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Gender Approach In Islamic Views

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Gender, Islamic View, Islamic studies	Gender equality is a phenomenon that is echoed by some audiences, ranging from academics, activists to politicians or public officials. Even though this discourse has been around for a long time, this discussion of gender has always been present at all times with various new discussions as well as old ones that have been updated. So whether you realize it or not, women and the issue of gender equality have recently become very interesting and lively for discussion, especially when it is related to Islamic discourse, where women in Islamic history did have an important position in various social, cultural, and social changes. economy, and even politics in this country. On this occasion, the author conducted a comparative analysis of the gender approach in Islamic studies by focusing on the discussion on the implementation of gender in society by searching books (research libraries) related to this discussion. Comparative analysis technique is a technique used to compare events that occurred when researchers analyzed these events and carried them out continuously throughout the research. Gender is used to identify differences between men and women from a socio-cultural perspective. While sex is used to identify differences between men and women in terms of biological anatomy. In addition, the relationship between women and men in Islam can in principle be called synonymous with talking about the equal partnership of men and women. Because in Islam in principle the relationship between the two sexes is equal before Allah (khaliq).

Introduction

In the current era, there is an increasing debate about religious teachings related to women. In various religious traditions, certain aspects seem to discredit women. Islam normatively teaches about the equality of men and women, despite the presence of gender biases in understanding.

Gender equality is a phenomenon advocated by various groups, ranging from academics, activists, to politicians or public officials. Despite being a longstanding

discourse, the topic of gender continues to resurface in every era, with both new and renewed discussions. Therefore, issues related to women and gender equality have become highly intriguing and prominent, especially when intertwined with Islamic discourse. In the history of Islam, women have played pivotal roles in various social, cultural, economic, and even political transformations in the country (Amil, 2013). Islamic organizations in Indonesia also signify responses to the growing issues of gender equality.

When brought into the context of marriage (family), the discourse of gender equality becomes incredibly complex. Marriage involves a relationship between a man and a woman, namely husband and wife. This marital bond gives rise to various forms of relations between them, including role divisions and statuses that are highly sensitive to gender (Yunus, 2022). Rooted in the concept of gender, often misunderstood by many, it is narrowly interpreted as merely discussing issues related to women and their inherent nature. However, gender is distinct from biological sex; it does not solely address women or men, nor does it focus solely on the biological differences between them. Gender encompasses the differing roles between men and women, constructed by societies or social groups with varying cultural backgrounds and social structures across regions, ethnicities, countries, and religions. Consequently, the roles, behaviors, and traits attributed to men and women in a certain culture may not necessarily apply elsewhere.

Since the passing of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the understanding of the holy book, the Qur'an, has become a significant issue for the Islamic community. During his lifetime, any religious matters, particularly those related to the Qur'an, could be directly inquired of him. However, with his passing, Muslims were compelled to understand their sacred scripture on their own. This necessity led to various efforts by scholars to develop methodologies of interpretation for understanding the Qur'an. In grasping the text of the Qur'an, some interpreters utilized the method of tafsir bi al-ra'yi (interpretation based on personal reasoning), which often introduces gender bias. To counter this bias, the interpretation and understanding of Qur'anic verses need to be reexamined, reinterpreted, and recontextualized. As gender issues are increasingly propagated by women activists on local, national, and international scales, the reconstruction of Qur'anic interpretation methodologies becomes essential. This reconstruction aims to create interpretations that are more sensitive to gender and capable of addressing contemporary religious and social changes (Syafrudin, 2009). Amina Wadud Muhsin, for instance, proposes a holistic/hermeneutic method of tafsir, integrating various interpretive methods with social, economic, political, equality, respect, and modern-day women's issues. Fazlur Rahman also introduced a holistic method, based on the assumption that verses of the Qur'an revealed in a specific time tend to use expressions that are relatively suitable for the surrounding circumstances. Therefore, they cannot be restricted to the historical context at the time of revelation. The Qur'an is relevant for all times (Majid, 2019). Hence, to maintain its relevance with human development, the Qur'an must be interpreted repeatedly, as it is a book suitable for all times and places. Similarly, Riffat Hassan introduces a comparative method by comparing texts, including passages from the Gospels in Genesis II. She also employs a historical-critical-contextual method, involving the following steps: (1) Determining the actual meaning of a specific concept based on its original root, using semantic analysis, then contextualizing it within the society of that time. (2) Assuming that the content of the Qur'an forms a coherent understanding, reinforcing one verse with another, making contradiction impossible. These meanings together build an integrated system of values. Riffat applies this method

to evaluate all other sources of values. (3) Ethical principles serve as verification for interpretation, meaning a new interpretation is deemed valid if aligned with principles of justice and fairness (Wathani, 2016). Conversely, interpretations disregarding these principles are automatically invalidated if they ignore or result in oppression and conflict with principles of justice.

Research Methods

On this occasion, the author conducts an analysis of the gender approach in Islamic studies, focusing the discussion on the implementation of gender in society by exploring relevant research sources (research library). Content analysis can also be understood as a research technique to draw inferences and validate data while considering its context (Rohimat, 2018). Meanwhile, the Comparative Analysis technique is used to compare events that the researcher analyzes continuously throughout the study. Several steps are taken in applying this technique to qualitative data analysis: the stage of comparing events applicable to each category, the stage of integrating categories and their characteristics, the stage of delimiting the scope of theory, and the stage of formulating the theory (Rosanti, n.d.). To obtain data, an examination and analysis of various concepts related to the discussion presented in this research, as well as scholarly information used as primary and supportive data sources, are conducted.

Results and Discussion

The term "Gender" originates from the English language, meaning "jenis kelamin" (sex). Quoted from Khoiruddin Nasution's book, "Gender" is defined as the perceived differences in values and behaviors between males and females. The Encyclopedia of Women's Studies explains that "gender" is a concept rooted in customs, making distinctions based on roles, behaviors, mentality, and emotional characteristics between the two sexes within a community (Nasution, 2009). While the term "gender" is not yet included in the KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), it is widely used. In the Indonesian language, "seks" refers to biologically determined humanness. The terms "gender" and "seks" are often used together. The two terms are often confused by individuals who do not understand gender. Both "seks" and "gender" originate from English, but they have been standardized and become Indonesian terms, namely "gender."

According to Supardin (2013), gender is not natural, it can be changed, and it can be exchanged from one individual to another, maintaining congruence with time and local culture. Puspitawati (2013) explains that gender refers to commercial attributes, societal aspects, cultural policies, and opportunities often associated with both women and men. The notion of difference is based here on aspects that are permanent (natural) and cannot be exchanged. The conceptual difference between gender and sex, for instance, is that men have penises and women have vaginas. Another example is that women are seen as gentle while men are considered strong (Fadlan, 2011). The term "gender" was introduced by social scholars to explain the differences between men and women as living beings created by the Creator, shaped by cultural and environmental influences since childhood. The presence of gender creates inherent differences in perspectives and identities between the two sexes (Puspitawati, 2013).

Social phenomena are depicted as natural changes and responses to the balance between communal roles and societal forms. In conclusion, differences between sexes are variations that take the form of customs, not a biological discussion, but rather the position of women in society. Therefore, the characteristics mentioned above are not necessarily inherent to women or men; environmental influences can lead to an exchange between the two. When such an exchange occurs, women can perform behaviors similar to those of men or vice versa. Traditions and customs are often cited as reasons why society tends to marginalize women. The basis of gender study centers on feminist thinking and refers to structural functionalism and conflict theory. Contemporary functionalism is concerned with social balance and harmony. Social phenomena are described as natural changes responding to the disparity in social roles and social constructions. Social exchanges rapidly become responses to abnormal changes.

The interrelationship among communities is needed to preserve and maintain harmony rather than compete. Value forms always function to shape harmony within the population (Kasmawati, 2013). This dichotomy provides different processes regarding sex in Islamic society. The differences give rise to various opinions about women, especially their primary role in domestic work. This dichotomy results in different interpretations of gender in Islamic society. The differences manifest as injustice and tradition often foster the perception, prevalent in society, that women's primary duty is to manage households and be responsible for domestic work.

Women are often marginalized, while male children are prioritized in all aspects. Balancing between men and women will result in fairness for both, without suppressing women perceived as weak and powerless. Islamic teachings protect the rights of women and consider their esteemed position, a consideration not observed in other teachings. If something unusual happens to women, it indicates that Islamic guidance is not fully implemented and that the teachings should not be blamed. Practices that deviate are influenced by distant community customs that deviate from Islamic teachings (Al Hibri, 2001). Men have a strategic role in society, so they have responsibilities concerning the family, while women simply follow men. The Arabian society did not warmly welcome the birth of female children and treated them poorly. In conclusion, the status of women before the arrival of Islamic teachings was as follows:

a) The humanitarian point of view that women do not yet have the right to give opinions in society and do not have an important role in society.
b) Husbands and administrators do not have equal equality in the family and husbands are more dominant over rights.
c) Women do not inherit, so personality and abilities must be hidden because Adams have a higher degree.

For a long time the women had no power before the Adams, they were of a higher rank and forced the women to submit and obey the dominion of the Adams. The existence of rahmatanlilla'lamin changed people's views on women for oppression so far and raised the status of women. Judaism and Christianity came early in life, but these teachings have not been able to understand people's mindsets about the status of women.

According to Eittah, (2014) suggests that patriarchy is based on the concept of one-sided superiority, namely adult men take precedence over women and children regarding the discussion of feminism. The Adams are more powerful in the family, breadwinner and policy making. It is alleged by Gadha Karni that Islam and the patriarchal system, either singly or in combination of the two have had an effect on the status of women wherever both are applied. Position affirmation affects the change in the object to which a verse is addressed. Feminism is an agenda to restore the rights of the Adams recognized by Nash, such as the right to equality, impartiality, obtaining individual self-respect, the right to marry or divorce and others. This problem wants to be changed to raise the self-esteem of the fair sex. So it is used to study nash texts that are predominantly biased against women. Biased interpretations of the similarities between the two need to be re-examined in order to raise the level and dismiss skewed responses about women. The renewal of the caliph system to monarchy gave rise to false hadiths condemning the fair sex. This is what feminists discuss to raise their dignity in all fields.

In general, in the context of social science, the term gender distinguishes between men and women which is not only based on biological reality, but also based on functions and roles given or constructed by society, which is called social sex. Studies related to gender analysis are able to produce three main theories, namely: nature theory, nurture theory and equilibrium theory as follows:

1) Nature Theory

Nature theory explains that the distinction of roles between men and women is natural and natural. This is due to the inherent biological anatomy, so that different genders of men and women become a major factor in determining social roles. Men have an ordinate (main) role in society because they are considered stronger, more potential, and considered more productive. While women are considered to play a sub-ordinate role (mastered) because they are biologically limited in their space, such as: pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding so that they are considered less productive. This difference gives rise to a separation of roles, functions and responsibilities between the two sexes. As a consequence of this assumption, men have a role as the head of the family and the main breadwinner by working in the public sphere (working outside the home) while women work or take roles in the domestic sphere, which is fully responsible for all governance in household affairs.

2) Nurture Theory

Nurture theory assumes that differences in gender relations between men and women are not determined by biological factors alone but by the formation or construction of society. Understanding in *nurture* theory raises the assumption that social roles, which have been considered standard and understood as religious doctrines, are not actually the will or nature of God, nor as a product of biological determination but as a product of social construction. Therefore, many gender-biased values that occur in patriarchal societies are colored by biological factors, which are actually none other than the cultural construction of the community. This theory views the distinction between men and women as the result of fabricated socio-cultural constructions and not nature, so

as to produce roles, resulting in different roles, functions and responsibilities. Sociological studies gave rise to the *feminist* movement, which is a women's flow or movement that focuses mainly on women's empowerment activities (accommodating women's potentials optimally) so that their position is equal to men in all fields known as women's emancipation.

3) Equilibrium Theory

In addition to these two theories emerged a theory that is compromising or bridging the understanding of its adherents known as the theory of equilibrium. This theory emphasizes the concept of partnership and harmony in relationships or relationships between women and men. This view does not contradict the relationship between men and women, because both must work together in partnership and harmony of gender relations in the life of the family, community, nation and state. So that in realizing this idea, based on the context of social change and development, it is expected that in every development policy and strategy to take into account the interests in the roles of women and men in a balanced or gender perspective development. Gender differences or gender differences are actually not a problem as long as they do not cause gender inequalities, but the social reality in the wider community is that gender injustice. The unequal position of men and women in obtaining their rights as human beings, in order to be able to play a role and participate in all areas of life, for example: political, legal, economic, socio-cultural, educational, defense and social security activities which can be seen from its 5 (five) manifestations in community life:

a. Marginalization, gender differences can cause marginalization in women if supported by government policies, beliefs, biased religious interpretations, traditional beliefs, and assumptions of knowledge that distinguish and seem to corner the existence of one race, both men and women.

b. Subordination, is the judgment or assumption that a role performed by a man or woman is inferior to another. Subordination to women arises from the assumption that women are emotional and irrational so that women are considered unable to appear as leaders.

c. Stereotypes, are negative labeling or views of certain groups or genders. One form of stereotype attached to society is that the breadwinner is the duty of men and female characters who are weak and emotional or feeling.

d. Violence is an attack on the physical and mental integrity of a person's psychology committed against the opposite sex. Gender violence can be in the form of harassment, violence, prostitution, pornography and so on.

e. Overloaded workload. Women have been constructed that their main task is to manage the household, while men are constructed to play a role in the public sphere. Women's work that focuses more on the domestic sphere forms assumptions and judgments that the work of wives who have careers is a burden on genda, because women are related to gender assumptions, from an early age in the family have been socialized to pursue their gender roles, while men are not culturally obliged to pursue various types of domestic work.

Gender is defined as the mental and cultural interpretation of the differences between sexes, male and female. Gender is often used to denote appropriate division of labor for men and women. Gender, as an analytical tool, is generally employed by adherents of the social conflict theory, which focuses on structural injustice and systems. Gender is a difference that is not biological and not a divine decree. Biological differences and differences in sex are part of God's design, making them permanently distinct. Meanwhile, gender refers to behavioral differences between males and females that are socially constructed – differences that are not inherent or created by God, but rather are crafted by men and women through prolonged processes in social and cultural life. The term "gender" is used differently from "sex."

Gender is used to identify social and cultural differences between males and females, while sex is used to identify anatomical and biological differences between them. The term "sex" is more concentrated on the biological aspects of an individual, encompassing differences in chemical composition and hormones in the body, physical anatomy, reproduction, and other biological characteristics. In contrast, "gender" is more focused on social, cultural, psychological, and non-biological aspects. According to Mansoer Fakih, gender is inherent in males and females, socially and culturally constructed (Fakih, 2013). For instance, women are seen as gentle, beautiful, emotional, and maternal, while men are perceived as strong, rational, masculine, and powerful. These traits and characteristics are interchangeable, meaning there are emotionally expressive and gentle men, just as there are rational, strong, and powerful women. Changes in these traits and characteristics can occur over time and across different locations. Therefore, the term "gender" encompasses all aspects that can be exchanged between male and female traits, which can change over time and vary from place to place or from one social class to another.

Understanding the concept of gender is fundamental to explaining issues related to equality in relationships, positions, roles, and responsibilities between women and men. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 132, gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women resulting from and subject to the social and cultural conditions of society. From the various definitions above, it can be concluded that gender is a characteristic inherent in both men and women, constructed socially and culturally (social construction and changeable). For example, the perception that women are known for their beauty, gentleness, emotionality, and motherly qualities, while men are perceived as strong, rational, masculine, and powerful. The characteristics of these traits are interchangeable. Gender refers to the roles and relationships between men and women. While sex differences are innate and entirely willed by God, the construction of gender is entirely a creation of society. Moreover, the concept of gender constantly changes due to shifts in time and place. Gender is a social construct that can be altered according to the level of societal human awareness. The core of the gender discourse is equal rights. Gender equality already exists, but the essence of gender justice, which strengthens equal rights between men and women, often experiences distortion (Simorangkir, 2022).

Since the passing of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the understanding of the Holy Quran has become a significant issue for the Islamic community. During his lifetime, all matters related to religion in general and the understanding of the Quran, in particular, could be directly queried to him. However, after the Prophet's passing, Muslims were compelled to understand the scripture themselves. For this purpose, history records the various efforts made by scholars to develop interpretive methodologies to understand the Holy Quran. In comprehending the Quranic texts, some commentators employ the method of "tafsir bi al-ra'yi" (interpretation based on individual reasoning). Many interpretations using this method exhibit gender bias. To avoid this bias, reinterpretation and actualization of interpretations of Quranic verses are necessary. With the emergence of increasingly prominent gender issues voiced by women activists, both on local and international scales, the reconstruction of Quranic interpretation methodologies becomes necessary to produce interpretations that are more gender-sensitive and capable of addressing contemporary socio-religious changes. In this context, Amina Wadud Muhsin proposes a holistic/hermeneutic method of interpretation, using a combination of all interpretative methods and linking them to various social, economic, political, equality principles, respect, and women's issues emerging in the modern era. This holistic method was also previously suggested by Fazlur Rahman. Its underlying assumption is that Quranic verses revealed at specific times tend to utilize expressions that are relatively relevant to the surrounding situation. Hence, these verses cannot be reduced or limited by historical circumstances at the time of revelation. The Quran is valid for all time. Therefore, to maintain the relevance of the Quran with the evolution of human life, it must be repeatedly interpreted, as the Quran is a timeless and placeless scripture. Similarly, Riffat Hassan offers a method of comparison, by comparing various texts, including biblical texts from Genesis II. In addition, she uses the historical-critical-contextual method, with steps such as: (1) Seeking the true meaning of a specific concept based on its original root, using semantic analysis, and then placing the interpretation in line with the context of society at that time. (2) Assuming that the content of the Quran is a network of meanings that reinforce each other between verses, making it impossible for the content to contradict itself. These meanings collectively strengthen and form an integral system of values. Riffat uses this method to evaluate all other sources of values. (3) Ethical principles are used as verification for interpretations, meaning a new interpretation is considered valid and correct if it aligns with principles and values of justice. Conversely, an interpretation is invalid if it disregards or leads to oppression, conflicting with principles of justice.

Conclusion

Gender is used to identify differences between men and women in socio-cultural terms. While sex is used to identify differences between men and women in terms of biological anatomy. Moreover, the relationship between women and men in Islam can in principle be called the same as talking about the equal partnership of men and women. Because in Islam in principle the relationship between the two sexes is equal before Allah (khaliq).

The Qur'an recognizes differences between men and women, but these differences are not discrimination that benefits one side and harms the other. This difference is intended to support the main mission of the Qur'an, namely the creation of harmonious relationships based on affection (mawaddah wa rahmah) in the family environment.

The understanding of feminism has led to many streams, namely liberal feminism, marx-socialist feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism. Muslim feminists themselves assume that the Qur'an does not see the inferiority of women compared to men. Men and women, according to them, are equal in the sight of Allah Almighty. Only the mufassir, almost all men, interpreted the verses of the Qur'an incorrectly.

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