

THE TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS ON MISOGYNISTIC HADITHS: THE INTERPRETATIONS AND IT'S IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstrak

Peran perempuan dan laki-laki yang tidak setara dan tidak seimbang telah menjadi subyek perdebatan sengit dalam masyarakat Muslim. Secara umum persepsi terhadap budaya dan agama telah berlangsung lama bahwa peran laki-laki harus mendominasi peran perempuan, dan subordinasi perempuan adalah nasib yang tidak dapat diubah. Penelitian ini mengkaji pemahaman guru-guru Muslim Indonesia terhadap konseptualisasi teks-teks Islam terutama hadis (perkataan Nabi Muhammad), mengenai aspek yang menggambarkan dan menentukan peran gender. Penelitian kualitatif ini adalah untuk mengungkap persepsi lima guru laki-laki dan lima perempuan, yang bekerja di Sekolah Menengah Islam di Yogyakarta, terkait dengan pemahaman mereka tentang status perempuan dalam masyarakat Islam. Data dikumpulkan melalui diskusi kelompok (FGD) yang melibatkan laki-laki dan perempuan dan dilakukan secara online melalui Zoom. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para guru mengakui bahwa sikap individu dan institusional berusaha untuk membatasi partisipasi perempuan dalam masyarakat Muslim, dan sebagian besar Muslim yakin bahwa sikap tersebut berasal dari teks-teks Islam (terutama hadis) yang telah diterjemahkan secara historis dan atau harfiah. Pandangan mereka bervariasi terkait dengan tiga konsep Islam yang dianalisis karena berpengaruh bagi status sosial dan pekerjaan perempuan, yaitu kodrat (sifatmanusia), *qiwama* (kedudukan sosial dan kepemimpinan), dan laknat (penilaian atau murka oleh para malaikat). Pada dasarnya, tidak semua guru dalam penelitian ini memiliki kesempatan untuk mengajar subjek yurisprudensi Islam (*fiqh*), di mana topik pernikahan secara khusus dibahas. Namun, mereka semua menyadari kebutuhan yang sedang berlangsung di kelas dan masyarakat. Penelitian ini memiliki implikasi praktis dari pendekatan pedagogis di sekolah-sekolah Islam untuk pendidikan tentang kesetaraan gender.

Kata Kunci: Peran Gender, Guru Indonesia, Ketidaksetaraan, Status Perempuan

Abstract

Unequal and unbalanced roles of women and men have become the subject of intense debate in Muslim society. Common cultural and religious perceptions have long been that men's roles should dominate over women's roles and that women's subordination is an unalterable fate. This study examines conceptualization by Indonesian Muslim teachers regarding Islamic texts, primarily of the hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), that describe and prescribe aspects of gender roles. This qualitative study was designed to explore perceptions of five male and five female teachers, employed in Islamic Secondary Schools in Yogyakarta, as related to their understanding of women's status in Islamic society. The data were gathered through mixed-gender focus group discussions conducted online via Zoom. Findings show that the subjects clearly acknowledge that individual and institutional attitudes persist for circumscribing women's participation within Muslim society, and that most Muslims derive these attitudes from Islamic texts (mainly the hadith) that have been translated in historical and/or literal ways. The teachers varied in their views about three Islamic concepts which were analyzed as influential for the societal and occupational status of women, namely kodrat (human nature), qiwama (societal standing and leadership), and laknat (judgment by, or wrath of, the angels). Basically, not all of the teachers in this study had occasion to teach the subject of Islamic Jurisprudence (fiqh), in which the marriage topic is specifically covered, yet they were all aware of an ongoing need in classroom and society. This study has practical implications of the pedagogical approaches in Islamic schools for education on gender equality

Keywords: Gender Roles, Indonesian Teachers, Inequality, Women's Status

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A. Introduction

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, has now had over two decades of democracy. As of 1998, the *Reformasi* (reformation) movement had successfully brought down the authoritarian New Order (1968-1999) regime. This result subsequently fostered both democratization and Islamization within the country. Amid such notable socio-political and religio-political changes, the topic of gender equality has spurred contentious new debate in Indonesia's public sphere. Women's activism and advocacy for gender equality have gained mainstream focus,¹ and research on these topics in the Indonesian context is newly abundant.² Topics under study include Islamic feminism;³ women and the state;⁴ women's

agency and activism;⁵ and women in conservative religions.⁶

Many scholars have advanced on the question of whether Islam is compatible with feminism. Women's subordination had been part of much Islamic theological teaching of the Qur'an and *hadith*, but Islamic feminists have newly shown that progressive interpretations of Islam can be used in good faith to empower women.⁷ And in the Indonesian context, the process of respectfully reinterpreting the Qur'an and *hadith* is a key feature of strategic advocacy for gender equality within the Islamic framework.⁸ For challenging the prior patriarchal interpretations of Islam, the Indonesian Muslim gender activists have proposed a contextual approach for re-reading the Qur'an in light of gender justice.⁹ Those scholars, who are concerned with seemingly misogynistic topics in the *hadith*, have also attempted to scrutinize the authenticity of some *hadith* by offering a critical

¹ Suzanne Brenner, "Private Moralities in the Public Sphere: Democratization, Islam, and Gender in Indonesia," *American Anthropologist* 113, no. 3 (2011): 478-490; Maria Platt, Sharyn Graham Davies, & Linda Rae Bennett, "Contestations of Gender, Sexuality, and Morality in Contemporary Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (2018): 1-15.

² Rin Setiawati, Marhumah Marhumah, & Zulkipli Lessy, "Economic Violence Against Women," *PALASTREN: Jurnal Studi Gender* 15, no. 2 (2022): 305-334. <https://dx.doi.org/10.21043/palastren.v15i2.14930>

³ Etin Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism: Pattern and Change in Indonesia*. London: Routledge, 2018; Nina Nurmila, "The Influence of Global Muslim Feminism on Indonesian Muslim Feminist Discourse," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 49, no. 1 (2011): 33-64; Alimatul Qibtiyah, Intervensi Malaikat dalam Hubungan Seksual. In H. Ilyas, M. Sodik, and I. Rohmaniyah (Eds.), *Perempuan Tertindas? Kajian Hadis-hadis Misoginis* (pp. 209-227). Yogyakarta: eLSAQ dan PSW UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2015; Kathryn Robinson, "Islamic Influences in Indonesian Feminism," *Social Analysis: International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 50, no. 1 (2006): 171-177. <https://www.jstor/stable/23181949>; Saskia E. Wieinga, "Women Resisting Creeping Islamic Fundamentalism in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 15(4), (2009): 30-56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2009.11666072>.

⁴ Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511492198>; Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, "Impact of Islamization and Democratization in Expanding Indonesian Women's Roles in Politics," In *Indonesian Women and Local Politics* (pp. 28-49). (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1nth4c.10>; Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam, and Democracy in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁵ Neng Dara Affiah, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor, 2017); Dina Afrianty, *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh* (London: Routledge, 2015); Rachel Rinaldo, *Mobilizing piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Piternella van Doorn-Harder, "Controlling the Body: Muslim Feminists Debating Women's Rights in Indonesia," *Religion Compass* 2, no. 6 (2008): 1021-1043.

⁶ A. F. N. Fuad, "Da'wa and Politics: Lived Experiences of the Female Islamists in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 19-47.

⁷ Erwati Aziz, Irwan Abdullah, & Zaenuddin H. Prasojo, (2020). "Why Are Women Subordinated? The Misrepresentation of the Qur'an in Indonesian Discourse and Practice," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 21, no. 6 (2020): 238-251; T. Masoud, A. Jamal, & E. Nugent, "Using the Qur'an to Empower Arab Women? Theory and Experimental Evidence from Egypt," *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 12 (2016): 1556-1598; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Justice, Equality and Muslim Family Laws," In Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Christian Moe, & Kari Vogt (Eds.), *Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law: Justice and Ethics in the Islamic Legal Tradition* (pp. 37-56). (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

⁸ Kathryn Robinson, "Islamic Influences in Indonesian Feminism," *Social Analysis: International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 50, no. 1 (2006): 171-177. <https://www.jstor/stable/23181949>

⁹ Siti Musdah Mulia, *Islam dan Inspirasi Kesetaraan Gender* (Jakarta: Kibar Press, 2009).

literary reading of those admonitions.¹⁰ Their view is that the moral objectives of Islam (*maqashid al-shari'a*) are equality and justice, and that therefore any Islamic texts that speak about gender relations should be understood in light of those two universal principles.

Accordingly, within Islamic education in Indonesia, there is a need for incorporating progressive interpretations of Islam that support gender equality of opportunity and respect. Education is society's powerful process for cultivating shared values and thus can create among students the awareness of, and sensitivity to, egalitarian principles. The need for such reform is highlighted by the findings in several studies, including Marhumah that gendered-biased interpretations of the Qur'an and the *hadith*, remain widespread among the *pesantren*, the Islamic boarding schools. These are the longest established Islamic education institutions in Indonesia, and the *pesantren* have educated and influenced *ulama'* (religious thinkers) and religious teachers for generations.¹¹

The persistence of unequal attitudes towards, and roles for, women within Muslim societies has been to some extent supported and maintained (consciously or not) by Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.¹² Accordingly, the crux of concern for this research was to document, examine, and conceptualize Indonesian Islamic secondary school teachers' perceptions and understanding of the Islamic texts, as found in the Qur'an and in the *hadith*, that speak about gender relations.

Several studies have discussed on gender and Islamic education, and on also gender and

pedagogy in Indonesia at all institutional levels. In studies of Islamic higher education, the topics have included gender mainstreaming;¹³ Muslim lecturers' understanding of gender issues in Islam;¹⁴ and women's experiences as students in university settings.¹⁵ The topic of women's representation and participation in leadership and decision-making has been addressed in the contexts of Islamic universities¹⁶ and of *madrasah*, which are Islamic secondary schools. Research has also addressed gender issues in the contexts of the *pesantren*. Topics have included gender mainstreaming in state-run *madrasah*;¹⁷ gendered-biased presentations in Islamic textbooks and in school curricula;¹⁸ women's

¹³Mufidah Ch, "Strategi Implementasi Pengarusutamaan Gender Bidang Pendidikan Islam," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 2 (2011): 391-414; Ann Kull, "At the Forefront of a Post-Patriarchal Islamic Education: Female Teachers in Indonesia," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 25-39; Muhammad Alfatih Suryadilaga, M. Yusuf, & A. Rofiq, "Gender Mainstreaming Dalam Kurikulum Mata Kuliah Agama Islam di PTN dan PTS di Yogyakarta," *MusāwaJurnalStudi Gender dan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2008): 117-136.

¹⁴ Alimatul Qibtiyah, "Mapping of Muslims' Understandings on Gender Issues in Islam at Six Universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 56, no. 2 (2018): 305-340.

¹⁵ Eva F. Nisa, "Embodied Faith: Agency and Obedience among Face-Veiled University Students in Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 4 (2012): 366-381; Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, "The New Muslim Romance: Changing Patterns of Courtship and Marriage among Educated Javanese Youth," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 3 (2005): 441-459; A. J. Utomo, "Gender in the Midst of Reforms: Attitudes to Work and Family Roles among University Students in Urban Indonesia," *Marriage & Family Review*, 52, no. (5), (2016): 421-441.

¹⁶ Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin & Jan Edwards, "Hitting Our Heads on the Glass Ceiling: Women and Leadership in Education in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 17, no. 2 (2010): 199-232. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v17i2.460>

¹⁷ Riswani Riswani, Rita Susanti, Nurhasanah Bakhtiar, Masud Zein, Eniwati Khaidir, & Musa Taher, "Achievement of Gender Mainstreaming in Islamic Schooling Based on the National Education Standard in Indonesia," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 20, no. 9 (2019): 29-42.

¹⁸ TajulArifin, "Gender Equity in *Hadith* Literature: An Analysis of the Contemporary *Hadith* Curriculum of Madrasah Aliyah in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2018): 40-51. <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JOIS/article/view/233528>; Kazi

¹⁰Hamim Ilyas, Mochamad Sodik, & Inayah Rohmaniyah, *Perempuan Tertindas? Kajian Hadis-Hadis Misoginis* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press & PSW UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2003); Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah: Tafsir Progresif untuk Keadilan Gender dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: Ircisod, 2019); H. Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan: Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2005).

¹¹Marhumah Marhumah, "The Roots of Gender Bias: Misogynist *Hadiths* in Pesantrens," *International Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 5, no. 2 (2015): 283-304. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v5i2.283-304>

¹²Masruhan Masruhan, "The Unprecedented Contextual Interpretation of the Misogynic *Hadith* at the Reformist Persis Pesantren in Bangil," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 2 (2019): 480-504.

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experiences and religious authority as encountered in the *madrasah*;¹⁹ and women's experiences with the Muslim understanding of gender in Islam in the context of the *pesantren*.²⁰

While such a body of literature has significantly contributed to discourse on the topics of gender, of Islamic education, and of pedagogy in Indonesia, little attention has been given so far to exploring Muslim teachers' understanding of gender relations in Islam. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to investigate Indonesian Muslim teacher's views of Islamic texts, mainly on the hadith pertinent to the issues of gender equality in educational institutions. Those are of important to teach and influence students who are essentially intended to be able participate in society. Dzuhayatin and Edwards indeed argue that primary and secondary schools are quite effective milieus within which to promote gender equality of opportunity, constructively balanced roles, and beneficial values.²¹

The majority of teacher respondents in this study felt that there are misinterpretations about the dynamics between men and women in society, and that these can stem from misconceptions about, and misunderstandings of, Islamic texts, the Qur'an, or the *hadith*. These

respondents indicated that Muslims can misconstrue Islamic texts if, as readers, they do not consider situational and historical contexts. Therefore, the respondents said that education for Islamic secondary students, about societal gender equality and balanced roles among men and women, needs to be addressed by Muslim teachers. In addition, they noted that such an effort should equip students with a valid vision for living in a democratic society where the equal status of men and women, for opportunity and respect, is of paramount importance. This study essentially sought to address two research questions: (1) What is the teacher's perception of the Islamic concepts on gender equality? (2) What are their views to promote gender equality in classroom and society?

Focus group discussion was used to gain an in-depth knowledge of the issue. This was adopted to explore teacher's perceptions of Islamic Secondary Schools on gender equality. This study gathered data on the perceptions and understandings held by the teacher participants about gender status, as presented in Islamic texts (the Qur'an and *hadith*) and as seen in current Indonesian society. This study involved 10 teachers who work at Islamic secondary schools, both in Java and outside Java, including the areas of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Kalianda of Lampung, and Makassar. We conducted mixed-gender group interviews, with each of two groups having five respondents and each group participating in the study separately from the other group. All interviews were guided by some questions in regard with Islamic concepts on gender equality such as (1) *qodrat*, (2) *qiwama*, (3) *laknat* and perspectives to build gender equality.

We had recorded the narratives about events experienced by the teacher respondents in their school milieus with their own students and with their teacher colleagues. We had also recorded the teachers' narratives about events experienced in their familial environments with their own husbands or wives and with their children. Thereby we gathered narratives of the individual teachers' experiences during the transfer process.²² As qualitative researchers, we

MdMkitulIslam & M. Niaz Asadullah, "Gender Stereotypes and Education: A Multi-Country Content Analysis Study of Secondary School Textbooks," *Thinking Gender Papers*, 1-28. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/38r9r094>;

AbdulGaniJamora. Nasution, "Bias Gender Dalam Buku Pelajaran SKI Tingkat Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 1, no. 2, (2018): 248-276.

¹⁹Claire-Marie Hefner, "Models of Achievement: Muslim Girls and Religious Authority in a Modernist Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 40, no. 4 (2016): 564-582.

²⁰Marhumah Marhumah, "Gender Dalam Lingkungan Sosial Pesantren: Studi Tentang Peran Kyai dan Nyai Dalam Sosialisasi Gender di Pesantren Al-Munawwir Krapyak Yogyakarta," *Research Report*, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2019; Eka Srimulyani, "Muslim Women and Education in Indonesia: The PondokPesantren Experience," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 27, no. 1 (2007): 85-99.

²¹Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin & Jan Edwards, "Hitting Our Heads on the Glass Ceiling: Women and Leadership in Education in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 17, no. 2 (2010): 199-232. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v17i2.460>

²²Elliot GeorgeMishler, *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative* (New Heaven, MA: Harvard University

took care to refrain from interpreting the results based on our personal feelings about what was said by respondents. We avoided presupposition, presumption, and misinterpretation and accordingly adopted a neutral role in listening to and writing down what we heard.²³ We also documented what we had seen in the participants' actions in order to report those aspects as well. In our documentary role as researchers, we nonetheless were not idle or passive; rather, we were active in exercising a straightforward understanding of the data in order to yield fruitful insights, yet without any underlying or presupposed agenda.²⁴

In this study, the respondents had signed their informed consent forms, having already received an explanation of their rights as subjects of our study. For example, the informed consent states that a respondent has the right not to answer questions during the online interviews, and/or can skip giving any responses to questions addressed to him or her. Participants also agreed to the use of their nicknames (short names) in our future reporting on responses.²⁵

B. Islamic Concepts on Gender Equality

From this qualitative research, conducted through online in-depth interviews with ten Islamic secondary school teachers, our subsequent analysis of the focus groups' verbatim data yielded three main themes overall. These themes are (1) *kodrat*: men's and women's comparative status in Islam; (2) *qiwama*: gender relations in the domestic and the public spheres, and (3) *laknat*: wrath of the angels within the husband-wife sexual relationship.

(1) *Kodrat*: The Status of Men and of Women in Islam

Theologically, the teachers interviewed

Press, 2006).

²³ Deborah K. Padgett, *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

²⁴ Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action - Sensitive Pedagogy* (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2003).

²⁵ Paul D. Leedy, Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, & Laura Ruth Johnson, *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2019).

in this study have similar knowledge and understanding towards the equal standing of men and women before God. But they also admitted that women's subordination is still practiced, partly influenced by long-standing societal norms that differentially interpret the concept of *kodrat* between male and female. In the context of Indonesian Islam, gender nature and differences are often associated with the idea of *kodrat*, which refers to God-given natural characteristics prescribing men's and women's gendered roles and how two such creatures should accordingly behave.²⁶ However, the teachers generally acknowledged that these differences do not necessarily mean that men are superior by nature to women, or superior in authority over women, but rather that the two genders should be understood as complementary to each other.

Participants agreed that men and women differ according to *kodrat* in terms of their biological backgrounds, as with creatures, nature, gene, or genre. Two of the respondents, one being Ria discussed the term *kodrat* by noting that according to *fitrah* (the Arabic term for nature), women can become pregnant and give birth, whereas men contribute solely to the initiation of pregnancy, and this illustrates kinds of *kodrat*. As mentioned by Lalu, biologically a woman is created as a partner to a man. He noted that many people in traditional societies have misinterpreted woman's *kodrat* through thinking of their roles as limited to mother, housewife, or homemaker. They believe that these roles are *kodrat* and that if a woman's role is as a housewife, then she is deemed to remain a homemaker forever. But Lalu maintained:

Many see rights and obligations between men and women via the traditional lens, but intelligence plays a determinant factor in promoting one's position. If, for example, a woman is progressive, and has better performance in society, why is it a problem for making her as our leader?

²⁶ Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam, and Democracy in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2009), 11.

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The modern approach to a gender-neutral view of leadership is in contrast to the belief that women are born only to deal with domestic topics and the work of a household. Even so, Lalu further argued that society can learn from Indonesia's former female President, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Megawati, who succeeded well in completing her term of presidency. Lalu also noted that there is a large socio-religious organization, namely Nahdlatul Wathan, in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, which also was once led by a woman. Thus, he felt that misinterpretation about woman's leadership needs to be recontextualized, and that this does not exist in opposition to woman's *kodrat or fitrah*. Another respondent stated that nowadays both man and woman cannot be seen solely from a biological essence, but should also be regarded from their intelligence and their socializing ability.

The traditional viewpoint had limited women to having their identity derived only from domestic pursuits. The teacher respondents in this study, however, were in agreement that patriarchal societies unfairly assign certain jobs, such as domestic work, as being suitable only to women and furthermore do not include many other occupations as suitable for both men and women. Lalu illustrated this tendency by quoting a saying that is famous among the Sasak community in Lombok: "*Itu aku yang gawe sekolah, ngapain kamu sekolah.*" This means that a man would say to his wife and daughter that he as a man should go to school, but that they as women are not obliged or required to do so. This saying is commonly found in a variety of Indonesian ethnic groups, and it has contributed to many men's views, as related to women's education not being a necessity.

Referring to some trusted stories, or *riwayah*, in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), many of his female *shahabah* (companions) in the Anshar community of Medina during early time of *Hijrah* (migration) took significant roles in helping emigrants, or *muhajirin*, during the process of resettlement. The women sought to augment education, to facilitate human resource development, and, as suitable to their abilities, to thereby help with

logistics and education for women and children. Over time, these women became foremost figures in their community, especially in their capacity as educators. Some of them became important actors in the transmission of *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) during the early period of Islam and the caliphates of Islam.²⁷

As mentioned also in the Qur'an (Islamic holy texts) and related to the position of women in social affairs, Adet asserted that Islam supportsempowering women's capacity to follow their own potential and expertise. Yet it has also been seen that women have most often been considered by patriarchal structures in society to be delimited by their *kodrat* and the male-oriented structures in society. Yet, if we refer to *hadith*, historical facts should be confronted, one with another. The Qur'an itself narrates how strong was the leadership of Queen Balqis (Queen Sheba) in wielding and managing her power. On one occasion, when she received a letter from the Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon), she gathered her ministers to discuss the particular political situation before taking a decision. Later she chose an envoy to meet Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon).

Based upon this story, as narrated in the Qur'an, a leader -- either man or woman -- is measured via their capacity and not their gender. Thus, anyone may possess the potential and the eventual capacity to become a leader in their society. Of this aforementioned explanation, a lesson can also be taken that even a man cannot become a leader if he does not possess or develop leadership qualities. Therefore, a myth or canard about of women's incapacity based on *kodrat* can be rejected, since over time each man and woman is assessed based on their function and not on an unalterable standing in a hierarchical structure.

In terms of men and women as homemakers and breadwinners, Adet gave testimony about what he has witnessed in his

²⁷ Fathiyaturrahmah Fathiyaturrahmah, "Studi Historis Dinamika Keterlibatan Perempuan Dalam Transmisi al-Qur'an Abad I-X H," *Unpublished Dissertation*, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia, 2020.

community, where many women are seen overcoming the common belief about *kodrat*, since they are able to work diligently both as homemaker and as breadwinner:

Some women even become fish sellers. Their husbands stay at home, looking after the children. There are also some women working as migrant workers, and it seems to be that they are the bread winners. Islam does not clearly assign the roles of both men and women in the functional contexts. Thus, I agree to the view saying that a man is a leader for his wife or partner. But I do not agree of it as connective to the functional role.

This statement has an important implication for seeing the roles of women in both public and private venues. In such an inclusive context, a woman can give birth, rear children, and have a role, even outside the household, to make money for the family. Adet, a teacher respondent, agreed that women can do many a job just as men can do, even though biologically women are born to the nurturing home-oriented *kodrat* embedded as theirs. And the role of rearing the children, in part or in full, can also be done by men; indeed, it is even an obligation as they forge their parenting role.

In a modern family, especially with the benefits of modern tools and transportation, men and women can share roles; and this has potential for enhancing family well-being:

In my view, women should go out for a job because of an economic security reason. So, they can help the family economy by seeking any job with regard to their ability. This same situation is also applied to men as they can do their obligations for the household.

According to the participants speaking frankly, they see two kinds of *kodrat*, namely *natural kodrat* and *social kodrat*. *Natural kodrat* is most commonly seen, and it is biologically based, such as women being pregnant. *Social kodrat* is perceived as socially men and women

are equal, and both have equal roles in the family and society, for example, seeking a job and nurturing a family.

Most participants denoted the term *fitrah* as being synonymous to *kodrat* for both man and woman. On this topic, Ria stated that many women are now wanting to participate in jobs formerly restricted to men, such as police and military, as well as doctor and engineer. She noted that many women become leaders even though society tends to elect leaders based on masculinity. But Ria stated that both men and women can apply any job so long as they have the commitment to well maintain their roles both in the family and in the workplace. Ria's opinion was in line with the view by Adet that there is a relative similarity in the position of *fitrah* and *kodrat* of men and women before God, but that recent developments in society and particularly in the workforce the men's and women's *fitrah* and *kodrat* cannot be limited and instead can be congruent socially, politically, economically, or even athletically.

(2) *Qiwama* Postulate: Men's and Women's Domestic and Public Roles

In the context of Islamic tradition, one of the most contentious gender issues is the topic of women's rights to participate in both the domestic and the public spheres. The questions about whether women have equal rights to be breadwinners, to pursue education, and to have greater public roles remain unsettled in Muslim societies. Debates over this issue commonly revolve around the idea of "*qiwama*", or men's guardianship, an Arabic term derived from the Qur'an, 34: 4, which reads:

(Husbands) are the protectors and maintainers of their (wives), because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if

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*they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): for Allah is Most High, Great (above you all).*²⁸

This Qur'anic verse has become a locus of hermeneutical debate on gender, as it constitutes the most important verse that defines men's and women's rights and roles. It is true that if we read classical Islamic jurisprudence, the verse is used as textual-theological evidence to support men's superiority over women.²⁹ The rationale is that men are "the protectors or the maintainers of women". This idea of superiority is justified through the concept of *nafaqa* on which the traditional gender role of men as breadwinners is based. Several misogynistic *hadiths* are also employed to support this gender inequality, such as those stating "women's lack of intelligence and religiosity" and "women's inappropriateness to be public leaders". Accordingly, the textualist and conservative Muslims usually quote the *qiwama* verse to perpetuate women's inherent domesticity, and thereby to have their public appearance and roles be highly restricted.³⁰

This section presents the teachers' views of these specific Islamic texts and their understanding of gender relations in both domestic and public spheres. From the preceding discussion, it is clear that they generally support the idea of gender equality. However, when it comes to the issue of gender relations in this context, they have a variety of responses. Noteworthy is that many of them still maintain traditional gender roles, while some others attempt to understand gender relations in the family in terms of mutually equal relationships. Yet it should be noted at once that many of them also argue that men's authority over women is

not absolute and must be open to spousal negotiation in the process of decision-making.

The teachers who maintain traditional gender roles base their argument on a literal understanding of the *qiwama* verse. In this regard, men are deemed to be the leaders of their households or the *imam* in the family. Ria, for example, conceded that in the context of family, men are superior to women. In her view, this is because, according to the verse, the husband must provide financial maintenance for his wife and children, and must educate them intellectually and morally. Meanwhile, a wife must obey her husband and maintain the trust and honor of her husband. Based on this idea of men's authority, the wife's public roles and activities, therefore, require the husband's permission.

Misbah shared a similar understanding of the husband's authority over the wife. While acknowledging men's duty as breadwinners and maintainers, he said that a wife's duty is mostly related to domestic affairs, such as mothering and child care. This is because, in Misbah's view, women's inherent gender-based nature (*kodrat*) is "*masak, macak, and manak* (cooking, dressing, and childbearing)", as expressed in a Javanese proverb to denote women's domestic duties. More importantly, he contended that women's domestic duties are a form of obedience to the husband for the sake of seeking God's pleasure. Thus, women's submission is justified through the male nature of God. In this regard, Misbah said:

In classical Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), it is mentioned that household chores, such as washing clothes, cooking, and many others, are the husband's duties. Yet, the wife's willingness to do these household chores is aimed at seeking the husband's pleasure ... Whether or not a household is good depends on the existence of the husband because God's pleasure (ridha) manifests in the husband's pleasure.

Misbah further quotes a *hadith* that explains the image of a good wife. It reads:

²⁸ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an* (England: Wordsworth Classics, 2007).

²⁹ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Justice, Equality and Muslim Family Laws," In Ziba Mir Hosseini, Christian Moe, & Kari Vogt (Eds.), *Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law: Justice and Ethics in the Islamic Legal Tradition* (pp. 37-56) (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

³⁰ K. M. Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

Narrated by Abu Hurairah, it is reported that the Prophet said: "a good woman is the one who can make her husband happy when he is looking at her, obey him when being commanded, and protect herself and her husband's property when she is left alone at home."

Adet proposed another claim for traditional gender roles. He argued that in the context of family, men are the protectors of women because the former is responsible for the lives of the latter. He further explained that in Islam, men are obliged to pay a dowry (*mahr*) for women during the marriage contract. In his view, this is a symbol of the husband's responsibility to protect and guarantee the wife's life. In these traditional gender roles, "women's rights are men's duties, and men's rights are women's duties". That is, women are entitled to gain protection and financial support from their husbands. According to Adet, this division of rights and duties is based on the "inherent natural difference (*kodrat*)" between men and women. He observed:

In my view, the husband may have the right to be protected by his wife, but the wife has greater right to be protected by her husband. This is because biologically, men are stronger and more proportional than women. Although it is a fact that women can develop atypically strong physical bodies, we should see this matter from a more general viewpoint. In general, men have more psychological and biological proportionalities than women, and accordingly, the former have duties and responsibilities to provide greater protection for the latter.

According to another respondent, Azis, men's responsibility is also deemed heavier and more extensive than that of women in the family. In his view, this is also the reason why a wife must obey her husband. He observed:

So, if the husband has already fulfilled his duties, it is natural for a woman to

*obey her husband... Therefore, I prefer to understand that *qiwama* does not only mean men's leadership in the family but also emphasizes men's large duties and responsibilities (towards women).*

The idea of *qiwama* is central to the construction of a patriarchal family in classical *fiqh*. As prominent Muslim feminist Mir-Husseini explained, it serves as the main postulate that governs men's and women's rights and duties in the family.³¹ Based on this viewpoint, two Islamic concepts are constructed, namely *nafaqa* (maintenance) and *tamkin* (submission/obedience). While the former is the husband's duty and the wife's right, the latter is the wife's duty and the husband's right. Mir-Husseini further argues that through the parameters of this logic – "men provide and women obey" – traditional gender roles operate within the classical *fiqh*.

In this traditional construction of gender in the family, the question remains as to what extent women's right to have public roles is possible. In response, most of the teachers argue that this gender construction does not necessarily mean eliminating women's rights to have public roles, including being a breadwinner, if necessary, and depending on the condition and situation of each family. In their views, what should be taken into account in this matter is the family's best interest. Murdiah observed:

If we each, as a wife, want to help our husband to provide for the family, namely to be a breadwinner, this is also allowed. A household would be much better if it is built together. Indeed, it is much better, isn't it? I myself believe that I have to be a career woman because this will serve as my protection

³¹ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Justice, Equality and Muslim Family Laws," In Ziba Mir Hosseini, Christian Moe, & Kari Vogt (Eds.), *Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law: Justice and Ethics in the Islamic Legal Tradition* (pp. 37-56) (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

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when abandoned by my husband someday.

In addition, most of the teachers reason that men's authority over women in the family is not absolute. In their views, even though men serve as the protectors or maintainers of women in the family, the men are not allowed to be authoritarian and instead have to take women's rights to have public roles into consideration. While maintaining traditional gender roles and duties, their understanding of the *qiwama* and gender relations in the family is not rigid. They attempt to negotiate this concept with their life experience and the contemporary fact that women increasingly have greater public roles and achievements in comparison to their male counterparts. More importantly, according to the teachers' views, women must be involved in family decision-making processes, as Nurhayati stated:

The concept of qiwama is limited only to domestic affairs, not public affairs. In terms of public affairs, the question remains whether the husband gives a permit or not. Another question remains whether this authority is hierarchical or deliberative. That is, when a woman says to her husband that she wants to run for a public leader office, then the husband does not immediately disallow her in an authoritarian way; then it is done! Or, there must be a discussion between spouses to make a decision together based on mutual best interest.

Meanwhile, the teachers who attempted to understand gender relations in the family in terms of a more balanced-mutual relationship proposed a different interpretation of *qiwama*. Chisan explained that the word '*qiwama*' is derived from the basic Arabic word '*qama*' which literally means "to stand". In her view, this literal meaning corresponds to the natural difference between men's and women's biological bodies. This is because, different from men, women have reproductive organs. In this regard, Chisan argued:

If we trace its meaning, qiwama is derived from the Arabic word, qama, which means to stand. If we (compare) this meaning with women's biological nature, men "stand" more than women because men do not menstruate, get pregnant, and give birth. In women's experience, there may be many women who get sick during menstruation and also who get pregnant. They, therefore, have to stay at home more than men do; they are not standing (in a literal sense), they are not qama. In general, for men, the advantage is that they stand more because their nature is not like that of women ... It is therefore why the duty of maintenance is given to men.

According to Chisan, based on this understanding, *qiwama* refers to a person's capacity instead of a sexed body. In this sense, a woman who chooses not to marry, for example, can be a leader, and stand (*qawwam*) for herself. In another case, if a husband is not able to do his duty as breadwinner for some reason, his wife may carry this duty. Chisan was also critical of the idea of women's obedience to the husband. She argued that both husband and wife have the right to be mutually obeyed in the family. In her views, the patriarchal claim that "God's pleasure is the husband's pleasure" is wrong because this is not consistent with the Prophet Muhammad's tradition which puts higher respect on the figure of mother instead of father.

(3) LaknatMalaikat: The Wrath of Angels within the Marital Sexual Relationship

One of the most cited misogynistic *hadith* about the sexual relationship between husband and wife is a *hadith* narrated by Imam Muslim (the second prominent *hadith*'s book narrator after Imam Al Bukhari) and from Abu Hurairah:

Abu Hurairah said, the Messenger of Allah said: "If a husband invites his wife to bed and then the wife refuses to fulfill

his invitation so that the husband feels disappointed until he falls asleep, throughout the night the angels will curse the wife until dawn.

The *hadith* were distributed widely within Islamic classical literature and taught in *pesantrens* (traditional Islamic boarding schools) to position wives to be the servants of their husbands.³² Many Muslims view it as a form of *ibadah* (service) to God for a wife to fulfill her husband's sexual desires.³³ In Indonesia, however, the *hadith* tends to be cited to subordinate women within the domestic sphere.³⁴ Hence, this has been a source of debate among feminist scholars who offer various approaches to understanding the *hadith*.³⁵ This section presents the participants' views about the *hadith* and their perceptions on what is necessary to be taught to high school students on the theme of marriage.

The participants in this study showed

³² MarhumahMarhumah, "The Roots of Gender Bias: Misogynist *Hadiths* in *Pesantrens*," *International Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 5, no. 2 (2015): 283-304. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v5i2.283-304>

³³ Nina Hoel&Sa'diyya Shaikh, "Sex as 'Ibadah': Religion, Gender, and Subjectivity among South African Muslim Women," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 1 (2013): 69-91. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.29.1.69>

³⁴ ErwatiAziz, Irwan Abdullah, & Zaenuddin H. Prasoj, "Why Are Women Subordinated? The Misrepresentation of the Qur'an in Indonesian Discourse and Practice," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 21, no. 6 (2020): 238-251; Nina Nurmila, "Indonesian Muslim Discourse of Husband-Wife Relationships," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 51, no. 1 (2013): 61-79.

³⁵ Hamim Ilyas, MochamadSodik, & Inayah Rohmaniyah, *Perempuan Tertindas? Kajian Hadis-Hadis Misoginis* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press & PSW UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2003); A. Matswah, "Pendidikan Gender DalamKeluarga: TelaahTerhadap Hadis-Hadis TentangRelasiLaki-Laki dan Perempuan DalamKeluarga," *Al-Adabiya: JurnalKebudayaan dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 1 (2014): 82-101; AlimatulQibtiyah, "IntervensiMalaikatDalamHubunganSeksual." In H. Ilyas, M. Sodik, and I. Rohmaniyah (Eds.), *Perempuan Tertindas? Kajian Hadis-Hadis Misoginis* (pp. 209-227) (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ dan PSW UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2005).

differing understandings regarding the *hadith*. Three views are highlighted: (1) those who understand the *hadith* literally but acknowledge the importance of discussion and negotiation in family decision making; (2) those who reluctantly commented on the status of the *hadith* but emphasize the flexible and negotiable relation between husband and wife in daily practices; and (3) the majority of the participants, who perceive the *hadith* as horrifying to be taught to the high school students while trying to emphasize the essential need to encourage understanding of equal relationships between men and women through teachings in school classes or in pre-marriage education.

Referring to a journal article she read, Ria mentioned the above *hadith* to argue that wives should oblige their husbands. She understood the *hadith* to imply the subordinate position of women in the domestic sphere, particularly because the husbands are the family's breadwinners. However, she also acknowledged that in practice, husband and wife might negotiate over some decisions. Ria asserted:

In my perception, about men and women relationships in families, indeed, the husband's position is higher (than the wife's) because he is the head of the family. But in decision-making, there should be discussions between them. It depends on the context, I think.

On the other hand, being reluctant to comment on the strength of the *hadith*'s chain or the causes of the *hadith*'s utterance, Azis understood the *hadith* as having strong correlation with the roles and responsibilities of husbands. He commented that in the practical life wherein the husband fulfilled all his responsibility to his family and treated his wife in a good manner, such wrath would not be likely to happen. He said:

Even though it seems horrifying for women, yet, if we go back to the roles and responsibilities of husbands to their wives, it (husband asking for sexual

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intercourse) would become something ordinary (for them). In this sense the husbands are responsible to provide sustenance for their family, taking care of their wives, and treating them well. The husband must love his wife with all good care, so that when he desires (to have sexual intercourse), the wife would not feel forced. If husband-wife relations were thus performed, I think there would not be any problem. From the textual hadith, indeed, it seems horrifying, but when we trace back to the context (when the hadith was uttered by the Prophet), women did not bear a heavy burden in terms of providing sustenance. All was considered the husbands' responsibility, even breastfeeding for the babies was husbands' responsibility.

Similarly, Misbah tends to understand that in practical life, the husband has to understand his wife's condition during the husband's sexual desires' arousal. He added that this also applies to the wives. He suggested using pleasing approaches rather than a harsh one. He stated:

Concerning sexual intercourse, husbands must have understood the character and personality of his wife. If he sees that his wife is very tired and so forth, a husband must be aware of this himself. He is better to please the wife (rather than force her), for instance by making her tea, or giving her massages ... if it is the wife who is in desire, she also has to ask his husband.

The other participants, however, termed the above *hadith* as 'horrifying' as it involves the wrath of supernatural beings, namely angels, to intrude in the most private relation between husband and wife. This view corresponds to Qibtiyah's scrutiny of the intervention of angels within human domestic affairs.³⁶

C. Teaching Gender Equality and Respect in the Classroom and Beyond

Regardless of the differences in teachers' understanding of the *hadith* about such topics as 'angels' wrath', the religious teachers in this study shared similar beliefs on the need, in educating their students, to enhance the perception of an equal relationship between husband and wife.

Affirming that some of the *hadith* can be too 'horrifying' to present in school, Chisan indicated that she would not discuss such *hadith* with her high school students. Besides some not being suitable to be discussed in the school context, she notes that the age requirement for a woman to get married according to Indonesian Marriage Law No 16 Year 2019 is 19 years old (Pemerintah, 2019), which is beyond high school age. She was grateful to find that *hadith* are not included in the textbook distributed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA).³⁷ She asserted that the MoRA is quite wise for not including it in the teaching materials. The subject around husband and wife relations is taught as a Fiqh subject instead, under the marriage topic, and is included for students at year eleven, when average student is 17 years old. Chisan argued:

I think it is good that MoRA is itself aware that high school students should not be taught with that terrifying hadith like in the Azis term. Firstly, because the topic is not taught in (any subject other than fiqh), nor the subject of Qur'an and Hadith (which she teaches). Secondly, if even Azis, a teacher, felt it is disturbing, what must be the students' feelings? As they are still very young, they must be terrified by those hadith.

Besides being a teacher, Chisan is also a pre-marriage extension worker for the Ministry of Religious Affairs. She asserted that she is highly committed to enhancing gender equality

³⁷AtmoPrawiro, *Fikih Madrasah Aliyah Kelas XI* (Jakarta: Kemenag, 2020).

³⁶*Ibid.*

through preparing marital couples with the understanding of the equal relationship between husband and wife. Referring to the concept of *mubadalah* (reciprocal) roles and the responsibility of men and women,³⁸ she believed that those topics are the foundation needed for building a harmonious family.

Nurhayati agreed with Chisan that it is too dismaying for the *hadith* to be included in the textbook. Admitting that she didn't teach about marriage subjects, Nurhayati suggested that the pre-married couple must have pre-marriage education to encourage a more equal relationship between husband and wife and to prevent the usage of such a *hadith* as a religious doctrinal means to threaten the woman.

Albany highlighted the sensitivity yet the urgency of teaching the theme of marriage for year eleven students. Assenting that the *hadith* should not be taught to the students, he argued that it is necessary to strengthen female students' understanding of equal relationships between men and women so that they dare to say 'no' to sexual intercourse outside marriage if asked by their boyfriends. Given some cases of unwanted pregnancy that happened among high school students, he found out that those problems are sometimes related to the 'unhealthy' relationship between the parents at home. He claimed:

I deeply care about (the need of teaching) the equal relationship between men and women; the Qur'an says 'wa'asiruhunnabilma'ruf' (treat your wives with good manners) ... because the understanding about the relation between men and women may affect the dynamic of life in a very wide spectrum, not only specific to the understanding of that hadith.

In addition, Albany encouraged his female students to take leadership roles in the classroom. He claimed that by becoming a leader, female students improve their confidence and

ability for problem-solving. He must admit that among the high performers in his class there are certainly female students. This shows that women have the same potentials, in terms of ability and intellectuality, as their male counterparts.

Similar to Albany's view, Adet highlighted his role as an educator who has to deliver a non-discriminative understanding of gender differences. He asserted that both males and females have the same rights to education. Although it is undeniable that some *fiqh* set different requirements for each gender, he highlighted that socially, both genders have the same rights. In his view, a teacher has to encourage both male and female students to achieve their full potentials.

This view is approved by Lalu, that female students also have the same intellectual potentials as males. He gave an example from the Prophet Muhammad who allotted his spare time to teach women of the *Anshar* community (those originally from Medina). Aisha (the wife of the Prophet) even praised these women for their attentiveness to and curiosity for learning. The *Anshar* females were not ashamed or abashed to ask questions about topics that female *Muhajirin* (originally from Mecca) would not dare to ask, due to shyness.

D. Conclusion

The persistent unequal attitudes towards women within Muslim societies, has been -- consciously or not -- influenced by, and to some extent promoted by, educational institutions such as *pesantren* and Islamic schools. By examining perceptions of Indonesian Muslim secondary-school teachers in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, this study affirmed this claim. Most respondents revealed a tendency to misinterpret the Islamic texts, mainly the *hadith* or the Qur'an, about the relations between men and women in society. These misunderstandings might be caused by using a textual approach as the basis for understanding texts, but which renders them out of their situational context.

The study found three themes from the Islamic concepts in relation to the topic of relations between men and women. These are

³⁸ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah: Tafsir Progresif untuk Keadilan Gender dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: Ircisod, 2019).

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qiwama (leadership), *kodrat* (nature) and *laknat* (wrath of angels). The teachers' detailed perceptions of those three concepts varied, yet the inclination toward affirming the superiority of men remained strong. However, they concluded most comments by acknowledging the importance of discussion and negotiation between husband and wife in their daily practices and their decision-making.

While not all the teachers who participated in this study teach the subject of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), within which the marriage topic is taught, they were all aware of the need to enhance gender equality in the classroom and in society. They were encouraging female students to take leadership roles in the classroom, or encouraging them to achieve expertise in their favorite pursuits. While, avoiding arguing about the generalizing the findings of this research to similar contexts, this study provides an argument that developing gender equality perceptions among teachers in Islamic schools is of paramount value. The role of teachers is pivotal in promoting a balanced understanding of relationship equality between men and women in society.

This understanding can start in educational institutions, and similar research in the future will be essential to continually gain a better understanding of Indonesian teachers' perspectives in wider contexts and in diverse geographical areas. In this study, collecting data from Islamic secondary school's teacher may have increased diversity of perspective; however, this covers only small number of respondents. Further studies may also focus on the pedagogical approaches for promoting gender equality in the classrooms.

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