

## Gender Equality Perspective in Islam Based on the Holy Quran

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to investigate and analyze how the Islamic concepts view the gender equality between men and women. This study was a library research by comparing various reference sources that discuss about gender. The main data source was the Holy Quran and Al Hadith. The data analysis results of the gender perspective in Islam showed that the presence of the disclosure problem of women by using the gender analysis often appears the resistance; either from the men or the women themselves. It can be caused by some issues, namely: first, questioning the women status is basically questioned the systems and structures that have been established. Second, discussing about gender means that discussing about the personal power, i.e., concerns and involves each individual. The Islamic concepts contribute a fair social system to women. Islam views women are equal to men in terms of humanity. Islam gives the rights to women as given to men and imposes the same obligations to both of them. The Islamic teachings do not schematically distinguish the different factors between men and women but they more consider both of them as a whole human being. In terms of biological and socio-culture they need each other and thus they have their own role. Islam as stated in the Holy Quran, treats women and men are equal because it refers to the relationship between the God and the individual both men and women. In the Islamic normatively perspective the high-low quality of a person only lies in the high-low quality of devotion and piety to Allah SWT (Almighty God). Allah gives the same and equitable respect to all human beings without distinction between men and women for all their deeds.

**Key words:** Islam, Holy Quran, gender, factors, relationship, SWT

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### INTRODUCTION

In the Holy Quran, it is stated that the God-Allah-creates the human beings based on their nature, i.e., men and women to worship to Him. It also recognizes the anatomical differences between men and women both of them have their respective roles. Some theories of the roles equality of men and women which mostly stated by the contemporary feminist are based on the fundamental question “what is the women’s role?” Essentially, there are four answers to this question. First, the women’s position and experience from many situations are different with the experienced by men. Second, the women’s position in most situations is not only different but also less profitable or unequal compared to men. Third, the women’s situation must also be understood in terms of a direct power relation between men and women. Women are “oppressed” in the sense of restrained, subordinated, molded, used and abused by men. Fourth, women get the differences, inequality and various oppressions in accordance with their total position in the stratification structure or oppression and privilege factors based on class, race, ethnicity, age, marital status and global position. Each of the various

types of feminist theory could be classed as the gender theory or gender inequality theory or gender oppression theory or structural oppression theory.

Gender analysis is more precisely referred to the distinguishing of power that create or perpetuate injustice by questioning who does what who owns what who gains and who loses who decides; male or female? The equality between men and women in a family does not mean that the position of men and women must be treated equally. Treating men and women equally in all situations would lead to gender bias. Treating equally between men and women in household activities for one condition is for example, the husband is also obliged to take care of his children, similarly the wife has obligation to take care of her children. It means that the obligation to take care of the children is not absolutely the duty of a wife but it is a collective obligation. Meanwhile, the traditional Islamic thoughts that are reflected by fiqh’s books generally provide limited role of women as a wife and mother. The traditional Islamic thoughts consider that the main principle is that “man is the family head” and he is responsible for matters outside the home while woman is a wife who is responsible to take care of the children and other domestic services. This difference becomes a

benchmark point of the different roles of men and women. It is also supported by the statement in the Holy Quran in Surah An-Nisa verse 34:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ  
بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

Meaning: men are in charge of women by (right of) what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend (for maintenance) from their wealth (QS. An-Nisa: 34).

The interpretation of that paragraph would be interpreted that man is the leader for woman because his wife must obey the husband and the husband has the right to discipline his wife. Based on the text view and the classical Islamic literature it is still consider that women are still marginalized or in other words, women are still under the domination of men. Hence, the discourse and construct about the women should be at the text discretion. It can be denied that the classical Islamic scholar's interpretation on the equality concept of men and women from the current perspective can be judged as bias because the interpretations in the past cannot be separated with the current socio-historical context.

In addition to the obligation for men to provide family income causes dominate decision superiority of men in a family. As the family head the man is the decision maker for all family problems. Referring to the problems that have been raised this study aimed to investigate and analyze how the Islamic concepts consider the gender equality between man and woman.

### **Literature review**

**Definition of gender:** The term of gender has been familiar to all people but some of them have not understood correctly this term. The term and definition of gender is mostly confused and defined as same meaning with the sex. Gender is also often interpreted as a gift from God or the divine nature whereas gender is not simply meant like that.

Etymologically, the modern English word gender comes from the Middle English gender (also *gendere*, *gendir*, *gendyr*, *gendre*), a loanword from Anglo-Norman and Middle French *genre*. This, in turn, came from Latin *genus*. Both words mean "kind", "type" or "sort". They derive ultimately from a widely attested Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root *g'n-* (American Heritage Dictionary of English Language). The third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED3) notes the original meaning of gender as "kind" had already become obsolete.

Nyikos (2008) defines gender as a broad term that is often used to denote not only biologically based dichotomous variable of sex that is male and female but also the socially constructed roles (i.e., gender) which are created by the different ways in which sexes are raised from birth and socialized within a certain culture.

Furthermore, Oakley (2016) defines the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender'. Sex is a word that refers to the biological distinction between male and female the visible difference in genitalia the related difference in procreative function. Gender, however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Therefore, gender refers to the behavioral differences between men and women that are socially differences created by men and women through social and cultural process. It is not defined as the nature or the God's creation.

Gender, a social construct and sex, a biological construct are distinct not interchangeable, terms the two nevertheless are often confused and used interchangeably in contemporary scientific literature. Gender refers to a social construct regarding culture-bound conventions, roles and behaviors for as well as relations between and among, women and men and boys and girls. Gender roles vary across a continuum and both gender relations and biologic expressions of gender vary within and across societies, typically in relation to social divisions premised on power and authority (e.g., class, race/ethnicity, nationality, religion). Meanwhile, sex is a biological construct premised upon biological characteristics enabling sexual reproduction (Krieger, 2003; Mifflin, 2000).

In the women's studies encyclopedia, gender is defined as a cultural concept that developed in the community that tries to make the different roles, behaviors, mentality and emotional character among men and women.

In the terminological term, gender by Hillary M. Lips is defined as the cultural expectations to men and women. H.T. Wilson defines that gender as a basis for determining the contribution differences of men and women in culture and collective life. Meanwhile, Elaine Showalter defines that gender distinction is more than just men and women concept that is considered from the socio-cultural construction.

Gender is previously defined as grammatical object classifications to distinguish the gender differences. Gender equality is often disproportionately prosecuted. All of these conditions add to enliven the problem of gender issues. The justice and gender equality should not certainly mean that considered in all issues. It needs objective and realistic wisdom to develop a concept or to actualize the concept of the proportionate and fair gender roles.

**Concept of gender equality:** The important concept to understand the relationship between men and women is to distinguish between the sex concept and the gender concept. The understanding and distinction between both concepts are indispensable in the analysis in order to understand the social injustice problems faced by women. This is caused by the close relationship between gender differences and gender inequalities in term of the society injustice structure widely. An understanding of the gender concept is necessary to considering this concept has produced a gender analysis.

The gender's term is used differently with the sex's term. The term of gender is used to identify differences between men and women in terms of the socio-cultural aspect. Meanwhile, the term of sex is used to identify differences between men and women in terms of biological anatomy. The sex's term is more focused on a person biological aspect including the differences in chemical composition and hormones in the body, physical anatomy, reproduction and other biological characteristics. Gender, on the other hand, is more focused on the social, cultural, psychological and other non biological aspects.

These differences appear the functions and responsibilities separation between men and women. The man has responsibilities to handle the matters outside the home and the woman has responsibilities to take care of the home that is known as the hunter and gatherer in traditional society the public sector and the domestic sector in the modern society. The gender differences in the subsequent process produce the gender role and it is considered that not cause problems, so it is never debated. However, the problem that needs to be debated is about the injustice structure that is inflicted by the gender roles and gender differences.

Disclosure problems of women by using gender analysis often face the resistance both form the men and women. It can be caused such as: first, questioning the women's status is basically questioned the systems and structures that have been established. Second, discussing about gender means that discuss the personal power relation which concerns and involves each individual. Therefore, understanding of the gender concept is a fundamental issue in order to clarify the equality relationship issues, positions, roles and responsibilities between men and women.

**Injustice gender differences:** The gender differences are not actually a problem as far as not cause the gender inequality. However, the problem is gender differences have been appeared various injustices both from men and especially for women. Gender inequality is a system and

structure in which both the men and women become victims of the system. The gender inequality is manifested in various injustice forms, namely: marginalization or economic impoverishment, subordination or unimportant presumption in the public decision, stereotype formation or by negative labeling, violence the longer and burden workload and socialization of ideological value of gender roles.

In the daily life communication in a society that embraces gender differences there are manners values and legal norms that differentiate the roles between men and women. Everyone is as if demanded to have a gender feeling in the intercommunication, so that if someone violates the values, norms and the feeling, he/she will be at risk in the community. The predicate of man and woman are considered as a status symbol. The man is identified as having the masculinity characteristics while the woman is identified as having the femininity characteristics.

The woman is perceived as a beautiful, slim and soft human being whereas the man is perceived as a mighty, strong and aggressive human being. The men dominance in society is not only because they are masculine but also they have a lot of power accesses to obtain the status. They for example, control the legislative institutions are dominant in the law and justice institutions are owner of the production sources, dominate the religious organizations, professional organizations and higher education institutions.

However, the women are paled in the inferior position. Their roles are limited so that the power access is also limited as the result the women get the lower status rather than men. As a mother or a wife the woman gets limited opportunities to work outside the home. His income depends on the willingness of the men, even though she stays with her family, she feels that the protection and rights that are obtained are limited than the rights owned by her husband.

Therefore, it can be stated that basically the gender roles do not appeared and stand by itself but they are rather related to the identity and characteristics assumed by various communities towards the men and women. The causes of the inequality status between men and women are not only in terms of physical biological differences but also all social-cultural values in the society are also contributed.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research type and approach:** The research type was a library/literature research in the form of study: the Holy Quran and Al-Hadith related to the gender issue. The writer used library research based on the qualitative

research approach in order to investigate and explore the gender issue that is considered as holistic, complex, dynamic and full of meaning issue from the sources as well as being a phenomenon in the modern era. Besides, library research was aimed to understand the problem in depth in order to find the patterns, hypothesis or theories of gender in the Holy Quran and Sunnah. This research approach was philosophical, historical and sociological approach.

**Data sources:** The literature data sources were all books that were relevant to the theme or issue. The research data sources were divided into two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data included all written materials that comes directly or original sources of the Holy Quran in the form of verses about gender. Meanwhile, the secondary data were all written material originating indirectly or the first original source that discuss the examined issue in the form of Hadith relating to the gender issue.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Equality relationship bias between men and women:** According to Rachman (2001), the oppression to women is caused by patriarchy (the men power) which becomes the biggest issue debated by the Islamic feminism. Because the patriarchy perspective from the feminism aspect is considered as the origin of all misogynist tendency (hatred of women) it is underlined the writings of the religious texts which are biased to the men's interest. The violence against women always occurs such as it is caused to several factors, namely.

The patriarchy ideology and culture, i.e., where the men are superior (female ruler) and the women are inferior. The legal structure factor which includes the legal substance (contains all the laws and regulations) both written and unwritten that are apply to state agencies as well as citizens, legal structures (i.e., law enforcement, police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers their enforcement procedures) and the legal culture.

The religious and cultural interpretation factor. The concept of patriarchy is different with the patrilineal. Patrilineal is interpreted as a culture where the societies follow the male lineage like children descent paternal, e.g., Habsah Khalik; Khalik is the father's name of Habsah. Meanwhile, patriarchy has another meaning which literally means that "father power" (role of the father) or "patriarch" which is intended for labeling a "family occupied by the men".

In the terminology term the word of patriarchy is used to understand the men's power it is related to the men's power dominates women as well as the system that

makes women remain controlled through various ways. Furthermore, Rachman (2001) states that etymologically it is related to the social system where the father dominates his all family members his wealth and economic resources. He also makes all family important decisions.

The system which is based on patriarchy usually alienates women at home hence, the men are more able to dominate women. However, the seclusion of women at home makes women are not independent economically and it will cause the psychological dependency. The moral, social and law norms also give more rights to men rather than women, precisely for the reason that men are more valuable publicly than women.

In its development, now patriarchy has become the term to all kinship systems and social, political and religious demeaning, even it oppress the women ranging from the households to the public. Meanwhile, according to Ritzer and Goodman (2004) there are four themes that mark the gender inequality theory.

First, the men and women are not only addressed differently in the community but also inequality. Specifically, women acquire material resources, social status, power and opportunity to actualize themselves less than that obtained by the men who divide their social position based on class, race, occupation, ethnicity, religion, education, nationality or based on other important social factors. Second, gender inequality comes from the community organizations and it does not from biological differences or important personalities between men and women. Third, although humans individually have different traits and characteristics to each other but there is no significant natural pattern differences which distinguish men and women. The gender equality recognition directly implies that women are situational less powerful than men to fulfill their needs in order to self-actualization. Fourth, all gender inequality theories consider that men and women will respond to situations and social structures that increasingly lead to equality (egalitarian) easily and scientifically. In other words they believe that an opportunity to change.

### **Woman in the Islamic concept**

**Woman as an individual:** The Holy Quran highlights woman as an individual. In this case, there is difference between among women in their capacity as individuals with women as the society members. The Holy Quran addresses both individual woman and men are equal because it is related to the relationship to the God and both men and women, so that the sex's terminology is not revealed in this issue. The Holy Quran statements about the position and status of women can be seen in some verses as follows:

- Women are God's creatures who have the same obligation to worship to Him as stated in QS. Adh-Dhariyat: 56
- Women are a couple form men as stated in QS. An-Naba: 8
- Women along with men also will be individually accountable for every action and choice as stated in QS. Maryam: 93-95
- Similarly, the Muslim's men the Muslim's women who work righteousness are promised by God to be given the life happiness over the world and eternal life in heaven, as stated in QS. An-Nahl: 97
- The Prophet Mohammad also confirms that women are siblings of men (HR. Ad-Darimy and Abu Uwanah)

Even, in its verses, the Holy Quran also does not confirm explicitly that Eve (Hawa) was created from Adam's rib, therefore her position and status is lower. On the basis of the Holy Quran principle, men and women are equal where the wife's rights are approved equally to the husband's rights. In other words, men have the rights and obligations towards women and vice versa. Therefore, the Holy Quran is considered to have a revolutionary perspective on the human relationship which gives the fairness rights between men and women.

**Woman and the rights:** Islam is actually born with a human relation conception that is based on justice on the men and women's position. In addition to the term of decision-making, woman in Islam also has economic rights, i.e., to have her own wealth, so her husband and father could interference with her property. It is explicitly mentioned in the Holy Quran Surah An-Nisa verse 32 as follows:

وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ عَلَى الْوَالِدِ وَالزَّوْجِ وَالْأَقْرَبِ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبْنَ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٣٢﴾

Meaning: and do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed other. For men there is a share of what they have earned and for women there is also a share of what they have earned and ask to Allah of His bounty. Indeed, Allah is ever of all things Knowing (QS. An-Nisa: 32).

Based on the verse above it can be interpreted that woman has their own property rights, i.e., he wealth ownership acquired through inheritance or her own earned. Therefore, the dowry in Islam must be paid for herself, not for the elderly and unbiased taken back by her husband. Quthb (1984) emphasizes that the multiple parts

of the mean than women in terms of inheritance as it is written in the Holy Quran then the reference is to the character of the men in life he married a woman and he is responsible to the living for his family in addition he is also responsible to everything relating to his family. That is why he is entitled to a share of two peoples while the woman when she is married then all needs maintained by her husband. However, when she is a girl or widowed the needs are fulfilled with the inheritance that she obtained or if it does so it could be covered by her male relatives.

Therefore, the existing differences only arise due to the responsibility characteristics which have the logical consequence of the inheritance division. Further, it is explained that Islam gives full guarantees to women in the religion, ownership and employment aspects and their realization in the marriage issue should only be conducted with the consent and willingness of women to marry without going through coercion. "Do not marry a widow before being consulted and do not marry a girl before the requested permit and the permit is silence" (HR. Bukhari Muslim). Even Islam guarantees all rights to women with a purely humanitarian spirit and not accompanied by economic or materialist tension. Islam precisely fights against the thoughts that state the woman is merely a tool that does not need to be given the rights. Islam fights the life burial customs of the girls and resolves it with the pure humanitarian spirit, so Islam forbids the murder.

**Woman and education:** Islam orders both men and woman to have knowledge and do not be a fool. The God-Allah-strongly condemns people who are not knowledgeable both men and women. As the obligation of study is also confirmed by the Prophet in the Hadith, i.e., studying is obligatory for every man and woman (HR. Muslim). Hence, it can be stated that Islam actually subverts a social system that is unfair to women and replace it with a justice system. Islam addresses that the women are equal to men in term of their humanity. Islam gives the woman's rights as given to the men and imposes the same obligations to both of them.

**The equality relationship between men and women in Islam:** Basically, the relationship spirit between men and women in Islam are fair (equal). Therefore, the subordination towards women is a belief that arises in the community which does not appropriate or contrary to the justice spirit taught by Islam. The gender equality concept between men and women in the Holy Quran is stated as follows: First, men and women are equally as slaves as stated in Surah Adh-Dhariyat verse 56 as follows:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

Meaning: and I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me (QS. Adh-Dhariyat: 56). In their capacity as a servant there is no difference between men and women. Both have the same potential and opportunity to be an ideal servant. The ideal servant as stated in the Holy Quran is referred to those who ward off (muttaqin).

Second, men and women as Khalifah on the earth, the purpose and aim of the man creation on this earth is to be submissive and obedient servant nad serve to God also to became Khalifah on the earth as the words of Allah in the Holy Quran in Surah Al-An'am verse 165 as follows:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتْلُوكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

Meaning: and it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees (of rank) that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful (QS. Al-An'am: 165). Similarly, it is also stated in the Holy Quran in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 30 as follows:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Meaning: and (mention, O Muhammad) when your Lord said to angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority", they said, "Will You Place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know" (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30).

Third, men and women receive the primordial covenant. When a human child was born he/she must first accept the agreement with his/her Lord. It is stated in the Holy Quran Surah Al-A'raf verse 172 as follows:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَتَىٰ نَفْسُنَا الْيَقِينَ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

Meaning: and (mention) when your Lord took from the children of Adam-from their loins-their descendants and made them testify of themselves (saying to them) "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." (This)-lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unawar" (QS. Al-A'raf: 172).

In Islam, the individual responsibility and independence take place since early childhood, since in the womb. Since, the beginning of the human history in Islam, it does not know the gender discrimination. Men and women equally state the same pledge divinity.

Fourth, men and women have same potential to reach achievement. There is no distinction between them to seize the achievement's opportunities. It is stated in the Holy Quran Surah An-Nisa verse 124 as follows:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَبْرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾

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 deed (QS. An-Nisa: 124).

According to Umar (1999), Islam certainly acknowledges the difference (distinction) between men and women but it is not differentiation (discrimination). This difference is based on the biological-physical condition of women which are destined contrary to men but this difference is not intended to glorify the one and underestimate others. The Islamic teachings do not schematically distinguish the difference factors between men and women but they more address these two human beings as a whole. Both biologically and social-culturally need each other and thus they have their own roles. It may be in one role they can be carried out by both of them such as an office job but in certain roles can only be carried out by a woman such as pregnancy, childbirth and breast feeding. On the other hand, there are certain roles that are humanly more appropriately played by men such as jobs that require greater power and muscle.

Therefore, in the Islamic normative perspective, the relationship between men and women are equal. The high and low quality of a person lies only in the high-low quality of devotion and piety to Allah SWT (Almighty God). God gives the same and equitable respect to human beings without distinguishes between men and women for their all deeds.

## CONCLUSION

The disclosure of woman's problems by using gender analysis often faces resistance; both form the man and the woman. It can be cause by some issues such as first, questioning the women's status is basically questioned the systems and structures that have been established. Second, discussing about the gender issue means that discussing about the personal power, i.e., concerns and involves each individual. The Islamic concepts contribute a social system that is fair to women.

Islam addresses that women are equal to men in term of their humanity. Islam gives the rights to the women as given to men and imposes the same obligations to both of them. The Islamic teachings do not schematically distinguish male and female differences factor but they more address these two human beings as a whole. Both biologically and social-culturally need each other and thus they have their own roles.

Islam as stated in the Holy Quran, treats both individual-man and woman are equal because it is related to the relation between God and them. In the Islamic normative perspective the relationship between men and women are equal. The high and low quality of a person lies only in the high-low quality of devotion and piety to Almighty God. God gives the same and equitable reward and respect to human beings without distinguishes between men and women for their all deeds.

Islam through both sources, i.e., the Holy Quran and Sunnah, addresses the men and women's position and status are equal and balanced, so there should be coercion. In other words, Islam truly reveals the gender equality perspective and does not desire injustice in society. Islam is rahmatan lil Alamin.

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