

AN-NISA'IYAH AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE, SPIRITUAL AGENCY, AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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Abstract: This article examines *an-nisa'iyah* as a critical epistemological paradigm within Islamic education, offering a framework that advances gender justice, spiritual empowerment, and women's autonomy. Rooted in a response to persistent patriarchal narratives in some Islamic educational settings, *an-nisa'iyah* rearticulates the role of women as active moral, intellectual, and social agents. Utilizing literature review and critical discourse analysis, this study investigates how *an-nisa'iyah* can inform educational reform across curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis—particularly in both formal and non-formal learning environments. The concept encourages an Islamic pedagogy that fosters awareness of rights, capabilities, and ethical responsibilities among female learners. By situating spirituality as integral to liberation, *an-nisa'iyah*

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envisioned education as a space for nurturing independent, critically conscious Muslim women. The article argues that integrating this paradigm within Islamic educational systems may contribute to more inclusive, justice-oriented, and spiritually grounded learning models—thus reshaping Islamic education into a transformative vehicle for gender equity and social renewal.

Keywords: *An-nisa'iyah*, Gender Justice, Women's Empowerment, Educational Reform, Feminist Islamic Thought.

Introduction

Women's issues in various dimensions of life, including educational, social, economic, and political, have become a dynamic discourse in contemporary society.¹ Women as the subject of development have a strategic role in shaping a just, inclusive, and progressive civilization. In the context of Islamic education, the urgency of the discussion about women does not only touch on legal-formal aspects, but also touches on conceptual and philosophical aspects related to the identity, role, and capacity of women in the social structure of the ummah.² One of the relevant concepts to be elaborated is the concept of *an-nisa'iyah*, which linguistically refers to everything related to women (*al-mar'ah*), but in a broader framework, encompasses the philosophical, theological, and epistemological meanings of women in Islam.

The concept of *an-nisa'iyah* is not just a term for gender that is constructed from a biological or cultural approach alone, but reflects the construction of Islamic values and views on the existence and function of women. In the Islamic view, women are not second-class creatures, but have an equal position spiritually and morally before Allah, as affirmed in various verses of the Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. However, in the practice of daily life, inequality, marginalization, and negative stereotypes are still found against

¹ Bambang Husni Nugroho, Ahmad Mustaniruddin, and Ahmad Taufik, "Ideological Contestation on the Production of Gender Exegesis within Institutional Quranic Interpretation in Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (October 1, 2024): 346–69, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5388>.

² Abdul Haris Rasyidi and Ulyan Nasri, "Muslim Sasak Female Scholars: Empowerment and Strengthening of Islamic Education in the Lombok Community, Indonesia," *Truektoria Nauki* 9, no. 12 (2023): 3029–39.

women which are sometimes framed in disproportionate religious legitimacy. This poses a serious challenge in efforts to build women's critical awareness and independence, especially in the context of Islamic education.³

Islamic education actually aims to form human beings who have faith, knowledge, and noble character, without discrimination on the basis of gender. Therefore, education that prioritizes gender equality and justice is a necessity in order to realize an Islamic society that is *rahmah li al-'alamin*.⁴ In this context, the concept of *an-nisa'iyah* can be an important epistemological offer to reconstruct an Islamic education paradigm that is responsive to women's issues. This approach emphasizes the importance of women's awareness of their existence as autonomous subjects, having the right to think, choose, and determine the future of their lives, and having a significant contribution in public and domestic life.

Self-awareness (*self-awareness*) is an essential element of liberating education, as advocated by educational figures such as Paulo Freire. In the Islamic perspective, women's self-awareness includes the understanding of one's identity as a creature created by Allah who has a mission in life (*maqasid al-hayat*), as well as an agent of social change that is able to realize the values of justice, compassion, and virtue in people's lives. This awareness cannot grow in a repressive and patriarchal space, but must be built through transformative, dialogical, and participatory education.⁵

In addition to awareness, the aspect of women's independence is also an important theme in Islamic education. Independence in this case includes the ability of women to make their own decisions, manage their potential, and actively participate in various areas of life. Islam itself has never forbidden women to play a role in the public

³ Fatimah Salma Az-Zahra and Ahmad Nurrohim, "Contemporary Interpretation Approach in The Culture of Patriarchal Analysis In Surah An-Nisa Verse 34: Literature Review," *Eduvest - Journal of Universal Studies* 4, no. 10 (October 26, 2024): 9062–72, <https://doi.org/10.59188/eduvest.v4i10.43671>.

⁴ Khamam Khosiin, Tobroni Tobroni, and Khozin Khozin, "The Rahmatan Lil-'Alamin Paradigm as an Approach to Islamic Education in Muhammadiyah Institutions," *Progresiva: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 01 (June 30, 2023): 133–46, <https://doi.org/10.22219/progresiva.v12i01.29382>.

⁵ Hasyim Hasanah, "Peran Strategis Aktivis Perempuan Nurul Jannah Al Firdaus Dalam Membentuk Kesadaran Beragama Perempuan Miskin Kota," *Inferensi: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 7, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 473–92, <https://doi.org/10.18326/infsl3.v7i2.473-492>.

sphere, as reflected in many stories of women during the time of the Prophet, such as Khadijah bint Khuwailid who was a successful businessman, Aisha bint Abu Bakr as an intellectual and narrator of hadith, and Asma' bint Abu Bakr who showed courage and toughness in the struggle of Islam. All these figures show that Islam provides ample space for women to grow and develop independently, as long as they remain within the framework of the values of piety and piety.⁶

By understanding the concept of *an-nisa'iyah* more comprehensively, it is hoped that a collective consciousness will emerge in Muslim society to reorganize the education system to be more equitable and respect the dignity of women. Islamic education must be a space of liberation for women, not a limiting tool that silences their potential and aspirations. Through the internalization of the values of justice, equality, and humanity derived from Islamic teachings, Muslim women can build complete independence both spiritually, intellectually, and socially and actively contribute to building a progressive civilization.⁷

This research uses a qualitative approach with *the library research method*.⁸ This approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the research objectives that are conceptual and philosophical, to explore and analyze the concept of an-nisaiyah in the perspective of Islamic education as a foundation in building women's awareness and independence. The main sources of data come from relevant classical and contemporary Islamic literature, including tafsir, hadith, as well as the works of Muslim feminist figures and scholars of Islamic education. The data collection technique was carried out through the review of documents on scientific works such as books, journals, articles, and digital sources that discuss women's issues, Islamic education, and gender justice discourse. The literature search is focused on works that reflect thoughts on women as subjects of education and social transformation.

⁶ Zaky Ismail, "Perempuan dan Politik Pada Masa Awal Islam (Studi Tentang Peran Sosial dan Politik Perempuan Pada Masa Rasulullah)," *Jurnal Review Politik* 6, no. 1 (June 29, 2016): 140–59, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jrp.2016.6.1.140-159>.

⁷ Asnal Mala et al., "Fostering Tolerance Through Inclusive Islamic Education: The Role of Pesantren in Navigating Global Challenges," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 12, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 153–78, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2024.12.2.153-178>.

⁸ Lynn Silipigni Connaway and Marie L. Radford, *Research Methods in Library and Information Science* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2021).

Data analysis was carried out using a *critical discourse analysis approach*,⁹ with the aim of identifying the structure of meaning, ideology, and power relations contained in the narrative of Islamic education towards women. The analytical measures include the interpretation of the text, the socio-historical context, and the construction of gender meaning within the framework of Islamic education. With this method, the research seeks to build a strong theoretical argument regarding the urgency of integrating an-nisaiyah values in Islamic education reform in order to realize women who are self-aware, independent, and empowered.

Interpretation of the Concept of An-Nisaiyah

The concept of an-nisaiyah is etymologically derived from the root word *An-Nisa'* (Women), which means women. However, in the epistemological approach of Islam, *an-nisa'iyah* does not simply refer to biological sex, but includes social, cultural, and theological constructions that contain meanings about women's identity, rights, roles, and existence in the order of life. In the perspective of Islamic education, this concept can be understood as a framework of thought that places women as educational subjects who have divine, intellectual, and social potential.¹⁰

The Qur'an as the main source of Islamic teachings gives a lot of attention to women, both in the form of historical narratives, laws, and moral principles.¹¹ For example, in Surah An-Nisa' (4), the Qur'an affirms the principle of justice and protection of women's rights in the family and society. Similarly, in Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, Allah mentions men and women equally in terms of faith, charity, and ukhrawi rewards:

The Muslims, Muslim women, believers, believing women, judges, judges, honest women, honest women, patient women, patient women, humble people, charity givers, fasting women, fasting women, keepers of their chickens, keepers and rememberers of God a

⁹ Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748610839>.

¹⁰ Andik Wahyun Muqoyyidin, "Wacana Kesetaraan Gender: Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer Tentang Gerakan Feminisme Islam," *Al-Ulum* 13, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 490–511.

¹¹ Sarifa Suhra, "Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Hukum Islam," *Al-Ulum* 13, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 373–94.

lot and memories God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.

إن المسلمين والمسلمات والمؤمنين والمؤمنات والقانتين والقانتات والصادقين والصادقات والصابرين والصابرات والخاشعين والخاشعات والمتصدقين والمتصدقات والصائمين والصائمات والحافظين فروجهم والحافظات والذاكرين الله كثيراً والذاكرات أعد الله لهم مغفرة وأجرًا عظيمًا.

“Indeed, Muslim men and women, believing men and women, men and women who remain in their obedience... Allah has provided for them forgiveness and a great reward.” (QS. Al-Ahzab: 35)

The important role of women in Islamic history is also concrete evidence that women have made significant contributions to the development of science and education. Figures such as Aisha bint Abu Bakr, Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah, Fatimah al-Fihri, and other contemporary women, show how women play an active role as educators, intellectuals, and spiritual leaders. Their presence is not only symbolic, but functional in the process of inheriting knowledge, affirming values, and social transformation. In this context, *an-nisa'iyah* also becomes a historical narrative that affirms the central role of women in Islamic education.¹²

Furthermore, *An-nisa'iyah* as a critical concept in Islamic education also serves as a tool to re-read the social and cultural structures that marginalize women. Through this approach, Islamic education is not only oriented to normative teaching, but also to the formation of critical consciousness (*critical consciousness*) women towards their social environment. This awareness is important as a basis for forming an identity that is independent, empowered, and able to take a strategic role in society. This is in line with the spirit of *maqashid al-shari'ah* which upholds the dignity and dignity of human beings, including the protection of reason (*'aql*), The Soul (*nafs*), and honor (*ird*).¹³

¹² Ismail, “Perempuan Dan Politik Pada Masa Awal Islam (Studi Tentang Peran Sosial Dan Politik Perempuan Pada Masa Rasulullah).”

¹³ M. Rizko Ramadani, “Kontekstualisasi Makna Nusyuz dalam QS. An-Nisa [4]: 34 sebagai Kritik Ideologi Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga: Analisis Semiologi Roland Barthes,” *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (October 17, 2024): 697–714, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jsq.v4i2.24758>.

An-Nisā'iyah in the Perspective of Islamic Education

The concept of An-Nisā'iyah, or femininity in Islam, is a theological and philosophical construction that contains the meaning of the existence of women in various dimensions of life, including education. In the Islamic perspective, women are seen as beings who have a spiritual and social status that is on par with men in terms of responsibility, potential, and devotion to God.¹⁴ This concept is not only sourced from normative texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith, but is also rooted in contextual interpretations and social praxes developed by Muslim scholars and thinkers across the ages. One of the main principles of the concept of An-Nisā'iyah in Islam is the ontological equality between men and women before Allah SWT.¹⁵

يا أيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم إن الله عليم خبير.

“O people, We have created you from a male and a female, and We have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing.” (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13)

The concept of An-Nisā'iyah is also closely related to the dimension of self-awareness (*self-awareness*) which is derived from the teachings of monotheism. In Islam, education is not only aimed at educating the intellect, but also to form a spiritual awareness that human beings have moral responsibilities towards themselves, their families, and their communities.¹⁶ In the context of women, education is a means to realize their position and strategic role as a *um wa madrasah* (mother and first school for her children).

In addition to self-awareness, the concept of femininity in Islam also includes independence (*al-istiqlāl*) in thinking and acting.

¹⁴ Asmaret Desi, “Kajian Tentang Gender Perspektif Islam (Studi Analisis Tentang Posisi Perempuan Dan Laki-Laki Dalam Islam),” *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syari'ah)* 17, no. 2 (2018): 259–68, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v17i2.1164>.

¹⁵ M. Rusydi, “Relasi Laki-Laki Dan Perempuan Dalam Al-Qur'an Menurut Amina Wadud,” *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 38, no. 2 (December 9, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v38i2.60>.

¹⁶ Ahmad Mukhlis Anwar and Burhanuddin Ridlwan, “Relevansi Pemikiran Pendidikan KH M.A. Sahal Mahfudh Dengan Sistem Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer,” *Irsyaduna: Jurnal Studi Kemahasiswaan* 4, no. 2 (August 23, 2024): 252–63, <https://doi.org/10.54437/irsyaduna.v4i2.1703>.

Independence here is not interpreted as a form of individualism, but as the empowerment of women in assessing, choosing, and determining attitudes based on knowledge and faith.¹⁷ In the history of Islam, we know female figures who showed extraordinary intellectual independence, such as Aisha bint Abu Bakr who became a reference in the field of hadith, um Salamah who was involved in political decision-making, and Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah who showed spiritual independence. The example of these women leaders affirms that independence is not something foreign to Islam, but part of the scientific and spiritual heritage that must continue to be revived in the contemporary Islamic education system.

The concept of An-Nisā'iyah in education also encourages the strengthening of Muslim women's identity in the midst of the challenges of globalization and modernity. On the one hand, globalization provides great opportunities for women to gain access to higher education, technology, and information.¹⁸ But on the other hand, the current of modernity also often brings liberal values that erode local spiritual and cultural identity.¹⁹ In practice, the implementation of the concept of An-Nisā'iyah in the Islamic education system can be carried out through the reorientation of a gender-responsive curriculum, teacher training on gender justice, and the empowerment of women in educational institutions. The Islamic education curriculum needs to include the study of Islamic women figures, Islamic feminism thought, and women's involvement in the history of Islamic civilization. In the perspective of educational methodology, andragogic and dialogical approaches are more suitable to be applied in women's education. This approach places women as active subjects who are able to explore and reflect critically on their life experiences. Education is no longer a *top-down*, but build a dialogical relationship between teachers and students, as well as

¹⁷ Bettina Dennerlein, "Gender Debates," in *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, ed. Anke von Kügelgen and Peter Adamson, trans. Gwendolin Goldbloom (Brill, 2024), 695–723, 10.1163/9789004710498_016.

¹⁸ Akemi Ashida, "The Role of Higher Education in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals," in *Sustainable Development Disciplines for Humanity: Breaking Down the 5Ps—People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships*, ed. Shujiro Urata, Kazuo Kuroda, and Yoshiko Tonegawa (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2023), 71–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-4859-6_5.

¹⁹ Gregorio Bettiza, Derek Bolton, and David Lewis, "Civilizationism and the Ideological Contestation of the Liberal International Order," *International Studies Review* 25, no. 2 (April 3, 2023): viad006, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viad006>.

between female students and each other. Through this process, women's collective awareness of the importance of their role in society can grow naturally and be internalized in concrete actions.

Women's Self-Awareness Education in Islam

Self-awareness is a key aspect of liberating education. In the Islamic perspective, women's self-awareness is rooted in the understanding of one's identity as a caliph on earth and as a servant of Allah who has moral and social responsibility. Islamic education should not only emphasize the cognitive and affective aspects, but also the existential and transcendental dimensions that touch women's self-awareness of their potential.²⁰

Paulo Freire in the concept of critical education emphasizes the importance of *the conscientization* process in which one becomes aware of the structures of oppression and seeks to liberate oneself through education. In the context of Islamic education, *consciousnessization* for women means being aware of gender injustices that hinder their actualization, as well as finding the spiritual and intellectual strength to respond to them constructively.

Education that builds women's self-awareness must be based on the principle of monotheism, which views all human beings as equal beings before Allah. Therefore, monotheistic education encourages women to recognize their potential as independent, responsible, and able to make a positive contribution to society. This awareness is the initial foundation for women's independence and empowerment in all aspects of life.

In the context of Islamic education that is oriented towards liberation and empowerment, women's self-awareness is an important stepping point in the process of social transformation. This awareness is not only related to the understanding of his social rights and position, but also closely related to the spiritual values that form his entire view of life. Self-awareness in Islam includes the vertical (relationship with Allah) and horizontal (relationship with fellow human beings and nature), which reinforce each other and give direction to the purpose of a Muslim woman's life.

The Qur'an explicitly recognizes the intellectual and spiritual capacity of women, as stated in the Qur'an. Al-Ahzab verse 35 which

²⁰ Hasanah, "Peran Strategis Aktivis Perempuan Nurul Jannah Al Firdaus Dalam Membentuk Kesadaran Beragama Perempuan Miskin Kota."

affirms equality between men and women in faith, righteous deeds, and ukhrawi rewards. This verse becomes a theological legitimacy that women cannot be positioned as second-class beings in education and social life. Therefore, Islamic education should open up a wide space for women to recognize their divine identity and potential, and develop them within the framework of social responsibility and gender justice.

Within the framework of self-awareness education, women must be equipped with reflective skills to criticize oppressive social, cultural, and religious structures. Education must not only be dogmatic and normative, but must also open up a dialogue and participatory space that allows women to build a critical understanding of the realities of their lives. This process is important so that women are no longer trapped in social constructions that limit their roles and potential, but are able to create the meaning of their lives independently and consciously.

In addition, self-awareness education must also emphasize the importance of women's subjective experiences as a source of knowledge. Women's life experiences in managing households, educating children, facing social pressure, and responding to injustice, are a form of reality that needs to be raised in the education process. Thus, women's experiences are not only objects of learning, but also subjects that have epistemic validity in the development of more inclusive Islamic science and education.

In practice, women's self-awareness education can be realized through a gender-responsive curriculum, dialogical learning methods, and a learning environment that supports women's active participation. Teachers and educators must be facilitators who encourage the emergence of critical and reflective thinking, not just memorizing dogma. Education like this will give birth to a generation of Muslim women who are not only spiritually and intellectually intelligent, but also have the moral courage to play a role in just and sustainable social change.

Women's self-awareness also has strategic implications in the formation of families and communities. Women who have strong self-awareness will be the first educators who are critical and visionary for their children. It will direct the family's education not only to the values of obedience, but also to the values of freedom, responsibility, and justice. From here, future generations will be born who value

equality and uphold human values in the perspective of Islam that *is rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Women's Independence as the Goal of Islamic Education

Independence in Islamic education is not just physical or economic freedom, but includes the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional ability to make conscious and responsible life choices. Islam views that women have the right to study, work, choose a partner, and play a role in socio-political life, as shown in the history of sahabiyah women.

Women's independence is an indicator of successful Islamic education. This can be achieved through strengthening women's capacity to think critically, make decisions, and manage lives productively. Education that builds women's independence must emphasize participatory, interactive, and contextual principles, namely making women's life experiences an integral part of the learning process.

Islam not only gives legitimacy to women's independence, but also places it as a condition for achieving the perfection of faith. In this context, women are encouraged to be *qawwiyah* (strong), *tsiqah* (confident), and *mujahidah* (warrior) in upholding the values of truth and justice in society. Islamic education based on an-nisaiyah must be able to encourage women to get out of the confines of structural dependence towards independence oriented to divine values.

The concept of women's independence in Islamic education is rooted in the understanding that every individual, including women, has a responsibility to develop their potential optimally. This independence includes freedom of thought, the ability to make rational decisions, and the courage to act in accordance with the divine principles that have been outlined in the teachings of Islam. Thus, independence is not only interpreted as a release from structural or patriarchal cultural dependence, but also as a strengthening of women's spirituality and intellect in order to be able to carry out their role as caliphs on earth in a more meaningful way.

In the history of Islam, sahabiyah women such as Khadijah bint Khuwailid, Aisha bint Abu Bakar, and Ummu Salamah have set a strong example of self-reliance. They not only play the role of wives and mothers, but also as intellectual figures, entrepreneurs, and strategic decision-makers in society. This proves that Islam has

opened up space for women to actualize their potential in various areas of life from the beginning. Therefore, Islamic education must be oriented towards strengthening women's capacity to be able to emulate these values in a contemporary context.

The educational process that encourages women's independence must be holistic and transformative. Holistic in the sense of integrating the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions of women in a balanced manner. Meanwhile, transformative means that education is able to change the mindset that was originally passive and dependent to be active, critical, and independent. One of the strategies that can be applied is through a student-centered learning approach that makes women's life experiences the main source of learning. In this way, women will find it easier to reflect on their condition, recognize their potential, and formulate concrete steps to achieve independence.

In addition, women's independence education must also encourage the strengthening of literacy, both religious and social literacy. Religious literacy is needed to build a complete understanding of Islamic teachings that uphold the values of justice, equality, and individual independence. Meanwhile, social literacy is important to increase women's awareness of structural issues that affect their lives, such as gender injustice, access to education, and the economy. Through this literacy strengthening, women will be better able to take the role of empowered agents of change and contribute positively to society.

Islamic education based on an-nisaiyah must also encourage women to get out of the comfort zone of dependence towards independence based on the values of monotheism. This means that women are encouraged to build confidence (*tsiqah*) in making decisions, have the strength (*qawiyah*) to face various challenges, and become mujahidah in fighting for the values of truth and justice in the public and domestic spheres. Through this process, women gain not only physical and economic freedom, but also spiritual independence which makes them more responsible in managing their lives.

In the end, women's independence as the goal of Islamic education will create a generation of women who are able to determine the direction of their own lives while still being based on divine values. They are not only personally empowered, but also able to make a significant contribution to the development of a more just

and gender-equitable society. Thus, Islamic education that focuses on women's independence is actually a tangible manifestation of efforts to realize a civilization that is rahmatan lil 'alamin, where women and men can work together equally in carrying out their mandate as caliphs on earth.

The Role of Formal and Non-Formal Education in Building Women's Awareness.

Education, both formal and informal, is a strategic instrument in building women's awareness of their existence, rights, and responsibilities as independent and empowered individuals. In the perspective of Islamic education, education functions not only as a process of transmission of knowledge, but also as a medium for the formation of spiritual and social consciousness that can free human beings from the shackles of ignorance, injustice, and structural oppression, including those experienced by women.²¹

Formal education has an important role as a structured system that allows women to gain access to the basic knowledge, skills, and values of life. Through systematic education—from elementary to tertiary level—women can develop their intellectual potential, form a critical mindset, and build confidence to participate in various spheres of life. In the Islamic education curriculum, materials such as morality, fiqh, tafsir, and Islamic history need to be presented with a gender-fair approach, so that women are no longer positioned as passive objects, but as active subjects in the learning process. This will create a collective awareness that Islam never limits women's roles, but rather encourages them to contribute positively to society.

However, formal education is often insufficient to penetrate the socio-cultural roots that limit women's consciousness. This is where non-formal education takes an important role as a complement as well as a reinforcement of critical awareness. Non-formal education such as skills training, Islamic studies, community forums, and literacy activities provide a more flexible, participatory, and contextual space for women to explore their life experiences, build social solidarity, and fight for change. This type of education allows women to reflect on

²¹ Hastuti Hastuti et al., "Peningkatan Peran Perempuan Dalam Upaya Mendorong Kemandirian Ekonomi Keluarga Melalui Pelatihan Kewirausahaan," *Jurnal Pengabdian Multidisiplin* 2, no. 1 (March 31, 2022): 10–16, <https://doi.org/10.51214/japamul.v2i1.205>.

the realities faced directly and articulate solutions based on Islamic values that *are rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Non-formal education is also effective in reaching women who are less accommodated in the formal education system, such as housewives, rural women, or informal sector workers. In this context, non-formal education functions as *an empowerment vehicle* that is able to foster collective awareness, form a strong social identity, and challenge oppressive social structures through a dialogical and transformative approach.

Therefore, synergy between formal and non-formal education is needed to build women's awareness as a whole. Formal education provides a cognitive and systematic foundation, while non-formal education reinforces the practical and contextual dimensions of such awareness. Both must be imbued with the spirit of an-nisaiyah, which is the spirit to glorify women as agents of change who are intelligent, independent, and with integrity within the framework of Islamic values.

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Formal education has an important role as a structured system that allows women to gain access to the basic knowledge, skills, and values of life. Through a systematic level of education starting from the elementary level to higher education, women can develop their intellectual potential, form a critical mindset, and build confidence to participate in various spheres of life. In the Islamic education curriculum, materials such as morality, fiqh, tafsir, and Islamic history need to be presented with a gender-fair approach, so that women are no longer positioned as passive objects, but as active subjects in the learning process. This will create a collective awareness that Islam never limits women's roles, but rather encourages them to contribute positively to society.

However, formal education is often insufficient to penetrate the socio-cultural roots that limit women's consciousness. This is where

non-formal education takes an important role as a complement as well as a reinforcement of critical awareness. Non-formal education such as skills training, Islamic studies, community forums, and literacy activities provide a more flexible, participatory, and contextual space for women to explore their life experiences, build social solidarity, and fight for change. This type of education allows women to reflect on the realities faced directly and articulate solutions based on Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Non-formal education is also effective in reaching women who are less accommodated in the formal education system, such as housewives, rural women, or informal sector workers. In this context, non-formal education functions as *an empowerment vehicle* that is able to foster collective awareness, form a strong social identity, and challenge oppressive social structures through a dialogical and transformative approach.

Therefore, synergy between formal and non-formal education is needed to build women's awareness as a whole. Formal education provides a cognitive and systematic foundation, while non-formal education reinforces the practical and contextual dimensions of such awareness. Both must be imbued with the spirit of *an-nisaiyah*, which is the spirit to glorify women as agents of change who are intelligent, independent, and with integrity within the framework of Islamic values.

Applicative Approach to the Concept of *An-nisa'iyah*

To fully grasp how the concept of *an-nisaiyah* is put into practice within Islamic education, it is essential to explore its implementation within educational settings and social movements grounded in Islamic principles and committed to advancing women's empowerment. The concept of *an-nisa'iyah* as a framework of thought that emphasizes the importance of gender awareness, independence, and justice in Islam, has been adopted by a number of progressive educational initiatives, both in the form of curriculum, learning models, and community movements.

A notable example can be seen in community-driven Islamic educational initiatives led by Muslim organizations in Indonesia, such as Rahima, a center dedicated to women's education and Islamic information. Rahima applies the *an-nisaiyah* approach by developing gender-inclusive Islamic education materials, as well as training

teachers, dai, and community leaders to have a fair and liberating Islamic perspective. The modules prepared not only contain women's fiqh, but also teach contextual interpretation of Qur'anic verses related to women, as well as integrate critical education approaches so that participants are able to recognize and criticize the social inequality experienced by women.²²

Another applicative approach can be seen in the development of gender equality-based curricula in several women's Islamic boarding schools, especially in Central Java and East Java. In the curriculum, religious education is provided in a way that emphasizes women's intellectual and spiritual potential. The female students not only studied the classics (*kupos at-turats*), but were also invited to have a critical dialogue about the meaning and relevance of these teachings in the context of women's life today. This practice is in line with the spirit of an-nisaiyah which rejects the literalistic reading of texts and opens up the space for interpretation in favor of justice.

On the international stage, a comparable strategy is evident in the educational model promoted by organizations like Sisters in Islam in Malaysia. This group works to reshape public perceptions of women's rights in Islam through advocacy campaigns, educational outreach, and the creation of progressive Islamic learning resources. Through interactive dialogues, seminars, and scientific publications, the an-nisaiyah approach is applied in encouraging the reformulation of Islamic laws with a more gender justice perspective, especially in the areas of marriage, inheritance, and women's leadership.²³

These case studies show that the concept of an-nisaiyah is not just a theoretical idea, but can be applied in the practice of Islamic education in real terms. Its success depends on the willingness of educational institutions to open spaces for critical discussion, involve women as subjects in the educational process, and interpret Islamic teachings in a contextual and gender-fair manner. With this kind of applicative approach, Islamic education can be a transformative path for Muslim women in building self-awareness, independence, and active contribution in society.

²² "About Rahima," *Swara Rahima* (blog), 2019, <https://swararahima.com/en/about-rahima/>.

²³ "Who We Are - Sisters in Islam," May 7, 2019, <https://sistersinislam.org/who-we-are/>.

This applicative approach also reflects the importance of Islamic education that is responsive to the social dynamics and needs of contemporary women. The integration of the concept of an-nisaiyah in educational practice confirms that gender-based social transformation does not only rely on regulation, but also on the formation of an inclusive, reflective, and progressive educational culture. This requires gender-responsive curriculum support, training of critically aware educators, and partnerships between educational institutions, local communities, and policy makers. Thus, the an-nisaiyah approach has great potential to strengthen a fair and sustainable Islamic education system.

To clutch the practical application of the an-nisaiyah concept within Islamic education, it is essential to explore how this framework is implemented in educational institutions and social movements rooted in Islamic values and committed to the empowerment of women. As a paradigm emphasizing gender awareness, autonomy, and justice from an Islamic perspective, an-nisaiyah has informed numerous progressive educational efforts—ranging from curriculum design and pedagogical models to community-based initiatives.

A notable example is the work of Muslim organizations in Indonesia, such as Rahima, an Islamic center dedicated to women's education and advocacy. Rahima operationalizes the an-nisaiyah approach by creating gender-sensitive Islamic teaching materials and training teachers, preachers (da'i), and community leaders to adopt an inclusive and emancipatory interpretation of Islam. Their educational modules go beyond traditional women's jurisprudence (fiqh al-nisa'), incorporating contextual readings of Qur'anic verses related to women and applying critical pedagogy, thereby enabling participants to recognize and question the social injustices that affect women.

A similar model can be seen in the gender-equitable curricula developed in several Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) for women, particularly in Central and East Java. Here, religious instruction highlights not only the mastery of classical texts (turath), but also encourages critical dialogue regarding their relevance to contemporary women's experiences. This practice reflects the an-nisaiyah ethos, which challenges literalist textual interpretations and promotes justice-oriented exegesis. On an international scale, comparable efforts are evident in Malaysia's Sisters in Islam, which advances public understanding of women's rights in Islam through campaigns,

educational outreach, and the production of progressive Islamic scholarship. Their work employs the an-nisaiyah perspective to support reinterpretations of Islamic law on matters such as marriage, inheritance, and female leadership.

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that an-nisaiyah is not merely a theoretical construct, but a viable, transformative force within Islamic educational practice. Its effectiveness depends on institutions' openness to critical discourse, the active participation of women in the learning process, and the contextualization of Islamic teachings in ways that promote gender equity. Ultimately, this applied approach underscores the importance of an Islamic education system that responds to the evolving realities and aspirations of Muslim women—requiring inclusive curricula, the training of critical educators, and collaboration between schools, communities, and policymakers. Through such efforts, an-nisaiyah holds promise as a catalyst for building a just and enduring Islamic educational framework.

Conclusion

Islamic education inspired by an-nisaiyah is intended to cultivate women's self-awareness, emphasizing their identity as both servants and vicegerents of Allah, endowed with moral and social responsibilities. This liberating form of education enables women to recognize and challenge the structures of injustice that confine them while nurturing their spiritual, intellectual, and social capacities to the fullest. Central to this vision is the principle of tawhid, affirming the inherent equality and dignity of all human beings before God. Women's empowerment in this context includes not only economic independence but also autonomy in thought, decision-making, and societal engagement. To achieve holistic empowerment, education must be participatory, context-sensitive, and grounded in women's lived experiences. Both formal and non-formal education play complementary roles in this process—formal education offers academic legitimacy, while non-formal spaces foster critical reflection and solidarity. Practical implementations, such as Indonesia's Rahima program or Malaysia's Sisters in Islam, illustrate how an-nisaiyah transcends theoretical discourse, shaping transformative curricula and empowerment initiatives that bridge faith with justice, and knowledge with liberation—true to Islam's mission as a mercy for all creation.

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