



TOWARDS GENDER-EQUITABLE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A STUDY OF THOUGHT ON THE FORMATION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education has great potential in promoting gender equality. However, efforts to achieve this still face various challenges, such as strong patriarchal culture, structural inequality, and social resistance to change. This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic education in shaping social gender constructs and to formulate strategies for creating a more inclusive and equitable education system. Through a qualitative approach based on literature analysis, the study found that increasing understanding of gender, updating the curriculum, empowering women in educational institutions, and community involvement are important steps in creating an education system that is more responsive to gender issues. The findings show that inclusive Islamic education can reduce gender stereotypes, increase women's participation, and strengthen the value of justice in the educational process. These strategies are key to building an equitable educational environment that supports the development of the potential of all students.

Keywords: *Gender, Islamic education, Sociological Impact*

A. Introduction

The flow of globalization, with its various conveniences as well as its challenges, demands that Islamic educational activities be adaptive without neglecting their substantive aspects (Anamisari et al., 2026). The dynamics Tafsir of the Qur'an in the modern era show a significant transformation, especially because of the various methods and ways of delivery. Technological innovations provide opportunities for Muslims to access and understand the Qur'an in various ways that suit their circumstances, although the main principles of interpretation are maintained and consistent from time to time. This transformation is increasingly evident as interpretation enters social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, which offer new communication patterns that are more open, fast, and participatory. (Miftahuddin, 2020)

Education plays a very important role in shaping people's perspectives and social norms, including in terms of gender relations. Although Islamic teachings emphasize that every individual has the right to education and to participate in social life without gender discrimination, practices in the field do not always reflect this principle.(Bouchouk & Ayaz, 2024) Many Islamic educational institutions, including madrasas and Islamic boarding schools, still maintain biased gender constructs. Therefore, Islamic education needs to fulfill its role as an agent of change that eliminates such bias and upholds justice and equality.(Malihah et al., 2023)

In reality, Islamic education practices in Indonesia are still dominated by rigid religious interpretations and patriarchal social norms, limiting women's roles in learning and society. (Bouchouk & Ayaz, 2024). The main challenges stem from cultural factors and policies that do not yet fully support the principle of gender equality. This situation means that the success of inclusive education is highly dependent on changes in mindset and the implementation of policies that are more affirmative towards gender equality. The Islamic education curriculum in several institutions often does not explicitly accommodate the principle of gender equality, and even shows gender bias in its teaching materials and practices.(Karim, 2021). Sociologically, the main challenge lies in changing the views of society and education stakeholders so that they realize that inclusive and equitable Islamic education is beneficial (Haryani & Nurhaeni, 2019,)

In the diverse context of Indonesia, Islamic education can serve as an effective tool for integrating the values of justice and inclusivity. However, many studies note that the main challenges stem from conservative religious views and social norms that still favor men. However, some Islamic educational institutions have shifted towards a more egalitarian view, and female scholars are playing an increasingly important role in building an inclusive and progressive educational environment. (Manshur & Atoillah, 2020)

Although much research has been conducted, there is still a significant gap in understanding how Islamic education shapes social gender constructs and what strategies can be implemented to overcome the obstacles that arise. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze in depth the role of Islamic education in shaping social gender constructs and to formulate innovative strategies for creating inclusive and equitable educational institutions.

To achieve these objectives, this study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method. Data were obtained from various scientific sources such as journals, books, and research results related to Islamic education and gender. Analysis was conducted through critical examination of concepts, empirical findings, and patterns of gender discrimination that emerged in the literature. This approach enables the study to identify gender social issues in Islamic education while formulating relevant and applicable strategies in the context of educational institutions in Indonesia.

B. The Obligation of Education for Men and Women in Islam

Education in Islam occupies a very important and strategic position. Islam requires every Muslim to seek knowledge without distinction of gender. This obligation is based on a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW narrated by Ibn Majah, which states that seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim. The term "Muslim" in the hadith is general in nature, thus encompassing both men and women(Novita Dyah Islamiyyah et al., 2025). In addition, the first revelation sent down to the Prophet Muhammad SAW was in the form of a command to read, as stated in QS Al Alaq verses 1 to 5, indicating that Islam upholds knowledge and places the learning process as an important part of human life (Nasihin, 2020).

Education in Islam is an obligation for all human beings regardless of gender. This is in line with Fatah Syukur's view that gender differences do not affect the level of piety and appreciation of religious values. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, learning must be humanistic and inclusive with the aim of developing the intellectual, spiritual, and social potential of students as a whole. Therefore, access to and the obligation of education for men and women is a fundamental principle in Islam that is in line with the values of justice and humanity (Anamisari et al., 2026)

The history of Islamic civilization provides clear evidence that women were not only allowed, but also actively participated in education and science. Figures such as Aisha bint Abu Bakr are widely known as one of the leading narrators of hadith and a reference for the companions in various matters of fiqh, medicine, and tafsir(Florentina et al., 2023). On the other hand, Fatima al Fihri founded Al Qarawiyyin University in Fez, Morocco, in the 9th century, which is recognized by UNESCO as the oldest university in the world that is still operating today. This historical fact shows that Islam does not restrict women's access to education but

rather encourages them to play an active role in the development of science and civilization (Mikraj et al., 2024).

The goal of education in Islam is not only focused on mastering worldly knowledge but also includes the formation of noble character, deepening religious understanding, and awareness of social responsibility. In this framework, men and women have complementary roles. Women who receive a good education have the ability to educate their children based on Islamic values, which is an important foundation for shaping future generations. Meanwhile, knowledgeable men are expected to be able to carry out leadership roles in the family and community in a fair, wise, and responsible manner. Therefore, education is not only seen as an individual right but also as a shared responsibility in building a civilized and pious society (Panjaitan et al., 2023).

Although Islam strongly supports education for all genders, in practice, cultural barriers that limit women's access to formal education still exist in some regions. This situation should be understood not as an Islamic teaching but as the result of inaccurate social interpretations and the influence of a patriarchal culture that is still dominant (Fathurrahman et al., 2025). Contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Abdullah bin Bayyah emphasize that preventing women from accessing education is a deviation from the true teachings of Islam. Therefore, efforts to expand access to education for women must continue to be encouraged as part of the implementation of authentic and just Islamic values (Lubis et al., 2025).

Thus, it can be concluded that Islam stipulates equal educational obligations for men and women. These obligations are not only spiritual in nature but also have social and civilizational dimensions. Education plays a major role in understanding religious teachings, developing one's potential, and contributing to the advancement of the community. From an Islamic perspective, there is no theological basis that justifies discrimination between men and women in terms of their rights and obligations to seek knowledge. On the contrary, the progress of a society is largely determined by the extent to which all of its members, without exception, have the opportunity to learn and develop.

C. Islamic Education and Gender Social Construction

Islamic education plays a major role in shaping society's views on gender. In Islam itself, education is a right for everyone, both men and women. As stated in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman." This means that education can be a tool to eliminate gender inequality that often arises from patriarchal culture. By combining the teachings of the Qur'an on justice (such as QS An-Nisa: 124 and At-Taubah: 71) and comprehensive education policies, we can build an equal society. (Aprilia & Astina, 2024) The following

is a simple discussion of how Islamic education can implement these policies to combat unfair social constructions of gender.

First, access to education should be equal for all. Islamic education emphasizes that knowledge is a light for all of God's creatures, regardless of gender. Subsidy policies or special scholarships for women, as mentioned earlier, can be implemented in madrasas or Islamic boarding schools. For example, scholarship programs for poor girls so that they can attend higher education, thereby gaining knowledge and economic independence. In line with the example of Khadijah RA, who was a successful businesswoman, this shows that Muslim women can be active in society. With this access, gender gaps are reduced, and women are more involved in economic or social fields.(Utara, n.d.)

Second, gender-neutral curriculum. Schools should teach the values of equality from the Qur'an, such as QS Al-Hujurat:13, which states that a person's nobility is measured by their piety, not their gender. Stereotypes such as "women should only take care of the home" need to be eliminated because they are not in accordance with the true teachings of Islam. In Islamic history, there are many examples of women who played significant roles in society, one of whom is Aisha r.a. Aisha was not only the wife of the Prophet, but also a scholar, teacher, and political figure. Many companions and scholars learned hadith and Islamic law from her. She also played a role in government affairs after the Prophet's death, showing that women can actively contribute in the public sphere. By studying the story of Aisha r.a. in school, students can understand that Islam values women's abilities and roles in various fields, not only at home, but also in education, science, and leadership. (Asykur et al., 2025)

Third, teaching skills to all genders is very important so that everyone can be independent. For example, men and women alike learn about technology, leadership, and household skills, without being limited by gender. In this way, women can pursue careers in fields that were once predominantly male, and men can also play a role in fields that are usually considered women's work. This approach helps reduce differences in roles and opportunities between men and women in the workplace and in social life. For example, like Nusaybah bint Ka'b who participated in the Battle of Uhud, Muslim women have leadership potential. With this, women can become leaders in modern society.(Aldi et al., 2024)

Fourth, a safe school environment free from discrimination. Students need protection from gender-based violence and access to facilities that are friendly to all, such as separate toilets. In a safe environment like this, female students can learn without fear or pressure, both physically and mentally. This will help them grow into confident women who are able to fight for equality in society. This kind of environment builds women's confidence, allowing them to be active in public spaces, rather than being restricted by pre-Islamic cultures such as gender segregation, which is mistakenly considered "authentic Islam."(Hafidzi, 2024)

Fifth, teachers are given gender sensitivity training. Teachers in Islamic education must be trained to understand equality, so that they treat male and female students fairly. Teach moral values from the hadith, such as the Prophet SAW who respected women and encouraged them to study. The purpose of this training is to prevent teachers from having biased views or favoring only men (patriarchal bias). With a fair understanding of the roles of men and women, teachers can use education as a tool to liberate and empower all students, rather than reinforcing injustice or gender-based role differences. Thus, schools become places that truly teach equality and treat everyone fairly.(Mushodiq et al., 2025)

Sixth, involving Women in Decision Making. In educational institutions, women need to be involved in the policy-making process, for example as school principals, board members, or policy planning and evaluation teams. This involvement ensures that the resulting policies are more in line with the needs of all parties, including women, and helps accelerate the realization of gender equality in education, both in schools and on campuses. Through the active participation of women and a more fair and open interpretation of religious teachings, deeply rooted patriarchal values can be reduced, making the education system more equitable, inclusive, and just. (Kurdi, 2023)

Islamic education aims not only to impart knowledge, but also to change social structures that have often favored men. Through fair policies, we can create a society that is in line with the true teachings of Islam, namely a society where men and women support each other as caliphs on earth (QS Al-Baqarah:30). The biggest challenge is countering the influence of patriarchal culture that sometimes creeps into religious interpretations. However, with proper and fair education, change toward equality can begin in the school environment.

D. Islamic Education and Gender Social Construction

Gender equality is a concept that emphasizes equal treatment between men and women regardless of gender. Equal treatment in all areas of life, education, employment, and decision-making. There have been many efforts to achieve gender equality, but its implementation still faces complex sociological challenges. The following are some of the sociological challenges in implementing gender equality.

First, deep-rooted patriarchal norms and culture. Patriarchal cultural norms are one of the main challenges in achieving gender equality. The patriarchal system itself often emphasizes the superiority of men and their greater authority in decision-making or other matters compared to women. This is reflected in the gender division of roles, where women's roles are related to domestic matters. Meanwhile, men's roles are more dominant in the public, economic, and political spheres. These norms are quite difficult to change because they are embedded in social values and community practices. An example is the stereotype that women

are more suited to being housewives than having careers equal to men. (Sopariyah & Khairunnisa, 2024)

Second, structural inequality in institutions. Another challenge that must be faced is in institutions such as education and the workplace. Many women experience discrimination in job promotions or unequal pay compared to men even though they have the same qualifications. Women also often experience sexual harassment in the workplace and in education. Not only that, institutional policies are often inadequate and unsupportive of women, for example, the lack of maternity leave facilities for women, making it difficult for them to balance their careers and family responsibilities. (Murtado, 2024)

Third, social resistance to change. Social resistance is one of the major obstacles. This is because many people view gender equality as a threat to traditional values. For example, the idea that women have the same rights as men in decision-making is often considered a violation of the social order and is often opposed. This resistance arises because community groups, religious leaders, or families still adhere to traditional gender roles. (Cantika & Junaedi, 2025)

Fourth, lack of awareness and education about gender equality

Lack of awareness and education about gender equality is also one of the challenges in implementing gender equality. Many people do not yet fully understand the concept of gender equality, both men and women. This has led to low support for policies that promote gender equality. Education that does not include a gender perspective in the curriculum exacerbates this problem because the younger generation is not exposed to the values of equality from an early age. (Novita Dyah Islamiyyah et al., 2025)

Fifth, stigma against gender activists. Activists or individuals who fight for gender equality often face social stigma. They can be seen as disruptors of social harmony or accused of promoting values that are not in line with local culture. This stigma can weaken advocacy efforts and discourage many people from getting involved in the gender equality movement. (Taufik et al., 2022).

The implementation of gender equality faces various sociological challenges, ranging from patriarchal norms, structural inequalities, social resistance, to a lack of awareness and stigma against activists. To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive approach is needed, such as public education, institutional policy reform, and strengthening social support for gender equality. With these steps, gender equality can be achieved gradually.

E. Strategies for Inclusive Islamic Education

Inclusive education comes from the term inclusion, which according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary is an ideology to create an open environment that includes everyone regardless of social status, ethnicity, race, religion, economic status, characteristics, and specific conditions. According to Indonesian Minister of

Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education, inclusive education is defined as an education system that provides opportunities for all students with disabilities and special talents and/or potential to participate in education or learning in the same educational environment as other students. (Kh & Wahid, 2021) The following are several strategies for achieving inclusive Islamic education. First, strengthening critical understanding of gender among teachers and students is a very important first step. Training and education that provide an understanding of gender equality based on Islamic teachings can help eliminate traditional biases and stereotypes that often arise in Islamic educational environments. Teachers and students are encouraged to understand the principles of justice and equality taught by Islam so that they can apply these values in their daily interactions and learning processes. (Ikhlasul, 2025). Second, revising the curriculum and teaching materials to be free of gender bias is important for creating a fair and inclusive learning environment. A curriculum that integrates the values of gender equality can eliminate subtle discrimination rooted in teaching materials. This also opens up space for male and female students to grow optimally without being burdened by rigid gender role stereotypes. (Asykur et al., 2025). Third, empowering women in education, whether in leadership positions, teaching, or active participation, is an important strategy for upholding equality. The presence of women as leaders and educators creates positive role models and breaks the dominance of patriarchal views that have limited women's roles. Providing equal opportunities in various positions and educational activities strengthens the value of inclusivity in Islamic education (Yaqin, n.d.). Fourth, collaboration with parents and community leaders must also be carried out actively and continuously. This dialogical and participatory approach aims to change the perceptions of the wider community, which sometimes still contain negative gender stereotypes. Support from the social environment is crucial so that the values of inclusiveness and equality in Islamic education can be accepted and implemented properly (Febrianto, 2025).

Strategies for achieving inclusive Islamic education with a focus on gender require a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening critical understanding of gender, revising bias-free curricula, empowering women, and collaborating closely with parents and the community. The implementation of this strategy can realize Islamic education that not only combines Islamic values with social justice but also creates a learning environment that is fair, open, and respects gender diversity. Thus, inclusive Islamic education becomes an effective means of preparing a generation with character and the ability to overcome social challenges with a more just and harmonious perspective.

F. Conclusion

The discussion shows that Islamic education has significant potential in promoting gender equality when implemented through a critical and inclusive approach based on the values of justice in Islamic teachings. Principles such as the obligation for both men and women to seek knowledge and the affirmation that piety is the measure of nobility show that Islam does not justify gender superiority.

These findings confirm that Islamic education can be a means of correcting patriarchal social practices and rejecting misconceptions that place men above women. However, its implementation still faces complex sociological challenges, such as a strong patriarchal culture, structural inequality in educational institutions, social resistance to changes in gender roles, and low public awareness of gender justice. These obstacles indicate that change requires not only theological understanding but also cultural and policy transformation at the level of educational institutions and society. Based on these findings, this study recommends several strategic steps. First, strengthening gender literacy for teachers and students. Second, revising the curriculum and teaching materials to be bias-free. Third, increasing women's involvement and leadership in educational institutions. Fourth, building active cooperation with families and community leaders to create broader support. The implementation of these policies has the potential to create a fair, safe, and harmonious Islamic educational environment, while strengthening the role of Islamic education in realizing an inclusive and equitable society.

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