



CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE
ON GENDER EQUALITY IN INDONESIA:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE VIEWS OF
SITI MUSDAH MULIA

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master in Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
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ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to study and analyze the contemporary discourse on gender equality in Indonesia developed by Indonesian Muslim intellectual, Siti Musdah Mulia. To achieve this, it explores and examines the views of Siti Musdah Mulia on gender equality. Musdah is one of the leading Muslim feminists in Indonesia but her thought on feminism and gender equality are considered most controversial. They are propagated among her students at IAIN and also in the organizations that she is a member of such as Fatayat NU, LKAJ (Institute for Study of Religion and Gender), IRCP (Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace), Megawati Institute even to the levels of government, namely the Ministry of Religion, in which she is the coordinator to the team drafting the CLD (Counter Legal Draft) for KHI (Compilation of Islamic Legal Laws). In this research, the method that has been adopted is textual analysis, using descriptive and analytical methods by referring to numerous works on the subject. It is contended that her thoughts on feminism and gender equality are not independent but influenced by liberal movement and presented as Islamic thought. Hence, this study analyses and criticizes her views from an Islamic perspective. This study reveals that Musdah's stand of gender equality is based on humanism i.e. human rights and equality in quantity. This basis is used by her to read the principle of *Tawhīd*, the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence in order to produce a new interpretation of Islamic teachings to support gender equality as understood by gender feminism. It is concluded that Musdah's views have considerably deviated from Islamic teachings and are destructive towards the Muslim family institution.

خلاصة البحث

سعى هذا البحث إلى دراسة وتحليل القضية المعاصرة عن المساواة بين الجنسين في إندونيسيا التي وضعها المفكر الإسلامي الإندونيسي، Siti Musdah Mulia. ولتحقيق ذلك، تكشف هذه الدراسة نظريات Siti Musdah Mulia عن المساواة بين الجنسين وتبحث فيها أن Musdah هي إحدى الرائدات النسوية المسلمة في إندونيسيا التي كان فكرها على الحركة النسوية والمساواة بين الجنسين، تعد الأكثر إثارة للجدل. نشرت الأفكار بين طلابها في الجامعة الإسلامية الحكومية (IAIN) وأيضا في المنظمات التي هي عضو فيها مثل فتيات (Fatayat NU)، ومؤسسة دراسة الدين والجنس (LKAJ)، والمؤتمر الإندونيسي حول الدين والسلام (IRCP)، و Megawati Institute وعلى مستوى الحكومة، والوزارة الدينية، كانت هي منسقة الفريق لصياغة CLD-KHI. اعتمد هذا البحث على أسلوب تحليل النصوص، وذلك باستخدام المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي بالإشارة إلى العديد من الأعمال حول هذا الموضوع. ويزعم أن أفكارها حول الحركة النسوية والمساواة بين الجنسين ليست مستقلة، ولكنها تتأثر بالحركة الليبرالية، وقدمت على أنها فكر إسلامي. ومن ثم، فإن هذه الدراسة تحلل وتنتقد وجهات نظرها من منظور إسلامي. وتكشف هذه الدراسة أن موقف Musdah الداعي للمساواة بين الجنسين على أساس الإنسانية يعني الحقوق الإنسانية والمساواة في الحقوق. ثم تستخدم هذه القاعدة لقراءة مبدأ التوحيد، والقرآن والفقهاء الإسلامي، من أجل إنتاج تفسير جديد للتعاليم الإسلامية، لدعم قضية المساواة كما يفهمها النسوة بين الجنسين. ويستنتج من ذلك أن نظريات Musdah قد انحرفت كثيرا عن التعاليم الإسلامية وأنها مدمرة لمؤسسة الأسرة المسلمة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Uşūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion).

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Co-Supervisor

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.....
Rahmah bt Ahmad H. Osman
Dean, Kulliyah of Islamic
Revealed Knowledge and Human
Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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Dedicated to

My beloved mother (Ziadah) and father (Sumarno), my lovely husband (Arif Maulana), my dear son (Muhammad Zavier Al Imtiyaz), my brothers (Taufiq Zaini Efendhi & Tobroni Zaini Basiruddin), my sisters (Susana Diah Kusumaningrum & Nurraini Hasanah), my whole family at Solo, Lombok, Brebes and my boarding school Darussalam Gontor for Girls 1

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LIST OF TRANSLITERATION

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Table of the system of translation of Arabic words and names
used by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

ء	'	خ	kh	ش	Sh	غ	Gh	ن	N
ب	B	د	D	ص	ṣ	ف	F	هـ	H
ت	T	ذ	dh	ض	ḍ	ق	Q	و	W
ث	Th	ر	R	ط	ṭ	ك	K	ي	Y
ج	J	ز	Z	ظ	ẓ	ل	L		
ح	ḥ	س	S	ع	‘	م	M		

Short Vowels	
َ	a
ِ	i
ُ	u

Long Vowels	
ا + َ	ā
ي + ِ	ī
و + ُ	ū

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	:	The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CLD-KHI	:	The Counter Legal Draft of Kompilasi Hukum Islam (Compilation of Islamic Law)
FKK	:	Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning (Forum for the Study of Classical Text Book)
GAD	:	Gender and Development
IAIN/UIN	:	Institut Agama Islam Negeri (National Institute of Islamic Studies / Islamic National University)
IRCP	:	Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace
LGBT	:	Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, Transgender
LIPI	:	Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan (Indonesian Institute of Science)
LKAJ	:	Lembaga Kajian Agama dan Jender (Institute for Study on Religion and Gender)
NU	:	Nahdlatul Ulama
P3M	:	Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (The Association of the Development of Pesantren and Society)
PBUH	:	Peace Be Upon Him
PKK	:	Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (Family Welfare Movement)
PSW	:	Pusat Studi Wanita (Center for Women's Studies)
PUAN	:	Pesantren untuk Pemberdayaan Perempuan (Pesantren for Women's Empowerment)
RUU-KKG	:	Rancangan Undang-Undang Kesetaraan dan Keadilan Gender (Drafted Bill on Gender Equality and Justice)
UDHR	:	Universal Declaration of Human Right
WID	:	Women in Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Feminism as an ideology and movement, has long roots since the Enlightenment¹. It is generally traced back to the 18th century as a theory of women's rights. At the beginning, it focused on raising the literacy rates of women and addressing many of their grievances.² However, during its formative years the discourse of women's liberation increasingly became radical which in turn led to a phase of the struggle for gender equality and woman empowerment.³ The liberal paradigm offered by the feminist movement has always raised awareness among women in order to actualize their lives as individuals.⁴

With the spread of the idea of gender equality in the modern West, the Islamic world also experiences similar turmoil. Some Muslims follow the pattern of the modern Western world. They form and join associations and movements to fight for the rights of women.⁵ In order to reinforce their ideas and movements, in 1980 onwards, several Muslim women who considered themselves feminists argued that the

¹ The Age of Enlightenment is characterized by the conflict between reason and Biblical revelation. Reason and observation or sense perceptions are recognized as the main sources of knowledge. As a consequence, it makes man independent from God in all domains of life. Hence, it inspires man to analyze his socio-economic and political problems through his own reason and experiences and to solve them through creating new ideas, concepts, theories and ideologies based on reason and observation. Feminism, like all other -isms in the modern Western ideologies owe its origin to this conflict. Zeenath Kausar, *Political Participation of Women: Contemporary Perspectives of Gender Feminist and Islamic Revivalist*, (Selangor: Thinker's Library, Sdn. Bhd, 2008), xi.

² Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France, and the United States, 1780-1860*, (Chicago Ill: Lyceum Books, 1985), 56.

³ The critical analysis of the concept of woman empowerment and gender perspective constructed by the feminist can be found in the work of Zeenath Kausar, *Muslim Women at the Crossroads: The Right of Women in Islam and General Muslim Practices*, (Selangor: Thinker's Library, Sdn. Bhd, 2006), 3.

⁴ Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 23.

⁵ Abdul Salam Muhammad Shukri, "Islamic Feminist Discourse in the Muslim World," International Islamic University Malaysia, <<http://irep.iium.edu.my/id/eprint/8151>> (Accessed 18 April, 2014).

oppression of Muslim women is due to the gender-biased interpretation of some verses of the Qur'an by Muslim male exegetes, so they claimed the need to reinterpret the same verses from gender perspective.⁶

The discourse on gender equality also spread in Indonesia. Since the 1990s, many feminist' works from the Muslim world have been translated into the Indonesian language.⁷ These works have been accepted by some Muslim intellectuals and have been influential in raising the awareness of Indonesian Muslims on the issue of equality and justice in Islam that used to be blurred by patriarchal culture.⁸ The proponents of the idea of gender equality claim that they are supporting it by using an Islamic approach. The development of elaborate argumentation within Islamic circles promoting women's rights and gender equality is considered the central path in addressing the needs and concerns of the Indonesian Muslim women.⁹

Indonesian Muslim scholars who address the idea of gender equality include Siti Wardah Hafidz, Lies Marcoes-Natsir, Siti Musdah Mulia, Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin and many others. Their ideas also find support from (well-known) male figures such as Mansour Faqih, Masdar F. Mas'udi, Nasaruddin Umar and Husein Muhammad.¹⁰ The support from male scholars on one side has strengthened their ideas, and on the other, has developed it into a movement which is now visible, not only in society but also in the political arena.

⁶ Sa'diyya Shaikh, "Transforming Feminism: Islam, Women and Gender Justice", in Omid Safi (ed.), *Progressive Muslims on Justice, Gender and Pluralism*, (Oxford: Oneworld Publishing, 2004).

⁷ As a well-established term in the modern Western ideology, feminism has been known in Indonesia since the 1970s, especially when scholarly writings on feminism appeared in various journals and newspapers. However, until the 1980s, this term has not been widely accepted by the society. In the 1990s, the term feminism - which then linked to Islam -, was acceptable although with the caution, especially after the publishing of translated books from global Muslim feminists such as Riffat Hassan, Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud Muhsin and Asghar Ali Engineer. Budhy Munawar-Rachman, *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kesetaraan Kaum Beriman*, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2004), 525.

⁸ Ibid., 530.

⁹ Mufidah Ch, *Pengarusutamaan Gender pada Basis Keagamaan: Pendekatan Islam, Strukturasi dan Konstruksi Sosial*, (Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2009), 11.

¹⁰ Budhy, *Islam Pluralis...*, 561.

Among Muslim scholars who are considered as highly controversial feminist in Indonesia is Siti Musdah Mulia. Her action to voice, defend and restore the rights of women from the religious perspective is often criticized, not only by intellectual Muslims but also her fellow feminists.¹¹ She is not only a scholar, but also an activist. Moreover, she is a researcher in the fields of socio-anthropology and philology and has written several books on women's issues. With her consistency in promoting gender equality in Indonesia, Musdah has received numerous awards, both nationally and internationally. Although she is not a pioneer of women movement in Indonesia, her thoughts on gender equality on the basis of religion can become a bridge to deepen the understanding of intellectual Muslims on the concept of gender equality in contemporary Indonesia.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The concept of gender equality introduced in Indonesia by Muslim scholars¹² in 1990 - which some people call 'liberal'¹³ -, has brought tremendous change to the views of some Muslims in Indonesia. Their particular agenda is to quantitatively actualize the equality between men and women which encourages both to participate in public and domestic spheres.¹⁴ Based on this goal, they still believe that the cultural aspect – not genetic or biological aspect - is the main cause which distinguishes the role of men

¹¹ Musdah became a coordinator in the formulation of Counter Legal Draft (CLD) for Compilation of Islamic Law. Some contents forbid polygamy, giving the prescribed period for men, eliminating the role of guardians for the bride and others. She also openly voiced her support for inter-sex marriage.

¹² Those figures such as Mansour Faqih, Masdar F. Mas'udi, Husein Muhammad and Lies Marcoes-Natsir.

¹³ Liberal figures in Indonesia are characterized by their use of free mind to understand religious texts (the Qur'an and *Sunnah*). They mostly accept every religious doctrine that is in accordance with their personal reasoning. See Budi Handrianto, *50 Tokoh Islam Liberal Indonesia: Pengusung Ide Sekularisme, Pluralisme dan Liberalisme Agama*, (Jakarta: Hujjah Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Ratna Megawangi, *Membiarkan Berbeda? Sudut Pandang Baru tentang Relasi Gender*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), 9.

and women.¹⁵ If this is so, their responsibility can be exchanged and replace one another.

This understanding is accepted by some Indonesian Muslim intellectuals. However, many others reject this position and consider it a distortion of the teaching of Islam. They argue that Islam has divided the role of men and women equally and assigned them proper place, as it is based on the Revelation. The proponents of feminism took a further step to promote the idea of gender equality by using Islam.

In order to formulate a solid basic argument about gender equality in Islam, Indonesian Muslim feminists make a crucial step by applying gender perspectives in reading the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence.¹⁶ As Indonesian Muslim feminists have accused that compiled commentaries and books on *fiqh* by male scholars and commentators as being full of gender bias¹⁷, they suggest that the textual understanding of the Qur'an and the *hadith* has to be replaced with contextual understanding, which is more egalitarian and accommodating to the values of humanity.¹⁸

Based on the issue above, it seems there is a need to explore and investigate the development of gender equality discourse in Indonesia. There is also a need to study the views and understanding of Indonesian Muslim scholars who are advancing the concept of gender equality in Islam. In this regard, Siti Musdah Mulia's views on

¹⁵ To conduct an approach on the issue of gender equality, Muslim feminist begin by explaining the difference between sex and gender. The first refers to the biological aspects, while the second emphasizes the social, cultural, psychological and other non-biological aspects. It is to emphasize further that the differences of gender load in the community occurred not because of biological factors (divine creation), but due to cultural construction. See Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), 38-45. See also Muhammad Muslih, *Bangunan Wacana Gender*, (Jakarta: Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies, 2007), 2-3.

¹⁶ Mansour Faqih, *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996), 135.

¹⁷ Khalif Muammar, *Atas Nama Kebenaran: Tanggapan Kritis terhadap Wacana Islam Liberal*, (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia: Institut Alam dan Tamadun Melayu, 2009), 152.

¹⁸ Siti Musdah Mulia, *Islam dan Inspirasi Kesetaraan Gender*, (Yogyakarta: Kibar Press, 2007), 24.

gender equality need to be studied critically and comparatively from an Islamic perspective.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the specific nature of the origin and development of gender equality discourse in Indonesia?
2. Why and how did gender equality discourse take place in Indonesia?
3. What are the views of Siti Musdah Mulia on gender equality?
4. What is the Islamic perspective on gender equality as understood by Muslim scholars?

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore and elaborate the origin and the development of gender equality discourse in Indonesia.
2. To explain and elaborate the dynamics of gender equality discourse in contemporary Indonesia.
3. To explore and examine the views of Siti Musdah Mulia on gender equality.
4. To elucidate a critical assessment on gender equality from the Islamic point of view.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research attempts to study the contemporary discourse on gender equality in Indonesia. It focuses in analyzing with a critical reading, the views of Siti Musdah

Mulia, one of the leading feminists in Asia, on the concept of gender equality. This research is done to explore Musdah's arguments and approaches on the concept of gender equality from the Islamic perspective. This study is important because it investigates her thoughts, especially her reading of the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence. This research is also important because it can help the Muslims, particularly the Indonesian-Muslim society, to understand the implications of feminism as it links it to the values of Islam. This research can contribute significantly in offering some answers, solutions and critics to the issue of gender equality discourse in Indonesia.

1.6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate the discourse on gender equality developed by Indonesian Muslim scholars in contemporary Indonesia. It highlights the understanding of one Indonesian Muslim scholar who supports the concept of gender equality in Islam that is from Siti Musdah Mulia's views. The second aspect of this study focuses on the critical point of view towards the concept of gender equality in Islam as understood by the opponents. A critical assessment is attempted after discussing each issue. In this relation, its arguments are simultaneously examined.

1.7. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

This research utilizes the qualitative method of study which relies on textual analysis. It also focuses on content analysis and is descriptive. However, the most important point of this research is the critical aspect. Since this research is a library research, the data are collected from books, articles, conference and seminar papers, journals, theses and dissertations as well as reliable websites. Data and information are collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources include books by Siti Musdah Mulia which are *Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Islam*, *Indahnya Islam: Menyuarakan Kesetaraan dan Keadilan Gender*, *Islam dan Inspirasi Kesetaraan Gender* and others. Secondary sources include various works from other forms of literature within the discourse on gender equality in Indonesia. Books written by their critics are also incorporated as secondary sources.

1.8. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review concentrates on relevant writings pertaining to the discourse on gender equality in Indonesia, particularly from the point of view of Siti Musdah Mulia.

Budhy Munawar-Rachman writes on the issue of gender and feminism from the liberal point of view in his book *Penafsiran Islam Liberal atas Isu-isu Gender dan Feminism* (The Interpretation of Liberal Islam on the Issue of Gender and Feminism). He begins the discussion by questioning the claim of Muslim traditionalists about the universality of Islam. For him, the statement “*al-Islām ṣhālih li kull zamān wa makān*” is not relevant anymore in today’s context. The universality only covers moral values and basic principles, but not solutions and ways of solving the problem. Relevantization is possible through liberal interpretation of Islam, including on women's issues in the Islamic world.¹⁹

Further, he argues that the superiority over women is corroborated by the affirmation of religious values. After getting theological approval, it is supported by psychological and socio-biological arguments. This further reinforces the support that sexual division between men and women is natural. According to Budhy, this

¹⁹ Budhy, *Islam Pluralis...*, 525.

distinction is a man-made design through the formation of culture. Liberal interpretation of Islam is needed to achieve gender equality. This is done mainly through a method called the deconstruction on the interpretation of classical texts that have placed women in the second class.²⁰ However, the researcher has not found any particular topic on how Siti Musdah Mulia develops her understanding on Islam to support the concept of gender equality.

A paper entitled *Kesetaraan Gender dalam Pemikiran Amina Wadud dan Siti Musdah Mulia* (Amina Wadud's and Siti Musdah Mulia's Thought on Gender Equality) is used by Sulaiman to compare the views of Amina Wadud and those of Siti Musdah Mulia on gender equality. In essence, the core of every religion, especially Islam, is to teach and uphold the principles of justice. It is highlighted that the Qur'an, as a guideline for Muslims teaches the value of justice in every aspect of life, including economic, political and cultural spheres as well as gender justice. However, these values are not applied properly in public life because social life is dominated by a patriarchal culture that places inequality against women. The author concludes that in an effort to fight for gender equality, Amina Wadud has made more effort on the interpretation of gender bias in the Qur'an while Siti Musdah Mulia placed more emphasis on the role of women in the context of Islamic law.²¹

As this research is a comparative study, the author has not deeply explored more Siti Musdah Mulia's views on gender equality, particularly on the implication of her views on gender relation issues. Moreover, the author does not demonstrate that his analysis is based on Islamic perspective which will be emphasized by the researcher in this research.

²⁰ Ibid., 530.

²¹ Sulaiman, "Kesetaraan Gender dalam Pemikiran Amina Wadud dan Siti Musdah Mulia", (Undergraduate Paper, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2006).

In *Metodologi Tafsir Berwawasan Feminis: Telaah Kritis atas Metodologi Penafsiran Siti Musdah Mulia* (The Methodology of Interpretation of Feminism: A Critical Study on Siti Musdah Mulia's Methodology of Interpretation), the author describes Siti Musdah Mulia's methodology in interpreting the verses containing gender issues which can be used as a reference for commentators to generate a fair and equal interpretation for both men and women. The methods described in this study are: 1. In interpreting the Qur'an, the commentators should prioritize the jurisprudential verses related to gender relations; 2. The commentators must be aware of the fact that men and women have the same potential and are equal while the differences are only determined by their quality of piety and 3. The commentators should focus their analysis on the consideration of the objective conditions of society which consist of six categories, including the principle of benefit, justice and gender equality, human rights, pluralism, nationalism and the principle of democracy. The author asserts that Musdah wanted to develop a reading text in a productive manner, not reproductive which merely repeats the reading or meaning of the text by the same means and methods.²²

This research is very important to know the basis for Siti Musdah Mulia's interpretation of the Qur'an, especially to support the concept of gender equality in Islam. However, the author does not underlie his research on Islamic perspective, which is very important point to find out the deviation of the concept of gender equality developed by Siti Musdah Mulia and other feminist figures in Indonesia.

Field research on the issue of gender equality was conducted in a *Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) by Ema Marhumah who documented her findings in her

²² Muhammad Abdul Haris, "Metodologi Tafsir Berwawasan Feminis: Telaah Kritis atas Metodologi Penafsiran Siti Musdah Mulia", (Undergraduate Paper, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2007).

book *Kontruksi Sosial Gender di Pesantren: Studi Kuasa Kiai atas Wacana Perempuan* (Social Construction of Gender in the Pesantren: A Study on the Power of Muslim Scholars towards the Discourse of Women).²³

Ema Marhumah explores the role of a *Kiai* as the leader of the *Pesantren* in socializing the issue of gender in the boarding school. The author considers that the role played by the *Kiai* as the leader is unbalanced. The dominance of a particular gender in the school was analyzed as a manifestation of the male leader's power which was more dominant than others. At the same time, that power was used as a tool to produce the dominance of a particular gender in the boarding school, which in turn has a regulatory function and normalization for actions, behaviour and gender relations among members of the school community.

The differences in gender roles are corroborated by studies of classical texts written by earlier scholars. According to the authors, these books were written at a time when the demands for gender equality and the emancipation of women were not popular and domination of men over women was considered a normal thing. The mentioned books include *al-Adhkār* by Syaikh al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī, *Adab al-Nisā'* by Muṣliḥ ibn Miftāh and others.

The author conducted the research to explore the discourse on gender equality in Indonesia from the *Pesantren* perspective which is considered as gender-biased in treating community members. In line with this topic, the researcher emphasizes on the same issue but from Siti Musdah Mulia's views, a figure who promotes the concept of gender equality in Indonesia.

²³ Ema Marhumah, *Kontruksi Sosial Gender di Pesantren: Studi Kuasa Kiai atas Wacana Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2011).

Another writing on Siti Musdah Mulia pertaining the issue of gender equality is *Pemahaman Siti Musdah Mulia tentang Ayat-ayat Tauhid dan Implikasinya terhadap Kesetaraan Laki-laki dan Perempuan* (Siti Mudah Mulia's Understanding of the Verses of Tawhid and its Implication on the Equality of Men and Women). The author Ahmad Aqib, explains that the sources of knowledge of Siti Musdah Mulia in understanding the verses of *tawhīd* are the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*. For a deep and thorough understanding, she combines two methods which are deductive and inductive. The first is to explore the meaning of the verses of *tawhīd* based on the Qur'anic text and the *ḥadīth*, Islamic history and the views of Muslim thinkers. The second rests on empirical experience. She combines rational analysis, hermeneutic understanding, thematic interpretation and integrates faith, reason and the senses to unearth the deep meaning of the verses. Each verse of the Qur'an which is not in accordance with social life is to be read critically and rationally.

Further Ahmad Aqib explains that for Musdah, *tawhīd* is the essence of the teachings of Islam. From there she deduces that the absolute is only God, no man can be deified because the nature of all human beings is equal and everyone is the same in front of God as *khalīfah fī al-'arḍ*. This understanding is a rationale for Musdah to fight for gender equality.²⁴ Nevertheless, the author does not discuss the contemporary discourse on gender equality in Indonesia developed by other Muslim scholars which the researcher believes is important to be studied to know their dynamics and challenges in promoting the issue.

In addition to the books and researches mentioned above, there are also other works that criticize the idea of gender equality in Indonesia. Those are:

²⁴ Ahmad Aqib, "Pemahaman Siti Musdah Mulia tentang Ayat-ayat Tauhid dan Implikasinya terhadap Kesetaraan Laki-laki dan Perempuan", (Undergraduate Paper, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2015).

Seputar Paham Kesetaraan Gender: Kerancuan, Kekeliruan dan Dampaknya (Gender Equality: Its Confusion, Mistake and Impacts). Adian Husaini writes this book as a response to criticisms by RUU KKG/*Kesetaraan dan Keadilan Gender* (The Drafted Bill of Equality and Gender Justice) discussed in the Indonesian Parliament. In the draft, the term ‘gender’ is defined as the differences between the roles and responsibilities of men and women as a result of cultural constructions that may be replaceable and can be learned. It is possible for them to be changed according to time, place and specific culture.²⁵

Adian assesses that this ideology is trying to place all values and teachings as products of culture, including religion. For him, the revelation will be less of value if religion remains subjugated to the cultural domain. In this book, Adian explains some of the reasons why the drafted bill should be rejected; primarily because it is contrary to the Islamic revelation. If the revelation is no longer considered as a principle, people become liberal and feel free to arrange their own affairs without the authority of God. The liberal ideology, according to Adian, becomes a foundation for Indonesian gender activists to reject anti-pornography bill, support inter-sex marriage, and promote interfaith marriage even some support free sex.

To complete data gathering and analysis regarding the confusions, mistakes and impacts of gender equality in Indonesia, Adian provides an overview of the phenomenon of homosexuals and lesbians that has begun to bloom in Indonesia as well as interfaith marriage, rejection of the anti-pornographic bill and promiscuity which are supported by many gender activists. By using the analysis-critical study, Adian describes the impact of gender equality on Islam, especially on women.

²⁵ Adian Husaini, *Seputar Paham Kesetaraan Gender: Kerancuan, Kekeliruan, dan Dampaknya*, (Depok: Adabi Press, 2012).