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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE AND HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

Perspektif Islam dan Penilaian Sejarah: Peranan Wanita dalam Masyarakat

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Abstract

This paper has the aim of analyzing how religion and women in Islamic societies are studied and examined with a qualitative approach, that is a literature study. Islam emphasizes that men are protectors of women. Men and women are given by Allah SWT strength and professionalism to complement each other. Physical advantages of male and female reproductive organs should not be understood as pros and cons, but they must all be used to carry out their functions proportionately. There is no difference between the two in terms of the possibilities that humans, men and women have conceptually. Since the beginning of creation, women have occupied the same status as men. When Allah SWT commands men, it also applies to women. On the other hand, when Allah commands something to women, it also applies to men. Women in Islamic societies and communities face gender inequalities in the so-called 'patriarchal gender system'.

Keywords: Religiosity, woman, feminism.

Abstrak

Makalah ini mempunyai tujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana agama dan wanita dalam masyarakat Islam dikaji dan dikaji dengan pendekatan kualitatif iaitu kajian literatur. Islam menekankan bahawa lelaki adalah pelindung wanita. Lelaki dan wanita diberikan kekuatan dan profesionalisme oleh Allah SWT untuk saling melengkapi. Kelebihan fizikal organ pembiakan lelaki dan wanita tidak boleh difahami sebagai kebaikan dan keburukan, tetapi semuanya mesti ditentukan untuk menjalankan fungsinya secara berkadar. Tidak ada perbezaan antara keduanya dari segi kemungkinan yang dimiliki manusia dan lelaki dan wanita secara konseptual. Sejak

awal penciptaan, wanita telah menempati status yang sama dengan lelaki. Ketika Allah SWT memerintahkan lelaki, itu juga berlaku untuk wanita. Sebaliknya, ketika Allah SWT memerintahkan sesuatu kepada wanita, itu juga berlaku untuk lelaki. Wanita dalam masyarakat dan masyarakat Islam menghadapi ketidaksetaraan gender dalam apa yang disebut sebagai 'sistem gender patriarki'.

Kata kunci: Keagamaan, wanita, feminisme.

INTRODUCTION

Like other religious traditions, Islam is open to various, and often contradictory, interpretations of the normative demands attached to it. These various interpretations also arise in the issue of state-religion relations. Far from presenting a single binding Islamic position on this issue, various Muslim individuals and groups offer various 'Muslim discourses' about whether and how certain interpretations of the state-religion relationship and the normative requirements of Islam contradict each other (Abdi, 2017).

Women's problems are increasingly interesting to talk about, sometimes with fiery emotions, when related to religion, Islam is no exception. Muslim scholars and scholars almost all over the world, are called upon to participate in solving various problems faced by Muslim women. As is usual in the world of thought, these thinkers have come to various, even contradictory, conclusions. They also use different approaches in interpreting authoritative sources in Islam such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and the opinions of previous scholars (Mujiburrahman, 2014).

Muslim women have long been the backbone of Islamic development, including the movement to practice Islamic thought. Despite their extensive contributions, the role of Muslim women in the development of the movement to practice Islamic thought was neglected. For example, establishing women's religious authority has been a problem in many Islamic countries throughout its development since the arrival of Islam. Meanwhile, what was said in the name of Islam from the start was not only for men but also for women (Krämer and Schmidtke, 2006; Künkler and Nisa, 2018). Men and women alike shared their thoughts and expertise with fellow Muslims and were sources of guidance for Islam throughout Islamic history. Today in addition, Muslim women are actively involved in forming their own Islamic organizations and play an important role in various Islamic movements, from very conservative movements to moderately progressive ones. However, the study of religious authority in theory is often of men's religious authority only, despite the equal responsibility for women and men to understand and disseminate religious knowledge.

Before Islam came, women experienced a lot of suffering and were not free to purchase in their own capacity. For example, a woman in Roman civilization was

under the power of her husband after her marriage, which was completely under the control of her father. His authority included the power to sell, exile, persecute, and kill. All the consequences of women's businesses belonged to the men's side. As soon as Islam came, women were given full rights, namely by being entitled to inheritance, given full ownership of their property, and even other parties were not allowed to interfere except after getting permission from them. In the Islamic tradition, *mukallaf* women can make various agreements, oaths and vows, both to fellow humans and to God, and there is no power that can invalidate their promises, oaths or vows as stated in Q.S. al-Ma'idah (5): 89. Women are also given full freedom to choose their life partner, even their guardians are prohibited from marrying her off by force. A girl's marriage will not take place if she has not given her permission and approval. Women and men have the same position before the law, even Islam gives equal rights to women in ending married life, namely by means of '*khulu*'.

Therefore, Islam can be said to be a religion that absolutely respects women and men before Allah SWT. Islam abolished the Jahiliya tradition which was very discriminatory against women. In Islam, men and women are considered equal creatures of God and are free to share ideas and complement each other's needs. Islam as teaching places women in a noble position. There is no dichotomy or role discrimination between men and women. In fact, Islam, whose norms are derived from divine revelation, has placed women in a very honorable and noble position in accordance with their nature and character, no different from men in matters of humanity and their rights. Therefore, it is an incorrect assumption and very wrong if anyone thinks that Islamic teachings are discriminatory against women. Especially when compared to the teachings, attitudes and customs outside of Islam, the attention and appreciation of Islamic law towards women is truly extraordinary (Efendi, n.d.).

Women in Islamic societies and communities face gender inequalities in the so-called 'patriarchal gender system'. Aspects of this original pre-capitalist system persist in rural areas in various regions, both Muslim and non-Muslim, from East Asia to North Africa. The system is based on kinship regardless of religion, male dominance, early marriage (hence high fertility), limiting the norms of women's behavior, the relationship between family honor and women's virtues, and sometimes the family structure of revenge (Kazuo). In Muslim areas, hijab and gender segregation are part of the gender system (Offenhauer, 2015).

Islam as a blessing for all in the world is also a blessing for women. Therefore, there are no religious regulations that can be understood as prohibiting women's participation in public life. This norm is derived from the divine revelation of Islam placing women in the same position as men in terms of humanity and rights, in a very good and noble position in accordance with their nature and character (Agesna, 2018).

Religion and Gender

Historical records tell us that there were great civilizations developed in Greece, Rome, India, China etc. before the Quran was revealed. The world also knew of religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism (Shihab, 1996: 296313). Greek society is famous for its philosophical thinking yet does not talk about the rights and obligations of women. Some of their elite women were stationed in the palace. And the fate of the lesser circular woman was in palace hands. And in the circle below, the fate of women was very sad. They were trafficked, but married ones were completely under the husband's control. They had neither human rights nor inheritance rights. The heyday of Greek civilization gave women the freedom to satisfy men's needs and tastes. In order not to be considered as a violation of the dignity of free sex, prostitution became the center of political, literary, and artistic activity (Yafie, 1996 : 59; Dosen et al., 2012).

Gender in Islamic Perspective and Feminist Discourse

The word "gender" is lexically English, or "Geschlecht" (German), "Genre" (French) "Genero" (Spanish), which means several types, races, classes, and comes from "generare" (Latin). It can mean reproduction or it can mean race and breed. It was in the 1970s that feminist scholars adopted the term gender as a way of distinguishing socially constructed aspects of male-female differences (gender) from biologically determined aspects (sex) (Wiki).

Gender differences are actually not a problem as long as they do not give birth to gender inequality. However, historical reality shows that gender differences have given rise to various gender inequalities, especially for women. In this kind of historical reality, gender differences are formed and even socialized, strengthened and standardized, and socially and culturally constructed through religious teachings and even through the state; because it is often believed as a provision of God that biological nature can not be changed anymore and the different natures of men and women are understood as gender differences. This then gave rise to various theories; from psychological, functional structural, conflict, socio-biological to ecological.

If you look closely, feminist theories make the same assumptions used in the patriarchal system. But feminist attitudes towards patriarchal ideology are negative; this ideology places women in a subordinate position. In order to achieve a more egalitarian system, feminist rejection of the patriarchal system can be approached in two ways. First, social transformation through revolutionary external change, and second, social transformation through evolutionary internal change.

In the Islamic world, the discourse on women or what is now known as the feminist discourse, has become controversial. Apart from the problem of linguistic bias that has been used as a pretext for rejecting feminism, this controversy is mostly triggered by the construction of feminism itself which is built on the awareness of

women's oppression (Malisi, n.d.). Islam does not recognize the discourse of feminism and gender inequality which claims that the issue goes back to the slavery of women. This is because Islam does not differentiate its position based on gender and there is no gender prejudice in Islam. Islam places men and women in the same place and in the same glory (Asghar Ali Engineer, 1990: 38; Mansour Fakih, 1996: 4; Junaidi & Hadi, 2010).

Islamic View of Women

Rational fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism believe that the vision of the Koran is justice. However, the paradigms used in understanding justice are not the same in conceptualization and the conclusions offered are also different. For rationalists, justice is discussing equality, religious people see justice in differences. Women in the view of Islam occupy her own elevated position. The view of Islam cannot be said to be gender-biased. Islam does sometimes talk about women as women (for example in the matter of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding obligations) and sometimes also speak of her as a human being without being distinguished from men (For example, in terms of the obligations of prayer, zakat, going on pilgrimage, having noble character, eating and drinking halal and so on). Both views aim at directing women individually as noble human beings and collectively, together with men, to become part of a harmonious (family and community) order (S, 2015).

From an Islamic point of view, women are actually in an enviable position. It is undeniable that there are many problems that plague the world of women's lives today. The question is how to solve it. That the challenging teachings of Islam are the sources of women's retreat has been proven wrong. On the contrary, this great teaching is a practical program educating women how to be noble, solemn in person and preserve family unity.

The Social Role of Women in Islam

In Islam, the social role of women is not the same as conceptualized in women's liberation and feminist movements born in the West. The pioneers, supporters, and activists of the women's liberation movement demanded equality with men in all things. The demands of this movement are so extreme that it eliminates the identity of women. Unknowingly they fall into the dilemma of various personalities, but when it comes to working outside the home, they are exactly the same as men. One of the biggest problems is neglecting household chores. Bad effects can also befall children and husbands, and the end result is the breakdown of the family system. If this happens, then the social structure of society becomes fragile because the family is the pillar of the state.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that there are ideas, or at least extreme traditions among Muslims that severely limit women's social roles. For this reason, the position of women in the social function suggested by the Qur'an needs to be properly re-examined. The pre-modern history of Islam is an exemplary capsule of human development in many ways. Demands of women were entertained. It is obvious that Islamic development fosters a social role for women and enhancement of their status. The elaboration of this social role is achieved by taking into account the respective roles of men and women.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods and is a literature study. Literature research collects detailed information and data through various books, notes, journals, and other bibliography, as well as the results of previous work related to answers to the problems to be researched and their theoretical foundations (Yaniawati, 2020). This research produces information in the form of notes and descriptive data contained in the texts under study (Mantra, 2008; Raco, 2018).

As a library research, there are two kinds of data sources, namely:

1. **Primary Sources**

Primary sources are the main data sources that are directly collected by researchers from the objects of research, namely books and articles which cover the objectives of this study.

2. **Secondary Source**

Additional data source that according to the researcher supports the main data, namely books or articles that act as supporters of the primary book or article to strengthen the concepts in the primary book or article.

The method used to collect research data in library research is to select, search, present, and analyze library data. Library materials obtained require philosophical and theoretical processing. The literature search here is a literature study without empirical verification (Muhadjir, 1998). The data presented is data in the form of words that need to be processed systematically and presented concisely.

This study uses data analysis techniques in the form of content analysis. This is a scientific analysis of the message content of data (Muhadjir, 1998). The aim of analysis is to develop research data that can be processed within a simple framework. (Zed,2004). The data that has been collected is then analyzed to obtain information, but first, the data is selected on the basis of its reliability (Mantra, 2008). The purpose of this data analysis is to find the truth of the data that has been obtained so that conclusions can be drawn from the results of the research that has been done. In this study, researchers used 3 stages, namely: data reduction, data display, data verification, and conclusion drawing.

CONCLUSION

World religions and civilizations allow women to be placed in the second sex, sometimes in a tight corner, even though they hold the same place as men in society. Gender bias is an aberration of religious thought about the function and position of women and must be dismantled, especially in the context of society.

Islam says that men are protectors of women. Men and women are given by Allah SWT strength and professionalism to complement each other. The advantages of male and female reproductive organs do not have to be viewed as pros and cons, they are meant to function in harmony. There is no difference between the two in terms of the possibilities that humans, men and women can achieve conceptually. From the very beginning, women occupied the same status as men. When Allah SWT commands men, it also applies to women. On the other hand, when Allah SWT commands something to women, it also applies to men.

In Islam, allocating household work to women alone is considered a male judgement and is not a defensible mechanism if one wants to foster a strong family structure in which the relationship is between humans as individuals. Women are trying to reframe relationships between men and women in society so that they can both make peace and support each other for the realization of family happiness and maintain social ethics for the realization of a noble society.

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