

Religiosity and Fundamentalism as Factors of Perception of Gender Equality

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Abstract: As a non-religious public university, Diponegoro University accommodates students from various religious and fundamentalist backgrounds. Since a person's religious values have an influence on their perspective on the values of inter-sex relationships, it is suspected that both variables also influence their perspective on these relationships. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of religiosity and religious fundamentalism on the perception of gender equality among Muslim students in Indonesia. Based on the literature review, it is hypothesized that religiosity and religious fundamentalism have a negative impact on the perception of gender equality. The study employs a quantitative approach with a survey design. Data were collected using a questionnaire specifically designed for Muslim students. The study involved 294 Muslim students from Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia. The participants were selected using a cluster sampling technique based on faculty, study program, and class. Hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple regression analysis. The findings reveal that Muslim students' perception of gender equality is negatively influenced by religiosity and religious fundamentalism. However their total contribution to the perception is small, 6.4% for males and 5.6% for females. Further research is needed to explore this relationship in greater depth.

Keywords: fundamentalism; gender equality; religiosity

Abstrak: Sebagai perguruan tinggi umum non keagamaan, Universitas Diponegoro menampung mahasiswa dari berbagai latar belakang religisitas dan fundamentalisme. Karena nilai-nilai keagamaan seseorang memiliki pengaruh pada cara pandangnya tentang nilai-nilai hubungan antar jenis kelamin, maka diduga kedua variabel juga berpengaruh pada cara pandang tentang hubungan tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pengaruh religiusitas dan fundamentalisme agama terhadap persepsi kesetaraan gender di kalangan mahasiswa Muslim di Indonesia. Berdasarkan tinjauan pustaka, dihipotesiskan bahwa kedua variabel independen memengaruhi persepsi kesetaraan gender secara negatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan kuesioner, yang dirancang khusus untuk mahasiswa Muslim. Penelitian ini melibatkan 294 subjek mahasiswa Muslim di Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia. Mereka dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik cluster sampling berdasarkan fakultas, program studi, dan kelas. Pengujian hipotesis dilaku-

kan dengan menggunakan analisis regresi berganda. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa persepsi mahasiswa Muslim tentang kesetaraan gender dipengaruhi secara negatif oleh religiusitas dan fundamentalisme agama. Akan tetapi, total kontribusi dari keduanya pada persepsi hanya kecil, 6,4% untuk laki-laki dan 5,6% untuk perempuan females. Diperlukan lebih banyak penelitian untuk mengeksplorasi hubungan ini secara mendalam.

Kata Kunci: fundamentalisme; keberagamaan; kesetaraan gender

A. Introduction

In this open communication era, gender equality is still a controversial topic in Muslim society. Some Muslims view that theologically, there is no equality between men and women since each of the genders has a different nature, so they have different positions and responsibilities.¹ On the contrary, some other Muslims view that women and men have exactly equal positions and responsibilities in social life.² These theological differences are also reflected in their social lives. It is common for the first Muslim groups to segregate women from men in their social gatherings. Women are expected to be around the domestic domain (family, home), while men are more in the public domain. While for the later group of Muslims, there is no segregation between men and women in their social lives. Both genders have the same opportunity to participate and contribute to their social lives, domestically or publicly.

The difference among the contradictory groups seems to be due to their differences in understanding religious (Islamic) teachings and how to implement them in their social lives.³ While the contradictory perception of gender equality is not the reflection of all Indonesian Muslims, variation exists among them, both in their views and social lives. Although it is not as apparent

¹ Abu al-Fida' al-Hafizh Ibn Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2004), 492–93; Syaikh Mutawakkil As-Sya'rawi, *Fiqh Perempuan (Muslimah): Busana dan Perhiasan, Penghormatan atas Perempuan sampai Wanita Karir*, trans. Y. H. M. Basyaruddin (Jakarta: Amzah, 2003), 35–36.

² Etin Anwar, *Gender and Self in Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006), 115, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203799628>; Fatimah Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 152.

³ Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, "Pergulatan Pemikiran Feminis dalam Wacana Islam di Indonesia," in *Rekonstruksi Metodologis Wacana Kesetaraan Gender dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar Offset, 2002), 11.

as among the older Muslim generation, the perception of gender equality also varies among the younger generation, ranging from very negative to very positive. The variation seems to be related to the reflection of religious teachings in their lives (religiosity) and how they implement them in their social lives (religious fundamentalism).

Religiosity and fundamentalism exhibit a complex relationship with views on gender equality, which can be particularly observed in diverse academic settings like Diponegoro University. This university, known for its inclusivity and acceptance of students from various religious backgrounds, provides a unique microcosm for studying these dynamics. In such an environment, religiosity—defined as personal devotion and adherence to religious practices—might not uniformly predict conservative views on gender roles. Instead, students' attitudes toward gender equality could reflect a spectrum influenced by the interplay between personal faith, cultural norms, and exposure to diverse viewpoints.⁴ Fundamentalism, which in some students may manifest as a rigid adherence to traditional interpretations of religious texts, could correlate with more conservative stances on gender roles. However, the open and interreligious setting at Diponegoro University may also encourage dialogue and reevaluation of previously held beliefs, leading to a more nuanced understanding and acceptance of gender equality among students.⁵

This paper aims to investigate the effects of religiosity and religious fundamentalism on the perception of gender equality among Muslim students in Indonesia. The study examined whether the variation in perception of gender equality among Muslim students has a relation with the variation in their level of religiosity and religious fundamentalism.

Perception is one of the cognitive processes in which one interprets their sensory impression into a coherent view of the surroundings.⁶ Robbins and Judge define perception as a process in which individuals organize and

⁴ J. M. Smith, "Faith and Flexibility: Religious Diversity and Student Attitudes towards Gender Roles in a University Setting," *Journal of College Student Development* 61, no. 3 (2020): 347–62.

⁵ M R Johnson and L Vickers, "Interreligious Dialogue and Changing Mindsets: Learning from Gender Equality Initiatives at a Multicultural University," *Studies in Higher Education* 44, no. 7 (2019): 1256–68.

⁶ Fred Luthans, *Organizational Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 126.

interpret sensory impressions to tie meaning to their surrounding realities.⁷ The process is done by refining, selecting, organizing, and interpreting a stimulus to make it meaningful for them. One's perception of something cannot be separated from how one selects, receives, organizes, and interprets information about it.⁸ Since it is through a selection process, perception can be different from objective reality, making understanding different. Consequently, a single thing may be perceived differently by different individuals.⁹ Individual differences may lead to differences in perception of a single object. Therefore, perception is not always consistent with the accuracy of acquired information since it depends on the meaningfulness of the individuals.¹⁰

In this study, the object of perception is gender equality, whether subjects/Muslim students view men and women as equal or unequal in their roles in all aspects of life. Although, in recent reality, gender inequality has decreased, it is still not fully realized in Muslim society, including among the young generation. Shuraidy, for example, found that the perception of Arab students in America tends to be negative toward equality of rights and responsibility between men and women.¹¹ Although they live in a culture where equal rights are fundamental, they still perceive both genders as not equal. The view of inequality, among other things, is affected by the Jodeo-Christian tradition.¹² According to Islamic teaching, the differences between men and women are unavoidable.¹³

Perception of gender equality is defined as one's understanding and views related to the equality of men and women in all aspects of life. It is seen as how

⁷ Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge, *Organizational Behavior*, 17th ed. (New York: New York: Pearson, 2017), 202.

⁸ John R. Schermerhorn Jr. et al., *Organizational Behavior* (Houston: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2010), 32.

⁹ Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono, *Pengantar Umum Psikologi* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1982), 81.

¹⁰ Brent Simpson, Barry Markovsky, and Mike Steketee, "Power and the Perception of Social Networks," *Social Networks* 33, no. 2 (2011): 166–71, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2010.10.007>.

¹¹ Wafa U. Shuraydi, "Gender Equity, Women's Demystification, and Islam: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective." [Unpublished Dissertation] (Wayne State University, Detroit, 1998), 127.

¹² Abdul Mustaqim, "Metodologi Tafsir Perspektif Gender," in *Studi al-Qur'an Kontemporer, Wacana Baru Berbagai Metodologi Tafsir*, ed. Abdul Mustaqim and Sahiroh Syamsudin (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2002), 65–95.

¹³ Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender, Perspektif al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), 98.

Muslims view the equality of men and women in family life, education, work, social and religious duties, responsibilities, and rights. The perception varies among individuals, ranging from very positive to very negative. In Muslim society, the differences can not be separated from how they view gender relations as a consequence of religiosity and religious fundamentalism. Differences in their views about inequality among Muslims are rooted in the way how they interpret the source of religious teachings, in which social and cultural values have significant contributions.¹⁴

What is society's perception of gender equality? Although gender inequality has decreased in today's life, gender equality is still far from reality in social life, including among the young generation. Most people perceive different social roles for males and females, as reflected in their perception of gender equality. Paterna and Martínez,¹⁵ for example, investigated perceptions about inequality or gender among Spanish. They found that both male and female subjects tend to perceive inequality between males and females in politics, society, and family life is natural. However, their perception of work division based on gender is more moderate. The perception seems to be affected by their traditionalist views, which are related to religiosity (especially the belief dimension).

Jacobson and Kostadam found that perception of inequality among young men and women in Sweden and Norway, both in public (workplace) and domestic (family) life.¹⁶ Although it has been decreasing, the researchers found negative attitudes towards gender equality among some young generations. They also found a negative relation between religiosity (measured by their attendant in religious services) and attitude towards gender equality. The findings are in line with Shuraidy's findings, which indicate that the perception of Arab students in America tends to be negative toward equality of rights and responsibility between men and women.¹⁷ Although they live in a culture

¹⁴ Anwar, *Gender and Self in Islam*, 115.

¹⁵ Consuelo Paterna and Carmen Martínez, "Fathers and Gender Traditionalism: Perception of Inequality and Life Roles," *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 9, no. 2 (2006): 171–81, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1138741600006077>.

¹⁶ Niklas Jakobsson and Andreas Kotsadam, "Do Attitudes toward Gender Equality Really Differ between Norway and Sweden?," *Journal of European Social Policy* 20, no. 2 (2010): 142–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928709358790>.

¹⁷ Shuraydi, "Gender Equity, Women's Demystification, and Islam: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective," 127.

where equal rights are fundamental, they still perceive both genders is not equal.

How is Muslims' perception of gender equality? There seem to be differences in their perception or views on the issue. The differences seem to be affected by how they understand and interpret the religious text as a primary source of religious teachings. It is found in the text (Qur'an 4: 34), for example, a verse that some Muslims often interpret in relation to gender, especially leadership. Some Muslim scholars¹⁸ interpret the text literally and conclude that men have higher positions than women since the text states that men lead women. They argue that in another verse (Qur'an 2: 228), al-Qur'an textually states that men have a higher rank than women. Consequently, they perceive negatively towards gender equality (men and women are unequal). Moreover, the inequality view, among other things, is rooted in theological assumptions affected by the Jodeo-Christianity tradition.¹⁹ The view about inequality can be detected from Muslims' understanding of some teachings about gender relations. According to Islamic teaching, the differences between men and women are not avoidable.²⁰ The differences are due to biological characteristics, in which each gender has specific organs which lead to different functions. However, the differences do not indicate that one gender is superior to the other since they are equal before Allah. Islam has changed gender relations so that women are equal to men²¹. Before the Islamic era, the position of Arab women in social life was very low. Islam has changed its position so that in the early Islamic era, Muslim women experienced equal rights and treatment in family and social life. However, since scholars and practical life in the past affected an understanding of some Muslim societies, their views about gender relations are also affected by scholars.

As in developed countries, it is expected that young Muslims in Indonesia also perceive inequality between both genders. Besides social reason, the interpretation of religious teaching also contributes to developing the (negative) perception. Based on her study on al-Qur'an, Hadith (the Prophet

¹⁸ Katsir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, 1:492–493.

¹⁹ Mustaqim, "Metodologi Tafsir Perspektif Gender," 84.

²⁰ Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender, Perspektif al-Qur'an*, 98.

²¹ Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, 152.

saying), and Muslim tradition, Etin Anwar concludes that negative perception of gender equality is rooted in the interpretation of the sources of Islamic teachings in social and cultural values have a significant contribution.²² The most important factor in interpreting religious text is the ontological root of the creation of woman, that is, biological and sexual differences, characteristic differences, and family relations and social. In addition, inequality understanding is a consequence of differences among Muslim scholars in how they interpret the text related to gender relations, in which they serve the interests of certain political regimes and cultures.²³ For their interest, they do not hesitate to create unauthentic *hadith* (the Prophet's saying) to support inequality culture. The differences in their perception of gender equality/inequality are also affected by the way to interpret religious texts, which is gender bias, in the sense that it is based on the basic beliefs that men have higher positions than women.²⁴ Since their studies are based on views on inequality, the results are an understanding of inequality between men and women.

It is conclusive that sex differences, as a function of biological factors, may affect role differences between males and females. It can lead to different perceptions about gender equality in social relations between males and females. The perception will vary among individuals, ranging from very negative (strongly unfavorable towards gender equality) to very positive (strongly favorable towards gender equality). In traditional society, in which the division of social roles is based on sex, the perception tends to be negative. On the contrary, in an open society in which the division of social roles is not based on sex, the perception tends to be positive.

The diversity of the perception cannot be separated from the various factors, among other things is related to religion, that is, how religious and fundamentalism an individual is. Those who have high religiosity tend to be in line with religious teachings. Since some scholars interpret some religious teachings to be favorable towards males over females, their perception of gender equality tends to be negative. On the other hand, those who have low

²² Anwar, *Gender and Self in Islam*, 115.

²³ Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, 152.

²⁴ Dzuhayatin, "Pergulatan Pemikiran Feminis dalam Wacana Islam di Indonesia," 5-26

religiosity tend to neglect religious teachings and see the development of society in perceiving gender relation so that they tend to accept equality between genders. Consequently, their perception of gender equality tends to be positive.

Although strict division in today's real life has declined, it is still debatable. Some Muslim scholars (supported by their followers) view that the division is natural and stated clearly in the text (al-Qur'an), so it must be maintained. Therefore, they perceive that there is no equality between genders. Other scholars view the division as artificial (affected by paternalistic culture, which dominated human history) and that it should be reconstructed. This view affects their perception of gender equality, in which males and females have equal competence, position, and responsibility in domestic and public affairs.

Neff and associates measure equality (inequality) in politics, work, and household.²⁵ In this study, the perception of equality is seen in broader aspects, such as equal rights, tasks, responsibility, competence, work, and function in the household, politics, and education. Since Muslims' views about these aspects vary considerably, their perception of gender equality will range from extremely negative (males are not equal [superior] to females) to extremely positive (males are fully equal to females).

In conclusion, the perception of gender equality is significantly influenced by biological, social, and religious factors contributing to varying views among individuals. While some Muslim scholars interpret religious texts to emphasize a natural division of roles that reinforces male superiority, others advocate for a more equitable interpretation that supports gender equality in all aspects of life, including politics, work, and domestic responsibilities. This diversity in interpretation and perception is also evident among students at Diponegoro University, reflecting the broader societal shifts toward understanding and implementing gender equality. Despite some progress, the struggle between traditionalist views and progressive interpretations continues to shape the discourse on gender equality, highlighting the complex interplay between religious teachings, cultural values, and modern societal norms.

²⁵ Lia Nur'aena, "Transforming Children's Character Education in Islamic Da'wah in the Era of Social Media," *Jurnal Dakwah* 24, no. 2 (2023): 133–59, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jd.2023.24204>.

Religiosity is a social phenomenon related to how religion lives within its followers.²⁶ Religiosity is an abstraction of social-psychological phenomenon reflecting that one is too religious, that is, how far a person owns, feels, practices, realizes, and commits to the "religion" (doctrine, systems, institutions) in their life. It reflects how "religion" exists within oneself, which has implications for other behavior.²⁷ Ladbury and Khan, in their study about Islamic religiosity, state that religiosity is an expression of self-personal belief in special life phenomena.²⁸

Religiosity is not a concept referring to a single phenomenon but multiple phenomena, as reflected in different aspects or dimensions of one's religious life. The dimensions are independent of each other, although they are intercorrelated.²⁹ Although all researchers agree that religiosity is a complex and multidimensional construct, it is about many dimensions. Based on their review of 13 religiosity instruments, Hill and Hood Jr. show the variation, ranging from 2 dimensions by Broen to 12 dimensions by D. Hoge.³⁰

Based on their analysis of Judeo-Christianity tradition, Glock suggests five dimensions of expression of religion: experiential, ideological, ritual (practice), intellectual (knowledge), and consequential.³¹ Later on, Glock and Stark eliminate the consequential dimension because it is not fully part of religious commitment. Most researchers use this concept.

In their study about Muslim religiosity, Nafis and associates adapted Glock and Stark's concept of religious dimensions while still holding on to Islamic teachings. Religiosity (Islam) combines four dimensions: belief, commitment, ritual, and social.³² The belief dimension includes an acceptance of the truth of

²⁶ Daniel C. Batson and W. Larry Ventis, *The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 34.

²⁷ Steve Bruce, *Conservative Protestant Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 221.

²⁸ Sarah Ladbury and Seema Khan, *Increased Religiosity among Women in Muslim Majority Countries* (London: GSDRC Emerging Issues Research Service, 2008), 28.

²⁹ Batson and Ventis, *The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective*, 34.

³⁰ Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Hood, *Measures of Religiosity*, ed. Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Hood (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1999), 4; Crystal Park, "Review of 'Measures of Religiosity,'" *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 12, no. 1 (2002): 59–60, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327582IJPR1201_07.

³¹ Charles Y. Glock, "On the Study of Religious Commitment," *Religious Education* 57, no. sup4 (1962): 98–100, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408620575407>.

³² Glock.

Islamic teachings. Commitment refers to the willingness of a Muslim to respond positively or negatively to Islamic teachings. Ritual and social dimensions refer to the intensity of Muslims to actively practice religious commands, especially to worship God (*ḥabl min Allāh*) and social deeds (*ḥabl min al-nās*).³³

Because of their common grounds, the diversity in the dimensions of religiosity among its followers also affects their various personal and social aspects of life. Since religiosity includes belief, value, and social aspects, the various aspects of individual life, such as belief, value, and social systems they hold, will also vary in accordance with the variation of the level of religiosity dimensions. Among the affected aspects of lives held by the followers is the perception of gender equality, which relates to personal and social values.

Religious teachings may also explain the variety of perceptions of gender equality. Some conservative Muslims perceive that women are more easily than men to commit sin. In contrary, the liberal and moderate Muslims perceive that the commitment to sin depends on individual characteristics, regardless of gender differences. This understanding may also affect how they perceive the equality between men and women in all aspects of their lives. Consequently, there will be diversity among Muslims in their perception of gender relations, especially the equality between men and women.

It is concluded that the concept of religiosity, which encompasses multiple dimensions of religious life, such as belief, commitment, ritual, and social interaction, significantly influences the perception of gender equality among its adherents. This diversity in religiosity levels leads to varied interpretations of religious teachings, affecting personal and social values, including views on gender equality. Thus, among Muslims, there is a spectrum of beliefs about gender roles, ranging from conservative views that might see women as more prone to sin to more liberal or moderate views that consider susceptibility to sin as independent of gender. This range of perceptions underscores the complex interaction between religiosity and societal attitudes towards gender equality.

In the early 1900s, fundamentalism was first used in the contexts of American Christian groups—in which they developed a doctrine in interpreting

³³ M. Nafis et al., *Keberagamaan Masyarakat Muslim Kodia Semarang* (Semarang: Pusat Penelitian IAIN Walisongo Semarang 1995), 28.

the basic teachings of Christianity.³⁴ They assume that religious teachings and practices had been deviated from religious texts so that to straighten it, the Christians should be back to the texts. In a recent development, the term fundamentalism also includes any religious movement, including Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and other traditions.³⁵ In Muslim society, the term is not fully accepted since it is historically used in relation to Christian fundamentalism.³⁶ Some Muslims use the term *ushuliyun* (back to basic) to refer to those who hold religious teachings radically as textually stated in the Qur'an and Prophet tradition.

From a Psychological perspective, fundamentalism is a phenomenon that is owned by every individual, apart from groups. In this view, fundamentalism is characterized by being close-minded, not questioning their belief or considering other views.³⁷ Moaddel and Karabenick define religious fundamentalism as a set of special beliefs about obedience to religious norms, including beliefs about the universality and eternity of basic teachings and truth claims to achieve happiness. Laythe, Finkel, and Kirkpatrick identify religious fundamentalism as a militant belief that is an understanding that there is only one Absolut truth, especially in relation to God.³⁸

Based on a study on 18 fundamentalist movement groups from different religions, Herriot suggests five indicators characterizing the groups: reactive (to modernity), dualism (tendency to see everything as black and white, true [if it is inline with their views] and wrong [if it is not inline with their views], authoritative (willingness to literally and totally accept religious text), selective (tendency to select a certain part of the texts to emphasize true and pure

³⁴ Gil S. Epstein and Ira N. Gang, "Understanding the Development of Fundamentalism," *Public Choice* 132, no. 3-4 (2007): 257-71, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-007-9150-4>.

³⁵ Shai Bermanis, Daphna Canetti-Nisim, and Ami Pedahzur, "Religious Fundamentalism and the Extreme Right-Wing Camp in Israel," *Patterns of Prejudice* 38, no. 2 (2004): 159-76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220410001692358>.

³⁶ Akhyar Akhyar, "Fundamentalisme dalam Agama Islam dan Kristen," 2011; Abu Bakar MS, "Fundamentalisme Agama-agama: Sebuah Perspektif Historis," *Toleransi: Media Ilmiah Komunikasi Umat Beragama* 10, no. 1 (2018): 18-29, <https://doi.org/10.24014/trs.v10i1.5718>.

³⁷ Bruce Hunsberger, Michael Pratt, and S. Mark Pancer, "Adolescent Identity Formation: Religious Exploration and Commitment," *Identity* 1, no. 4 (2001): 365-86, https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532706XID0104_04.

³⁸ Brian Laythe, Deborah Finkel, and Lee A. Kirkpatrick, "Predicting Prejudice from Religious Fundamentalism and Right-Wing Authoritarianism: A Multiple-Regression Approach," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 1 (2001): 1-10, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0021-8294.00033>.

teachings), millennialism (a belief that God wins goodness over evil).³⁹ These characteristics may not be present together, but some may be. This understanding indicates that fundamentalism is not dichotomous (fundamentalism vs. not fundamentalism), but characteristics that may range from very low/very weak to very high/very strong. Because it is a life view, fundamentalism affects various aspects of social life related to religious values, such as the perception of gender equality.

In conclusion, the concept of fundamentalism, originally associated with a return to scriptural orthodoxy within American Christian groups in the early 1900s and later expanded to include similar movements across various religious traditions, profoundly impacts social values, including perceptions of gender equality. Fundamentalism is characterized by rigidity, close-mindedness, and a literal interpretation of religious texts, leading to a black-and-white worldview that often opposes modern interpretations of gender roles. As such, fundamentalist beliefs typically support traditional gender roles and may resist progressive shifts towards gender equality, affecting how gender relations are viewed across different societies and religious communities.

One's religiosity cannot be separated from their acceptance of the religious teachings they are committed to. Those with high religiosity tend to accept religious teachings unquestionably without considering social and cultural context. On the other hand, those who have low religiosity tend to accept religious teachings contextually. Meanwhile, religious fundamentalism reflects one's view about how religious teachings should be accepted, understood, and implemented in today's life. Those with strong fundamentalism tend to accept religious teachings textually and follow past practices so that their attitude towards the teachings is very positive. On the other hand, those who have weak fundamentalism tend to accept religious teachings critically and try to accommodate to social and cultural contexts so that their attitude towards the teachings tends to be negative or neutral.

Nowadays, gender equality is a debatable concept among Muslim scholars because of their differences in the way to understand and implement religious teachings. Those who understand religious teachings textually tend to deny gender equality since it is not in line with the religious texts and past practices.

³⁹ Laythe, Finkel, and Kirkpatrick.

While those who understand the teachings contextually tend to accept gender equality since it is in accordance with the social and cultural development of the society, in which both genders have the same rights and responsibilities. This tendency seems to align with the tendency of religiosity and fundamentalism so the variation of both variables tends to be followed by the variation of perception of gender equality. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that religiosity and fundamentalism affect Muslim students' perception of gender equality.

B. Method

The study involved 294 Muslim undergraduate students studying at Diponegoro University, the most prominent state university (populated by about 30.000 undergraduate students) in Semarang, Indonesia. As a public nonreligious university, it accommodates all different religious backgrounds. Because the population consists of several groups based on faculty, department, and class, it is reasonable to use cluster sampling to select samples ⁴⁰ based on faculty, department, and class. About 64% of the selected sample were females, and the other 36% were male. They comprised 45.6% of students in humanity and social sciences and 54.4% o

It involved two independent variables (level of religiosity and religious fundamentalism) and one dependent variable (perception of gender equality). The instrument for each variable was developed in accordance with its characteristics and tested on 78 subjects selected from the same population of the main study. Based on data collected from these subjects, items were calibrated to select the valid ones and measure the instruments' reliability.

Perception of gender equality, with indicators of equality in household matters, equality of opportunity to obtain education, equality of opportunity to obtain employment, equality in socio-political matters, and equality in religious matters, was measured by using an instrument developed on a Likert-type scale,⁴¹ consisting of 20 items, selected from 25 items based on data collected during the pilot study. Each item was constructed in a positive or negative statement, followed by four alternative responses, *Strongly Agree, Agree, Not*

⁴⁰ Ibnu Hadjar, *Pendekatan Kuantitatif dalam Penelitian Agama* (Semarang: Walisongo Press, 2020), 206.

⁴¹ Rensis Likert, *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes* (New York: Archives of Psychology, 1932), 14.

Agree, and *Strongly Not Agree*, indicating the degree or level of participant's agreement with the statement. Test reliability analysis with the Cronbach technique⁴² resulted in an alpha reliability coefficient, $\alpha = 0.83$.

Religiosity, conceptually, is defined as the manifestation of religious values in various aspects of human life that believe, have, and embrace it. It consists of four dimensions: belief, ritual, social, and commitment, as developed by Nafis et al.⁴³ Due to its multidimensionality, it was measured using an index, a composite score from its dimensions, measured differently per each dimension. Since their descriptive nature, the validity testing of ritual and social dimension instruments was done conceptually (expert judgment). The validity testing of belief and commitment dimension instruments was done empirically based on data collected in the pilot study. The testing results, 19 belief items, and 16 commitment items were valid (with the reliability of $\alpha = 0.65$ and $\alpha = 0.79$ consecutively). For primary data analyses, these four dimensions were transformed into standardized T-scores and rated to create a global religiosity index score), with greater scores indicating higher religiousness.

Religious fundamentalism is defined as the way a Muslim views and understands religious teachings concerning contemporary life, especially reaction, dualism, authority, selectivity, and minimalism. The instrument development for this variable is based on the instrument developed by Altemeyer and Hunsberger.⁴⁴ Items for this instrument were developed in a Likert-type scale in the form of a statement, followed by alternative responses.⁴⁵ The calibration of data collected in the pilot study resulted in 15 valid items and Cronbach alpha internal reliability⁴⁶ of $\alpha = 0.70$.

⁴² Heesup Han et al., "Muslim Travelers' Inconvenient Tourism Experience and Self-Rated Mental Health at a Non-Islamic Country: Exploring Gender and Age Differences," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 2 (2021): 758, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020758>.

⁴³ Nafis et al., *Keberagamaan Masyarakat Muslim Kodia Semarang*, 28.

⁴⁴ Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, "A Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale: The Short and Sweet of It," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 14, no. 1 (2004): 47–54, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327582ijpr1401_4.

⁴⁵ Likert, *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes*, 14.

⁴⁶ Lee J. Cronbach, "Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests," *Psychometrika* 16, no. 3 (1951): 297–334, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555>.

To test the hypotheses, data were analyzed by path analysis, which technically uses regression analysis.⁴⁷ The analysis was done in two steps, multiple and straightforward, to get the regression effect, as indicated by the proportion of the variance due to regression (R^2), value of F, and level of significance. The analysis was done for the total and separate data for males and females. The hypothesis would be accepted if the results indicated 5 percent of significance. Before testing the hypotheses, data were analyzed descriptively to find the tendency of their centrality and variability of the subjects.⁴⁸ All analyses were done by using W-Stats, Program Aplikasi Statistik Walisongo.⁴⁹

C. Results

Data were analyzed descriptively using means and standard standard deviation techniques to see subjects' tendencies. The analysis is done in total (data for all subjects) and separately (data for male and female subjects). The results of the analysis are as in Table 1.

Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of each variable based on sex

Variable	Theoretical range (mean)	Male		Female		Total	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Perception of gender equality	19 – 76 (47.5)	48.96	7.54	54.18	6.25	52.30	7.19
Religiosity	0 – 100 (50)	50.31	7.42	49.93	6.75	50.07	6.99
Religious fundamentalism	15 – 60 (37.5)	39.21	3.72	39.15	2.97	39.17	3.26

⁴⁷ Elazar P Pedhazur, *Multiple Regression in Behavioral Research: Explanation and Prediction* (New York: CBS College, 1982), 577.

⁴⁸ Ibnu Hadjar, *Statistik untuk Ilmu Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Humaniora* (Semarang: Walisongo Press, 2019), 55.

⁴⁹ Ibnu Hadjar, *W-Stats: Program Aplikasi Statistik Walisongo* (Semarang: UIN Walisongo, 2016), 1.

Table 1 shows that Muslim students generally tend to be moderately positive in their perception of gender equality. However, female students are more positive than males in their perception, although they are less varied. It indicates that although not too strong, most students support gender equality. Only a minority do not support the equality between males and females. Like their perception of gender equality, their religious fundamentalism tends to be moderate. Unlike their perception, the differences in religiosity and religious fundamentalism are trivial. Male and female students tend to be on the same level of religiosity and fundamentalism. It indicates that sex does not affect their religiosity and fundamentalism in their religious life.

Moreover, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the relation of religiosity, religious fundamentalism, and perception of gender equality simultaneously. It is hypothesized that religiosity and religious fundamentalism affect Muslim students' perceptions of gender equality. In the path model, religiosity and religious fundamentalism function as exogenous variables since no other variable explains its variance. Theoretically, both variables are independent since there is no causal relationship. In addition, since there is no other variable between both variables and perceptions about gender equality, they have only a direct effect (DE), and no indirect effect (IE) through another variable. However, since both have causal relations, their relation has an unanalyzed effect (UE) on the perception of gender equality.

To test the hypothesis, first, data collected were analyzed by means of Product Moment correlation to uncover whether the variables involved have a relationship to each other.⁵⁰ Secondly, data were analyzed by using path analysis, which technically uses simple and multiple regression⁵¹ to uncover the effects of the exogenous variables on the indigenous. Consecutively, the results of the analysis are presented in the Table 2, 3, and 4.

Moreover, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the relation of religiosity, religious fundamentalism, and perception of gender equality. It is hypothesized that religiosity and religious fundamentalism affect Muslim students' perception of gender equality. In the path model, religiosity and

⁵⁰ Gene V. Glass and Kenneth D. Hopkins, *Statistical Methods in Education and Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 79–81.

⁵¹ Pedhazur, *Multiple Regression in Behavioral Research: Explanation and Prediction*, 589.

religious fundamentalism function as exogenous variables since no other variable explains its variance. Theoretically, both variables are independent since there is no causal relation. In addition, since there is no other variable between variables and perception of gender equality, they have only direct effect (DE), and no indirect effect (IE) through other variables. However, since both have non-causal relations, their relation has an *unanalyzed effect* (UE) on the perception of gender equality.

Table 2
Mean Difference, the Value of *t* and *p* for Each Variable based on Sex

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	Mean Difference	t	P
Perception of gender equality	Female	188	54.18	5.22	6.363	.000
	Male	106	48.96			
Religiosity	Female	188	49.93	-.38	-.447	.655
	Male	106	50.31			
Religious fundamentalism	Female	188	39.15	-.06	-.148	.883
	Male	106	39.21			

Table 3
Effect of the Independent variable on perception of gender equality for total subjects (n = 294)

Independent Variable	R ²	F	Significance
Religiosity	0.022	6.455	0.012
Religious Fundamentalism	0.040	12.261	0.001
Religiosity + Religious Fundamentalism	0.055	8.445	<0.001

Table 4
Effect of the Independent Variable on the Perception of Gender Equality based on Sex

Independent Variable	Female			Male		
	R ²	F	Sign.	R ²	F	Sign.
Religiosity	0.017	3.197	0.075	0.029	3.124	0.080
Religious Fundamentalism	0.054	10.638	<0.001	0.034	3.710	0.057
Religiosity + Religious Fundamentalism	0.064	6.310	0.002	0.056	3.056	0.051

To test the hypothesis, data were first analyzed by means of Product Moment correlation⁵² to uncover whether the variables involved have a relationship to each other. Secondly, data were analyzed by using *path analysis*, which technically uses simple and multiple regression to uncover the effects of the exogenous variables on the indigenous.⁵³ Consecutively, the results of the analysis are presented in Table 5 and Table 6. Table 5 shows that all variables correlate significantly with each other ($p>0.05$). Unlike the perception of gender equality and two other variables, the relationship between religiosity and religious fundamentalism is not linear because one does not affect the other. Table 6 shows that the path coefficient of religiosity toward the perception of gender equality is $p_{Y1X1} = -0.122$, $t = -2.117$; the effect of the variable is significant at 3.5 percent ($\alpha = 0.035$). It indicates that religiosity has an adverse effect on the perception of gender equality. It means that the more religious the subjects (Muslim students), the more negative their perception of gender equality. Those who are more religious tend to perceive that males and females are not equal in all aspects of life. On the contrary, those who have lower religiosity tend to accept equality between males and females.

Table 5
Coefficient (r) among Variables (Lower-left) and Level of Significance (Upper-right)

Variable	Y ₁	X ₂	X ₁
Perception of gender equality (Y ₁)	1.000	0.001	0.012
Religious fundamentalism (X ₂)	-0.201	1.000	0.019
Religiosity (X ₁)	-0.47	0.137	1.000

Table 6
Path Coefficients of Independent Variables towards Dependent Variable

No.	Relationship between variables	Symbol	coef.	p	t	Sign.	Conclusion
1.	Religiosity and perception of gender equality	p_{Y1X1}	-0.122	-2.117	0.035	Sign.	
2.	Religious fundamentalism and perception of gender equality	P_{Y1X2}	-0.184	-3.199	0.002	Sign.	

⁵² Glass and Hopkins, *Statistical Methods in Education and Psychology*, 79–81.

⁵³ Pedhazur, *Multiple Regression in Behavioral Research: Explanation and Prediction*, 589.

Moreover, the table also shows that the effect of religious fundamentalism on the perception of gender equality is very significant, $t = -3.199$ and $\alpha = 0.002$; with path coefficient, $p_{YX1} = -0.184$. It indicates that religious fundamentalism has a significant negative effect on the perception of gender equality. In other words, the more fundamental the subjects (Muslim students), the more negative their perception about perception of gender equality. Those who are more religious tend to perceive that males and females are not equal in all aspects of life. On the contrary, those who have lower religious fundamentalism tend to accept equality between males and females.

As discussed before, the relationship between both exogenous variables is significant ($r_{X1X2} = 0.137$; $\alpha = 0.019$). Although it is unexplained in the model, religious fundamentalism has a significant relation with religiosity. Therefore, it should be included in defining the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables and perception of gender equality. The relation among the variables can be illustrated in the path Figure 1.

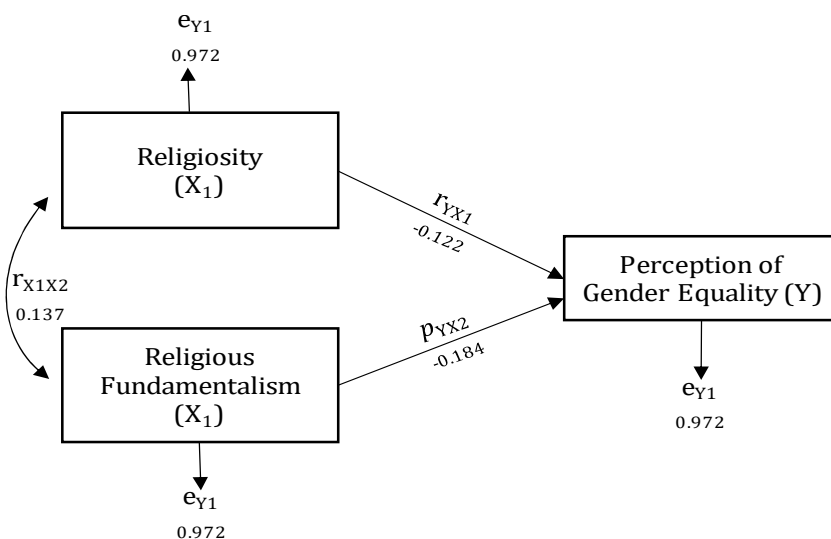


Figure 1
Path Diagram of Perception of Gender Equality from Its Independent Variables

Per the hypotheses and the diagram, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables are limited to *direct effect* (DE). Based on the results of path analysis, as in the table above, it can be calculated as follows:

- a. *Direct effect* (DE) of religiosity (X_1) on perception of gender equality (Y_1):
 $DE = p_{y1x1} = -0.122$

In other words, religiosity (X_1) and perception of gender equality have a direct negative relationship ($DE = p_{y1x1} = -0.122$).

- b. *Direct effect* (DE) religious fundamentalism (X_2) on perception of gender equality (Y_1):
 $DE = p_{y1x2} = -0.184$.

The result indicates that religious fundamentalism has a direct negative relationship ($DE = p_{y1x1} = -0.184$) with the perception of gender. The results of the decomposition of the relation between the exogenous variable (independent) and endogenous (dependent) are presented in Table 7.

Based on the results of decomposition (Table 7.), it is possible to interpret the effect through the proportion of the variance explained by religiosity (X_1) and Religious Fundamentalism (X_2). The proportion is the *explained variance* or effective contribution, that is the percentage of variance that can be explained by its independent variable.⁵⁴ The proportion is the product of path coefficient (p) and Product Moment correlation coefficient (r) between independent and dependent variables. Based on the results of decomposition and correlation, the effective contribution of the independent variable (X_1 and X_2) on the perception of gender equality (Y_1) is as in Table 8.

Table 7
Decomposition of a Causal Relationship with Perception of Gender Equality (Y_1)

No.	Exogenous variable	Direct Effect (DE)	Indirect Effect (IE)	Total
1	Religiosity (X_1)	-0.122	-	-0.122
2	Religious Fundamentalism (X_2)	-0.184	-	-0.184

⁵⁴ Tulus Winarsunu, *Statistik dalam Penelitian Psikologi dan Pendidikan* (Malang: UMM Press, 2017), 201.

Table 8
The Effective Contribution of the Independent Variables on
Perception of Gender Equality (Y₁)

No.	From Variable	Direct Effect (DE)	Indirect Effect (IE)	Total
1	Religiosity (X ₁)	-0.122(-0.147) = 0.018	-	0.018
2	Religious Fundamentalism (X ₂)	-0.184 (-0.201) = 0.038	-	0.038
	Total	0.056	-	0.056

Based on Table 8, the total effective contribution of the independent variables on the perception of gender equality (Y₁) is 5.6% 1.8% of which is contributed by religiosity and 3.8% by religious fundamentalism. All proportion is contributed by direct effect (DE).

Therefore, it concluded that research Hypothesis 1 (H₁) stating: "Religiosity (X₁) and religious fundamentalism (X₁) affect the perception of gender equality(Y₁)" is accepted. Both independent/exogenous variables have a significant direct negative effect on perceptions about gender equality. Each variable contributes 1.8 percent and 3.8 percent of the variance of perception of gender equality.

D. Discussion

Descriptively, Muslim students' perceptions of gender equality vary widely, ranging from very negative (the belief that males and females are unequal in all aspects of life) to very positive (the belief that males and females have identical roles in all aspects of life). However, in general (as indicated by the average score), their perceptions tend to be positive, with the majority of students supporting equality in all aspects of life. Only a small minority of them tend to reject gender equality.

The differences in perception indicate that a minority of the subjects (who scored on the negative side of the scale) believe that females are not equal to males in various aspects of religious and social life. Conversely, another minority of the subjects (who scored on the positive side of the scale) believe that females are entirely equal to males in all aspects of religious and social life. These differences arise from varying views on gender relations.

As found in many human cultures, gender relations often suggest that males are superior to females. Students with negative perceptions tend to view traditional gender relations as acceptable and natural, making them unquestionable. Consequently, they reject the idea of equality between genders. On the other hand, students with positive perceptions tend to see gender inequality as unnatural, believing it to be a construct created by men, the dominant gender, to maintain the status quo. They argue that inequality between males and females should be corrected to restore equality. As a result, they reject inequality and advocate for gender equality in all aspects of life.

This finding is in line with Shuraydi's finding.⁵⁵ She investigated gender equality among young Arab Muslims in the United States. She found that although the subjects live in the American culture, their view about gender equality varies, ranging from totally accepting equality to totally denying the equality view. There are many reasons, but dominantly because of the patriarchal culture defended in Arabian families who live in the United States.

Further findings indicate that females tend to accept equality more than males do. Whether they study at social or natural science faculties, females tend to be more positive towards equality than males do. However, the dispersion of the perception is not different (ranging from very negative to very positive). The social aspect seems to have a stronger influence than the religious aspect. In a patriarchal culture, females are treated differently from males. This tradition is regarded as unfair, especially by females, so they deny it. Consequently, they tend to accept equality, which will liberate the unfairness. Meanwhile, males tend to accept the traditional view as natural. Consequently, they tend to accept inequality views between both genders. These different views are reflected in different perceptions about gender equality.

Gender equality is not only a social problem but also a religious one, especially related to how to understand religious texts. In Islamic teachings, some texts are often related to gender relations, such as the Qur'an 4: 34, containing teachings about leadership. The Muslim scholars who interpreted the verses literally, such as As-Sya'rawi,⁵⁶ conclude that men are superior to

⁵⁵ Zainal Rosyadi et al., "Peran dan Periodisasi Wali Songo dalam Pengembangan Budaya Islam di Nusantara," *Sinda: Comprehensive Journal of Islamic Social Studies* 1, no. 3 (2021): 87, <https://doi.org/10.28926/sinda.v1i2.203>.

⁵⁶ As-Sya'rawi, *Fiqh Perempuan (Muslimah): Busana dan Perhiasan, Penghormatan atas Perempuan sampai Wanita Karir*, 35–36.

women because literally, the text says that men lead women. Consequently, they deny gender equality, which is not in line with the Qur'an. On the other hand, Muslim scholars who interpreted the same verses contextually, such as Aminah Wadud Muhsin,⁵⁷ tend to emphasize the quality of the leader, that is those who have a superior quality which is possible to anyone, regardless of their gender. Consequently, they support gender equality.

Since perception is influenced by how individuals understand religious texts and the sources of religious teachings, their perception of gender equality is closely related to religiosity and religious fundamentalism—two key characteristics they possess. These two variables are shaped by the way religious individuals interpret their teachings. Those who interpret religious texts literally tend to exhibit high levels of religiosity and strong fundamentalism. Conversely, individuals who interpret religious texts contextually are likely to demonstrate lower levels of religiosity and weaker fundamentalism.

Based on this perspective, it is anticipated that variations in the subjects' religiosity and fundamentalism will correspond inversely to variations in their perception of gender equality. In other words, the more religious the subjects are, the more negative their perception of gender equality tends to be. Similarly, the more fundamentalist the subjects are, the more negative their perception of gender equality becomes, and vice versa.

As presented in the previous section of this paper, religiosity, and religious fundamentalism are hypothesized to directly and negatively affect the perception of gender equality. The results of the path analysis support this hypothesis. Therefore, the research hypothesis stating, "Religiosity (X_1) and religious fundamentalism (X_2) affect the perception of gender equality (Y_1)," is accepted.

Religiosity has a negative effect on the perception of gender equality, contributing 1.8% to its variance. Similarly, religious fundamentalism also negatively affects the perception of gender equality, contributing 3.4% to its variance. However, neither variable indirectly affects the perception of gender equality.

⁵⁷ Desinta Dwi Asriani et al., "The Changes in the Daily Activities Cycle of Women Informal Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Vulnerability and Resilience," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 16, no. 1 (2021): 19–42, <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v16i1.7112>.

The negative effect of religiosity and fundamentalism on attitudes toward gender equality may be due to their tendency to support conservative understandings and practices in interpreting religious texts. High religiosity and fundamentalism are associated with ambivalent sexism, where rigid religious understandings often result in the rejection of gender equality.⁵⁸ Religiosity, which reflects the depth of an individual's involvement in religious practices and beliefs, can affirm traditional views of gender roles if religious texts are interpreted literally and conservatively. Fundamentalism, which is characterized by strict acceptance of religious doctrine as absolute truth without question, often rejects modernization or new interpretations that support gender equality. It is because fundamentalism maintains a dualism—seeing everything in black and white, right if it fits their view, and wrong if it does not.

In many religious traditions, leadership and authority roles are often given exclusively to men, while women's roles are confined to the domestic and reproductive spheres. This is reinforced by the literal interpretation of religious texts that traditionally emphasize gender-based role differences.⁵⁹ Therefore, in many cases, the higher the level of religiosity and fundamentalism of a person, the more conservative their attitude toward gender equality.

Although both independent variables significantly affect the perception of gender equality, their contribution to explaining the variance in perception is practically very small, accounting for only 5.6%. The remaining 94.4% is attributed to other variables not included in the path analysis model. Therefore, future studies on gender equality should incorporate additional variables, such as religious understanding and family background, to achieve a more comprehensive and optimal prediction.

E. Conclusion

In order to test the hypothesis, this study involved students of Diponegoro University Semarang as a sample. Descriptively, the results of the study above

⁵⁸ R. J. Harnish et al., "The Effect of Religiosity and Religious Fundamentalism on the Psychological and Social Adjustment of University Students," *Journal of College Student Development* 58, no. 7 (2017): 1017–34.

⁵⁹ Linda Woodhead, "Gender Differences in Religious Practice and Significance," in *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. J. A. Beckford and J. Demerath (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007), 566–86, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607965.n28>.

show that Muslim students' perception of gender equality tends to be moderately. This indicates that although various efforts by the government and feminist activists have been made to improve women's participation in the public domain, full equality between males and females has not yet been realized in Muslim society. However, the perception ranges significantly, varying from negative to positive.

In accordance with the main objective, this study found that the variation in Muslim students' perception of gender equality is negatively influenced by religiosity and religious fundamentalism. The findings show that the more religious the students are, the more negative their perception of gender equality becomes. Similarly, the more fundamentalist the students are, the more negative their perception of gender equality tends to be. Thus, students' perceptions of gender equality inversely correlate with their levels of religiosity and religious fundamentalism. As religiosity and fundamentalism increase, perceptions of gender equality tend to become less favorable (more negative).

However, the effect of religiosity and fundamentalism on these perceptions is minimal. This is evidenced by the fact that the contribution of both independent variables accounts for only 5.6 percent of the variance in perceptions. In other words, while the effect is statistically significant, it is practically negligible.[s]

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