

# Social Media and Muslim Indonesian University Students' Perception of Gender Equality and Equity

Ros Mayasari<sup>1</sup>, Moh. Yahya Obaid<sup>2</sup>, Asni<sup>3</sup>  
{mayagayo@yahoo.com<sup>1</sup>, yahyaobaid01@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>, asni.azrai@yahoo.com<sup>3</sup>}

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kendari, Indonesia<sup>123</sup>

**Abstract.** This study aims to explain the effect of social media on students' perception of women's opportunities to obtain education and careers among the people declining the idea of gender equality and equity. No one can manage the flow of information against the issue of gender equality in the social media that the people use at any time. The research question was what is the perception of students who actively follow certain channels in social media on the educational and career aspirations. To obtain the data, the respondents were asked to fill out the open-ended questionnaire. The data was obtained from those often follow certain on social media. The results indicated that respondents who were actively participated in certain channels on social media tended to agree that married women prioritize their children over their works, and some also agreed that after marriage women are better at home to focus on educating their children. This affected the young women's interest negatively; they were discouraged to continue their education higher after marriage.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality and Equity, Muslim Students, Social Media, Career, Woman

## 1 Introduction

The effort to introduce and encourage students to understand and accept the discourse of gender equality and equity in students is not a simple matter. Some challenges hamper the discussion of gender equality to be approved by all students. One of the problems of gender equality and justice movement is originating from those who decline the gender equality and equity issues. This movement seems to limit the opportunity for women to continue their education and career in public space by using interpretations of religion. This phenomenon is straightforward for us to get on social media. Social media as part of new media, on the one side, shows a picture of non-hierarchical and egalitarian, but on the other side shows the pattern of gender inequality in education and employment [1]. On social media, some communities raise the issue of women's primary obligations and the highest achievement of women only in their role as mothers. This understanding is very vigorous and systematically socialized both through study groups and on social media. On the other hand, students are very familiar with social media with various types such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others. No one can hamper the speed of information on the issue of gender equality in the social media they use at any time. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the attitude of students who actively use social media on women and men's opportunities to continue their education and careers.

## **2 Literature Review**

Mass media has a substantial effect on influencing audiences. Mass media has characteristics with a wide range, can be a useful tool in disseminating gender construction to the community. Mass media can also lead to judgments about good and bad behavior in society. In this position mass media acts as a value maker in society [2]. Therefore, mass media (including online media such as social media) is one of the essential instruments to shape gender construction in society. The media will construct the appropriate values and roles for women and men. Mass media including social media play important rule in the struggle for gender equality [3]. The gender construction can have implications for career and education journeys especially for women [4].

People who use social media give meaning to everything they watch or read. These events in psychology are referred to as perceptions. In simple terms, perception is the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting and regulating sensory information. Perception is a stimulus sensed by someone, organized and then interpreted so that individuals realize and understand what is captured by the senses. According to Kotler, as explained by Taylor et al. as perception refers to a process of how one selects, organizes and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful overall picture [5]. Each social perception is obtained through several steps, namely gathering information, deciding which information to use and integrating information into the assessment [6]. At the stage of collecting relevant information, someone will receive relevant information. However, this stage somehow will create some biases.

Messages delivered on social media such as videos are intended to give specific messages. Media messages can vary, including about the roles and relations between women and men. The message about the roles and relationships of men and women can be equal or unequal relations. Messages are delivered by argumentative persuasion.

How do individuals respond to persuasive messages? Some theories explain this, one of which, the Social Consideration Theory of Sheriff and Hovland as explained by Chusniya [7] emphasizes the role of attitudes that individuals have in changing their perceptions of persuasive messages. This theory assumes that the attitude that has been owned by the person who will change his attitude is used as a standard consideration (or anchor) in the process of persuasion. If the recipient of the influence of persuasion mixes (assimilate) the message received into the attitude that he has, then the process of persuasion becomes easy to do. Nonetheless, if the recipient of the influence of persuasion against (contrasts) the persuasive message received with the attitude that has been previously owned, then the persuasion process is assumed to be hampered. In the perspective of this theory, the persuasion that is in harmony with the attitude that has been held by the recipient of persuasion will be accepted, while persuasion that is contrary to the attitude that has been conducted will be inhibited.

## **3 Method**

Respondents were students of State Institute. of Islamic Studies, Kendari. They were chosen through an accidental sampling. They were asked to fill in an open-ended questionnaire. There were 60 sheets of questionnaires that were returned to the researcher, 45 sheets of answers were selected in which respondents wrote channels on social media that were often followed.

The data was then analyzed to categorize respondents' attitudes towards the opportunities for men and women to continue higher education and pursue career opportunities.

## 4 Result and Discussion

There are some interesting things to conclude from respondents' answers about the channels that are often followed on social media. First, the most frequently accessed media is video which attracts the viewers' attention since this type is audiovisual media. Most respondents responded that they follow videos from certain people either through *YouTube*, posts on their *Facebook* account or *WhatsApp* group. This finding shows that audio-visual media is in high demand. This could be due to audio-visual media being more interesting because it has sound and image elements. This type of media has better output because it covers both kinds of auditive (listening) and visual media (viewing).

Second, most of the respondents admitted that the videos that they subscribe are those with religious messages. The videos were uploaded by certain religious teachers (*ustazd*). Some specific *ustazd* names were written by respondents when asked what they often do when accessing the internet or the social media they have. Most respondents write videos of specific religious figures that they regularly watch through certain channels, *Youtube* and *Vlog*. This fact could be due to the Islam students who are from Islamic Higher Education institutions are more interested in finding religious channels. However, another cause could be a tendency for the millennial generation in Indonesia to be involved in ethical issues.

The names of *Ustadz* are Abdul Somad, Adi Hidayat, and Felix Siau. Adi Hidayat's video generally gives the opportunity for married women to work but not as breadwinners. Working for married women is to develop hobbies, talents, and abilities. There are certain conditions for women who are married at work which is not tiring for him because there is a primary duty to take care of their children and husbands. Meanwhile, Felix Siau's videos reject feminism. A housewife is better for women because they need to prepare the new generations; their children. Abdul Somad's videos talk that women who have been married may work as long as the husband gives permission, they cover their genitals adequately, and they do not mingle with other men. The teachings of the *ustazd* is as found in the research of Lubis which concludes that the perception of the *ustazd* on justice and gender equality has not yet been consistent. There is gender awareness in one theme in one indicator, but it is not in line with other themes in the same indicator, so there are contradictory opinions. For example, most of them agree that leaders do not have to be men, but they do not agree if women occupy positions higher than men [8].

Third, this study shows several categories of students' attitudes towards the men and women opportunity to continue their education and pursue career opportunities. This category is based on prominent perceptions of respondents based on the background of social media accounts that are often followed (watched). In general, most of the respondents consider that men and women have equal opportunities to obtain higher education. However, for those who are married, women can continue their education by terms and conditions. The terms and conditions are they need to ask permission from their husbands, they do not neglect their household chores and ignore their children's education. In contrast, the men do not have to fulfill any requirements if they are willing to pursue higher education or career even if they are married.

Likewise on the issue of career opportunities for men and women. There are differences in career opportunities for married women compared to married men. Men are given the freedom to work whether they are single or have a family with no conditions that must be fulfilled regarding their role as husband or father. However, for women, especially when they are married, there are two perceptions of being allowed to work. The first group argues that married women do not need to work because their primary responsibility at home is taking care of children and husbands. Second, women who are married may work with terms and conditions. For example, they need to get permission from their husband; they do not mingle with other men at work, they do not ignore their role as mother and housewife.

Nowadays, every organization develops a moderate or traditional gender perspective. In addition to organizations, students are also inseparable from media exposure, related to the increased access and use of the internet to the younger generation. In Islamic higher education, the introduction to gender equality and equity is conducted through lecturers. However, it cannot guarantee that students will be responsive towards the gender issues simultaneously. This phenomenon is due to the presence of social media which includes gender equality or vice versa. Some media limit the existence of women on mass media. This media has a crucial role in shaping the students' attitude toward gender equality and justice issues.

The development of information technology increasingly facilitates messages about pro or contra attitudes about gender equality and equity. Attractive, concise and straightforward messages are very likely to be easier to choose and digest, so someone will continually access the website or video on the same channel. On the other hand, indecisive tendencies whether agree or disagree, also encourage people to choose what media to access. The individual consciously chooses and accesses a site or website that he knows will further support his attitude.

## **5 Conclusion**

This study concluded that most of Islamic students who often follow certain channels in online media agree that the women need to stay at home because they will be a mother of children and a wife to the husband who is the primary responsibility as a woman. This finding is different from previous studies which did not find mass media relations with gender construction[9]. The perception made us realize that exposure to social media greatly influences the perceptions of these students rather than what is taught in the college. It is not easy to give an understanding of gender equality to the community, especially when it comes to dealing with religious thoughts, more so if the religious thought is conveyed by those who are seen by the community as the owners of the truth authority. The difficulty is further if the thought has become a religious belief or is believed to be religion itself[10]. Therefore, the center for gender studies in higher education needs to increase its role to balance the idea of gender equality and equity; the idea of women who could continue their studies and pursue their career.

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