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**The Movement of Muhammadiyah Women: Religious Values,
Culture, and Gender Equality**

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THE MOVEMENT OF MUHAMMADIYAH WOMEN: RELIGIOUS VALUES, CULTURE, AND GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract

This study analyzed and explored social practices and community-based movements for gender justice carried out by the females of Muhammadiyah. To this point, there has been a duality in supporting the epistemological construction, which is the status of women and their role in the public sphere. This study employed a qualitative interpretive approach with an ethnomethodology approach by conducting observations, conducting interviews, and being involved in social dynamics activities and community-based education. This study was conducted in Malang City, with the consideration that there are social dynamics and community-based movements carried out by Muhammadiyah's females for gender justice. Informants in the research were Muhammadiyah Regional Leaders, Aisyiyah Regional Leaders, Nasyyiatul Aisyiyah Regional Leaders, active members of Muhammadiyah, and Muhammadiyah mothers who were involved in social activities with gender ideology. The data were analyzed by inductive data analysis. This study found out that the social dynamics and community-based education movement for gender justice carried out by Muhammadiyah's females are as follows: (1) religious activities, disseminating the amr ma'ruf nahi munkar movement and Islamic egalitarianism; (2) education and advocacy on women's issues (local dynamics); (3) agency, which was divided into mainstream groups (conservative-literal, rational-praxis), and religion's critical-reinterpretation group for gender justice.

Keywords: Social Dynamics; Politics; Women's Movement; Muhammadiyah; Gender.

A. Introduction

This study aims to analyze the movement of Muhammadiyah's females by focusing on social dynamics and community-based education movements in realizing gender justice. Muhammadiyah, as a modernist Islamic organization (Al-Hamdi, 2021; Kahfi, 2020; Marsudi & Zayadi, 2021; Nashir et al., 2019; Rahman, 2019; Sutiyono, 2015), established a women's organization called "*Aisyiyah*" in 1917, and it was followed by the establishment of a cadre organization named "*Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*" in 1933. The principle encouraging women's involvement in the Muhammadiyah organization is the Islamic view of men and women as agents in persuading people to do good deeds and avoid evil deeds (QS At-Taubah (9): 71-72). Thus, women's presence in the public sphere is essential to reforming and developing the life of modern society.

The expansion of the role of women outside their homes was a discussion that was repetitively reviewed among women at the beginning of the *Aisyiyah* organization's establishment or in the pre-independence period. The efforts to define the role of women in the family and society began to be a debate topic. However, the most systematic efforts to transform women's agendas into political action began to occur through women's organizations and congresses that were initiated in 1928 and the publication of magazines such as "*Suara Aisyiyah*". All women's powers were combined and turned personal into political matters. This debate opened up perspectives about the value of women both as human beings and wives; afterward, it was used as a tool to support the state ideology of motherhood and Islamic arguments about equality in Islam (Arake et al., 2023; Saiin et al., 2024). Motherhood is a social construction of women's roles based on the relationship between women and their husbands (Alfons et al., 2017; Ichsan Kabullah & Fajri, 2021; Kusmana, 2015; Pratamawaty et al., 2018; Syukri, 2021).

The emphasis on independent agents was the central idea at the beginning of the struggle for the women's movement in Indonesia. They argue that men and women have equal thinking abilities to act rationally and morally as autonomous agents (Ratnasari, 2018; Suhra, 2018; Tong, 2017). Although the



context of the demands for women's movement equality in Indonesia and the Western countries is different, they both demand the community to provide equal access for men and women to education so that women have equal intellectual abilities and potential contributions to individuals, families, and society (Muttaqin, 2015; Ridwan, 2022; Dawood, 2024).

Muslim men and women have the right to progress and develop themselves within their respective authority and boundaries. Although the responsibilities of men and women are different, their rights to religion are not different, because women's rights are already discussed in Islamic teachings (Blackburn, 2008; Siri, 2014; Juliansyahzen et al., 2024). Islamic, feminist, and nationalist support for equality shows how maternal values were constructed at the beginning of the women's movement and how these movements contributed to the epistemological construction of inclusive humanity as a starting point for emancipation. Simultaneously, the value of motherhood plays an important role in creating a network among fellow women having similar views to contribute to life outside their homes.

The propaganda stating motherhood values are parts of commands related to religion and culture to protect women's morality and progress occurred in Asian countries (Hidayat & Afifuddin, 2024). However, the peculiarities of the geopolitical situation, gender expectations, and religious practices create diverse roles for women in society and families. In Indonesia, the emphasis on women's morality is institutionalized through the uniformity of the family across cultures and the uniformity of women's roles across social classes. The government's emphasis on women's morality encourages the politicization of gender ideology through uniformity or, in Friedan's terms, the feminine mystique (Friedan, 1974; Sugitanata et al., 2023).

The emergence of Muslim women's movements in Indonesia has triggered the involvement of women in national reformation projects. The process of Islamic reformism being connected to nationalism at the time has contributed to the emancipation of women. The position of women's organizations as parts of their parent organization raises concerns. Women's organizations tend to follow the structure and agenda of their



parent organizations. Therefore, women's organizations are considered to be less autonomous and their leadership is less influential in overcoming the gender gap caused by beliefs and patriarchal religious practices.

Although the concerns about these conditions are debatable, they must be seen from the context of the culture of Indigenous kinship, agency in Islam, and cultural expectations seen from the value of women at any given time. Women act to the fullest of their capabilities as agents of change within the women's movement (Afrianty, 2018; Chakravarty et al., 2020; Nogueira et al., 2018). They are also able to make important changes regardless of whether the activity is on their initiative or under the guidance of their parent organization. It is undeniable that the women's movement in Indonesia has contributed to the improvement of women's lives both in the private and public spheres and in facing social, cultural, and religious challenges (Sofiani et al., 2024).

Several studies on the Muhammadiyah woman movement have been done previously. One of them is conducted by Qibtiyah (2016), in her study, she discusses gender equality pedagogy in family, school, and society among *Aisyiyah* families. Amalia (2017), in her study, deals with the role of *Aisyiyah* as an Islamic women's organization in improving women's status in Banten Province. Zaharani et al (2018), see gender and its problems as an emerging discourse in many countries, including Indonesia. Casmini (2020), in her study, discusses some Islamic preaching strategies implemented by *Aisyiyah* toward Muslim new believers (mualaf). In his study, Miswanto (2020) discusses that renewal in Islam leads to gender problems.

Although Muslim women support the paternalistic view of maternal values, they are also aware of equality between men and women as moral agents or views on Islamic egalitarianism. The epistemological formulation of women as moral beings laid the foundations of the support of Islam for equality and the next generations involving Muslim thinkers, gender activists, and the feminine to formulate their aspirations. The Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement encouraged egalitarian gender principles (Dewi, 2017), but the value of women continued to be defined according to their ability to be good wives, mothers, and daughters in primary domestic capacities.

The diverse modalities between the common humanity providing equality for men and women as well as the social and cultural expectations imposed on them create the paradox of women as human beings and as sexualized bodies. This conflicting duality supports epistemological constructs about the status of women and their role in the public sphere as human beings and as sexualized bodies. In the context of Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement, the paradox has encouraged women to enter the territory of the praxis level or shift the direction from orthodoxy to orthopraxis as well as from global to local issues.

B. Method

The research employed a qualitative interpretative approach. The ethnomethodology approach was used in this research to find out the social reality of ideas or knowledge, shared interpretation, shared objective, and intersubjective social practices (Carls, 2021; Pillay, 2019; Vera, 2016). They are in the form of gender values or ideology, gender activities, and meaningful life experiences. These dimensions may occur in a group of certain communities, religious groups, or families. The research was carried out in Malang City by considering the existence of social dynamics and community-based educational movements done by *Aisyiyah* Malang City in achieving gender equality.

This approach helps to trace how social dynamics and community-based movements are carried out by Muhammadiyah women, by conducting observations, interviews, and being directly involved in social dynamics activities and community-based movements. Data was obtained from the attitudes, perspectives, and opinions of Muhammadiyah members and Muhammadiyah women, in this case, the administrators as formative and articulating agents, active members, and those who are actively involved in the activities of the women's empowerment movement as an implementation of gender ideology. The informants in this study determined based was sought evenly from elements of Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership 3 informants, *Aisyiyah* Regional Leadership 3 informants, *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* Regional



Leadership 3 informants, Muhammadiyah active members and Muhammadiyah women each 3 informants, and those involved in activities gender ideology social praxis 3 informants.

In conducting data analysis, this study uses inductive data analysis (Walidin et al., 2015, 2023). The first step of data analysis using inductive analysis begins with sorting based on the integrity and credibility, confirmation, and the relationship between one informant and another, or what is called the degree of trust. Step two is carried out purposely, based on his position as a leader in the organization and his knowledge of gender ideology. Meanwhile, the third step is to confirm the data obtained based on his position as an active member but outside the position of the leader of the organization. The fourth step looks at data linkages related to active involvement in gender-ideological praxis activities.

C. Result and Discussion

This section presents the research findings on the dynamics of the Muhammadiyah women's movement in advocating for gender justice through religious activities, local politics, and agency roles. These findings are analyzed using a qualitative interpretative approach with an ethnomethodological method, involving observations, interviews, and direct engagement in community-based social activities. Data analysis was conducted inductively to identify patterns, social relations, and the construction of meaning within the Muhammadiyah women's movement. The discussion in this section will relate the research findings to relevant theoretical frameworks and previous studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the position, challenges, and contributions of Muhammadiyah women in promoting gender equality at the local level.

1. Result

This study found that the Muhammadiyah women's movement in Malang City to achieve gender justice can be categorized into three main aspects: religious activities, politics of location (local-level movement), and agency roles. Each of these aspects plays a crucial role in shaping



social dynamics and community-based education supporting gender equality.

Table 1. Social Dynamics and Community-Based Education Movement for Gender Justice

Religious activity	Politics of Location (movement at the local level)	Agency
<i>Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar</i> , Islamic egalitarianism	Localizing the global movement, from orthodoxy to orthopraxis (real actions)	Traditional-Literal, Rational-Practical, and Critical Reinterpretation of Religion for Gender Justice

Source: Author data collection

Table 1 is depicted, first, it is religious activity; the activity always explains the principle supporting the involvement of Muhammadiyah's female followers that Islam considers man and woman as ethical agents in partners in asking people to do good deeds and avoid evil deeds (Surah At-Tawbah (9): 71-72). Second, the *Aisyiyah* movement is conducted locally; there are three factors influencing Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement; (i) sociocultural factors, (ii) the gender equality movement, and the challenge of globalization and industry revolution 5.0. Third, the agency's role is two mainstream groups in Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement: The first group is traditional-literal, and the second group is rational-praxis.

a. Religious Activities

Aisyiyah emphasizes the importance of religious activities as the foundation of the Muhammadiyah women's social movement. This is reflected in the principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, where women play an active role in calling for good deeds and preventing wrongdoing, as emphasized in Surah At-Taubah (9): 71-72. Several informants mentioned that women's roles in religious activities extend beyond the domestic sphere and into the public domain. A regional *Aisyiyah* leader explained:

"In Aisyiyah, women are not just supporting da'wah behind the scenes; they are actively involved in Islamic studies, sermons, and empowerment programs based on Islamic values" (AA).

Meanwhile, a Nasyiatul Aisyiyah cadre affirmed:

"We teach young women that Islam does not restrict women's roles in society. We utilize digital media to propagate Islamic teachings and promote gender equality" (BB).

Additionally, this study found that various Aisyiyah religious activities, such as women's Quranic interpretation studies and community-based economic empowerment prayer groups, provide space for women to contribute to their social and spiritual lives.

b. Politics of Location (Local-Level Movement)

Aisyiyah's local-level movement faces structural challenges that hinder women's roles in the public sphere. Three key factors influence Muhammadiyah women's movement in Malang City:

- 1) Socio-cultural factors: Women's roles are still perceived as limited to the domestic sphere, prompting Aisyiyah to focus on education and empowerment programs.
- 2) Gender equality movement: Aisyiyah advocates for women's rights in access to education and economic opportunities through various policy advocacies.
- 3) Challenges of globalization and the Industrial Revolution 5.0: Muhammadiyah women are encouraged to enhance their digital literacy and creative economy skills to compete in the modern world.

An Aisyiyah activist stated:

"We face challenges in changing society's mindset that women can also be leaders. However, we continue to push for education and training for women so they gain confidence in taking social roles" (CC).

In terms of advocacy, *Aisyiyah* is also actively providing legal aid services for women who experience discrimination or gender-based violence through the Aisyiyah Legal Aid and Consultation Institute.

In efforts to enhance support for women who face discrimination or gender-based violence, *Aisyiyah* not only provides legal assistance



through the Aisyiyah Legal Aid and Consultation Institute but also actively educates the community about women's rights. This educational program is designed to increase awareness about gender equality issues and to reduce the stigma that often follows the victims. One informant revealed that *"through seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns, Aisyiyah strives to change societal perceptions about gender and enhance women's abilities to fight for their rights legally and socially. These initiatives are crucial in creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for women across Indonesia, ensuring that they have access to the resources needed to achieve justice and equality"* (Interview result).

c. Agency Roles in Muhammadiyah Women's Movement

This study found that the agency roles in the Muhammadiyah women's movement can be categorized into three main groups:

- 1) Traditional-Literal Group: Adheres strictly to Muhammadiyah doctrine and maintains women's roles within the domestic sphere while contributing to da'wah and education.
- 2) Rational-Practical Group: Prioritizes practical actions to achieve gender justice while remaining grounded in Islamic values.
- 3) Critical Reinterpretation of Religion for Gender Justice Group: Actively reinterprets religious texts to be more inclusive of women's rights and influences decision-making discourse in Muhammadiyah's Tarjih Council.

A gender activist in Muhammadiyah stated:

"We recognize that religious texts are often interpreted in a patriarchal manner. Therefore, we strive to reinterpret Islamic teachings to be more inclusive of women's rights" (DD).

Additionally, in an interview with a Muhammadiyah scholar, it was stated:

"In the Tarjih Council, we continually discuss gender equality issues in Islam. Several important policies have been adopted, including those affirming that women can hold leadership roles in public spaces" (EE).



This study highlights that the Muhammadiyah women's movement transcends traditional domestic roles, actively fostering social consciousness, engaging in robust advocacy efforts, and fortifying women's agency within the public domain. By organizing educational seminars, community outreach programs, and public discussions, the movement challenges entrenched gender stereotypes and advocates for equitable treatment across all spheres of life. Moreover, it equips women with the necessary skills and knowledge to partake effectively in civic and political activities, thereby expanding their influence beyond the confines of home and into the broader societal fabric. This dynamic engagement not only supports women's personal growth but also contributes significantly to societal progress by promoting inclusive practices that recognize and value the contributions of women.

These findings will be further analyzed in the Discussion section, where their relationships with relevant theories and previous research will be elaborated.

2. Discussion

a. Religious Activity in Muhammadiyah's Female Followers

Aisyiyah has equal value with Muhammadiyah in promoting religious, social, and educational changes among Muslim communities, but it emphasizes the importance of building individual and public moral responsibility. Being part of Muhammadiyah does not lessen the role of *Aisyiyah* as a woman agency. Its members aim to improve the life quality of Muslim women by; (i) getting involved in Islam preaching, (ii) developing education and reviving social solidarity, (iii) gathering in mosques and other Islamic institutions, (iv) teaching and training girls to have meaningful life goals, and (v) broadcasting and publishing materials related to their activities in *Suara Aisyiyah* magazine. The activities demand women to exist in agency centers. The *Aisyiyah* movement is known as *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (asking people to do good deeds and forbidding them to do evil deeds) (Wekke et al., 2019).

Religious activities are conducted by all boards in *Aisyiyah* in Malang City, especially Majelis Tabligh on all levels (local, branch, division) and are supported by *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*, the organization of *Aisyiyah* cadres. The next

basic principle states that *Aisyiyah* considers both men and women to be human (egalitarian). However, their values depend on their deeds at home and outside their homes. This perspective is derived from the Quran and hadith interpretation stating that the value of man and woman depends on their piety to God. *Aisyiyah* cites the verses of the Quran in surah An-Nisa (4): 124, An-Nahl (16): 97, and An-Nisa (4): 32, as epistemic fundamental to build female ontology status in Islam. Meanwhile, *Aisyiyah* encourages Muslim women to boost their values as humans and boost their social roles through various activities.

Aisyiyah encourages women to understand their nature as wives and social justice activists. Its advocacy for family institutions is by the government's agenda in promoting family planning and the Sakinah family. Salman lists the indicators of Sakinah family in *Aisyiyah*, namely: (i) creating a family through marriage under religious rules; (ii) growing a family with sincerity and love between husband and wife; (iii) fulfilling the family needs legally; (iv) carrying out the obligation and rights to the spouse; (v) taking care of each other with love until their death; and (vi) having pious children (Salman, 2015). To support the activities, the *Aisyiyah* of Malang City establishes the Sakinah Family Clinic Center and Pre-Marriage Course.

The *Aisyiyah* movement, with its religious activities, which spread the principles of *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* and egalitarianism in Islam, is the first step towards the analysis of women's problems. Educating and advocating for women's problems at the local level makes it easier for women to understand the importance of justice for them. The role of agency in carrying out social piety is essential for women because working together can strengthen networks and make it easier to convey women's issues to policymakers regarding gender justice (Huda & Hidayati, 2023). Of course, various problems and obstacles to realizing gender justice in society exist. It takes time, effort, and money to carry out activities with a genuine concept. Another important thing is the requirement that agencies must have self-confidence, high motivation, and learn continually in carrying out social praxis and community-based education movements (Aziz et al., 2022) so that the need for gender justice can be realized immediately.

b. Politics of Location (Movement at Local Level) in Muhammadiyah's Female Followers

Second, the *Aisyiyah* movement is conducted locally; There are three factors influencing Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement (Aisyiyah.co.id): (i) socio-cultural factor, in which sociocultural injustice in the society puts women's role only around the domestic sector. The movement tries to diminish the condition as well as enlighten and educate women. Islamic feminist analysis examines how the interpretation of Islamic sources and Indonesian cultural practices result in contradictions in terms of claiming gender hierarchy and egalitarianism.

Gender hierarchy views the natural differences between men and women, necessitating ontological, moral, spiritual, financial, social, cultural, and political differences. In contrast, gender egalitarianism calls for intrinsic equality between men and women before God and fellow human beings, regardless of gender differences (Qadri & Siregar, 2023). This historically hierarchical gender culture is dominating because most ulema (religious leaders in Islam), judges, Sufis, and philosophers, who produce and maintain gender culture, are men. To close the gap in knowledge, authority, and power, the Islamic women's movement in Indonesia tries to change the hierarchical gender culture by examining the verses of the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet. They have been used to reveal the inferior position of women in the politics of interpretation.

Aisyiyah actively contributed by establishing formal education, conducting Islamic preaching, and carrying out the social role to make people respect and acknowledge their existence, (ii) the gender equality movement, as one main focus, particularly related to human source development as an objective of national development. Even though the government has improved many aspects of women's life quality and carried out the women's empowerment program, the gap between men and women is still found in various life sectors. Besides fighting for women's rights, *Aisyiyah* shows its support for women by issuing the Decree of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Head at the 2014 National Conference. The decree explains the perspective of the Quran and Hadith that men and women have equal roles and positions before God. No one is superior or subordinate.

To overcome the gender gap and promote gender equity, Muslim women have taken up the work of gender and feminism as an analytical tool. Using gender as a social analysis tool makes it possible to recognize the differences in men's and women's lives due to their sexuality and how these differences affect their involvement in the private and public spheres. Gender is a trait attached to social, religious, and cultural roles for men and women based on their sexuality (Akbar et al., 2024). The process of masculinity and femininity is socially and personally constructed (Hinchliff, 2014).

It provides an opportunity for women to actively speak for their aspirations and contribute to creating social justice for people, (iii) the challenge of globalization and industry revolution 5.0 become new things that have to be faced by women. They can achieve comprehension and catch up with digital development by having a good education equal to that of men. The global challenge motivates Muhammadiyah's female followers to educate other women to get equal abilities with men, especially in fundamental sectors such as education and job opportunities. Among Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement, the individual's piety is shown by her physical practice such as wearing a veil and joining religious activities.

In the social domain, the individual's piety encourages women to be members of women's organizations, to be involved in public matters, and to participate in women's empowerment and advocacy in society as a form of good deeds. To address women's issues, the *Aisyiyah* of Malang City establishes the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute. In addition, the role of each board in *Aisyiyah* becomes important to educate and improve the capability of the members through the educational board (early childhood, elementary, and inclusive education), health board (tuberculosis medicine post), social welfare board (cooperative institution, zakah, infaq and sadaqah institution, medicine post), legal board, and human rights (political education).

c. Agency's Role in Muhammadiyah's Female

The agency's role is two mainstream groups in the Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement: The first group is traditional-literal; this group carries out every Muhammadiyah organization doctrine. The second group is



rational praxis; this group carries out movements for gender justice by advocating for women's problems and educating women in various fields by continuing to spread social piety based on Islamic teaching norms.

Meanwhile, a new relationship between Islam and women spreads among individuals who critically deconstruct patriarchal interpretations of science and the authority of men. Then, through this process, they rediscover the ethics of egalitarianism in Islam (Hariyanto et al., 2024). This group is found in the Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement although the quantity is relatively small. The third group is called the group of critical reinterpretation of religion for gender justice. Their voices can influence the discourse of the decision-making process on gender at the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council level. This division has the authority to determine religious doctrines in Muhammadiyah.

Since its establishment, the Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement has provided women with religious knowledge and strengthened women's agency and authority to support the larger mission of its parent organization. Affiliation is precisely beneficial for women since it provides stability and quick access to a large network of organizations and intellectuals, which are composed of well-known leaders and resources (Amalia, 2017; Qibtiyah, 2018). While *Aisyiyah* encouraged the promotion of women as individuals, daughters, wives, and members of society, they emphasized the importance of appropriate behavior for their gender. Ann Oakley (2015), defines sexuality as a personality area related to sexual behavior. The adjustment of women's behavior according to their biological character or nature is in line with common perceptions among Muslims. The appropriate role of women should follow their biological nature as mothers and wives.

Likewise, the existence of *Aisyiyah* and *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* as unique organizations for women and girls within the scope of Muhammadiyah has not been seen as representatives of the Muhammadiyah's female followers' movement. Therefore, women's Fiqh in the social and public fields requires meaning and reaffirmation from the Muhammadiyah circle. The reality in most societies shows that justice for women has often been neglected.

Religious legitimacy comes to the fore because of unilaterally reciting and understanding a verse or Hadith, or because legal products, especially Fiqh, are sometimes no longer relevant due to dynamic social changes. These changes are caused, among others, by changes in the social status of women due to education and changes in the global economic-political situation that affect the status of women in the family (Napsiah et al., 2024).

With these changes, there should also be changes in women's rights because the basis of law implementation in Islam is justice and benefit. The word justice is abstract, so we need indicators to show how justice can be implemented. The message that must be conveyed is about equality between men and women. It is one of the universal messages of Islam (Hariyanto et al., 2024; Maimun, 2022). It implicates the urgency of expanding the role of women from the private or domestic sphere to the public sphere.

The understanding of the Muslim women's movement about personal experiences is mediated through the Third World, one of which is from the book entitled "Some Questions on Feminism and Its Relevance in South Asia" written by Bhasin and Said Khan (1986). This book not only invites readers to highlight the power of patriarchy as a source of oppression but also recognizes the internal doubts and fears that arise from the commitment of gender and feminism activists. It also introduces women as a movement and can influence women's movement activists in Indonesia. Finally, this book offers a feminist view in the context of individuals' awareness of their oppression and efforts to overcome it cohesively and politically.

The slogan of Western feminism, "personal matters are also political matters", has helped women's daily lives (Hooks, 2014). As this slogan resonates in the lives of Muslim women, the framework for structuring Islamic feminism as a blend of Eastern and Western Islam has triggered the efforts to address gender disparities, share common concerns and goals, and generate a rethinking of Islam with the basic methodology of *ijtihad* (the legal process of obtaining fatwas by individual jurists on issues that are not discussed in the Quran and Hadith). Reinterpretation of *Tafseer* (the scientific tradition of interpreting the Quran) is also involved.



In this sense, Muslim women participating in a movement are localized socially, religiously, and politically (Miswar et al., 2023). Its transforming influence shapes the lives of women in their geopolitical locations.

This search reveals various forms of activism among Muslim women, bringing Islam and women together. Rinaldo marks a cross between Islam and women in the social science concept of agency, i.e., “the ability of people to make choices and take action” (Rinaldo, 2013). Women’s agency in the West revolves around women’s capacity to “empower themselves and challenge subordination”. On the other hand, the agency of piety stems from Islamic norms in its various manifestations.

The result of this study shows that several findings are different from the previous studies. Qibtiyah’s study focuses more on mapping interpretations of religious texts to defend Muslim women’s rights (Qibtiyah, 2016). Meanwhile, this study focuses on social dynamics and community-based education movements (religious activities, local praxis, and agencies) for Muhammadiyah women in realizing gender justice. The interpretation of religious texts in defending women’s rights is only one of the agency groups, i.e., the group of critical reinterpretation of religion (Maimun, 2022), but the voice of this group can open discourse at the decision-making level in the Muhammadiyah Organization. The rest are traditional-literal and rational-praxis groups.

The result of this study has similarities with Amalia’s study in analyzing social praxis and community-based education movements carried out by *Aisyiyah*, such as religious activities through the *Amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* movement and Islamic egalitarianism, and also the solutions provided by *Aisyiyah* to local issues on women (Amalia, 2017). However, this study also analyzes the agency’s role in Muhammadiyah’s female followers’ movement. Zaharani et al., study on the existence of agency in Muhammadiyah’s female followers’ movement in various fields clarifies the result of this study (Zaharani et al., 2018).

Furthermore, this study produces agency mapping, i.e., mainstream groups consisting of textual-traditional and rational-praxis groups, and the group of critical-reinterpretation of religious groups. Casmini’s study helps

analyze *Aisyiyah's* social praxis and community-based education movement (Casmuni, 2020). It analyzes *Aisyiyah's* social praxis and community-based education movement into three movement concepts, i.e., the religious activities of Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar and Islamic egalitarianism, local praxis, and agency. According to Miswanto's study, so far, there has been orthodoxy that seems to limit the roles of *Aisyiyah* in the public sphere (Miswanto, 2020). This study finds that *Aisyiyah* was able to answer Muhammadiyah's orthodoxy through social praxis and community-based education movement (orthopraxis) to achieve gender justice.

Gender is an issue related to human rights, especially women's rights. Meanwhile, almost all views of Fiqh law make women human beings who move domestically in private spaces (Thahira & Handayani, 2023). So far, among the general public, Fiqh is considered something that is given, and already finished, so it is often considered as a legal product that has been completed and could not be questioned again. In contrast, as a contextual and dynamic intellectual work, Fiqh is a law constructed sociologically based on the situation and development of the times. It also applies to fiqh, which discusses women's issues. They tend to be dynamic. Women's issues are relatively challenging to discuss unless they use a new approach in the methodology of contemporary Fiqh preparation. Rediscussing these decisions is deemed necessary to socialize women's Fiqh, a model of Muhammadiyah, and reconstruct it in a more assertive form with a proper perspective of justice and equality.

Furthermore, the agency's role in the Muhammadiyah women's movement has not only local but also global impacts. In the context of globalization and the industrial revolution 5.0, this movement illustrates how the adaptation and reinterpretation of Islamic norms can influence the global discourse on gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, through religious reinterpretation for gender justice, *Aisyiyah* has been able to open discussions at the decision-making level within the Muhammadiyah organization, which can serve as a reference for similar women's movements in



other countries fighting for comparable rights. This aligns with Rinaldo's (2013) view, which emphasizes that women's agency in an Islamic context often relates to the capacity to break down subordination and empower oneself.

Additionally, Aisyiyah's activities in education and advocacy can strengthen the international solidarity network among Muslim women's movements, as noted by Qibtiyah (2016) who examines how the interpretation of religious texts can defend the rights of Muslim women. Thus, this movement not only changes the gender dynamics in Indonesia but also has the potential to influence the understanding and implementation of gender policies internationally. For instance, Casmini (2020) illustrates how Aisyiyah's preaching strategies support new Muslims, which can be adapted by Muslim communities around the world to support women's empowerment and gender justice.

Therefore, Muhammadiyah's active role in discussing and challenging patriarchal interpretations within Islam indicates a global trend in the fight for gender equality, as recorded in Amalia's (2017) study on how Aisyiyah promotes social change and education within the Muslim community. This success indirectly supports the global UN agenda on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls (SDGs 5), reinforcing Indonesia's position as a key player in the global discussion on gender reform in a religious context.

D. Conclusion

This study is expected to provide a new discourse for studies of the women's movement in Indonesia, especially the Islamic women's movement. The Islamic women's movement has different types and models of movement in each region, depending on the developing needs and issues. This study is limited to certain areas, so there may be some differences in problems in other areas with different movement models. Further studies are highly recommended to add to the discourse on the social transformations carried out by the Muslim women's movement in Indonesia and their contribution to gender justice.

On the one hand, *Aisyiyah* defines men and women as spiritually equal before God. However, on the other hand, *Aisyiyah* defines women's social role based on the differences of gender, and gender from a male perspective. Despite this contradiction, it should be noted that Muhammadiyah women are not only trying to adapt socially, religiously, and culturally acceptable in society, but also they are pioneers in setting religious arguments about equality in the new movement. They add a new dimension to the gender debate, and ontological equality of men and women in terms of humanity, agency, moral sovereignty, and virtue.

The concept of gender relations in Islam is about regulating justice and gender equality in society and theologically regulating the relation pattern of the microcosm (human), the microcosm (nature), and God. Islam emphasizes that men and women have equal duties and responsibilities as caliphs in regulating and prospering this earth. *Aisyiyah's* call to the family as the pillar of society acts as a buffer to reduce the excesses of rapid social change and demonstrates the suitability of Islam in the modern world.

In carrying out these efforts, *Aisyiyah* promotes women's self-discovery as individuals and community members without neglecting the family. Their participation in the family institution is needed very much for the welfare of the state. *Aisyiyah* pays excellent attention to adjusting the role of women in the family and encourages women to participate in all activities as long as they are within the boundaries of Islamic parameters. The parent organization defines these parameters; the discourse narrative on the various roles of women lies in themselves. Together with Muhammadiyah, *Aisyiyah's* contribution to the public good has been made a lot, starting with building educational facilities, health, and humanitarian activities.

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