

# Kyai Husein Muhammad's Perspective on Gender Equality in Efforts to Reconstruct Indonesian Women's Role in the 20th Century

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## Abstract

The discourse on women is synonymous with discussions of oppression, violence, discrimination, subordination, and the patriarchal domination over women's existence. Women seem to lack the space and time to voice their rights like men. Over time, the discourse on gender equality has been advocated by several figures who are aware of the injustices women have experienced. The fate of women in various countries is almost similar, and the women in Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century also experienced similar challenges. The women's movement began to emerge, although it was not yet widespread. Towards the end of the 20th century, a prominent Indonesian Muslim feminist figure, Kyai Husein Muhammad, emerged, striving to defend women's legitimate rights in the public sphere. This research adopts a qualitative descriptive historical approach, using historical research methodology including heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the general contestation of women's role in Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century revealed that many women did not receive their rights on par with men. The women's movement existed but was still limited. In the mid-20th century, the women's movement grew, though not yet comprehensive. Towards the end of the 20th century, Indonesian women made significant progress and succeeded in obtaining public space to voice their rights. Kyai Husein became a phenomenal figure thanks to his contributions in advocating for women's rights, earning him the title of a feminist Kyai. He held the perspective that men and women are equally human. Women are the mothers of humanity, entitled to possess all their human potential in capacities relatively equal to men.

## 1. Introduction

The discourse on women has always been a captivating topic of discussion across all sectors. Nearly in every conversation about women, it is evident that in the cultural fabric of society, a strong mindset is established, where women are predominantly associated with domestic roles. As a result, there are conscious individuals who acknowledge that the domestic sphere is not always intrinsically just. Thinkers and activists tend to criticize the issue of women, pointing out that, in general, laws and human rights systems worldwide are still

dominated by patriarchal structures (Husein Muhammad, 2016). Many of the obligations imposed on women are considered unjust. Various discussions about women, in turn, bring about an awareness that fundamentally, women and men are both human beings (Marzuki, M. A., 2020). The lack of independence for women is, in fact, rooted in the agreements made by societies, eventually transforming into culture. The situations and conditions of such injustices are not natural if believed by cultures in various countries.

Women are often treated as mere objects, frequently marginalized, subordinated, and burdened with multiple expectations. In response to these issues, the public is now engaging in discussions about gender equality. In common parlance, gender is often interpreted as being solely about women, while men are not given much attention. This understanding affects society's perception that women aspire to be higher or superior to men. However, feminism exists to advocate that women and men are equally human and, therefore, women should not be constrained or restricted from participating in the public sphere. Human rights provide a fundamental basis for the freedom and equality of every individual, regardless of gender or any other aspect (Muhammad, K. H., 2014).

Nuril Hidayati mentions that Simone de Beauvoir agreed with Sigmund Freud's understanding that has led to a significant shift in view of the discourse of male and female authenticity that seemed unchanged for centuries. For him, the urgent thing that needs to be done is to provide a vital part for women in their social interactions. It encourages women to exit domestic and passive territories and rejects the removal of women from social and emotional agencies. In Indonesia, something similar is happening in other countries. Indonesian women are constructed to comply with rules that can even harm them, the rules come from social cultural and religious traditions.

In the early 20th century, women were not allowed to seek science like men. Women are restricted to school, a result of the public mindset that believes that women do not need high school because in the end their work remains in the kitchen. After that, around the 1900s, the women's movement, called feminism, emerged to give its voice to the public that women also need to demand science, just like men.

Responding to the problem of gender inequality existing, an Indonesian feminist figure of the late 20th century named Kyai Husein Muhammad has the idea that gender disparities existing are influenced by traditions, religious patterns of society especially of religious norms and texts. It is the differences and religious patterns that then produce a great culture. This requires an understanding between a woman's body and social construction. In fact, women are equally human beings who have the right to a good role, in the domestic and public sphere. If culture is the reality of human society's life that includes traditions, patterns of everyday human behavior, laws, thoughts, and beliefs, then the culture that appears around it in general still clearly shows its opposition to men. If we look further, on the other hand, there is a capacity of women that is not far different from men in both intellectuality and social role in society, but it is rarely written in history.

Kyai Husein successfully revealed the roles of Indonesian women that are rarely recorded in the history of civilization. Kyai Husein sought to present historical evidence of women's roles as scholars, intellectuals, and experts in various fields, showing their relatively equal intellectual capacities and, in some cases, even surpassing men's roles. This fact has challenged the belief of many people that women's intellect, morality, intelligence, and intellectual abilities are lower than those of men (Husein Muhammad, 2020).

The smaller number of women's roles compared to men's roles is not a fundamental issue. The presence of one or two women in significant roles is sufficient proof that women have the potential and intellectual qualities that are not inherently inferior to men. Feminism has enabled women to have the opportunity to contribute in the public sphere. Now, it only requires women's self-awareness to reshape their mindset and actively participate. The contestation of women's roles can now be seen in various aspects and public policymaking, both culturally and structurally. At this point, there is a clear need for a reevaluation of discriminatory rules (Husein Muhammad, 2016).

According to Kyai Husein, the main issue lies within oneself, society, culture, tradition, politics, legal instruments, religious views, and other policies that hinder equal opportunities and access for both men and women

## 2. Materials and Methods

This research employs the following elements of historical research methodology:

### a. Selection of Research Topics:

The research focuses on Kyai Husein Muhammad's perspective on gender equality and his efforts to reconstruct the role of women in the 20th century. The researchers aim to contribute to the advancement of science by using new data in their research.

### b. Heuristic:

Researchers searched for sources that support the research topic, including primary and secondary sources. The primary source used is Kyai Husein Muhammad's book titled 'Women of Ulama on the Scene of History.' For secondary sources, interviews, scripts, journals, articles, and books were used. The researchers conducted interviews with Kyai Husein Muhammad as an informant and visited the UIN KHAS Jember library and Jember and Bondowoso Regional library. Additionally, they accessed various online platforms such as Google Scholar, Garuda Dikti, Academia.edu, and Oxford Academic to access relevant journals.

c. Verified by:

Two types of source criticism were performed, namely external and internal criticism. External criticism involved verifying the authenticity and credibility of the primary source, Kyai Husein Muhammad's book, to ensure that it genuinely reflects his thoughts on gender equality and the role of Indonesian women in the 20th century. Internal criticism focused on analyzing the content of the book, 'Women on the Stage of History,' as a reflection of the social reality concerning the role of women in Indonesian history.

d. Interpreted by:

Researchers interpreted historical facts to reconstruct past realities. The interpretation aimed to provide historical explanations, regarding Kyai Husein Muhammad's thoughts on gender equality and their relevance to the role of Indonesian women in the 20th century.

e. of Historiography:

At this stage, the researchers reconstructed the past by presenting their findings along with argumentative evidence and detailed facts. The writing was arranged chronologically, aligning with the sequence of events or occurrences

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 The Contestation of Women's Roles in 20th Century Indonesia

The role of Indonesian women during the pre-independence era began with the emergence of several prominent figures from the upper class, such as Kartini, Dewi Sartika, Cut Nyak Dien, and others. All these women played roles according to their respective circumstances. Kartini and Dewi Sartika were involved in the field of education, advocating for women's literacy and providing skills training for them to become competent mothers. During that time, education was crucial for women to lead skilled lives (Syafiq Hasyim, 2010). On the other hand, Cut Nyak Dien played a significant role in her time by participating in the resistance against Dutch colonialism (the Aceh War).

Indonesian women not only fought for equal rights with men but also struggled to gain space in the public sphere for education, just like men. Various efforts made by women encouraged the establishment of schools for girls. On January 16, 1904, Dewi Sartika founded the first girls' school called 'Sekolah Istri' (Women's School). She, along with Ny. Poerwa and Nyi. Oewid, served as educators in the school (Modul Kaderisasi dan Gerakan KOPRI Kota Malang, (Tt: tt). Dewi's activities continued even after her marriage to B. A. Suriawinata in 1906. Eight years later, the name of the school was changed to 'Sekolah Kautamaan Istri.' With Suriawinata's support, the school expanded to nine schools for girls from ordinary backgrounds. This meant that Dewi was credited with building 50% of all schools in the Sunda region [18]. In Kotogadang, there was a woman named Roehana Koeddoes who founded the 'Kerajinan Amal Setia' (KAS) school in 1911. In Manado in 1917, Maria Walanda Maramis successfully established the 'PIKAT' (Percintaan Ibu Kepada Anak Keturunannya) school. Meanwhile, in Semarang in 1913, C. Th. Van Deventer and his wife founded the 'Sekolah Kartini.'

The struggle of Indonesian women was not far from the help of active men in the national movement. For example, in 1909, the first women's newspaper, 'Poetri Hindia,' was established with the support of a journalist named R.M. Tirto Adhi Soeryo in Bandung. In 1912, 'Poetri Mardika' was published in Jakarta with encouragement from Boedi Uetomo (Cora Vreede-De Stuers, 2017). Three years later, 'Soenting Melajoe' was published in Bukittinggi, entirely managed by women. In the Islamic community, there was Siti Walida, who founded 'Aisyiyah,' a school with a modern curriculum for girls. In Padang Panjang, Rahmah El-Joenoesia founded the 'Diniyah Puteri' girls' boarding school in 1922 (Verelladevanka, 2021).

In 1942, Indonesia was under Japanese occupation. Japan implemented a policy to dissolve all Indonesian women's organizations, except for 'Fujinkai' (Women's Association). This organization aimed to combat illiteracy, run communal kitchens, and participate in social work. These activities facilitated interactions among women from different social classes (Verelladevanka, 2021). Many women played crucial roles in the Proclamation of Independence on August 17, 1945, and even became the forefront in organizing themselves as nurses and liaisons, running communal kitchens and mobile clinics. This women's association was called 'Perwani' (United Women of Indonesia) (Dimas, Erika, Dea, dkk., 2022). In 1954, 'Gerwani' (Indonesian Women's Movement) was formed, successfully coordinating various Indonesian women's organizations and becoming the only organization at that time with over a million members.

During the period of independence and the Old Order, Indonesian women made significant progress in their movements. However, these advancements began to wane during the New Order era, and almost all women's movements seemed to be directed only towards domestic issues. Under Suharto's leadership, the most extensive humanitarian tragedy in Indonesian history occurred due to the emergence of left-wing and revolutionary groups. This led to the dissolution of Indonesian women's movements. All women who joined GERWANI were labeled as inhumane and subsequently persecuted. As a turning point for women's movements, 'PKK' (Family Welfare Movement) and 'Dharma Wanita' were formed as women's organizations and tools for mobilizing women in development programs.

The New Order government-based women's roles on 'ibuisme' (motherhood), a concept that considered women's economic activities as part of their role as mothers, and deemed women's contributions to politics inappropriate. Gender politics, as reflected in state documents such as GBHN, Marriage Law No.1/1974, and Panca Dharma Wanita, reinforced the gender ideology of the New Order (Cora Vreede-De Stuers, 2017). Women's organizations affiliated with government departments in 1974 were mobilized to promote the New Order's gender perspective ideology. Organizations like PKK, Dharma Pertiwi, and Dharma Wanita were often encouraged to participate in 'popular participation' to involve women in development processes.

The Reform Era witnessed the rise of several NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and Women's Studies Centers (PSW). The Women's Studies Center (PSG) gained full rights to express creativity and opinions, especially for women's organizations whose rights had been suppressed. The Reform Era consolidated various movements, resulting in several legal regulations, such as the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (PKDRT) in 2004, which pushed for gender mainstreaming in development through the President's Instruction No. 9 of 2000. This aimed to achieve gender mainstreaming through institutional strengthening programs.

Women's voices contributed to the formulation of rules and policies and played a role in the development of women's movement organizations in civil society. Some of these organizations include SERUNI (Indonesian Women's Union), KAPAL Perempuan (2000) (Kopri PKC PMII Jawa Barat. *Modul Kaderisasi KOPRI Jawa Barat*, tt, tt), Pemberdayaan Perempuan Kepala Keluarga (PEKKA) (2000), and Migrant Care (2004). The role of Indonesian women in the Islamic world also developed well, such as Fahmina (2000) and Rahima, a Study and Social Institute (LKIS) (1999/2000). The role of women's organizations in various regions of Indonesia also flourished, such as the Legal Research Center for Gender and Human Rights Justice (LRCKJHAM) in Semarang (1999), SAPA Women's Institute in Bandung (2005), Duek Pakar Inong Aceh (DPIA) (1998), Inong Bale in Aceh, Nurani Perempuan in Padang, West Sumatra (1999), Swara Parangpuan in Manado (1998), the Humanitarian Volunteer Team for Flores (TRUK-F) (1997/1998), Women's Empowerment Institute (LPP) in Bone (2002), and others (Monika Nur Wijayanti. 2019)

### 3.2 Short Biography of Kyai Husein Muhammad

Kyai Husein Muhammad was born on May 9, 1953, in Arjawinangun, Cirebon, to parents KH. Muhammad Asyrofuddin and Nyai Hj. Ummu Salma Syathori. Kyai Husein's father became the son-in-law of Kyai Syatori during his time as a student at the pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) (Kopri PKC PMII Jawa Barat. *Modul Kaderisasi KOPRI Jawa Barat*, tt, tt). He married Nyai Lilik Nihayah Fuadi and was blessed with five children: Hilya Auliya (born 1991), Layali Hilwa (born 1992), Muhammad Fayyaz Mumtaz (born 1994), Najla Hammadah (born 2002), and Fazla Muhammad (born 2003) (Noviyati Widiyani, 2010). Kyai Husein received limitless support and encouragement from his family, allowing him to leave a positive impact through his works (Ahmad Husain. *Husein Muhammad*, 2021).

Husein completed his primary education at the elementary school and Diniyyah school, which were part of the Dar al-Tauhid Islamic boarding school in Arjawinangun in 1966. During junior high school, Husein was actively involved in organizations and began memorizing the Quran, eventually memorizing three juz (portions). He graduated from SMPN 1 Arjawinangun in 1969. Husein stated that the development history in Cirebon differed from other pesantrens because its founder, KH. Syatori, had adopted a moderate approach and implemented modern educational curriculum using tools such as blackboards, benches, and classrooms, which were considered innovative for that time. In contrast, other pesantrens did not permit such modern methods as they were seen as imitating the Dutch style (Husein Muhammad, 2019).

Husein pursued religious education at the Lirboyo Islamic boarding school in Kediri, East Java, graduating in 1973. He then continued his studies at the College of Quranic Sciences (PTIQ) in Jakarta until 1980. As a student, Husein and his peers were required to memorize the Quran and specialize in the study of its verses. This emphasis on Quranic study, especially the interpretation of misogynistic verses, indicated Husein's focus on Islamic studies (M. Nuruzzaman, 2005).

In 1979, Husein graduated from PTIQ but received his official graduation in 1980. He then proceeded to pursue further studies at Dirasah Khasshah in Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, until 1983. He chose to study in Egypt based on a recommendation from his teacher, Prof. Ibrahim Husein, who believed it would allow Husein to deepen his knowledge of the Quran and its interpretation. Moreover, Egypt was known for its openness to scientific knowledge (Husein Muhammad, 2011). After returning from Egypt, Husein became the leader (Kyai) of

the Dar al-Tauhid Islamic boarding school in Arjawinangun, Cirebon, West Java, a position he still holds today (M. Nuruzzaman, 2005). He was once offered a teaching position at PTIQ in Jakarta but declined it because his grandfather's pesantren required his attention to develop all aspects within it. In addition to his role as a Kyai at the pesantren, Husein was involved in various organizations:

1. Founder/Vice Chairperson of Puan Amal Hayati Jakarta, since 2000 until now.
2. Founder/Committee Member of Rahima Foundation Jakarta, since 2000 until now.
3. Founder and Chairperson of Fahmina Institute Policy Council Cirebon, since 2001 until now.
4. Founder of Interfaith Forum (Forum Sabtu) Cirebon, since 2000 until now.
5. Founder of WCC Balqis NGO, Cirebon, since 2001 until now.
6. Consultant for Balqis Foundation on Women's Rights, Cirebon, since 2001 until now.
7. Commissioner of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) in 2007-2009 and 2010-2014.
8. Member of the Ethics Council of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) in 2015-2020.
9. Founder of Fahmina Institute of Islamic Studies (ISIF) College in 2008.
10. Founder of Alimat in 2009.
11. Member of the Expert Commission of the Indonesian Family Planning Association in the period 2010-2014.
12. Member of the Board of Trustees of Nurwala Foundation in 2020.
13. Founded Women Crisis Center Mawar Balqis in 2000, providing support for women experiencing sexual violence.
14. Acted as a speaker in various seminars both domestically and internationally, among other activities.

Kyai Husein also authored more than 40 books during his struggle, and approximately the books that discuss women are as follows:

1. *'Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai atas Wacana Agama dan Gender'* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2001).
2. *'Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan: Pembelaan Kyai Pesantren'* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004).
3. *'Mencintai Tuhan, mencintai Kesetaraan'* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2014).
4. *'Jilbab dan Aurat'* (Cirebon: Fahmina Institute, 2022).
5. *'Ijtihad Kyai Husein; Upaya Membangun Keadilan Gender'* (Rahima, 2011).
6. *'Perempuan, Islam dan Negara'* (Yogyakarta: Qalam Nusantara, 2016).
7. *'Menuju Fikih Baru'* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020).
8. *'Perempuan Ulama di atas Panggung Sejarah'* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2020).
9. *'Islam, Cinta, Keindahan dan Kemanusiaan'* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2021).
10. *'Aku dan Perempuan: Sebuah Pengalaman'* (Cirebon: Hyang Pustaka, 2022), and others.

#### 4. Husein Muhammad's perspective on gender equality in efforts to reconstruct Indonesian women's role in the 20th century

Kyai Husein Muhammad is an active figure in the activities of discussions on religious and gender issues and other women's issues. The background of Kyai Husein's defense of women was on his concerns about seeing women constrained by patriarchal culture, through religious labels, women imprisoned for a long time into domestic creatures or household creatures, violence against women, marginalization, and other inequalities. A woman is a human being, as a man is a creature created by God. Women are given all of their human potential, which includes reason, sexual desire, then spiritual (heart and feelings, such as pleasure, longing, sadness and so on), as well as the energy potential given by God at a relative rate equal to that of men (M. Iqbal Fatoni, 2022). Sometimes there are women's potential that exceeds men's and vice versa. This can mean that in fact all these issues are relatively dependent on how the public manages them. When women are often labeled stupid, it is because they do not get the same education as men. If a woman is educated like a man, then a woman can be as intelligent as a man (Husein Muhammad, 2006).

If women are given sufficient space to demand science, then women can be more existent than men. But the public belief leads to the assumption that men are superior to women, so that there will be a culture that will give rise to social construction; as a result, there are various social inequalities. It is clear that the social construction was deliberately formed by the society and is not a height of God. Kyai Husein, on the other hand, stated that if we look further, the capacity of women is not far different from that of men, for example in intellectuality or social role in society. The problem is, the role of the woman since then has not been recorded in detail. This is one of the many discourses in the public sphere that men have superiority over women. As time progressed, a discourse emerged as a response to that. Wacana was later called a gender equality discourse that later questioned the social inequalities of women. Since then, old beliefs about women contrary to reality have

been reconstructed with the aim of creating a gender-free social life. In Indonesia, Kyai Husein's perspective by the public is judged to be central, as it can reconstruct gender understanding not only textually but also contextually according to the demands of the time.

Kyai Husein not only fights against Muslim women but all Indonesian women and around the world. Kyai Husein reveals that in the work he wrote only a few. There are a lot of women who are fighting in Indonesia like RA. Kartini, Cut Nyak Dien, Goddess Sartika and so on. However, in his work only written a few Indonesian female figures with positions of believers, such as Teuku Fakinah, Fatimah al-Banjari, Rahmah El Yunusiah, Siti Walidah Ahmad Dahlan, and Nyai Khoiriyah Hasyim Asy'ari, which is subsequently female believers from various countries. The aim of Kyai Husein's writing of the book is to show that women throughout the history of civilization have been numerous who have struggled but are submerged by the patriarchal system. Religious text or religious text alone is the answer to the case in a civilization, i.e. culture, while culture can only change according to the situation and consideration of the time (Husein Muhammad, 2020).

Through history, some religious texts that appear to be misogynistic are still widespread and have not been re-examined. Through his long journey, Kyai Husein endeavored to unravel the role of Indonesian women in the 20th century through his phenomenal works. He began advocating for gender equality in 1993. Through his relentless efforts, Kyai Husein expressed deep gratitude for successfully empowering women, particularly female scholars, and contributing to the formulation of laws alongside his friends. Through his network, Kyai Husein, as a promoter of female clerics from all over Indonesia, established the PUP (Pengkaderan Ulama Perempuan) to empower Indonesian women who have brought about significant changes, such as becoming leaders, governors, regents, members of parliament, and more. One of Kyai Husein's most strategic involvements was during the formulation of a Presidential Decree (Perpres) by Gus Dur concerning a 30% minimum quota for women in state institutions. According to Kyai Husein, this was just the first step, and the next step should aim for a 50% quota (Husein Muhammad, 2022).

In the post-reform era, Indonesia has ratified the CEDAW/ICEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) through Law No. 7 of 1984, along with several other international conventions and covenants. The various steps of ratification have had a very significant impact on the advancement of women's rights. Furthermore, this has led to the development of several public and political policies.

The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) noted that within the ten years of the reform era, 29 new policies were formulated to address and eradicate violence against women. These policies consist of 11 national-level policies, 15 regional-level policies, and 3 policies at the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) level (Husein Muhammad, 2020).

These new policies include 8 (eight) new laws that uphold women's rights in relation to violence and discrimination: Human Rights Law (1999), Law No. 12 of 2005 on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Court Law (2000), Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (PKDRT) in 2004, Law on the Eradication of Human Trafficking (2006), Child Protection Law (2002), Law on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers Abroad (2004), and Law on Witness and Victim Protection (2006). Kyai Husein has contributed to the formulation of these laws. Additionally, there are two presidential policies on gender mainstreaming in 2000 and the establishment of the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) in 1998.

Among these legal instruments, several other more implementable and practical policies have also been introduced, such as the establishment of 129 Women and Children Service Units at the Police Headquarters (POLRES), 42 Integrated Service Centers at hospitals, and 23 Integrated Service Centers for the Empowerment of Women and Children (P2TP2A). Kyai Husein has played a role in the establishment of Women Crisis Centers (WCC) that are now present in various regions (Husein Muhammad, 2020).

Kyai Husein emphasizes that in the early 20th century, women experienced discrimination, injustice, gender-based violence, patriarchal culture, subordination, and other forms of harm to women. Access to education was still concerning and limited only to men. Then, in the mid-20th century, women started to have roles, but not comprehensively. By the late 20th century, there were more positions in the public sphere available to women, but it depended on how women responded to these opportunities. If women still did not contribute, it was not the state's fault. Many have fought for equality, such as Rahmah El Yunusiah and Kartini, who fought for education, as everything starts with education. All civilizations around the world are rooted in education. The state has given women positions to occupy any role.

Kyai Husein hopes that all Indonesian women will continue to strive for their equal rights and that violence in any form should no longer be tolerated. Women give birth to the nation's successors. The progress of a nation is due to the advancement of women. Women are the mothers of humanity and possess all their potentials, depending on how society treats them. In his book titled "Perempuan Ulama di Atas Panggung Sejarah" (Women Scholars on the Stage of History), Kyai Husein quotes a professor of Islamic studies from the Netherlands who argues that if history is explored, it is not impossible to find numerous women who mastered religious knowledge, but the public does not fully trust the contributions/roles of women due to the entrenched patriarchal culture that hides the brilliance of women's intellect (Husein Muhammad, 2020). Kyai Husein asserts

that indeed, there have been many women who fought during the 20th century. However, in his work, he specifically focuses on women who fought in the realm of religion, often referred to as women scholars or ulama. For him, any woman, wherever and whoever she may be, should not be oppressed because women are the mothers of humanity who must be healthy and intelligent to nurture the young generation, especially in Indonesia, to become an intellectual and beneficial generation for the nation. Women are an integral part of humanity, and thus, they deserve to enjoy their human rights. In his thoughts about women, Kyai Husein is undoubtedly influenced by other figures. He emphasizes that it is not the results of these figures' thoughts or works that influence his thinking, but rather their way of thinking. Some of the influential figures are from Indonesia and abroad, including Prof. KH. Ibrahim Hosen LML, Dr. KH. Achmad Sahal Mahfudz, Prof. Dr. Ali Yafie, and Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), while from abroad, figures like Prof. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaed, Amina Wadud Muhsin, Jasser Auda, as well as various activists from Sudan, Australia, Egypt, and many others. Kyai Husein has had the opportunity to meet and engage in discussions with them during various gatherings, seminars, and networking events (Husein Muhammad, 2020). The mindset of these figures generally tends to assume that religious rules are flexible and dynamic. Especially when it comes to women who often face injustice. Religious phrases should be interpreted logically according to their time, not merely literally. This way of thinking is relevant to the spirit of the times that tend to undergo change and this way of viewing is what gives frame to Kyai Husein's perspective on women.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis conducted in the research on 'Kyai Husein Muhammad's Perspective on Gender Equality in the Effort to Reconstruct the Role of Indonesian Women in the 20th Century' the following conclusions can be drawn:

**First:** The general contestation of women's roles in Indonesia during the 20th century has undergone gradual contextual changes, starting from the early 20th century, which was relatively minimal. During the pre-independence period, schools for girls began to be established, followed by the post-independence and Old Order era, where various women's organizations were formed. Later, during the New Order regime, there was a tragedy of erasing the Indonesian women's movement or normalizing women's positions. The New Order era then established a women's movement aligned with the New Order perspective, affiliated with the government and mostly consisting of women from the upper class. This led to the domestication of women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In the Reform era, Indonesian women's roles made significant progress with the formation of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and Women's Study Centers (PSW), which were granted the freedom to voice their rights and participate in public spheres, including education, politics, law, social matters, and more.

**Secondly:** Kyai Husein Muhammad's perspective on gender equality in the effort to reconstruct the role of Indonesian women in the 20th century is based on religious aspects, reconstructing religious texts that were previously seen as misogynistic, and his affirmation that women inherently possess the same potential as men. He believes that women, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, should not be demeaned by anyone. The roles of Indonesian women before the 20th century and during the early 20th century were deeply concerning, as religious understanding, cultural norms, and social constructs deprived women of their basic human rights.

**Third:** Kyai Husein's perspective is relevant to the general contestation of Indonesian women's roles in the 20th century because his thinking prioritizes democratic patterns and the fulfillment of human rights. He emphasizes that women are humans and an integral part of human society. Religious texts should be reconstructed according to the prevailing situation, conditions, and demands of the time, in order to bring justice to all humans, including women.

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