

The Empowerment of Women: Eliminating Communication Inequality based on Islamic Perspective

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Abstract— According to Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 347.256 divorce cases during 2015. The number tends to increase annually. Allegedly, communication disharmony is the major factor causing divorce. In fact, communication is essential for a family. Most of Indonesians, based on the culture and religious factors, still believes that husband holds the position of decision makers; and wife shall obey husband. The deeply rooted patriarchal culture indicates that some Indonesian women are lack of opportunities to speak up. It seems that there is an inequality between husbands and wives to express opinions or arguments. This paper has explored Islam's view on the empowerment of communication between husband and wife. The study employed a qualitative approach and a case study method. The data were collected through an in-depth interview, a focus group discussion, and an analysis of documents. The study took place in Desa Cilame where a group of women becomes the head of households. The women were subjects of empowerment programs provided by some Muslim scholars. The results of the study reveal the concept of women empowerment in Islam. Firstly, women are "the gate of heaven" for their parents and the heaven for their children. Secondly, Islam gives freedom for women to actualize themselves by taking part in social activities so they can be knowledgeable and skilled. Thirdly, Islam perceives that husband-wife relationship is not superordinate-subordinate one, but it is a relationship of love and affection where the basic convention is peace and tranquility. In communication, Islam regulates that wife and husband must use their "heart" (slowly, clearly, and well arranged) when they talk to each other.

Keywords— *Inequality, empowerment, Islamic View, Communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equality still endures. This social phenomenon has been going on for a long time. Women sometimes feel that they have no right to express their desires, opinions, or choices freely. This has become a polemic in Indonesia. Many women feel the effects of gender inequality that has lasted for years.

Gender inequality mainly occurs in married life. It emerges as a prolonged conflict involving husband and wife. Since it occurs continuously, it may lead to domestic violence. Domestic violence is a social phenomenon that has been taking place for a long time in the world, including in

West Java, Indonesia. It is barely heard due to the assumption that it is too taboo to be discussed openly. Central Data of the Integrated Service Center for Women and Children Empowerment (P2TP2A) in West Java shows that the rate of violence in West Java is still relatively high. Most violence cases in West Java have been dominated by cases of sexual and domestic violence, especially in Bandung (the Capital City of West Java) and its surroundings. The Chairperson of P2TP2A West Java, Netty Heryawan, reveals 160 cases of child abuse and 168 cases of violence against women during 2017.¹

According to the Law Number 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, Article 5, everyone is prohibited from committing violence against persons in their household by any means of physical, psychological, sexual violence, or domestic neglect.

The 1945 Constitution states "All citizens shall be equal before the law and the government and shall be required to respect the law and the government, with no exceptions". The provision substantiates that men and women are equal before the law. Women are equal partners for men, they have the equal rights, obligations, and opportunities in every field of life, including in the household.

The main cause of domestic violence in most part of Indonesia is due to the perspective that men have higher position than women do. Due to this perspective, there is a gender inequality. Gender inequality is the difference between the roles and rights of men and women within society, which place women in a lower status than men. The main factor is the imbalance power relations between women and men. Therefore, men mostly feel more powerful. They have rights to regulate, to direct, and to control women. The one with power will exercise the power.

Islam strongly opposes violence in any forms, including in domestic life. The principle of Islamic household is *sakinah, mawadah, wa rahmah* (safe, affection, and compassion). The Holy Quran states "And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought" (Ar-Ruum: 21).