

Islamic Education from a Gender Perspective (A Sociological, Economic, and Da'wah Analysis)

Risqiatul Hasanah¹, Ridhahani Fidzi², Syaifuddin Sabda³, Husnul Yaqin⁴

^{abcd} Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin, Indonesia

¹risqiatulhasanah@uin-antasari.ac.id*; ²ridhahanifidzi@uin-antasari.ac.id; ³syaifuddinsabda@uin-antasari.ac.id;

⁴husnulyaqin@uin-antasari.ac.id

*Korespondensi author

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ABSTRAKSI (10 PT)

Abstrak: Penafsiran terhadap pendidikan Islam dari perspektif gender menjadi semakin relevan di tengah upaya menciptakan masyarakat yang adil dan setara. Melalui pendekatan tafsir Al-Misbah karya M. Quraish Shihab, artikel ini mengkaji ulang konstruksi peran gender dalam pendidikan Islam dengan menekankan nilai-nilai kesetaraan, keadilan, dan pemberdayaan perempuan. Tafsir Al-Misbah tidak hanya menyajikan pemahaman keislaman yang kontekstual, tetapi juga menawarkan pembacaan ulang terhadap ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an yang selama ini ditafsirkan secara patriarkal. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, penelitian ini menyoroti tiga dimensi utama: sosiologis, ekonomi, dan dakwah. Dalam dimensi sosiologis, pendidikan Islam dipandang sebagai alat untuk mengubah norma sosial yang bias gender. Secara ekonomi, pendidikan diberi makna sebagai jalan bagi perempuan untuk meraih kemandirian dan peran aktif dalam pembangunan. Sementara itu, dari sisi dakwah, pendidikan menjadi medium penyampaian nilai kesetaraan yang rahmatan lil 'alamin. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa pendidikan Islam yang inklusif dan berbasis keadilan gender merupakan jalan strategis menuju masyarakat yang beradab dan seimbang secara spiritual maupun sosial.

Abstract: Reinterpreting Islamic education through a gender perspective has become increasingly vital in shaping a just and equitable society. This article draws upon M. Quraish Shihab's Tafsir Al-Misbah to revisit gender roles in Islamic education, emphasizing the principles of equality, justice, and women's empowerment. Shihab's work presents a contextual reading of the Qur'an, challenging patriarchal interpretations and advocating a more balanced theological framework. Employing a qualitative, literature-based approach, the study explores three central dimensions: sociological, economic, and da'wah. Sociologically, Islamic education is framed as a transformative tool to dismantle gender-biased social norms. Economically, it is positioned as a path to empower women towards independence and societal contribution. Through the lens of da'wah, education serves as a platform to convey Islam's universal message of equality and compassion. The findings reaffirm that a gender-responsive Islamic education grounded in inclusive values and prophetic justice offers a strategic pathway for fostering a spiritually enriched and socially just community.

Keywords:
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Gender
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I. Introduction

Islamic education has historically been one of the most influential domains shaping religious identity, ethical sensibilities, and social order in Muslim societies. However, its role in constructing and reconstructing gender norms remains a critical concern in the contemporary era. Despite Islam's foundational emphasis on justice ('adl), mercy (rahmah), and human dignity (karāmah), the educational experiences of Muslim women are often shaped by patriarchal norms that contradict these core values. In many cases, religious justifications are used to reinforce unequal gender roles, limiting women's access to education, leadership, and religious authority. This disconnect between theological ideals and institutional practices necessitates a renewed examination of Islamic education from a gender perspective. One of the most compelling responses to this challenge emerges from Tafsir Al-Misbah, a modern exegesis of the Qur'an by M. Quraish Shihab. His interpretative project engages deeply with the Qur'anic message to dismantle gender-based injustices perpetuated in the name of religion. Shihab's work does not merely advocate for women's access to education; it calls for a radical rethinking of religious authority, public participation, and socio-economic inclusion through a faith-informed, human-centered approach (Hakim, 2023) (Mukhtar, 2013). By combining traditional Islamic scholarship with contemporary sociological insight, Shihab constructs a progressive yet grounded reading of the Qur'an that situates education as both a right and a transformative force for all genders.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۖ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ
اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

Meaning : "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, establish prayer, give zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is they whom Allah will have mercy upon. Indeed, Allah is Almighty and All-Wise." Surah At-Taubah [9]: 71

Within this framework, Islamic education must not only convey knowledge but also challenge oppressive structures. It must evolve from a means of religious conformity to a platform of social empowerment. In this sense, education becomes a vehicle for justice and liberation, reflecting the Qur'anic ethic that all humans regardless of gender are equal recipients of divine guidance. Verses such as Surah At-Taubah [9:71], which proclaims that believing men and women are awliya' (allies) of one another, serve as foundational to Shihab's argument for gender cooperation in spiritual and social endeavors (Hakim, & Muhid, 2023). Likewise, Surah Al-'Alaq [96:1–5], which commands the pursuit of knowledge, is interpreted as a universal call without gender distinction, affirming the integral role of women as seekers, teachers, and preservers of sacred knowledge.

These interpretations offer a powerful rebuttal to patriarchal readings of the Qur'an that have long been used to exclude women from intellectual, economic, and religious life. Through Tafsir Al-Misbah, Shihab reclaims the Qur'an as a text of liberation not one that reinforces inequality, but one that demands justice in all domains of human life. His work thus becomes an indispensable reference for efforts to build gender-sensitive Islamic educational frameworks that are authentic to the spirit of Islam while responsive to the challenges of the contemporary world.

This study seeks to explore how Islamic education, when viewed through the lens of Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab, can serve as a transformative force in promoting gender equality. The research is driven by the conviction that education informed by inclusive, contextual, and justice-oriented Quranic interpretation holds the potential to reshape social, economic, and religious realities in Muslim communities. The specific objectives of this study are: 1) To analyze the sociological dimensions of gender in Islamic education by examining how Shihab's interpretations challenge patriarchal norms and promote women's active participation in public and intellectual life. 2) To examine the economic implications of gender-inclusive Islamic education, particularly how it can empower women through access to knowledge, vocational skills, and financial independence. 3) To investigate the da'wah potential of Islamic education as a vehicle for

promoting gender justice and correcting gender-biased religious narratives in both traditional and digital contexts. 4) To provide a comprehensive framework for integrating gender-sensitive interpretation into Islamic educational institutions and curricula.

Through these objectives, the study aims to bridge the gap between Qur'anic ideals of equality and the real-life structures that often undermine them.

II. Literature Review

A. Problem Statement

Despite the Qur'an's affirmation of gender equality and the rich legacy of female participation in early Islamic scholarship, many contemporary Islamic educational institutions continue to perpetuate gender disparities. These inequalities manifest in various ways: the underrepresentation of women in teaching and leadership roles, gender-biased curricula, limited access to higher religious education for women, and theological interpretations that restrict women's public engagement. The persistence of these problems suggests a disjuncture between Islamic teachings and their institutional application. While patriarchal practices are often justified through religious discourse, a closer examination reveals that such justifications are frequently rooted in cultural interpretations rather than scriptural mandates (Wasik, 2023) (Afidah, 2023). There remains a critical need to re-evaluate how Islamic education can serve as an instrument for dismantling gender-based inequalities rather than reinforcing them.

M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir Al-Misbah* provides an alternative lens for interpreting Islamic teachings in a way that affirms gender justice. However, the extent to which his insights have been integrated into contemporary Islamic education remains limited. Thus, the central problem this study addresses is the gap between gender-inclusive Qur'anic interpretation and its actual implementation in Islamic educational systems.

B. Theoretical Contribution

The study enriches the field of Islamic educational thought by highlighting *Tafsir Al-Misbah* as a model of progressive Qur'anic exegesis that aligns with contemporary gender justice frameworks. By foregrounding Shihab's work, it adds a vital voice to efforts aimed at reinterpreting Islamic texts in light of evolving ethical, social, and pedagogical concerns.

By demonstrating how inclusive interpretations of the Qur'an can inform educational policies and pedagogies, the research offers actionable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and religious leaders. It advocates for gender-responsive curricula, inclusive teacher training, and equitable access to leadership roles within Islamic institutions.

In societies where religion plays a central role in shaping gender relations, this study provides a faith-based argument for equality. It empowers communities to challenge oppressive norms not as outsiders to the tradition, but from within it drawing on the rich resources of the Islamic intellectual heritage. Ultimately, the study aims to inspire educators, scholars, and policymakers to view Islamic education not merely as a repository of doctrine, but as a living institution capable of responding to the urgent call for justice, equity, and human dignity.

This study is grounded in a gender-sensitive hermeneutic framework, informed primarily by M. Quraish Shihab's exegetical methodology in *Tafsir Al-Misbah*. Shihab's interpretative approach is characterized by its contextual awareness, ethical orientation, and commitment to inclusivity. He blends classical tafsir techniques with insights from sociology, history, and contemporary ethics, crafting interpretations that speak to both traditional authority and modern sensibilities (Hakim, & Muhid, 2023) (Mukhtar, 2013).

At the core of this framework is the belief that the Qur'an is a text of universal guidance, whose message must be interpreted in light of the evolving needs and contexts of its readers. This involves a departure from literalist or ahistorical readings that often exclude women from

intellectual and public life. Instead, Shihab urges interpreters to return to the Qur'an's foundational values such as justice ('adl), consultation (shūrā), and compassion (rahmah) as guiding principles for interpretation. The framework also draws upon contemporary theories of Islamic feminist hermeneutics, which emphasize the active role of readers in constructing meaning, the need to deconstruct patriarchal interpretations, and the centrality of lived experiences in understanding religious texts (Wasik, 2023). In line with this, the study critically engages with gendered constructions of knowledge in Islamic education, seeking to uncover how Shihab's tafsir reconfigures theological authority to include women as equal stakeholders in knowledge production.

This theoretical stance positions the study within a broader intellectual movement that refuses to choose between faith and justice. Rather, it insists that any meaningful interpretation of Islam must harmonize divine revelation with human dignity a harmony that Shihab exemplifies in his work.

III. Research Method

A. *Methods and Approach*

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, grounded in a library-based methodology, to explore Islamic education from a gender perspective as articulated through Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab. The qualitative nature of this research allows for an in-depth analysis of textual interpretations, sociocultural implications, and theological insights relevant to gender justice within Islamic education. The selection of Tafsir Al-Misbah as the central source is not incidental; it reflects the significance of Shihab's work in reinterpreting Islamic teachings through a contemporary and humanistic lens, particularly concerning women's roles in education, the economy, and da'wah (Hakim, & Muhid, 2023) (Ichwan, n.d.). The library research method provides a rich analytical framework to examine the intersection of gender, religious text, and social transformation. This method involves the systematic collection and interpretation of secondary data primarily sourced from scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and official documents relevant to gender and Islamic education. The approach is interpretative and analytical, rather than empirical, enabling a nuanced understanding of how religious interpretation can shape and reshape gender norms.

B. *Source Selection and Justification*

The primary text for analysis in this research is Tafsir Al-Misbah, which serves as a modern exegetical work that bridges classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary ethical concerns. Shihab's interpretative method, characterized by clarity, contextual relevance, and an inclusive ethos, provides a valuable entry point for rethinking gender in Islamic education. His work challenges patriarchal norms by offering readings that align with Qur'anic justice and equity (Mukhtar, 2013) (Hakim, & Muhid, 2023). Secondary sources include journal articles and research studies that examine Shihab's contribution to Islamic gender discourse, as well as those that explore the broader implications of gender-sensitive education within Muslim communities. These include works that analyze the sociological transformation enabled by education (Wasik, 2023), the economic significance of women's empowerment (Miswar et al., 2023), and the potential of da'wah to promote inclusive religious narratives (Afidah, 2023).

C. *Data Collection and Processing*

Data were collected through meticulous textual analysis, focusing on themes and passages within Tafsir Al-Misbah that address issues of gender, equality, education, and societal development. Particular attention was given to Shihab's interpretation of specific Qur'anic verses such as Surah An-Nisa [4:32], Surah Al-Nahl [16:58–59], and Surah At-Taubah [9:71] which he employs to dismantle gender biases and emphasize women's agency in various spheres of life.

The data processing involved several key stages:

1) *Thematic Identification: Central themes such as gender equality, educational justice, economic empowerment, and inclusive da'wah were identified from the primary text and supported by secondary literature.*

2) *Contextual Interpretation: Each theme was contextualized within contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in light of existing gender disparities and cultural practices that hinder women's participation in education and public life.*

3) *Comparative Reflection: Shihab's interpretations were contrasted with both traditional exegetical positions and modern feminist readings to highlight his unique contribution to gender-inclusive Islamic thought (Ulum & Jauharoh, 2023).*

D. Analytical Framework

This research utilizes thematic content analysis as its primary analytical tool. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to trace patterns across different interpretations and identify consistencies in Shihab's advocacy for gender justice. By reading and re-reading the selected texts, key insights are drawn that illustrate how Islamic education, when interpreted through a gender-aware lens, can become a vehicle for social and spiritual transformation (Ciptadi et al., 2023). This analysis also involves a critical discourse examination, especially of how religious authority is constructed and challenged in relation to gender. Shihab's work is read not just as a theological exposition but as a cultural intervention that redefines norms and practices within Islamic education.

E. Validity and Triangulation

To ensure the reliability and scholarly rigor of the findings, source triangulation was employed. Interpretations from Tafsir Al-Misbah were cross-validated with other authoritative works, including feminist Islamic scholarship and sociological studies. For instance, Shihab's reading of gender equality was juxtaposed with perspectives from scholars such as Asma Barlas and other contributors to Islamic reformist thought (Wasik, 2023) (Mukhtar, 2013). This process helps to avoid over-reliance on a single interpretive framework and enriches the overall analysis. The ethical integrity of this study is maintained by adhering to principles of academic honesty, proper citation, and respect for the intellectual contributions of all referenced scholars. The study avoids speculative assertions and focuses on textual fidelity and analytical clarity.

F. Methodological Limitations

As a library-based study, this research is inherently limited in its empirical scope. It does not include field observations, interviews, or quantitative data. However, the richness of textual analysis compensates for this limitation by offering deep, critical insights into the theological foundations and socio-political implications of gender in Islamic education. The reliance on Tafsir Al-Misbah as the primary text may be seen as limiting in terms of representing the diversity of Islamic thought. Nonetheless, given the depth, accessibility, and scholarly merit of Shihab's work, its selection is both justified and strategic for the aims of this study.

IV. Discussion

A. Sociological Perspective: Reframing Gender Norms through Islamic Education

The sociological dimension of Islamic education from a gender perspective is fundamentally concerned with how social structures, norms, and cultural expectations shape and often constrain the lived experiences of women. In many Muslim-majority societies, deeply rooted patriarchal norms have constructed rigid gender roles, relegating women to the private sphere while men dominate public, educational, and religious domains. These patterns are not intrinsic to Islam, but rather reflect socio-historical forces that have co-opted religious authority to justify gender inequality (Hakim, 2023) (Wasik, 2023). M. Quraish Shihab, through his Tafsir Al-Misbah, provides a necessary theological counter-narrative. His interpretations challenge the taken-for-granted patriarchal readings of the Qur'an and call for a reorientation of Islamic education as a means to liberate rather than constrain. According to Shihab, the Qur'anic view of human beings

is fundamentally egalitarian. He draws attention to Surah At-Taubah [9:71], which describes believing men and women as “allies of one another”, jointly enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. This verse, in Shihab’s view, dismantles any religious justification for gender segregation in moral or intellectual leadership (Hakim, & Muhid, 2023).

Islamic education, therefore, must be reimagined as a transformative sociological tool one that not only transmits religious knowledge but actively contests cultural practices that contradict Qur’anic ethics. In traditional educational settings, particularly pesantren and madrasahs, gender bias has often manifested in curriculum design, pedagogical style, and the underrepresentation of female educators and leaders. Women’s intellectual contributions are frequently excluded from textbooks, and religious instruction often subtly reinforces submissive gender roles (Anwar et al., 2024). Shihab's hermeneutics urges educators to question these narratives and instead develop curricula that reflect the full moral agency and intellectual capacity of women. The power of Islamic education lies not only in its formal structures but in its broader influence on social consciousness. Through religious sermons, school culture, and family teachings, education shapes how gender is understood and performed. By integrating a more gender-equitable reading of Islamic texts, educators and religious leaders can initiate a slow but profound shift in public attitudes. For instance, emphasizing stories of female companions such as Aisha (RA) a scholar, jurist, and political voice in early Islam can provide counter-models to prevailing notions of female passivity and exclusion (Ulum, & Jauharoh, 2023).

In sociological terms, education functions as both a reflection of societal values and a site for contestation and change. When Islamic education embraces gender inclusivity, it not only revises theological understandings but also contributes to wider social transformation. It becomes a vehicle for challenging internalized oppression and restoring women's public presence as knowledge bearers and moral guides. Shihab also stresses that the Qur'an does not prescribe fixed gender roles in worldly activities. While the text recognizes biological differences, it does not use them to justify inequality. He warns against interpreting verses through the lens of local customs or personal bias particularly when such interpretations silence women or restrict their access to learning and leadership (Mukhtar, 2013) (Ichwan, n.d.). For example, his reading of Surah Al-Nahl [16:58–59] exposes the emotional and ethical failure of societies that devalue the birth of daughters, describing such attitudes as a pre-Islamic ignorance that Islam came to abolish (Firman et al., 2023). Shihab views educational access as a moral imperative. Denying education to girls, in his framework, is not just a loss of opportunity it is a denial of one’s spiritual potential. As he argues, the Prophet Muhammad declared that seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim, male and female. This hadith, when interpreted earnestly, necessitates the inclusion of women at every level of educational engagement from student to teacher, from classroom to policymaking board (Hakim, & Muhid, 2023). One of the sociological challenges, however, is that gender bias in education often operates subtly and is sustained through what Pierre Bourdieu calls symbolic violence: the internalization of discriminatory norms that appear natural or divinely ordained. This is particularly relevant in religious education, where interpretations are often not questioned and carry significant moral weight. By equipping students with critical thinking tools rooted in Islamic ethics, educators can help dismantle these internalized structures of inequality (Wasik, 2023).

Shihab’s contribution is not merely to reinterpret the text but to invite a new form of religious literacy one that emphasizes context, ethical reasoning, and inclusivity. In this model, sociological change begins in the classroom but extends to families, mosques, and public discourse. Islamic education, then, becomes not only a means of personal piety but also a pathway to social justice. In this sense, gender-sensitive Islamic education plays a dual role: it functions as a form of resistance against patriarchal religious misuse, and as a framework for reimagining what a just Islamic society might look like. Such education must address not only curriculum content but also institutional culture, teacher training, and community engagement. Shihab’s work provides a theological basis for this transformation, grounded in the Qur’anic values of justice (*adl*), mercy (*rahmah*), and human dignity (*karamah*). This sociological reconfiguration of Islamic education can serve as a model for other Muslim-majority contexts grappling with similar challenges. When religious institutions commit to equity and inclusion, they become agents of social progress rather than

defenders of the status quo. As such, the sociological lens reminds us that gender equality in education is not simply about adding women into existing systems it is about reshaping those systems to reflect the ethical vision of Islam itself.

B. Economic Perspective: Empowerment Through Educational Access

While gender equality in Islamic education is often discussed in theological and sociological terms, its economic implications are equally profound. Education is not only a right but a pathway to independence, productivity, and community advancement. M. Quraish Shihab, through his exegetical work in *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, provides a firm theological foundation for recognizing women's economic rights, rights which are often overlooked or undermined in practice. At the heart of Shihab's argument is the belief that Islam affirms the agency of women in economic life. This is clearly articulated in his interpretation of Surah An-Nisa [4:32]: "To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn." Shihab explains that this verse explicitly validates women's right to engage in labor, entrepreneurship, and property ownership (Firman et al., 2023). He further argues that limiting women's economic participation is not grounded in Islamic law, but in cultural traditions that have historically distorted the egalitarian spirit of the Qur'an (Hakim, 2023) (Miswar et al., 2023) (Sholichah et al., 2023)

In economic terms, access to education is one of the most significant predictors of a woman's capacity to attain financial autonomy. Without education, women are confined to informal, often exploitative labor markets, or remain economically dependent within the domestic sphere. This dependency not only inhibits personal development but contributes to the persistence of poverty and gender inequality at the community level. Education, in this context, becomes a form of economic empowerment that can break intergenerational cycles of deprivation. Shihab's approach acknowledges that educational access must be complemented by vocational relevance. In his perspective, Islamic education should incorporate practical and market-responsive knowledge alongside religious instruction. This includes training in skills that enable women to thrive in modern economies, such as digital literacy, financial management, sharia-based entrepreneurship, and cooperative economics. Education that is spiritually grounded yet economically functional equips women to contribute meaningfully to both household and national economies (Ulum, & Jauharoh, 2023) (Iqbal, 2023).

The Qur'anic vision of economic justice extends beyond individual gain to the fair distribution of resources and opportunities. Shihab highlights that economic empowerment is a communal obligation, a means to uplift society as a whole. Women, when provided with equitable educational and economic resources, tend to reinvest in their families and communities at higher rates than men. This ripple effect strengthens social bonds and promotes sustainable development, especially in marginalized areas. In many Muslim-majority contexts, however, economic barriers to women's education remain formidable. Tuition fees, lack of safe transportation, and social stigma often prevent girls from pursuing higher learning. These barriers are compounded by curricula and institutional practices that fail to prepare female students for economic participation. In response, Shihab advocates for targeted interventions, such as scholarships for underprivileged women, gender-inclusive curricula, and institutional reforms that normalize women's presence in economic decision-making spaces (Hakim, & Muhid, 2023) (Anwar et al., 2024).

Islamic education, then, must be reconceptualized as a tool for social mobility. It must provide not only ethical guidance but also the capabilities that enable women to function as full economic agents. In this regard, *Tafsir Al-Misbah* becomes not merely a theological text but a framework for designing education policies that are economically empowering. One of the most radical aspects of Shihab's economic vision is his framing of women's financial independence as a form of liberation. He does not view economic empowerment as a deviation from religious piety, but as a realization of the Qur'an's holistic vision for human flourishing. The narrative of Khadijah (RA), the Prophet Muhammad's first wife, features prominently in Shihab's work as a model of entrepreneurial excellence, spiritual integrity, and partnership. Her success as a businesswoman and supporter of the Prophet's mission exemplifies the seamless integration of economic and religious life in early Islam (Ichwan, n.d.) (Miswar et al., 2023).

The implications for contemporary Islamic education are clear. Educational institutions must move beyond a narrow focus on theological instruction and embrace a curriculum that prepares women for real-world challenges and leadership roles. This includes financial literacy, access to capital, entrepreneurship, and cooperative business models based on sharia principles. When integrated with ethical teachings, such education becomes a vehicle for both spiritual growth and economic justice.

The economic perspective also requires a cultural shift. It demands that communities move beyond viewing women's work as secondary or supplementary. Shihab contends that women's labor whether inside the home, in the marketplace, or in civic spaces holds equal moral and economic value. This theological stance challenges patriarchal assumptions that have historically confined women to unpaid or undervalued roles (Afidah, 2023). Islamic education institutions must become inclusive spaces where women can not only learn but lead. This includes appointing qualified female scholars in positions of academic and financial leadership and ensuring their voices shape institutional priorities. Without women's representation at decision-making levels, educational reform will remain incomplete. The broader economic consequences of gender-exclusive education are stark. Studies have consistently shown that gender inequality in education leads to lower GDP, increased poverty, and weakened health and development outcomes. Inversely, when girls are educated, the entire society benefits from improved child health to higher labor productivity and enhanced civic participation.

Shihab's insistence on women's right to education and economic participation is not only rooted in scriptural fidelity but is also a visionary response to global challenges. By grounding economic empowerment in Islamic principles, he provides a culturally resonant framework that can inspire policy change across diverse Muslim contexts. In summary, the economic dimension of Islamic education, when informed by gender equity, holds transformative potential. It enables women to become economically autonomous, enhances societal well-being, and fulfills Islam's call for justice and compassion in all spheres of life. Shihab's tafsir reclaims this vision and calls on educational institutions to actualize it through inclusive, practical, and spiritually grounded pedagogy.

C. Da'wah Perspective: Islamic Education as a Medium for Gender-Conscious Religious Engagement

The da'wah (Islamic proselytization) perspective offers yet another powerful lens through which to assess the transformative role of Islamic education in addressing gender inequality. Often associated narrowly with preaching or religious invitation, da'wah in its deeper sense is a comprehensive effort to convey the values of Islam values rooted in justice, mercy, and human dignity. For M. Quraish Shihab, da'wah must evolve beyond mere ritual discourse and become an instrument of ethical awakening, particularly concerning gender relations and educational equity (Imran & Shaleh, 2024).

Within this framework, Islamic education serves as the most strategic and enduring medium of da'wah. It is through education that religious narratives are constructed, legitimized, and passed on to future generations. Thus, the type of Islam that is taught whether exclusive or inclusive, patriarchal or egalitarian shapes not only personal piety but also social norms and public policies. Shihab calls for a da'wah strategy that is grounded in hikmah (wisdom), informed by contextual understanding, and committed to human rights including the rights of women to learn, lead, and teach. One of the key challenges addressed by Shihab is the distortion of Qur'anic messages through gender-biased interpretations. He asserts that many traditional readings have projected cultural assumptions onto the text, reinforcing male dominance and sidelining women's contributions. For instance, he critiques the notion that women should be excluded from public religious life, arguing instead that historical examples such as Aisha (RA), a scholar and teacher of hadith demonstrate women's active participation in the religious and intellectual spheres of Islam (Syukur & Bakar, 2022)

Shihab's re-reading of verses such as Surah At-Taubah [9:71] and Surah Al-'Alaq [96:1–5] is particularly important in constructing a da'wah narrative that affirms gender equality. In Surah At-Taubah, believing men and women are described as *awliya'*, mutual allies who are equally responsible for upholding justice. This framing moves beyond gendered hierarchies and calls for partnership in religious and social reform. Surah Al-'Alaq, which opens with the command to "Read," reaffirms that knowledge is the foundational act of worship without gender distinction. These verses, in Shihab's interpretation, provide a theological foundation for inclusive da'wah through education (jannah, et al., 2022). In practice, this means that da'wah should be mobilized to support women's education, challenge patriarchal misinterpretations, and foster spaces where women can contribute intellectually and spiritually. Educational da'wah is not limited to formal classrooms; it includes community-based religious programs, mosque lectures, digital platforms, and family discussions. These spaces must be reclaimed and reshaped to reflect Islam's core message of justice and inclusion.

Shihab insists that da'wah should not perpetuate silence or complicity in the face of oppression. When certain religious interpretations are used to justify child marriage, limit girls' schooling, or restrict women's mobility, da'wah must intervene not through confrontation, but through dialogue rooted in compassion and scriptural integrity. Religious educators and preachers carry a moral responsibility to dismantle narratives that weaponize religion against the very people it seeks to liberate (Khofifah Khofifah et al., 2024).

A gender-conscious da'wah also requires that women not only be recipients of religious knowledge but active producers of it. In many Islamic contexts, women have limited access to roles as *mubalighat* (female preachers) or teachers of Islamic jurisprudence. Shihab challenges this marginalization by highlighting that spiritual authority in Islam is not gendered but based on knowledge and sincerity. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions must invest in leadership development programs for women in da'wah roles preparing them to teach, write, and engage in theological discourse at all levels. Digital da'wah is another domain where inclusivity must be fostered. In the current era, social media, podcasts, and online learning platforms have become key arenas for religious discourse. Unfortunately, these spaces are also susceptible to the spread of rigid and exclusionary ideologies. Shihab encourages Muslim educators to utilize these tools for constructive engagement, developing content that highlights the ethical and universal dimensions of Islam, while challenging harmful gender stereotypes (Imran & Shaleh, 2024).

In addition, da'wah must confront the epistemological barriers that limit women's religious literacy. Many women in rural or underserved communities have minimal access to religious education beyond basic Quranic recitation. Shihab stresses that Islamic education must address this gap by promoting critical engagement with texts, including *tafsir*, *fiqh*, and *hadith*, so that women are equipped to interpret and practice their faith independently and confidently (Ciptadi et al., 2023). Such empowerment is not a luxury it is a requirement for a truly just Islamic society.

An inclusive da'wah must also consider the affective dimension of education. It must speak to women's experiences, struggles, and aspirations in language that resonates and uplifts. When women hear religious messages that affirm their dignity, encourage their growth, and validate their voices, they are more likely to embrace and embody Islamic values with integrity and purpose. On the contrary, da'wah that shames, silences, or marginalizes women undermines the very mission of spiritual guidance. (Harum et al., n.d.) (Gaol et al., n.d.) Shihab's model of da'wah through education insists on coherence between message and method. A da'i cannot preach justice while perpetuating inequality. Educational institutions cannot claim Islamic authenticity while excluding women from leadership or theological authority. Therefore, Islamic education as da'wah must embody the prophetic model: a model rooted in empathy, engagement, and the elevation of all human beings toward their highest potential.

Finally, the da'wah perspective affirms that gender justice is not a Western import but an Islamic imperative. Shihab reminds readers that the Qur'an speaks directly to the human conscience, calling for equity, mutual respect, and communal responsibility. In this light, gender-

responsive education and da'wah are not merely reformist efforts they are acts of fidelity to the divine message.

V. Conclusion

This study has explored Islamic education from a gender perspective through the interpretive lens of Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab, highlighting the sociological, economic, and da'wah dimensions of gender justice. Shihab's contributions offer a transformative framework that reconciles classical Islamic teachings with the demands of contemporary justice and inclusivity. His exegetical work reclaims the ethical core of the Qur'an centered on equality, compassion, and dignity and applies it to reform educational structures that have historically marginalized women. Sociologically, Islamic education is positioned as a vehicle for challenging patriarchal norms and enabling women's active participation in intellectual and public life. Economically, it is a tool for empowerment, preparing women not only for spiritual development but also for meaningful contributions to household and societal prosperity. In the realm of da'wah, education becomes a platform for promoting inclusive religious narratives and nurturing women as equal bearers of knowledge and moral authority.

To realize the full potential of gender-responsive Islamic education, several recommendations are proposed: 1) Curricular Reform, Educational institutions must revise curricula to reflect inclusive narratives and highlight women's historical and contemporary contributions to Islamic knowledge and society. 2) Capacity Building, Invest in training programs for female educators, scholars, and da'iyat to enhance women's representation in religious leadership and scholarly discourse. 3) Community Engagement, Develop community-based educational and da'wah initiatives that address local barriers to girls' education and promote gender equity as an Islamic value. 4) Policy Alignment, Advocate for policies that support access to quality education for women, including financial aid, safety measures, and leadership opportunities.

Through these steps, Islamic education can fulfill its prophetic mission, not only to transmit knowledge, but to inspire justice, cultivate dignity, and build a society where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive in faith and freedom.

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