

Gender inequality in islamic religious education

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates gender inequality in Islamic education, focusing on access, participation, and the overall benefits for both genders. The primary objective is to analyze the root causes of gender disparity and its broader impacts on social and economic development. Utilizing a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach, data were collected through literature review, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of Islamic educational institutions. The findings reveal that cultural norms, socioeconomic factors, and policy gaps significantly contribute to the disparity, limiting women's opportunities in education and beyond. The results underscore the psychological and economic consequences of this inequality, hindering societal progress. This research concludes by offering actionable strategies, including inclusive policies, curriculum reform, and enhanced community awareness, to foster gender equality. The study highlights the necessity of collaborative efforts among governments, educational institutions, and communities to create a fair and inclusive educational environment, empowering individuals regardless of gender.

I. INTROUCTION

Historical developments in Islam that come into contact with very patriarchal cultures such as Persia, Assyria, Indonesia and so on greatly influence the interpretation of the holy verses of the Qur'an and give a strong impression of domination for men. This impression of dominance spreads to various realms such as socio-culture. In the socio-cultural realm, the determination of the roles between men and women in social life is still clear. Men hold a leading role in society because of their physical presumption of being stronger, potential, and productive. Meanwhile, women are considered weaker, less potential, and productive. This assumption makes *Labeling* women as domestic role holders while men hold public sector roles [1].

Islamic education, as the main pillar of character and science formation in the Muslim world, should be a way to change thinking and perception about gender inequality. In addition, Islamic education is also thirsty to instill equal rights for all people, regardless of gender [2]. However, in reality, there are significant inequalities between men and women in access, participation, and benefits of Islamic education. This phenomenon reflects not only gender inequality, but also challenges that have a profound impact on social, economic, and cultural development in Islamic societies [3]. The importance of Islamic education in forming a correct understanding of religious teachings and moral values makes gender inequality in access to education an urgent issue to be addressed. Although much progress has been made in recent decades to improve gender equality,

there remain obstacles that negatively impact women in reaching their full potential in the field of Islamic education [4].

These inequalities not only reflect human rights violations, but also hinder the progress of Islamic society as a whole. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the root causes of gender inequality in Islamic education, understand its impact on social and economic development, and formulate concrete solutions to overcome this disparity. In this study, an in-depth study will be conducted on social, cultural, economic, and policy factors that contribute to gender inequality in access to Islamic education. In addition, the psychological and economic impacts of this inequality on women will be identified, as well as how it affects the development of society as a whole.

Through a deeper understanding of gender inequality in Islamic education, it is hoped that this research can make a real contribution to formulating strategic steps that can be taken by the government, educational institutions, and the general public to create an inclusive, fair, and equitable educational environment for all people, regardless of gender. Thus, the Islamic community can reach its full potential through education that is fair and equal for all.

II. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the factors contributing to gender inequality in Islamic education. Data were collected through three primary methods. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to analyze existing research, reports, and policies related to gender inequality and Islamic education. Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out with education practitioners, scholars, and students to gather firsthand insights into their experiences and perceptions. Lastly, participant observations were conducted in Islamic educational institutions to identify real-time practices, challenges, and opportunities for promoting gender equality. These methods ensured a robust understanding of the socio-cultural, economic, and policy factors influencing gender disparity.

The data analysis process was guided by thematic analysis to systematically identify and categorize themes related to access, participation, and educational outcomes. Coding was performed manually, ensuring the inclusion of nuanced insights from interviews and observations. Triangulation of data sources and methods was employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. To ensure reproducibility, detailed documentation of the interview protocols, observation guidelines, and data categorization frameworks was maintained. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were upheld throughout the research process.

III. RESULTS

A. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological differences between males and females. The two main sexes in humans are male and female, and these differences are related to certain physical and biological characteristics. The main element of sex includes the reproductive organs. Men have reproductive organs such as testicles that produce sperm, while women have reproductive organs such as ovaries that produce eggs and uterus which play a role in pregnancy. The next element is the sex chromosome. Males have XY chromosomes, while females have XX chromosomes. The next element is sex hormones. Men have androgenic sex hormones, especially testosterone while women have the sex hormones estrogen and progesterone [6]. These biological differences develop during the formation of the fetus in the womb and are managed by genetic factors inherited from both parents. Sex identification is generally done based on the observation of the external sex organs at birth, although there are occasional biological variations that result in mismatches between the external sex organs and the chromosomes or internal sex organs.

The word gender comes from the English word "gender" which means gender. Meanwhile, in Webster's New World Dictionary, gender is defined as the difference that appears between men and women in terms of values and behavior [7]. Judith Butler argues that gender is not something we have or are innate, but rather something we do or demonstrate every day. Gender is understood as a series of social actions and roles that we perform [8]. Gender is a social and cultural concept that refers to the roles, norms, and identities associated with men or women in a society. The Qur'an, as the main source in Islamic teachings, has affirmed when Allah SWT created human beings including men and women. There are at least four words that are often used in the Qur'an to refer to humans, namely, *Basyar*, *person* and *Al-Nas*, and the Bani Adam. Each of these words refers to the best of God's creatures (*fi ahsan taqwim*), although it has the potential to fall to the lowest point (*Asfala safilin*), but in a different emphasis. These four words include both male and female [9].

Islam views the concept of gender as referring to the differences and roles given by Allah SWT to men and women, both in physical and social aspects. Although there are differences in nature and certain duties entrusted to men and women, the basic principle of Islam is essential equality before Allah SWT and in obtaining rights and responsibilities. The Qur'an provides an explanation of the differences that define gender in several ways:

1. Human Physical Nature

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اٰدَمُ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰیكَ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِى سَوَاتِیْكَ وَرِیْشًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰی ذٰلِكَ خَیْرٌ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَذَّكَّرُوْنَ

Meaning: O children and grandchildren of Adam! Indeed, We have provided clothes to cover your awrah and for ornaments for you. But the clothes of piety, that's better. These are some of the signs of Allah's power, hopefully they will remember. (Q.S. Al-A'raf verse 26).

This verse explains biasedly that Allah SWT created humans with two genders, namely male and female, and commanded to use clothes that covered the awrah. This shows that there is a difference in physical nature [11].

2. Roles and Responsibilities

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالْصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَ الَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

Meaning: Men (husbands) are protectors for women (wives), because Allah has given some of them (men) more than others (women), and because they (men) have provided for themselves from their possessions. So righteous women are those who obey (Allah) and take care of themselves when (their husbands) are not around, because Allah has taken care of (them). Women whom you are worried about nusyuz, give them advice, leave them in bed (split beds), and (if necessary) beat them. But if they obey you, then do not look for excuses to trouble them. Truly, Allah is the Most High, the Most Great. (Q.S An-Nisa verse 34).

The context of leadership and economic responsibility is greater for men than for women. This verse states that this role and responsibility is certainly not an indicator of superiority but something that must be carried out well. Both men and women have obligations, p. And each of them does not give higher or lower labeling [12].

3. Equivalence of Positions

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ اُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰٓةً حَسَنًا ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Meaning: Whoever does good deeds, both men and women in a state of faith, then We will definitely give him a good life and We will reward him with a better reward than what he has done. (Q.S An-Nahl verse 97).

Allah SWT emphasizes in this verse that both men and women have the same equality in the eyes of Allah SWT. Allah SWT will distinguish his creatures based on faith and deeds that are performed. Not to gender differences. Because Allah SWT promises a better life and reward [13].

Some of the points above clearly provide an understanding that there is a difference between men and women, not giving stereotypes and degrading only one gender. As a servant of Allah SWT, of course, gender equality needs to be upheld by paying attention to the rights and obligations for every man and woman. This is because Allah SWT has affirmed that there is no difference between men and women, but the measure of faith. However, Allah SWT also affirms that men and women have different duties, rights, and obligations to complement and complement each other without degrading each other.

B. Gender Inequality in Islamic Education

Gender inequality in Islamic education includes a number of aspects that illustrate the disparity between men and women in access, participation, and benefits of education. Several issues of gender inequality are still occurring, especially in Islamic education in Indonesia. This

can be caused by comparisons and calculations regarding the excess of men and women who exceed the limit [1]. According to several study results cited by Mansur Faqih, gender inequality can be seen from several points of view, such as the marginalization of women and subordination to one of the genders that generally occur in women. In addition, the emergence of *stereotype*, violence, and dual roles in the domestic household also often exaggerate on the part of women [14].

Islamic education, which should continue to run and make the Qur'an the basis for the implementation of education, certainly pays attention to this inequality problem. However, in its implementation, several gender inequalities involving several aspects still occur, including the following:

1. Access to Education

Some areas or locations still make it difficult for women to access educational institutions, such as some communities in conflict areas that only allow men to access education. Some regions in Papua, especially those affected by conflict and political tensions, may experience difficulties in providing equal access to education for women. In addition, problems in inadequate educational facilities such as special places of worship and appropriate sanitation.

Women's limited access to textbook writing causes the proportion of textbook writers dominated by men who are not gender-responsive is very large, namely 85%. There is limited access for women to become teachers, especially for junior high school and above. As a result, the learning process has not been oriented towards gender equality, and more places women in a disadvantageous position (bias against female). This is exacerbated by teachers' awareness of gender equality which is still low [15].

2. Participation

Women's representation is still felt to be lacking in teaching materials and textbooks in the curriculum. For example, some history textbooks often emphasize the role of men in historical events, while women's contributions are often overlooked or not given a balanced portion. This can create the impression that women's contribution is not as large as men's contribution in historical development.

Women's participation in the decision-making process in the field of education is still low compared to men. This situation can affect education policies that are less gender-sensitive, which can further have a disadvantageous impact on women [3].

3. Culture and Social Norms

Gender stereotypes that are still strong in society can create expectations and norms that limit women's educational choices and ambitions. Some cultural norms may prevent women from pursuing higher education or particularly in certain fields. Women are considered less important to achieve higher education [16].

4. Lack of Role Models

Inequality in the representation of women's role models in Islamic education can limit women's aspirations to pursue scientific or religious careers. One concrete example is the lack of women as teachers or scholars who are recognized in several Islamic educational institutions. In some Islamic boarding schools or institutions, women's roles are often limited to domestic activities or religious education that are considered in accordance with traditional norms. This inequality can limit women's aspirations to pursue higher scientific or religious careers [17].

5. Reproductive Welfare and Health Issues

The burden of household responsibilities and family well-being can be an obstacle to women's participation in higher education or special training. Lack of access to or support for women's reproductive health issues can affect their well-being and participation in education [18].

6. Violence and Harassment

Women can experience violence or harassment in educational settings, which can be a serious barrier to their participation and well-being. According to data from the Ministry of Child Empowerment and Protection, the number of violence and harassment of women in the education environment is 22,553 people. Gender-based treatment or discrimination in the educational environment can harm women and create an unsafe environment [19].

7. Economic and Employment Gap

The economic gap between men and women can affect women's access to education, especially among families with limited resources. After completing their education, women may face inequalities in the workplace, including disparities in salary and career opportunities. As a result of gender unconsciousness in education, as well as in the selection of majors of expertise, men have the opportunity to acquire high expertise and professional status. As a further result, the average income of men is higher than the average income of women [20].

C. Efforts to Handle Gender Inequality in Islamic Education

Addressing gender inequality in Islamic education requires coordinated efforts from various parties, including the government, educational institutions, communities, and individuals. Here are some efforts that can be made to overcome gender inequality in Islamic education:

1. Establishment of Inclusive Policy

Various elements in education can develop and implement education policies that ensure gender equality at all levels of Islamic education. This can be done by developing policies that support equal access, participation, and educational outcomes for men and women [21].

2. Promotion of Equivalence in the Curriculum

Evaluation and renewal of the Islamic education curriculum needs to be carried out to reflect gender equality and integrate women figures who play an important role in Islamic history and scholarship. In addition, there needs to be an evaluation and ensure that the teaching materials do not reinforce gender stereotypes and stimulate critical thinking [22].

3. Women's Empowerment and Community Awareness

Awareness campaign activities can be carried out to change social and cultural norms that hinder women in pursuing higher education. This can encourage women's active participation in extracurricular activities and support successful models of women's roles in various fields [23].

4. Provision of Financial Support

Access to scholarships or special financial aid for women who wish to pursue higher education in the religious or scientific fields needs to be provided. This support can also be done by encouraging financing programs that support women in pursuing education, especially in areas with low economic levels [2].

5. Inclusive Facility Development

This development can ensure the existence of suitable and comfortable facilities for women in Islamic educational institutions, including prayer rooms and sanitation facilities. It can also be done by increasing physical and geographical accessibility to educational institutions, especially in hard-to-reach areas [24].

6. Training for Educators and Education Personnel

Some of the imbalances that occur can be prevented by providing training to educators and education personnel on the importance of gender equality and how to support women's participation in the learning process. In addition, efforts are also made to encourage inclusivity in the classroom and overcome gender bias in teaching [25].

7. Collaboration between the Government and Private Institutions

The main efforts carried out also need to be complemented by encouraging collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and the private sector to develop holistic and sustainable solutions. This can be done by organizing partnership programs that support efforts to eliminate gender inequality in Islamic education [26].

8. Routine Supervision and Evaluation

This form of effort is to carry out routine supervision and evaluation of the implementation of gender equality policies in Islamic educational institutions. Another thing that needs to be done is to develop indicators and metrics that can be used to measure progress and assess the impact of efforts that have been made [27].

9. An Inclusive Approach in Extracurricular Activities

This approach is carried out by encouraging women's participation in extracurricular activities that support the development of their skills and interests, including in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Another thing that needs to be done is to provide mentorship and support for women who are interested in fields that are considered to be gender biased [28].

10. A Comprehensive Approach to Reproductive Health Issues:

The last effort that needs to be made is to provide reproductive health information and services that are affordable and accessible to women. This can provide support for women who need help managing their family well-being and education on a regular basis [4].

IV. CONCLUSION

The importance of Islamic education in shaping perceptions and values is emphasized, so that the issue of gender inequality is very important to overcome. The discussion began with an exploration of the concept of gender in Islam, which emphasizes the essential equality between men and women before Allah SWT, while acknowledging the differences in terms of physicality, roles, and responsibilities. There is an emphasis that these differences should not lead to stereotypes or demean one gender, but must be upheld by paying attention to the rights and obligations of each.

In addition, there is a need to explore specific aspects of gender inequality in Islamic education, including access to education, participation, cultural and social norms, lack of role models, issues of reproductive well-being and health, violence and harassment, and economic and employment disparities. Efforts to address gender inequality in Islamic education were then presented, focusing on the formation of inclusive policies, promoting equality in the curriculum, women's empowerment and public awareness, providing financial support, development of inclusive facilities, training for educators, collaboration between government and private institutions, regular monitoring and evaluation, inclusive approaches in extracurricular activities, and the comprehensive on reproductive health issues. These efforts require coordinated action from various parties to ensure gender equality at all levels of Islamic education.

This discussion emphasizes the need for strategic steps that must be taken by the government, educational institutions, and the general public to create an inclusive, fair, and equal educational environment for all people, regardless of gender. By addressing the root causes of gender inequality in Islamic education and implementing concrete solutions, Islamic societies can reach their full potential through equitable and equitable education for all.

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