

## Jurnal Hayula

### The Contestation of Feminism and Religious Authority and Its Implication Towards Islamic Education

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## The Contestation of Feminism and Religious Authority and Its Implication in Islamic Education

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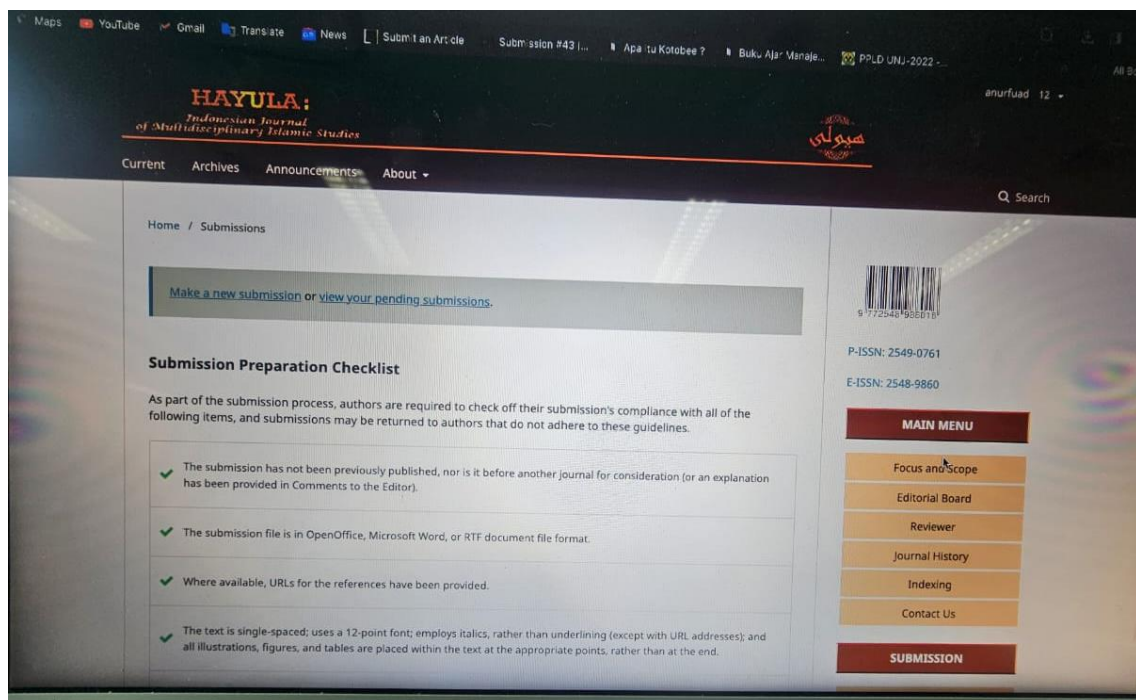
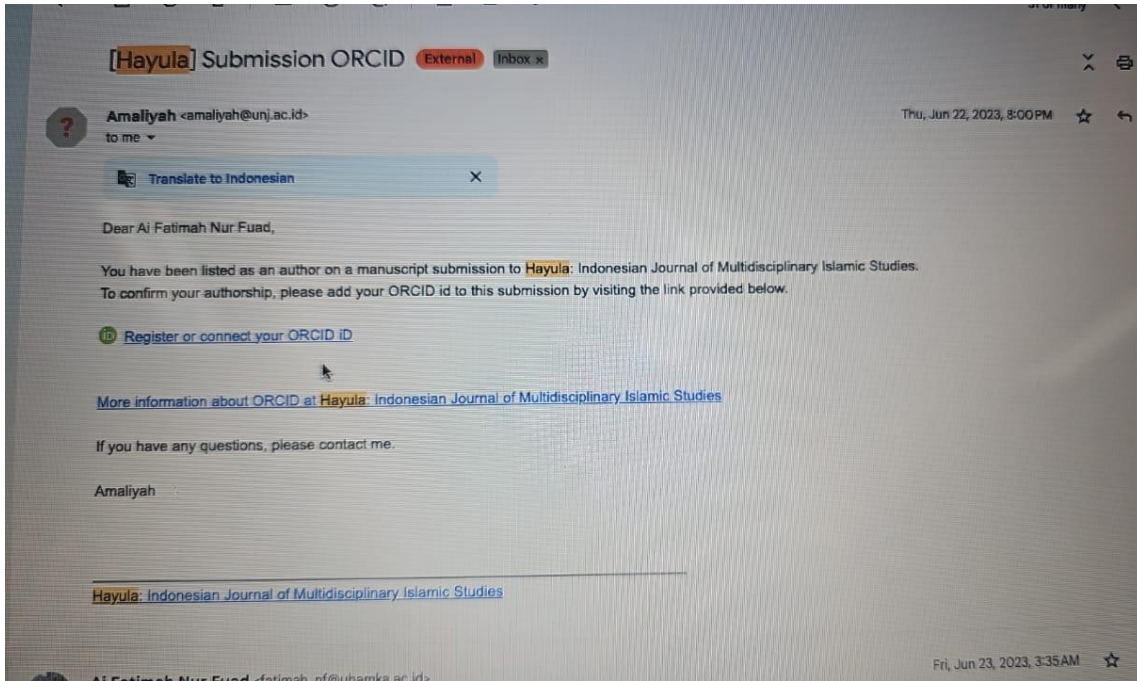
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## The Contestation of Feminism and Religious Authority and Its Implication Towards Islamic Education

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### Abstrak

Feminisme dan otoritas keagamaan merupakan dua kerangka konseptual yang selama ini menjadi pokok bahasan dalam pendidikan Islam. Kedua konsep tersebut mengalami kontestasi yang berkelanjutan karena perbedaan perspektif dan praktek ditengah komunitas Muslim mengenai dua konsep tersebut. Feminisme disatu sisi adalah gerakan yang mengadvokasi kesetaraan gender dan mengkritisi marginalisasi perempuan dalam masyarakat. Feminisme seringkali mempertanyakan budaya patriarki yang membatasi agensi perempuan. Disisi lain, otoritas keagamaan seringkali digambarkan sebagai ranah yang didominasi laki-laki. Tulisan ini bertujuan mengelaborasi bagaimana feminisme menentang otoritas keagamaan (traditional dan konservative) dan sejauh mana implikasinya terhadap pendidikan Islam? Pertanyaan ini dijawab melalui metode kualitatif berbasis kajian pustaka. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa feminisme menantang dominasi laki-laki terkait otoritas keagamaan. Feminisme menekankan perlunya lembaga pendidikan Islam menerapkan prinsip egaliter dalam Islam yang menempatkan laki-laki setara dengan perempuan dan mempromosikan peran, kepemimpinan dan otoritas keagamaan perempuan. Temuan penelitian ini akan berkontribusi dalam membangun kembali pendidikan Islam yang lebih egaliter yang memberdayakan perempuan dan membentuk masyarakat Muslim yang lebih inklusif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Feminisme, Islam, Otoritas Keagamaan, Pendidikan Islam, Perempuan*

### Abstract

Feminism and religious authority are two conceptual frameworks that have been subjects of discussion in the field of Islamic education. Both concepts are an ongoing contestation due to difference of perspectives and practices within Muslim community. Feminism in one hand is a movement that advocates gender equity and criticizes the marginalization of women in society. It often questions the culture of patriarchy that limit women's agency. On the other hand, religious authority is often described as male-dominated domain. This paper aims to elaborate how feminism challenges traditional and conservative religious authority and to what extent its implications towards Islamic education? These questions are answered through a

library-based qualitative method. The finding shows that feminism challenges the dominance of male religious authority. Feminism emphasizes the need for Islamic educational institutions to implement egalitarian principles of Islam that place female and male equally and to promote women's religious role, leadership and religious authority. This will contribute to rebuild a more egalitarian Islamic education that empower women and shape a more inclusive Muslim society.

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Islam, Religious Authority, Islamic Education, Women*

## **Introduction**

Feminism and religious authority have been a topic of discussion and debate in Islamic education for many years. The intersection of these two issues revolves around the women that are often marginalized from having leadership roles and religious authorities. The conservative Islamic education is described as often excludes the women from religious roles and contribution (Moghadam, 2002; Fuad, 2021; Mahmood, 2001; El Saadawi, 1997). Thus, feminism challenges the norms, interpretations and practices that justify gender inequalities (Barazangi, 2004). Feminism also challenges the restriction of women in religious domain that to many extents was influenced by religious authority. There are earlier studies conducted to examine contestation between feminism and religious authority both theological and historical roots of this (Ahmed, 1992). Some studies argued that this contestation led by differences of perspectives within feminist movements (Badran, 2009), differences of Muslims' responses to modernity (Fuad, 2019), especially in the Middle East (Moghadam, 2002; Abu-Lughod, 1990).

In the field of Islamic education, feminism frequently criticized the conservative interpretation of religious texts and practices that justify gender inequalities (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2001b; Wadud, 1999). The interpretation of religious texts are often constructed by male *ulama* (religious scholars). This construction has been used for justifying patriarchal norms and restricting women's rights. The feminists highlight the importance for reinterpretation of religious texts which strengthen the principles that respect women based on egalitarian values. In reinterpreting religious texts, feminists also argue that it is necessary to consider historical and sociological contexts where the Qur'anic texts and Hadith were revealed.

Feminism often challenges the male-dominated religious authorities in the society. It means that feminist perspectives challenges Islamic educational institutions that often exclude women from leadership position. Many traditional Islamic institutions are

dominated by men (Badran, 2009; Barlas, 2001a; Moghadam, 2001; Mir-Hosseini, 2003). They rarely give opportunities for women to improve their religious knowledge and skills through trainings so that women and men are equally knowledgeable. Feminism suggests to develop the curricula of Islamic education that address gender equality and give opportunities and respects for women as much as for men. Feminism also promotes women's activism and contribution in religious areas. This paper, therefore, examines the contestation between feminism and religious authority within Islamic education and investigates the implications that arises from this contestation.

There are two key conceptual words in this topic, the first is feminism and the second is religious authority. Feminist theory provides a tool through which could examine the role of women in Islamic education and the challenges they face in obtaining religious authority. Through this theory, the topic can be understood by employing patriarchal lens. Patriarchal system is a system that privileges men over women and maintain gender inequalities. In Islamic education, patriarchy is often used to justify the practices that exclude women from religious leadership positions. Feminism challenges this system and undertakes to create a more equitable society. Religious authority is a theory that refers to the influence, power and charisma that religious leaders have over their followers. Religious authority are dominated by men and excluded women (Fuad, 2021). Thus, there is a continuous intersection between feminism and religious authority and between gender and religion (Badran, 2009).

Feminism initially emerged in Europe and North America as a reaction to gender-based social inequality. Thus, female population in these countries speak up about their rights and justice under the law. This led to a social upheaval initiated by both men and women who wanted gender equality in society and the state (Suwastini, 2019). Through various calls and movements to empower women, women's rights were gradually recognized by European and North American governments. As a result, the feminist movement became one of the main vocal groups in the European political scene. This is characterized by various kinds of readings and official discourses held by feminist groups to introduce the liberation of women from patriarchy and bigotry (D. Jaya, 2019).

The conflict over the liberation of women's rights in Europe and North America also dragged the church as a religious authority that has been established since medieval times (Ross, 2001). The church is required to equalize women in religious ceremonies that they are carried out and forbidden to conduct these ceremonies that are dominated by male



(Rocheffort, 2000). This action caused the church to be pressured to carry out a reform of its system to respond to the emergence of this feminist movement. As a result, the church loosened its patriarchal policies and gave space for more women participation and contribution in the church activities (Leschi, 1996).

The success of feminist reform in the church influenced the construction of religious thought at the time. Muslim feminists who went to school in Europe began to introduce the concept of feminism and reorganize Islamic jurisprudence in favor of gender justice. Islamic thought was synthesized with feminist thought in the minds of young Islamic scholars (Moghadam, 2002). This led to the emergence of movements that are currently known as the initiators of the feminist Islamic movement. One of these initiators was Qasim Amin, a *qadhi* or judge from Egypt who became one of the figures who challenges the Islamic civilization, which at that time was in a static state, to become dynamic again with the emergence of new understandings and streams that the traditionalists saw as a threat to the faith of Muslims (Enderwitz, 1995). Thus, it was through Qasim Amin that the full concept of Islamic feminism was widely introduced to the Muslim world. Indeed, there are various responses from those who accepted to those who rejected this feminist movement. Thus, the church loosened its patriarchal policies and gave space to women to act more in church activities (Leschi, 1996).

After Qasim Amin, the ideas and concepts of Islamic feminism began to be neatly arranged. Many young girls who had studied feminism and Islam tried to unite and synthesize both ideas as an effort to relieve the ignorance and stagnation of Muslims (Keddie, 2018). Indeed, in that era, Islam was still in the transition stage from a feudal society to a modern society that could compete with Western technology (Lubis, 2022). So breakthroughs such as those initiated by young girls at that time were enough to spark religious and government authorities to try to pay attention to women's issues again in their national education development plans (Adaruddin, 2020).

As a result of the explosion of feminist thought, feudal society experienced a paradigm shift regarding women and their position in society (Irawaty & Darajat, 2019). Modern Islam emerged as a new icon in a society that had just been exposed to modern technology (Fuad, 2019). Another thing that strengthens the position of women is the active participation of women in religious community organizations (Darajat, 2017). This has led to the displacement of leadership and religious authority from males to females in society (Fuad, 2021).

Cultural upheavals and social reforms have caused feminism to become one of the forces influencing the minds of modern Muslims (Seedat, 2016). Feminism as a representation of the upheaval over the oppression and marginalization of women became an influential force in various government agencies (Tohidi, 2003). The interpretation of meaning that develops follows the feminist paradigm (Abugideiri, 2010). Policies such as GESI (Gender Equality and Social Exclusion) emerged as a response to feminists interpretation on the need in a culture of society, which in this case is Indonesian society (Said et al., 2021).

However, the development of feminism and its interpretation of meaning as a new paradigm is complex. There is culture clash that occurs between the feminist paradigm and the growing religious authority. As a result, the responses in a society are diverse. The majority of responses reject feminism because their efforts are considered as too radical in trying to promote gender equality (Abbas, 2020). The cases used as justification for this argument can be found in the issue of prayer leader (*imams*), which Amina Wadud understands that women also have the same rights as men to be an *imam* (Wadud, 1999). The other case is about Musdah Mulia who promotes CLD-KHI (Counter Legal Draft of *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* or the Compilation of Islamic Jurisprudence) as an effort to reform national Islamic law that emancipates women (Suriansyah, 2017). A similar case also arises when we discuss the RUU-KKG (*Rancangan Undang Undang-Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender means The bill draft on gender justice and equality*), which emphasizes the emancipation of women and gender equality; and the last and perhaps still lingering in our minds is the RUU-PKS (*Rancangan Undang Undang-Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual* means the bill draft on The elimination of violence against woman), which tries to eliminate sexual violence with concepts and contexts that are placed in feminist reasoning (Patros & Anggelia, 2021).

The conflict of interpretation of meaning between feminism and religious authorities in Indonesia spreads to various layers of life, one of them is in education. In practice, the dissemination of religious messages (*da'wa or fatwa*) in education is controlled by the relevant religious authority. However, it cannot be denied that recently this domination has been challenged by feminism movements. Thus, there is a turmoil of interpretation between the two parties to claim the truth (Mayer, 2016).

Islamic education is not an exception. It is not free from this conflict of interpretation. This is based on the fact that Islamic education is a field of study that learn

Islam comprehensively. Thus, the effort to control the interpretation of meaning in Islamic education is a ticket to occupy the seat of authority over the self-claimed true meaning of Islam (Hoodfar, 1996; Moghadam, 2001; Moghissi, 1999).

Having the problems above, this research will find an authoritative interpretation that can be used by Islamic educators to solve the problem related to the contestation of feminism and religious authority. In addition, we will re-read and re-contextualize the arguments of feminism and religious authority. Then, try to formulate an interpretation that is neutral for both feminism on one side and religious authority on the other side.

In exploring this discourse, we will borrow the theory of power-knowledge from Sociology that developed by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 2019). Because the debate that arises over the two claims above comes from the dynamics of power-relations that have developed in Islamic discourse. Then, we will also borrow the theory of binary oppositions from the linguistic that developed by Jacques Derrida (Derrida, 2016). The theory will provide an explanation of the paradigm used to challenge the established meaning held by the authority. Another theory that we use is the theory of religion and religious knowledge that developed by Abdolkarim Soroush (Soroush, 2000). Where this theory is an explanation of how religion becomes a place for contestation over the interpretation of meaning. Then the last is authoritative law from the jurisprudence that developed by Khaled Abou el-Fadl (Abou El Fadl, 2001). Where this theory will provide a negotiative system for the emergence of contestation in understanding a text.

## **Research Method**

This research is a qualitative with library-based approach reviewing both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of articles and books that linked directly to the contestation of feminism and religious authority within Islamic education. Secondary sources are also used in this research, and they are substantially related to primary sources. They are the complementary data in carrying out this research. In the process, the study begins by sorting and examining the primary sources related to the topic of the research being conducted. After the sorting is done, the next step is clustering the data while analyzing and comparing one data with another. It is interconnected and put together into a coherent concept. Then the same step and process also applies to the secondary sources. After both have been sorted, compared and analyzed, the researcher synthesizes the two

sources of data, to find the answer regarding the constestation of feminism and religious authority within Islamic education.

## **Research Finding and Discussion**

### **The Contestation over Gender in Islamic Education**

The role of power is highly influential in shaping the curriculum of Islamic education. The person or group in the control of power has the ability to interpret the contents of the Islamic education curriculum based on their personal beliefs, experiences and practices. However, these interpretations often to favor their own groups, leading to social resentment within the community. if not addressed promptly, this issue can result in a division of ideologies. Consequently, Islamic education becomes embroiled in a struggle for authority and control over knowledge.

This power struggle over authority has been described by Michel Foucault as part of the power relation between those who hold power and those who are subjected to it (Foucault, 2019). This will affect the knowledge flow that will develop in a place and will make it homogeneous which will eventually become authoritarian power without any room for criticism if it is in opposition (Syafiuddin, 2018). All of these premises by Foucault are called the power-knowledge paradigm, where the meaning in knowledge is formed according to the holder of the authority. This reality is what is happening in the world of Islamic education today. Where science and knowledge have been censored in such a way that only the truth desired by the authorities can be published to the general public and tackle those who do not agree with the religious authorities (Adlin, 2016; Foucault, 2019; Pratama, 2021).

This contestation of power relations becomes evident through the discussion on women's issues in Islamic education based on the interpretations of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. There is certain Muslim scholars (*ulama*) adopts conservative stance, emphasizing traditional values that have been established within the community. On the contrary, there are Muslim scholars (*ulama*) who adopts interpretations based on modern values, presenting counter-arguments against conservative views. In such circumstances, contestation emerges to question which interpretation should be followed as the preferred path. The problems that arise above have actually been conveyed by Derrida on various occasions. The essence that Derrida wants to emphasize is that we cannot understand the

issue in binary oppositions or give one of them power over the other. This is because this is done so that the interpretation remains dynamic and does not experience stagnation in the understanding of its meaning (Derrida, 2016).

However, it should be understood that this paper will not take Derrida's extreme view that tries to completely shift the main meaning to the side and emphasize the meaning on the side. On the contrary, this paper tries to show how the dynamics of the struggle for meaning that has occurred and will continue to be carried out as long as humans still exist on earth. Where these meanings will experience their ups and downs phase with different authority holders. Thus, authority holders have an important role in shaping and implementing the beliefs they hold and dwarfing what they consider deviant.

From the above, we can see how power and authority have the dynamics to change a form of meaning to a new form according to the will of the authority holder (Foucault, 2019). This is also true in the case of feminism and religious authority competing for authority over Islamic education in accordance with their views. They both use the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as the basis of their arguments and also provide natural facts related to their claims (Akmaliyah & Khomisah, 2020; Mahmudah, 2016). So that this contestation drags and confuses students in understanding the true teachings of Islam. Where all groups feel that their interpretation is the most appropriate and their opponents are wrong, while ordinary students only follow what has been conveyed by their teachers without being able to provide rebuttal arguments because they feel they still lack religious knowledge.

This polemic of power struggle raises contradictions to students in understanding religion. On the one hand, those who are born from conservative families will cling to traditional views held by religious authority as an unquestionable truth. This causes them to reject the views of their teachers who understand religion in a modernist and feminist way. Conversely, something different will happen to those who are born within progressive and modern family. They will seek modern views that are considered compatible with modernity as an unquestionable truth. This is of course makes them more resistant to conservative religious views and considers them outdated (Sahin, 2018).

The conflict above is the result of the dynamics of power relations and power struggle proposed by Foucault. Thus, feminism as a group that feels marginalized rises with Derrida's binary oppositions paradigm to challenge that authority and reverse the current dominant power relations. However, we realize that if this continues, it will only

become a time loop that goes round and round without direction. Where the power over meaning changes hands and the ruler sets rules that support and dwarf his opponent. Thus, we need to examine further how this contestation works in the teaching and learning process in Islamic education.

### **Authoritarian Interpretation in Islamic Education**

There are many issues that can be discussed about how authoritarian interpretations influence the patterns of thought that develop in Islamic education classrooms. The issues raised in this section are women's leadership, which has become a common discourse that students receive from childhood to adulthood. These issues also create a lot of cross opinions that are not only confusing but also convolute in giving the final verdict to students. Therefore, this study will objectively criticize the authoritian interpretation that emerges from both sides of the conflict.

Many study on various levels of education ranging from elementary to college levels, The propositions regarding the role of women as leaders experience ups and downs with a variety of reasons (Haris, 2015; Putry, 2015). This is because society is accustomed to positioning men as leaders and women as those who are led. This practice exists in societies that are still firmly attached to the conservative views (Sholihah, 2020). Meanwhile, those society that are more open and interact with modernity and progressive views pointed out that a skilful individual are capable to be a leader regardless of gender (Putry, 2015).

The complexity of this matter increases when we compare women's leadership with the ongoing contestation between feminism and religious authority (Ilyas, 2002). Where both groups of feminism and religious authority interpret the same verse of *Qur'an* (*ayat*) and build the contradictive arguments, justifications and conclusions. Both contesting parties start their premise by citing the word *qowwamuuna* in (QS an-Nisa [4]; 34). In brief, this verse talks about the role of a man who becomes *qowwam* for a woman. In the perspective of religious authority that has been established in society, the word of *qowwaam* is interpreted as leaders who must protect those they lead (Masri, 2021). In this case, the men have the duty and responsibility to lead women and provide guidance to the right path in accordance with the commands of God. This perspective is widely embraced in conservative society as a genuine leadership, where men organize and fulfil all the needs of women and women follow and obey their leaders (M. Jaya, 2020; Kholis, 2015).

However, these views are challenged by feminists as a form of discrimination and marginalization of women (Wadud, 1999, 2013). Feminists bring up a new meaning of the word *qowwaam* as a protector (Haris, 2015; Himmah & Yaqien, 2017; Rusydiana & Azami, 2021). The men are not leaders, protectors who protect women instead. The feminist viewpoint recognize the distinction in meaning between the concepts of leader and protector, which contrasts with the conservative view that consider them as synonymous. Therefore, feminists challenge this paradigm and call for reinterpretation of the term “*qowwamuuna*” to promote more egalitarian stance towards women (Sholihah, 2020).

The interpretation of the term *qowwamuuna* represents a tangible manifestation of power relations and struggles, as described by Foucault. On one hand, the established authority determines its authoritative meaning, while opponents of that authority seek to reinterpret it in order to challenge the dominant meaning. If the power has shifted, the next authority holder will use their own beliefs as an argument to establish policies regarding the interpretation of the new meaning. Therefore, a scientific critique of both perspectives is necessary to prevent an excessive dominance of a single established viewpoint.

The perspective within the framework of religious authority are based on the premise that men are the leaders of women (M. Jaya, 2020; Kholis, 2015; Masri, 2021). In the process, it will have arguments that will lead to the conclusion that men are created to be leaders and men are superior to women. Both views are reflected in policies that try to subordinate women. Moreover, this claim is reinforced by citing the *Hadith* which tells the leadership of a Persian princess who the prophet tell will only wait for her destruction (*HR al-Bukhari: 4425*). However, it cannot be used as a form of justification since the claims often arise from a mixture of culture and tradition. Moreover, the Hadith is often cited as a primary justification for preventing women from assuming leadership roles is, in fact specific to the daughter of Kisra of Persia. Thus, the validation of this claim of male superiority cannot be justified as the truth embraced in Islam. It is akin to falsely claiming it to the teachings of the prophet Muhammad.

There are also the views developed by feminists who use the premise that men are protectors of women (Haris, 2015; Himmah & Yaqien, 2017; Khoer et al., 2022). In the process, a conclusion will be drawn on the believes that women and men are absolutely equal and at the extreme conclusion women must become leaders in various sectors. The two views above illustrate how a hegemony of meaning is successfully dominated by other

groups and they change it into a new meaning that corresponds to their views. The view of absolute equality is an interesting concept but in fact difficult to implement. Because of the thought process that has been built in social life which positions men as breadwinners everywhere, while women prepare everything at home. This breakthrough to make absolute equality will cause great resistance not only to men, but also to women who still hold conservative views. So that the dream of absolute equality where men's work is women's work and vice versa still leaves a wider conflict in society. Then the extreme view that women must become leaders has clearly emerged as a reaction to the backlash against masculine authority that has long dominated. So women are expected to occupy important seats in structural positions in various formal and non-formal institutions. It is important to understand that such a view will not change the existing situation. These conclusions only change who is in power and do not provide conclusions that are accepted by both parties. Because in essence, this policy only moves masculine authority into feminine authority. From a patriarchy worldview to a matriarchy worldview which is essentially the same but with different authority holders.

From the two analyses above, we already know that the two claims that are argued in the contestation are not perfect. So the question that arises now, how do we position these interpretations to students in Islamic education. Then we must understand that the educator's claim to a view cannot be imposed on his students as an absolute truth. Because if this is still done regardless of the educator following religious authority or feminism, the educator has carried out an authoritarian interpretation to his students without any room for criticism. Whereas this is what is being sought not to happen, so as to open space for students to explore various arguments and views that are considered suitable and acceptable in revelation (*naql*) and perfect healthy reason (*aql*).

### **Authoritative Islamic Education: An Alternative**

The previous explanation on the authoritarian interpretation provides insights into the discourse on gender issues in Islamic education. There are contradictive school of thoughts that try to dominate over one another, while the other resists such attempts. This raises the question of why such contestation emerge, despite the arguments originating from the same Qur'anic verse.

Having explaining above, we need to pay attention to the paradigm of thinking put forward by Abdolkarim Soroush, that religion and religious knowledge are different things



(Soroush, 2000). Where religion will remain intact throughout the ages, an example of which is the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, which will not be added or revised to adjust the era it occupies. This happens because Allah swt. has preserved both, so humans do not need to doubt the authenticity of the verses in the *Qur'an* and can examine the *Hadith* to find out the level of truth. However, this is different from religious knowledge, which will experience an evolution and devolution following the times (Rahmat, 2021). It is in this religious knowledge that interpretations arise that are taken from religions such as the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (Fletcher, 2005). So that it forms a new system of thought and will change its form in every era. Therefore, religion is something sacred and inviolable, while religious knowledge is open to verification of the truth of the arguments developed (Mas'udah Al Mas'udah, 2018; Soroush, 2000; Sufyan & Irwan, 2022).

Through Soroush's thoughts, we examine the problem above. We can see that in the interpretation of religious authority and feminism on the word *qowwamuuna*. It is the dynamics of a religious knowledge, where both arguments are interpretations of a verse in the *Qur'an*. So claiming that the truth belongs to one of them is an arrogant and authoritarian act. Therefore, the discourse and debate over who is right on this issue is subjective and not objective. Because both sides will consider their opinions the most rational and objective, while their opponents are irrational and subjective.

Seeing the case that has been stated above. So a negotiative action is needed for both of them to come up with a middle ground that can be embraced by both. This is done in view of how Islamic education greatly affects the young generation of Islam. Thus, creating a climate of Islamic education that is neutral from this kind of contestation in the classroom is a must for educators and education experts. Because students need open and non-authoritarian learning to be able to understand the knowledge that has been conveyed.

Therefore, we need to pay attention to the conception offered by Khaled Abou el-Fadl regarding the authoritative concept in understanding Islam. Where Muslims must understand that the *Qur'an* is a work in movement (Abou El Fadl, 2001). Where the process is still ongoing and new interpretations will replace the old ones with new variations as well. So in the process, understanding Islam authoritatively is done by understanding that humans cannot justify their arguments by positioning Allah swt. as a shield for their claims. Amin Abdullah calls this process as negotiative hermeneutics (Abou El Fadl, 2001). Where the author, text, and reader try to place the problem and find

a wise agreement in answering the existing problems. Thus, an authoritative rule is created and does not favor the authority holder alone (Abou El Fadl, 2001; Sofyan, 2015).

Regarding the issue raised earlier concerning women's leadership within the authoritative paradigm, we refrain from taking an extreme stance that denies women's capability to lead merely based on *Hadith* al-Bukhari. It is important to note that the context of the *Hadith* specifically pertains to the inhabitants of Persia and their queen. Additionally, we consider instead the queen of Saba and Aisyah RA which provides different perspectives. At the same time, we also recognize that it would be inappropriate to impose an obligation on women to assume leadership positions in all formal and informal structures. This is because every individual, regardless of gender, has their own unique capabilities. Therefore, women have the same right to lead as men do.

In the context of Islamic education, the process of authorizing ideas that develop within the classroom must consider the inclusion of two primary perspectives. The objective is to seek a middle ground that is neither self-centered nor authoritarian (Mahfud, 2019). This involves carefully examining and integrating the arguments of two sides to form a new idea that is open and negotiable. As explained earlier, we seek a negotiative and neutral position towards feminist groups and religious authority on the issue of women's leadership. However, it is important and crucial for us to demonstrate wisdom and respect towards all different perspectives without resorting to demonization.

## **Conclusion**

Feminism is an activists movement aimed at challenging the marginalization of women. It has gained support not only from women, but also from men. This support enabling it to penetrate conservative areas within Islamic education. Feminism has thrived as a movement opposing gender inequality. In this process, feminism has engaged in a power struggle with religious authority. According to Foucault, this power struggle manifest as a power relation that seeks to control the interpretation of established meanings. As a response, feminism has emerged to challenge the domination over religious authority through extensive discourses.

This contestation has had a negative impact on Islamic education as educators present diverse arguments when grappling with particular issues on women. This can be observed in the debate over the permissibility of women as leaders, with some opposing

and others supporting it. As a result, students become divided in their understanding of who is right and who is wrong. To address this issue, Islamic education need to assume an authoritative role in discussing such matters. It is important to establish a unified framework that encompasses contradictory arguments and foster wise negotiations. This approach ensures that Islamic education remains cohesive, avoiding divisions over different views, and remains open to understanding Islam in accordance with revelation (*naql*) and reason (*aql*).

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# Hasil Turnitin 1

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**The Contestation of Feminism and Religious Authority and Its Implication Towards Islamic Education**

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**Abstrak**

Feminisme dan otoritas keagamaan merupakan dua kerangka konseptual yang selama ini menjadi pokok bahasan dalam pendidikan Islam. Kedua konsep tersebut mengalami kontestasi yang berkelanjutan karena perbedaan perspektif dan praktek ditengah komunitas Muslim mengenai dua konsep tersebut. Feminisme disatu sisi adalah gerakan yang mengadvokasi kesetaraan gender dan mengkritisi marginalisasi perempuan dalam masyarakat. Feminisme seringkali mempertanyakan budaya patriarki yang membatasi agensi perempuan. Disisi lain, otoritas keagamaan seringkali digambarkan sebagai ranah yang didominasi laki-laki. Tulisan ini bertujuan mengelaborasi bagaimana feminisme menentang otoritas keagamaan (traditional dan konservative) dan sejauh mana implikasinya terhadap pendidikan Islam? Pertanyaan ini dijawab melalui metode kualitatif berbasis kajian pustaka. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa feminisme menantang dominasi laki-laki terkait otoritas keagamaan. Feminisme menekankan perlunya lembaga pendidikan Islam menerapkan prinsip egaliter dalam Islam yang menempatkan laki-laki setara dengan perempuan dan mempromosikan peran, kepemimpinan dan otoritas keagamaan perempuan. Temuan penelitian ini akan berkontribusi dalam membangun kembali pendidikan Islam yang lebih egaliter yang memberdayakan perempuan dan membentuk masyarakat Muslim yang lebih inklusif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Feminisme, Islam, Otoritas Keagamaan, Pendidikan Islam, Perempuan*

**Abstract**

Feminism and religious authority are two conceptual frameworks that have been subjects of discussion in the field of Islamic education. Both concepts are an ongoing contestation due to difference of perspectives and practices within Muslim community. Feminism in one hand is a movement that advocates gender equity and criticizes the marginalization of women in society. It often questions the culture of patriarchy that limit women's agency. On the other hand, religious authority is often described as male-dominated domain. This paper aims to elaborate how feminism challenges traditional and conservative religious authority and to what extent its implications towards Islamic education? These questions are answered through a

library-based qualitative method. The finding shows that feminism challenges the dominance of male religious authority. Feminism emphasizes the need for Islamic educational institutions to implement egalitarian principles of Islam that place female and male equally and to promote women's religious role, leadership and religious authority. This will contribute to rebuild a more egalitarian Islamic education that empower women and shape a more inclusive Muslim society.

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Islam, Religious Authority, Islamic Education, Women*

### **Introduction**

Feminism and religious authority have been a topic of discussion and debate in Islamic education for many years. The intersection of these two issues revolves around the women that are often marginalized from having leadership roles and religious authorities. The conservative Islamic education is described as often excludes the women from religious roles and contribution (Moghadam, 2002; Fuad, 2021; Mahmood, 2001; El Saadawi, 1997). Thus, feminism challenges the norms, interpretations and practices that justify gender inequalities (Barazangi, 2004). Feminism also challenges the restriction of women in religious domain that to many extents was influenced by religious authority. There are earlier studies conducted to examine contestation between feminism and religious authority both theological and historical roots of this (Ahmed, 1992). Some studies argued that this contestation led by differences of perspectives within feminist movements (Badran, 2009), differences of Muslims' responses to modernity (Fuad, 2019), especially in the Middle East (Moghadam, 2002; Abu-Lughod, 1990).

In the field of Islamic education, feminism frequently criticized the conservative interpretation of religious texts and practices that justify gender inequalities (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2001b; Wadud, 1999). The interpretation of religious texts are often constructed by male *ulama* (religious scholars). This construction has been used for justifying patriarchal norms and restricting women's rights. The feminists highlight the importance for reinterpretation of religious texts which strengthen the principles that respect women based on egalitarian values. In reinterpreting religious texts, feminists also argue that it is necessary to consider historical and sociological contexts where the Qur'anic texts and Hadith were revealed.

Feminism often challenges the male-dominated religious authorities in the society. It means that feminist perspectives challenges Islamic educational institutions that often exclude women from leadership position. Many traditional Islamic institutions are

dominated by men (Badran, 2009; Barlas, 2001a; Moghadam, 2001; Mir-Hosseini, 2003). They rarely give opportunities for women <sup>14</sup> to improve their religious knowledge and skills through trainings so that women and men are equally knowledgeable. Feminism suggests to develop the curricula of Islamic education that address gender equality and give opportunities and respects for women as much as for men. Feminism also promotes women's activism and contribution in religious areas. This paper, therefore, examines the contestation between feminism and religious authority within Islamic education and investigates the implications that arise from this contestation.

There are two key conceptual words in this topic, the first is feminism and the second is religious authority. Feminist theory provides a tool through which could examine the role of women in Islamic education and the challenges they face in obtaining religious authority. Through this theory, the topic can be understood by employing patriarchal lens. Patriarchal system is a system that privileges men over women and maintain gender inequalities. In Islamic education, patriarchy is often used to justify the practices that exclude women from religious leadership positions. Feminism challenges this system and undertakes to create a more equitable society. Religious authority is a theory that refers to the influence, power and charisma that religious leaders have over their followers. Religious authority are dominated by men and excluded women (Fuad, 2021). Thus, there is a continuous intersection between feminism and religious authority and between gender and religion (Badran, 2009).

Feminism initially emerged in Europe and North America as a reaction to gender-based social inequality. Thus, female population in these countries speak up about their rights and justice under the law. This led to a social upheaval initiated by both men and women who wanted gender equality in society and the state (Suwastini, 2019). Through various calls and movements to empower women, women's rights were gradually recognized by European and North American governments. As a result, the feminist movement became one of the main vocal groups in the European political scene. This is characterized by various kinds of readings and official discourses held by feminist groups to introduce the liberation of women from <sup>9</sup> patriarchy and bigotry (D. Jaya, 2019).

The conflict over the liberation of <sup>9</sup> women's rights in Europe and North America also dragged the church as a religious authority that has been established since medieval times (Ross, 2001). The church is required to equalize women in religious ceremonies that they are carried out and forbidden to conduct these ceremonies that are dominated by male

(Rochefort, 2000). This action caused the church to be pressured to carry out a reform of its system to respond the emergence of this feminist movement. As a result, the church loosened its patriarchal policies and gave space for more women participation and contribution in the church activities (Leschi, 1996).

The success of feminist reform in the church influenced the construction of religious thought at the time. Muslim feminists who went to school in Europe began to introduce the concept of feminism and reorganize Islamic jurisprudence in favor of gender justice. Islamic thought was synthesized with feminist thought in the minds of young Islamic scholars (Moghadam, 2002). This led to the emergence of movements that are currently known as the initiators of the feminist Islamic movement. One of these initiators was Qasim Amin, a *qadhi* or judge from Egypt who became one of the figures who challenges the Islamic civilization, which at that time was in a static state, to become dynamic again with the emergence of new understandings and streams that the traditionalists saw as a threat to the faith of Muslims (Enderwitz, 1995). Thus, it was through Qasim Amin that the full concept of Islamic feminism was widely introduced to the Muslim world. Indeed, there are various responses from those who accepted to those who rejected this feminist movement. Thus, the church loosened its patriarchal policies and gave space to women to act more in church activities (Leschi, 1996).

After Qasim Amin, the ideas and concepts of Islamic feminism began to be neatly arranged. Many young girls who had studied feminism and Islam tried to unite and synthesize both ideas as an effort to relieve the ignorance and stagnation of Muslims (Keddie, 2018). Indeed, in that era, Islam was still in the transition stage from a feudal society to a modern society that could compete with Western technology (Lubis, 2022). So breakthroughs such as those initiated by young girls at that time were enough to spark religious and government authorities to try to pay attention to women's issues again in their national education development plans (Adaruddin, 2020).

As a result of the explosion of feminist thought, feudal society experienced a paradigm shift regarding women and their position in society (Irawaty & Darajat, 2019). Modern Islam emerged as a new icon in a society that had just been exposed to modern technology (Fuad, 2019). Another thing that strengthens the position of women is the active participation of women in religious community organizations (Darajat, 2017). This has led to the displacement of leadership and religious authority from males to females in society (Fuad, 2021).

Cultural upheavals and social reforms have caused feminism to become one of the forces influencing the minds of modern Muslims (Seedat, 2016). Feminism as a representation of the upheaval over the oppression and marginalization of women became an influential force in various government agencies (Tohidi, 2003). The interpretation of meaning that develops follows the feminist paradigm (Abugideiri, 2010). Policies such as GESI (Gender Equality and Social Exclusion) emerged as a response to feminists interpretation on the need in a culture of society, which in this case is Indonesian society (Said et al., 2021).

However, the development of feminism and its interpretation of meaning as a new paradigm is complex. There is culture clash that occurs between the feminist paradigm and the growing religious authority. As a result, the responses in a society are diverse. The majority of responses reject feminism because their efforts are considered as too radical in trying to promote gender equality (Abbas, 2020). The cases used as justification for this argument can be found in the issue of prayer leader (*imams*), which Amina Wadud understands that women also have the same rights as men to be an *imam* (Wadud, 1999). The other case is about Musdah Mulia who promotes CLD-KHI (Counter Legal Draft of *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* or the Compilation of Islamic Jurisprudence) as an effort to reform national Islamic law that emancipates women (Suriansyah, 2017). A similar case also arises when we discuss the RUU-KKG (*Rancangan Undang Undang-Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender* means *The bill draft on gender justice and equality*), which emphasizes the emancipation of women and gender equality; and the last and perhaps still lingering in our minds is the RUU-PKS (*Rancangan Undang Undang-Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual* means the bill draft on *The elimination of violence against woman*), which tries to eliminate sexual violence with concepts and contexts that are placed in feminist reasoning (Patros & Anggelia, 2021).

The conflict of interpretation of meaning between feminism and religious authorities in Indonesia spreads to various layers of life, one of them is in education. In practice, the dissemination of religious messages (*da'wa or fatwa*) in education is controlled by the relevant religious authority. However, it cannot be denied that recently this domination has been challenged by feminism movements. Thus, there is a turmoil of interpretation between the two parties to claim the truth (Mayer, 2016).

Islamic education is not an exception. It is not free from this conflict of interpretation. This is based on the fact that Islamic education is a field of study that learn

Islam comprehensively. Thus, the effort to control the interpretation of meaning in Islamic education is a ticket to occupy the seat of authority over the self-claimed true meaning of Islam (Hoodfar, 1996; Moghadam, 2001; Moghissi, 1999).

Having the problems above, this research will find an authoritative interpretation that can be used by Islamic educators to solve the problem related to the contestation of feminism and religious authority. In addition, we will re-read and re-contextualize the arguments of feminism and religious authority. Then, try to formulate an interpretation that is neutral for both feminism on one side and religious authority on another side.

In exploring this discourse, we will borrow the theory of power-knowledge from Sociology that developed by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 2019). Because the debate that arises over the two claims above comes from the dynamics of power-relations that have developed in Islamic discourse. Then, we will also borrow the theory of binary oppositions from the linguistic that developed by Jacques Derrida (Derrida, 2016). The theory will provide an explanation of the paradigm used to challenge the established meaning held by the authority. Another theory that we use is the theory of religion and religious knowledge that developed by Abdolkarim Soroush (Soroush, 2000). Where this theory is an explanation of how religion becomes a place for contestation over the interpretation of meaning. Then the last is authoritative law from the jurisprudence that developed by Khaled Abou el-Fadl (Abou El Fadl, 2001). Where this theory will provide a negotiative system for the emergence of contestation in understanding a text.

### **Research Method**

This research is a qualitative with library-based approach reviewing both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of articles and books that linked directly to the contestation of feminism and religious authority within Islamic education. Secondary sources are also used in this research, and they are substantially related to primary sources. They are the complementary data in carrying out this research. In the process, the study begins by sorting and examining the primary sources related to the topic of the research being conducted. After the sorting is done, the next step is clustering the data while analyzing and comparing one data with another. It is interconnected and put together into a coherent concept. Then the same step and process also applies to the secondary sources. After both have been sorted, compared and analyzed, the researcher synthesizes the two

sources of data, to find the answer regarding the constestation of feminism and religious authority within Islamic education.

## Research Finding and Discussion

### The Contestation over Gender in Islamic Education

The role of power is highly influential in shaping the curriculum of Islamic education. The person or group in the control of power has the ability to interpret the contents of the Islamic education curriculum based on their personal beliefs, experiences and practices. However, these interpretations often to favor their own groups, leading to social resentment within the community. if not addressed promptly, this issue can result in a division of ideologies. Consequently, Islamic education becomes embroiled in a struggle for authority and control over knowledge.

This power struggle over authority has been described by Michel Foucault as part of the power relation between those who hold power and those who are subjected to it (Foucault, 2019). This will affect the knowledge flow that will develop in a place and will make it homogeneous which will eventually become authoritarian power without any room for criticism if it is in opposition (Syafiuddin, 2018). All of these premises by Foucault are called the power-knowledge paradigm, where the meaning in knowledge is formed according to the holder of the authority. This reality is what is happening in the world of Islamic education today. Where science and knowledge have been censored in such a way that only the truth desired by the authorities can be published to the general public and tackle those who do not agree with the religious authorities (Adlin, 2016; Foucault, 2019; Pratama, 2021).

This contestation of power relations becomes evident through the discussion on women's issues in Islamic education based on the interpretations of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. There is certain Muslim scholars (*ulama*) adopts conservative stance, emphasizing traditional values that have been established within the community. On the contrary, there are Muslim scholars (*ulama*) who adopts interpretations based on modern values, presenting counter-arguments against conservative views. In such circumstances, contestation emerges to question which interpretation should be followed as the preferred path. The problems that arise above have actually been conveyed by Derrida on various occasions. The essence that Derrida wants to emphasize is that we cannot understand the

issue in binary oppositions or give one of them power over the other. This is because this is done so that the interpretation remains dynamic and does not experience stagnation in the understanding of its meaning (Derrida, 2016).

However, it should be understood that this paper will not take Derrida's extreme view that tries to completely shift the main meaning to the side and emphasize the meaning on the side. On the contrary, this paper tries to show how the dynamics of the struggle for meaning that has occurred and will continue to be carried out as long as humans still exist on earth. Where these meanings will experience their ups and downs phase with different authority holders. Thus, authority holders have a important role in shaping and implementing the beliefs they hold and dwarfing what they consider deviant.

From the above, we can see how power and authority have the dynamics to change a form of meaning to a new form according to the will of the authority holder (Foucault, 2019). This is also true in the case of feminism and religious authority competing for authority over Islamic education in accordance with their views. They both use the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as the basis of their arguments and also provide natural facts related to their claims (Akmaliyah & Khomisah, 2020; Mahmudah, 2016). So that this contestation drags and confuses students in understanding the true teachings of Islam. Where all groups feel that their interpretation is the most appropriate and their opponents are wrong, while ordinary students only follow what has been conveyed by their teachers without being able to provide rebuttal arguments because they feel they still lack religious knowledge.

This polemic of power struggle raises contradictions to students in understanding religion. On the one hand, those who are born from conservative families will cling to traditional views held by religious authority as an unquestionable truth. This causes them to reject the views of their teachers who understand religion in a modernist and feminist way. Conversely, something different will happen to those who are born within progressive and modern family. They will seek modern views that are considered compatible with modernity as an unquestionable truth. This is of course makes them more resistant to conservative religious views and considers them outdated (Sahin, 2018).

The conflict above is the result of the dynamics of power relations and power struggle proposed by Foucault. Thus, feminism as a group that feels marginalized rises with Derrida's binary oppositions paradigm to challenge that authority and reverse the current dominant power relations. However, we realize that if this continues, it will only



become a time loop that goes round and round without direction. Where the power over meaning changes hands and the ruler sets rules that support and dwarf his opponent. Thus, we need to examine further how this contestation works in the teaching and learning process in Islamic education.

### **Authoritarian Interpretation in Islamic Education**

There are many issues that can be discussed about how authoritarian interpretations influence the patterns of thought that develop in Islamic education classrooms. The issues raised in this section are women's leadership, which has become a common discourse that students receive from childhood to adulthood. These issues also create a lot of cross opinions that are not only confusing but also convolute in giving the final verdict to students. Therefore, this study will objectively criticize the authoritarian interpretation that emerges from both sides of the conflict.

Many study on various levels of education ranging from elementary to college levels, The propositions regarding the role of women as leaders experience ups and downs with a variety of reasons (Haris, 2015; Putry, 2015). This is because society is accustomed to positioning men as leaders and women as those who are led. This practice exists in societies that are still firmly attached to the conservative views (Sholihah, 2020). Meanwhile, those society that are more open and interact with modernity and progressive views pointed out that a skilful individual are capable to be a leader regardless of gender (Putry, 2015).

The complexity of this matter increases when we compare women's leadership with the ongoing contestation between feminism and religious authority (Ilyas, 2002). Where both groups of feminism and religious authority interpret the same verse of *Qur'an* (*ayat*) and build the contradictive arguments, justifications and conclusions. Both contesting parties start their premise by citing the word *qowwamuuna* in (QS an-Nisa [4]; 34). In brief, this verse talks about the role of a man who becomes *qowwam* for a woman. In the perspective of religious authority that has been established in society, the word of *qowwaam* is interpreted as leaders who must protect those they lead (Masri, 2021). In this case, the men have the duty and responsibility to lead women and provide guidance to the right path in accordance with the commands of God. This perspective is widely embraced in conservative society as a genuine leadership, where men organize and fulfil all the needs of women and women follow and obey their leaders (M. Jaya, 2020; Kholis, 2015).

However, these views are challenged by feminists as a form of discrimination and marginalization of women (Wadud, 1999, 2013). Feminists bring up a new meaning of the word *qowwaam* as a protector (Haris, 2015; Himmah & Yaqien, 2017; Rusydiana & Azami, 2021). The men are not leaders, protectors who protect women instead. The feminist viewpoint recognize the distinction in meaning between the concepts of leader and protector, which contrasts with the conservative view that consider them as synonymous. Therefore, feminists challenge this paradigm and call for reinterpretation of the term “*qowwamuuna*” to promote more egalitarian stance towards women (Sholihah, 2020).

The interpretation of the term *qowwamuuna* represents a tangible manifestation of power relations and struggles, as described by Foucault. On one hand, the established authority determines its authoritative meaning, while opponents of that authority seek to reinterpret it in order to challenge the dominant meaning. If the power has shifted, the next authority holder will use their own beliefs as an argument to establish policies regarding the interpretation of the new meaning. Therefore, a scientific critique of both perspectives is necessary to prevent an excessive dominance of a single established viewpoint.

The perspective within the framework of religious authority are based on the premise that men are the leaders of women (M. Jaya, 2020; Kholis, 2015; Masri, 2021). In the process, it will have arguments that will lead to the conclusion that men are created to be leaders and men are superior to women. Both views are reflected in policies that try to subordinate women. Moreover, this claim is reinforced by citing the *Hadith* which tells the leadership of a Persian princess who the prophet tell will only wait for her destruction (*HR al-Bukhari: 4425*). However, it cannot be used as a form of justification since the claims often arise from a mixture of culture and tradition. Moreover, the Hadith is often cited as a primary justification for preventing women from assuming leadership roles is, in fact specific to the daughter of Kisra of Persia. Thus, the validation of this claim of male superiority cannot be justified as the truth embraced in Islam. It is akin to falsely claiming it to the teachings of the prophet Muhammad.

There are also the views developed by feminists who use the premise that men are protectors of women (Haris, 2015; Himmah & Yaqien, 2017; Khoer et al., 2022). In the process, a conclusion will be drawn on the believes that women and men are absolutely equal and at the extreme conclusion women must become leaders in various sectors. The two views above illustrate how a hegemony of meaning is successfully dominated by other

groups and they change it into a new meaning that corresponds to their views. The view of absolute equality is an interesting concept but in fact difficult to implement. Because of the thought process that has been built in social life which positions men as breadwinners everywhere, while women prepare everything at home. This breakthrough to make absolute equality will cause great resistance not only to men, but also to women who still hold conservative views. So that the dream of absolute equality where **men's work** is **women's work and vice versa** still leaves a wider conflict in society. Then the extreme view that women must become leaders has clearly emerged as a reaction to the backlash against masculine authority that has long dominated. So women are expected to occupy important seats in structural positions in various formal and non-formal institutions. It is important to understand that such a view will not change the existing situation. These conclusions only change who is in power and do not provide conclusions that are accepted by both parties. Because in essence, this policy only moves masculine authority into feminine authority. From a patriarchy worldview to a matriarchy worldview which is essentially the same but with different authority holders.

From the two analyses above, we already know that the two claims that are argued in the contestation are not perfect. So the question that arises now, how do we position these interpretations to students in Islamic education. Then we must understand that the educator's claim to a view cannot be imposed on his students as an absolute truth. Because if this is still done regardless of the educator following religious authority or feminism, the educator has carried out an authoritarian interpretation to his students without any room for criticism. Whereas this is what is being sought not to happen, so as to open space for students to explore various arguments and views that are considered suitable and acceptable in revelation (*naql*) and perfect healthy reason (*aql*).

#### **Authoritative Islamic Education: An Alternative**

The previous explanation on the authoritarian interpretation provides insights into the discourse on gender issues in Islamic education. There are contradictive school of thoughts that try to dominate over one another, while the other resists such attempts. This raises the question of why such contestation emerge, despite the arguments originating from the same Qur'anic verse.

Having explaining above, we need to pay attention to the paradigm of thinking put forward by Abdolkarim Soroush, that religion and religious knowledge are different things

(Soroush, 2000). Where religion will remain intact throughout the ages, an example of which is the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, which will not be added or revised to adjust the era it occupies. This happens because Allah swt. has preserved both, so humans do not need to doubt the authenticity of the verses in the *Qur'an* and can examine the *Hadith* to find out the level of truth. However, this is different from religious knowledge, which will experience an evolution and devolution following the times (Rahmat, 2021). It is in this religious knowledge that interpretations arise that are taken from religions such as the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (Fletcher, 2005). So that it forms a new system of thought and will change its form in every era. Therefore, religion is something sacred and inviolable, while religious knowledge is open to verification of the truth of the arguments developed (Mas'udah Al Mas'udah, 2018; Soroush, 2000; Sufyan & Irwan, 2022).

Through Soroush's thoughts, we examine the problem above. We can see that in the interpretation of religious authority and feminism on the word *qowwamuuna*. It is the dynamics of a religious knowledge, where both arguments are interpretations of a verse in the *Qur'an*. So claiming that the truth belongs to one of them is an arrogant and authoritarian act. Therefore, the discourse and debate over who is right on this issue is subjective and not objective. Because both sides will consider their opinions the most rational and objective, while their opponents are irrational and subjective.

Seeing the case that has been stated above. So a negotiative action is needed for both of them to come up with a middle ground that can be embraced by both. This is done in view of how Islamic education greatly affects the young generation of Islam. Thus, creating a climate of Islamic education that is neutral from this kind of contestation in the classroom is a must for educators and education experts. Because students need open and non-authoritarian learning to be able to understand the knowledge that has been conveyed.

Therefore, we need to pay attention to the conception offered by Khaled Abou el-Fadl regarding the authoritative concept in understanding Islam. Where Muslims must understand that the *Qur'an* is a work in movement (Abou El Fadl, 2001). Where the process is still ongoing and new interpretations will replace the old ones with new variations as well. So in the process, understanding Islam authoritatively is done by understanding that humans cannot justify their arguments by positioning Allah swt. as a shield for their claims. Amin Abdullah calls this process as negotiative hermeneutics (Abou El Fadl, 2001). Where the author, text, and reader try to place the problem and find

a wise agreement in answering the existing problems. Thus, an authoritative rule is created and does not favor the authority holder alone (Abou El Fadl, 2001; Sofyan, 2015).

Regarding the issue raised earlier concerning women's leadership within the authoritative paradigm, we refrain from taking an extreme stance that denies women's capability to lead merely based on *Hadith* al-Bukhari. It is important to note that the context of the *Hadith* specifically pertains to the inhabitants of Persia and their queen. Additionally, we consider instead the queen of Saba and Aisyah RA which provides different perspectives. At the same time, we also recognize that it would be inappropriate to impose an obligation on women to assume leadership positions in all formal and informal structures. This is because every individual, regardless of gender, has their own unique capabilities. Therefore, women have the same right to lead as men do.

In the context of Islamic education, the process of authorizing ideas that develop within the classroom must consider the inclusion of two primary perspectives. The objective is to seek a middle ground that is neither self-centered nor authoritarian (Mahfud, 2019). This involves carefully examining and integrating the arguments of two sides to form a new idea that is open and negotiable. As explained earlier, we seek a negotiative and neutral position towards feminist groups and religious authority on the issue of women's leadership. However, it is important and crucial for us to demonstrate wisdom and respect towards all different perspectives without resorting to demonization.

## Conclusion

Feminism is an activists movement aimed at challenging the marginalization of women. It has gained support not only from women, but also from men. This support enabling it to penetrate conservative areas within Islamic education. Feminism has thrived as a movement opposing gender inequality. In this process, feminism has engaged in a power struggle with religious authority. According to Foucault, this power struggle manifest as a power relation that seeks to control the interpretation of established meanings. As a response, feminism has emerged to challenge the domination over religious authority through extensive discourses.

This contestation has had a negative impact on Islamic education as educators present diverse arguments when grappling with particular issues on women. This can be observed in the debate over the permissibility of women as leaders, with some opposing

and others supporting it. As a result, students become divided in their understanding of who is right and who is wrong. To address this issue, Islamic education need to assume an authoritative role in discussing such matters. It is important to establish a unified framework that encompasses contradictory arguments and foster wise negotiations. This approach ensures that Islamic education remains cohesive, avoiding divisions over different views, and remains open to understanding Islam in accordance with revelation (*naql*) and reason (*aql*).

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