

## **Religion and Women's Socioeconomic Welfare: An Empirical Study of Women's Economic Empowerment Based on Entrepreneurial Pesantren**

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Received: 2020-11-15; Accepted: 2022-02-11; Published: 17-04-2022

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to reveal the role of women in building economic independence amid gender issues. The absence of religion and government in a connected business has made the issue of violence against women continue to roll on. The existence of women in recent years, and likely to continue, is threatened by the absence of safe spaces for women. Komnas Perempuan's 2020 data explains that in the last 12 years cases of violence against women and children have continued to increase significantly due to disharmony and economic factors. Using a phenomenological approach, this study shows a positive pattern in reducing the number of violence against women and realizing women's socio-economic welfare through the women's economic empowerment movement.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Pesantren; Religion; Women's Socio-economic; Women's Economic Empowerment.

**Abstrak:** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengungkap peran perempuan dalam membangun kemandirian ekonomi ditengah isu gender. Tidak hadirnya agama dan pemerintah dalam sebuah usaha yang terkoneksi satu sama lainnya, membuat isu-isu kekerasan terhadap perempuan terus bergulir. Keberadaan perempuan selama beberapa tahun terakhir dan kemungkinan akan terus berlanjut, terancam dengan tidak adanya ruang yang aman bagi perempuan. Data dari Komnas Perempuan pada tahun 2020 menjelaskan bahwa dalam 12 tahun terakhir kasus-kasus kekerasan terhadap perempuan dan anak terus meningkat signifikan yang disebabkan oleh faktor ketidakharmonisan dan ekonomi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi, penelitian ini menunjukkan pola yang positif dalam menekan jumlah kekerasan terhadap perempuan dan menciptakan kesejahteraan sosial ekonomi perempuan melalui gerakan pemberdayaan ekonomi perempuan.

**Kata Kunci:** Pesantren Wirausaha; Agama; Sosial-Ekonomi Wanita; Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Perempuan.

### **1. Introduction**

Patriarchal systems (Akgul and Akgul, 2017; Muhammad, 2019) not only in Islam but also in other religions and countries (see, Bouhours and Broadhurst, 2015) and economic capitalization in addition to limiting access and rights (education, social, political and economy) women also make the systematization of religion in the culture of society did not work well, so as to create an unsafe space for women. Women are increasingly limited in their zoning. Data published by Komnas Perempuan in March (2020) shows that the number of violence against women and children has fluctuated, and has even tended to increase significantly in the last twelve years (8 times or the equivalent of 792%). subjects that have the potential to have a significant impact on the country's economy (Akbulaev & Aliyeva, 2020), where the role of women and economic development has close interconnections and can be useful to reduce the gap between men and women (Duflo, 2012).

So far studies related to religion and women still focus on theological realms (for example, the existence of mosques as a gender space) (Nyhagen, 2019), economy (for example the involvement of women in non-farm activities) (Spierings, 2014), and the role of women in peace (for example women and state peace) (Shin, 2020), not yet at the stage of the religious-based women's movement which has an impact on the economy. This study (in contrast to the studies that have been done) analyzes comprehensively how a non-structural civilization of women by utilizing religious spaces (Islam) is able to change orthodox and puritanism thoughts that initially rejected, and eventually move collectively in building a safe space for women by creating harmony in the socio-economic sphere. The absence of women collectively in a resistance movement makes the position of women in society even lower even though the government has paid attention to women in gender equality policies. Religion is not just a dogma that is instructed by humans to measure piety, but religion more broadly becomes a contextual teaching that is relevant to social conditions (Handayani & Ali, 2020) quoted from (Kloos & Moore, 2000; Regnerus & Uecker, 2007).

The purpose of this paper is to complement previous studies on religion and women which emphasize the side of how the presence of women in social, religious and cultural spaces can create a sense of security for women. The descrediting of women in the social system triggers an imbalance of knowledge and power which is basically needed to survive the issues of modernity. So far, the government's policy on 'gender equality' (which is considered as a women's resource development strategy) has not been able to provide wide space for women to empower, especially middle-aged women because it is limited to domestic areas created by a patriarchal system. The role of the public and private sector still has large home jobs to provide equal space for men and women so as to create a safe life for women (Olmos Gómez, López Cordero, & Mohamed Mohand, 2019).

The creation of an empowerment space for women does not only have an impact on their own lives but also creates harmony in a family, women's independence, increased degrees, women's economic stability, and an increase in women's religious values. Borrowing the social construction theory of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 2016) in forming a truth, religion is one aspect that can be used to legitimize the existence of women as actors in determining personality because women's resources are a potential that can be optimized. In addition to building economic and political constructions, it is also to reduce the number of violence that is often directed at women. Entrepreneurial pesantren as a women's economic empowerment movement not only has an impact on women's economies but is also able to create spaces for financial, social, spiritual and knowledge independence. In the view of Becker G. (1964) quoted by (Boon, Eckardt, Lepak, & Boselie, 2018) that human resources are an important construction in building an economy and civilization through knowledge, skills and other talents.

## 2. Result and Discussion

The level of belief and seriousness of resistance to all forms of violence against women is still questionable both within the state and in religion. So far, the government's new breakthroughs through the issuance of laws and policies on gender equality had not had a positive impact in reducing the number of violence against women. In fact, there are still many cases that are not detected by the public, which makes the balance never achieved. The issue of harmony and economy, according to Komnas Perempuan (2020), is a factor that underlies the processes of violence: sexual, physical, and psychological, which occur universally in Indonesia.

Basically, issues related to gender and Islam had captured the world's attention and attention from world researchers and experts (Darakchi, 2018). The never-ending women's problems lead to further problems, namely the sub-optimal development of the country in various sectors because there is no collective effort to develop. The absence of women from the concept of development makes every policy not run optimally, it seems monotonous and imposing. For example, the gender equality policy issued by the government is unable to answer the existing problems because there is never a common mind between the government and society.

So far, the role of women in resolving women's issues has not been optimal because it is limited to the social system that is built in society. The social reality that is built as a frame of mind and social truth in the community makes the presence of women considered foreign because *first*, the point of view that women should be at home, is the same as the point of view of puritanism that is widely practiced by the Salafi Muslim community. *Second*, a patriarchal system that is built from social realities in society based on interpretations of religious texts, biased culture, and an education system that does not provide an understanding of equality, thus positioning men as the dominant party in policy makers. *Third*, the economic weakness of women because they do not work in sectors that generate money (salaries) is considered to be dependent on men.

In cases of violence against children, silencing their voices and not involving them in responding to issues of violence against them was one of the causes of increased violence against children, especially women who are assumed to be 'subjects' who have no power (Hlavka, 2019). To respond to issues of violence against women and children, harmonization of religion and women's education is very important in distributing critical knowledge of social reality. The women's and children's empowerment movement that takes advantage of the role of religion in a women's social system will provide reinforcement that every activity that is gathered has educational religious values that encourage women to be more dynamic in moving and able to appear in public. Religious space in the social system becomes a space that can be used to manage and optimize the knowledge and role of women (middle aged and do not have a high level of formal education) in responding to female problems and gaps.

A pandemic which was assumed to reduce the level of violence against women because of the harmony that will be created when family members gather, has in fact never reached the desired point. The Covid-19 pandemic has actually increased the number of violence against women and is a bad thing to accept (Theconversation.com). This means that in addition to being unable to solve pandemic cases, the country has also failed to end women's suffering. Home as a domestic area that should be a safe place for women is in fact the place that contributes to the highest number of violence.

The KUPI (Indonesian Women's Ulama Congress) Congress in Indonesia in 2018 concluded that the role of 'female clerics' is vital to voice women's rights (Farida & Kasdi, 2018). The role of 'female ulama' will legitimize that women can appear in public and will indirectly influence the paradigm of women's thinking that women can and are able to have a voice. The appearance of female Muslim figures is basically symbolic that women have a big share in fighting against acts of discrimination, marginalization, and patterns of sub-ordinance committed by men. In an effort to voice the aspirations of women as part of nationalism, women ulama could strengthen the position of women and children in a social system by using correct Islamic views (Kusmana, 2019).

The shifting of knowledge in the midst of gender issues made women easily influenced by radical teachings that continuously exert influence psychologically and religiously. In cases of terrorism, women would be easily influenced to become bombers on the pretext of fighting against the injustices that are often addressed to women in general. In cases like this, the existence of female ulama will be able to give a dynamic touch to women to get together again and create peace among women (Gumiandari & Nafi'a, 2020). Ulama will become the sector leading in the women's resistance movement in all forms of duping and limiting space by systems that are dominated by patriarchal arguments.

In some cases, female ulama when compared to male ulama have broad freedom or access to enter into women's lives. Unfortunately, this assumption can not be generalized to cases or other phenomena because the truth created in one area did not have a truth value in another area because of the complexity of community life which makes gender issues different (Scarborough, Sin, & Risman, 2019). On the other hand, the limited number of female ulama in each region means that women do not have figures who defend women's rights and have the same feelings. The presence of women ulama, basically, is not directly involved in the activities against potential violence against women because they are only present as figures who provide understanding.

Threats of violence against women come from various places and spaces, both in the domestic (personal) and public (work, educational, and social) spheres. Based on a reported from Komnas Perempuan (2020), the position of women at home is very weak, so that violence in the personal space of women dominates the recorded number of violence against women, namely 11,105 cases (75%). In addition, 3,602 cases (24%) of violence were recorded in the community or public space (sexual violence in the form of sexual abuse, rape, sexual harassment, and intercourse with 58% process). Of the total violence, physical violence was reported, with 43% (4,783 cases) and sexual violence in the next position with 2,807 cases (25%) (Komnas Perempuan, 2020).

These data show that there are not many safe spaces for women, which results in limited women's thoughts and knowledge. Domestic space which is considered as a safe area for women actually shows a different fact that the disharmony of the relationship makes the domestic space a prison and a space for punishing women's position. Ensuring that the position of man is the same as issuing a gender equality policy and holding on to religious theology in life, in fact, has not been able to encourage women to be more involved in an activity. With limited interpretations, women are unable to grasp the meaning of religious texts, so that currently there are many interpretations that are wide and even biased due to the influence of the patriarchal system and the needs of men.

The negative stigmatization of women from many men made violence against women even stronger which has fatal consequences for women's health and well-being (Garcia-Moreno & Stöckl, 2017). Women will be more silent and accept every law addressed to them as an effort to obey their husbands and religion. In the area of pesantren, as a form of obedience, students did not make many challenges to every system and teaching sources that are gender biased. Islamic boarding schools by maximizing the role of 'kyai' and 'buk nyai', still maintain the traditions which so far place women into second class based on the prevailing traditions and norms (Marhumah, 2015).

Islam and the Government at this stage did not exist as a complete element that has a clear concept, strategy, policy in solving women's problems, even though both of them have so far paid special attention to the concepts of gender equality and religious tolerance. In fact, the existence of Religion and Government often operated as different elements in solving the problem of inequality (Al-Hamdi, 2015). Religion with all forms of teaching is often analogized as a space devoted to connecting the relationship between humans and their gods, while the government is the maker of legal policies. This difference in approach shows that the same goals do not have strong interconnections in solving problems of sexual violence.

Democracy in a state means providing equal opportunities to all parties politically, economically, educationally and socially. Even though this was the final decision in Indonesia, the fact is that there are still many activities that ignore the norms and rules that have been mutually agreed upon so as to form a new reality. In Islam, Al-Quran and Sunnah have provided a clear picture of democratic processes or if drawn into women's issues, it can mean 'equality' which is a common right. However, weak commitment in the 'implementation' stage is one of the obstacles that makes the policy move slower.

The process of narrowing access, social networking and silencing women's voices makes their thoughts and knowledge co-opted with the cultural realities that are formed. With the orthodox culture that was built in society, legitimizing the role of religion and the government in the PKDRT Law is unable to reduce the number of violence against women. This silencing allows the worst events to occur, namely that women do not have a strong movement base for empowerment, do not have a sufficient knowledge base to fight female depression, and do not have strong socio-religious values in responding to existing phenomena. As a moderate alternative message, women's aspirations can be taken into consideration that the position of women in a social and religious system has the potential to build and change an orthodox system.

Women are actors who must move to provide awareness that their presence is not as a complement or a different party but as partners who can be a valuable resource. Women are not systemized robots, but individuals who are part of every social value and system who have the right to speak out and get a comfortable space. The resistance movement against duping should not only

be carried out pragmatically but also collectively on a broader scale and move in a sustainable manner. The convenience offered by world development, related to industry 4.0, makes the activity of voicing women's rights not only be done conventionally by moving sporadically, the real movement can also take advantage of the existence of technological facilities. Therefore, by providing true Islamic views, assumptions and views about women and Islam can reach many parties effectively and efficiently (Rengkaningtias, 2018)

The large number of female population basically can be a strength, but in reality, women do not have free space or are even equal to men. So far, the policies taken by the government and religious norms have not been able to place women in a strong position in society. Domestic space which is considered as a safe space for women (Suhandjati & Hadi Kusuma, 2018), because it is a space that contains high spiritual values, is actually a shackle and an area that often creates debate and acts of violence. This means that all places pose the same threat to women as being the second being.

In order to provide resistance to racial acts and discrimination against women, it is important to carry out or create solidarity between women. There are many cases of discrimination against minority groups in the world as efforts to control the majority. This incident in America is very concerning that there have been many patterns of discrimination accepted by minority groups, for example Muslims. However, this incident actually created values of solidarity between groups, races, ethnicities and religions who were marginalized from civilization (Abdelhadi and O'Brien, 2020). Women as a group that are in fact subordinated for several reasons and reasons, for example culture, patriarchal systems, and religion need solidarity values that are built together to give a response that women also have the same rights and positions.

It is not enough to hope that government policies and religious norms will work because so far it has proven that the presence of these two elements has not been able to solve the problem of women's violence. Even though women have a higher religiosity value than men as evidenced by the large number of women who follow the flow of migration and do religious-based activities, for example in Europe (Wanless, 2019), women are unable to stem violence against themselves just by sticking to the religious norms. Especially for indigenous peoples, their religion and teachings do not have a higher position than the culture or traditions that are built in society because their spiritual value is measured from the overall identity (Parke-Sutherland, 2018). Using a religious approach alone in the settlement process is not enough, neither is the educational approach.

Religion should be presented not pragmatically but by using simple methods and blending into culture. Basically, women's safe space (figure 1) is not formed by itself, but is constructed by humans as a systematic development process. The Payungi community movement (Pasar Yosomulyo Pelangi) which has been running for more than 2 years has been able to have a significant impact in addition to women's economics as well as being able to build knowledge, religious and social construction. Besides that, it is also able to create a comfortable and safe space, harmony in the family and in the social community.



Figure 1 Women's safe spaces in Payungi

Payungi's women have their own way of showing that they have the potential and power to empower. Through a feeling that is combined with the awareness that women are not always and should stand on the legitimacy of the understanding created by men. Religion is not sufficiently present at the level of dogma, there is not enough education if it only increases or increases the thinking and social gap. Collective efforts in moving and thinking based on spiritual values, Payungi women are able to create a space for awareness that women also have economic reasoning, and think so that religious values become optimal.

The economic empowerment of women using religious and social approaches has so far had a significant impact on the women's movement. They are motivated by religious as well as social zeal, that is why Payungi women are able to show that women are not always objects or secondary parties in the social system. Inviting women to empower has indirectly created learning spaces for women, social spaces, and economic spaces through a non-structural system.

This movement originated from the movement to realize that women are able to speak up, are able to change the economic status of their families, are able to suppress violence that has been directed against women, and are able to create a safe space for them. Entrepreneurial pesantren, which was scheduled for the first time more than three years ago, is now able to shape thinking patterns, socialize and increase religious adherence. The understanding related to religious values is not limited to the five daily prayer activities, but also in the social, economic and educational applications (figure 2).



Figure 2 activities of the Payungi women's entrepreneurial boarding school

The presence of pesantren, apart from being a space for religious learning, also talks a lot about the economy, which has thus far become a strong basis for descending the existence of women in the global realm. 'Pesantren wirausaha perempuan' became the initial concept to build women's ideas and ideas to empower them to think, discuss, collaborate, and learn together without limits. This activity, which was attended by all women who are members of the women's community, which numbered 50, discussed the values of religious theology and economic activities. The agenda, which is held every Thursday night, is able to increase the values of understanding related to religion, as well as to provide a picture related to the economy.

This awareness at first experienced stagnation and a sense of pessimism from women rolled out. The difference in thinking frames made them more likely to reject the idea and the idea of empowerment had debated, even some of them considered the idea of economic empowerment of women as an impossible idea to realize. Religious and social spaces were the first steps for this movement to be created two years ago. In the end, by using a social and social religious approach with the principles of Taawun and mutual cooperation, some of the women began to give positive responses and close ranks to empower and learn.

This religious forum gives women the freedom to speak, learn and discuss. It is not uncommon for social conflicts to appear in this movement, but it becomes a learning medium for women to

increase a sense of kinship and maturity. With different backgrounds, women exchange ideas, share responsibilities, and strengthen ranks to increase the values of female solidarity. They, with the women's economic empowerment movement, are able to create spaces that become the center of public attention, such as traditional culinary tourism spots based on women's empowerment.

This empowerment movement is able to create safe spaces for women and children. Through mutual cooperation, women move together with the same responsibilities and rights to fight (poverty, patriarchal systems, economic capitalization and knowledge gaps). This women's movement was able to make the Payungi a safe space for women to grow and develop by fighting duping and public deception that women were weak and of no value. Payungi also exists as a space to foster creativity and develop solidarity, not only for Umbrella women but also for the public and educational institutions in general. There is no dominant power relation in this empowerment movement because all are equals framed in human, religious, and social values.

This movement is able to legitimize the position of women as equal to men. With a turnover of market events that reaches an average of 50-60 million per event, women are getting stronger in the economy and ideas. The result is that women are able to empower, create safe spaces, equalize positions, reduce the number of women's violence, increase the value of spirituality and knowledge. This position has made Payungi women form a rhythm of thinking and moving as a unit of social capital because at this time human capital development has a more influential potential in building than in physical development. Women who are considered as the second party have potentials whose roles must be optimized.

With the persistence of this women's movement, it was able to create a religious, creative and economic space to work together in a system. In the end they collectively work to create a colorful village, digital village and traditional market which currently has many accessible learning spaces, such as Payungi University, Kampung Bahasa, Women and Environment Studies, Hajj and Umroh Travel, The Center of Desa Studies, Kampung Organik, a library which every week has been able to attract public attention to study. These study spaces are a development of a space for women's economic empowerment based on religion and social society which was formed in the spirit of mutual cooperation two years ago.

Reducing the number of poor women, developing businesses with existing resources, increasing community awareness for the welfare of poor women, increasing the independence of women's groups by developing productive businesses, increasing women's capacity and increasing income distribution by increasing women's economic income in the family to meet their basic and social needs. There is certainty in empowerment (Sumodinigrat, 1999). Payungi has been through a long period of time to come to this day as a movement that makes women the driving force. Besides being able to create a space for independence, Payungi is also present as a learning space for children, students, and communities from many regions. Because men and women are able to walk harmoniously in creating safe and comfortable spaces on a smaller scale.

This empowerment creates an equal space between men (husbands) and women (wives), which has been the subject of debate. In fact, the activity of creating empowerment spaces is able to build family economic construction through the Payungi movement. Men and women live equally, are annoyed, and no dominant force can suppress a minority position. In fact, this movement is able to make men realize that women are capable of creating independence in the economy and knowledge so that there are no more religious texts that restrict women from being empowered in the public sphere. That is because women are able to create safe, economic, educational, social and religious spaces through women's economic empowerment.





Figure 3 International seminar on gender in collaboration

The existence of Payungi's women has also become a public concern as a class that gives color to the world of women and academics. Several times the Payungi's women held discussions about womanhood organized by the Rumah Kitab and the Gender Studies Center IAIN Metro (figure 3). This public attention shows that Payungi empowerment has values that should be carried out by many parties, as well as the government and other religious spaces. This movement further proves that to build a civilization does not require a lot of plans and budget because human capital is more than sufficient to carry out economic development and knowledge.

### 3. Conclusion

The women's economic empowerment movement by utilizing the religious space "pesantren wirausaha" has been able to create a safe and comfortable space for collaboration. Women are a great potential with their personal and group enthusiasm and solidarity. Their existence so far not being of concern, their potential has not been discussed much, and their presence is not something of value, is in fact an option for building a civilization. Women's economic empowerment Payungi are able to create learning values and equality in economy, social, religion and family. This study does not look at the existence of communities of different religions in the empowerment movement, so it cannot see the tolerance that is built into the movement.

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