Students' Perceptions of Gender Discrimination in Indonesia: A Study at Muhammadiyah University

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality is still an important and strategic issue to discuss in Indonesia. This study aims to describe the gender role attitudes of students in the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah Higher Education (PTMA) environment because PTMA students are agents of change and are tasked with spreading the Muhammadiyah Islamic preaching committed to gender equality and justice. The research method used quantitative with respondents in this study totaling 200 students in various PTMA, 136 women and 64 men. The instruments used in this study were constructed by the researcher and consisted of five dimensions: religion, marriage and family, social work, work, and education. The results of this study indicate that in general, the gender role attitudes of students in the PTMA environment are more egalitarian than traditional gender roles, meaning that they already have a gender role perspective based on equality. However, there is still a gender bias, such as the view of the same potential between women and men in education; religious authority (ulama) towards women is not the same as men; and opportunities for public leadership for women. The implications of the findings of this study will be discussed further.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equality in Indonesia is still an important and strategic issue to be discussed, considering that the gender equality index data released by the UNDP, a body that oversees development programs at the UN, explains that Indonesia is in the third lowest ranking in ASEAN and is ranked 103rd out of 162 countries.

The issue of gender equality cannot be separated from talking about gender role attitudes themselves. Gender role attitudes are interpreted as expectations and beliefs about appropriate roles for men and women, including boys and girls, both in the private and public spheres (Lomotey and Chachu, 2020). Gender role attitudes are conceptualized as a continuum variable that moves from traditional gender role attitudes to egalitarian or also called non-traditional gender role attitudes (Antić and Radačić, 2020). According to traditional gender role views, women should behave in a nurturing, nurturing manner, while men should be the head of the household and should provide financial support for the family. Non-traditional, or what is often called egalitarian, views of gender roles suggest an alternative view (Zambare *et al.*, 2021). This view positions that individual behavior should not be determined solely by gender and that there should be more egalitarian relationships between men and women. Individuals should have the right to choose the roles they wish to occupy and the extent to which those roles relate to their gender (Hung and Bayrak, 2022).

These views of traditional and non-traditional gender roles are attached to individuals in at least two ways; exposure-based, namely through education, socialization, parental ideology, and marital status, and interest-based where individuals gain an understanding of the benefits of a particular gender ideology for themselves. One of the roots of such gender role attitudes may lie in the interpretation of religious teachings (Hechavarría *et al.*, 2024). Religion as a consistent predictor of a person's gender ideology, is related to gender ideology both based on interests and exposure. Religious teachings are studied both formally and informally (Mustofa, Karya and Halim, 2021).

Several studies have explained the influence of different variables on gender role attitudes among adolescents and young adults. For example, studies note that attitudes toward gender roles vary between male and female youth. Several other studies also show the influence of age on views of gender attitudes (Yang, 2023). Studies by Japaridze et al (2013) and Shteiwi (2015) found that youth living in cities showed more egalitarian attitudes compared to youth living in rural and rural areas (Beltrán and Creely, 2018).

Many modern societies are trying to move away from traditional gender ideas and are moving towards providing equal opportunities for men and women (Beltrán and Creely, 2018). Indonesia is a country that in its various public policies shows efforts to foster equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. This was demonstrated by Indonesia in 1984 ratifying CEDAW*(The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) which was ratified by the UN* in 1979. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah, as one of the largest religious-based social organizations, also supports the values of equality and justice in gender roles. Even since its early days, Muhammadiyah has had no problems regarding gender inequality (Yang, 2023).

One clear proof that Muhammadiyah adheres to the principles of justice and gender equality is the founding of 'Aisyiya Muhammadiyah women's organization, only 5 years after the

founding of Muhammadiyah itself. The existence of 'Aisyiyah does not mean separating or marginalizing women from Muhammadiyah, but simply providing wider space for Muhammadiyah women to organize their activities that are more specific to women. Through educational channels, Muhammadiyah, with 170 universities throughout Indonesia and approximately 569 thousand students, is also trying to build egalitarian gender attitudes, which is demonstrated by the applicable curriculum. For example, in formal subjects at Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah universities, there is the Al-Islam course (some use the name Muamalah course) which is a course that discusses the relations between women and men. The young generation, represented by students, are leaders of change in society who carry a very strategic role. Therefore, it is important to see how their gender role attitudes influence their social education. This study will be limited to looking at the gender role attitudes of students in the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah Universities.

2. METHODS

Materials and methods should make readers be able to reproduce the experiment. Provide The population of participants is students at Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah Universities (PTMA) who are at least in their fourth semester (Sugiyono, 2017). It is assumed that starting in the fourth semester, students have received exposure to the al-Islam or Muamalah course, the subject of which is about relationships within the family. In this study, research respondents totaled 200 students, consisting of 136 women and 64 men, from several PTMAs, including Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra, Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, Muhammadiyah University of Sorong-Papua and others.

Table 1. *Data processed from survey results on selected respondents (data from university)*

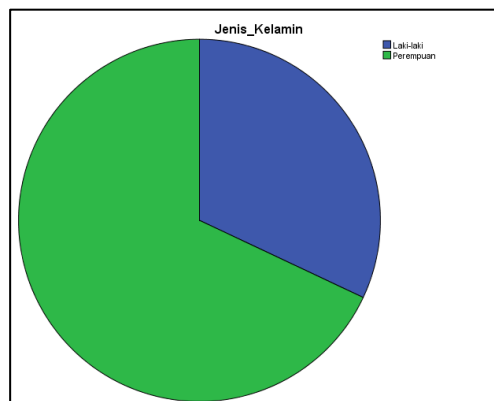| No	University	Amount
1	STKIP Muhammadiyah Bogor	3
2	Aisyiyah University, Yogyakarta	11
3	Bogor Muhammadiyah University	1
4	Muhammadiyah University Jakarta	14
5	Muhammadiyah University of Makassar	19
6	Muhammadiyah University of Sorong	2
7	Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra	144
8	Sorong Muhammadiyah University of Education	6
Total number		200

Figure 2. *Gender data (data processed from survey results on selected respondents)*

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This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey method, with a survey instrument developed by the researcher. The instrument measures five dimensions, namely the religious dimension, the marriage and family dimension, the social role dimension, the work dimension, and the education dimension. These five dimensions are assumed to be able to identify a person's gender role attitudes. Gender role attitudes are also described on a continuum, from traditional role attitudes to egalitarian gender role attitudes. A person is considered to show egalitarian gender role attitudes if on the measurement items that describe their egalitarian gender role attitudes, more people agree and strongly agree, and someone is considered to show traditional gender role attitudes if on the measurement items that describe their traditional gender role attitudes, More people agreed and strongly agreed (Sugiyono, 2016).

The religious dimension is a dimension that represents views or attitudes regarding religious rights for women and men. The items in this dimension are; women must be able to participate fully with men in all worship and prayer activities; women and men should be seen as equal spiritually and religiously; the exposure of women's private parts is a source of harassment against women; The religious views of male clerics are more trustworthy than the views of female clerics. The marriage and family dimension represents a person's attitude or view regarding the rights and obligations as well as the roles of women and men in the husband-wife relationship. Items in this dimension include: in modern economic conditions with women working outside the home, men have to share household tasks such as washing dishes and washing clothes, etc.; men should discuss with their wives when making important decisions; In Islam, husbands are allowed to beat their wives to teach their wives a lesson/education. The social role dimension is a view of the role and involvement of women and men in social work. This dimension is represented by the items: leadership in a society should only be given to men; women's opinions are as important as men's opinions in policy making in society; women should not be given responsibilities outside of the home.

Another dimension is the work dimension which explains the position of women in the world of work. Items in this dimension include: Women should be allowed to occupy appropriate positions in companies and all professions along with men; There should be a strict system in job appointments and promotions regardless of gender in society. The education dimension represents views about women's rights to access education. Among the items that represent this dimension are: in the family, boys should be encouraged to get a higher education than girls; being a wife who takes care of household work does not require high education; women should be allowed to take full advantage of educational and professional opportunities.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1.   Perceptions of the Religious Dimension

On items describing the equality of men and women in religiosity, spirituality and religious rights, the majority of respondents (78-84%) showed an egalitarian attitude. Meanwhile, in the statement explaining equality in religious organizations (ulama), 60% of respondents showed an egalitarian attitude, but the other 40% still had a traditional attitude. 80% of the total number of respondents agreed that exposing women's private parts was a source of harassment against women. This shows that the view of equality in religion is still a domestic issue and has not been widely realized in the public sphere. However, harassment of women that occurs in public spaces

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does not necessarily occur because of women but can be due to opportunity, social conditions, or even the perspective of men who look down on those who reveal their private parts (Lahiri-Dutt, Amor and Perks, 2021).

3.2. Perceptions of Marital and Family Dimensions

In this dimension, the majority of respondents showed an egalitarian attitude regarding items that explained the equality of husband-wife relationships, important decision making and the division of roles in the household. However, more respondents (63%) do not agree that women have the same freedom as men to propose to someone. 58% of them agree that daughters are obliged to follow the decision of their guardian/father in determining their future husband.

3.3. Perceptions of the Dimensions of Social Action

In the dimension of social action, 94% of respondents agreed that women's opinions are as important as men's opinions in policy-making in society. 43% agree that leadership in a society should only be given to men. However, 66% of respondents agreed with the statement that women should not be given responsibilities outside of the home. This means that there is a bias in views regarding the rights and obligations of women outside of domestic matters.

3.4. Perceptions of Job Dimensions

In the work dimension, the majority of respondents showed egalitarian gender attitudes, indicated by 83%. Women should be allowed to occupy appropriate positions in companies and all professions along with men. Respondents also agreed that women should be considered colleagues by men. On the other hand, they do not agree that women should only prioritize their obligations in caring for children and taking care of the house, rather than having the desire to pursue a career in the professional and business fields. Thus, views on employment issues have progressed very well because everyone states that both men and women have the right to determine work according to their capacities and desires.

The interesting thing about this dimension is that 80% of respondents agreed with the statement that women find it difficult to make important decisions because women are more dominated by feelings than logic. Although this statement does not explain its implications in the world of work, this attitude shows that there is still a bias in viewing women's competence, especially in work fields that require more logical than effective thinking.

3.5. Perceptions of Educational Dimensions

With the statement "Women should be allowed to take full advantage of educational and professional opportunities", as many as 96.5% of respondents agreed. 77% do not agree with the view that being a wife who takes care of household work does not require higher education. This means that the majority of respondents agree that men and women both need education and are given equal access to education. However, regarding the attitude that states that men's potential is the same as women's potential, 66% of respondents stated that they did not agree with this attitude. Thus, views on women's learning potential still tend to be biased.

It needs to be explained that individuals with a tendency towards traditional attitudes do not necessarily have traditional views in all aspects because they may also agree with other items that have an egalitarian view.

Table 2. *Number of distributions (n) for each item (data processed from survey results on selected respondents)*

Dimensions	no	Statement	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)
Religion	1	Women must be able to fully participate with men in all worship and prayer activities.	44	112	40	4
	2	Women and men should be seen as equal spiritually and religiously.	64	104	27	5
	3	The exposure of women's private parts is a source of harassment against women.	89	70	29	12
	4	The religious views of male clerics are more trustworthy than the views of female clerics.	16	64	105	15
Marriage and Family	5	In marriage, a woman's consent should be as important as a man's consent.	64	91	40	5
	6	The right to divorce should be given to both parties, both husband and wife.	56	116	18	10
	7	Women should have the same freedom as men to propose to someone.	14	60	108	18
	8	In modern economic conditions with women working outside the home, men have to share household tasks such as washing dishes and washing clothes, etc.	58	97	33	12
	9	Men should discuss with their wives when making important decisions.	91	104	2	3
	10	Girls are obliged to follow the decision of their guardian/father in determining their future husband.	34	82	76	8
	11	In Islam, husbands are allowed to beat their wives to teach their wives a lesson/education.	9	22	94	75
Social activities	12	Leadership in a society should only be given to men.	26	61	100	13
	13	Women should not be given responsibilities outside of the home.	30	102	61	7
	14	Women's opinions are as important as men's opinions in policy-making in society	62	126	10	2
Work	15	There should be a strict system of job appointments and promotions regardless of gender in society.	63	115	21	1
	16	Women should be allowed to occupy proper positions in companies and all professions alongside men.	49	117	29	5
	17	Women should only prioritize their obligations in caring for children and taking care of the house, rather than having the desire to pursue a career in the professional and business fields.	17	33	112	38
	18	Women should be considered colleagues by men.	20	125	46	9
	19	Women find it difficult to make important decisions because women are more dominated by feelings than logic	44	116	35	5

Table 3 continued…

Education	20	In the family, boys should be encouraged to get a higher education than girls.	31	58	80	31
	21	Women should be allowed to take full advantage of educational and professional opportunities.	77	116	6	1
	22	Being a wife who takes care of household work does not require a high education	12	34	92	62
	23	A woman's thinking ability is as potential as a man's	20	48	105	27

3.6.   Analysis of Perceptions of Gender Role Attitudes

The findings of this study show that in general, the gender role attitudes of students in the PTMA environment are more towards egalitarian/non-traditional gender roles, which means they already have a gender role perspective that is based on equality. However, several things still appear to have a bias in gender views and are homework for the PTMA curriculum, namely: views on the equal potential of women and men in education; religious authority (ulama) for women is not the same as for men; as well as public leadership opportunities for women .

This result is in line with a previous study conducted by Fajri et al (2021) which stated that students had views that tended to be egalitarian, and a small portion still held traditional views (Grunow, Begall and Buchler, 2018). Also, as revealed in the Tallichet and Willits (1986) study, individuals with higher educational status tend to have non-traditional gender role attitudes. In the Indonesian context, these results are also in line with what was shown in Harida's (2015) research which noted that students in the Islamic Higher Education (PTAI) environment in Sumatra had sufficient understanding and acceptance of gender equality (Chan *et al.*, 2021).

In detail, this research can be seen from the five dimensions that have been studied. First, in terms of religion, it states that participation in worship is a shared right for men and women (Falavigna *et al.*, 2022). However, violations of Sharia by women are the cause of harassment against women. Harassment of women is part of a violation of the Sharia which of course can be committed by both women and men for various reasons and is not solely the woman's fault (Cui *et al.*, 2021). Second, in terms of marriage and family, awareness of equality or egalitarianism is quite high (Busby *et al.*, 2020). This means that marriage and family issues are shared rights and responsibilities that cannot be imposed on just one party. However, what is important to note is in terms of determining partners. Women are still placed passively in choosing and determining partners (Pandang *et al.*, 2022). This passive attitude can be seen from the freedom of choice which is still largely determined by guardians or parents and also the freedom to propose or choose a partner (Kim *et al.*, 2020). This passive attitude can have a bad impact on women if the choices they receive are not what they want or even coercion occurs. For this reason, if there is awareness that family is a shared right and responsibility then it should start from having equal rights in making choices (Sindermann *et al.*, 2020).

Third, Attitudes towards social roles for men and women show positive things where both have the same opportunities in public spaces. However, this shows that the majority consider women's leadership to be unequal to that of men. The position of women who are considered weak in leading makes the majority of both men and women reluctant to give leadership mandates to women (Kalogeraki and Georgakakis, 2022). When it is described that the majority agree to hear women's opinions, it means that women will indeed be heard when expressing opinions but

not when making decisions. Fourth, in the work dimension, equality or egalitarian attitudes appear to be dominant among all respondents (Deng *et al.*, 2021). This means that work is a right that anyone can get regardless of gender and just look at their competence. However, there is an interesting note that it is assumed that women have a lower emotional level than men and are therefore considered to be incompetent in making decisions. This could be because, in the subconscious mind, people think that women are no better than men at using logic. A wrong awareness and wrong impact too (Battaglia *et al.*, 2020). And fifth, related to the educational dimension, an egalitarian attitude can be seen when it no longer differentiates the right to obtain education from the family (Khan *et al.*, 2018). This is also driven by the awareness that the potential of men and women is the same. However, what should be noted is that homework is considered not to require higher education. In other words, housework is lowly work and women who are highly educated but only take care of household work are people who waste their higher education (Saputra *et al.*, 2020). Of course, this is a bias in the issue of gender equality. This is because household work still requires a high level of education and being a housewife is also not a low choice for women.

CONCLUSION

Achieving gender equality requires changes in socialization practices in all aspects, including educational aspects, through educational institutions and especially higher education. From the results of this research, we can see that universities need to take approaches that try to reproduce an unbiased social structure. Apart from that, this study also suggests mainstreaming gender equality in higher education environments, by training academics at universities to implement it during the education process. Teaching staff at universities can play a major role in changing the traditional gender roles of their students through the concept of gender identification because teaching staff have the authoritative power to do that.

One way to implement this policy is as recommended by Yang (2016) by establishing a Gender Equality Education Committee which is tasked with designing regulations, policies and annual projects related to gender equality education and promoting research, curriculum development, teaching about gender equality education and other issues. related issues. In various literature, it is said that high-level political support from executives in higher education is very important to successfully achieve the goal of gender mainstreaming.

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