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Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā: A Legacy of Scholarship and Empowerment for Contemporary Muslim Women

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Abstract

The study of female scholarship has received growing attention from both academic and non-academic communities. This renewed focus highlights the importance of revisiting historical perspectives, showing that Muslim women have made meaningful contributions to intellectual life. Historical records from as early as the 7th century affirm that women's excellence in Islamic scholarship is a well-documented reality, not a constructed myth. This study aims to highlight the role of Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā, a distinguished female hadith narrator from the Tābi'īn period, as a representative figure in early Islamic scholarship. Utilizing qualitative research methods, including documentation, library research, and data from primary and secondary sources, this study explores her historical background, contributions to hadith scholarship, and her role as an inspiration for contemporary Muslim women. The findings reveal that Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā was not only recognized for her scholarly excellence but also served as a role model for later generations. The study concludes that female participation in Islamic intellectual history is both significant and enduring, underscoring the inclusive nature of knowledge in Islam and advocating for the continued empowerment of women in religious and academic spheres.

Keywords: Hadith, Knowledge, Muslim Women, Scholarship, Umm al-Dardā'

Introduction

In Islamic history, women have played a pivotal and well-documented role in the preservation, transmission, and teaching of ḥadīth. Far from being passive participants, many women emerged as authoritative scholars who contributed significantly to the development of ḥadīth sciences. Their active involvement in scholarly circles, including public teaching, issuing religious verdicts, and transmitting canonical texts, challenges the common misconception that Islamic knowledge traditions were exclusively male dominated. The recognition of these women, later known as *al-Muhaddithāt*, affirms that intellectual leadership and religious authority in Islam have never been confined by gender.¹

The legacy of *al-Muhaddithāt*, began during the Prophet's time and continued to be recognized until the fifteenth century. Throughout this long period, no single bad report was heard regarding them, only compliments from great and famous scholars. For example, Imam al-Dhahabi (d.748 AH/1347 CE) said in his book *Mīzān al-I'tidāl*, 'I have not known of any woman who was accused of falsifying ḥadīth.'² Imam al-Shawkani also commented, 'It is not reported by any of the scholars that he rejected ḥadīth narrated by a woman because the narrator was a female.' These statements show that the women scholars who contributed to the role of narrator or transmitter had a great reputation for justice, truthfulness and trustworthiness in knowledge and narration.

Western and Muslim scholars alike have recognized their contributions. Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) was one of the first modern scholars to acknowledge the special role of women in ḥadīth transmission.³ Since then, other scholars begin to further highlighted their roles and contributions such as Jonathan Berkey⁴, Zubayr Siddiqi⁵, Ruth Roded⁶, Hisham Kabbani and Laleh

¹ Abou-Bakr, Omaima. 2003. "Teaching The Words of the Prophet: Women Instructors of the Ḥadīth (Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries)." *Hawwa* 1(3): 306–328; Nadwi, Mohammad Akram. 2007. *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam*. Oxford: Interface Publication.

² Al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Mīzān al-I'tidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*. al-Maktabah al-Athariyah, 1984.

³ Sayeed, Asma. 2011. "Muslim Women's Religious Education in Early and Classical Islam." *Religion Compass* 5(3): 94–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2011.00263.x>.

⁴ Berkey, Jonathan P. 1992. "Women and Education in the Mamluk Period." In *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, edited by Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron, 143–157. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁵ Siddiqi, Muhammad Zubayr. 1993. "Women Scholars of Ḥadīth." In *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development, Special Features & Criticism*, 117–123. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society.

⁶ Roded, Ruth. 1994. *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who*. Colorado & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Bakhtiar⁷, Omaima Abou-Bakr⁸, Asma Sayeed⁹ and the most current and distinctive work of Akram Nadwi.¹⁰

Therefore, as a contribution to the body of knowledge, this study focuses on a female figure who is regarded as one of the prominent female ḥadīth narrators from the generation of the Tābiʿīn. She is Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā, and was chosen because, although existing research has largely examined her life and scholarly contributions, it has yet to fully explore her enduring legacy as a role model for contemporary Muslim women.

To contextualize the focus of this research, it is essential to examine how previous scholarship has portrayed the intellectual contributions and religious authority of Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā. Asma Sayeed¹¹ emphasizes that Umm al-Dardā's religious stature closely parallels that of ʿĀ'ishah, particularly in terms of her influence within early Islamic intellectual circles. She was widely acknowledged for her mastery of both the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, and she is known to have received a substantial number of ḥadīth from her husband, Abū al-Dardā'.¹² Her reputation as a learned woman of her time underscores her unique position among the Tabiʿīn and her centrality in the transmission of religious knowledge.

Further scholarship has shed light on specific aspects of her life and influence. Geissinger (2013), in her study "*Umm al-Dardā' Sat in Tashahhud Like a Man*",¹³ analyzes a ḥadīth from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that references her manner of sitting during prayer, using it as a lens to explore gender norms and religious authority in early Islam. Umm Dardā's legal opinions—such as permitting women to adopt certain male postures in prayer—reflect a broader jurisprudential agency that continues to have relevance in contemporary discussions of gender and ritual practice.

Historical sources further underscore her scholarly distinction. Umm al-Dardā' was said to surpass prominent contemporaries such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ibn Sīrīn in both knowledge and asceticism. Notably, she challenged

⁷ Kabbani, M. H., and Bakhtiar, L. 1998. *Encyclopedia of Muhammad's Women Companions and the Traditions They Related*. Chicago: ABC International Group.

⁸ Abou-Bakr, 306–328.

⁹ Sayeed, Asma. 2005. *Shifting Fortunes Women and Ḥadīth Transmission in Islamic History (First to Eighth Centuries)*. Princeton University.

¹⁰ Nadwi, Mohammad Akram. 2007. *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam*. Oxford: Interface Publication.

¹¹ Sayeed, 126–130.

¹² Nadwi, 101.

¹³ Geissinger, Aisha. 2013. "'Umm al-Dardā' Sat in Tashahhud Like a Man': Towards the Historical Contextualization of a Portrayal of Female Religious Authority." *The Muslim World* 103: 305–319.

prevailing gender norms by transmitting ḥadīth to unrelated men, a practice uncommon for women of her time (Sayeed, 2017). Her intellectual influence extended even to the political elite; Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān is reported to have attended her lectures and consulted her on religious matters. Following her migration to Damascus, she continued to teach both men and women. Students under her mentorship who later emerged as leading scholars, including Abū Qalābah, Rajā’ ibn Ḥaywah, Makhūl, and Zayd ibn Aslam.¹⁴

Despite these references, most academic discussions treat Umm al-Dardā’ al-Ṣuḡhrā within the broader context of female participation in ḥadīth transmission, rather than as the central focus of detailed scholarly analysis. This indicates a significant gap in the literature concerning her specific intellectual legacy and her potential role as a model of religious authority for contemporary Muslim women.

2. Background Of Umm Al-Dardā’ Al-Ṣuḡhrā

Her actual name was Ḥujaymah bint Ḥuyayy al-Washshābiyyah, and she is also referred to as Juhaymah bint Ḥuyayy or Ḥuy.¹⁵ The reason she is more widely recognized by the name Umm al-Dardā’ al-Ṣuḡhrā is due to her marriage to Abū al-Dardā’, a prominent companion of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The title ‘*al-Ṣuḡhrā*’ was used to distinguish her from Abū al-Dardā’s first wife, Umm al-Dardā’ al-Kubrā. The latter, whose name was Khayrah Abī Ḥadard (also known as ‘Abd Allāh al-Aslamī), was a respected and wise female companion.

Originating from the tribe of Washshab in Himyar. Umm al-Dardā’ al-Ṣuḡhrā was a renowned female scholar and *Muhaddithāt* from Syria, active during the 1st and 2nd centuries AH.¹⁶ She resided in Syria alongside her husband and maintained a distinctive lifestyle marked by devotion and travel between sacred sites. Each year, she would spend six months in Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) and the remaining six months in Damascus. Her religious commitment is further illustrated by her performance of the Hajj pilgrimage in the year 81 AH. Although the precise date of her death is not definitively

¹⁴ Hashmi, Farhat. "Contribution of Women in Spreading the Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)." Paper presented at the National Seerah Conference, 1993. Retrieved from <https://www.farhashmi.com/articles-section/motivational/contribution-of-women/>

¹⁵ Nur Saadah Hamisan@Khair & Norzulaili Mohd Ghazali. 2022. Bidadari Ilmu Hadis. Nilai: Penerbit USIM, 47-49.

¹⁶ Afifi, A. A. 2022. "Women's Scholarship in Islam and Their Contribution to the Teaching Knowledge." *AL-IMAM Journal on Islamic Studies Civilization and Learning Societies* 3: 19-25.

recorded, sources confirm that she passed away sometime after the year 81 AH.¹⁷ Scholars estimate that her death likely occurred between 81 AH and 90 AH,¹⁸ marking the end of a life dedicated to learning, teaching, and pious service to the Muslim community.

Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣughrā, a prominent figure from the third level of the Tābi'īn generation (*al-wuṣṭā min al-tābi'īn*),¹⁹ was nurtured in an environment that deeply valued knowledge. From a young age, she demonstrated a strong commitment to learning, particularly in her study and understanding of the Quran. According to reports from Ibn Jabir and 'Uthmān ibn Abī al-Ātikah, she was an orphan raised under the care of the scholar Abū al-Dardā'. She frequently accompanied him to the mosque, where she participated actively in religious learning—praying among the men's rows and attending scholarly study circles with her head uncovered, dressed in two simple garments. Her early exposure to such inclusive educational settings continued until Abū al-Dardā' eventually directed her to join the women's prayer rows.²⁰

Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣughrā was a distinguished *Muhaddithāh* (female ḥadīth scholar) known for her dedication to the study and transmission of ḥadīth. She was one of the beloved students of A'isha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, and had the privilege of learning from several prominent Companions, including Fadhalah bin Ubaid al-Anṣārī, Salman al-Fārisī, Ka'ab bin Ashim al-Ash'arī, and Abū Hurairah.²¹ In addition to narrating ḥadīth from her husband, Abū al-Darda', she also transmitted narrations from male scholars who were not her mahram, which highlights her active participation in ḥadīth scholarship and the trust placed in her reliability and knowledge.²²

Her scholarly influence extended across the regions of Jerusalem and Damascus, where she reportedly divided her time—residing six months in each city, according to Ibn Ḥibbān in *Al-Thiqāt*. It is noted that she performed Hajj in the year 81 AH and passed away thereafter during the caliphate of 'Uthmān, approximately two years before the death of Abū al-Darda'.²³ Her contributions to the Islamic intellectual tradition, particularly in the field of

¹⁷ Junaid, Bin Junaid. 2018. "Aktualisasi Tabi'in Perempuan dalam Periwiyatan Hadis." *An-Nisa'* 11(1): 298–306.

¹⁸ Al-Dhahabi, Shams al-Din Muhammad. 1990. *Tarikh al-Islam wa Wafayat al-Mashahir wa al-A'lam*. Edited by Omar Abdul Salam Tadmuri. 1st ed. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi.

¹⁹ Junaid, Bin Junaid, 298–306.

²⁰ Nadwi, 81.

²¹ Nur Saadah & Norzulaili, 47–49.

²² Junaid, 298–306.

²³ Al-'Ayni, Badr ad-Din Abu Muhammad Mahmud bin Ahmad bin Musa. 1970. *'Umdat al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*. Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi & Dar al-Fikr.

ḥadīth, affirm her esteemed position among the early generations of Muslim women scholars.

3. Scholarly Contributions And Influence

Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā was a renowned scholar who earned widespread recognition for her deep knowledge in the fields of Qur'an and ḥadīth. Her scholarly authority was acknowledged by both her contemporaries and later generations, especially in matters of jurisprudence. Among her significant contributions was her issuance of a fatwa permitting women to sit in prayer in the same physical manner as men²⁴—a ruling that remains relevant today. She was described as a *fāqīha* (female jurist), reflecting her high standing in Islamic legal thought, and was also skilled in the art of writing, which was a rare and respected expertise for women of her time.²⁵

Her scholarly excellence earned her the recognition of many leading scholars. Imam al-Dhahabi praised her depth of knowledge in jurisprudence, while Ibn Kathir described her as a devout *tābī'īyyah*, scholar, and jurist who taught both male and female students in her classes held on the northern side of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Among her students was Caliph 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwan, who regularly attended her study circles. He, along with other students of hers, went on to become respected scholars and leaders.²⁶ Historical records indicate that Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā conducted teaching sessions not only in Damascus but also in Jerusalem, where she held public classes attended by scholars of fiqh and ḥadīth, regardless of gender.²⁷

Her level of scholarship was considered superior to several prominent male scholars of her time, including al-Hasan al-Basri and Ibn Sirin. Umm al-Dardā's boldness in transmitting ḥadīths to men outside her *maḥram* circle also set her apart, defying conventional gender boundaries of the period. She made significant contributions in the field of ḥadīth, particularly through her role in transmitting ḥadīths to later narrators. She herself narrated ḥadīths from several notable companions and figures, including her husband Salman Al-Farsi, as well as Faḍālah ibn 'Ubayd, Abū Hurayrah, Ka'b ibn 'Āṣim, and 'Ā'ishah.²⁸

²⁴ Geissinger, 305–319.

²⁵ Hamisan@Khair, Nur Saadah. 2016. "Women and Hadith: A Thematic Study." *Journal of Academic Perspectives* 1. https://www.journalofacademicperspectives.com/app/download/969971886/Khair_N.pdf.

²⁶ Hossen, B., and Osmani, N. M. 2016. "Building a Strong Ummah: Muslim Women in the Twenty-First Century." *The 1st International Conference on Islam and Contemporary Issues in the Muslim World: Challenges and Way Forward*. 137–156.

²⁷ Nadwi, 150–151.

²⁸ Nadwi, 101.

Her transmission of ḥadīths was further continued by a number of students and narrators who reported from her. According to Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852H) in his renowned work *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, the following individuals narrated ḥadīths from Umm al-Dardā’ al-Ṣuḡhrā: Jubayr ibn Nufayr, Mahdī ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, Abū ‘Imrān al-Anṣārī, Sālīm ibn Abī al-Ja’d, Zayd ibn Aslam, Shahr ibn Ḥawshab, Ṣafwān ibn ‘Abd Allāh, Ismā’īl ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Abī al-Muhājir, Abū Ḥāzim ibn Dīnār, Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Kurayz, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī Zakariyyā, ‘Uthmān ibn Ḥayyān al-Dimashqī, ‘Aṭā’ al-Kikhirānī, Ya’lā ibn Mamla k, Yūnus ibn Maysarah, Marzūq al-Taymī, Makhūl al-Shāmī, ‘Awn ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Utbah, and Ibrāhīm ibn Abī ‘Ablah. This extensive list reflects the wide reach and influence of her scholarly legacy in ḥadīth transmission. Through her intellectual leadership and scholarship, Umm al-Dardā’ al-Ṣuḡhrā broke gender norms of her time and established a powerful legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition.

In addition to her scholarly achievements, Umm al-Dardā’ al-Ṣuḡhrā was known for her piety and ascetic lifestyle. Her influence extended beyond academic circles, reaching political figures who sought her counsel and respected her authority in religious matters.²⁹ Her home served not only as a place of private devotion but also as a learning centre for companions and students who gathered for acts of worship such as night prayers and dhikr ceremonies, which were conducted as spiritual exercises.³⁰ This integration of spiritual and intellectual pursuits was characteristic of her holistic approach to religious life.

4. Inspirational Figure For Contemporary Muslim Women

Possessing *qudwah hasanah*, or being a good role model, plays a vital role in shaping the moral character of individuals across all stages of life, including children, students, adolescents, adults, professionals, and society at large.³¹ As a prominent figure in Islamic history, Umm al-Dardā’ al-Ṣuḡhrā exemplifies how a life rooted in religious commitment, sincerity in worship, and dedication to knowledge can inspire meaningful societal transformation. Her legacy highlights that women are not only capable of making significant contributions to their communities but can also serve as exemplary figures for future generations through strength, wisdom, and moral integrity. This

²⁹ Khan, Sarah. 2017. *Gender Boundaries and Trends in the Role of Women in Hadith Transmission*. Thesis.

³⁰ Abdullah, Akmaliza, Siti Norlina Muhammad, Adibah Muhtar, and Nur Najwa Hanani Abd Rahman. 2024. "Unveiling the Intellectual and Spiritual Endeavours of Muslim Women in Ibn ‘Asakir’s Tarikh Madinah Dimashq". *UMRAN - Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 11 (3): 75-83. <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2024.11n3.751>.

³¹ Ismail, I. 2016. "Character Education Based on Religious Values: An Islamic Perspective." *Ta’dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 21(1): 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.19109/td.v21i1.744>.

study explores the enduring relevance of her values and how her life offers a practical and empowering model for contemporary Muslim women.

4.1 Diligence in Performing Ibādah

Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā is a perfect example in her acts of worship, serving as a distinguished model of piety and spiritual commitment. She was known among the women of Sham as a very diligent worshipper and always remembered Allah with gratitude. People sought her guidance to learn humility and piety in worship, as well as how to integrate acts of devotion into daily life. For example, as Yunus bin Maisarah stated, when the women who worshipped alongside her became tired, they would support themselves with ropes in order to continue their worship.³²

Narrated by Ibn 'Asākir in his book "History of Demascus", in a story reported by Ibn Abī al-Ṣā'ib, he said: "I heard my father relate that Umm al-Dardā' used to have hiccups (out of fear of God) when she recited the Quran." And Meimoon said: "Never did I visit Umm al-Dardā' during prayer time except found her engaged in prayer and the Muslim women used to worship Allah with Umm al-Dardā'."³³ This ḥadīth describes the seriousness and piety of Umm al-Dardā' in worship, especially in reading the Quran, which she often stopped because of her fear of Allah. In addition, it also shows that Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā never left prayer, and the Muslim women of that time often worshiped with her. This is a great example of obedience to God. This also shows perseverance and deep sincerity in worship even in the face of physical fatigue. She teaches that sincere worship is more than an external practice, but it involves sacrifice and seriousness in every aspect of life.

For Muslim women in the 21st century, the example of Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā is very relevant to the busy and challenging modern world. Today, women are often caught up in trying to balance their social, family, and professional obligations. However, one of the important teachings of Umm al-Dardā' is that sincere worship should not be limited to a specific place or time. This prayer can be used in everyday life. For example, today's Muslim women can still find time to worship sincerely, whether through prayer, zikr, or reading the Quran, even with a busy schedule. Getting closer to God is more

³² Darul Fatwa Islamic High Council of Australia. 2023. "Umm al-Darda' al-Sughra." November 3. <https://www.darulfatwa.org.au/ar/%D8%A3%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%89/>.

³³ Faithful Rose Organization. 2018. "Hujeimeh Al-Wessabiyyeh, Umm Ad-Darda' Al-Sughra (أم الدرداء الصغرى): The Female Companions (Sahabiyyat)." Retrieved from https://faithfulroseorg.wordpress.com/hujeimeh-al-wessabiyyeh-umm-ad-darda-al-sughra-the-younger-umm-ad-darda/#_ftnref1

important than time or place. Thus, Umm al-Dardā' can serve as a role model for modern women, inspiring them to continue to worship sincerely despite challenges.

4.2 Persistence in Seeking Knowledge

Simultaneously, Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuġhrā is the best example of Muslim women who diligently seek information and use it for the good of society and themselves. Not only does she have a wealth of knowledge, but she also uses that knowledge in clever ways, making her an inspiration to Muslim women in the 21st century who are faced with the challenges of globalization, technological progress, and social transformation. For example, the analysis study conducted on the thoughts of Prof. Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that among the challenges Islam faces in confronting science and technology in the 21st century, there are two main factors. The first factor is external challenges, such as the new world order, the secularization of life, the advancement of science and technology, and the adoption of non-Islamic values. The second factor is internal challenges, such as a lack of unity, feminism, human rights issues rooted in cultural and philosophical contexts, as well as the attitudes of other civilizations, such as Indian, Chinese, and Japanese civilizations, which also pose challenges to the Islamic world.³⁴

From the point of view of Quran perspective, education also plays a very important role in shaping a person's personality to become a pious, noble and possessing the qualities by which they will be someone who can benefit themselves and the community around them. The Quran also discusses the importance of education that emphasizes intellectual elements as well as comprehensive aspects including spiritual and moral dimensions.³⁵ In addition, education plays a crucial role in the long-term development process, as it is essential in shaping the identity of society and fostering ethical and high-quality individuals in accordance with Islamic principles.³⁶

Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuġhrā has proven that knowledge is among the highest forms of worship in the life of a Muslim. She not only learned the knowledge for herself but also spread it to the community, including men and women. This shows how Islam recognizes the importance of women's

³⁴ Ismail, Khalid, Solihah Haji Yahya Zikri, Abdul Salam Zulkifli, and Azhar Abdul Rahman. 2022. "Cabaran Islam Menghadapi Sains Dan Teknologi Abad Ke 21: Analisa Pemikiran Prof Dr Seyyed Hossein Nasr". *Jurnal Pengajian Islam*, August, 140-53. <https://jpi.uis.edu.my/index.php/jpi/article/view/192>.

³⁵ Muid, A., and Nasrulloh, N. 2024. "The Role of Education in the Formation of Character and Noble Morals from the Perspective of the Qur'an." *Journal of International Multidisciplinary Research* 2(11): 218-226.

³⁶ Afifi, 19-25.

education and provides equal opportunities for women to become knowledgeable person. Knowledge is absolutely the best kind of obedience to Allah, and this is what became clear to the abstentious knowledgeable woman of understanding. In history, Umm al-Dardā' was known for her dedication to attending scholarly gatherings and engaging in discussions with scholars. She said, "I have sought worship in everything. I did not find anything more relieving to me than sitting with scholars and exchanging (knowledge) with them."³⁷ It was not only showing the importance of knowledge but also emphasize how seeking knowledge is also considered as an act of worship (*'ibādah*) in Islam. It reflects that intellectual engagement and seeking knowledge provide a deeper sense of spiritual fulfilment.

For Muslim women in the 21st century, her story is an example that the pursuit of knowledge is a right and a responsibility that should not be neglected. The importance of knowledge led women of her time to quench their thirst and hunger with learning. A woman's credibility was not measured by her appearance, rank, or social status, but by her expertise in a particular field of knowledge. Knowledgeable women were often held in high esteem and served as key references in their areas of specialization. This represents a profound form of women's empowerment that had already taken root during the Prophet's era. Therefore, knowledge and education serve not only as a means to improve individual capacity but also as a tool to shift paradigms and elevate the overall socio-economic status of women.³⁸

4.3 An Exemplary Wife in Commitment and Loyalty

Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā became an exemplary example of a faithful and dedicated wife, making her a relevant inspiration for contemporary Muslim women. In today's world, marital stability faces many challenges, with an alarming increase in divorce rates due to modern pressures, lack of communication, and moral and social problems.³⁹ So, the story of Umm al-Dardā' provides a model of domestic harmony and fidelity in marriage, in line with Islamic teachings.

Her relationship with her husband, Abū al-Dardā', was built on mutual respect, spiritual growth, and a deep commitment to Allah. Abū al-Dardā' companion of the Prophet Muhammad who was known for his asceticism and wisdom, educated and guided his wife in knowledge and faith. He often brought Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā to knowledge sessions and involved her in

³⁷ Nadwi, 43.

³⁸ UNESCO. 2014. UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2014-2021. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227040>

³⁹ Ibrahim et.al, 90-104.

congregational worship at the mosque. Their relationship was characterized by mutual understanding, as reflected in Abū al-Dardā's advice to his wife: "If I become angry, calm me down, and if you become angry, I will calm you down. If we do not do this, how quickly we will part."⁴⁰

Her loyalty extended beyond her husband's lifetime. When Abū al-Dardā' fell seriously ill, she prayed: "O Allah, Abū al-Dardā' proposed to me and married me in this world. Now, I propose to You to make him my husband in the Hereafter." This prayer was heard by Abū al-Dardā', who responded: "If you desire that, do not remarry after me." After Abū al-Dardā' passed away, Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā kept her promise, even when proposals came from prominent figures like Caliph Muawiyah. She said, "By Allah, I will not marry anyone in this world until, InsyāAllāh, I marry Abū al-Dardā' in Jannah."⁴¹

For Muslim women in today's world, the dedication of Umm al-Dardā and her loyalty even after her husband's death, may inspire many to build relationships based on love, faith, and the eternal hope of reuniting in the afterlife. Marriage is considered an act of worship (*'ibādah*) in Islam because it fulfils religious, social, and moral responsibilities in accordance with divine guidance. Due to that, even successful women who hold high positions in any field will not neglect their responsibilities as mothers and wives, as they regard marriage as a form of worship (*'ibādah*).

4.4 Courage and Determination in Delivering the Truth

The courage to speak the truth is a very important value, yet many women today feel afraid to reprimand mistakes, especially when faced with powerful people. Fear of social, professional, or personal consequences often prevents them from voicing opinions or reprimanding injustices.⁴² This happens even more in societies that emphasize politeness and hierarchical positions, which often restrict freedom of expression.

A clear example can be seen in the life of Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā, whom was famous for her knowledge and wisdom. She once advised Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan when he scolded a servant of his palace just because

⁴⁰ Faithful Rose Organization. 2018. "Hujeimeh Al-Wessabiyyeh, Umm Ad-Darda' Al-Sughra (الصغرى الدرداء (أم): The Female Companions (Sahabiyyat)." https://faithfulroseorg.wordpress.com/hujeimeh-al-wessabiyyeh-umm-ad-darda-al-sughra-the-younger-umm-ad-darda/#_ftnref1.

⁴¹ Al-Aṣḡbahānī, Abū Nu'aym. 1988. *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā' wa Ṭabaqāt al-Aṣḡfiyā'*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah.

⁴² Erwani, Intan, and Anisa Suryani Siregar. 2024. "The Role of Women in Islamic Sacred Texts: A Critical Study of Women's Narratives and Authority in Islamic Tradition." *Pharos Journal of Theology*: 1–14.

he was late to answer his call. Umm al-Dardā' wisely reminded the Caliph of the words of the messenger of Allah: "Those who used to curse (others) will not find intercession and are not worthy of being witnesses on the day of resurrection."⁴³ The Caliph accepted the reprimand, proving how great the influence of a wise woman is in guiding a leader and speaking the truth.⁴⁴

Today's women should make the fame of Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣughrā as well as other female scholars during her time as a source of inspiration. In the context of the modern world, the involvement of women in many aspects is very important, whether in the workplace, in the community, or even in the institution of the family. Speaking the truth is not merely determined by anyone's position but includes the responsibility to bring positive change and good to society. Therefore, women should not be afraid to fulfil their responsibilities to enjoin good and forbid evils (*al-amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*) or devalue themselves because of gender differences. On the other hand, continuous efforts to improve knowledge and skills need to be fostered, so that they can make meaningful contributions, as has been shown by female figures in Islamic history.

5. Conclusion

Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣughrā was a remarkable woman who greatly contributed to Islamic knowledge and spiritual growth. She is well-known for her role as a ḥadīth narrator, reflecting her strong commitment to preserving the teachings of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Her huge contributions in wisdom and knowledge earned her great respect in Islamic scholarship.

She was not only a scholar but also an example of humility, sincerity, and determination in seeking knowledge. Along with her focus on acts of worship, she spent her life teaching and guiding others, showing that faith and education are deeply connected. Through her wisdom and grace, she proved that women could play an important role in shaping Islamic society's intellectual and spiritual foundations.

Her life inspires others by showing the impact of combining education, faith, and perseverance. It will be a loss if young generation did not recognize her and get benefits from her contributions. Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣughrā should a timeless symbol of how women can shape the future of society while staying true to their faith, proving that knowledge and devotion can go hand in hand. Through her example, many continue to find strength and purpose in their own journeys toward faith and learning.

⁴³ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2595.

⁴⁴ Nur Saadah & Norzulaili, 47-49.

In conclusion, it is important for future studies to focus on the under-explored area of female ḥadīth narrators and their invaluable contributions to the Islamic tradition. By conducting an in-depth study of these narrators and the ḥadīths they narrated, scholars can provide a new source for future generations, ensuring that the knowledge imparted by early Islamic scholars remains flourishing and accessible to all.

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