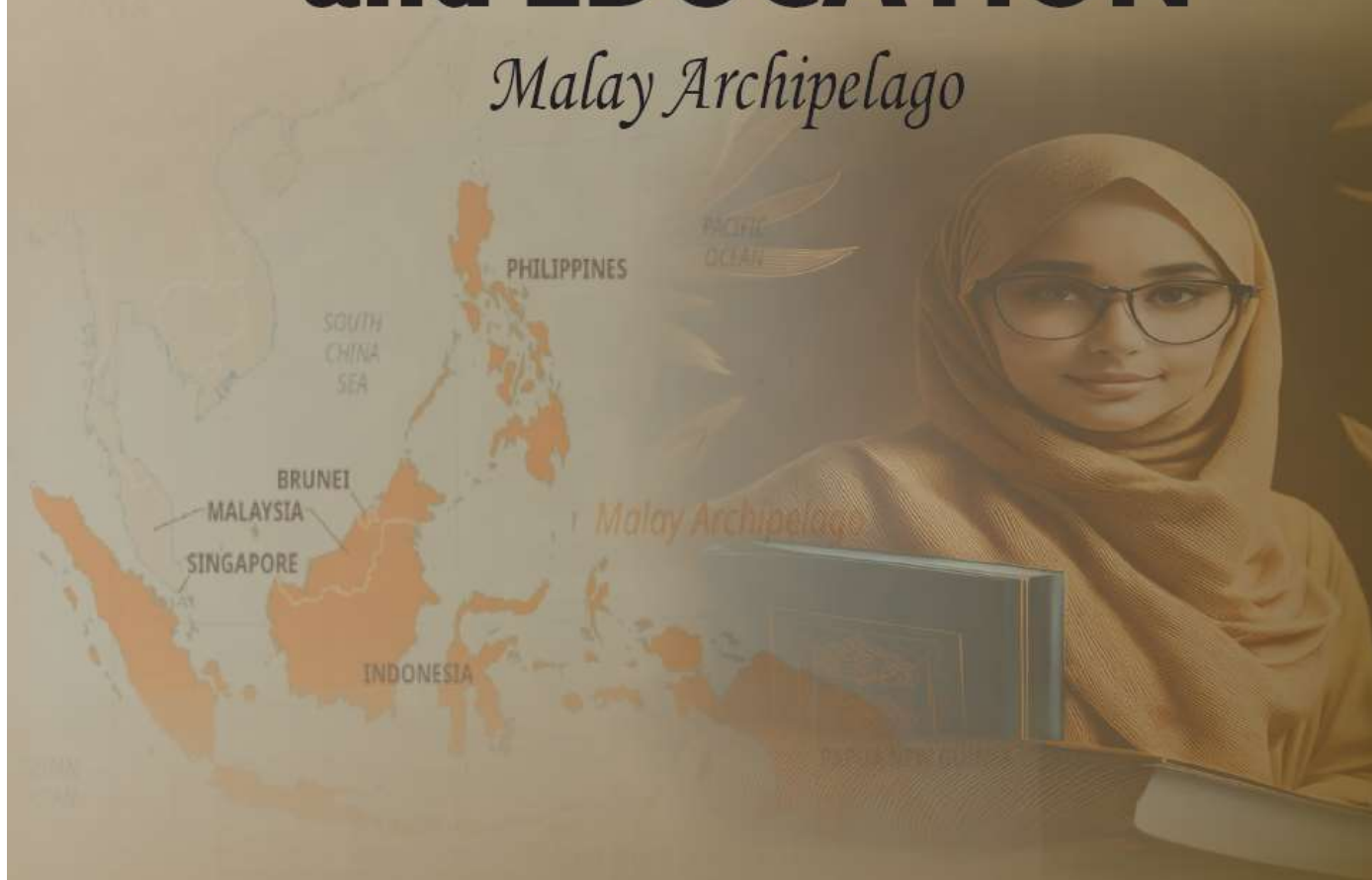


THE CONTRIBUTIONS of WOMEN in ISLAMIC STUDIES and EDUCATION

Malay Archipelago



Editors

**Raudlotul Firdaus Fatah Yasin
Mek Wok Mahmud**



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Press**

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Foreword

Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
Former Rector of International Islamic University Malaysia

Editors

**Raudlotul Firdaus Fatah Yasin
Mek Wok Mahmud**



IIUM
Press
Gombak • 2024

First Print, 2024
©IIUM Press, IIUM

IIUM Press is a member of the Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia - MAPIM
(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)
Persatuan Penerbit Buku Malaysia – MABOPA
(Malaysian Book Publishers Association)
Membership No. - 201905

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data



Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia
A catalogue record for this book is available
from the National Library of Malaysia
ISBN 978-967-491-423-3



Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia
A catalogue record for this book is available
from the National Library of Malaysia
eISBN 978-967-491-424-0

Published in Malaysia by
IIUM Press
International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Printed in Malaysia by
FIRDAUS PRESS SDN. BHD.
No. 28, Jalan PBS 14/4
Taman Perindustrian Bukit Serdang
43300 Seri Kembangan,
Selangor Darul Ehsan

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Preface

Women are generally associated with being feminine. The fundamental meaning of female is stated by Merriam-Webster (2022) as “relating to, or being the sex that normally possesses the potential to have offspring or generate eggs”. It seems that this definition has added a new definition of “female” to appease the LGBTQ rights movement. A female is now defined as “having a gender identity that is the opposite of male” (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Gender identity explicitly reveals that gender is not inherently associated with sex. This argument also encompasses a female who is unable to conceive due to infertility or other illnesses that hinder her from becoming pregnant. Despite the multifaceted definition of female, Islam views the acceptable definition as a human with a female reproductive system, which may or may not include the ability to conceive, give birth, breastfeed, experience menstruation, and uphold feminine values. Regarding the above statement, it has entirely rejected the idea of LGBTQ rights, no matter how hard they verify their eligibility to become female by alternating their original sex.

Women are the embodiment of power, love, sacrifice, and bravery. However, until significant shifts occur, the complexity of men’s competence in all aspects has typically overshadowed the abilities and roles of women. Women have been treated as second-class citizens and have been denied numerous basic rights previously granted to the male population. The West has characterised Islamic women as a primitive society in a patriarchal world. Thus, it is not surprising that women are usually treated as slaves and typically considered as socioeconomic tools for home responsibilities such as birthing and raising children, preparing for men's needs, and even providing the family's revenue, even in contemporary times. In fact, Islam is the first official religion that grants equal status to women and men.

The Qur'an highlights numerous teachings and guides how Islam respects and acknowledges equal rights to women in a respectful manner, presenting a direct argument that refutes Western perspectives (Aziz-ur-Rehman et al., 2012, pp. 146-147).

Women were subjected to severe humiliation, and their rights were ruthlessly violated. The introduction of education, which was once initiated only for men, has spread and is now practised by women. Education has opened the minds and eyes of women, allowing them to improve their "unfortunate" lives. Education is essential for women to achieve tremendous success in all disciplines and to consistently develop their own positive identity and progressive impression on society. However, even before modern culture permitted the practice of education, women educators made numerous sacrifices and efforts to ensure future generations could easily access the educational process. Dewi Sartika, Raden Adjeng Kartika, and Ibu Zain were among those who fought for women's education to empower and improve their lives. As a result of the introduction of education into society, women have become self-reliant, financially independent, and well-informed. It has enabled women to march alongside men, liberate themselves from poverty, and pave the way for a better modern society.

In light of the spectacular changes in the position of women, it has subscribed to the philosophy of empowerment via education. Although the definition of empowerment varies, scholars have evaluated its relevance in this context by measuring factors such as women's autonomy, agency, status, land rights, domestic economic power, bargaining power, power, patriarchy, gender equality, and gender discrimination (Pillai & Asalatha, 2013, p. 3; World Bank, 2017). The core concept of empowerment is placed on the idea of power. From a feminist standpoint, nurturing women's voices validates their creativity and encourages more active and collaborative life enhancement (Pillai et al., 2009). The processes of attaining insight may be facilitated by the involvement in inter-dialogue across differences and the application of knowledge via interactions in addressing the associated concerns that disregard them.

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In order to describe women's empowerment, Pillai and Asalatha (2013) also emphasised and focused on two aspects of empowerment (p. 4). As cited in Keller and Mbwewe (1991), the first fundamental feature of empowerment is that it is a process through which "women become able to organise themselves

to increase their own self-reliance, to express their autonomous right to make decisions, and to manage resources, which will aid in confronting and removing their own socio-political subordination". It encompasses autonomy and the process of progression from gender inequality to gender equality. Besides that, agency, or the requirement that women play a meaningful role in the transformation process being described or measured, is the second component of empowerment that sets it apart from previous notions. It may refer to positive development in indicators of improvement "bottom up" rather than "top down" (Rowlands, 1995; Oxaal & Baden, 1997). It is founded on the concept of self-efficacy and the importance of individual women realising their ability to influence change in their own lives (Pillai & Asalatha, 2013, p. 4). To add, according to McWhither (1991), the empowerment process, which enables women to organise themselves to increase their own self-reliance, assert their own self-reliance, and proclaim their independent right to make decisions and control resources, will help women challenge and end their own subordination in the home. So, it could be argued that the intended result can be legitimately reached through the educational process, which involves learning facts and developing skills.

To further understand the role of education in women's empowerment, the first chapter unravels the importance of women's education, their responsibilities and roles from various fields in improving women's social status, and their contributions to nation-building. The chapter delves into the definition of education from both general and Islamic perspectives, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of its role in enhancing human life and soul. It also demonstrates how women's education has transformed

their participation in politics and decision-making processes in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

The outstanding increment of women's involvement in state and political affairs is a result of improvements in women's education that are rooted in the efforts of numerous inspiring women. The second chapter delves into the historical facts of Asian women, including their contributions and dedication to promoting a better education for women. It highlights influential figures such as Raden Adjeng Kartini and Dewi Sartika from Indonesia, as well as Zainun Munsyi Sulaiman and Aishah Ghani from Malaysia, who advocated for the importance of women's education in their respective countries.

The advancement of women's education and its effects portrayed in the Asian communities is aligned with the Islamic teaching that promotes equal opportunities, rights, and respect for both genders, as mentioned before, which is why the fourth chapter will analyse Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's book *Risale-i Nur*, his Qur'anic exegesis, emphasising the importance of moral education and the author's unique techniques and approaches based on Islamic education.

The realisation of the importance of education sparked a motivation to fulfil educational needs, and women are no exception among those who responded to the call to seek knowledge and education. Hence, the fifth chapter reviews the lack of higher educational opportunities in Islamic education in Malaysia, which encouraged Malayan women to study abroad. Al-Azhar is known to be one of the top choices for higher education in the Islamic world. Thus, Al-Azhar experienced an increase in the number of female students because of educational migration and journey; as a result, a faculty of Islamic studies was established specifically for its female graduates, named the Faculty of Al-Banat al-Islamiyyah (KBIUA) in the University of Al-Azhar, Egypt. Six main factors leading to this educational journey are discussed in this chapter.

After 1964, the return of the female graduates who were involved in the establishment of KBIUA surely benefited the Malaysian education system, which will be discussed in the

sixth chapter. Their contributions encompass secondary, higher, and community education. The major impact is illustrated in IPT through the appearance of new young lecturers, students writing, publication, and consultation. At the school level, these female graduates typically serve as teachers and participate in school management. Moreover, the educator role is not limited to educational institutions but is also extended to community education, a non-formal education organised by various bodies and organisations or individuals to spread knowledge, especially Islamic knowledge and motivational talks among communities.

Women's increased involvement in the education system and improvements in women's education indicate the advancement of women's empowerment in Malaysia, ensuring equal opportunities for women in various fields, including Shariah law. The seventh chapter focuses on women's influence in metastasising Shariah law in Malaysia. Despite studies showing an increase in women's enrolment in universities and their dominance in award nominations, which reflects their academic merit, men still hold a dominant position in the labour market. However, despite this setting, a number of women have achieved recognition in Malaysia and worldwide for their contributions to their respective professions and in the implementation of Shariah law in Malaysia. These women include Prof. Dr Harlina Halizah Siraj, Prof. Dr Engku Rabiah Adawiah Engku Ali, Dr Shamsiah Mohamad, Prof. Dr Najibah Mohd Zin, Datin Prof. Dr Raihanah Haji Abdullah, Assoc. Prof. Dr Shamrahayu Ab Aziz and Assoc. Prof. Dr Nik Salida Suhaila Nik Saleh.

In Malaysia, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), led by Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, is well-known domestically and internationally for producing and recruiting exceptional women to contribute educationally through learning, teaching, writing, and research. IIUM offers higher education opportunities to both genders in fulfilling the Prophet's ρ commandment to his companions to seek knowledge for God's sake. The eighth chapter provides a brief history of AbdulHamid Abu Sulayman Kulliyah, the founder of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at IIUM,

and his role in providing Revealed Knowledge courses that complement the Islamisation and integration of the university curriculum. Furthermore, the chapter depicts Malay women's involvement as academic staff at IIUM and their contributions to the education of various fields of study and expertise.

One might argue that women's involvement and contribution to knowledge and education bloomed late, as it is only visible in the 20th century. However, from a Muslim perspective and also in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality, women's participation in education surfaced from the Prophetic era through the era of the companions until the present. The *Ummahat Al-Mu'minin* is an example of a woman who was known as among the most reliable references in *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, in which her expertise was passed down to the later generations. The ninth chapter explains women's role in the progress of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* from the companions' era to the present day; it also examines the progress of *'Ilm al-Tafsir* in the Malay Archipelago (Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, and Thailand) and how the Pan-Islamism movement affected the learning of *'Ilm al-Tafsir*. Besides, in present Malaysia, *'Ilm al-Tafsir* is added to the high school and university level syllabus.

In relation to the *'Ilm al-Tafsir*, the spread of Qur'anic and *Ḥadīth* teaching is a must-discussed topic that will be included in the tenth chapter. It will focus on the leadership and contribution of the Malay Archipelago's women in spreading the teachings of the Islamic revelations. The Kingdom of Pasai (1267-1517 M) is considered the earliest Muslim kingdom in the Malay Archipelago that witnessed a vast volume of women's participation in Islamic *da'wah*. In short, women share the same significance as men in the role of Islamic educators at all times. It is also proved that there were plenty of great outcomes in regard to the dissemination of Islamic teaching and values as products of women's inclusion.

As women's inclusion proved to have amazing impacts in the study of the Islamic revelations, it will be for nought if these incredible women are not explored individually. This is why the eleventh chapter will focus on women scholars who specialise in modern Qur'anic exegesis, a branch of knowledge

in the science of the Qur'an that aims to elucidate the words and meaning of its verses. The chapter will announce twelve Muslim women scholars who actively participated in the Qur'anic interpretation from the 17th century to the 21st century. They are Nusret Begam Amin (d. 1983) from Iran, Hannān al-Lahhām from Syria, Naila Hasyim Sabri from Palestine, Kamilah al-Kuwari from Qatar, Miyadah bint Kamil from Riyadh, and Farhat Naseem Hashmi from Pakistan. Five female scholars were from Egypt: 'Aisha Abd al-Raḥmān bint Al-Shāṭi' (d. 1998), Zainab al-Ghazali (d. 2005), Fatin Muhammad al-Falaki, Fawqiyyah Ibrahim al-Sherbiny, and Fatma Kariman Hamzah. Another two female scholars are from Turkey: Semra Kürün Çekmegil and Necla Yasdıman. This chapter attempts to briefly discover each of their works on modern Qur'anic exegesis, analyse their style of interpretation of Qur'anic verses, and examine their approach to developing their own version of Qur'anic exegesis.

As a whole, this book is published to understand and describe how women contribute to the educational system, especially in Islamic studies, how women's empowerment has been achieved through the educational system, and how the educational system affects the roles and functions of women in all walks of life. Major works and writings in this volume significantly expounded the role of education as a game-changer that contributes to a higher level of women's empowerment, and as a result, gender equality has been realised. It is intended that the scientific research and empirical data would create greater awareness and help people better grasp the significance and value of women's roles in society and inspire women everywhere to contribute to both their own well-being and the welfare of those around them.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the financial contribution from Yayasan Bukhari, the research grant funder, under the research grant code SP18-132-0394. The book has been successfully printed and distributed through IIUM Press, thanks to the financial support of CFRU (Contemporary Fiqh Research Unit), overseen by Abdulhamid Abu Sulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and

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Human Sciences. We deeply appreciate the funder's generosity, and we hope this will be considered their good deeds ('amal salih) in the Hereafter.

RAUDLOTUL FIRDAUS FATAH YASIN
MEK WOK MAHMUD

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THE CONTRIBUTIONS *of* WOMEN in ISLAMIC STUDIES and EDUCATION

Malay Archipelago

This book is the result of a group of scholars' writings sponsored by Yayasan Bukhari, who want to recognise the important role that women have played in Islamic education across the Malay archipelago. The book acknowledged that the pre- and post-colonial systems had an impact on popular perceptions and beliefs on Islamic studies, highlighting the diverse educational backgrounds of each individual. The purpose of this book is to explain and comprehend the ways in which women, particularly in the area of Islamic studies, contribute to the educational system. It uncovers how women empowerment has been attained through the system, and how the system influences women's duties and responsibilities in all spheres of life. Justice in gender equality has been achieved as a result of the major works and writings in this book, which extensively discussed the importance of education as a game-changer that raises the bar for women's empowerment. The goal of the empirical facts and scientific research is to raise awareness, aid in understanding the importance of women's roles in Islamic studies and society, and encourage women everywhere to make positive contributions to their own well-being as well as the Islamic education of those around them.

ISBN 978-967-491-423-3



9 789674 914233

IIUM Press

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