MUSLIM WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARIA LAW IN INDONESIA

PENGALAMAN DAN PERSEPSI PEREMPUAN MUSLIM TERHADAP PENERAPAN HUKUM SYARIAH DI INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the diverse experiences and perceptions of Muslim women regarding the implementation of Sharia law in Indonesia, with particular attention to how these religious regulations impact their daily lives, agency, and rights consciousness. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with women from various socioeconomic backgrounds across regions with differing levels of Sharia implementation, this study reveals the complex and often contradictory ways Muslim women navigate, negotiate, interpret, and contest Sharia-based regulations. The findings indicate that women's responses to Sharia implementation are neither uniformly supportive nor oppositional, but rather contingent upon factors including education level, economic status, regional context, and personal religious understanding. This research contributes to nuanced understandings of the lived experiences of women under religious law, challenging both orientalist assumptions of Muslim women as passive victims and idealized portrayals that overlook genuine constraints on women's autonomy. The study provides insights for developing more gender-responsive approaches to religious law implementation that better reflect women's diverse needs and perspectives.

Keywords: Sharia implementation, Muslim women's agency, gender and Islamic law, religious legal consciousness

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi keberagaman pengalaman dan persepsi perempuan Muslim terhadap penerapan hukum Syariah di Indonesia, dengan perhatian khusus pada bagaimana regulasi keagamaan ini memengaruhi kehidupan sehari-hari, agensi, dan kesadaran hak mereka. Melalui wawancara mendalam dan diskusi

kelompok terarah dengan perempuan dari berbagai latar belakang sosial-ekonomi di wilayah dengan tingkat penerapan Syariah yang berbeda, studi ini mengungkapkan cara-cara kompleks dan sering kontradiktif yang dilakukan perempuan Muslim dalam menavigasi, menegosiasikan, menafsirkan, dan mempertanyakan regulasi berbasis Syariah. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa respons perempuan terhadap penerapan Syariah tidak seragam, baik mendukung maupun menentang, melainkan bergantung pada faktor-faktor seperti tingkat pendidikan, status ekonomi, konteks regional, dan pemahaman keagamaan pribadi. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman bernuansa tentang pengalaman hidup perempuan di bawah hukum agama, menantang asumsi orientalis tentang perempuan Muslim sebagai korban pasif dan juga gambaran idealis yang mengabaikan kendala nyata pada otonomi perempuan. Studi ini memberikan wawasan untuk mengembangkan pendekatan penerapan hukum agama yang lebih responsif gender yang lebih mencerminkan kebutuhan dan perspektif beragam perempuan.
Kata Kunci*: Penerapan Syariah, agensi perempuan Muslim, gender dan hukum Islam, kesadaran hukum keagamaan*

A. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Sharia law in various regions of Indonesia represents one of the most significant developments in the country's legal landscape following the post-1998 decentralization reforms. While much scholarly attention has focused on institutional and political dimensions of this phenomenon, less research has systematically examined how Muslim women themselves—often portrayed as primary subjects of these regulations—experience, interpret, and navigate Sharia implementation in their daily lives. This research gap is particularly notable given that women's bodies, behaviors, and mobilities frequently become central sites of religious regulation through dress codes, mobility restrictions, and gender segregation policies. Brenner (2011) argues that women's experiences with Islamic law implementation provide a crucial lens for understanding broader contestations over religious authority, gender norms, and citizenship rights in contemporary Muslim societies. Their perspectives reveal the lived realities of religious law beyond formal legal frameworks and political debates.

Indonesia offers a particularly rich context for examining Muslim women's experiences with Sharia implementation due to its distinct approach to incorporating Islamic law into the national legal framework. Unlike countries with comprehensive state enforcement of Sharia, Indonesia has developed what Salim (2008) terms "nationally diverse, locally implemented" approaches to Islamic law. This ranges from formal implementation of Qanun (Islamic regulations) in Aceh province under special autonomy provisions to district-level Sharia-inspired regulations (Perda Syariah) in various regions,

alongside national-level recognition of Islamic law in family and inheritance matters. This diversity creates varied experiences for Muslim women across different regions and legal domains, allowing for comparative analysis of how contextual factors shape women's engagements with religious regulations that directly impact their lives.

The tensions between religious law implementation and women's rights discourses have generated significant scholarly debate regarding Muslim women's agency and legal consciousness. Traditional orientalist narratives have often portrayed Muslim women as passive victims of religious patriarchy, while some Islamic feminist scholars have emphasized women's active engagement with religious interpretation and practice. Moving beyond this binary, Mir-Hosseini (2011) proposes understanding Muslim women's legal subjectivity through the framework of "bargaining with patriarchy," wherein women strategically navigate religious legal systems to maximize their autonomy while maintaining religious legitimacy. This approach recognizes both women's agency and the structural constraints they face, providing a nuanced framework for analyzing Muslim women's experiences with Sharia implementation in Indonesia.

The regional diversity in Sharia implementation across Indonesia has significant implications for Muslim women's experiences with religious regulations. Aceh province, operating under special autonomy provisions, has implemented the most comprehensive system of Islamic regulations, including the Qanun Jinayat (Islamic criminal code) that regulates moral offenses such as khalwat (unmarried proximity) and ikhtilath (public displays of affection). In contrast, other regions have implemented more limited Sharia-inspired regulations focusing on specific domains such as religious education, modest dress, or alcohol prohibition. Smith-Hefner (2019) documents how this regulatory diversity creates significantly different lived experiences for women depending on their geographic location, highlighting the importance of regional context in shaping women's encounters with religious law implementation.

Socioeconomic factors significantly influence how Muslim women experience and respond to Sharia implementation in Indonesia. Research by Robinson (2016) demonstrates that class position often determines whether women experience religious regulations as empowering affirmations of piety or constraining impositions on autonomy. For economically privileged women, veiling

practices and gender-segregated spaces can represent voluntary expressions of religious commitment and class distinction. In contrast, women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may experience these same regulations as additional burdens limiting their economic mobility and access to public resources. These differential impacts highlight the importance of intersectional analysis that examines how gender, class, and religious identity interact in shaping women's experiences with Sharia implementation.

Educational background and religious literacy significantly shape Muslim women's capacity to engage critically with Sharia implementation in Indonesia. According to Rinaldo (2013), women with higher levels of religious education often demonstrate greater confidence in questioning patriarchal interpretations of Islamic law, drawing on their knowledge of religious texts to articulate alternative understandings that support women's rights. This pattern of "pious critical agency" enables some women to simultaneously affirm their religious commitment while challenging specific implementations of Sharia that they view as contradicting core Islamic principles of justice and equality. This phenomenon highlights the importance of examining how educational resources shape women's capacity to navigate, interpret, and contest religious regulations affecting their lives.

The implementation of Sharia-inspired regulations in Indonesia has generated complex and sometimes contradictory impacts on women's public participation. While some regulations explicitly restrict women's mobility through curfews or gender segregation policies, Islamic activism has simultaneously created new avenues for women's public engagement through religious education programs, charity organizations, and piety movements. Examining this paradox, Platt (2017) documents how Muslim women in Aceh navigate competing demands for public piety and public participation, developing strategic approaches that allow them to maintain religious legitimacy while pursuing educational and professional aspirations. These strategies reveal women's agency in reconciling religious commitments with participation in public life despite regulatory constraints.

Women's embodied experiences with Sharia implementation, particularly regarding dress codes and physical movement restrictions, represent a central dimension of their engagement with religious law. The increasing prominence of Islamic dress requirements in various Indonesian regions has transformed how many

Muslim women experience public space and bodily autonomy. Analyzing these developments, Jones (2010) argues that veiling practices in Indonesia cannot be reduced to simple expressions of either religious oppression or empowerment, but rather constitute complex negotiations of piety, identity, and agency that vary significantly across different contexts. For some women, Islamic dress represents a meaningful expression of religious identity, while others experience it as an imposed constraint on personal autonomy, highlighting the diverse meanings attached to bodily practices regulated by Sharia implementation.

The family domain represents another critical site where Muslim women experience and negotiate Sharia implementation in Indonesia. Islamic family law governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance significantly impacts women's lives, often creating tensions between religious legal provisions and women's rights considerations. Examining these dynamics, Nurlaelawati (2013) documents how Muslim women in Indonesia strategically navigate between religious courts and civil courts to maximize their interests in family disputes, demonstrating considerable legal agency despite formal constraints. These navigation strategies reveal how women's everyday experiences with Islamic family law involve complex negotiations between religious commitment, practical needs, and rights consciousness that cannot be captured through abstract legal analysis alone.

The relationship between Sharia implementation and women's economic rights presents another important dimension of Muslim women's experiences with religious law in Indonesia. Several Sharia-inspired regulations impact women's economic participation through restrictions on working hours, appropriate occupations, or mobility requirements. Analyzing these dynamics, Azra (2017) finds that economic necessities often lead to pragmatic accommodations between religious regulations and women's livelihood needs, with local authorities selectively enforcing restrictions based on community economic considerations. These patterns highlight how economic realities shape the practical implementation of religious regulations affecting women's lives, creating spaces for negotiation between religious ideals and material necessities that women actively navigate in their daily experiences.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly examination of Muslim women's experiences with Islamic law implementation has evolved significantly over recent decades, moving beyond simplistic binary frameworks that position women as either victims of religious patriarchy or uncritical supporters of Islamization. Abu-Lughod (2013) pioneered more nuanced approaches through her critique of "saving Muslim women" narratives that project Western liberal assumptions onto diverse Muslim contexts without attending to women's own articulations of agency, piety, and rights. Her ethnographic work demonstrates how Muslim women's experiences with religious norms involve complex negotiations of moral frameworks, community relationships, and personal aspirations that cannot be adequately captured through secularist frameworks focusing exclusively on individual autonomy. This perspective provides essential theoretical grounding for examining how Indonesian Muslim women experience Sharia implementation through their own cultural and religious frameworks rather than through externally imposed conceptual categories.

The concept of "Islamic feminism" has emerged as a significant framework for understanding Muslim women's engagement with religious law from rights-conscious perspectives that remain grounded in Islamic traditions. Badran (2009) defines Islamic feminism as discourse and practice that derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an, seeking rights and justice within the framework of gender equality as part of the Quranic worldview. This approach challenges both secular feminist dismissals of religion and conservative religious interpretations that marginalize women's concerns, creating space for women's critical engagement with Islamic legal traditions through reinterpretation rather than rejection. In the Indonesian context, Islamic feminist approaches have enabled women activists to challenge patriarchal implementations of Sharia while maintaining religious legitimacy, demonstrating the importance of indigenous religious frameworks for understanding women's legal consciousness.

Empirical research on Muslim women's experiences with Sharia implementation has increasingly emphasized the importance of examining agency and constraint as simultaneous rather than opposing dynamics. Mahmood (2005) develops this framework through her influential study of women's piety movements in Egypt, demonstrating how religious disciplines and practices constitute particular forms of agency that may not align with liberal understandings of freedom as resistance to norms. Her analysis reveals how women actively cultivate religious subjectivities through ethical

practices that include embracing certain forms of gender differentia-
tion, challenging assumptions that agency necessarily involves re-
jecting religious authority. This theoretical perspective provides val-
uable tools for analyzing how Indonesian Muslim women might sim-
ultaneously embrace certain aspects of Sharia implementation while
critically negotiating others, without positioning these responses as
contradictory.

Regional comparative studies of Sharia implementation and
women's experiences across different Muslim contexts provide im-
portant insights for understanding the Indonesian case in broader
perspective. Examining women's experiences with Islamic law in
Malaysia, Ong (2006) demonstrates how state implementation of
Sharia has been shaped by modernizing developmental agendas
rather than traditionalist impulses, producing distinctive impacts on
women's rights and subjectivities. This analysis highlights the im-
portance of examining Sharia implementation as embedded within
specific political economies and governance projects rather than as
a uniform religious phenomenon. Such comparative perspectives
help illuminate the distinctive features of Indonesia's regionally var-
ied approaches to Sharia implementation and their diverse impacts
on women across different socioeconomic positions and geographic
locations.

Research specifically examining Indonesian Muslim women's
engagement with Islamic law has highlighted the importance of both
historical context and contemporary regulatory diversity. Blackburn
(2008) traces how Indonesian women's organizations have en-
gaged with Islamic law throughout the nation's history, demonstrat-
ing how women have consistently participated in public debates
over religious interpretation rather than remaining passive subjects
of male religious authority. This historical perspective reveals that
contemporary Muslim women's critical engagement with Sharia im-
plementation continues long-standing traditions of women's reli-
gious agency in the Indonesian archipelago. More recent ethno-
graphic studies by Smith-Hefner (2019) and Rinaldo (2013) docu-
ment the diverse ways contemporary Indonesian Muslim women
navigate, interpret, and sometimes challenge Sharia-inspired regu-
lations across different regional and class contexts, highlighting the
need for nuanced approaches that attend to both women's agency
and the structural constraints they navigate.

C. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology cen-
tered on phenomenological approaches to understanding Muslim

women's lived experiences with Sharia implementation in Indonesia. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological inquiry is particularly appropriate for investigating how individuals perceive, describe, feel about, judge, remember, and make sense of particular phenomena they have directly experienced. This approach enables examination of the complex and often contradictory ways Muslim women subjectively experience, interpret, and navigate religious regulations affecting their daily lives. Through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation in communities with varying levels of Sharia implementation, this research prioritizes women's own articulations of their experiences rather than evaluating these experiences through predetermined analytical frameworks. This methodological orientation responds to critiques by Abu-Lughod (2013) regarding the importance of centering Muslim women's own voices and interpretive frameworks rather than imposing external categories of analysis.

The sampling strategy incorporates maximum variation approaches to capture diverse experiences across different regional contexts, socioeconomic positions, educational backgrounds, and religiosity levels. Following guidance from Patton (2015) on purposeful sampling in qualitative research, participants were selected from three distinct regulatory contexts: Aceh province with comprehensive Qanun implementation, districts with moderate Perda Syariah implementation, and urban areas with minimal formal Sharia regulations. Within each region, participants included women from different age groups (18-25, 26-40, 41+), educational backgrounds (primary through postgraduate), employment statuses (students, homemakers, formal and informal sector workers, professionals), and self-identified religiosity levels. This sampling approach enables comparative analysis of how different positions and contexts shape women's experiences with and interpretations of religious regulations, responding to Rinaldo's (2013) emphasis on the importance of examining how class, education, and regional context mediate women's engagement with Islamic normativity.

Data analysis employs constructivist grounded theory approaches that recognize the interpretive nature of qualitative research while maintaining systematic coding procedures. As articulated by Charmaz (2014), constructivist grounded theory acknowledges that researchers do not approach data as neutral observers but rather engage in interpretive processes influenced by their own positionalities and theoretical sensibilities. This approach enables

the research to remain grounded in participants' own conceptualizations while developing theoretical insights through systematic coding, constant comparison, and memo writing. The analysis particularly attends to how women articulate their agency, constraints, religious understandings, and rights consciousness through their narratives about Sharia implementation, while maintaining reflexivity about how researchers' own perspectives might influence interpretations of these narratives. This analytical approach responds to methodological concerns raised by Mahmood (2005) regarding the importance of avoiding projecting secular liberal assumptions onto religious women's experiences while still engaging critically with power dynamics affecting women's lives.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Muslim women's narratives reveal diverse experiences with Sharia-based dress codes across different Indonesian regions, reflecting varying approaches to veiling practices within a spectrum of agency and constraint. In Aceh, where hijab requirements are formally enforced through Sharia police (Wilayatul Hisbah), many participants described experiences of direct enforcement through public admonishment or administrative penalties for perceived violations. As one participant recounted: "I was stopped by Wilayatul Hisbah officers who said my jilbab was too transparent. They gave me a warning and made me sign a statement promising to dress more appropriately." In contrast, participants from regions with informal rather than legally mandated veiling expectations described more subtle forms of social pressure rather than official enforcement. These regional variations confirm Hefner's (2016) observation that Indonesian Sharia implementation ranges from formal legal requirements to informal social norms depending on local political configurations and governance approaches. However, women's responses to these regulations transcended simple opposition or compliance, with many participants describing strategic adaptations that maintained public conformity while creating private spaces for alternative practices.

Education level and religious literacy significantly shaped how participants interpreted and navigated Sharia-based regulations affecting their lives. Women with higher levels of Islamic education frequently articulated critical perspectives grounded in religious knowledge rather than secular frameworks. As one university-educated participant from Yogyakarta explaine Education level and

religious literacy significantly shaped how participants interpreted and navigated Sharia-based regulations affecting their lives. Women with higher levels of Islamic education frequently articulated critical perspectives grounded in religious knowledge rather than secular frameworks. As one university-educated participant from Yogyakarta explained: "I study Islamic jurisprudence, so I know the diversity of opinions on women's dress in classical fiqh. What's presented as 'obligatory' is often just one interpretation among many." These participants frequently distinguished between divine Sharia (understood as perfect and just) and human fiqh (understood as fallible interpretation), creating theological space for critiquing specific implementations while maintaining religious commitment. This pattern aligns with Mir-Hosseini's (2011) observation that religious literacy often enables women to challenge patriarchal interpretations from within Islamic frameworks rather than through secular critiques. In contrast, participants with limited formal religious education more frequently described accepting religious regulations as presented by authority figures without questioning their interpretive foundations, highlighting how educational differences shape women's capacity for critical religious agency.

Economic circumstances significantly influenced how participants experienced the practical impacts of Sharia implementation in their daily lives. Working-class participants frequently described greater vulnerability to enforcement of public morality regulations due to their occupational requirements and mobility patterns. Women working in markets, factories, or service industries reported particular difficulties navigating nighttime curfews, transportation restrictions, or dress requirements incompatible with their work conditions. As one participant employed as a factory worker in Tangerang observed: "The regulation says women can't work after 10 PM, but our factory has night shifts. I need this income for my family, so what choice do I have?" These economic constraints often necessitated practical negotiations with religious regulations, confirming Robinson's (2016) finding that class position significantly determines whether women experience religious norms as enabling or constraining. Middle-class and professional participants generally reported greater capacity to adapt religious requirements to their circumstances or access exemptions through social connections, highlighting how economic privilege mediates regulatory impacts.

Women's experiences with family law represented another significant domain where participants navigated Sharia implementation

with complex strategies reflecting both religious commitment and practical needs. Many participants valued certain aspects of Islamic family law, particularly provisions requiring male financial responsibility (nafkah) and protections against arbitrary divorce. However, these same participants often described strategic navigation between religious and civil legal systems when specific provisions disadvantaged them. One participant from Bandung recounted: "When my husband wanted a second wife, I reminded him of the religious requirement to treat wives equally—financially and emotionally. When he couldn't guarantee this, I used this religious argument to convince him against polygamy." This strategic deployment of religious knowledge for practical protection exemplifies what Nurlaelawati (2017) terms "negotiated application" of Islamic family law, where women selectively emphasize aspects of religious law that serve their interests while contesting unfavorable interpretations through alternative religious frameworks rather than rejecting religious authority outright.

Intergenerational differences emerged as significant factors shaping participants' experiences and interpretations of Sharia implementation. Older participants who had experienced the New Order period's restrictions on public religious expression often contextualized contemporary Sharia implementation within historical narratives of religious revival and identity assertion. As one participant in her 60s from Makassar observed: "During Suharto's time, wearing jilbab in school or government offices was forbidden. Today's freedom to practice our religion openly is valuable to those of us who remember that repression." This historical consciousness provided a framework for appreciating certain aspects of public religiosity while still criticizing excessive restrictions. In contrast, younger participants who had grown up during the post-1998 period of increased religious expression often emphasized compatibility between Islamic values and contemporary rights discourses, reflecting what Rinaldo (2013) terms "cosmopolitan Islam" that integrates religious commitment with modern education and rights consciousness rather than positioning these as opposed frameworks.

Participants' narratives revealed complex relationships with religious authority figures who mediate Sharia implementation at the community level. While many participants expressed respect for religious scholars (ulama) in principle, they differentiated between those perceived as understanding women's contemporary circumstances and those viewed as imposing decontextualized rulings.

Several participants described strategically seeking religious opinions from scholars known for progressive gender interpretations while avoiding those known for restrictive views. One participant from Padang explained: "When I need a fatwa on women's issues, I consult Ustaza Fatimah who understands women's real situations today, not Ustaz Ahmad who only quotes classical texts without considering our modern context." This selective engagement with religious authority reflects Kloos' (2018) observation that Indonesian Muslim women exercise significant agency in choosing which religious authorities to recognize, creating space for interpretive flexibility while maintaining commitment to religious guidance in principle.

Women's bodily autonomy emerged as a central theme in participants' experiences with Sharia implementation, particularly regarding mobility restrictions and physical discipline. Participants from Aceh described particularly direct bodily impacts through public caning punishments for moral offenses, which several had witnessed if not experienced personally. One participant recounted: "Watching a woman caned publicly for khalwat affects how all women move through public space—we become more cautious, more aware of being watched." Beyond such formal punishments, many participants across regions described how internalized surveillance shaped their bodily experiences in public, confirming Foucault's analysis of how regulatory systems operate through self-discipline rather than merely external enforcement. However, participants also described creating protected spaces for bodily autonomy through private gatherings, women-only venues, or strategic compliance in public matched with greater freedom in private settings—revealing what Scott (1990) terms "hidden transcripts" of resistance that coexist with public conformity.

Participant narratives revealed complex attitudes toward the moral regulation aspects of Sharia implementation, with many expressing simultaneous support for certain moral principles while questioning specific enforcement mechanisms. Across educational and class backgrounds, many participants affirmed support for promoting public morality while expressing concern about inconsistent enforcement, particularly gender disparities that placed greater restriction and scrutiny on women than men. As one participant from Banten observed: "I support regulations against khalwat in principle—Islam values sexual morality—but why are women always punished more severely than their male companions? That's culture, not religion." This selective critique reflects what Bayat (2013) terms

"critical piety" wherein Muslims maintain commitment to core religious values while questioning implementations perceived as cultural distortions of religious principles. This pattern challenges simplistic categorizations of Muslim women as either embracing or rejecting religious morality regulations, highlighting instead their critical engagement with specific implementations.

Regional governance structures significantly influenced how participants experienced Sharia implementation in their daily lives. In Aceh, where formal Sharia courts and specialized enforcement mechanisms exist, participants described more direct institutional encounters through documentation requirements, court proceedings, or interactions with Wilayatul Hisbah officers. In contrast, participants from regions with informal Sharia implementation encountered religious regulations primarily through local community mechanisms such as neighborhood surveillance, mosque announcements, or marriage registration procedures. This governance variation confirms Buehler's (2016) analysis of the diverse institutional arrangements through which Sharia-inspired regulations operate across different Indonesian regions. However, participants' narratives revealed that formal implementation did not necessarily correlate with greater impact on women's lives, as informal social enforcement sometimes proved more pervasive than official mechanisms, highlighting the importance of examining both formal and informal regulatory dimensions.

Women's perceptions of the relationship between Sharia implementation and national citizenship revealed another significant dimension of their experiences. Many participants articulated complex navigations between their identities as Muslims and as Indonesian citizens entitled to constitutional rights. Rather than experiencing these as inherently contradictory, most participants described seeking balance between religious commitments and national belonging. As one participant from Jakarta expressed: "I'm a Muslim who values Sharia guidance for my personal life, but I'm also an Indonesian citizen who believes in Pancasila principles that protect diversity. These aren't contradictory for me—both shape my identity." This integration of religious and national belonging reflects what Azra (2015) terms "Indonesian Islam" that emphasizes compatibility between Islamic values and national identity rather than positioning these as competing frameworks. However, participants' perspectives varied significantly based on local political contexts, with those from regions emphasizing Islamic identity in governance expressing

greater skepticism about national frameworks than those from more pluralistic regions.

Political engagement represented another dimension of women's responses to Sharia implementation, with significant variation in how participants positioned themselves in public debates about religious regulations. Some participants, particularly those with higher education and urban backgrounds, described active involvement in civil society organizations advocating for gender-sensitive interpretations of Islamic law. Others emphasized community-level engagement through religious study groups (pengajian) where women collectively discussed and interpreted religious texts in ways relevant to their daily lives. As one participant from Surabaya explained: "In our weekly pengajian, we study Quranic verses about women and discuss different interpretations. This helps us develop informed positions about regulations affecting us." This pattern of women's interpretive communities confirms van Doorn-Harder's (2006) observations about Indonesian Muslim women's longstanding traditions of collective religious interpretation outside formal political structures. However, participants from regions with stricter implementation often described greater constraints on public expression of dissenting views, highlighting how political context shapes available modes of engagement.

Health and bodily wellbeing emerged as significant concerns in participants' narratives about Sharia implementation, particularly regarding reproductive health access and physical activity. Several participants described challenges accessing reproductive health services due to gender segregation requirements or restrictions on women's mobility after dark. Others mentioned constraints on physical activities due to dress requirements, with some describing creative adaptations such as women-only sports facilities or modified athletic wear that maintained modest coverage. One participant who taught physical education noted: "Girls need exercise for health, but some interpretations of modest dress make this difficult. We developed special sports uniforms that are comfortable but still meet religious requirements." These adaptations reflect Rinaldo's (2013) observation that Indonesian Muslim women often create practical solutions that maintain religious commitments while addressing contemporary concerns about health and bodily wellbeing rather than positioning these as inherently opposed.

E. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Muslim women's experiences with Sharia implementation in Indonesia are characterized by complex negotiations that cannot be adequately captured through binary frameworks positioning women as either victims or uncritical supporters of religious regulations. Participants' narratives revealed sophisticated navigations between religious commitment and practical needs, strategic engagement with religious authorities and interpretive traditions, and contextual adaptations based on socioeconomic circumstances and regional variations in implementation. Rather than uniformly embracing or rejecting Sharia implementation, women selectively engaged with specific aspects based on their understanding of authentic religious principles, practical life circumstances, and personal aspirations. These findings challenge both orientalist narratives that portray Muslim women as lacking agency under religious law and idealized portrayals that overlook genuine constraints on women's autonomy in certain implementations of Sharia regulations. By centering women's own articulations of their experiences, this research contributes to more nuanced understandings of the lived realities of religious law implementation beyond abstract legal or theological frameworks.

The diversity of Muslim women's experiences with Sharia implementation in Indonesia carries significant implications for policy development and religious discourse. This research suggests that meaningful improvements in women's experiences require moving beyond abstract debates about secularism versus religious law toward more contextual approaches that address specific implementation practices affecting women's daily lives. The findings indicate particular need for attention to socioeconomic disparities in regulatory impacts, strengthening women's religious literacy and interpretive authority, ensuring transparent and gender-equitable enforcement mechanisms, and creating inclusive processes for women's participation in developing and evaluating religious regulations. By highlighting the agency, creativity, and critical engagement demonstrated by Muslim women navigating Sharia implementation, this research challenges assumptions that women's wellbeing necessarily requires either complete secularization or uncritical acceptance of traditional religious interpretations. Instead, it points toward possibilities for developing more gender-responsive approaches to religious law implementation that better reflect women's

diverse needs, perspectives, and aspirations within frameworks that respect both religious values and women's autonomy.

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