

Analysis Of The Concept Of Human Equality And Gender In Religious Relations In A Multicultural Society

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This study analyzes the concept of human and gender equality in religious relations within Indonesia's multicultural society. The main objective is to explore the perspectives of major religions in Indonesia, such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, on human and gender equality, and how these teachings interact in a diverse cultural context. A descriptive qualitative approach using literature review was employed. The findings reveal that despite doctrinal differences, all religions share common values of human dignity, compassion, and social justice. Gender equality is recognized in each religious teaching, emphasizing the importance of equal treatment for both men and women. Additionally, the study underscores the need for more robust interfaith dialogues to reduce gender discrimination and foster a more inclusive and harmonious social environment. Collaboration across religious communities can strengthen these equality values, contributing to more equitable social and economic development in Indonesia. This cooperative effort is essential for promoting peace and cohesion in a society rich with cultural and religious diversity.

Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a unique morphology and consists of thousands of islands separated by waters. The morphology of the Indonesian archipelago is quite complex because it is composed of coastal areas to mountains. The complex morphology of the archipelago owned by Indonesia and the dispersion of regions in Indonesia create diverse socio-cultural conditions. As an archipelagic country, Indonesia is one of the countries whose areas are geographically isolated, especially when drawn in the context of ancient times, when the use of technology and transportation was not as massive as it is today (21st century). Geographical isolation is defined as a landscape barrier that limits the movement space of people

in an area to interact and communicate with people outside their area (Setiyadi et al., 2020). This limited interaction makes it difficult for local people to access information from outside their area. The limited process of information exchange will have an impact on cultural exchanges between regions, which is what causes unique and diverse races, languages, religions, and livelihoods in Indonesia. In line with Andrian's research (2020), which states that cultural exchange is a consequence of the cultural communication process.

Indonesia's diverse natural character, which is reflected by the existence of coastal and mountainous areas, is also a factor in cultural differentiation in Indonesia. Cultural differentiation between regions is a form of community response to adapt to their environment. The adaptation carried out by the community aims to maintain their lives through adjustments to people's behaviors, beliefs, culinary, communication patterns, and livelihoods. Efriani (2020), stated that adaptation to the natural environment is an effort for society to survive. For example, the Tengger Tribe adheres to Hinduism which places its place of worship on Mount Bromo. The determination of this location is a way for the local community to respond to their environment as their medium in worship. Apart from being a place of residence for the Tengger people, Bromo also has a meaning as a place for gods to live because it is located in a highland area and is considered sacred. This meaning brings the local community to appreciate nature as part of their belief element so that the Tengger people always strive to create harmony between nature and society. This is because temples are considered a medium for people to worship (Ghefira et al., 2024). On the other hand, when viewed from a historical perspective, the geographical location of each region in Indonesia which is diverse also plays a role in the spread of people's beliefs and religions. The spread of religion has an impact on the diversity of other cultural elements, such as community organizations, culinary, language systems, and art systems.

The potential for cultural diversity in Indonesia has led this country to get the nickname of a multicultural society. When viewed from the Indonesian Information Portal (2024), the composition of the Indonesian population based on religion, there are 87.2% of the population of Muslims, 6.9% of the population of Protestants, 2.9% of the population of Catholicism, 1.7% of Hindus, 0.7 Buddhists, and 0.05% of the population of Confucianism. Outside of these religions, there are still some local beliefs of the local community. Referring to the same source, there are 1300 tribes in Indonesia until 2023. The diversity of tribes constructs different systems of life in society. Different lifestyles create diverse cultural landscapes and interesting social systems. The interfaith social system formed in Indonesia is quite interesting. This is because even though the social conditions are considered many and diverse, harmony is still seen between religious people. This harmony was created by the desire of the community to always be able to meet their daily needs so that they decided to always respect each other between religious people (Benu, 2022).

Tribal communities in each region have local wisdom that is a guideline for people to behave. The community combines local wisdom with the religious values adhered to. Acculturation between local wisdom and religious values is an ideal combination that is able to bring the Indonesian people towards a harmonious and mutually respectful nation. The harmonization created must cover all lines, both equality to carry out obligations and exercise rights between tribes

and religions, as well as between genders in religious life. Acculturation between local tribal wisdom and religious values in Indonesia should ideally be used as a moral compass to socialize and respect fellow human beings. However, until now, there is still a phenomenon of human and gender discrimination caused by inequality that arises in the midst of Indonesian society. This phenomenon is certainly a problem in itself because it will threaten the rights of certain genders or tribes, and what is more dangerous is the emergence of national disintegration.

The phenomenon of gender discrimination in Indonesia can be seen in various aspects, both in terms of livelihood or career, and in religious life. The gender discrimination that occurs has an effect on stereotypes against gender who are affiliated with certain tribes or religions. Kasih et al. (2024), show that there is still gender discrimination against women in the career world, discrimination that occurs is not only limited to the deprivation of income rights, but also threatens women's security and comfort. The findings of this issue are also strengthened by research by Silalahi and Sare (2023), which revealed that the issue of the wage gap between women and men still occurs. This issue is also strengthened by research by Akbar (2021), and Ihsani (2021) research, which found that there is still discrimination in worship in Indonesia. In addition to the problem of gender inequality, Indonesia also experiences the problem of inequality between humans that often occurs in the midst of modern society (Rasya & Triadi, 2024). The inequality is related to the socio-economic-legal gap that is more in favor of the capitalists or the rulers.

Gender inequality and socio-economic-legal disparities are problems faced by Indonesian society, where previous research, such as those conducted by Saraswati and Manalu (2023), Awal et al. (2023), and Pratama et al. (2024), emphasized that the gap illustrates the lack of ability of some communities to reflect on the acculturation between local wisdom and religious values in the context of multicultural life. In addition, according to Pebriaisyah et al. (2022), Okarniatif et al. (2024) and Indriyani (2024), in an atmosphere rich in cultural diversity, gender inequality is often internalized in social norms that limit women's roles, resulting in minimal access to education and economic opportunities. This not only has an impact on each individual, but also hinders women's participation in decision-making, strengthens the cycle of poverty, and creates unfair social dynamics. Despite legal efforts to support equality, challenges in implementation and enforcement often hinder progress. Therefore, the inclusive integration of local wisdom values with the principles of social and gender justice is essential to create a more just and equitable society, where every human being, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities to develop and contribute.

Therefore, this study aims to understand how the concept of human equality and gender is perceived through religious relations in the context of diverse Indonesian society. By analyzing the interaction between religious values and local wisdom, this study seeks to provide a treasure trove of information on ways to create equality. The results of the research are expected to be a strong foundation for thinking in formulating policies and programs that are gender equal and strengthening solidarity between groups. In addition, this research aims to increase public awareness of the importance of respecting cultural and religious diversity, creating a constructive dialogue space, so that Indonesian society can develop into a harmonious and prosperous community, regardless of ethnicity,

race, status, or religion.

Research Methods

The qualitative descriptive approach with the literature study method is the basis of the method used in this study. The use of this method aims to explore the understanding of the concept of human and gender equality in religious relations in multicultural communities (Sugiyono, 2022: 15). Literature studies make it easier for authors to dig up secondary data in published literature. This research focuses on theoretical studies of gender and human equality in religious relations in multicultural societies. The data sources of this research come from literature relevant to the research objectives, which include books, journal articles, and related reports. This type of research falls under the category of qualitative research, where the author uses a data collection procedure through literature exploration that includes the search for reliable sources. The data collection technique was carried out by entering keywords to find appropriate literature, while the data analysis technique relied on thematic interpretation to identify patterns and themes in the context of gender equality and religious relations. Media articles and reports are also used as complementary data to build the construction of the concept explanation in this article.

There are several procedures applied in this study, including the following: *Literature exploration*, the author searches for various types of literature on various reliable sources. In the literature exploration activity, the author included several keywords that are able to represent the purpose of the research, such as "gender equality in religion", "human equality in Indonesia", and "equality in a multicultural society". *Selection and sorting of literature*, this activity aims to select the literature that is most relevant to the research objectives. The relevance of the literature must meet the requirements, such as studies conducted on literature findings must be conducted in Indonesia and contain the context of gender equality, human equality, religious relations, and multicultural society. *Categorization of literature findings*, this categorization is carried out to classify literature based on research subthemes. This categorization is adjusted to the needs of research. Therefore, this study classifies literature based on religion, this is adjusted to the purpose of research that wants to interpret the concept of gender and human equality reviewed from religious relations. Categorization aims to make it easier for authors to interpret the data findings and draw conclusions from the findings. *Thematic interpretation*, the author describes theories and empirical facts from the concept of human equality and gender from the perspective of religious relations. The depiction is accompanied by an analysis and comparison of empirical concepts and facts of each religion in a multicultural society. *Drawing conclusions*, after the data is analyzed, draws conclusions based on the main findings related to human equality and gender in religious relations. The researcher highlights how religions in Indonesia affect perceptions of gender, as well as how multiculturalism enriches or complicates efforts to achieve such equality. *Qualitative description*, the author describes the results of drawing conclusions while still paying attention to the results of categorization so that the research results are more structured and systematic.

Discussion

The Concept of Human and Gender Equality

The concept of human equality and gender has essentially been taught by the religions embraced by the Indonesian people. Broadly speaking, the six religions in Indonesia teach us, as human beings, to always be fair from the moment in our minds. Fairness refers to behavior that does not discriminate against humans, even though it is in heterogeneous socio-cultural conditions. Especially in a country with complex heterogeneity of ethnicity, race, and status, so that a fair attitude is the basis for the realization of human and gender equality. Fair behavior oriented towards human and gender equality can be realized when society is not fixated on ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism can be defined as an understanding that moves a person to assume that his group (based on ethnicity, race, and religion) is better than other groups, thus triggering racist acts against people who come from outside his group. Ethnocentrism is often the root of the problem of national disintegration and social jealousy. Seeing this situation, religious values play an important role in minimizing the notion that considers other human beings bad, because in fact humans are just people created by God to respect and respect each other. The consequences of sin and reward that arise on every behavior of religious people are a controlling factor in the behavior of people with various religious and tribal backgrounds to always obey religious commands and avoid God's prohibitions. Likewise, the teaching to view all human beings as equal, even though they have differences in gender, race, and economic status.

Each religion has a variety of concepts in responding to differences in ethnicity, race, and religion. However, the teachings of the six religions embraced by the Indonesian people boil down to human and gender equality. In order to provide a clearer and more holistic picture, the author tries to interpret and describe the findings of the literature data in accordance with the objectives of this research. The first finding refers to human and gender equality in Islam (Hendra & Hakim, 2023). According to the study, it is known that Islam has actually taught justice and equality. The teaching is summarized in the word 'adala ya'dilu. This equality is universal, which means that Islam views all people as equal in the eyes of God, regardless of gender or social status. In the Qur'an, the teachings are listed in Surah An-Nisa verse 124 and Al-Hujurat verse 13. In Islam, all human beings have the same position in the eyes of the law and God views a person's glory based on his days and deeds. When viewed from a historical point of view, the Prophet has implemented gender equality in social life in Medina. The Prophet placed women and men in equal positions so that women were allowed to participate in wars. Islamic law provides freedom of movement for women to optimize their potential, while still having to pay attention to the norms taught in Islam.

Muslims will get the nickname *khair ummah* when they apply the values of *amar makruf* in socializing which is humanist and *nahi munkar* which commands a person to stay away from evil. Humanism has always been the main teaching in Islam. Humanism in Islam commands humans to respect other humans as whole human beings, without discriminating between genders. The context of liberation in Islam aims to realize a nation that is free from slavery, crime, oppression, poverty, and other bad phenomena. Islam commands justice by providing positive

and negative consequences. Positive consequences will be obtained by Muslims in the form of rewards when Muslims practice good, while when Muslims practice bad, they will get sins for mistakes made personally. In addition to bad consequences in the form of sin, Islam also regulates the bad consequences that will be obtained by violators in the form of criminal sanctions. In Islam, the criminal sanctions given also do not look at gender. As an example of theft, there are at least five elements of the act that can indicate the act of theft, which includes the theft activity itself, something stolen, the victim of the theft, the location of the theft, and the person who committed the theft. These five elements do not mention a specific gender or gender.

Equality between the gender of women and men in Islam means equality in the sense of comparability between men and women to obtain and provide rights and obligations in the public sphere, men and women must be humanized with all their shortcomings and advantages, and men and women must be able to realize and optimize their potential as the realization of human rights justice. The rights possessed by every human being are limited by the rights of other human beings, which means that, in order to obtain their rights, human beings must respect the rights of others and carry out their obligations. Therefore, the rights of individuals are protected by obligations on every other individuals. Likewise, the rights and obligations of men and women in pursuing knowledge. Both men and women have obligations and have the right to pursue knowledge. In fact, men and women must be instilled with the mindset to always seek knowledge from the internal family environment. This is also related to the rights of men and women in work. In this context, employment is defined as professional employment and domestic employment. Often professional jobs are constructed and aimed at a specific gender, namely men, while domestic jobs are aimed at women. However, in fact, Islam sees the opposite. Islam has never viewed professional or domestic work as relevant to a particular gender, let alone in a bonded relationship between husband and wife. In Islam, both men and women have the right to work professionally and carry out their domestic roles. This is because both men and women have responsibility for themselves. In addition, Islam also commands its people (regardless of gender) to be independent and independent so that they do not depend on others for their lives.

The second literature is the results of Azizah's research (2024), which discusses gender equality in Protestant Christianity. As is well known, the holy book of Christians is the Bible. In the Bible, especially in 1:26-27 it is explained that although men and women were created differently based on their gender, they have the same dignity before God. This was reinforced by Erasmus who ordered to further humanize women, who at that time, social constructions viewed women as weak and inferior beings to men. Protestants also allow women to be leaders in their religion. Protestants believe that men and women are born with equal status according to the image of God written in the Bible. Although men and women are biologically different in physique and function, the difference does not refer to the qualities between men and women. Men and women essentially have the same qualities and complement each other. The blessings and responsibilities given are also equal, without discriminating against a particular gender. There is no one who is superior or inferior, both men and women have equal degrees. In the Bible, women are allowed to have characters that are generally possessed by men, such

as firm, charismatic, leader-spirited, brave, and strong. Likewise, men are also allowed to choose a gentle, caring, compassionate, and forgiving character. In Protestant Christianity, God created men and women to complement each other and have the opportunity to gain equal power and freedom in fighting for their identity.

The Essence of Male and Gender Equality in an Interreligious Perspective

The view of human equality and gender from the Catholic review teaches that human beings are created with the same dignity regardless of gender, race, or social status. This is in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ which emphasizes love for all mankind without discrimination. Gender equality in the Catholic Church theologically emphasizes that men and women have the same dignity. The importance of men and women working together to create a humane society. This explanation is in accordance with Ranubaya and Endi (2023), whose *Gaudium et Spes* Art. 9 and 29 are the basis for the discussion that it is important to uphold gender equality based on gender, and physical differences. According to the Catholic Church, patriarchy is an understanding that is outdated and needs to be eradicated. The emphasis on the importance of involving women in decision-making in the Church is also necessary and has been implemented by Pope Francis. Catholic teachings on charity and social justice support gender equality efforts, focusing on education, health, and the elimination of violence against women.

Human and gender equality in Hinduism teaches that every individual has an equal and eternal soul regardless of gender, caste, or social status. This view emphasizes that the whole soul is part of Brahman which is the supreme source of life, thus creating a human foundation between men and women of equal value. According to the Warta literature (2024), gender equality needs to be applied in every human life. Human and gender equality does not only focus on gender differences, but involves other aspects, including cultural norms, cultural social structures, and spiritual roles. In Hindu mythology, there are many gods such as Dewi Saraswati, Dewi Parwati, and the glorified Dewi Laksmi. This confirms the important role of women in spiritual and social life. Hinduism integrates the values of equality in daily life by involving women to play an important role in economic, social, and religious activities.

The next source of literature according to Arayatama et al. (2024), related to human equality and gender in Buddhism is an important aspect of human life. Human equality is based on the understanding that all living beings are bound by birth (*samsara*) and have the potential to attain enlightenment (*nirvana*). Buddhism teaches compassion and universal love to invite all human beings to treat all living beings, including men and women, with equal respect. Men and women have the ability to achieve the same enlightenment. Gender equality in Buddhism looks at aspects of education, social charity, and spiritual development. The Buddhist teachings on gender equality also highlight the role of men and women in spiritual life. Although in early Buddhist practice, the role of women was often limited in monastic life, in the core teachings of Buddhism, there is no spiritual difference between men and women. The Buddha himself once taught that women have the same potential as men to achieve enlightenment, and this paved the way for women to live a religious life equal to men, including becoming nuns or leaders in

the Buddhist community. Spiritual development in Buddhism also emphasizes the importance of gender equality. Both men and women are encouraged to live a life based on the principles of morality, meditation, and wisdom. In this way, gender equality is not only recognized in social life, but also in efforts to achieve spiritual development and full awareness. This shows that in Buddhism, gender equality is not only a social issue, but also an integral part of the path to enlightenment and freedom from suffering.

According to Ashri (2023), Confucianism emphasizes that social balance can be achieved through harmonious relationships between various levels of society and family members. In the traditional context, Confucianism organizes relationships between humans based on certain hierarchies, such as relationships between fathers and children, husbands and wives, and superiors and subordinates. However, this hierarchical structure does not mean inequality, since each individual has a moral responsibility in treating others well, according to their position in that hierarchy. This principle requires everyone to be fair, caring, and respectful of everyone, both men and women. It teaches that every individual, regardless of social status or gender, must be respected and treated humanely. Gender equality in Confucian family ethics has undergone a significant transformation along with the times. In the more ancient Confucian tradition, women were often placed in more limited domestic roles, such as taking care of the household and educating children. However, modern developments of this teaching have begun to emphasize the importance of women's roles not only at home, but also in society. Today's Confucians increasingly recognize that women have equal rights and responsibilities with men, especially in terms of education and contribution to society. In addition, in the context of modern life, more and more women are playing important roles in education, economics, and politics in the Confucian community. They are no longer only placed in traditional roles, but are also valued for their abilities and contributions in various aspects of life.

Despite having different doctrines, Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism share the same basic values regarding human dignity, love, and social justice. The teaching of universal love teaches the importance of compassion for others regardless of gender. Respect for women's roles is also highly upheld, while the principle of social harmony emphasizes the importance of harmony in social relationships. These values can contribute to the achievement of gender and human equality in Indonesia, where all people, both men and women, can be treated fairly and equally. In a multicultural Indonesian society, there are great challenges in uniting various religious views related to the issue of gender equality. However, through ongoing interfaith dialogue and cross-community cooperation, the values of equality from each religion can be integrated to reduce discrimination and fight for women's rights. The combination of these religious teachings can be a driving force to create a more inclusive and equitable social environment, where women's roles are valued equally with men. Religious values that support human and gender equality can also make a significant contribution to national development. When religions work together to promote women's rights, economic empowerment, equal access to education, and the elimination of gender-based violence, Indonesia can move towards a more just and harmonious society. This collaboration not only strengthens the values of

equality, but also supports the achievement of more inclusive social and economic development, strengthening the foundation of a united nation in diversity.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of literature related to the focus of this research, it is concluded that despite the differences in doctrine, all religions practiced in Indonesia, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, basically teach values that support human equality and dignity. These teachings emphasize the importance of justice, respect for the role of women, and the principle of equal compassion, so that they are very well applied in a multicultural society. In Indonesia, the challenge of achieving gender equality can be overcome through interfaith dialogue and cross-community collaboration, where equality values can be integrated to reduce discrimination and empower women's rights. The application of the principles carried out not only has an impact on social justice, but also supports the development of diversity harmonization, where every human being, both men and women, can play an equal role and be valued.

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