344118 - Are Women Disregarded in Islam?

the question

What is the ruling on disregarding and belittling females, based on the verses in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Wealth and sons are [but] adornment of the worldly life.} [Al-Kahf 18:46]

{and has made for you from your mates sons and grandchildren..} [An-Nahl 16:72]

{[He] provided you with grazing livestock and sons.} [Ash-Shu‘ara 26:133]

And in a hadith, it says that we [women] form the majority of the people of Hell? I used to love girls, but I have become afraid that if I praise a girl, I will be going against the teachings of Islam, to the extent that I have started to criticise females, for fear of going against the verses, even though I am female myself. I used to love my brother’s little daughters and enjoy spending time with them, but now I seek refuge with Allah, lest I am regarding them as part of the adornment of this life, when Allah, may He be exalted, has only mentioned sons in such terms. Does the verse {And We have certainly honored the sons of Adam ….} [Al-Isra’ 17:70] include females too? Is this word bani (sons) like awlad (children), meaning that it includes both genders? Or is it like the words banin and banun (sons) which only refer to males?

Summary of answer

1. Disregarding daughters is the attitude of the people of Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic days of ignorance) and it is not the attitude of the people of Islam.
2. What is mentioned in the verses of the Quran describing sons as an adornment is simply stating how people regard them, and it is not a command to do that.
3. The Muslim should show compassion towards his daughters, love them and treat them kindly.
4. With regard to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stating that women form the

majority of the people of Hell, that has nothing to do with not loving them or hating to have daughters. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said this to the women of the Companions to urge them to do good, not to condemn them.
5. Allah’s honouring of the sons of Adam includes women too.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What you mention in your question about disregarding and belittling females is wrong and is the opposite of what is right.

Explanation of the Quranic description of sons being the adornment of this worldly life

What is mentioned in the verses of the Quran describing sons as an adornment is simply stating how people regard them, and it is not a command to do that. What is usually the case is that a man feels proud in front of people in gatherings if he has a lot of sons who will help him and support him. Thus Allah, may He be exalted, draws the attention of the disbelievers to this immense blessing, in return for which they should give thanks to Allah, may He be exalted, and not be ungrateful.

For example, Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And Allah has made for you from yourselves mates and has made for you from your mates sons and grandchildren and has provided for you from the good things. Then in falsehood do they believe and in the favor of Allah they disbelieve.} [An-Nahl 16:72]

{Wealth and sons are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one's] hope.} [Al-Kahf 18:46]

And Allah, may He be exalted, tells us of the call of Hud (peace be upon him) to his people:

{So fear Allah and obey me And fear He Who provided you with that which you know

Provided you with grazing livestock and sons, and gardens and springs. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day.} [Ash-Shu‘ara’ 26:131-135]

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“{Wealth and sons are [but] adornments of the worldly life.} [Al-Kahf 18:46]… Allah mentions sons and not daughters, because customarily [men] only felt proud of sons. During the Jahiliyyah, daughters were a source of the greatest shame, as Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief.} [An-Nahl 16:58]; in other words, his face turns dark and his heart is filled with rage.

The words {adornment of the worldly life} [Al-Kahf 18:46] mean that a man feels enhanced; he feels proud of having sons. Imagine yourself as a generous man, meaning that you are a host and you have ten sons who welcome the guests. This would bring you the greatest happiness, and this is a kind of adornment and enhancement. Imagine yourself riding a horse, with these sons around you, surrounding you on the right and on the left, behind you and in front of you. You would feel a great deal of pride." (*Tafsir Surat Al-Kahf* p. 78-79)

The point is that the verses are highlighting the blessing that Allah bestows upon His slaves, and there is nothing in them to suggest that one should feel more proud of having sons and love them more than daughters.

Islam enjoins compassion and kindness towards daughters

The Muslim should show compassion towards his daughters, love them and treat them kindly. This is the teaching of Islam.

`Aishah, the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: A woman came to me, and she had two daughters with her. She asked me [for food] and I could not find anything

except one date. I gave it to her and she shared it between her two daughters, then she got up and left. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came in and I told him [about her], and he said: “Anyone who takes care of daughters and treats them kindly, they will be a shield for him against the Fire.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 5995, and Muslim, 2629)

Anas ibn Malik said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever takes care of two girls until they reach puberty, he and I will come like this on the Day of Resurrection” – and he held his two fingers together. (Narrated by Muslim, 2631)

Jabir ibn `Abdillah said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever has three daughters and cares for them, shows compassion towards them and spends on their maintenance, Paradise will definitely be his due.”

It was said: O Messenger of Allah, what if they are two?

He said: And even if they are two.

Some people thought that if they had said to him, what if there is one? He would have said, [And even if] there is one. (Narrated by Imam Ahmad in *Al-Musnad* (22/150); classed as sahih by the commentators on *Al-Musnad*. It was also mentioned by Shaykh Al-Albani in *As-Silsilah As-Sahihah* (6/397)

Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded us to follow the example of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), as He, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.} [Al-Ahzab 33:21]

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) loved his daughters and was compassionate towards them.

`Aishah, the Mother of the Believers, said: We, the wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him) were with him, and not one of us was absent. Fatimah (peace be upon her) came walking, and by Allah her manner of walking was exactly like that of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). When he saw her, he welcomed her and said: “Welcome to my daughter.” Then he seated her on his right or his left… (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 6285, and Muslim, 2450)

According to a report narrated by At-Tirmidhi (3872), `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: I never saw anyone who more resembled the Messenger of Allah in bearing and dignity, in the way she stood and sat, than Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). When she came to visit the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), he would stand up to welcome her, kiss her and seat her in his place. And when the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went to visit her, she would stand up, kiss him and seat him in her place…

At-Tirmidhi said: This is a hasan sahih hadith which is gharib with this isnad. This hadith was narrated via more than one isnad from `Aishah.

It was narrated from Al-Miswar ibn Makhramah that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Fatimah is a part of me; whoever offends her offends me.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 3714, and Muslim, 2449)

Disregarding daughters is the attitude of the people of Jahiliyyah

As for disregarding daughters, it is the attitude of the people of Jahiliyyah and it is not the attitude of the people of Islam.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males,

Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren. Indeed, He is Knowing and Competent.} [Ash-Shura 42:49-50]

Here Allah tells us that whatever children He decrees that a couple should have, it is a gift from Allah to them, and if a person is displeased with what Allah has given him, that is sufficient to incur His wrath.

And in this verse Allah, may He be exalted, begins by mentioning females.

What is meant is that being displeased with females is one of the characteristics of the Jahiliyyah for which Allah, may He be exalted, condemned them when He said (interpretation of the meaning):

{And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief.

He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide.} [An-Nahl 16:58-59]

Allah, may He be exalted, says: {And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief…}

But He, may He be exalted, says regarding women (interpretation of the meaning):

{For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good.} [An-Nisa’ 4:19]

By the same token, if a man has daughters, there may be much good for him in them, both in this world and the Hereafter. If he dislikes them, the fact that he is disliking what Allah was pleased with and gave to His slave is sufficient evil.

Salih ibn Ahmad said: Whenever a daughter was born to my father, he would say: The prophets were fathers of daughters…

Ya‘qub ibn Bakhtan said: Seven daughters were born to me, and every time a daughter was born to me, I went to Ahmad ibn Hanbal and he would say to me: O Abu Yusuf, the prophets were fathers of daughters. And that would take away my distress." (*Tuhfat Al-Mawlud* p. 24-31).

Allah, may He be exalted, has instructed us to treat our children equitably.

It was narrated that An-Nu‘man ibn Bashir (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Fear Allah and treat your children equitably.” Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2587, and Muslim, 2587)

Some of the scholars are of the view that they should be treated equally even with regard to kissing them, so if a father kisses one of them, he should kiss his other children too, both males and females.

At-Tirmidhi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“This is the correct way according to some of the scholars, who said that it is encouraged to treat children equally, to the extent that one of them said: [The father] should treat his children equally even with regard to kissing. And some of them said: He should treat his children equally in terms of giving, meaning that he should treat both males and females the same." (*Sunan At-Tirmidhi* 3/640)

So kissing one’s sons and treating them kindly, to the exclusion of daughters comes under the heading of injustice and wrongdoing, and it is not fair or equitable.

What is meant by the hadith “… For I have seen that you form the majority of the people of Hell”

With regard to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stating that women form the majority of the people of Hell , that has nothing to do with not loving them or hating to have daughters. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said this to the women of the Companions to urge them to do good, not to condemn them.

In the hadith of Abu Sa`id al-Khudri (may Allah have mercy on him) it is narrated that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “O woman, give charity, for I have seen that you form the majority of the people of Hell.”

They said: Why is that, O Messenger of Allah?

He said: “You curse a great deal and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have never seen anyone so lacking in reason and religious commitment, more overwhelming to a man of wisdom and reason than you, O women.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 1462, and Muslim, 80)

But if a woman does righteous deeds, she is given the glad tidings of Paradise, just like a man.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.} [An-Nisa’ 4:124]

{Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do .} [An-Nahl 16:97]

Does Allah’s honouring of the sons of Adam include women?

With regard to the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

{And We have certainly honored the sons of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things ….} [Al-Isra’ 17:70],

This honour includes women too. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Women are but the twin halves of men.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud (236) and At-Tirmidhi (113); classed as sahih by Al-Albani in *Silsilat Al-Ahadith As-Sahihah* (6/680)

Al-Khattabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The words “Women are the twin halves of men” mean: They are their peers and are like them in attitude and nature, so it is as if they were twins and kindred spirits of men.

And we may understand from this hadith that it is valid to make an analogy and apply the same ruling to a comparable group. So when a religious text is narrated as being addressed to men, it is also addressed to women, except in a few cases in which there is evidence to indicate that it is applicable only to one of the two genders." (*Ma'alim As-Sunan* 1/79)

In Islam, honour is based on taqwa (piety, mindfulness of Allah), not on masculinity. Therefore whoever is most mindful of Allah is more honoured by Allah, may He be exalted.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.} [Al-Hujurat 49:13]

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him): It was said: O Messenger of Allah, who is the most honoured of people?

He said: “The one who is most pious.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 3353, and Muslim, 2378)

For more, please see these answers: 40405 , 302114 , 12840 , 5053 , and 10001 .

And Allah knows best.