Islam and the Tradition of Gender: Exploring the Intersection of Religion and Culture in Indonesia

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Abstract

Studies of gender disparity have often viewed religion and culture as only partially shaping the social practices that exasperate this disparity. This article examines the Qur'anic verses and hadiths as factors that contribute to the creation of gender disparity in Indonesian society. Men and women become inequal when beliefs and values that prioritize men are continuously reproduced by religious leaders. This study finds that religion and culture do not function independently; they overlap in creating an ideological power that structures social practices in a manner that subordinates women. Religion and language, similarly, are both ideological forces that not only influence the interactions between men and women, but also create inequality and contestation. Data for this study were collected through limited observations, using an Islamic perspective for comparative analysis. It recommends that subsequent research investigate the contribution of non-Islamic teachings on the dynamic relationship between religion and culture, thereby providing a deeper understanding of gender inequality in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Islamic Text, World View, Gender Inequality, Qur'an and Hadith, Muslim Society.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination in Indonesia's social spaces and practices has created a sexist reality. Society is replete with gender marking, both in language and in social practices. Various terms are used to distinguish between men and women. Take, for example, the terms doktorandus for male scholars and doktoranda for female scholars; wartawan for male journalists and wartawati for female journalists; and pemuda for male adolescents and pemudi for female adolescents. Almost all roads are named after men, and children are often identified based on their patrilineal heritage. In the workplace, women are paid 30 percent less than men (Taniguchi and Tuwo, 2014; Auspurg et al., 2017). Disparity is also evident in their access to economic resources as well as their social recognition. All of these phenomena reflect the particular paradigm and values embraced by Indonesian society, which themselves are products of religion and culture.

Gender studies generally fall into three categories. First are studies that understand gender inequality as being inexorably linked with society's worldviews and values (Freud, 1994; Brickell, 2006; Vespa, 2009; Hopper, 2015); as shown by Hopper, gender constructs are rooted in ideological forces (Hopper, 2015). Second are studies that emphasize the socialization of gender identity (McHale, Crouter and Whiteman, 2003; Leaper and Friedman, 2007; Lucal, 2009; Morita, 2009; Carter, 2014); according to such studies, social context contributes significantly to the creation of gender identities in society (Muttaqin and Ekowarni, 2017). Third are studies that examine the effects of gendered constructs on women's everyday lives; owing to these constructs, women often face significant difficulties (Seguino, 2000; Belle and Doucet, 2003; Mencarini and Sironi, 2012; Trolan, 2013; Hughes et al., 2015; Rahmawati, 2016). Such studies have yet to provide a detailed analysis of religion's contribution to the structuring of gender relations. For fear of controversy, scholars have rarely considered the effects of religion on gender and gendering processes (Musti'ah, 2016; Yasin & Adam, 2017; Sonneveld and Tawfik, 2015; Mayer, 2018; Qibtiyah, 2018).

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Meanwhile, discussions of Islam and gender have generally perceived religion as part of a cultural framework that informs the relationship between men and women. However, in practice, religion does not only influence gender relations; it structures their relationship, creating contestation and inequality. Gender is part of a social reality that structures the power arena, and thus is replete with particular interests (Bourdieu, 1989; Rabinow and Bourdieu, 2018). Unlike existing studies, this article seeks to provide a detailed examination of how ideological forces manifest themselves symbolically in the structuring of male–female relations, using Javanese culture as its example. In other words, this study analyzes how various manifestations of gender inequality in Java are structured by Islam.

This article departs from the argument that gender does not simply manifest itself in society, but is structured within an environment that is replete with meaning and interests. Gender relations are shaped through a cultural process, one that is rooted in cultural values and symbols, and thus evident in various social discourses and practices. Gender is thus made manifest through a discursive process that highlights society's dominant ideology and norms.

METHODOLOGY

This study relies on three primary sources. First, it refers to the Qur'anic verses that are commonly cited during the structuring of male–female relations. In its 30 juz (parts), the Qur'an consists of 114 chapters and 6,236 verses; 140 of these verses mention women. This study relies on the most popular verses, those which are most used to position women in society and thus dominate religious and social discourses. Second are those hadiths that are most commonly referenced by religious scholars and by lay people when describing an ideal social order. Third, it refers to Javanese-language terms and phrases that are commonly used to describe women and to create social order. These terms and phrases are widely recognized, and thus frequently used to proscribe particular activities and prohibit others.

These linguistic expressions were examined through three means. First, each was examined in terms of its structure and its conceptualization of gender. All concepts found within these verses, hadiths, and phrases were examined semantically. Second, connections between different Qur'anic verses were examined to identify potential correlation; similarly, a comparative approach was used to identify meanings and constructs that were shared between different hadiths and between different phrases. Third, the verses, hadiths, and phrases were examined to identify overlapping meanings, and thus tease out potential causal relationships and influences. This enabled the researchers to discover a link between the Qur'anic verses and the hadiths, wherein the former was operationalized through the latter. Meanwhile, although common Javanese-language phrases reflected concepts similar to those found in the Qur'an and hadiths, influences from other religions—particularly Hinduism, which was Java's dominant religion before the introduction of Islam—were also evident.

All of these elements and their influence on social practices were analyzed by examining the relationship between them and their shared significance. This also required consideration of the dominant social context. As such, analysis was conducted at two levels. At the first level, links between texts were analyzed to obtain an understanding of the research object. The results of this analysis were presented using the restatement technique. Second, interpretive analysis was conducted to understand the construction of gender through these texts within a specific social context. As such, their association and logic could be ascertained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Inequality within Society

The concept of gender is used to describe the social construction of behavioral norms (Abdullah, 2003; Addis et al., 2015). This concept enables the inequality and subjugation experienced by women to be understood. Women often experience systematic oppression, including wage discrimination and sexual harassment, at the hands of individuals, groups, and institutions (Leman & Tenenbaum, 2013; Reeves, 2019). This can most commonly be attributed to the prevalent ideology, i.e. the patriarchy (Abdullah, 2001; Puspitasari, 2013; Brickell, 2005). Under this patriarchal ideology, society is divided into two groups: men, who are identified as dominant and superior, and women, who are identified as weaker and expected to prioritize domestic affairs (Reeves,

2019). Under this ideology, women are positioned as objects, and thus experience injustice and inequality. This is exacerbated by stereotypes created within the media (Puspitasari, 2013).

Through language, the patriarchal ideology—that which psychoanalysts identify as "the law of father" is symbolically constructed in a manner that creates and exacerbates gender inequality. It is best understood through a social redistribution perspective, wherein the gendered division of labor is understood as having been created by the capitalist economy. Patriarchal culture creates social injustice through its hierarchal structuring of society, wherein women and the feminine are marginalized. This inequality is ultimately internalized by individuals and informs their social interactions, as well as government policies and laws; this can be seen, for example, in Indonesia's Law against Pornography and Pornoaction, which exhibits a patriarchal bias. The patriarchal regime subordinates and marginalizes women, creating domestic violence, stereotyping, and exploitation, as well as promoting the socio-cultural exclusion of women (Suraya, 2015).

All individuals embody a multitude of identities: ethnic, religious, national, etc. (Myhill, 2015; Zhang et al., 2019). Amongst the most fundamental is gender, the perception of being male or female. The term gender, as well as the associated concept of gender roles (the actions, attributes, and characteristics that are culturally and socially associated with masculinity and femininity), was first introduced in the medical literature in the 1950s, when it was investigated within the context of sexual development and gender dysphoria (Hamidi & Nippoldt, 2019:39). The sense of being male or female strongly informs how individuals perceive themselves, and provides an important foundation for individuals' interactions with others (Steensma et al., 2013; Hamidi & Nippoldt, 2019).

Stoller defines gender identity as one's sense of being male or female. Most males identify as men, while most females identify as women, thereby reflecting their genitalia at birth. As such, gender identity has often been conceptualized dichotomically, with men being opposed to women (Joseph et al., 2007:370). Gender identity is thus an important element of individual identity, as well as a regulator of social behavior and interactions. It develops through a multidimensional process involving various factors, including one's sense of self.

However, for transgender individuals, gender identity does not conform with genitalia at birth. As such, the term gender expression has become used to describe the external manifestation of gender, including but not limited to names, pronouns, clothing, hairstyles, behaviors, and physical characteristics. Meanwhile, the term sexual orientation has been used to refer to individuals' physical and emotional interest in others. None of these terms are binary; in other words, they recognize more than male and female (Korpaisarn et al., 2019). In many cases, gender identity has been examined using a psychological approach, as seen in the study of sub-arctic Russian adolescents' gender identities conducted by Flotskaya et al. (2018).

Gender inequality is commonly defined as the disparities experienced by men and women in the fields of education, health, and decision-making, as well as in wages (Shen et al., 2016; Looze et al., 2018). Lorber (2010) thus conceptualizes gender inequality as stemming from gendered social structures, wherein men and women are treated differently and provided with different opportunities. Many studies have examined gender inequality within the context of traditional gender norms, particularly the values they embody (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Schwartz & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Branisa et al,. (2012) have shown that gender inequality is caused by formal and informal institutions' production and reproduction of distinct gender roles. These have a deleterious effect on society, including public health and economic growth.

While recognizing the deleterious effect of gender inequality, it is necessary to ask whether it is a problem or a product of a problem. Gender inequality is not inherently related to sex, but rather a social matter. Nonetheless, women are most commonly identified as the victims of gender inequality, and many studies have examined its complex consequences (Bhagavatheeswaran et al., 2016; Looze et al., 2018; Singh & Mukherjee, 2018; Thelwal et al., 2019). Chang et al. (2018) have found that East Asian women are at greater risk of suicide owing to their lower social status. Women have limited access to education and economic opportunities, a fact that limits their ability to grow and develop. Owing to their lower social status, women are more likely to experience violence and poverty, and are less capable of accessing resources.

Owing to the positive association between education and economic resources, unequal access to education results in unequal access to economic opportunities. Wegren (2017) identified gender inequality in the informal economy of rural Russia, attributing it to the dominant gender roles in that society. The domestication of women by associating them with domestic labor negatively affects their professional development, as entrepreneurial activities are more commonly undertaken by men. Despite institutional reform within the economic sector, culture and tradition continue to create gender inequality. In many societies, women are expected to handle household chores and raise children, while men are tasked with protecting the family and providing economic support (Lorber, 2010: 5).

The Construction of Women's Social Reality within Islam

In Islam, women's social reality is built upon two foundations: the Qur'an and the hadiths. The words 'woman' and 'women'—almost always paired with the words 'man' and 'men'—are found in 140 Qur'anic verses, which are distributed amongst 42 of the holy book's 114 chapters. Mentions of women are most prominent in Surah An-Nisa (meaning: 'The Women'), where it is found in 23 verses. In these verses, women are understood through several perspectives.

First, women are identified as having been created after and from men. This can be seen, for example, in Surah An-Nisa 1 (QS 4:1), which reads: "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer." Discussion of humanity's creation focuses mainly on Adam, as seen in Surah Al-Baqarah 30–31 (QS 2:30–31) and Surah Ali-Imran (QS 3:59). Eve, meanwhile, is described as having been created from Adam (QS 39:6). This is often used to justify the positioning of women as the secondary sex, as the second class of society.

Second, women (and children) are perceived as weak beings that require protection (QS 4: 75 and 127). Although in many things, such as worship, men and women are equals, Surah Baqarah (QS 2: 228) states: "…d due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise." This is commonly identified as showing men's superiority over women. Surah An-Nisa also explicitly states that " Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other…" (QS 4: 34). This has frequently been understood as justifying inequality and disparate power relations in social practices.

Third, women are positioned as objects. As stated in Surah Ali Imran: "Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return." (QS 3: 14). Women are equated with children, with possessions, with cattle, and with tilled land, all of which contribute to piety and devotion to God. Indeed, in one hadith, the Prophet Muhammad stated: "The world is enjoyment and the best enjoyment in the world is a righteous wife" (HR. Muslim No. 1467). The objectification of women thus has a basis in the Qur'an, which is commonly referenced in public discourses and social practices.

Fourth, women are perceived as negative, as having a deleterious effect on men. This can be seen, for instance, in the statement that touching women makes one impure (QS 5: 6) and in the identification of women as witches (QS 113: 4). Surah Al Falaq (QS 133:4) states: "… And from the evil (of women) of the blowers in knots". These verses have often been used to justify the subjugation of women as God's will, and women's activities being threatening to men. The phrase "a woman's voice is a man's aurat", meanwhile, suggests that a woman's voice can create sexual desire, and thus women may not speak to any man except her husband or her muhrim (unmarriageable kin). Such views are often expressed in everyday discourses that blame women for society's ills and failings.

Qur'anic verses such as these have been interpreted in a manner that justifies the subordination of women. Surah An-Nisa, which is widely referenced by Muslims, identifies the first woman as having been created from the rib-bone of the first man (QS 4:1). This is also referenced in Surah Al-Baqarah (QS 2:30–31) and Surah Ali-Imran (QS 3:59), which state that Adam was created from the earth (and thus distinguishes him from Eve).

Hadiths are referenced to support such interpretations and socialize patriarchal values. Hadiths that emphasize male leadership, for instance, are used to reinforce Verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa (QS 4: 34).

Fiqh, often understood as Islamic jurisprudence, is based on human interpretation and thus imbued with a patriarchal spirit that limits efforts to achieve equality and social justice (Mir-Hosseini, 2006: 633). Women are confined by texts that firmly distinguish between men and women. Their reality is consistently influenced by patriarchal readings and interpretations of the sacred texts that are referenced when creating normative gender roles. Two commonly referenced resources are the Qur'an and hadiths, which are continuously and systematically reproduced and disseminated by religious leaders, missionaries, and institutions. These religious texts are consulted not only by religious scholars, but also by societal and cultural leaders, who use them to justify social and cultural codes of conduct as well as gender relations.

The following section examines how hadiths have been used to support particular interpretations of the Qur'an and thereby justify gender inequality in Muslim societies such as Indonesia.

Hadiths and their Construction of Gender Inequality

The hadiths, the reported sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, are the second-most important references in Islamic law (after the Qur'an). They provide guidelines and good examples (uswatun hasanah) that should be followed by all Muslims, in all aspects of their everyday lives and in dealing with all matters. In their content, the hadiths echo the teachings of the Qur'an. As such, their identification and positioning of women exists within the same framework as the Qur'an. Women and men are not positioned as equals, and because men are leaders their instructions must be followed by women.

Within the hadiths, there are three tendencies. First, there are hadiths that define and position women. In doing so, women are made the second sex, identified as subordinate to men. This can be seen in several hadiths: (1) the first woman was created from the rib-bone of a man; (2) women are the majority in Hell, they often neglect their husbands, forget their husbands' good deeds, and deficient in religious knowledge and rational thought; (3) women can cause impurity, as with dogs and donkeys; (4) women are hunted by demons if they leave the house; (5) women are bringers of misfortune; and (6) women as fitna (trials, temptation). Such ideas are found in hadiths that have been reported by Abu Hurairah, Abu Sa'id Al-Kudri, and Bukhari (Table 1).

Table 1. Hadiths that Subordinate Women

NO	HADITH	SOURCE	CODE
1	"Treat women nicely, for a women is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper portion, so, if you should try to straighten it, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So treat women nicely."	Abu Hurairah RA	Women were created from a rib
2	"The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went out to the musalla (prayer place) on the day of Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Fitr. He passed by the women and said, 'O women! Give charity, for I have seen that you form the majority of the people of Hell.' They asked, 'Why is that, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religious commitment than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you.' The women asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, what is deficient in our intelligence and religious commitment?' He said, 'Is not the testimony of two women equal to the testimony of one man?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Is it not true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?' The women said, 'Yes.' He said, 'This is the deficiency in her religious commitment.'"	Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri	Women are the majority of the people of Hell, as they frequently curse and act ungratefully towards their husbands. They are seen as deficient in intelligence and religious belief.
3	The Prophet (saw) said: "The prayer is severed by a woman, a dog and a donkey."	Abu Hurairah RA	Women are equivalent to dogs and donkeys.
4	Women are *aurat*. If they leave the house, they pursued by demons.	at-Thabrani	Women are temptations and pursued by demons upon leaving the house.

| 5 | If there is bad luck in anything, it is in houses, women and horses. | Abdullah bin Amr | Women bring misfortune |
| 6 | "I have not left behind me any fitnah (temptation) more harmful to men than women." | HR. Bukhari: 5096 and Muslim: 2740 | Women are fitna for men. |

Second are the hadiths that regulate women's behavior, often in a manner that benefits men. These hadiths create a specific concept of "good womanhood", one to which women must aspire. The ability to nurse children, for instance, is considered a measure of womanhood. Some hadiths state that those women who enter heaven are those who have many children and who seek the blessings of their husbands. Good women are those who are pleasing to the eye and who obey their husbands; this is usually used to require women to look beautiful for their husbands. Meanwhile, it is narrated that women who reject their husbands' sexual advances will be punished by angels; angels are thus seen as partial towards men. These hadiths provide a religious basis for prioritizing men and subjugating women, as seen in the table below (Table 2).

Tabel 2. Hadiths that are Partial to Men

NO.	HADITH	SOURCE	CODE
1	"While I was sleeping two men (Angels) came to me, held my upper arms, and took me to a rocky mountain. They said, 'Climb.'I said, I am unable to climb, they said, we will make it easy for you. So I ascended until I reached a high place in the mountain. I heard fierce cries and enquired what those cries were? They answered, that is the loud cry of the people of the fire… We moved on until I saw women with snakes biting their breasts. I asked 'What is the matter with these?' They answered, these are the women who deprive their children of their breast milk…"	HR. Ibnu Hibban	Punishment for women who refuse to breastfeed their children
2	*Let me tell you, those wives who enter Paradise are full of love, bear many children, and always return to their husbands. If their husbands are angry, they come and place their hands on his and say, "I cannot sleep without your blessing".*	HR. An-Nasai	Heaven is for women who service their husbands
3	"If a man Invites his wife to sleep with him and she refuses to come to him, then the angels send their curses on her till morning."	H.R. Bukhari and Muslim	Punishment for women who refuse sexual intercourse with their husbands
4	"It was said to the Messenger of Allah: 'Which woman is best?' He said: 'The one who makes him happy when he looks at her, obeys him when he commands her, and she does not go against his wishes with regard to herself nor her wealth.'"	Abu Hurairah/ HR. Ahmad	Good women are those who please their husbands and obey them
5	The Prophet (saw) said: "When her husband is present, no woman should fast any day apart from the month of Ramadan without his permission."	Abu Hurairah	Women must always act with their husbands' permission.
6	'Never will succeed such a nation as makes a woman their ruler'	Bukhari, Ahmad, Tirmidzi	Prohibition against women becoming leaders.

Third, those hadiths that limit the rights of women. Table 2 also shows that the rights of women are limited by several hadiths: (1) the hadith that states that women must fast only with their husbands' permission; as such, they are not free to worship; (b) the hadith that deals with women's role in marriage, with a woman's silence indicating her consent and willingness to marry; (c) the hadith that limit women's ability to leave the house, requiring them to receive their husbands' permission and be accompanied by a mahram; and (d) the hadith that prohibit women from becoming leaders. Such hadiths limit women's rights, unilaterally positioning them within confined spaces.

The hadiths in Table 1 and 2 show that women are perceived not as individuals who exist independently of men, but as objects who require men's permission or who must act to please men. Women may not make decisions, even regarding their own fates. They experience legal objectification, with scriptural references being chosen, read, and interpreted unilaterally to establish codes of conduct. In other words, the hadiths—as with the Qur'an—is used as a basis for making decisions and policies that are (directly or indirectly) detrimental to women. Given that Islam is a major component of Indonesian culture, as 87 percent of the population is Muslim, such beliefs significantly influence the relationships between men and women in Indonesian society.

Islamic Culture and Gender: Women in Java

The Javanese people often use phrases and terms that convey specific meanings and assert particular paradigms. This includes phrases and terms that deal with women and their position in society. Four terms are often used

to identify women while simultaneously subordinating them. First, it is the term *wadon*, which denotes that women are *kawula* (ordinary people) and the *abdi* (servants) of men. Second is the term *wanita*, which is frequently identified as an abbreviation of the Javanese words *wani* (willing) and *ditata* (to be ordered). Women are thus framed as willing to accept others' orders and instructions. Third is the term *estri*, from the root *estren*, which means 'support' or 'motor'; it thus implies that women must support their husbands behind the scenes. Fourth is the term *putri* (*putus tri perkawis*/three affairs), which indicates that women are obligated to act simultaneously as *wadon, wanita*, and *estri* (Sulistyawati, 2018).

Within the household, while acting as *garwa* (wives/companions), women are expected to *macak* (beautify themselves), *manak* (bear, feed, nurture, and educate children), and *masak* (cook). In Javanese, women are often said to exist in three areas: the *dapur* (kitchen), *sumur* (well), and *kasur* (bed). The ability to control women is perceived as symbolizing masculinity; women are asked to be obeisant and dependent on their husbands.

The positioning of women as subordinate to men can be seen in their identification as requiring four qualities: *setya* (devotion), *bekti* (service), *mituhu* (obeisance), and *mitayani* (trustworthiness). All of these qualities benefit men. From childhood, Javanese women are taught to obey men; to handle domestic chores such as cleaning, washing, and cooking; to stay at home; and to remain prim and proper. Women are conceptualized as feminine, as caring, and as tender, and where they behave differently, they are perceived as acting inappropriately. After marriage, women are expected to embody three specific values: *gemi* (thriftiness), *wedi* (fear), and *gumati* (love). They may not exceed their husbands, and indeed are expected to fear them. In the traditional inheritance scheme, or *sepikul saghendongan*, men receive twice as much as women (*sepikul* versus *seghendhongan*).

In Javanese culture, a "good" woman is a good wife, a good mother, and a good daughter (i.e. devoted to her father and mother). A good wife is one who obeys her husband, as seen in the phrase "*Swarga nunut neraka katut*" (following to Heaven, following to Hell). In other words, a woman's fate is determined by her husband's good and bad deeds. Women are *kanca wingking* (kitchen friends), being relegated to the domestic sphere. Owing to this construct, men and women receive different treatment and different educations.

Various Javanese traditions support the continued subjugation of women. Women, be they daughters, wives, or mothers, are understood as subordinate to men. During childhood, daughters receive smaller shares of food than sons, while their schooling is given less emphasis. The division of household chores is likewise gendered. Male children are often not expected to help around the household, which are handled by female children.

When women become wives and mothers, they are similarly powerless, as men are defined and idealized as breadwinners. Men are expected to provide their families with their everyday needs, as well as protect them from outside threats. Where economic pressures drive women to work outside the home, they are still expected to handle domestic chores and childrearing activities. Women are perceived as more detailed and patient, and thus better able to handle children. Women are thus given multiple burdens: they must be wives to their husbands, mothers to their children, and daughters to their parents (fathers). Such positioning is justified with references to Islam, Java's majority religion. Islamic law, which regulates the relationships between men and women, are continuously reproduced through misogynistic readings and interpretations of the Qur'an and the hadiths.

CONCLUSION

Gender inequality, which is rooted in the subordination of women, has become a common and unquestioned part of society. This study has shown that the subordination of women has a solid and deep-rooted framework, one that built upon the dual foundation of religion and (local) culture. The two main sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and the hadiths, are often reproduced by fiqh experts to affirm male superiority while erasing the gender equality that permeates the Qur'an. Narratives of Javanese womanhood are segregarian, as marked by linguistic expressions that reflect the inequality in Javanese society.

The symbiosis of Islam and Javanese culture has provided a different perspective for understanding the social subordination of women, as well as evidenced that gender inequality does not develop linearly. This study has shown that inequality and disparity is a dependent variable, one that is causally related to the independent variables of religion and culture. The relationship between religion and gender, as well as the relationship

between culture and gender, can only be understood partially when examined separately. This study has shown that religion and culture are integrally linked, and thus contribute significantly to the configuration of male–female relations in Indonesia. Gender roles and relations are not only informed by religious values, but also by cultural values (which are subsequently justified legitimized through religious discourses). Such a discursive construction of gender is biased in favor of men.

It must be recognized that this study, conducted through limited observation of a Muslim-majority society, cannot provide a general understanding of how religion structures the relationships between men and women. It is therefore necessary to conduct a comprehensive and comparative investigation into how gender relations are constructed as well as how social acknowledgement is contested. The relationship between men and women is dynamic, constructed with a reference system that is contextualized in different spaces and times.

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