Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Integrating Gender into History Teaching: A Narrative Inquiry into Islamic Senior High School Teachers in Surakarta

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Abstract. Integrating gender equality in history learning in Islamic schools is a complex and dynamic issue. This study aims to understand the beliefs and practices of history teachers in Islamic schools about gender integration in their learning. This study uses a narrative inquiry approach by conducting in-depth interviews with four history teachers from two types of Islamic schools in Surakarta: Islamic boarding school-based high schools (*pesantren*) and Madrasah Aliyah (MA). This study finds the complexity of teachers' perspectives on gender influenced by religious social backgrounds, experiences, and school contexts. Some teachers demonstrate a progressive understanding of gender equality and seek to integrate it into learning, while others are still tied to traditional views. These findings expand on Gender Schema Theory by showing how schemes influenced by religion and social environment can accommodate equality in some domains while maintaining hierarchies in others. This study offers implications for teacher professional development and gender-responsive textbook policies in Islamic educational settings.

Keywords: Gender, Teacher, History Teaching, Learning

1 Introduction

History learning in schools has a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of identity, culture, and social values [1], [2]. However, in the context of education in Islamic schools, especially in Indonesia, gender roles are often a complex issue and have not been fully integrated inclusively in pedagogy. This phenomenon demands special attention, considering that education should ideally be a space that is responsive to all social aspects, including gender equality.

Gender relations in the Eastern world, including in Indonesia, are very closely related to the prevailing culture, religion, and tradition [3], [4]. In this view, women are often placed in partiality [5] where men dominate social roles in various fields compared to women [6]. This kind of position ultimately leads to discrimination, marginalization, and gender inequality in several aspects of life, such as education, employment, and political rights.

In a study conducted by Owen [7] although historically women in Southeast Asia have had enough roles, when compared to women in South Asia and India who are more patriarchal, the historical record of women's experience shows that the

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division of roles between men and women has never been equal. This is in line with Karim [8] study which states that women in Southeast Asia do not consider themselves less important regarding the division of roles with men, but women feel disadvantaged because of the workload of household and parenting imposed on women.

A useful lens for understanding how gender schemas are reproduced at an individual's level of trust is Gender Schema Theory [9], which states that individuals develop a cognitive structure of gender schemas from an early age that organizes information based on gender categories. These schemes are heavily influenced by the surrounding social and cultural environment, including the educational environment, and ultimately shape how individuals process new information, evaluate behavior, and build expectations for themselves and others. School is one of the important domains in the formation of gender concepts, so that the gender scheme owned by history teachers is an important dimension as well, not only as a factor in shaping gender schemes for students, but also related to how teachers choose and frame historical narratives in the classroom.

This study uses Gender Schema Theory by Sandra Bem as a unit of analysis, as well as the concept of patriarchal agreement by Kandiyoti, to explain the gender schema possessed by teachers and how the schema is actively maintained. The concept of patriarchal agreement Kandiyoti [10] describes how individuals strategize in a particular system of gender relations by negotiating, adapting, and accepting the limitations of the patriarchal system in order to maximize security or autonomy. In Islamic feminist studies, Islam treats gender equality as something that can be restored through the reinterpretation of Islamic textual sources and jurisprudence, not as something that must be external [11], [12]. So the schema-based analysis of Bem [9] and Kandiyoti's [10] offering-based account together offer a more textured lens for understanding how history teachers in Islamic schools reconcile the claim of equality with religious commitment.

Previous research studies have shown that teachers' beliefs and practices greatly influence how gender issues are presented in the curriculum and how students understand the role of gender in history. In the research Muntoni & Retelsdorf [13] stated that teacher gender stereotypes greatly affect teachers' expectations on student learning outcomes and the relationship between teachers and students. In addition, the results of the research by Apaolaza-Llorente et al [14] stated that critical teaching, including gender, in history learning can only be carried out if teachers have a strong conception of feminism. This finding is in line with Díez-Bedmar's [15] research, which stated that integrating feminism, intersectionality, and gender categories into history teaching is essential to develop a critical discourse with a gender perspective for teachers.

In Indonesia, gender issues in history learning are widely used to analyze gender-biased history textbooks [16]–[18] Another study was conducted by Yuliati, et al [19] through the idea of gender-based history learning which is based on the idea of reviving the narrative of Indonesia women's history in the history curriculum in schools. Meanwhile, in the context of education in Islamic institutions, research [20] shows that Islamic schools, especially under Islamic boarding schools, still face challenges in integrating gender perspectives in the curriculum and pedagogy. This is due to a variety of factors, including conservative interpretations of religious texts,

entrenched social norms, and a lack of adequate training and resources for teachers to implement gender-responsive pedagogy.

This study aims to explore the understanding of gender and teaching practices of history teachers in Islamic-based schools in Surakarta using a narrative inquiry approach. Through in-depth interviews with four history teachers, this study seeks to answer: a) understand how history teachers in Islamic schools understand the concepts of gender and gender equality, b) identify the teaching practices carried out by teachers in integrating gender perspectives into history learning, and c) analyze what factors influence teachers' beliefs and practices related to gender integration in history learning. By understanding the complexity of teachers' views and practices related to gender, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective strategies to integrate gender perspectives in history teaching and promote gender equality in Islamic schools.

2 Method

This study used a narrative inquiry approach [21] to explore in depth the gender perspectives and practices of history teachers in Islamic schools as they relate to gender integration in learning. This approach allows researchers to understand how teachers construct gender schemes and how their gender scheme experiences affect the practice of teaching history in the classroom.

This research was conducted in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia. The city was chosen because it has a variety of Islamic schools, both Islamic boarding school-based schools and Madrasah Aliyah. This diversity allows one to explore how different institutional contexts affect the perspectives and practices of teachers related to gender.

2.1 Participants

Participants consisted of four history teachers, two men and two women, who were selected through purposive sampling. Two participants teach at a pesantren-based high school and two teach at Madrasah Aliyah. The selection criteria are: (a) actively teaching history in Islamic schools in Surakarta; (b) teaching experience, at least five years; and (c) willingness to share their experiences and views on gender in in-depth interviews. Pseudonymous codes are used throughout the section to protect the identity of participants.

Table 1. Research Participant

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	School Type
Mr. R	57	Male	Pesantren-based Senior High School
Mrs. N	33	Female	Pesantren-based Senior High School
Mr. RM	38	Male	Madrasah Aliyah
Mrs. T	58	Female	Madrasah Aliyah

2.2 Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30–45 minutes with each participant. The interviews focus on teachers' experiences, beliefs, and practices related to gender and their integration into history learning, and are recorded in audio with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim in Indonesian and then translated into English in this article.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a combination of narrative re-storytelling and cross-case thematic analysis [22]. Individual interview transcripts are first written into a coherent narrative portrait for each participant. The transcripts were then analyzed thematically in various cases, with six steps: (1) transcription of all interviews verbatim; (2) identification through re-reading of transcripts; (3) coding of transcript segments relevant to the research question; (4) grouping similar codes into broader categories; (5) identification of the main themes of these categories; and (6) the interpretation of themes related to Gender Scheme Theory and the institutional context of each school.

3 Result and Discussion

This research explores gender perspectives and how they affect the teaching practices of four history teachers in two Islamic-based secondary schools in Surakarta. The research findings are presented in two parts. First, an individual narrative portrait to illustrate how each teacher understands gender in their respective institutional contexts and experiences. Second, the four cross-sectoral themes synthesize patterns among the four narratives, specifically addressing how teachers translate gender perspectives into practice and what factors shape them.

3.1 Individual Narrative

Mr. R: "Equality within the Limits of Religious Frameworks"
Mr. R, 57, is the principal and history teacher at a pesantren-based high school. He describes a gender perspective that balances a commitment to equal opportunities with the traditional norms of the pesantren environment.

> *"Actually, there is no difference [between boys and girls], but for lessons, we do separate them, and the same applies to daily activities. For the student council (OSIS), for example, male and female students each have their own management. There is a student council president for male students, also there is a student council president for female students."*
>
> *"Pesantren does completely separate male and female students, because our school operates under the auspices of pesantren. The hope is to limit interaction between men and women so that there is no promiscuity."*

When asked directly if gender equality is in line with Islam, Mr. R's answer showed a layered point:

"If we look at it from a cultural point of view, [gender equality] would be said to be incompatible with Islam. But if we look at it from a contemporary point of view, well, I think now is the time."

This layered attitude also appears in the school curriculum. Female students at the school receive special instruction in Women's Fiqh (women's Islamic fiqh) using the text I'anatun Nisa', which discusses menstruation, marriage, and marital relationships, material that Mr. R describes as the core of how schools deal with gender from a religious framework:

"Yes, there is a book called I'anatun Nisa', it is given to female students at the time of puberty. In it, students learn about Islamic law and women, about menstruation, marriage, and marital relationships. All of our female students receive this material."

There are no restrictions on women's authority in the management structure of the Islamic boarding school. Although the position of overall pesantren leader remains male, the Education division that oversees the madrasah curriculum is led by a woman:

"In the management structure of the Islamic boarding school, there are male administrators for male students and female administrators for female students. But the head of all Islamic boarding schools is still a man. However, the head of the Education division, Mrs. Ari, is a woman. So at some level, women are already allowed to lead."

In his own teaching, Mr. R takes on a much broader historical role of women than in school textbooks. He explicitly frames this as a pedagogical strategy to maintain students' interest in learning history:

"The main thing in history lessons is to broaden [students'] perspectives... When we tell the story of the birth of Islam and its spread to Indonesia, it can never be separated from the role of women — for example, Sayyidah Khadijah, Sayyidah Fatimah. Then, in the era of Indonesia's struggle, we talk about Kartini, Dewi Sartika, Ratu Kalinyamat. We also say that the arrival of Islam in Indonesia cannot be separated from the role of Fatimah bint Maimun. Usually textbooks only mention his name, but we develop it further, who he is and what his role is... Students become interested when we tell such stories; If they are just told to read, they are not interested."

Mr. R attributes much of this pedagogical orientation to the educational philosophy of the school's founder, whose emphasis on expanding students' horizons (perspectives) he considers to be the basic reason although he notes that limited infrastructure has limited the realization of many of the great ideas of kyai

Mrs. N: "Trying to Create a Collaborative Space"

Mrs. N, 33 years old, teaches at a pesantren-based high school and has a background in sociology education. Of the four participants, she articulated the most explicitly progressive gender understanding, while also being the most critical of the rest of her own biases:

"Sometimes I still like to tell students, 'You are boys, so you have to be strong,' or 'You are girl, so you have to be diligent and gentle.' It's a habit that's hard to break."

Despite these acknowledged tensions, Ms. N consciously sought to disrupt gender patterns in her classroom by integrating mixed-gender learning groups, even though it was against prevailing school norms.

"To be honest, when I invite students to discuss in class, I often combine groups not based on gender but a mix of men and women. Actually, it's not allowed, but I tell the kids, 'you're going to work with anyone after graduation, so my goal is to get you used to it'... Maybe it's because of my educational background in sociology and I learned a lot about social theory, so I think it's okay as long as it doesn't go against religious norms."

Mrs. N emphatically interprets this practice as preparation for students to face life after graduation. It is a conscious effort to train students' ability to work together across genders, before they enter a campus environment or the world of work that does demand these skills. In particular, Ms. N attributes this view to her educational background in sociology, so she is more open. Armed with her broad understanding of social and gender theory, she views cross-gender collaboration as not just an interaction that must be understood, but a competency that must be built in a planned manner.

Mr. RM: "Equal Treatment in Practice, Still Lacking Narrative Content"

Mr. RM, 38, teaches at a Madrasah Aliyah and is known among colleagues for his innovative technology-integrated learning approach. Instead of having no gender perspective, Mr. RM articulate a fairly precise conceptual distinction between biological sex and gender as a social role:

"What I understand about gender is that gender is about roles. Physically there are men and women, but gender has more to do with roles, what is the role of men, what is the role of women. In the context of my history teaching, I do not distinguish between male and female students. I don't know if you're a girl or a boy, I consider all students equal. There is no difference. After all, it's not always true that women always get better results."

He also stated that his school provides equal opportunities for male and female teachers to pursue professional development:

"Alhamdulillah, here, the leadership gives an equal portion to male and female teachers to develop. Everyone is given the same opportunity... It is shared openly, there is this activity, who wants to join?, so no one is raised directly. We were given ample opportunities to develop ourselves."

In the classroom, Mr. RM deliberately mix discussion groups by gender rather than separate them, and have observed patterns that contradict common assumptions about gender participation:

"The concrete form is that when there is an activity that requires collaboration, I don't separate the boys' and girls' groups, I always combine them for the class... And what I see is that female students are more diligent (sregep). They are often the driving force in group discussions."

According to her own admission, what Mr. RM have not done is to develop new curriculum content that highlights women's historical narratives and asks researchers to help address:

"To develop a new narrative, not yet. Maybe later you can give me some examples that I can use in class."

The Mr. RM attitude in the classroom towards gender equality, mixed groups, equal treatment, and openness to female student leadership in discussions seems to be well established, but not yet with their access to gender-responsive curriculum content. His case shows that knowledge, disposition, and curriculum content can develop unevenly.

Mrs. T: "Seeking a Female Representative, within Domestic Boundaries"

Mrs. T, 58 years old, is a senior teacher at a MAN and an active member of the regional history teachers' forum (MGMP). This story is the richest and most internally complex of the four, vividly illustrating how claims of equality and traditional role expectations can coexist in a single belief system, rather than just forming one of the two.

"Right now, I see that there is progress compared to before... It is not yet fully equal, but there has been quite good progress in education, employment, even sports... For me personally, since I teach in Madrasah, I can't separate this from religious matters. So when I talk about gender, I emphasize education and other things, but I still make sure students understand their nature as women. It does not mean that gender must be 100% equal to men. There is a space where men and women can be equal, and there is a space, as in religion, where the husband is the leader... Even if you earn more than your husband, it doesn't mean you can give him the housework that women are supposed to do. Homework, yes, it's shared, but when it comes to cooking, it has to be you, not him."

In her teaching, Ms. T explicitly highlights women's historical agency and links this practice to her identity and profession as a woman:

"Never assume all heroes are men. There are many heroines as well, such as Cut Nyak Dien, who spent her final years away from her family, far from being considered a hero's child, until she was eventually exiled to Java. It was one of the toughest struggles. So I always tell my students: don't underestimate women."

"Yes, of course [this has to do with me as a woman]. I even co-wrote history textbooks... Most of this material rarely discusses women at all. That's why I respect you choosing this dissertation topic. Who knows, maybe you might even write a book about female figures."

Ms. T also offers a comparison between the government-issued history textbooks, which she understands include richer women's narratives written in part by female academics, and the commercially published Erlangga textbooks she currently uses, which she agrees remain relatively male-centric:

"I don't think it's equal [laughs softly]. I think female narratives like Kartini, Nyi Ageng Serang, Cut Nyak Dien rarely appear... I don't have that one from the government yet, the one I use is still from Erlangga."

In practice, Ms. T also deliberately assigned a mixed discussion group, although at least one colleague chose to stick around despite institutional opposition:

> *"Not in my class, I asked the students to mix. So that they don't get bored, and I also don't want boys to be grouped separately from girls. Although I was criticized for this, the Fiqh teacher said, 'later the students will look at each other.' I understand, because he teaches Fiqh, which is related to religion. But I did it anyway."*

Mrs T's story of a former student exhibiting gender nonconformist behavior provides another look at the limits of her progressive attitude. As his homeroom teacher, he chose to discuss with the student in question when the student avoided socializing with his male friend and was teased by his classmates, and immediately intervened to stop the ridicule. At the same time, the guidance she gives to students is expected to align with conventional gender expression, for example, encouraging students to also spend time with male friends rather than just with women.

3.2 Cross-section Themes

Theme 1: Equality Constrained by Religious Frameworks

None of the four teachers explicitly rejected gender equality, and all four at least affirmed it, in the areas of access to education and professional opportunities. Yet three of the four, Mr. R, Mrs. T, and Mrs. N, simultaneously maintain at least one thing, family or religious authority, in which hierarchy is treated as legitimate and even necessary. This is most often expressed through the language of *kodrat* (female nature) or, in Mr. R's case, Sunnatullah (divine command). Only Mr. RM articulated a framework that was consistently non-hierarchical across the domains discussed in its interviews, although, as mentioned above, this has not translated into curriculum content. This pattern suggests that gender equality, for most teachers, functions more as a set of domain schemes than a single belief, in line with Bem's (1981) proposition that gender schemes organize information selectively, but suggests that in religiously structured institutional settings, this selectivity can be strengthened doctrinally, rather than incidentally.

Theme 2: Developing Women's Narratives in History Classes

Teachers' practice in integrating gender into history teaching is an ongoing process. On the one hand, Mr. R's storytelling practice deliberately goes beyond textbook content to restore the historical presence of women, from early Islamic figures to national heroes to local legendary women, explicitly as a strategy to attract students' interest. Mrs. T also uses direct moral instruction ("do not underestimate women") combined with research assignments that ask students to independently investigate historical figures. In contrast, Mr. RM have not developed compelling narrative content in an effort to build an equal space in the classroom. This shows that every teacher has different professional development needs that cannot be standardized.

Theme 3: Textbook Gap as a Structural Constraint

Both Ms. T and Mr. RM, who teach at the same school, each described the Erlangga textbooks they use as minimal narrative space in providing a women's historical perspective, while Ms. T also noted that the latest government-issued textbooks include explicit discussions about gender equality in the family, but the books are not provided by the school and have not been used in their classrooms. This suggests that

policy changes towards more gender-inclusive textbook content may be underway in Indonesia, but the reach of everyday classroom practices in schools is still limited.

Theme 4: Institutional and Religious Structures That Shape Teacher Practice
Institutional and religious factors arise in shaping how teachers translate beliefs into practice. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, gender segregation is explicitly rationalized by Mr. are not as a statement about women's inferiority, but as a protective measure against "free mixing". This is reflected in the separate male and female student council presidents to maintain segregation while allowing female student leadership to take its own path. Women's access to formal authority in pesantren, similarly, is limited to a specific domain (education division) rather than to the overall leadership of the pesantren. Mr. R also attributes his own inclusive storytelling practice to the educational philosophy of the school's founder, illustrating how the pedagogical vision of one influential figure can shape gender-related practices at the grade level, regardless of formal curriculum policies. In the context of the Islamic schools in this study, gender-related practices seem to be more often negotiated individually from the bottom up, such as in the shared willingness of Ms. T and Ms. N to mix discussion groups with institutional preferences. Finally, the subject-teacher forum (MGMP) emerged as an existing channel, although currently underused, to disseminate gender-responsive pedagogy, during her interview, Ms. T spontaneously proposed that researchers lead a session on gender-responsive teaching at the upcoming MGMP meeting.

3.3 Discussion

The findings of this research complicate the simple classification of history teachers in Islamic schools as "progressive" or "traditional" in their understanding of gender. On the contrary, what appears in the four narratives is a pattern of separation where gender equality is affirmed in several domains of social life, especially education and professional opportunities, but in some domains such as family and religious authority is still maintained.

Bem [9] states that gender schemes are shaped by the surrounding social and cultural environment and organize information selectively, rather than uniformly. The teachers in this study show that, in a religiously structured institutional environment, the selectivity of gender schemes is not coincidental but can be doctrinally reinforced. This is shown in Mr. R's differing views between "cultural" and "contemporary" readings of Islam, as well as Mrs. T's careful discussion between spaces where equality prevails in professional spaces and intolerable in private spaces, both of which show that teachers do not passively hold conflicting beliefs but actively work to reconcile the claim of equality with religious commitment. These findings also give empirical texture to Karim's observation [8] that women in Southeast Asia suffer losses primarily through disproportionate domestic workloads and childcare, not because of internal feelings that they are less capable or less important, Mrs. T's explanation of cooking and washing dishes as an inevitable "part", even when she generates her own income and holds her professional authority, is an accurate illustration of the dynamics that occur in a teacher's reasoning about her family life.

Mr. R's opinion questioning whether gender equality is an external product or an explorable value of contemporary interpretations of Islam reflects a long-standing debate in the study of Islamic feminism. This debate centers on whether gender equality is a foreign concept that is forced, or rather a legitimate value based on a reinterpretation of Islamic sources [11], [12]. The fact that this dilemma arises naturally from teachers' reflections shows how they seek to navigate gender issues within the Islamic school environment. This finding also provides new nuances to the claim of Apaolaza-Llorente et al. [14], who state that critical and gender-aware history teaching can only be done by teachers with a strong understanding of feminism. This is clearly seen in the case of Mr. RM. She actively implements equality in the classroom by creating mixed discussion groups and openly acknowledging the dominant role of female students, although in practice, she has not incorporated the narratives of female historical figures into teaching materials. This case proves that teachers' pedagogically fair attitudes in the classroom and mastery of gender-responsive historical materials are two things that can develop separately.

The theme of textbook gaps speaks to gender bias in history textbooks [16]–[18] and Yuliati et al.'s [19] conceptual to revive women's historical narratives in the curriculum. Current findings suggest that such changes may already be taking place at the government-issued textbook level, but their reach to real-world classroom practice at both schools is still limited. This is in line with the findings of Muntoni and Retelsdorf [13] that teachers' beliefs and attitudes greatly influence how the curriculum is applied in the field. However, these findings also show structural problems that are often overlooked. The main obstacle may not be due to the refusal of teachers, but simply the problem of the procurement and distribution process of textbooks at the school level. The difference in the alleged cause can certainly still be tested. Therefore, further research is very appropriate to follow up on this problem.

At the institutional level, the findings of this study expand on the observation of Srimulyani [20] who stated that pesantren face structural challenges in integrating gender perspectives. The current findings provide a more detailed picture of what these challenges look like from the inside. For example, gender segregation in the pesantren studied is expressly interpreted as a protection effort to prevent "promiscuity". Mr. R does not view this as a form of female inferiority. In addition, women's access to formal leadership positions in Islamic boarding schools has not actually disappeared, although it is still limited. This understanding is critical to policy formulation and advocacy. Efforts to encourage gender-responsive pesantren education will be more successful if it is done by embracing rather than opposing the principle of protection that is rooted in the tradition of pesantren. This approach should also take advantage of existing women's leadership opportunities, instead of considering pesantren as a completely closed institution.

4 Conclusion

This research shows that teachers' views on gender equality are not rigid beliefs, but rather domain-specific commitments. They strongly support equality in the realms of education and professions, but limit it in the realms of religion and family authority. Referring to the Gender Scheme Theory by Sandra Bem and the concept of patriarchal

bargaining by Kandiyoti, this attitude is not an inconsistency. Rather, it is a conscious attitude that teachers build based on the religious values in their institution. In the classroom, this attitude is manifested by the initiative to elevate female historical figures outside of textbooks, implement mixed learning groups (male and female) even though the institution does not agree, and provide personal guidance to students whose gender expressions differ from school norms.

These findings have practical implications for teacher professional development where teacher training is no longer enough to just campaign for the importance of gender equality, but must provide specific support according to the real needs of teachers in the field. This support can be in the form of providing ready-to-use women's history materials, teaching approaches for teachers who take the initiative to implement blended classes, and discussion spaces on how to provide personal guidance to students, which have rarely been discussed in curriculum training. The Subject Teacher Discussion Forum (MGMP) can be used as a practical and efficient forum to disseminate this program. Furthermore, further research can be developed in two main directions. First, to expand the sample to various Islamic schools and other regions to see if this pattern of gender context segregation also occurs there. Second, to examine more deeply how teachers provide interpersonal guidance to students with gender diversity, an important issue that arises but has not been fully explored in this study.

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