

The Complexity Role of Muslim Women in Java

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Abstract: The study of gender cannot be separated from theological studies, because all religions have special treatment for women. The position of women in several religions and beliefs is placed as second class. As a result, the condition of women continues to be in a state of loss because of religious pretexts or legitimacy. This article discusses the basis of gender stereotypes in Islam, gender biased interpretation of the Qur'an, and gender equality in Islamic culture in Java. This study uses a library research approach. The result is that the Qur'an has explicitly tried to increase the dignity of women. This condition shows that Islam emphasizes that both men and women are given equal opportunities to achieve positions or degrees according to their abilities. These Islamic values are then firmly adhered to in realizing gender equality in Islamic culture in Javanese society, so that they can destroy perceptions of the position, dignity, and worth of men and women. Further research is needed that specifically addresses the role of Muslim women in the current era.

Keywords: *Complexity role, gender, islamic perspective, Java.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender is not a new thing, but talks about gender will continue to be relevant to the present time. On June 7, 2021, the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia held a meeting with a number of representatives of the people to coordinate regarding the handling of the issue of violence against women and children in Indonesia. Talks about women and children cannot be separated from gender issues, so that there is urgency in gender analysis (Jackson, 2013; Miralles-Guasch et al., 2016).

Gender analysis is a study that discussed the pattern of relations between women and men in the social framework, especially concerning the existence of injustice that arises from social construction. In understanding the concept of gender, first need to be understood the difference between gender and sex. Etymologically, gender said from English which means "gender", while terminologically, gender is cultural expectations for women and men (Coulter & Lips, 2001; Miralles-Guasch et al., 2016; Organo et al., 2013).

Gender is a series of characteristics that are bound and distinguish masculinity and femininity. These characteristics include gender (male, female or intersex), which is determined based on sex (social structure as such a gender role) or gender identity. Social structure is a level in society. One type of concrete example of social structure is the caste system. The social structure is a social order in the community which is also a network of basic social elements (Raharjo, 2009). Gender identity is someone's understanding and awareness of his own gender (Eliason, 2007).

From the explanation above, it is understood that gender is not only understood as a distinction of men with women seen from the socio-cultural construction of a society, but also the concept of analysis to explain something. While the word sex is about to concentrate more on a person's biological aspects, including differences in hormone or chemical compositions in the body, physical anatomy, reproduction, and other biological characteristics. Gender is more on socio-cultural, psychological and other aspects of nonbiological aspects (Chavada & Bhagyaxmi, 2009; Gu, 2010; Persson et al., 2021; van Anders, 2015).

So in general, gender is used to identify male differences with women from socio-cultural aspects, while sex to identify male differences with women in terms of biological anatomy. The definition stated by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment is "mental and cultural interpretation of sex differences, namely men and women, usually used to show the division of labor which is considered appropriate for men and women.

The studies of gender cannot be separated from theological studies. All religions have special treatment of women. The position of women in some religions and trust is placed as the Second Class. As a result, the condition of women in general continues to lose conditions due to the excuse or legitimacy of religion. In daily practice, it is difficult to distinguish which message comes from religion and messages which are sourced from community construction, more-more myths. In fact, the verses of the Qur'an are loaded with gender discourse which attracts enough attention to anyone who wants to study. Strictly, the Qur'an has stressed the increase in the dignity and dignity of women. None of the cultures and world civilizations are able to place women in honorable positions except Islam with the values of justice and equality. Prophet Muhammad SAW. state: "*innama al-Nisa shaqaiq al-rijal*" (Truly women are male brothers) (al-Sijistani, 1952). Many previous studies have discussed the implementation of gender equality in Islamic education (Warni tue Sumar, 2015) gender equality in educational and social spheres

(Sulistiyowati, 2021). Therefore, this research focuses on discussing the gender stereotypical base in Islam, the interpretation of the Qur'an that is gender bias, and Gender Equality in the perspective of Islamic Culture in Java. Knowledge about gender in the perspective of Islamic culture in Java is crucial for promoting gender equality, addressing social issues, empowering individuals, and fostering cultural understanding within the context of Islamic teachings.

METHOD

This study uses a library research approach, using content analysis techniques to construct a basic framework of gender in Islamic perspective. The purpose of using the method is to gain Gender Equality in the perspective of Islamic Culture in Java, which is contained in al-Qur'an (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Al-Qur'an as the holy book and guidelines for muslims is expressed in Arabic because the language is compatible and able to represent the meaning of God's message. Qur'an was sent down in accordance with the current context. Therefore, it needs to be interpreted from time to time and requires contextualization to find out the relevance, change, and time demands. A contextual approach can be completed by an interpretation method, including thematic interpretation. Practically, this method contextualizes the Qur'an in the first generation, the next generation and the contemporary, which uses a linguistic approach and the other approach that considers the history and development of the discourse. The interpreter is expected to consider new places and information, meaning that the interpretation is according to the needs, time, reality, and goals in the future (Rosyada, 2018). Data analysis techniques were carried out in three stages, namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 2013: 4).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Almost all religions (Jews, Christians and Islam) and trust distinguish the origins of men and women. Male Creation earlier than the creation of women. In the Bible, for example, it was explained that women were created from male ribs (Genesis 1: 24-27). Next, said:

“Then the Lord God made the man sleep well, when sleeping, the Lord God took one of the ribs from him, then closed the place with meat, and from the ribs that the Lord of God was built by a woman, then he was taken to the man” (Genesis 2: 21-23).

In the Scriptures of the Qur'an, information about the origin of the events of human beings in Q.S. Al-Nisa verse 1, Q.S. Al-A'raf verse 189, and Q.S. Al-Zumar verse 6. However, not found in the Qur'an about a verse that tells in detail the origin of the events of women. All the verses called earlier use the word *nafs wahidah*. The use of Hawa said that had been perceived as a woman's wife Adam, was not found in the Qur'an.

Of the three verses above, the most popular used as a reference in the discourse of the origin of the events of women is the Qur'an of Q.S. Al-Nisa verse 1:

“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allāh, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allāh is ever, over you, an Observer” (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

The editorial of this verse is open to be understood differently, especially in three words, namely *nafs wahidah*, *minha*, and *zawj*. The commentators differ on who exactly is meant by *nafs wahidah* (one self), who is designated by the pronoun (*dhamir*) "*minha*" (from him) and what is meant by *zawj* (partner). A number of classical commentators, including al-Qurtubi (al-Qurtubi, 1996), Ibn Katsir (Ibnu Katsir, 1999), al-Zamakhsyari (al-Zamakhsyari & Umar, 1977), as well as contemporary scholars such as Yusuf Qardawi and the translation team of the Qur'an of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, and this is a large number of scholars, understand *nafs wahidah* with Adam. *Dhamir* afterwards by becoming Adam, and *zawj* with Adam's partner, Eve. It can be concluded that Eve (female) was created from Adam, a figure who is considered male. Such an interpretation refers to a hadith:

“Take good care of women, because women were created from a rib, and the most crooked rib is the uppermost one. If you straighten it hard, it will break, and if you let it, it will stay bent. Therefore, give a will to good women” (Al-Bukhari, 1986).

In contrast to them, al-Razi said that the word *minha* does not mean part of Adam's body, but from the *jins* (genes) of Adam's creation as a human being. Eve's origin was not from Adam, but from a single gene element, and this is where living things came from. In line with al-Razi, al-Thabathabai interprets the word *minha* with the original *istaqqaw min asli wahid*, namely *nafs wahidah*. In addition, etymologically the word *nafs*, according to him is '*ayn al-shay*, the unity of spirit and body, or what is known as soul, spirit (al-Thabataba'i, 1991).

In Q.S. as-Shura verse 11 and Q.S. Thaaha verse 53, the *nafs* is a genus and one of its species is Adam and his partner, while the other species are animals and their partners, as well as plants and their partners. Therefore, the view that uses Q.S. al-Nisa

verse 1 as a reference to the creation of Eve, or in this case the biological origin of human events, feels less relevant because there are many other verses that explain the origins of human beings the incident, namely from water (Q.S. Al-Furqan verse 54), despicable water "*main mahin*" (Q.S. Al-Mursalat verse 20), water that radiates "*ma' dafiq*" (Q.S. Al-Taariq verse 6), a lump of blood "*'alaq*" (Q.S. Al-'Alaq verse 2), the essence of soil "*sulalah min tin*" (Q.S. Al-Mu'minun verse 12), dry clay like pottery "*salsal ka al-fakhkhar*" (Q.S. Ar-Rahman verse 14), and the land "*tin*" (Q.S. As-Sajdah verse 7).

Regarding the creation of Eve, several commentators gave their opinion. Al-Maraghi, Rashid Rida, and Murtadha Mutahhari stated that the idea of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib stems from the teachings of the Old Testament, not from the Qur'an. Rashid Rida states:

"If the story of Adam and Eve was not listed in the Old Testament, the wrong opinion would never have crossed the mind of a Muslim" (Ridha, 1973).

The theological concept that assumes the creation of Eve from Adam's rib has psychological, social, economic, and political implications. Therefore, Quraish Shihab interprets the existence of the source of Eve's creation from Adam's rib with a metaphorical understanding (Shihab, 1996). Thus in the Old Testament, it is stated that the existence of Eve (woman) as a complement to Adam (male) is none other than the view that underestimates women so that it connotes that women are created from male body parts. From this basic stereotype, women become concentrated in domestic roles.

In Javanese Islamic culture, gender roles and relationships are influenced by a combination of Islamic teachings, Javanese traditions, and local customs. Here are some key aspects related to gender in Javanese Islamic culture:

1) Family and Household: Javanese Islamic culture places a strong emphasis on family and household roles. Traditional gender roles prevail, with men typically seen as the breadwinners and women responsible for domestic duties and child-rearing. However, these roles are not rigidly enforced, and many women also pursue education and careers outside the home. 2) Marriage and Relationships: Marriage is considered a significant milestone in Javanese Islamic culture, and arranged marriages were common in the past. However, nowadays, more people choose their own partners. Islamic principles guide marriage practices, such as the requirement of consent from both parties and the provision of dowry (*mahar*) by the groom. Polygamy is permissible in Islam but is less common in contemporary Javanese society. 3) Social Interactions: Gender segregation in social settings is not as strict in Javanese Islamic culture compared to some

other Islamic societies. Men and women often interact in public spaces and social gatherings, although certain cultural norms may influence the degree of separation in specific contexts. Modesty, respect, and appropriate behavior are expected in all interactions. 4) Education and Empowerment: In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on education and empowerment for both men and women in Javanese Islamic culture. Many educational institutions and religious organizations provide opportunities for women to pursue religious studies, leadership roles, and professional careers. 5) Rituals and Worship: Men and women generally participate in communal religious rituals and prayers together, although some mosques may have separate areas or arrangements for women. Women are encouraged to fulfill their religious obligations, such as observing daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, and performing acts of charity. It's important to note that gender roles and practices can vary within Javanese Islamic culture due to factors such as individual interpretations of Islam, level of education, geographic location, and exposure to different influences.

Almost all commentaries are gender biased, as well as in language dictionaries. This is none other than due to the influence of Middle Eastern culture which is androcentric (win for men). There are several verses that often cause controversy because they tend to give priority to men, for example verses about inheritance, witnesses and leaders. It should be known that almost all verses related to women cannot be separated from their *asbab al-nuzul* so that they are historical.

There are various interpretations of the verses of the Qur'an due to differences of opinion between them regarding the applicability of the texts. These differences of opinion can be classified into three groups. First, that the verses of the Qur'an apply universally regardless of the case of its descent, *al-ibrah bi 'umum al-lafdzi la bi specifically as sabab*. This opinion is followed by the majority of scholars on the grounds that although the verses were revealed for a special reason, they use general editorial (*'amm*) so that the majority of scholars prioritize text analysis rather than guidance for the people who are the only places where the Qur'an was revealed but also for society until the end of time.

Second, that the verse applies universally with the obligation to pay attention to the similarity of the characteristics of *'illah (khusus al-'illah)*. This opinion was conveyed by al-Syatibi in the book *al-Muwaffaqat* with a more general purpose oriented (*maqasid al-syari'ah*) and relying on analogies (*qiyas*) so that it concentrates more on the study of

context than on the text. Third, that the verse only binds to the special events that caused the revelation, *al-ibrah bi khusus as-sabab la bi umum al-lafadz*. In this case, a verse is considered not to directly discuss other events. This opinion is not common among scholars.

It should be noted that when the sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and Hadith talk about a particular case, it should be seen as a process that leads to a general goal (*maqasid al-syari'ah*). In other words, the presence of Allah's messenger, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. Bringing the Qur'an into the world is a mercy for the whole world.

If you pay close attention, the verses on inheritance, testimony and polygamy lead to one goal, namely realizing justice and upholding the values of equality among human beings in social life. As a comparison between Islam and previous traditions, an example verse can be taken about the provisions of inheritance: 1 to 2 for girls and boys (Q.S. al-Nisa verse 11). This verse received a direct response from the people at that time, because the provision was considered to deviate from their tradition. The assumption of society at that time was that women were not inherited subjects, but women were objects (materials) that could be inherited.

The emergence of a gender-biased interpretation of the Qur'an is caused by several things, including: (1) The strong influence of isra'iliyah stories in the Middle East; (2) the use of a textual approach rather than a contextual approach in interpretation, which is a logical consequence of the application of *al-ibrah bi umum al-lafdz la bi khusus al-sabab*; (3) The influence of the analytical interpretation method (*tahlili*) in society is stronger than the thematic method (*mawdu'i*), which results in a lack of objectivity in the interpretation of gender verses in the Qur'an; and (4) Partial understanding of the verses of the Qur'an because of the subjectivity of men.

Historically, social policies at the time of the Prophet s.a.w. increasingly leading to the principles of gender equality even though the culture of society is not yet conducive to realizing gender equality. In various verses relating to women, their rights and position, the Messenger of Allah s.a.w. constantly overhauling the paternalistic culture in Arab society. Initially, women and minors did not get inheritance rights, because customary law at that time was not considered capable of defending the tribe. Gradually, Islam gave them their rights in obtaining inheritance, as stated in Q.S. al-Nisa verse 11.

Allāh instructs you concerning your children [i.e., their portions of inheritance]: for the male, what is equal to the share of two females. But if there are [only] daughters, two or more, for them is two thirds of one's estate. And if there is only

one, for her is half. And for one's parents, to each one of them is a sixth of his estate if he left children. But if he had no children and the parents [alone] inherit from him, then for his mother is one third. And if he had brothers [and/or sisters], for his mother is a sixth, after any bequest he [may have] made or debt. Your parents or your children - you know not which of them are nearest to you in benefit. [These shares are] an obligation [imposed] by Allāh. Indeed, Allāh is ever Knowing and Wise (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

At first, men were free to marry an unlimited number of women, which later Islam gave a limit of four people. That too with strict conditions, as stated in Q.S. al-Nisa verse 3.

And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of [other] women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or those your right hands possess [i.e., slaves]. That is more suitable that you may not incline [to injustice] (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

At first, women were not allowed to be witnesses, but later Islam was given the opportunity, although in some cases it was still limited to one to two, as stated in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 282.

O you who have believed, when you contract a debt for a specified term, write it down. And let a scribe write [it] between you in justice. Let no scribe refuse to write as Allāh has taught him. So let him write and let the one who has the obligation [i.e., the debtor] dictate. And let him fear Allāh, his Lord, and not leave anything out of it. But if the one who has the obligation is of limited understanding or weak or unable to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate in justice. And bring to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses - so that if one of them [i.e., the women] errs, then the other can remind her. And let not the witnesses refuse when they are called upon. And do not be [too] weary to write it, whether it is small or large, for its [specified] term. That is more just in the sight of Allāh and stronger as evidence and more likely to prevent doubt between you, except when it is an immediate transaction which you conduct among yourselves. For [then] there is no blame upon you if you do not write it. And take witnesses when you conclude a contract. Let no scribe be harmed or any witness. For if you do so, indeed, it is [grave] disobedience in you. And fear Allāh. And Allāh teaches you. And Allāh is Knowing of all things (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

Men and women have the same status as servants of Allah. One of the purposes of human creation is to worship Allah, as stated in Q.S. al-Zariyat verse 56.

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

In the human capacity as a servant, there is no difference between men and women. Whoever has many acts of worship, they are the ones who will get a greater reward without having to look at and consider gender. Both have the same potential and

opportunities to become ideal servants. The ideal servant in the Qur'an is termed the pious (*muttaqûn*). In order to achieve the degree of *muttaqûn*, it is not known that there are differences in gender, ethnicity or certain ethnic groups (Suhra, 2013).

In addition to being submissive and obedient servants (*âbid*) and serving Allah s.w.t., men and women also become caliphs on earth (*khalifa fi al-ard*). Human capacity as caliph on earth is confirmed in Q.S. al-An'am verse 165.

And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

Men and women both carry the mandate and accept the primordial covenant with God. This is as it is known that before a human child comes out of his mother's womb, he must first accept a covenant with Allah, as stated in Q.S. al-A'raf verse 172.

And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware." (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

Men and women have the opportunity to achieve maximum performance, as specifically emphasized in several verses, including Q.S. Ali-Imran verse 195.

And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed - I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allāh, and Allāh has with Him the best reward." (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

The position of women in all classes and ethnicities has the same rights in developing their professions, such as economics, politics, and education, even in sports (Thorpe et al., 2022). This condition was a very rare occurrence before the advent of Islam. In the verses of the Qur'an or hadith, there is not a single prohibition for women to take an active part in the public world. The Qur'an hints at the ability of women to actively pursue their profession, as stated in Q.S. At-Taubah verse 71.

The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakāh and obey Allāh and His Messenger. Those - Allāh will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allāh is Exalted in Might and Wise (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

This is because each man or woman is given the same opportunity to achieve a position or degree according to their abilities, as stated in Q.S. Al-An'am verse 132.

And for all are degrees [i.e., positions resulting] from what they have done. And your Lord is not unaware of what they do (Kementerian Agama, 2020).

In some narrations it is stated that women at the beginning of Islam played an important role in political activities. For example, the wives of the Prophet, 'Aisyah, Umm Salamah, Safiyah and other female friends. In addition, women can be involved in the economic field, either independently or collectively, as long as the work is carried out in an atmosphere of respect and courtesy. This is as done by Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, the wife of the Prophet. Another example is Zaenab bint Jahi as a tanner for animal skins, Umm Salim bint Malhan as a bridesmaid, Ibn Mas'ud's wife as an entrepreneur, and al-Shifa as a secretary and was given the task of caliph 'Umar as a supervisor for the city of Medina (Shihab, 1992).

In the field of education, the Qur'an and Hadith give praise to anyone, including women who are able to improve their achievements in science (Sabir & Aris, 2021; Siti Zuhrotun & Mienchah Al, 2021). Al-Qur'an alludes to a number of women who achieved achievements, for example the queen of Bulqis, Maryam, and 'Aisyah, the wife of Pharaoh. In various narrations, it is also mentioned that a number of women who succeeded in mastering science, even surpassing men, include 'Aisyah, the wife of the Apostle, Sakinah, the great-grandson of the Apostle, whose name is even immortalized as the name of a mosque in Cairo which it is said that Imam Shafi'i had studied with him. and al-Shaykhah Shuhrah who was dubbed *Fahr al-Nisa'* (the pride of women).

Gender equality in the Islamic perspective, as described above, is mostly adopted in the life of the Islamic community in Java. This is as pioneered by several female figures in Java, including Kartini, Nyai Ahmad Dahlan and so on. It was revealed that equality of access and opportunity to education between men and women has the same portion. Gender Equality in question is getting a good education. This is due to the principle of equality in Islamic education that men and women both have the potential to achieve achievements (Abidin, 2015; Pane, 2005; Subhi, 2016).

The struggles carried out by these female figures are full of very formidable challenges. This is because the people's thinking at that time maintained the traditions of their ancestors from generation to generation, known as "the second sex". The term or assumption is attached to both the natives and the colonizers. The women feel that the culture of society is unfair, which is clearly not in accordance with Islamic values, so there is an effort to realize gender equality by women to destroy the perception that causes this injustice (Abidin, 2015; Hermawan et al., 2021).

In other words, the struggle for gender equality is to obtain a good education for women and not merely to compete with men but only to obtain a proper and equal position, dignity and worth with men. The phenomenon of gender equality is an interesting discussion because women are a source of inspiration in all dynamics of life. In addition, it must be admitted that the status of women in past cultures was not as fortunate as the status of men. In fact, it is possible that the emergence of the women's movement in demanding gender equality in Indonesia is the impact of women's movements around the world.

Efforts to fight for gender equality are also accompanied by maintaining Javanese culture and maintaining the values of local wisdom. These efforts are always considered by looking at it from a positive point of view for the advancement of women who can ultimately advance a nation. This is due to the belief that a developed and developing nation can emerge because the community respects and appreciates women as idols who inspire their children, husbands and the surrounding environment. In addition, the culture and local wisdom of the Javanese people are also closely related to etiquette and manners as well as other Islamic teachings that regulate women. The role of women in maintaining Javanese culture and local wisdom is limited by religious rules so that in their work and socializing they will not interfere with the nature of a woman who has duties in a family (Inawati, 2014).

There are several examples of behavior in Javanese society that may go against the principle of gender equality:

Rigid division of gender roles: In some families or communities in Java, there is a tendency to have a rigid division of gender roles. For example, the assumption that domestic duties and child rearing are entirely the responsibility of women, while men are expected to focus on careers and work outside the home.

Limited access to education and employment opportunities: Some communities in Java may still have the view that higher education and better employment opportunities are more suitable for men than for women. This can result in limiting women's access to equal education and fair employment opportunities.

Early and forced marriages: Although there has been a law prohibiting marriage below a certain age, the practice of early and forced marriages still occurs in some areas of Java. This can lead to gender inequality because young women tend to have limited opportunities for education and self-development.

Male-dominated decision-making: In some contexts in Java, important decision-making in the family or

community is often dominated by men. This can reduce women's participation and contribution in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Based on the things above than Knowledge about gender in the perspective of Islamic culture in Java is crucial for promoting gender equality, addressing social issues, empowering individuals, and fostering cultural understanding within the context of Islamic teachings.

CONCLUSION

Islam has explicitly sought to increase the dignity of women. There is not a single world culture and civilization that is able to place women in a respectable position except Islam with the values of justice and equality. In various verses related to women, their rights and positions, the Prophet always reformed the paternalistic culture in Arab society, including about inheritance rights, marriage, professions in various fields. This condition is because in Islam it is emphasized that both men and women are given equal opportunities to achieve positions or degrees according to their abilities. These Islamic values are then firmly adhered to in realizing gender equality in Islamic culture in Javanese society, so that they can destroy perceptions of the position, dignity and worth of men and women. This research is limited only to literature review. Therefore, further research is needed that specifically addresses the role of Muslim women in the current era.

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