

THE POTENTIAL OF WOMEN'S INTELLIGENCE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROPHET'S HADITH: A STUDY OF MISOGYNISTIC HADITH

Suwendi, Rifqi Fadhillah, Mesraini, Aris Munandar

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

suwendi@uinjkt.ac.id, rifqi_fadhillah23@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id, mesraini@uinjkt.ac.id,
arism2365@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji kembali hadis tentang perempuan sebagai *naqishat 'aql wa al-dīn* yang selama ini dipahami sebagai legitimasi inferioritas intelektual perempuan. Penelitian bertujuan menganalisis validitas dan makna hadis tersebut melalui integrasi kritik sanad–matan, pendekatan sosio-historis, dan hermeneutika gender. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dengan analisis deskriptif-kritis terhadap hadis, literatur klasik, dan studi gender Islam kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun hadis tersebut sahih secara sanad, pemaknaannya bersifat kontekstual dan tidak menunjukkan inferioritas kodrati perempuan. Konsep *nuqshān al-'aql* lebih merefleksikan kondisi sosial Arab abad ke-7, terutama dalam konteks kesaksian ekonomi, bukan ketidakmampuan intelektual universal perempuan. Sejarah Islam juga menunjukkan kontribusi signifikan perempuan dalam transmisi ilmu keislaman sebagai kontra-narasi terhadap tafsir misoginis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada penguatan pembacaan hadis yang lebih etis, kontekstual, dan berkeadilan gender.

Kata Kunci: Hadis Misoginis, Kecerdasan Perempuan, Kritik Sanad, Keadilan Gender.

Abstract

This study reviews the hadith about women as naqishat 'aql wa al-dīn which has been understood as the legitimacy of women's intellectual inferiority. The research aims to analyze the validity and meaning of the hadith through the integration of sanad-matan criticism, socio-historical approaches, and gender hermeneutics. The research uses a qualitative method based on literature studies with descriptive-critical analysis of hadith, classical literature, and contemporary Islamic gender studies. The results of the study show that although the hadith is valid in sanad, its meaning is contextual and does not show the inferiority of women's nature. The concept of nuqshān al-'aql reflects more of the 7th-century Arab social conditions, especially in the context of economic testimony, rather than women's universal intellectual incompetence. The history of Islam also shows the significant contribution of women in the transmission of Islamic knowledge as a counter-narrative to misogynistic interpretations. This research contributes to strengthening the reading of hadith that is more ethical, contextual, and gender-fair.

Keyword: Misogynistic Hadith, Women's Intelligence, Sanad Criticism, Gender Justice.

Intruduction

Religion has placed reason as a *manâut* al-taklîf or a place of dependence for one's religious practice. Those who are burdened with practicing religious teachings are all human beings, both men and women, who have intellect. For the unreasonable, it will be relieved of the burdens of this religion. With this ability of reason, all the practices of religious teachings will be accounted for on the appointed day (*yaum al-hisab*). This is stated in QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 36,

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى.

Meaning: "Does man think that he will be left alone (without accountability)" (QS. al-Qiyamah [75]: 36)

The word intellect comes from the Arabic ('aqala) meaning "to bind" and "to hold". A sensible person is a person who can restrain his anger, control his passions so that he can therefore take a wise attitude and action in facing all the problems he faces.¹

The word "intellect" is not found in the Quran. However, the verb form (*fiil mudlari*) was found approximately 50 times spread across various letters. The Quran also uses words that indicate the meaning of thinking such as *nazhara* (there are 120 verses), *tafakkara* (there are 18 verses), *faqiha* (there are 20 verses), and *tadabbara* (there are 100 verses), among others. People who think or understand are often also referred to as *ulul albab* and the Qur'an gives praise to *ulul albab* (mentioned 14 times) which is not limited to men only, but also women. This is more emphatically stated in QS. Ali Imran [3]: 191-195, who explained the identity of the *ulu al-bab*.

Indonesian scholars of interpretation, such as Hamka,² Mahmud Yunus,³ and Interpretation of the Department of Religion,⁴ agreed to distribute *Ulul Albab* with thinking people, both men and women. This means that

both men and women can think, remember, understand, learn, and practice, and even think about nature.

However, in the sources of religious teachings, there are still hadiths that tend to be misogynistic that state that women's intellect is less than that of men, so it is appropriate that in the future women will become the dominant 'society' in hell. This kind of hadith has been accepted by Muslims so that it has become the view of the community in its own right. As a study conducted by J. Frueck, it is explained that doctrine has a great influence on the culture of the community. It is not only capable of separating cultures, but also of separating them.⁵

Apparently, the misogynistic hadith has become the basis of a fatwa for some scholars. Ibn Hajar al-Haitami (1909 AH), once issued a fatwa that learning to write for girls is *makruh*, hated by religion. The reason is, the ability to write is like a very sharp knife, anyone who is affected will be injured. Meanwhile, said Ibn Hajar with his male bias, stating that women are human beings who are less able to control themselves. Therefore, the ability to write for them will be very dangerous for whoever is targeted.⁶

In fact, in historical records, many women have distinguished their knowledge in various sciences, even becoming references for male figures. Such as the Prophet's wife, Aisha, Sakinah bint Husayn bin Ali, Shaykh Syuhrah, the teacher of Imam Shafii, Rabi'ah Adawiyah, the teacher of the Sufis, and others. In fact, there are three names of women who became teachers of *madhhab* figures, namely the brother of Salahuddin al-Ayyubi (Mu'nisat al-Ayyubiyah bin al-Malik al-Adil), Syamiyat al-Taymiyah, and Zainab bint Abdul Latif al-Baghdadi, al-Syifa, the head of the market of the city of Medina, Khadijah bin Khuwalaid, the first wife of the Prophet PBUH who was

¹ Hasan, et.al Sadiliy, Ensiklopedi Indonesia, jilid 1 (Jakarta: Ichtiar Baru Van Hoeve, 1990), h. 98.

² Hamka, Tafsir Azhar, jilid 4 (Jakarta: Pustaka, 1988), h. 194-197.

³ Mahmud Yunus, Tafsir Quran Karim (Jakarta: Hidakarya Agung, 1993) h. 101.

⁴ Departemen Agama, Tafsir Al-Quran al-Karim, jilid 2 (Jakarta: Menara Kudus/Citra Utama, 1996), h. 102-103.

⁵ J. Fuek, "The Role of Tradisionalism in Islam", dalam Merlin L. Swartz, Studies on Islam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), h.99.

⁶ Ibn Hajar al-haitami, al-Fatawa al-Haditsiyah, (Beirut dar al-Fikr) h. 62. Dikutip dalam Masdar F. Masudi, Islam Dan Hak-Hak Reproduksi Perempuan: Dialog Fiqih Pemberdayaan, Edisi Revisi (Bandung: Mizan, 2000), h. 63.

successful in business, and others.⁷

These views, which are also reinforced by patriarchal culture in society, are very likely to contribute to the decline in women's participation in the world of education and science from one generation to the next. This is reflected in Ruth Roped's findings which show that during the time of the Prophet's companions there were around 1,232 women who were active in the scientific field, especially hadith narration. However, during the time of the tabi'in the number experienced a significant decrease to about 150 people, and during the tabi'in period it decreased again to about 50 people. After this period, there are almost no records of women's involvement in similar scientific activities.⁸

Therefore, hadiths that contain misogynistic content need to be studied and re-examined for their validity and context of understanding. This is important, especially in the context of education, because the issue of reason and intellectual capacity is a major part of the discourse developed in the world of education. A comprehensive understanding of the theological foundation of women's intellect will provide clarity in the development of women's education discourse in a more proportionate and objective manner. In addition, critical studies of misogynistic hadiths can also be an effort to build a more inclusive and gender-fair cultural paradigm, so as to create equal relations between men and women. Thus, the religious practice of the ummah is expected to develop more maturely and in harmony with the values of justice taught in the Qur'an.

The study of hadiths that are considered misogynistic has become a significantly developed discourse in contemporary Islamic studies, especially those that intersect with Islamic feminism. Dede Rodliyana in her

research highlights the importance of reinterpreting misogynistic hadiths by considering historical contexts, sanad, and matan hadiths, as well as by using a feminist approach to show that Islam does not inherently position women subordinately.⁹ In line with that, Nur Saadah Hamisan reviewed how the dominance of patriarchal interpretation of certain hadiths has caused significant gender bias, especially because the majority of the process of transmission, codification, and interpretation of hadith is mastered by men. She emphasized that these interpretations need to be reviewed to reflect the values of gender justice in Islam.¹⁰

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, Marhumah revealed that hadiths that have the potential to be misogynistic are often taught widely without a critical approach, so that in the end it becomes a social legitimacy for the practice of discrimination against women. Through a historical-sociological approach and *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, he emphasized the importance of reinterpreting these hadiths in order to build a more gender-just Islamic society.¹¹ Meanwhile, Rizal Purnama and Rizal Mutaqin examine Fatima Mernissi's thoughts in depth by showing that misogynistic hadiths need to be read through an integrative approach that combines sociological, historical, and critical hermeneutics perspectives. According to Mernissi, a number of hadiths that have the potential to place women subordinately are born in the context of patriarchal culture and power, even though they are considered valid in sanad.¹² Another study conducted by Andre Fathan Akbar also confirms that hadiths such as the phrase "women as a source of slander" cannot be understood literally, because they contain complex social relations and gender constructions. Therefore, these hadiths need to be reinterpreted contextually so as not

⁷ Zaitunah Subhan, *Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Gender Dalam Tafsir Quran* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1999), h. 57.

⁸ Ruth Roded, *Kembang Peradaban, Terjemahan Dari Women in Islamic Biographical* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), h. 38, 86, 110.

⁹ M. Dede Rodliyana, "Reevaluating Gender Dynamics: A Critical Analysis of Misogynistic Narratives in Hadith Literature," *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 11, no. 2 (December 23, 2023): 312–26, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijni.v11i2.31219>.

¹⁰ Nur Saadah, "Debate on Patriarchal Interpretation of Hadith: An Overview," *Al-Basirah Journal* 11, no. 2

(December 30, 2021): 57–67, <https://doi.org/10.22452/basirah.vol11no2.5>.

¹¹ Marhumah, "The Roots of Gender Bias: Misogynist Hadiths in Pesantrens," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 5, no. 2 (December 10, 2015): 283–304, <https://doi.org/10.18326/IJIMS.V5I2.283-304>.

¹² Faturrohman Rizal Purnama and Samsul Rizal Mutaqin, "Hadis Misoginis Dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam Perspektif Fatima Mernissi," *Jurnal Ulunnuha* 8, no. 1 (July 5, 2021): 21–36, <https://doi.org/10.15548/ju.v8i1.289>.

to give birth to theological discrimination against women.¹³

Based on previous research, it can be seen that studies of misogynistic hadith generally still focus on efforts to reinterpret and critique hadith through sanad, matan, and feminist perspectives. However, research that simultaneously and comprehensively integrates sanad criticism, matan criticism, the historical context of pre-Islamic Arab society, and historical evidence on the intelligence and intellectual contributions of Muslim women is still relatively limited. In addition, the constructive work of women in Islamic history has not been used as an explicit counter-narrative to the misogynistic understanding of certain hadiths.

This research is here to fill this gap by combining a multidisciplinary approach that includes the study of classical hadith, contextual hermeneutics, sociology of knowledge, and historical analysis of Muslim women. Through this approach, this research not only seeks to deconstruct the patriarchal discourse that develops in the understanding of hadith, but also to reconstruct a more equitable understanding of Islam towards women within the framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* and the principles of social justice.

This research uses a qualitative approach based on library research with a descriptive-critical method of analyzing religious texts. This approach was chosen because the object of research is in the form of the Prophet's hadiths which require an in-depth reading of textual, historical, and interpretive aspects, especially the hadith about women as *naqishat 'aql wa al-dīn* which has been misunderstood so far. The qualitative approach is used to understand the meaning of the hadith contextually and to examine the construction of thought that develops around it, not to measure phenomena statistically.

The primary source of this research is the hadiths related to the narration of *naqishat 'aql wa al-dīn*, especially the narrations in authoritative hadith books such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and other supporting hadith books. Meanwhile, secondary sources include hadith sharia books, works by classical

and contemporary scholars, as well as literature on Islamic gender studies, Muslim feminism, and hadith hermeneutics.

The analysis procedure is carried out through several stages. First, sanad criticism is carried out to assess the validity of the hadith narration by examining the continuity of the sanad (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), the moral quality of the narrator (*'adālah*), the intellectual capacity of the narrator (*ḍabt*), and the possibility of hidden defects (*'illah*) and irregularities (*syudzūd*) in the transmission of the hadith. Second, the criticism is carried out by examining the conformity of the content of the hadith to the basic principles of the Qur'an, rationality, historical facts, and its consistency with other relevant hadiths.

In addition to the *ulumul hadith* approach, this study also uses a socio-historical approach to understand the socio-cultural context of Arab society during the time of the Prophet, especially the position of women in the patriarchal social structure that influenced the situation of the emergence of hadith (*asbāb al-wurūd*). This approach is important so that the hadith is not understood ahistorically and textually. To reread the meaning of hadith more fairly for women, this study uses a framework of gender hermeneutics, especially the perspective of Islamic feminism as developed by Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, which emphasizes the importance of historical contextualization and ethical reading of religious texts. In this perspective, the hadith is not understood literally, but is analyzed by considering power relations, social structures, and Islamic normative goals that uphold justice and human equality.

Through the integration of sanad criticism, matan criticism, socio-historical approaches, and gender hermeneutics, this research seeks to produce a more proportionate and contextual reinterpretation of hadith on women's intellectual potential in Islam, while making a theoretical contribution to the development of hadith studies and gender justice in contemporary Islamic discourse.

¹³ Andre Fathan Akbar, "Gender Relations in The Hadith 'Women as A Source of Fitnah,'" *Al-Imtaz: Jurnal Keilmuan Ushuluddin*, no. 1 (2024): 66–77,

<https://ejournal.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id/index.php/imtaz/index>.

The Hadith of Naqishat 'Aql wa Dīn as the Basis of Misogynistic Discourse

Among the hadiths that are most often used as theological legitimacy for women's intellectual inferiority is the hadith about women as naqishat 'aql wa dīn (lack of intellect and religion). This hadith has a great influence in the formation of socio-religious views on the position of women, especially in the issue of intellectual capacity, legal testimony, and leadership. In many contexts, this hadith is understood literally, giving the impression that women naturally have lower thinking abilities than men.

However, the interpretation of this hadith requires a more comprehensive reading. The validity of sanad does not always have implications for the universality of meaning, because the social, cultural, and circumstantial context of the hadith also affect the way the hadith is understood. Therefore, this study first examines the validity of hadith through sanad criticism before moving on to matan criticism and contextual reinterpretation of meaning

The following is the text of the hadith that is the main object of this research:

عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ يَا مَعْشَرَ
النِّسَاءِ تَصَدَّقْنَ وَأَكْثِرْنَ الْإِسْتِغْفَارَ فَإِنِّي رَأَيْتُكُنَّ أَكْثَرَ
أَهْلِ النَّارِ فَقَالَتْ امْرَأَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ جَزَلَةٌ وَمَا لَنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
أَكْثَرَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ قَالَ تُكْثِرْنَ اللَّعْنَ وَتَكْفُرْنَ الْعَشِيرَ وَمَا
رَأَيْتُ مِنْ نَاقِصَاتِ عَقْلِ وَدِينٍ أَغْلَبَ لِذِي لُبٍّ مِنْكُمْ
قَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَقِصَانُ الْعَقْلِ وَالْدِّينِ قَالَ أَمَّا
نَقِصَانُ الْعَقْلِ فَشَهَادَةُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَعْدِلُ شَهَادَةَ رَجُلٍ فَهَذَا
نَقِصَانُ الْعَقْلِ وَتَمْكُثُ اللَّيَالِي مَا تُصَلِّي وَتُفْطِرُ فِي
رَمَضَانَ فَهَذَا نَقِصَانُ الدِّينِ (رواه البخاري ومسلم)

It means: "O women, give alms and ask for forgiveness because I see that you are the majority of the inhabitants of Hell. Then one of the women among them who was intelligent and critical asked: "O Messenger of Allah, why are we the majority of the inhabitants of Hell?"

The Messenger of Allah replied: "You curse many (pray badly for others) and are not grateful for the kindness of your husband. I don't see women who lack their sense and religion who can beat a sensible man, other than you." The critical woman asked again: "What is the lack of reason and religion of the woman?" The Prophet replied: "As for the lack of reason, the testimony of two women is the same as the testimony of one man. That is the lack of reason, and the woman (menstruates) goes for days without praying and not fasting in the month of Ramadan. This is the lack of religion." (HR. Bukhari Muslim)

Criticism of Sanad Hadith Naqishat 'Aql wa Dīn

The matan hadith above, seems to be narrated by six hadith books in different paths by using matan texts that are very similar to the matan text above. There were three companions who narrated the hadith, namely Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar and Abu Hurairah. The hadith sourced from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri is only narrated by one imam, al-Bukhari, with a chain of sanad consisting of 'Iyad ibn 'Abdullah – Zaid ibn Aslam – Muhammad bin Ja'far – Sa'id ibn Abi Maryam. In addition, the above hadith is also narrated by al-Tirmizi with the sanad of Dzakwan – Suhail – 'Abdul Aziz – Huraim ibn Mis'ar. The hadith sourced from Abdullah ibn Umar was narrated by four imams: Muslim, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud and Ahmad bin Hambal. Imam Muslim and Ibn Majah narrated the hadith from Ibn 'Umar with the same sanad which consisted of 'Abdullah ibn Dinar – Yazid ibn Al-Had – Lais bin Sa'id – Muhammad ibn Rumh. Meanwhile, Abu Dawud and Ahmad ibn Hambal each narrated with a path that was halved differently from the path used by the two imams mentioned earlier. After Yazid ibn al-Had, Abu Dawud used the route consisting of Bakhr ibn Mudlar – 'Abdullah ibn Wahb – Ahmad ibn 'Amr ibn as-

Sarh. Meanwhile, Ahmad bin Hambal, after Muhammad bin al-Had, used the route of Haiwah ibn Shuraih – 'Abdullah ibn Wahb – Harun ibn Ma'ruf.

In the hadith rules, it is stated that al-shahabah kulluhum 'udul, the companions are just, with the understanding that they cannot lie in narrating the hadith of the Prophet.¹⁴ Thus, the assessment of ta'dil and tajrih to determine whether their narration is accepted or rejected, does not need to be done. Therefore, their narration, including the three companions, was accepted and their tsiqah was placed in the first rank (rutbah) (in the chart it is indicated by the number one in parentheses).

The assessment of ta'dil and tajrih in the study of hadith is only carried out on the post-Companion narrators.¹⁵ From this assessment, it is known that most of the narrations contained in the five paths of sanad narrating the hadith have tsiqah-an, as shown in the chart by the numbers in parentheses, which are in the second rank (siqah sabbath, 'adil and dabit and can be ascertained to be strong in the narration) and the third rank (siqah, 'adil and dabit). Among the narrators of the hadith there are only three people whose rank is below them. All three are in the sanad al-Tirmizi path, with two of them ranked fifth; and the other one ranked sixth. The two people who ranked fifth were Suhail who was considered to be very honest (shaduq), but at the end of his life his ability to memorize the hadith changed; and Abdul Aziz who was considered shaduq, but he narrated a hadith from the notebooks of other scholars and he was wrong in his narration. Meanwhile, one person who was ranked sixth was Huraim ibn Mis'ar

who was considered a maqbul, accepted by his hadith.

Thus, from the brief explanation above, it can be seen that the hadith that mentions the lack of reason and religion of women in the aspect of silsilat al-sanad is considered sahih. The validity of the hadith according to the hirakhi of the authentic hadiths presented by al-Nawawi is at the first level, because it was narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim whose second collection of hadiths is recognized as the most authentic and authoritative book of hadith compared to other collections of hadith books.¹⁶ If you look at the number of narrations, which from among the Prophet's companions consisted of three, and from the next generation increased by more than three, then the hadith is included in the mustafid hadith whose degree of validity is one level below the mutawatir hadith.¹⁷ Therefore, what is revealed by the hadith can, if not necessarily, be accepted as a historical fact that actually occurred in the time of the Prophet.

Matn Criticism in Hadith Studies: A Contextual Approach

The above hadith contains a dialogue between the Prophet and the sahabiyyah. Among the dialogue materials that often lead to an understanding of women's inferiority is the Prophet's statement that the testimony of two women who are the same as the testimony of a man is a sign of a woman's lack of intellect. At the level of fiqh, this statement is used as a reference by most scholars to enforce the 2:1 provision in all women's testimonies. Meanwhile, at the theological level, this statement is considered a divine statement that

¹⁴ Abil Ash, "Adalah al-Rawi Perspektif Sunni Dan Syi'ah," *AL ISNAD: Journal of Indonesian Hadith Studies* 3, no. 2 (December 4, 2022): 73–89, <https://doi.org/10.51875/alisnad.v3i2.127>.

¹⁵ Andi Muhamad Hidayat, Tajul Arifin, and Muhamad Chaedar Rafiq, "The Existence of Al-Jarh Wa Al-Ta'dil (In Modern Hadith Studies)," *Al-Afkar: Journal For Islamic*

Studies 8, no. 2 (May 7, 2025): 1139–55, <https://doi.org/10.31943/AFKARJOURNAL.V8I2.1434>.

¹⁶ Muhammad Jamaluddin al-Qasimi, *Qawâ'id al-Tahdits Min Funûn Mushthalah al-Hadîts* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, n.d.), h. 82.

¹⁷ al-Qasimi, h. 35–38.

affirms the supremacy of men over women. Meanwhile, at the level of social reality, this statement becomes a powerful argument to prioritize and marginalize women from a life that is considered to require more 'reason'.

The Prophet PBUH as the messenger of Allah has superior qualities, including shidiq (honest and trustworthy) in his speech. Therefore, the words of the Prophet PBUH above can be further examined from several aspects.

First, the audience addressed by the Prophet in the above hadith is the group of women of Medina, most of whom are the Ansar group. Regarding the sociological structure of the Ansar society, Umar ibn Khatab stated: "When we came to the Ansar people, we found that they were a people dominated by their wives. So, our wives then followed their behavior."¹⁸ From this information it is stated that the women of Mecca (Muhajirin) before migrating to Medina (Anshar) were dominated by their husbands. After they moved to Medina, the atmosphere turned upside down. Therefore, Umar conveyed to the Prophet and was responded with a smile.¹⁹

The social conditions of women in Makkah and Medina in the early days of Islam showed quite striking differences. The women of Makkah, who lived in the aristocratic and patriarchal structure of Quraysh society, tended to have more limited space for movement in the field of science and public participation. The cultural norms that prevailed in Makkah placed more emphasis on women's domestic roles and prevented them from active involvement in religious and intellectual activities.²⁰

On the other hand, the women of Medina, especially from the Ansar circles, have a more

open habit in terms of religious learning and discussion. The people of Medina do have a more egalitarian tradition in several aspects, including women's involvement in social life and education.²¹ This is reflected in their courage to ask the Prophet directly about religious and life issues, even in sensitive matters.

Siti Aisyah, one of the most prominent female figures in Islamic history, explicitly expressed her admiration for Ansar women. In a hadith narration, he stated that he admired them very much because of their enthusiasm in seeking knowledge and their curiosity about the teachings of Islam. Aisha's statement shows the recognition of the active role of women in Madinah in the development of Islamic intellectuals from the beginning.²²

In addition, this hadith was presented by the Prophet on the momentum of Eid al-Fitr. As usual, on the Eid al-Fitr the Prophet gave advice to Muslims, including women. The Prophet who respects women is too noble to convey something that hurts women during the holiday. In that context, it would be more appropriate if the Prophet's statement was understood as advice to women and not at all a reflection of a degrading attitude towards women. This is reinforced by the sound of the hadith which is preceded by the advice that women give a lot of alms and istighfar so that they do not belong to the group of women who are experts in hell.

This is the background of the words of the Prophet PBUH to them. The words of the Prophet were his admiration for the women of Anshar. The above hadith is understood as if the Prophet stated, "O women, God has bestowed upon you the ability to melt the hearts of strong and mighty men, even though you are weak.

¹⁸ al-Bukhari, Shahih Al-Bukhari, Jilid 3 (Kairo: al-Sya'b, n.d.), h. 36-37.

¹⁹ Subhan, Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Gender Dalam Tafsir Quran, h. 58-59.

²⁰ Hasanatul Jannah, Ulama Perempuan Madura: Otoritas Dann Relasi Gender (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020), h. 27.

²¹ Hasanatul Jannah, h. 29.

²² al-Asqalani Ibn Hajar, Fath Al-Bari Bi Syarh al-Bukhari, jilid 7 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), h. 29.

Therefore, be devoted to Him and do not use that ability except for good."²³

Second, the sentence نُفُصَانُ الْعَقْلِ وَالِدَيْنِ contains many interpretations. Because, in the above hadith, the lack of women's intellect lies in the field of testimony. Shortcomings in any field will not erode women's intellectual abilities and ability to bear all their responsibilities, such as childcare. Why do men from the past until now entrust women to take care of children, shop, manage finances, etc., if it is true that women lack sense? If true, it is possible that men will not leave it to women to take care of children or manage shopping. Moreover, the responsibility of parenting and managing household affairs is a heavy responsibility.

If the woman is not perfect in her ability to think, surely Imam Abu Hanifah, for example, would not allow a woman to become a religious judge. In fact, the Prophet himself would not have said:

خُذُوا نِصْفَ دِينِكُمْ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْحُمَيْرَاءِ

Meaning: "Take half of your religion from this Aisha".

All of that happened in the historical record that actually happened. History has proven that the first person to believe in the Prophet Muhammad as a Prophet and apostle was a woman, Khadijah. The Qur'an as a holy book, was first compiled by a woman to be guarded and maintained, namely Hafsa bint Umar bin Khatab.

Abdul Halim Muhammad Abu Syuqah explained a comprehensive study conducted by Turman and Melis on the differences in male and female characters. In the study, it was found that at the same time it was known that the factors of masculinity and femininity were

closely related to the factors of knowledge obtained through education and teaching, both at home and outside the home. The influence of such factors is stronger than physical factors. This shows that environmental conditions and social factors have a very strong influence compared to the influence of physical factors.²⁴

According to psychologists, every case of brain weakness brought to a psychiatric clinic is usually unable to concentrate, restless, and unable to stay calm. In fact, it is as if every activity is without thought at all, even though the mindless movement is also found in those who are normal and intelligent. Among the psychological causes is a feeling of regret that arises from a lack of achievement due to backwardness or weakness of reason. This psychological fulfillment turns out to be experienced not only by women, but also by men.²⁵

The absurd statement that has implications for this testimony actually contains its own problems. Most scholars generalize this testimony to all issues. In fact, if we look at all the verses about the testimony between human beings, it turns out that there are only 5 (five) verses of the Quran on 4 (four) topics. First, testimony in the recording of debts and receivables, namely QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 282. Second, the testimony about adultery, namely QS. al-Nisa [4]: 15 and QS. al-Nur [24]: 4. Third, the testimony in the will, namely QS. al-Maidah [5]: 106. And fourth, the testimony in reference, namely QS. al-Thalaq [65]: 2.

If you look closely, it will appear that of the five verses, there is only one verse that clearly mentions the difference between male and female testimony, namely about the recording of debts and receivables (QS. al-Baqarah [2]:

²³ Abu Syuqah and Abdul Halim Muhammad, *Tahrir Al-Mar'ah Fi 'Ashr al-Risalah*, Juz 1 (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1990), h. 275.

²⁴ Syuqah and Muhammad, h. 290.

²⁵ Abdul Aziz al-Qussy, *Pokok-Pokok Kesehatan Jiwa/Mental*, vol. jilid 2 (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang), h. 76.

282). While the other verses do not specifically state that women's testimony is half of men's.

QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 282 This is only related to financial matters. Many modern interpreters who are sympathetic to women's rights state that this verse does not show the inferiority of women. Women at that time did not have adequate experience in financial matters, and therefore two female witnesses were recommended by the Quran. So, if forgetfulness occurs (due to lack of experience), then one person can remind the other. Since men have enough experience then such reminders are unnecessary for them.²⁶

Similarly, Muhammad Assad said, "the provision that two women can be used as substitutes for one male witness does not reflect anything about women's moral or intellectual abilities. This is clearly related to the fact that women are less familiar with business procedures than men, and are therefore more likely to make mistakes in this regard."²⁷ Muhammad Abduh, a prominent Egyptian theologian, also held the same view.²⁸

Third, the word نُقْصَانُ الدِّينِ is a limited thing, namely the lack of prayer and fasting on the days of menstruation and puerperium. This dispensation is given by religion, even mandatory. Not praying or not fasting is due to obedience to religious teachings. Then, why should it be used as an excuse for the lack of women's religiosity. Hibbat Rauf Izzat referred to this deficiency as *nuqshân nau'i*, as opposed to *nuqshân al-fithri* (deficiency of fitrah). *Nuqshân nau'i* is a tentative shortcoming.²⁹ These shortcomings are temporary

shortcomings, not throughout life, but occur in a short short period of time. In addition, menstruation does not occur during pregnancy and menstruation will stop altogether during menopause.

This deficiency is not the desire or the result of women's efforts. In fact, believing women who feel lacking because they are prevented from performing prayers and fasting, at that time can replace it, for example with dhikr, prayer, and istighfar. Siti Aisyah once performed Hajj as a substitute for the obligation to perform jihad, even though jihad was the main practice. He also replaced prayer and Umrah by increasing the circumcision prayer after the purity of menstruation or puerperium. Aisha said: "O Messenger, do people go home with two rewards, while I have only one reward?".³⁰

Prof. Abdul Halim, a progressive Muslim thinker quoted by Asghar Ali Engineer, categorically rejected the validity of the hadith about "women's lack of intellect". This rejection is not without reason, but is based on considerations of rationality and conformity with the basic principles of Islam.³¹

According to Prof. Halim, the hadith is unacceptable because it is contrary to common sense. For her, it is illogical that women's intellect is inherently considered inferior to men's, while in reality many women show intellectual abilities that are equal to or even surpass men in various areas of life.

More than that, Prof. Halim also considered that the content of the hadith was not in line with the spirit of the Qur'an which

²⁶ Ashgar Ali Engineer, "The Rights of Women in Islam" Diterjemahkan Oleh Farid Wajidi Dan Cici Farkha Assegaf, Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: LSPPA, 2000), h. 63.

²⁷ Muhammad Assad, "The Message of The Qur'an" (Gibraltar, 1980), h. 63.

²⁸ Engineer, "The Rights of Women in Islam" Diterjemahkan Oleh Farid Wajidi Dan Cici Farkha Assegaf, Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam, h. 97.

²⁹ K.H. Husein Muhammad, "Pengantar Kelemahan, dan Fitnah Perempuan", dalam Abdul Moqsi Ghazali, Tubuh, Seksualitas, Dan Kedaulatan Perempuan (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2002), xiv.

³⁰ al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*.

³¹ Engineer, "The Rights of Women in Islam" Diterjemahkan Oleh Farid Wajidi Dan Cici Farkha Assegaf, Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam, h. 112.

upholds the equality of human beings before God, both men and women. The Qur'an never mentions that women have a lack of intellect or intellectual inferiority. Precisely in many verses, both men and women are treated as equal subjects in terms of moral, spiritual, and social responsibilities.

Such a critical view is important to remind that not all hadith can be taken for granted without contextual and normative analysis. The rejection of hadith that is contrary to the principles of the Qur'an and common sense is part of *ijtihad*'s efforts to maintain the purity of Islamic values from cultural bias and historical patriarchy.

According to Husein Muhammad, an enthusiast of gender and Islamic studies, stated that the view of the hadith above gives a strong impression that religion discriminates between human beings. In fact, this is contrary to the principle of religion itself, *al-musâwah bain al-nâs*, equality between human beings, which is a logical consequence of the principle of monotheism.³²

Because by nature women's intellect is not differentiated from men's, women's testimony and quality should not always be considered inferior to men's. If a woman has undoubted qualifications of 'intellect', her testimony should not be ignored. Therefore, it is very natural for Ibn Al-Qayyim to state that the testimony of women such as Um Darda and Um Athiyah is stronger than the testimony of a man.

Seeing such a reality, we cannot understand that from the origin of women are destined to always be more stupid, not strong in memory, less accurate in their testimony, and so on. 'Lack of sense' is more of an inevitable impact for

most women as they have to follow the social and cultural systems that limit them to maximize their potential.

Socio-Theological Implications of Hadith on Contemporary Gender Relations

The interpretation of the hadith on women's lack of intellect and religion has formed a framework of thinking and social relations that are deeply rooted in Muslim society, both at the theological level and in the practice of daily life.³³ In contemporary reality, the literal understanding of the Prophet's words that women are "*naqishât 'aql wa dîn*" (lack of intellect and religion) is often used as a normative pretext to limit women's space for movement in various areas of life, such as education, public leadership, legal witness, and religious activities. This ultimately impacts unequal social construction and systematically harms women.

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According to Amina Wadud, the understanding of religious texts, including hadith, must involve two approaches at once: historical contextualization and ethical reading of the universal values of the Qur'an. In this framework, hadith that appears to demean women is not necessarily ignored or rejected,

³² Husein Muhammad, *Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Atas Wacana Agama Dan Gender* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2001), h. 22.

³³ Lalu Rahmat Sugilara, Salsabila Arju, and Yogi Sopian Haris UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta, "Understanding Misogynistic Hadiths

from The Perspective of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement Hermeneutics: Memahami Hadis Misoginis Dalam Perspektif Hermeneutika Gerakan Ganda Fazlur Rahman," *Jurnal Living Hadis* 10, no. 1 (May 27, 2025): 101–21, <https://doi.org/10.14421/LIVINGHADIS.2025.6176>.

but is positioned in the sociological context of 7th-century Arab society which at that time was still dominated by patriarchal social structures. The words of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in the hadith can actually be understood as a form of criticism or even satire on unequal social reality, not as a universal normative statement that applies throughout the ages.³⁴

In the contemporary social realm, the impact of the literal understanding of the hadith is still very felt. Many women still experience structural injustice in the name of religious teachings. In the world of education, for example, the narrative that women lack intellect is often used as an excuse to hinder them from accessing higher education or holding strategic positions. In the legal realm, women's testimony is often considered invalid or worth half that of men without considering individual competence. In family life, this myth reinforces the unequal power relationship between husband and wife, under the pretext that the husband is more "rational" or "wise" because of his higher nature of reason.³⁵

In fact, today's reality shows that women are able to contribute greatly to intellectual, spiritual, and social development. Many women have become academics, scholars, institutional leaders, and religious figures whose credibility is recognized. Their contribution is empirical evidence that "lack of reason and religion" is not nature, but the product of alterable historical interpretations.

The Portrait of Women's Intellectualism in Islamic History as a Counter-Narrative

The discourse about women's "lack of intellect" stemming from a literal interpretation

of the hadith of the Prophet PBUH, if not criticized contextually and historically, will continue to reproduce a narrative subordinate to women. In fact, Islamic history records many female figures who played an important role in the development of science, spirituality, and education of Muslims.³⁶ The discourse about women's "lack of intellect" stemming from a literal interpretation of the hadith of the Prophet PBUH, if not criticized contextually and historically, will continue to reproduce a narrative subordinate to women. In fact, Islamic history records many female figures who played an important role in the development of science, spirituality, and education of Muslims.

One of the most prominent figures in the history of women's intellectuals was Aisha bint Abu Bakr. In addition to being the wife of the Prophet, Aisha is widely known as the most prolific hadith narrator after Abu Hurairah. He narrated more than 2,000 hadiths, including the hadiths of the Prophet's law, creed, and household life. In various matters of fiqh, even the companions such as Abu Hurairah, Umar bin al-Khattab, and Ibn Abbas refer to Aisha. The Prophet's expression, "Take half of your religion from al-Humaira," became an authoritative legitimacy for Aisha's scholarly position as a reference for the ummah.³⁷

In addition to Aisha, another prominent female figure is Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah, a female Sufi from Bashrah who was a pioneer in Islamic spirituality based on divine love (maḥabbah ilāhiyyah). His concept of selfless love for Allah became an important doctrine in classical Sufism and greatly influenced great figures such as Hasan al-Bashri and Al-Ghazali. The existence of Rabi'ah proves that women are not

³⁴ Amina Wadud, "Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam," *Praktyka teoretyczna*, no. 08 (2013): 249–62.

³⁵ Hamim, et.al Ilyas, *Perempuan Tertindas?: Kajian Hadits-Hadits 'Misoginis'* (Yogyakarta: PSW IAIN Yogyakarta-The Ford Foundation, 2003).

³⁶ Hasanatul Jannah, *Ulama Perempuan Madura: Otoritas Dann Relasi Gender*, h. 83.

³⁷ Marhumah, "The Roots of Gender Bias: Misogynist Hadiths in Pesantrens."

only able to understand the spiritual depths of Islam, but also create original ideas in Islamic thought.³⁸

In the field of hadith, history records a number of women as teachers of well-known male scholars. Karimah al-Marwaziyyah, an 11th-century hadith, is the main narrator of Saheeh al-Bukhari who is widely used as a reference by male students. In addition, Zainab bint al-Kamal, Fatimah al-Battayahiyyah, and Aisyah al-Ba'uniyyah are female scholars who have high scientific authority, and are even given the title of musnidah (owner of complete sanad). They are a symbol that women not only play the role of disciples or implementers of teachings, but also as the main producers of knowledge and teachers in the Islamic scientific tradition.³⁹

Women's involvement in educational and social institutions has also been recorded from the beginning. Al-Syifa bint Abdullah was the first woman assigned by the Prophet as a market supervisor in Medina, indicating that women were given authority in the public and economic sectors. Meanwhile, Khadijah bint Khuwailid, the Prophet's first wife, was a successful businessman who supported Islamic da'wah from an economic and moral point of view. Khadijah's example in leadership, courage, and economic independence is a clear example that women have full capacity as leaders and pioneers.

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Deconstructing the Meaning of "Nuqshān al-‘Aql" in a Socio-Historical Context

The hadith's phrase "nuqshān al-‘aql" or "lack of women's intellect" is often used as a theological justification to demean women's intellectual capacity. However, the understanding of this term needs to be re-dismantled through three critical approaches: linguistic analysis of meaning, a review of the social and historical context of the people who hear the hadith, and the dynamics of the social changes that occurred after the arrival of Islam.⁴⁰

Semantically, the term nuqshān (نقصان) in Arabic it means "incompleteness" or "deficiency" in a relative sense, not total absence. This word does not imply that something really does not exist, but rather indicates that an element has not reached a certain completeness or capacity in a particular situation. Therefore, in its use in the hadith, the meaning of this word must be seen carefully and not simplified into a form of judgment on the essence of women.⁴¹

In the context of the hadith that refers to "women's lack of intellect", this term is directly related to the rule of testimony—that is, two women are equal to one man in certain matters, such as financial transactions. It is important to

³⁸ Milda Yanti and Muhammad Bahagia, "Cinta Ilahi (Mahabbah) Sufi Wanita: Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah," *Jurnal Ekshis* 1, no. 2 (October 15, 2023): 47–60, <https://doi.org/10.59548/je.v1i2.77>.

³⁹ Anugrah Eran Batu, "Re-Eksistensi Perempuan Dalam Perwayatan Hadis," *PAPPASANG* 6, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 42–63, <https://doi.org/10.46870/jiat.v6i1.707>.

⁴⁰ Saadah, "Debate on Patriarchal Interpretation of Hadith: An Overview."

⁴¹ Eran Batu, "Re-Eksistensi Perempuan Dalam Perwayatan Hadis."

note that the Prophet Muhammad did not state that women are inherently or essential to have deficiencies in thinking. Rather, it is a form of limitation that is functional in a specific scope, not in all aspects of intellectual life.

This limitation can also be understood through the historical conditions of pre-Islamic Arab society. Few women at that time had literacy skills. This literacy inequality certainly has an impact on women's access to administrative fields, including in the management of business transactions or contracts that require legal understanding and documentation skills. Therefore, this hadith reflects the socio-cultural reality of the time, not an absolute assessment of women's potential.⁴²

The term *nuqshān al-'aql* in the hadith is more accurately understood as a marker of contextual-administrative limitations than essential-biological shortcomings. This confirms that the hadith is not intended to define the intellectual position of women absolutely, but rather to reflect the social conditions and practical needs of a given period. Such an interpretation opens up space for a more equitable hermeneutic approach to religious texts that have been interpreted normatively and gender-biased.

Conclusion

This research shows that the hadith about women as "*naqishat 'aql wa dīn*" (lack of intellect and religion), which has often been used as theological legitimacy to degrade women's intellectuals, is actually incomprehensible literally and ahistorically. With a critical approach to *sanad* and *matan*, as well as contextual-historical analysis and gender hermeneutics, it is evident that the Prophet's words are situational, not universal normative statements. In addition, the historical reality of Islam records the great contribution of women in

the fields of science, spirituality, and social society, which actually becomes a counter-narrative to the growing misogynistic discourse. The hadith, if placed in the socio-cultural context of 7th-century Arabia, is more appropriately interpreted as a form of moral advice and spiritual warning, rather than as an essential condemnation of the female gender. Therefore, the understanding of women's intellectual potential in Islam must be reconstructed fairly and proportionately, in line with the principle of equality taught by the Qur'an and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. This research opens up space for more in-depth follow-up studies, especially in tracing the transformation of misogynistic hadith discourse in various cultural contexts and Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools or *madrasas*. A comparative study between classical and contemporary scholars' interpretations of similar hadiths is also feasible to explore the epistemological dynamics in the Islamic scientific tradition. In addition, research on forgotten female intellectual figures in Islamic history needs to be continuously developed to strengthen the reconstruction of the narrative of equality in Islam. These studies are expected to strengthen the direction of inclusive, egalitarian, and contributory religious diversity to human civilization.

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⁴² Akbar, "Gender Relations in The Hadith 'Women as A Source of Fitnah.'"

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