Reflective analysis is employed as an analytical stance rather than as an independent methodological approach.

The study is not designed as an empirical field investigation, but as a theoretical and interpretive inquiry. Accordingly, it does not seek empirical generalization or measurement. Instead, it focuses on epistemological clarification by analyzing how experience is theorized as a source of knowledge within Islamic intellectual tradition. References to spirituality, resilience, and ethical practice are treated analytically as epistemic categories that inform moral reasoning, ethical judgment, and social orientation rather than as normative or philosophical assertions.

Within this framework, Palestinian women are not positioned as direct empirical subjects, but as epistemic referents whose experiences are accessed through textual and narrative representations in existing literature. This distinction avoids the epistemological overclaim that women themselves are the direct source of data, and instead clarifies that the study analyzes how women's experiences are interpreted and mobilized as sources of peace-related knowledge in scholarly and religious discourse.

Data were collected from primary and secondary textual sources using purposive and criterion-based selection. Primary sources include the Qur'an, selected Hadith, and classical as well as contemporary Islamic scholarly works on epistemology, peace, and da'wah. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and authoritative reports published by international organizations addressing women, conflict, peacebuilding, education, and digital activism. Secondary materials were selected based on three criteria: (1) direct relevance to Islamic peace studies or women's roles in conflict contexts; (2) academic credibility or institutional authority; and (3) explicit engagement with lived experience, education, or mediated narratives. Reports and public narratives were used as contextual materials rather than as empirical datasets.

The analytical process was conducted in three interrelated stages. First, thematic mapping was applied to identify recurring epistemic themes across the selected sources, including spiritual endurance, educational practice, caregiving, mediated narration, and community-oriented action. Second, a hermeneutic interpretive analysis was undertaken to examine how these themes function epistemologically—that is, how they contribute to the construction, transmission, and validation of peace-related knowledge within Islamic thought. This stage involved contextual reading and interpretive synthesis rather than empirical coding. Third, conceptual integration was conducted by relating the interpreted themes to key concepts in Islamic epistemology, such as *'ilm*, *rahmah*, and *'adl*, in order to formulate a coherent analytical framework of peace.

The reliance on conceptual–hermeneutic library research defines the scope of this study. Because the analysis is based on secondary sources and textual interpretation, it does not claim to represent the full diversity of Palestinian women’s lived realities. Instead of presenting this as a methodological limitation to be defended, the study explicitly positions itself as an epistemological inquiry focused on conceptual clarification and theoretical contribution. Empirical field-based research may complement this approach in future studies by expanding the range of experiential data.

The contribution of this study does not lie in methodological innovation, but in its thematic and epistemological repositioning. By systematically analyzing women’s lived experiences as epistemic references rather than as moral illustrations or advocacy narratives, the study offers a conceptually grounded contribution to Islamic peace studies and clarifies the role of experience in the production of peace-related knowledge.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **1) Patterns of Peace-Related Knowledge Identified in Palestinian Women’s Experiences**

Based on the thematic categorization of academic literature, humanitarian reports, and documented narratives of Palestinian women, this study identifies three recurring patterns through which peace-related knowledge is articulated: (1) ethical endurance in everyday life, (2) maintenance of social continuity through education and care, and (3) narrative framing of suffering as moral testimony.

These patterns were derived from repeated descriptions of women’s daily practices under conditions of occupation, including caregiving, informal education, and community maintenance (Richter-Devroe, 2018; Sharoni, 2002). Rather than treating these practices as inherently peaceful, the analysis focused on how they are explicitly framed in the sources as conscious responses to violence, loss, and structural constraints.

Importantly, the data show variation rather than uniformity. While some narratives emphasize resilience and ethical commitment, others reveal exhaustion, emotional strain, and limited agency. This indicates that peace-related knowledge is not an essential trait of Palestinian women but a contingent outcome shaped by social position, material conditions, and interpretive context.

#### **2) Women as Epistemic Actors**

The analysis indicates that Palestinian women function as epistemic actors when their experiences are articulated as reflections on justice, responsibility, and survival, rather than as mere accounts of victimhood. This is evident in documented cases where women describe

sustaining education, family structures, and moral norms despite severe restrictions (Richter-Devroe, 2018).

However, the findings also reveal clear limitations. Not all experiences generate reflective knowledge, and not all women articulate their experiences in epistemological terms. Some narratives remain fragmented, silent, or emotionally unresolved. This challenges idealized portrayals of women as consistently resilient or morally generative.

By acknowledging these constraints, the study avoids essentializing women as natural carriers of peace and instead situates peace knowledge as selectively produced, mediated, and interpreted.

### **3) Interpreting Experiential Knowledge within Islamic Epistemology**

When interpreted through Islamic epistemological frameworks, the identified patterns correspond to forms of knowledge rooted in ethical practice (*'ilm bi al-'amal*) and reflective experience (*ma'rifah*). Unlike doctrinal knowledge derived solely from textual authority, these forms of knowledge emerge through lived engagement with moral reality.

However, this study does not assume that experience automatically constitutes epistemology. Experiences become epistemologically significant only when they are framed as moral responses to injustice and connected to broader ethical principles such as responsibility, care, and preservation of life. This distinction clarifies the boundary between moral sentiment and epistemological contribution.

While Rosidin and Mardhatillah (2021) argue that lived experience can function as a source of meaning in Qur'anic peace education, this study extends their argument by demonstrating that such experiential meaning is uneven and context-dependent, rather than universal.

### **4) Digital Narratives as Mediated Sites of Peace Knowledge Production**

The analysis of secondary literature on digital activism shows that women's narratives circulate peace-related knowledge by translating localized suffering into globally intelligible moral claims (Hirji, 2021; Meidina, 2023). These narratives function as mediated epistemic products rather than direct representations of experience.

While digital platforms amplify women's voices, they also impose narrative constraints, privileging emotionally resonant stories over complex or ambivalent experiences. This selective visibility limits epistemological depth and risks reducing women's roles to symbolic representations of resilience.

Thus, digital da'wah and activism are interpreted as conditional epistemic spaces capable of producing peace-oriented knowledge, but also shaped by technological, political, and audience-driven pressures.

### **5) Education, Empowerment, and Leadership as Applied Outcomes**

The findings further indicate that education and empowerment operate as applied outcomes of peace-oriented knowledge rather than abstract ideals. Women's involvement in home-based education, informal learning spaces, and economic survival strategies reflects practical responses to structural violence.

However, these roles also generate tension. Educational and leadership responsibilities often increase women's burdens and reinforce gendered expectations without equivalent structural support. Lopes Cardozo (2022) notes the peacebuilding potential of education but also highlights its vulnerability under prolonged conflict.

By foregrounding these tensions, the study offers a more critical understanding of how peace knowledge is enacted, sustained, and constrained in practice.

## **6) Theoretical Implications for Islamic Peace Studies**

Rather than proposing a new methodology, this study contributes theoretically by refining how Islamic peace epistemology can be understood through experiential analysis. It demonstrates that peace-related knowledge emerges not from idealized moral categories but from selective, mediated, and context-bound practices.

Unlike studies that present women primarily as symbols of resilience, this research highlights both agency and limitation, thereby contributing a more critical and analytically grounded perspective to Islamic peace studies and gender discourse.

Overall, the results show that the epistemology of peace in Islam, as reflected in Palestinian women's experiences, is neither purely theoretical nor uniformly lived. It emerges through everyday ethical decisions, constrained agency, and mediated narratives that transform suffering into moral reflection. By grounding discussion in analyzed patterns rather than normative assertion, this study positions experiential knowledge as a contingent but meaningful contributor to contemporary Islamic peace discourse.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study examined how peace-related knowledge is articulated through the documented experiences and narratives of Palestinian women, interpreted within an Islamic epistemological framework. Based on the analysis, the study identifies that peace in Islam is not constructed solely through doctrinal or textual formulations, but also emerges through ethically grounded practices embedded in everyday life under conditions of structural violence.

The findings show that Palestinian women contribute to peace-related knowledge primarily through three interconnected practices: sustaining social continuity through education and care, framing suffering as moral responsibility rather than victimhood, and articulating ethical endurance in domestic and community spaces. These practices do not represent uniform or idealized experiences; rather, they reflect context-dependent responses shaped by material constraints, emotional strain, and limited agency. As such, women's experiences function as epistemological resources only when they are interpreted, narrated, and situated within broader ethical and theological frameworks.

The analysis further demonstrates that empathetic da'wah and digital activism operate as mediated spaces for peace knowledge production rather than direct expressions of lived experience. While digital platforms enable the circulation of moral narratives and global solidarity, they also selectively amplify certain forms of representation and marginalize others. This finding

suggests that technology facilitates, but does not automatically guarantee, the transmission of peace-oriented epistemic content.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to Islamic peace studies by refining the concept of experiential epistemology. Rather than proposing experience as an inherently valid source of knowledge, the study clarifies that experiential knowledge becomes epistemologically meaningful through ethical framing, narrative mediation, and interpretive analysis. This distinction advances existing scholarship by addressing the boundary between moral discourse, lived experience, and epistemology.

Practically, the study highlights that education, empowerment, and value-based advocacy function as applied outcomes of peace-oriented knowledge rather than universal solutions. These practices demonstrate potential for sustaining social resilience, but they also generate new burdens and tensions, particularly for women operating within unequal structural conditions.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, it relies on secondary sources and documented narratives rather than direct ethnographic engagement, which restricts the depth of experiential variation captured. Second, the focus on women's peace-oriented practices may underrepresent experiences that do not conform to ethical or spiritual frameworks. Finally, the interpretive nature of the analysis limits the generalizability of the findings beyond similar socio-religious contexts.

In conclusion, the experiences of Palestinian women illustrate that Islamic peace epistemology can be understood as a contingent and practice-based form of knowledge shaped by ethical action, narrative mediation, and contextual constraint. Rather than offering a universal model, this study provides an analytically grounded perspective on how peace-related knowledge is produced, limited, and negotiated within lived Islamic realities.

## **Acknowledgment**

The author expresses profound appreciation and gratitude to all parties who have provided support throughout the preparation of this manuscript. In particular, sincere thanks are extended to educators, academic supervisors, and colleagues for their guidance, critical discussions, and constructive feedback, which have greatly enriched the depth of analysis and sharpened the rigor of scholarly argumentation. The author also appreciates educational institutions and related organizations that have provided access to literature and research facilities, enabling this study to be conducted systematically and effectively. Such academic support and resources have served as an essential foundation for the success of this research. Special acknowledgment is given to humanitarian activists and the narratives of Palestinian women's struggle, who have served as the primary inspiration for this study. Their patience, steadfast faith, and spiritual resilience have profoundly influenced the author's understanding of the epistemology of Islamic peace and empathetic da'wah grounded in humanistic values. It is hoped that this manuscript contributes to the advancement of knowledge, strengthens commitment to peace and justice, and broadens transnational solidarity founded upon Islamic teachings.

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