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Nurun Najwah

Irwan Abdullah

Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy

Ahmad Baidowi

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By Nurun Najwah[1], Irwan Abdullah[2], Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy[3], Ahmad Baidowi[4]

Abstract

Discourses regarding women as imams became widespread after Amina Wadud led communal Friday prayers in 2005. Academics have predominantly responded by analyzing religious doctrine and its exegesis, ignoring the fact that women's ability to lead worship is strongly influenced by their specific socio-cultural contexts and dynamics. This article will investigate how religious texts structure and are structured by the socio-cultural context of Indonesia. In this study, data were collected by identifying hadiths of leadership, then analyzing them using content analysis. It was found that religious doctrines tend to emphasize the primacy of men (as leaders) while underscoring the (physical, intellectual, and spiritual) shortcomings of women. Such religious dogmas receive symbolic legitimacy from the patriarchal culture of society. The dominance of men in mosques, as well as the prohibition against women serving as imams, have been institutionalized by Indonesia's four largest Islamic institutions (MUI, DMI, NU, and Muhammadiyah) and reproduced through their fatwas as well as the sermons of popular preachers.

Keywords: Gender differences, Gender in Islam, Women leadership, Gender habitus, Religious text, Indonesia, Hadiths of leadership

Introduction

Ever since Amina Wadud[5] acted as imam and preacher during a congregational Friday prayer in The Cathedral Church of Saint John, Manhattan, New York the United States in 2005, the question of whether women could lead mixed-gender congregations, has been widely discussed in academia. This discourse has revolved not only around the matter of women's prayer leadership, but also the broader positioning of women in Islam, one of the most crucial debates of modern times (Hafid, 2014). In one CNN story, for example, it has been reported that an Indian Muslim woman named Jamida Beevi received death threats after leading a mixed-gender prayer, and that she had been branded a radical by several Muslim

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[1] Nurun Najwah is a Doctor of Hadith and senior lecturer of Hadith Studies at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. As a Gender Studies enthusiast, one of her recent publications is the article "Gender Analysis on the Misogynist Hadiths in Al-Kutub Al-Tis'ah". Email: nurun.najwah@uin-suka.ac.id.

[2] Irwan Abdullah, Professor of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada

[3] Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, lecturer of Hadith Studies at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.

[4] Ahmad Baidowi, lecturer of Qur'anic Studies at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.

[5] Amina Wadud born September 25, 1952, is a Professor Emeritus of Islamic Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. As an American Muslim philosopher with a progressive interpretation of The Holy Quran, her written works i.e Qur`an and Woman: Rereading Sacred Text from a Woman`s Perspective (1999) and Inside the Gender Jihad: Women`s Reform in Islam (2006). She studied at the University of Pennsylvania; Master of Arts Education in Near Eastern Studies; Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic studies at The University of Michigan (1988).

organizations as she had deviated from standard Islamic teachings (Suastha, 2018). A report by UN Women (2020) indicates that Indonesian women as a leader was 6.6% in 1985; men, thus, are dominant as leaders, with opportunities for women significantly limited (Bierema, 2016). This finding is supported by Pastner and Mernissi (1978), who argue that such positioning is simultaneously driven by scripture and by specific socio-cultural contexts.

To date, most of the literature addressing the controversy over women's leadership has referred to religious texts to determine whether women are permitted, by Islamic doctrine, to lead congregational worship (Calderini, 2011; Akhmetova, 2015; Edwin, 2013; Hammer, 2010; White, 2010)**.** Calderini (2011), for instance, writes that women's leadership has been extensively discussed among *ulama* (scholars of Islam), both classical and modern. *Ulama* following classical Muslim doctrine have, citing religious texts and their positioning of women, rejected women's leadership of mixed-gender communal worship (Wadud, 1999; Damanhuri, 2018; Midden & Ponzanesi, 2013; Schade, 2018). For example, Wadud (1999) writes that women are positioned as the second-created person in the Qur'an and the hadiths (the collected writings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), being weakened by the patriarchal structure of Islamic jurisprudence. Few studies have analyzed how the socio-cultural factors that shape religious texts and their interpretation have been used to justify the positioning of women. According to Anwar (2019), opposition to women's leadership cannot be attributed solely to theological considerations; sociological aspects are also influential. In other words, the text must be seen within the context of the specific structural and cultural dynamics of the society interpreting it.

Recognizing that the literature tends to explain the rejection of women imams through reference to religious texts, this article seeks to fill gaps in the extant body of literature by considering the context in which these texts are read and given significance. Religious texts receive symbolic legitimacy from the cultures that interpret them, and this may provide a basis for discriminating against women. The rejection of women's leadership cannot be seen as merely a religious fact; it must also be recognized as a socio-cultural fact. This article highlights how women are structured as the "second sex" in three realms: within the textual realm, wherein the textual concepts are structured socially; the cultural realm, wherein the patriarchy and its dominance is legitimized by the text; and the discursive realm, wherein religious leaders act as agents and maintain gender inequality. These three realms will be explored using the question of women acting as imams.

Discrimination against women is not merely constructed by religious texts, but also directly correlated with cultural responses to said texts. Although the Quran and the hadiths have significantly shaped the cosmology of Muslim societies, the content of these texts could not structure reality without cultural legitimacy. The link between text and context is inseparable, as context is a space that is structured by religious texts while simultaneously structuring the exegesis of the text. In the positioning of women, the authority of the text necessarily intersects with the dynamics of society. Women are segregated along gender lines, and—as a result—women are subordinated by patriarchal structures that are legitimized by religious texts and social structures; as a consequence, the leadership of women is problematized.

Literature Review

Debate regarding women's leadership, as framed by textual realities and by social realities, has given rise to many questions regarding gender and gender differences. Similarly, gender differences are seen within the context of religion and the shaping of their habits.

Gender Differences

Historically, societies have tended to construct individuals in a manner that recognizes two genders: male and female (Hyde, 2014). From childhood, men and women are introduced to the different roles and behaviors that are deemed appropriate for their gender (Conry-Murray et al., 2020). As a result, gender and gender constructs influence mindsets, behaviors, appearances, and even the division of labor and responsibility (Boe, 2015; Oláh, Kotowska, & Richter, 2018). In society, these gender differences result in men and women being divided by society, religion, and culture, with men being identified with the power and authority to lead, and women being expected to follow the guidance of men (Puspitawati, 2012). As such, according to Borg (2019), gender differences serve as labels that are attached to individuals and that influence their behavior through their specific social constructs. Through this labeling, women are assigned a specific class and status in accordance with their gender (Thelwall et al., 2019).

Gender differences produce significant disparities in how individuals exercise their rights, access, control, and movement (Branisa et al., 2013). Women are subordinated, marginalized, and even discriminated against because of the patriarchal understandings that underpin all elements of social life. Chang, Yip, & Chen (2019) write that the inequalities experienced by women leave them vulnerable to discrimination, violence, poverty, and even death, and as a result they have fewer opportunities to access necessary health and education services. Women are limited by society in behavior and attitude (Scarborough & Risman, 2018); as argued by Madsen (2019), society creates particular stereotypes that leave women vulnerable to psychological and emotional harm, as well as violence and abuse. Such gender differences tend to benefit men, and indeed they dominate the religious and economic sectors (Boe, 2015). Women are not positioned as equals, and this inequality continues to be legitimized by male-centric cultures, religious texts, and policies (Shastri, 2014).

Gender and Islam

Gender in Islam has been understood through an exploration of the positioning of men and women. From a traditional/classical perspective, Islam is seen as identifying men as the leaders of women (Turner, 2018). Women are narrated as having limited roles, with their rights and obligations being oriented primarily towards domestic activities such as serving their husbands and raising their children. In such a context, women are marginalized by dominant discourses and constructed to obey the teachings of (predominantly male) scholars (Hafid, 2014). In such a perspective, women experience significant biases. Meanwhile, according to Brenner (2011), modern Islamic perspectives have offered new understandings of gender. Texts and their regulation of women have been deconstructed by philosophers such as Amina Wadud the woman who acted as Imam in 2005 (Irsyadunnas, 2015). She argues that there is no truly objective exegesis of the Quran and thus the existing scholarship must be reinterpreted to achieve an understanding suited to modern times (Wadud, 2006). Her assessment challenged existing views of gender and Islam, emphasizing

the justice and equality aspects of the Quran (Wadud, 2014). Similarly, Abdullah, Ali, & Hamid (2015) write that Islam does not distinguish between women's and men's religious rights and obligations; individual Muslims are only distinguished by their faith and their piety.

The practical application of Islamic perspectives of gender, however, is limited by individual interpretations (Husaini & Husni, 2015). This is supported by Wadud (1999), who writes that the positioning of women as the second sex is not a religious matter, but rather one of the interpretation and implementation of the Qur'an within a patriarchal structure. Patriarchal interpretations and exegeses result in women being subordinated, as evidenced in the interpretation of al-Nisa` (the fourth chapter of Quran) to limit women's independence, including their mobility, employment, and education. Gender inequality has been identified by many as a problem of misinterpreting the religious rights and obligations of women, especially in Islamic countries (al-Mannai, 2010). al-Mannai (2010) shows that religious, social, and cultural factors all drive women to obey men and to follow specific interpretations of religious texts. Similarly, these factors limit women's ability to act without the involvement of male decision-makers (Aluko, 2015).

Gender Habitus

In discussing the matters of construction and inequality, it is important to recognize how women are structured within specific fields (i.e., economics, politics, education, religion, and literature), and how this structuring is socially reproduced. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction suggests individuals' experiences with, and interpretations of their interactions lead them to internalize the particular structure of their society (Bourdieu, 2013). These internalized schemes produce a habitus or personal background which in turn produces particular practices, perceptions, and evaluations (Miller, 2016). It is through their habitus, that individual sense, recognize, understand, and evaluate their social reality. As explained by Adib (2012), in the end the relations between actors and structures are dialectic, with each influencing and mediating the other, and inexorably linked within a network of social practices, lifestyles, and values, all of which are associated with specific social groups. This dialectic produces 'structuring structures' and 'structured structures', both of which influence individuals' relations within specific fields and highlight the power relations within said fields (Bourdieu, 2013). Miller (2016) notes that all fields have dominant actors who assert their dominance through symbolic violence.

In the Bourdieusian understanding of social reproduction, the social reality of gender is oriented towards recognizing symbolic violence, the imperceptible and invisible violence. In this context, women are marginalized by cultural and religious structures (including written texts and oral traditions), and over time this marginalization is internalized (Syed, 2010). In practice, this social reproduction results in women being limited to domestic roles and being controlled by men (Wacquant, 2013). This understanding is reinforced by Musarrofa (2019), who notes that women are taught to bow their heads and to honor men; as such, morality is determined by their respect for masculinity. Such structures distinguish between men, with their masculine habitus, and women, with their feminine habitus (Musarrofa, 2019). Women are thus expected to obey the commands of men, who are positioned as their superiors, and to internalize this habitus to such an extent that cultural and religious constructs are reinforced. Examining the case of Indonesia, Sudarso, Keban, &

Mas'udah (2019) find that the internalization of patriarchal culture is buttressed by religious dogmas, and that young women (especially from poor families) are structurally pressured to marry early and to quit school. Studies such as these underscore the influence of a gendered habitus.

Women's Leadership

Leaders are actors capable of influencing the social construction processes. Leaders are perceived as playing important roles in determining the extent of social norms and influence the available means for achieving desired goals (Zaccaro, 2014). Yulianti, Putra, & Takanjanji (2018) identify two leadership styles: transformational (The Female leaders who can be motivation and inspiration their subordinates to achieve the same goals) and feminist (The Female leaders who lead with their experiences influenced by culture and social order as women in society). Although explanatory in theory, in practice, women's involvement in institutional leadership faces significant hurdles that complicate that transformational and feminist approach. According to Smith (2013), women are not adequately in leadership positions represented, and their power remains limited by gender. A survey of women leadership in Indonesian institutions, finds that, although 75% of workers are women, only 20% of leaders are women. Several factors limit women's opportunities to become leaders, including inadequate access, gender bias, patriarchal structures, and societal expectations of male leadership (Azmi et al., 2012). Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr (2014) similarly note that women are perceived as ineffective leaders and viewed as lacking the capacity to mobilize their subordinates; as such, women are rarely entrusted with leadership roles.

Women's leadership is particularly limited in areas where religious beliefs are strong. Using Ghana as a case study, Ammah (2013) showed that religious views of women, particularly those that frame women as lacking leadership skills, commonly result in them being prohibited from leading religious activities or state institutions. Supplementing this study, Agesna (2018) notes that women's leadership of worship has often been problematic for Muslims. It is often feared that, when women lead congregational prayers, the prayers of male worshippers will be rendered invalid, as women are seen as not meeting the normative criteria for leadership—which is historically established as a rational, well-read, devout, and pious post-pubescent Muslim male (Fatimah, 2015).

Method

This study investigates women's leadership, both as a religious fact and as a socio-cultural fact. It investigates the research object within three fields: the textual field, wherein particular texts structure the social order; the cultural field, wherein the patriarchy legitimizes texts; and the discursive field, wherein religious leaders discursively promote gender inequality.

Data in this study were gathered primarily from the Hadiths (the second source of Islamic teaching based of the Prophet Muhammad) narrated by *Shahih al-Bukhari*, *Shahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud, Sunan al-Turmudzi, Sunan al-Nasa`I, Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan al-Darimi, Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, and al-Muwaththa` Imam Malik (*as recorded in the Nine Primary Book of Hadith) were all consulted. The hadiths used to justify discriminative practices were classified based on their content. Three categories were identified: hadiths

dealing with leadership, hadiths that positioned women as inferior to men, and hadiths that label women negatively.

Data were also collected regarding the leadership of four Islamic institutions in Indonesia: *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI), the *Ulama* Council of Indonesia is national organization consisting of Islamic scholars, governments, and scientists in Indonesia established in July 26, 1975; *Dewan Masjid Indonesia* (DMI), the Council of Indonesian Mosques is the national organization to realize the function of the mosque as a center of worship, community development and unity of the moslem people in Indonesia, was founded on June 22, 1972; *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) is an Islamic traditionalist Sunni organization which is following the Shafi'I school of jurisprudence, was established on January 31, 1926; and *Muhammadiyah* is a large Islamic organizations in Indonesia to restore all deviations in Islamic teachings by building social and educational systems in the community, established on November 18, 1912. The collected data, which covered the two most recent leadership periods (2010-2015 and 2015-2020), was used to ascertain the extent of women's involvement in these institutions as well as the percentage of women leaders. Also consulted were the sermons of three popular *da'I (*religious preacher)*:* Abdul Somad, Khaled Basalamah, and Adi Hidayat .

All collected data were identified as mutually influential, and subsequently examined and analyzed using a gender habitus perspective. This perspective not only enabled the researchers to understand how the prohibition of women's leadership has been legitimized by the hadiths, but also to understand how this legitimacy has been reinforced by specific socio-cultural contexts.

Results

Gender Discrimination in the Qur'an and the Hadiths

Literal and historical understandings of religious doctrine provide the foundation for justifying discrimination against women in theological spaces. Theological doctrines prohibit women from acting as the imams of mixed-gender congregations. These texts fall into three broad thematic categories: texts dealing with leadership, texts dealing with the subordination of women, and texts that negatively stereotype women.

Historically, scholars of Islam have associated the concept of leadership with men; women, conversely, are not perceived as leaders. Quran al-Nisa (4):34 and al-Baqarah (2):228 both emphasize male leadership over women. Verse 34 of Quran al-Nisa, for example, explicitly states that "Men are protectors of women, because Allah has preferred some of them above others, and because they have provided out of their wealth…." Such concepts are supported by several hadiths that emphasize men's dominance in their relationships with women. One hadith, narrated by al-Bukhari, states specifically that "the man is the leader of his household, and his leadership must not be questioned" (al-Bukhari no. 2,232). Other hadiths describe women as illegitimate leaders (al-Bukhari, no. 4,073), and prohibit them from serving as imams in mixed-gender congregations (Ibn Majah, no. 1,071). Pursuant to these texts, men are positioned as leaders—from the micro to the macro—while women are provided no spaces for leadership. Indeed, one hadith reads that "no people will find fortune after surrendering leadership to women" (al-Bukhari no. 6,570). Leadership, whether over family, more broadly in society or in worship, as reinforced by hadith, is male. This holds true for worship as well (Table 1).

Table 1. Text of Hadiths Requiring Male Leadership

No.	Material	Men	Women	Basis of Argument
1.	Family leadership	Leads	led	al-Bukhari no. 2,232
2.	Leadership	Permitted	Not permitted	al-Bukhari no. 4,073 and no. 6,570.
3.	Imam during worship	May lead men or women in worship	May not lead men in worship	Ibn Majah no 1,071.

These texts also subordinate women, positioning them as lower than men. Several hadiths are used to legitimize such positioning, including: (1) woman was created from the rib bone of man (al-Bukhari 4,787); (2) by their very nature, women lack religious piety and intellectual capacity (al-Bukhari, no. 293); (3) women are bound to others in their worship, require companions (non-marriageable kin) (al-Bukhari 1,729); (4) They must receive their husbands' permission before conducting supererogatory almsgiving (al-Bukhari 1,924); (5) women have limited space for worship, and their worship is best realized in the back row (Muslim, no. 664); (6) women worship is better at home (Abu Dawud, no. 480); (7) Women in domestic sphere and restricted in public area (Muslim, no. 2,390)(Table 2).

Table 2: Subordination of Women in the Hadiths

No.	Material	Men	Women	Basis of Argument
1.	Origin of humanity	Main creation	Derivative creation (created from a man's rib)	al-Bukhari no. 4,787
2.	Illogical and irreligious	Not characteristic	Viewed as natural order	al-Bukhari no. 293
3.	Hajj	May be conducted alone	May not be conducted alone; must be accompanied by *mahram* (a close family as her bodyguard)	al-Bukhari no. 1,729
4.	*Infaq* (charitable disbursements)	Permission of wife not required	Permission of husband required	al-Bukhari no. 1,924
5.	Location during worship	Front *shaf* (row) is the best	Back *shaf* is the best	Muslim no. 664
6.	Worship at home	*Mubah* (permitted, neutral)	Preferred	Abu Dawud no. 480

7.	Division of roles	Public sphere	Domestic sphere: ability to leave home restricted	Muslim no. 2,390

As the table 2 shows, women are positioned as second-class citizens; they are seen as inherently inferior to men. In one hadith, dialogue between a woman and the Prophet is underscoring this subordination. A woman asks: '… o Prophet, what do our minds and faiths lack? Is not a woman's testimony half that of a man's?', When the woman asked, the prophet replies, 'It is true. That is a shortcoming of women's minds." He further pointed out that in times of menses, are fasting and prayer not permitted for you?' When the woman agreed that they are expensed from fasting and prayer doing these times, the prophet said, 'That is a shortcoming of women's faiths' (al-Bukhari, no. 293). This dialog reinforced the justification for women's subordination.

Hadiths also provide a basis for negative stereotypes and labels regarding women, including (1) women as temptresses, as Eve's temptations of Adam resulted in their banishment from heaven (al-Bukhari no. 3,083); (2) women are the majority of the denizens of Hell (al-Bukhari, no. 293); (3) women bear the burdens of others' sins (Abu Dawud, no 4,094); (4) women are sources of disaster (al-Bukhari, no. 4,703); (5) Women are demons (Abu Dawud 1,839); (6) women may annul/negate the worship of others (al-Nasa'i, no. 742) The hadith about women as demons emphasized a problem in women's physical forms that are detrimental: "Truly, a woman, when coming, takes a demon's form…" (Abu Dawud, no. 1.839) (Table 3).

Table 3. Stereotypes regarding Women in the Hadiths

No.	Material	Men	Women	Basis of Argument
1.	Eve; wife the cause of husband's sins	Not characteristic	Characterized as problematic	al-Bukhari no. 3,083
2.	Most denizens of Hell	Not characteristic	Characteristic	al-Bukhari no. 293
3.	Bearer of others' sins	Not characteristic	A slain infant girl will carry the sins of her killer	Abu Dawud no. 4,094
4.	Source of disaster	Not characteristic	Characteristic	al-Bukhari no. 4,703
5.	As demons	Not characteristic	Characteristic	Abu Dawud no. 1,839
6.	Annulling the worship of others	Impossible	Possible, when passing in front of a worshipping man	al-Nasai no. 742.

The Patriarchal Systems of Islamic Institutions

The patriarchal systems of Islamic institutions, as well as said institutions' discrimination against women, is clearly evident in the management of mosques. Etymologically, the word *mosque* refers to the place of prostration; in the original Arabic

(*masjid*), it is a masculine noun (al-Munawwir, 2012). This etymology has shaped how mosques are understood in society, as well as the cultural belief that mosques are gathering places for men rather than women. A patriarchal structure is evident in the management of these mosques, where men dominate theological discourses and select the *ta'mir* (caretaker) and the imam. Religious leaders and institutions have consistently socialized a male-oriented perspective and used this perspective to control sacred spaces such as mosques. In Indonesia, where there are almost 800,000 mosques and prayer rooms, almost all *ta'mir* are men. These *ta'mir* are generally respected members of the local community, or individuals who have become prominent owing to their completion of the hajj pilgrimage. Even where women serve as *ta'mir*, they tend to be limited to domestic tasks (Nurjamilah, 2017).

The involvement of women in Islamic institutions has occurred slowly, as may be seen by four cases: the *Ulama* Council of Indonesia (MUI), the Council of Indonesian Mosques (DMI), the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah. In these institutions, few women are identified as having occupied leadership roles in 2010-2020; where women occupy such roles, their duties are primarily limited to domestic ones. The Department of Women and Child Development at DMI, for instance, has been led by a woman, as has the Department of Women Empowerment and Child Protection at MUI. No woman has ever had to justify occupying a top leadership position in other major institutions such as the Ministry of Religion, their leadership, limited to domestic departments (Table 4).

Table 4. Women's Level of Involvement in Islamic Institutions

Institution	Period	Men (%)	Women (%)
MUI	2010–2015	82.06	17.94
MUI	2015–2020	89.19	10.81
DMI	2012–2017	90.00	10.00
DMI	2017–2022	94.74	5.26
PBNU	2010–2015	100	-
PBNU	2015–2020	94.73	5.27
Muhammadiyah	2010–2015	94.12	5.88
Muhammadiyah	2015–2020	94.12	5.88

Discursive Processes that Reject Women's Leadership

Public discourses have rejected women's leadership, especially in worship. Such discourses are found in three realms.

First, in the administrative realm, regulations require the imams of mosques to be men. At the mosques administered by Indonesia's provincial and municipal governments, imams are selected in accordance with specific government regulations—which were drafted primarily by men. A similar phenomenon is found in community-run mosques and prayer rooms throughout Indonesia, where imams are selected based on their reputations within the community. The selection process is male-biased, as the selectors and selected are all men. Women may only serve as imam and *khatib* (preacher) for congregations that consist only of women and prepubescent children; for instance, Siti Rohmah served as imam during Eid prayers in Bojongkulur, Bogor (Ramadhan, 2019).

Second, in its institutional vision and mission, MUI formally rejects the leadership of women. MUI Fatwa No. 9 / MUNAS VII/13/2005, dated July 28, 2005, states that 'it is *haram* (forbidden) for women to serve as imams for congregations that include men, and any such prayer is invalid; where the congregation consists solely of women, it is *mubah* (permitted) for women to act as imams.' This fatwa was issued in response to the previously mentioned leadership of Amina Wadud in the United States (MUI, 2005). As reported by one online news portal, *Republika.id* (2011), statements prohibiting the leadership of women have also been made by popular *da'i* such as Abdul Somad, Khaled Basalamah, and Adi Hidayat. In one sermon posted to his YouTube channel (My Dakwah Tube), Abdul Somad underscored that women could not lead mixed-gender congregations. "If a woman is learning to lead prayers, may she say her compulsory prayers loudly? So long as there are no men, so long as there are only women—mothers, daughters, sisters, nieces—then her leadership is fine. But if there are men? No. If there is one man, take him as the imam."

Similarly, on the YouTube channel *Kebumen Mengaji* ('Kebumen Worships') Khaled Basalama in his rejection of women's leadership stated: 'In order to be an imam, one must be a just and knowledgeable man. In this case, just does not simply mean honest, but also understanding of the hadiths. To be just, one must have sufficient knowledge to act justly and always advocate for truth. As such, should a man's worship be led by a woman, it would be invalid. Meanwhile, Adi Hidayat allowed women to go to the mosque, stating: 'A woman's worship in the most private places is just as blessed as a man's worship in the mosque. For women, if they meet three criteria, they may go to the mosque. These three criteria are, first, they are not mingling with men—or, rather, having their own place in the mosque. Second, being safe from temptation on the streets, and third, all of their more important obligations— nurturing and nursing children—are completed.' Nevertheless, on his YouTube channel Audio Dakwah, Adi Hidayat also emphasized that women's worship is best conducted at home, as it brings them the same blessings as mosque worship. Like the other popular *da`i*, he emphasized a gender segregation in worship that prohibited women as imams.

The third realm that objected to women's leadership has come from women themselves. Although the Indonesian Islamic feminists agree against the injustices of women, they have different opinions in leader prayer (Peter, 2013). In Etin articles, one of traditional feminist, Yoyoh Yusroh (a member of the Indonesian Justice Party and Parliament) disagrees with a Imam woman in a mixing prayer, an equality does not mean everything could be equal; Amani Lubis (a female lecturer and an expert of Arabic literature) argues, women`s Imam in Indonesia only in emergency situations; moderate feminist, Musdah Mulia (an Indonesian`s Islamic scholar) has a view neither in Quran and Hadith is mentioned about sex as criteria to be a leader in prayer. She accepts the equality of men and women for leading prayer, but Muslim society disagree this equality concept in *ibadah* (ritual religious) (Lang, 2013). Many women have difficulty positioning themselves as agents of change, even in the most limited contexts (Anwar, 2019). For example, Husein Muhammad (a gender activist and a leader of an Islamic boarding school in Cirebon Indonesia) argues that it is permissible for a woman to become an imam. He himself has encouraged his wife to become a prayer leader for him and his family, but she refused to do it (Anwar, 2019).

Public discourses in this male-dominated socio-cultural context have reproduced the construct that women cannot be imams in worship. This discourse has been legitimized by religious texts, which clearly conceptualizes men as leaders and women as their subordinates,

and by patriarchal social practices (in the administration of mosques and religious institutions, in the selection of imams, and in sermons), and by women themselves.

Discussion

Opposition to women's Indonesian`s leadership in mixed-gender settings has been driven primarily by a literal understanding of religious texts, especially hadiths that identify leadership as solely within the purview of men (Turner, 2018). Opposition has also stemmed from the portrayal of women in religious texts, including the depiction of Eve as having been created from Adam's rib bone, the description of women as religiously and intellectually lacking, the requirement for women to receive their husbands' permission to conduct supererogatory worship and almsgiving, and the labeling of women as the cause of humanity's banishment from heaven, as negating worship, as causing misfortune, and as denizens of Hell. Such gender differences have become understood as part of a non-negotiable and a contextual order (Hafid, 2014), and have been legitimized by sacred texts. Discrimination against women is not only accepted but reinforced by the dominant structure (al-Mannai, 2010). All four of Indonesia's largest Islamic institutions—MUI, DMI, NU, and Muhammadiyah—are dominated by men (Shastri, 2014). Discrimination along gender lines is also justified culturally through MUI Fatwa No. 9 of 2005 as well as the sermons of popular preachers such as Abdul Somad, Khaled Basalamah, and Adi Hidayat.

Opposition to women imams must be understood within the cultural context of pre-Islamic Arabia. The text of the Quran was revealed in a patriarchal society, wherein men were responsible for all public matters (including supporting their families) and women were responsible for domestic duties (including household chores). At the time, they were viewed as unimportant, as little more than objects; indeed, many pre-Islamic Arabs were driven by economic, social, and political factors to bury their infant daughters alive. In domestic spaces, they were often exploited and subject to inhumane treatment. Forced marriage, spousal abuse, and unjustified polygamy were common; slave women could be forcibly impregnated, with their children sold, or passed from generation to generation. This reality resulted in women becoming dehumanized, being viewed as created by men for men, and thus as lacking the ability to determine their own fates.

This historical context shaped Islam's religious texts, and thus influenced Islam's structure as an organized religion. Failure to consider this context when reading religious texts has contributed significantly to the discrimination against women in religious worship/rituals and in other public spaces.

The belief that imams must be men has been maintained for centuries throughout the Muslim world, including in Indonesia. Ongoing opposition to women leadership in mixed-gender congregations has been intended in part to respond to views that have challenged the dominant religious paradigms regarding worship. Where worship practices have deviated from commonly accepted standards, anarchy and unrest has occurred. Take, for example, the cases of Yusman Roy and Suratman who challenged the Arabic language tradition. In the first case, Mochammad Yusman Roy was forced to comply with Decision of the Regent of Malang no.10/783/Kep/421.012/2005 (dated May 6, 2005) prohibiting bilingual worship, required to cease all religious activities (Tempo.co, 2005)**,** and sentenced to two years imprisonment guilty of blasphemy, pursuant to Article 156a of the Indonesian Criminal Code (NU Online, 2005). In the second case, Suratman and eighteen other members of a religious

sect in Sumberkere Village, Wonomerto District, Probolinggo Regency, East Java, were branded deviant by MUI's Probolinggo branch after conducting worship in Javanese; members of the sect were subsequently forced to end all religious activities (Waspada.co.id, 2016).

This study differs from previous studies of women's leadership, which have tended to emphasize textual understandings and analyses (using the Quran, the Hadiths, and supplementary texts) in their exploration of the rejection of women imams. This article, in contrast, recognizes the social and cultural 'context', acknowledging not only how these texts influence the socio-cultural practices that reinforce the belief that imams must be men and promote discrimination against women, but also how exegesis is influenced by the interpreters' society and culture. Women are not positioned as the second sex owing to religious doctrine, but because the text of the Quran is interpreted and implemented within a patriarchal culture (Wadud, 1999). This social and cultural context denies women their rights.

This study has offered a way of restoring women to their rightful position in Islam. Women, as human beings, must be humanized in all things—including in their worship, as well as in the public and private spaces. The texts commonly used to legitimize the discrimination against women must be re-examined, and the socio-cultural frameworks that enable such discrimination must be challenged. In considering the religious positioning of women, it is necessary to recognize the patriarchal structures that result in women facing injustice, subordination, marginalization (including impoverishment), stereotyping, violence, sexual exploitation, and labor exploitation—as well as the tendency for women to not recognize their dehumanization (Fakih, 2003).

Conclusion

The belief of imams must be men in Indonesia is not only based on the religious texts (including the hadiths) that influence the socio-cultural practices that reinforce discrimination against women, but also the exegesis is influenced by their interpreter's society and culture. The research has shown that the male-dominated socio-cultural contexts in which religious activities are conducted have structured and significantly influenced the matters of leadership, mosque management, and organizational administration. These contexts have been reinforced by particular policies and sermons that identify Islam as rejecting women's imams.

This article exposes the need to provide women with the necessary wider space to become involved in the management of mosques and religious institutions. At the same time, the need to encourage men as agents of change in a patriarchal culture that discriminates against women, in their attitudes and beliefs. Religious studies using a range of perspectives are necessary to achieve a greater social understanding of diversity and religiosity. Only then can texts that humanize women and recognize their human dignity be realized.

Future studies of the hadiths used to justify discrimination against women must achieve a deeper understanding of their social and cultural contexts. It is also necessary to conduct a detailed investigation of the religious and social spaces in which women are accepted as imams, as well as to ascertain the quality of their leadership in worship and the space for women imams should be available in Indonesia's more than 800,000 mosques.

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