

## A GENDER INEQUALITY IN MOSQUE: An-Ethnographic Approach in Kudus, Central Java

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### Abstract

*The mosque is a center of worship and a learning medium for Muslims. As a place of worship, according to the syariah there is no specific classification that mosques can only be dominated by one gender only. However, male dominance over the mosque as a religious public sphere occurred in the Baitussalam Kauman Mosque, Jekulo, Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia from 1923 until now. Therefore, this article seeks to analyze the factors of discrimination against females in using the mosque as a place of worship and other religious activities. Using an ethnographic approach, this article argues that discrimination against females has occurred since 1923. This happened at the same time as the establishment of the Pesantren Al-Qaumaniyah Islamic (only for male santri) and was followed by other pesantren around the mosque. The gender inequality discrimination argument relies on an unwritten rule that ideally females only pray in congregation at home. In further, it is as if females are positioned as “trouble makers” because they are seen as disturbing the male congregation who are focusing on memorizing the al-Qur’an at the Baitussalam Mosque. This stereotype and discriminatory regulation still perpetuated today under the pretext of respecting the old rules of the founders.*



*[Masjid merupakan pusat ibadah dan media pembelajaran bagi umat Muslim. Sebagai tempat ibadah, secara syariat tidak ada klasifikasi khusus bahwa masjid hanya boleh didominasi oleh salah satu jenis gender saja. Namun dominasi laki-laki atas masjid sebagai ruang publik keagamaan ternyata terjadi di Masjid Baitussalam Kauman, Jekulo, Kudus, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia sejak tahun 1923 sampai sekarang. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini bertujuan untuk menggali faktor-faktor diskriminasi terhadap perempuan dalam menggunakan masjid tersebut sebagai tempat ibadah dan aktivitas keagamaan lainnya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnografi, artikel ini berargumen bahwa proses diskriminasi terhadap perempuan sudah terjadi sejak tahun 1923. Hal demikian terjadi bersamaan dengan berdirinya Pesantren Al-Qaumaniyah (khusus santri laki-laki) dan diikuti oleh pesantren lainnya di sekitar masjid. Adapun argumentasi diskriminasi bias gender tersebut bersandar pada peraturan tidak tertulis bahwa idealnya perempuan cukup salat berjamaah di rumah saja. Bahkan, dalam temuan lebih lanjut dari artikel ini, seolah perempuan diposisikan sebagai “sumber masalah” lantaran dianggap mengganggu jamaah laki-laki yang sedang fokus hafalan al-Qur’an di Masjid Baitussalam tersebut. Stereotip dan peraturan diskriminatif ini masih dilanggengkan sampai sekarang dengan dalih sebagai penghormatan terhadap tata aturan lama dari para pendiri.]*

**Keywords:** *Mosque, Gender Inequality, Stereotype, Female*

## **Introduction**

Gender is used to identify differences between males and females in the aspects of socio-culture, psychology, and other non-biological aspects, while sex identifies the differences from the aspect of biological anatomy including the difference of chemical composition and hormone in body, physical anatomy, reproduction, and other biological anatomy. Gender studies emphasized on development aspect of masculinity (*nisa'iyah*). Sex studies emphasize on biological aspect and chemical composition in the body of male (*zhukurah*) and female (*unutsah*).<sup>1</sup>

Gender concept is characteristics inherent to male and female for being constructed socially and culturally lasting for a long time and

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<sup>1</sup> Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Quran* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001), p. 35.

preserved in social regulation, as if it were the inherent characteristics which should be owned and cannot be exchanged, for example: a woman is constructed to be graceful, emotional, maternal, amenable, while a man is constructed to be doughty, rational, strong, and so on.<sup>2</sup> This construction is not based on vacuum of idea, but by nature a female tends to be graceful and maternal, even if a male having such behavior, then he will be regarded as a shemale. If a female having male's characteristics, like stocky, sturdy in walking, she is called *macho/tomboy*.

So, gender construct attached to female and male will turn into parts of their life's character. People give gender identity according to natural identity owned by individuals. If someone has single genital in form of vagina, she is given an identity as a female, if it is in form of penis, he will be called as a male. The term of gender was getting popular after the publication of President Instruction (*Inpres*), number 9, December 19, 2000 about gender mainstreaming and global program of democratization, honor on human rights, environment geniality and awareness of understanding messages on gender.

In further, the gender studies become more interesting when it is associated with the issue of mosques. However, most studies still focus on the perspective of the mosque as a public sphere to social problem-solving such as *zakat*, *infaq*, counseling, and other religious activities.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the existence of mosques is also considered to contribute to the problems of entrepreneurship, *dakwah*,<sup>4</sup> and learning related to *syariah* topics.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the issues targeted by researchers

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<sup>2</sup> Tri Marhaeni Pudji Astuti, *Konstruksi Gender dalam Realitas Sosial* (Semarang: UNNES Press, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Feri Rahmawan, "Fungsi Sosial Masjid Al-Hidayah Purwosari, Sinduadi, Mlati, Sleman Terhadap Kesejahteraan Masyarakat" (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> Anis Kurniawati, "Masjid Sebagai Pusat Kegiatan Pendidikan Masyarakat (Studi Peran dan Kontribusi Masjid Baitus Shomad Dusun Krajan, Tegalombo, Pacitan, Jawa Timur)" (Ponorogo: STAIN Ponorogo, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Yunus, "Manajemen Masjid Nurul Huda dalam Meningkatkan Pengamalan Agama di Kelurahan Tanete, Kecamatan Aggeraja, Kabupaten Enrekang, Sulsel" (Makassar: Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, 2020).

tend to be merely normative.

For those, this article intends to fill in gaps in the study of mosques by focusing on gender discrimination and patriarchal construction in mosques as a religious public sphere. Using an ethnographic approach, this article seeks to examine when did the rule of gender bias occur and what are the factors behind the occurrence of discrimination in the Baitussalam Mosque, Kauman, Jekulo, Kudus, Central Java.

### **Female Sphere in the Mosque**

The mosque is mostly patriarchal. On daily, male Muslims are obligated to participate in *salat jamaah* (congregational) at the mosque, while female Muslims are not. Females are encouraged to pray at home.<sup>6</sup> In all social classes, the mosque attendance is more common for male Muslim than female, even more in the higher society.<sup>7</sup> In Iran, for example, should females attend the mosque, they are often given a separate and peripheral place. The place for males is in the central part of the mosque while females are seated in a high balcony or in a side section of the mosque. The occasional presence of children may also affect the atmosphere of the female place in the mosque. Among Sudanese migrants, female attendance at mosques is considered an old practice, however female mosque groups are viewed as a contemporary occurrence.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note that, the architecturally separated spaces for females in the mosque didn't exist in the first several hundred years of Islam. It was not until the Ottoman Empire, that females were allocated in the balconies of the mosque. Moreover, the facilities on the female side are different from that of the male. This is happened in Waterloo,

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<sup>6</sup> Shampa Mazumdar and Sanjoy Mazumdar, "In Mosques and Shrines: Women's Agency in Public Sacred Space," *Journal of Ritual Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2002, pp. 165-79.

<sup>7</sup> Niloofar Haeri, "The Private Performance of "Salat" Prayers: Repetition, Time, and Meaning," *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 86, No. 1, 2013, pp. 5-34.

<sup>8</sup> Salma A Nageeb, "Appropriating the Mosque: Women's Religious Groups in Khartoum," *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2007, pp. 5-27.

Canada, in which the female's room is only 15 percent of the size of the female.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Origin of Baitussalam Mosque**

The word “*Jekulo*” came from the word *njejek ulo* (kick a snake) or from the dialect *djek kulo* (since I was here). Regarding existence of Baitussalam Mosque in Jekulo Village—according to oral story—initially it started from the presence of pile of wood building material of wood and *tablek* (woven bamboo).

Sunan Kudus (Raden Ja'far Shadiq) suggested the local residents use the wood to build a mosque, which is now named Baitussalam. Islam spread in Jekulo on the effort of Sunan Kudus, and was developed by a *ulama*<sup>10</sup> from the area of Tuban, East Java, namely Abdul Jalil (a Warlord of Raden Fatah from Demak Bintara) who was settled in Pagudjangan (previous name before the name of Jekulo) together with Abdul Qohar. Abdul Jalil and Abdul Qohar were both buried in the side/in one area of Baitussalam Mosque.

In 1890 AD, the mosque was renovated and built with red bricks. From 1916 until 1917 the mosque was renovated and enlarged, initiated by Kiai Sanusi with his two sons, i.e., H. Ali from Klaling Village and H. Ismail from Jekulo Village, Kudus. In 1930/1931 the additional building, the porch of the mosque, was built with the support of H. Nor Ali Amir and the workers of the Tjap Amir Djekulo cigarette factory (closed long ago). On 13 February 1969, a committee of the Mosque Building was formed. On Monday *Klinon*, 14 *Dzulhijjah* 1388 H/3 March 1969 AD until 14 *Dzulhijjah* 1389 H/20 February 1970 AD, the mosque was enlarged with the support of H. Ma'ruf, the owner of a cigarette factory, Djambu Bol.

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<sup>9</sup> Anne H. Betteridge, “Women and Shrines in Shiraz,” in D. L. Bowen and E. A. Early (eds.), *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> The religious scholars who are versed theoretically and practically of Islam.

The existence of the mosque had inspired the establishment of *pesantren* around the mosque. The founder of the first *pesantren* in Kauman Jekulo was *Kiai* Yasir who had a son-in-law named *Kiai* Yasin. The *pesantren* of *Kiai* Yasir did not get a concerned by the next generation, so it did not develop.<sup>11</sup> A figure who was pivotal in developing Islam in Kauman, Jekulo, next was *Kiai* Yasin, before performing Hajj, his name was Sukandar. He was born in Kajen Village, Sub-District of Margoyoso, Pati, Central Java, to a father named H. Tasmin and a mother named Salamah.

The genealogy of *Kiai* Yasin from the early descendent was Sultan Hadiwijaya, Sunan Senopati, Sunan Amangkurat I (Yogyakarta), Amangkurat II (Tegal Arum), Harya Candra Sumahadinegara (Tuban, East Java), and from the descendent of Kajen, Pati, started from K.H Ahmad Mutamakin, Alfiyah, Asiyah, Demang Waru, Muhamad Wira'i, Muhamad Soleh, Muhamad Ali, H. Amin, dan Sukandar (H. Yasin). *Kiai* Yasin, in his saga, was believed to have various *karamah* (ability exceeding ordinary), i.e., able to speak in Dutch though he never learned about it. When being attacked by the Colonial of Dutch, he fought against them by sneezing and the Dutch soldiers died. *Kiai* Sanusi and Yasin were buried in the front side of Baitussalam Mosque. Meanwhile, other figures in Jekulo are among others *Kiai* Basyir and other *kiai* in public cemetery on right side of Baitussalam Mosque.

In Jekulo Village, the professions of the citizen were various, such as trader, civil servant (ASN), industrial labor, farmer, and etc. In the hutment of Kauman, Jekulo, there are 13 *pesantren*, with the number of *santri* of more or less 3.0000. There are 1 mosque, 7 *musala*, 1 *Madrasah Diniyah* (Islamic Religiousity School), 2 PAUD (Early Childhood Education), 3 TK (Kindergarten), 1 MI (Elementary School), 2 MTs (Secondary School), and 1 MA (Senior High School).

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<sup>11</sup> Amirul Ulum, *K.H Yasin Bareng Sang Mujiz Dalailu al Khairat dari Nusantara* (Yogyakarta: Global Press, 2018), p. 60.

There are three pillars for the *santri* of Kauman Jekulo, those are praying congregationally, reading *kitab salaf*, and conducting pilgrimage to graves of *masyayikh* (the elders of school). The principles instilled to *santri* are learning is not just a tradition, not just searching knowledge, but it should also be intended to get salvation in the world and the hereafter. *Ngajio senajan ora mudeng, senajan ora iso, insya Allah barokah lebmgo goleki ilmu* (Just learn though you do not understand; although you are not capable, if God disposes, it can turn into blessings for the effort having been made to get knowledge).

The advantages that could be obtained by the surrounding people of *pesantren* in Kauman Jekulo, are among others, to be able to join in the learning programs of al-Qur'an and *Kitab Salaf*, to be food traders, promoting the existence of around 20 food stalls, mutual cooperation with the students for cleaning the environment periodically. The differentiating thing of the existence of Baitussalam Mosque if compared with other mosques in Kudus, is in the context of activity.

First, for *muazin*<sup>12</sup> whatever the time, it is not allowed to intonate the *azan*. Prohibition of intonating the *azan* was stated in the written announcement in *Pegon* language, framed and stuck to the wall of Baitussalam Mosque, which is written, "*Tlan, Imam Syafi'i radliyallahu anhu, sopo-sopo sing azan wajib lenceng ora keno dilago ake. Sopo sing weruh azan dilagoake wajib ngilingake. Intaba al-haj Yasin*". "(Announcement, Imam Syafi'i stated whosoever recites the *azan*, he should not intonate it. If anyone knew or heard the *azan* intonated, he must be reminded. This is an instruction of H. Yasin.)" The late H. Yasin was an elder of the early generation in Kauman Jekulo. Second, after the *azan*, there should be no chanting, and just performing the *salat munfarid qobliyah* (before the obligatory *salat*). Third, congregational *salat* of *qodlo* is conducted at the end of *Ramadan* to substitute punishment (for leaving the *salat*) for

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<sup>12</sup> The Muslim official of a mosque who summons the faithful to *salat* from a minaret five times a days.



a year (before *Ramadan*) for the actor. Fourth, *beduk* is sounded at 00 s.d 01.00 am in *Ramadan* to wake the residents up for the night prayer and preparation to cook for *sabur* (predawn meal).

Fifth, the mosque is not used for a big Qur'anic learning forum inviting a *pendakwah* (preacher) from outside the area with many visitors. The mosque is also not used for reciting al-Qur'an during the night in Ramadan (*tadarus*); not used for reciting *Salawat Barzanji* on Monday night or Friday night, but *Mauludan* only done in the night of 12 *Rabiul Awal* without being accompanied by *rebana* (tambourine). The event was attended by Kiai, residents, and *santri*.

Sixth, a child who has not been circumcised may not enter the inside room of the mosque when performing *salat*. The rule was stated in written information on the white paper pasted on the pillar of the middle part of the mosque (between the porch and terrace of the mosque)" border of children (not yet circumcised)" with an arrow sign directing downward. Seventh, the mosque is not used to announce the information of obituary. If a citizen dies, it is announced from *musala* of Kauman Jekulo. The mosque is not used for public discussion. The worship activities in Baitussalam Mosque includes *salat lima waktu*, *salat sunnah*, *salat Jumat*, *salat jena'ah*, learning the *Kitab Salaf* colossally attended by the local citizens, and the *santri* every Tuesday night after the *salat Isya'* mentored by Kiai Ahmad Saiq Mahin.

### **Pretext of the Prohibition to Female on Having Activities in Baitussalam Mosque**

The prohibition for female to *salat jamaah* (pray in congregation) at the Baitussalam Mosque has probably become commonplace for local residents. It has been many years, from 1923 until now, this prohibition is still adhered to. The prohibition refers to some reasons: first, female bring about *fitnah* when being activities in the mosque. In the area surrounding the mosque is built a *pesantren* special for male. Second,



*salat* in the mosque are only for male not female. Third, the suggestion for female to pray at home, based on the *Kitab I'aratut Tholibin* written by *Syeikh* Abu Bakar bin Muhammad ad-Dimyati. It is also corroborated by *Syeikh* Ibn Qasim al-Ghazi argue in *Fathul Qorib*: "A male is better to *salat jamaah* in mosque whereas a female is better *salat jamaah* at home." In addition, there are also *hadis* about advising women to pray at home better (HR. Abu Dawud: 483).<sup>13</sup>

The management of the mosque gave a solution by building a special place for female to *salat* and to have a break for her who visit their sons who are learning in the *pesantren*. This "special *musala*" building was restored during the second renovation of the mosque in 1969. In further, the *musala* (*pawestren*) was then rebuilt in 2014 by the village government of Jekulo Village and was written on the wall: "Musala for Female, Male are prohibited to enter" and also "Female Only." The position of the *musala* is side with the public cemetery beside the mosque. *Pawestren* is understood as an attempt to maintain the distance between male and female *jamaah*.<sup>14</sup>

There are two arguments related to the limitation of mosque sphere for female. First, prohibiting in form of *fatwa* by the *kiai* presented in the *pengajian* forum. The prohibition referred to the *kiai* of Kauman Jekulo who thought that when female are outside the house they can result in *fitnah*, so they had better have activities at home. In the past, female in Kauman Jekulo were prohibited to attend *tablilan*, *mengaji*, and formal education. Being a ASN for male and female of the residents of Kauman Jekulo was regarded as *makruh* by one of the *kiai*. The form of prohibition was gradually changing in its application except the prohibition of having activities in the mosque. The change of perspective occurred because the *kiai* who became the initiator of the prohibition had passed away and the paradigm of today's *kiai* have been exposed to the modern

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<sup>13</sup> Abu Dawud Sulayman, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabi. ND), p. 223.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Khomsatun, female, November 2022.

dynamics. The prohibition for female activities in the mosque is more because there are *pesantren* for male who conduct regular activities in the mosque. Second, allowing females to do activities in the mosque since the mosque is public property. The response of *kiai* as the permitting group was realized by answering the question from the *santri* or residents by saying 'it is allowed'.<sup>15</sup>

However, most of the residents dominantly obeyed the prohibition to female on having activities in the mosque. One of female *jamaah*, believes that *kiai's* teaching is intended to protect and prevent female from being the source of *syahwat* for male dan *santri* of *pesantren* al Qaumaniyah.<sup>16</sup> Another female *jamaah* and one of *kiai* also accepted the prohibition because assumption that it was a tradition, and local wisdom.<sup>17</sup>

In further, since 2017 female also was prohibited to conduct a pilgrimage to public grave beside Baitussalam Mosque. The prohibition was written on the board put in the grave in cooperation with the village government. The green board written with white paint was attached to the grave, saying "Notice of prohibition on giving headstone to the tomb, female are prohibited to visit the grave." The announcement was made by *Nadzir* dan Village Government of Jekulo Village.

### ***Muslimah* under Patriarchal Culture Dominance**

Gender and Islamic discourse in Indonesia cannot be separated from two points. First, Islam is considered to have an appeal, especially in examining the themes about the development of contemporary thinking related to issues of human rights, pluralism, disability, and gender. Second, Islam motivates people not only to criticize the social problems due to science and technology development but also to take a significant role in finding solutions. However, these issues have not been embodied in

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with *Kiai* Mujathid, November 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Muslimah female, November 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Maryati, November 2022; Interview with *Kiai* Mujtahid, November 2022.

the entire Muslim community in Indonesia. This fact may be due to two main factors: gender issues have not been well understood by religious leaders, such as *kiai*, and people are not well-concerned with the discourse that is “difficult to digest”. The discourse of gender vis-a-vis Islam is just discussed in limited circles, such as students, lecturers, and enthusiasts of Islamic studies contemporary, even though these activities still get challenges from various parties in Indonesia.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, the prohibition to female on having activities in Baitussalam Mosque of Kauman Jekulo Kudus is relevant. Restricting the sphere for female to worship at the mosque is not only patriarchal, but also violates human rights by ignoring the fact that the mosque is a place of worship for all Muslims, both male and female. As a religious public sphere, mosques should be allowed to serve as places of worship and other religious activities regardless of race, ethnicity or gender identity. Even, since the time of the prophet Muhammad, the mosque has actually been used as the center for civilization.<sup>19</sup>

In the Javanese tradition, there are power relations that are perpetuated for a long time. Power relations that are covered with religious authority and traditional labels have given rise to the subordination of female as male's (*konco wingking*) and gender inequality. The emergence of gender inequality is due to cultural social construction such as a myth that male act prior to reason while female, attached to females are three M (*masak* (cook), *macak/berdandan* (make up), *manak/melahirkan* (give a birth)). In capitalism, males are a winner due to being symbolized as more powerful than females.<sup>20</sup> As result, gender inequality and patriarchal views emerge.

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<sup>18</sup> Mufidah, Ch., “Complexities in Dealing with Gender Inequality: Muslim Women and Mosque-based Social Services in East Java Indonesia,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* (JIIS), Vol. 11, No. 2, 2017, pp. 459-488.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Trisaksti Handayani and Sugiarti, *Konsep dan Teknik Penelitian Gender* (Malang: UMM Press, 2006), p. 9.

According to Suhandjati, the occurrence of stereotype is may be due to some factors: first, female are weak creatures compared to male, so they need to be protected by male. Second, female as wives is dependent on male. Third, female was created to be part of male's body. Fourth, female was created to be solely regarded as reproduction organs, and fifth, female only take cares of domestic matters.<sup>21</sup> It is in accordance with the context of female restrictions in the religious public sphere.

In further, Yasir Alimi argue that factor of gender inequality is inseparable from ideology that requires male and female obey the rules of country, among others religion and ideology emphasizing that female are the second classed creature not because of the biological identity attached to them, but negative imaging to them by science and religion.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the prohibition of females in their activities in Baitussalam Mosque is considered a form of dehumanization and male oppression to them.

Moreover, religious authority strengthened by local wisdom is also an important factor in sex segregation at the Baitussalam mosque. The existence of the *kyai* as a central figure who has religious authority has contributed to perpetuating a gender-biased tradition. An understanding that is conventional and *sunnah* oriented is a strong foundation regarding the reasons why female must be limited in their space for movement in the mosque. Moreover, geographically, Kudus is included in one of the "*kota wali*" ("saint city") which is still very strong in upholding Islamic traditions originating from Sunan Kudus as a central figure in the spread of Islam with a chain connecting to the Prophet Muhammad.

Indeed, religious authority is a hierarchical relationship that connects a group of people with a past that they recognize to be foundational, thereby endowing those in authority with the capacity to

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<sup>21</sup> Sri Suhandjati, *Mitos-Mitos tentang Menstruasi* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2002), p. 89.

<sup>22</sup> Moh. Yasir Alimi, *Dekonstruksi Seksualitas Poskolonial Dari Wacana Bangsa hingga Wacana Agama* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004), p. 36.

transmit and transform that past into examples for the present. Authority “rests neither on common reason nor on the power of the one who commands,” but on the recognition of the hierarchy deemed by all parties involved to be right and legitimate.<sup>23</sup>

In the ethnographic notes of this article, the hierarchical relationships in the religious authority context also happened to the *kiai* family in Kauman, Jekulo, Kudus. Affirmation of religious authority does not occur naturally. It happened through the inheritance of the family chain. This means that the old *kiai* passed on religious authority through family relations. Thus, the childrens of the *kiai* as heirs to religious authority can continue the “holy mission” as a central figure in terms of religious knowledge as well as gender-biased policies.

Even in its current development, some of the *kiai*’s children were breaking the walls of the conservative tradition that has been going on for generations. They have started to be open-minded and inclusively to take part in being of modernity. Some of them became ASN, studied up to bachelor’s and master’s levels, and established formal schools starting from early childhood education to senior high school. Their mindset is also no longer the same as their predecessors. They have started to give space and roles to women to take part in various religious activities in the religious public sphere.

## **Conclusion**

The prohibition activities for female in the Baitussalam mosque has been in effect since 1923. It refers to the policy of the *kiai* with the reason to maintain honor and avoid slander against female. Around the mosque, there are many *pesantren* specifically for male, so it is considered taboo when many females are active in the mosque.

The prohibition on gender bias was actually accepted by the females around the mosque. This article argues that the acceptance of

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<sup>23</sup> Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), p. 4.

the prohibition is caused by some factors: first, the public's belief that the prohibition is based on the *kitab salaf*. Second, the prohibition of females has been going on for a long time and is considered taken for granted. Third, the community around the mosque still believes that the *kiai* is the highest religious authority so his utterance must be accepted and obeyed even though he has passed away.

However, over time, when the *pesantren* leadership reached the second generation, they began open-minded. The next generation of *kiai* began to pursue education up to bachelor's and master's degrees. Some of them even become ASN. They also initiated a special forum for females to empower them, especially from a religious perspective. In fact, since 2014, the government of Jekulo Village has contributed to responding to this policy by renovating a special prayer room for females which has actually been established since the 1960s.

Thus, it becomes important to understand that Islam places females in the same noble manner as males. So, the mosque as a religious public sphere should have the right to be occupied by all Muslims regardless of gender or sex. Likewise, with regard to careers, Islam does not prohibit females from working according to their abilities. As long as it is *halal* and does not violate to *syariah*, all Muslims, both male and female, have the right to do so.

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