

# Gender equality in Mary Wollstonecraft's thought: Aisiyiah's perspective as a women's movement for advancement

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<p><b>Article History</b> Accepted: 30 January 2025 Revised: 27 March 2025 Available Online: 30 April 2025</p> <p><b>*Corresponding</b> <a href="mailto:eranurandra@gmail.com">eranurandra@gmail.com</a></p> <p> 10.22219/satwika.v9i1.39680</p> <p> <a href="mailto:jurnalsatwika@umm.ac.id">jurnalsatwika@umm.ac.id</a></p> <p><b>How to Cite:</b> Candra, E. N. A., &amp; Azani, M. Z. (2025). Gender equality in Mary Wollstonecraft's thought: Aisiyiah's perspective as a women's movement for advancement. <i>Satwika: Kajian Ilmu Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial</i>, 9(1), 169-179. <a href="https://doi.org/10.22219/satwika.v9i1.39680">https://doi.org/10.22219/satwika.v9i1.39680</a></p> 	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p>Gender equality remains a pertinent issue across diverse social contexts, encompassing Western and Islamic teachings. Mary Wollstonecraft, a prominent advocate for gender equality in the West, contended that women should possess individual freedom without male domination. In Indonesia, Aisiyiah, a progressive women's movement, posits that gender equality should be examined not only through religious and spiritual lenses but also through political, economic, and educational dimensions. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a literature study method to analyze various books, articles, and reports relevant to the topic. Despite their differing cultural and religious perspectives, both Aisiyiah and Mary Wollstonecraft assert that education is fundamental to achieving gender equality. This article explores Aisiyiah's perspective as a progressive women's movement to critically analyze Mary Wollstonecraft's concept of gender equality, which is often perceived as being incompatible with the Islamic worldview. The findings of this study aim to offer an Islamic perspective from Aisiyiah that addresses the challenges posed by Western secular thought.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>aisiyiah, gender equality, mary wollstonecraft, education</i></p> <p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p><i>Kesetaraan gender merupakan topik yang selalu relevan dalam berbagai konteks sosial, baik di Barat maupun dalam ajaran Islam. Salah satu tokoh kesetaraan gender di Barat, Mary Wollstonecraft yang memperkasai perjuangan perempuan untuk kesetaraan gender berpendapat bahwa perempuan perlu memiliki kebebasannya secara individu tanpa diatur oleh laki-laki. Aisiyiah sebagai gerakan perempuan berkemajuan di Indonesia menyoroti kesetaraan gender tidak hanya dapat dilihat dari perfektif agama dan spiritual, tetapi juga dari berbagai aspek lain seperti politik, ekonomi dan pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan, yang berfokus untuk menganalisis berbagai buku, artikel, dan laporan yang memiliki keterkaitan dengan topik yang dibahas. Meskipun keduanya mengusung pandangan yang berbeda dalam konteks budaya dan agama, baik Aisiyiah maupun Mary Wollstonecraft berpendapat bahwa pendidikan adalah kunci utama untuk mencapai kesetaraan gender. Artikel ini menyajikan perspektif Aisiyiah sebagai gerakan perempuan berkemajuan untuk menganalisis konsep kesetaraan gender menurut Mary Wollstonecraft, yang dianggap tidak sesuai dengan pandangan hidup Islam. Temuan dalam kajian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan pandangan hidup Islam dari perspektif Aisiyiah yang mampu menjawab tantangan pemikiran Barat sekuler.</i></p> <p><b>Kata kunci:</b> <i>aisiyiah, kesetaraan gender, mary wollstonecraft, pendidikan</i></p>
<p>© 2025 This is an Open Access Research distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/</a>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original works are appropriately cited.</p> 	

## INTRODUCTION

Gender equality remains a significant issue across various regions globally, encompassing social, cultural and religious dimensions. Within gender studies, two predominant perspectives are frequently examined: the Western perspective, often associated with feminist theory (Rif'at & Nurwahidin, 2022) and the Islamic perspective, which provides a religion-based framework (Midesa & Nadilla, 2022). These perspectives offer distinct interpretations of women's rights and societal roles. This study aims to compare gender equality from an Islamic perspective, as exemplified by the Aisyiyah movement, with a Western perspective rooted in feminist thought.

Gender is frequently conceptualized as a sociocultural construct that differentiates between men and women, independent of biological determinants. It emphasizes the pursuit of equality between women and men across various life domains (Aeni, 2022). Conversely, the Islamic perspective, as exemplified by the Aisyiyah movement, endeavors to align Islamic views with progressive values, thereby ensuring that women receive their rights within a non-discriminatory framework. This movement demonstrates how Islamic thought can adapt to the exigencies of social change while preserving its fundamental essence (Azizah, 2021).

Feminist thought in the Western context emerged in the 18th century, notably through the contributions of Mary Wollstonecraft, who underscored the significance of women's education and autonomy. Wollstonecraft posited that equitable education would empower women to achieve independence and strength (Ilaa, 2021). This perspective on gender equality focuses on advocating for women's individual rights in opposition to patriarchal structures that impede their progress. While there are parallels between these viewpoints in their advocacy for women's rights, notable differences exist in their methodologies and theoretical frameworks, particularly concerning the concepts of religion and culture (Aeni, 2022).

Although numerous studies have addressed gender equality from the perspectives of Aisyiyah and Western feminism, direct comparisons between these two viewpoints are infrequent. Prior research has predominantly focused on analyzing each perspective independently. However, this study aims to offer a comparative analysis of these two significant perspectives, a topic that has been insufficiently explored in the existing literature. Such an analysis is crucial for understanding how these perspectives complement or

contradict each other in the context of the struggle for women's rights.

Within the framework of Western feminist thought, the notion of gender equality predominantly emphasizes women's empowerment within the socio-political sphere, encompassing aspects such as suffrage, autonomy in decision-making, and access to education (Sabelis, 2024). Theoretical constructs such as 'gender roles' and 'empowerment' are particularly prevalent in feminist discourses originating from Europe and America (Istiqomah, 2024).

From an Islamic perspective, particularly within the Aisyiyah movement, gender equality is based on the principle that men and women possess equal rights and responsibilities in Islam. However, certain differences may exist based on religious teachings that are not intended to be discriminatory (Kholisatun et al., 2024). Through its progressive Islamic approach, Aisyiyah endeavors to reinterpret Islamic teachings to enhance the societal role of women while upholding religious values (Umar et al., 2021). The concepts of 'equal rights' and 'the role of women in Islam' serve as foundational elements of their advocacy (Abidin, 2023).

Numerous studies have been conducted on gender equality, examining both the Aisyiyah movement and Western feminist studies; however, none have directly compared these two perspectives. For instance, Aeni (2022) investigated the Aisyiyah movement's role in advocating for women's rights through a progressive Islamic framework that emphasizes women's empowerment within a religious context. Similarly, Azizah et al. (2021) highlighted the concept of progressive women within the Aisyiyah organization, particularly in addressing social challenges in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Ilaa (2021) explored the theme of feminism and women's liberation within the socio-political context of Indonesia, focusing on women's struggles to secure their fundamental rights in society. Adiwilaga (2017) addresses the issue of feminism in relation to women's cultural resilience in Indonesia, especially concerning the impact of patriarchal culture on women's status in society. Qomariah (2019) examines community perceptions of gender equality within the family, with a specific focus on the differential treatment of boys and girls in the household context. While these studies have significantly contributed to the understanding of gender equality, no research has directly compared the perspectives of Aisyiyah and Western feminism in terms of concept and application. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by providing a comparative analysis

that has not been extensively explored in the existing literature.

This study compares Aisyiyah's perspectives on gender equality from an Islamic viewpoint with those of Western feminist thought. It specifically aims to identify the differences and similarities in the conceptualization of gender equality within these two frameworks. Furthermore, this study examines how these approaches can contribute to the feminist movement in Indonesia, particularly within the context of the Aisyiyah movement.

The significance of this research is underscored by the necessity to comprehend the development of the concept of gender equality within two distinct intellectual traditions: liberal feminism, as advocated by Mary Wollstonecraft, and Islamic feminism, as championed by Aisyiyah's Nurhasanah. This study is particularly relevant because of the ongoing debate regarding the compatibility of Western feminist values with Islamic principles in the pursuit of gender equality.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the enrichment of feminism and gender studies by offering a comparative analysis of the thoughts of Mary Wollstonecraft and Aisyiyah's perspectives. By juxtaposing these two viewpoints, this study aims to provide novel insights into the construction of gender equality within two distinct value systems. Practically, the findings of this study are anticipated to serve as a valuable reference for academics engaged in gender studies and feminism, particularly in the context of comparing Western and Islamic thought. Additionally, the study offers benefits to women's organizations, notably Aisyiyah, by providing a reflective basis for formulating strategies to empower women grounded in Islamic values while also being progressive in advocating for women's rights. Furthermore, it serves to inform the broader community that gender equality is not solely a concern of Western feminism but is also integral to the struggles of women in Islam, as exemplified by movements such as Aisyiyah's.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research methodology utilizing a literature review approach. This approach was selected because the research objective was to analyze and compare the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft with the concept of gender equality as articulated by Aisyiyah through the examination of written sources (Fadli, 2021). The literature review method enables researchers to delve into comprehensive information from a variety of pertinent literature without conducting field observations. Library research

encompasses a series of activities related to the collection of library data, including reading, recording, and processing research materials.

This research utilizes primary data sources, including Mary Wollstonecraft's works, such as "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," and "Aisyiyah's Covering Book: The Dynamics of the Progressive Islamic Women's Movement" by Mu'arif and Hajar Nur Setyowati. Additionally, secondary data sources include books, scientific journals, articles, and other publications that explore Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas and Aisyiyah's perspective.

The criteria for selecting data sources were based on their relevance to the research topic, the credibility of the author or publisher, and the currency of the information presented. The selection of credible and pertinent sources is crucial for ensuring the validity and reliability of the data obtained. The data in this study comprised written texts containing information about the concept of gender equality as articulated by Mary Wollstonecraft and Aisyiyah. The data may include quotations, summaries or interpretations of predetermined sources (Ummah, 2019).

The data utilized in this research comprise written texts that convey information regarding the concept of gender equality as articulated by Wollstonecraft and Aisyiyah. This data may include quotations, summaries or interpretations derived from predetermined sources. The data collection method employed is documentation, which involves gathering data from various literature pertinent to the research topic (Noor, 2011). The procedural steps undertaken were as follows: source identification (literature relevant to the research topic was identified), data collection (gathering information from the identified sources), and data recording (documenting significant information that supports the research analysis). This technique was selected because it enables researchers to amass comprehensive and in-depth data without the constraints of time and location. The collected data were analyzed through comparative analysis, juxtaposing the concepts of gender equality proposed by Mary Wollstonecraft and Aisyiyah. The analytical steps included data reduction (selecting and concentrating on data pertinent to the research objectives), data presentation (structuring data in a matrix or table format to facilitate comparison), and inference drawing (formulating conclusions based on the conducted comparisons).

The comparative analysis method was selected because of its efficacy in elucidating the similarities and differences between two concepts or ideas, thereby facilitating a more profound comprehension of the

subject matter under investigation (Rijal, 2019). To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation, which involves comparing information from multiple sources to verify data consistency and accuracy. By engaging in this comparative process, researchers can ascertain the validity and reliability of the data obtained (Saadah et al., 2022). The research methods outlined are anticipated to significantly contribute to understanding the concept of gender equality as interpreted by Mary Wollstonecraft and Aisyiyah.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Gender equality remains a dynamic issue with significant implications for the social, political, and economic domains. This concept has sparked global debate, particularly regarding the cultural and historical distinctions between Western societies and the Islamic world (Kholisatun et al., 2024). Mary Wollstonecraft's perspectives on gender equality are frequently linked to Western feminism (Azizah et al., 2021), whereas the Islamic conceptualization of gender emphasizes roles and responsibilities grounded in religious values (Midesa & Nadilla, 2022). Consequently, this section examines the notions of gender and gender equality from these two distinct perspectives and their implications within the context of contemporary Indonesia.

### Gender and Gender Equality

To comprehend the concept of gender equality, it is essential to first grasp the definition of gender. Gender encompasses the social and cultural distinctions between men and women that are constructed by society rather than being solely based on biological differences (Mutmainah et al., 2022). It is not merely a symbol denoting sex but also reflects the social roles and cultural expectations associated with men and women (Azizah et al., 2021). Biological differences between the two include characteristics such as a woman's capacity for childbirth, breastfeeding, and menstruation, whereas men typically possess an Adam's apple and are more likely to grow facial hair, such as a beard or mustache (Pithaloka et al., 2023).

Gender is intricately linked to variations in roles, functions, rights, responsibilities, and behaviors, all of which are influenced by social values, culture, and customs (Mutmainah et al., 2022). Within the field of gender studies, gender identity serves as a social category that differentiates between men and women based on the cultural constructions prevalent within a society (Azizah, 2021). When gender characteristics are examined within

a specific cultural context, the social norms and roles ascribed to men and women become discernible. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), gender is perceived as a product of social construction, manifested through norms, relationships, and roles between men and women (Aeni, 2022).

Gender differences encompass not only physical attributes but also disparities in social status and opportunities. Men are frequently associated with traits traditionally deemed masculine, such as resilience, determination, logical reasoning, and decision-making. Conversely, women are often linked with traits perceived as softer, with a focus on emotional priorities, and are frequently regarded as less rational than men (Azizah et al., 2021). This perspective is entrenched in a patriarchal social system, wherein men predominantly occupy leadership roles and women are often relegated to secondary positions within society (Aini et al., 2021).

The concept of gender equality seeks to rectify disparities by ensuring equitable access for both men and women across various domains, including education, health, economics, and politics. The objective of gender equality is to guarantee that women possess equal rights and opportunities in social and economic development at both the national and global levels (Indrawasih & Pradipta, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the implementation of gender equality is a crucial component in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society (Arifin, 2017). The principle of gender equality is characterized by conditions wherein men and women have equal opportunities to engage in politics, law, economy, and socio-cultural activities, thereby enabling both to contribute equally to development (Koto & Priyoyudanto, 2023). Gender equality encompasses the eradication of gender-based discrimination and injustice (Bangun, 2020).

One of the critical inquiries in this study is whether gender structures invariably create inequality. The response is contingent on the specific social and cultural context under examination. Analyzing gender inequality necessitates the consideration of structural, historical, and economic factors that shape the roles of men and women within a society (Rahmatullah, 2023). Gender inequality is not a static phenomenon; rather, it evolves in tandem with social change. Gender inequality is observable in various regions worldwide, not solely as a consequence of the globalization of gender inequality but also due to the globalization of democratic values and the transition from patriarchal systems to modernization and industrialization (Sitepu et al., 2025).

Building on the foundational concepts of gender and gender equality, the subsequent section delves into the

perspectives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Aisyiyah on gender equality. This analysis elucidates how Wollstonecraft's advocacy for women's rights has significantly contributed to the discourse of Western feminism, while also examining how Aisyiyah, as an Islamic women's organization, provides a perspective grounded in Islamic values in its advocacy for women's rights in Indonesia.

## **Gender Equality in Mary Wollstonecraft's Thought**

Mary Wollstonecraft, an 18th-century philosopher and feminist, significantly influenced liberal feminism through her intellectual contributions. She was particularly focused on articulating her perspectives on education and social equality (Bangun, 2020). Her seminal work, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), critiques the societal framework that relegated women to a subordinate status relative to men. During this period, women in Europe were largely deprived of access to formal education and were expected to acquire only domestic skills to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers (Wollstonecraft, 1972). Wollstonecraft challenged this notion, advocating for equal rights to education for women and positing that education is essential for women to engage in rational thought and actively participate in society (Dzuhayatin, 2022).

In her book, Wollstonecraft asserts, "I do not wish them women to have power over men but over themselves" (Wollstonecraft, 1972). She emphasized that women should embody qualities such as strength, integrity, intelligence, and independence. Her perspective has been underestimated in fiction, literature, and educational institutions for decades. She contends that men and women possess equivalent learning capacities, yet inequality fosters gender discrimination and societal inequity (Rif'at & Nurwahidin, 2022). Furthermore, she argues that within a philosophical framework, all individuals share the same moral principles, irrespective of gender, skin color, beliefs, or religion. Individual rights and freedoms should not be constrained by biological differences. Without freedom, a just political system cannot be realized (Midesa & Nadilla, 2022).

In addition to advocating for women's education, Wollstonecraft championed women's rights within the institution of marriage and the process of divorce. She contested societal norms that confined women to domestic roles and underscored the significance of women's autonomy in determining their life trajectories (Bangun, 2020). Her ideas served as a precursor to the feminist movement, which continues to evolve.

Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft's ideas have not been immune to criticism. Some contemporary philosophers and feminists argue that her perspectives remain rooted in the European middle-class viewpoint, thereby neglecting the experiences of women from working-class and non-European backgrounds (Istiqomah, 2024). For instance, Simone de Beauvoir advanced the notion that women require not only education but also liberation from societal constructs that position them as inferior to men. Concurrently, intersectional feminists such as bell hooks have emphasized that Wollstonecraft's theories fail to adequately consider the diverse experiences of women across different races and social classes (Mujahidin, 2021).

Wollstonecraft's philosophical contributions are significant in examining gender equality within the Islamic world (Ilaa, 2021). Islamic women's organizations, such as Aisyiyah, have historically advocated for women's access to education, aligning with Wollstonecraft's assertion that education is fundamental to achieving equality (Aeni, 2022). Aisyiyah, functioning as the women's division of Muhammadiyah, upholds the principle that Islam inherently promotes justice and equality between genders, encompassing educational, social, and economic rights (Ilyas, 2015). Consequently, despite originating from distinct backgrounds, there is a shared vision between Wollstonecraft's ideology and Aisyiyah's efforts to advance gender equality within Muslim communities.

Historically, women have faced challenges in having their voices acknowledged and their rights recognized (Hsb & Hambali, 2023). Mary Wollstonecraft was among the early intellectuals advocating for social reforms to address gender inequality. For centuries, society has characterized men as rational beings and women as emotional beings (Ilaa, 2021). Gender encompasses not only differences in sex but also variations in personality and societal roles assigned to men and women (Nayottama & Syarief, 2023). Gender stereotypes often place women in positions that are incongruent with their inherent status. These gender differences influence women's rights and responsibilities (Wahyuni et al., 2022), perpetuating stereotypes that disadvantage women. With growing awareness of gender injustice, the movement for gender equality continues to expand, inspiring various social changes (Retnani, 2017).

## **Aisyiyah Movement in Progress**

Aisyiyah was established in 1917 by Nyai Ahmad Dahlan as a women's organization within Muhammadiyah, focusing on education, social affairs, and progressive Islamic da'wah. During this period, women faced significant discrimination, particularly regarding access to education (Remiswal et al., 2021). As an integral part of Muhammadiyah, Aisyiyah upholds

the principle of Islam Berkemajuan, which involves adapting Islamic teachings (Mujahidin, 2021) to contemporary contexts while preserving the fundamental religious values. This approach contrasts with conservative perspectives that often confine women's roles to the domestic sphere (Azizah et al., 2021).

Aisyiyah serves as a platform that encourages women's active participation in education and society, highlighting that Islam does not restrict women's autonomy or their contributions to societal development (Umar et al., 2021). The objective of Aisyiyah's establishment was not to segregate or marginalize male and female Muhammadiyah members but rather to create broader opportunities for Muhammadiyah women to organize and engage in their own specific activities (Alfizah et al., 2022).

In the field of education, Aisyiyah has established institutions such as the Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, which has successfully cultivated numerous highly educated female leaders. This institution offers Islamic-based education that persistently advocates for gender equality by equipping women with religious, social, and scientific knowledge, thereby enabling them to contribute meaningfully to society (Mojopahit, 2024). In terms of policy, Aisyiyah actively champions regulations that safeguard the rights of women and children (Kholisatun et al., 2024). A notable example is Aisyiyah's involvement in advocating for the Law on the Protection of Women and Children and its active participation in the women's economic empowerment movement through cooperatives and microenterprises (Sitepu et al., 2025). Regarding women's participation in the public sphere, Aisyiyah positions women in leadership roles, both within organizational structures and in society at large (Remiswal et al., 2021). Numerous Aisyiyah members have become academics, leaders of social organizations, and policymakers (Ilyas, 2015). By adhering to moderate Islamic principles, Aisyiyah demonstrates that women possess equal rights and capabilities to engage in nation-building (Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020).

Wawan Gunawan Abdul Wahid, MA, a member of PP Muhammadiyah Tarjih and Majelis Tajdid, asserts that gender equality is not only significant but also requires dissemination through the Muhammadiyah organization. This is because gender equality is an integral aspect of Islam itself (Hsb & Hambali, 2023), as illustrated in the Qur'an, Surah An Nahl, verse 97: "Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, in a state of faith, then indeed We will give him a good life and indeed We will reward them with a better reward than

what they have done." This verse elucidates the concept of human equality from the Muhammadiyah perspective. Both men and women are afforded equal opportunities to engage in Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar as human beings (Nugraha, 2019).

The teachings propagated by Prophet Muhammad SAW have elevated the equality and dignity of women to a status comparable to that of men. Islam enhances the status of women, advocates for their human rights, and opposes discrimination against their roles (Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020). Following the advent of Islam, women gained access to education equivalent to that of men, providing them with genuine opportunities to develop their inherent potential (Hsb & Hambali, 2023). Aisyiyah underscores that gender equality does not entail contravening the intrinsic nature of women but rather offers them the opportunity to develop without abandoning Islamic values (Aini et al., 2021). In Islam, women have equal rights to pursue knowledge, engage in work, and contribute to society. This aligns with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, who endorsed women's education and participation in the social and economic spheres (Nugraha, 2019).

Aisyiyah's concept of Islam Berkemajuan challenges patriarchal perspectives that confine women's roles to the domestic sphere (Ikhsanto et al., 2023). Instead, it posits that Islam permits women to assume strategic roles in the public domain, provided that they uphold religious values. This principle is operationalized through various Aisyiyah programs that promote women's education, maternal and child health, and sharia-based family economic enhancement (Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020).

In the ongoing discourse between secular feminism, which advocates for absolute equality, and Islamic feminism, which emphasizes the role of women within religious contexts, Aisyiyah offers a conciliatory approach (Nasution & Hasannah, 2025). Aisyiyah's perspective on gender equality integrates women's rights while remaining consistent with Islamic teachings (Nugraha, 2019). For instance, Aisyiyah not only advocates for women's access to education and economic opportunities but also underscores the importance of establishing a harmonious family based on Islamic principles (Izurohman et al., 2023). Regarding leadership, Aisyiyah demonstrates that women can assume leadership roles without compromising their Islamic identity (Umar et al., 2021). This illustrates that the pursuit of gender equality can be achieved while adhering to religious values (Mubarak et al., 2024).

Aisyiyah exemplifies a balanced approach, demonstrating that gender equality within Islam does not

threaten traditional values. Instead, it represents an effort to enhance the role of women in various aspects of life (Sitepu et al., 2025). Consequently, Aisyiyah serves as a model for advocating women's rights in the Islamic world, avoiding entrapment in secular or conservative extremism (Aeni, 2022).

Aisyiyah, as a progressive Islamic movement, aims to fulfill the objective of Islam Ramathan Lil Alamin (Hafidz et al., 2019). To realize this objective, Aisyiyah cadres are expected to possess the capability to enhance the welfare of themselves, their families, local communities, the Indonesian state, and to contribute to the advancement of global civilization. These cadres are highly intellectual individuals required to study various general sciences in addition to religious sciences (Izurohman et al., 2023).

## **A Comparison of Aisyiyah and Mary Wollstonecraft's Movements towards Gender Equality**

Gender equality, as viewed from both Western and Islamic perspectives, remains a prominent topic in academic discourse. Women continue to encounter numerous challenges in their pursuit of equal rights within society, striving to avoid marginalization in the social, political, and economic spheres (Nugraha, 2019). The persistence of stereotypes across various societies has resulted in the erosion of women's rights, while men frequently enjoy greater advantages and freedoms in multiple facets of life (Alfizahrin et al., 2022). In this context, the objective of gender equality is to enhance women's political consciousness and promote their engagement in diverse social activities, facilitated by policies that support women's interests (Alfizahrin et al., 2022).

In Islam, distinctions in rights and obligations between men and women are not perceived as discriminatory but as a form of complementary balance. These differences are grounded in theological principles delineating the roles of each gender in social and spiritual contexts (Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020). Muslim women enjoy a degree of freedom in fulfilling their public roles within the confines of Islamic law, which seeks to harmonize domestic responsibilities with public engagement (Mubarok et al., 2024). Consequently, gender equality from an Islamic perspective should be understood as the provision of equal opportunities for both women and men without disrupting established social harmony.

Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" and the historical development of Aisyiyah

share a common focus on underscoring the significant role of women in society and advocating for social justice (Remiswal et al., 2021). Despite originating from distinct cultural contexts, both works emphasize the pivotal role of education in enhancing women's status. Wollstonecraft regarded education as a means for women to attain intellectual parity with men (Wollstonecraft, 1972), whereas Aisyiyah viewed education as an Islamic obligation accessible to all individuals, regardless of gender (Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020).

Mary Wollstonecraft's assertion, "Let woman share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man" (Wollstonecraft, 1972), encapsulates her conviction that women can only achieve their full potential when afforded the same rights as men, particularly in the realms of education and personal freedom (Istiqomah, 2024). This perspective aligns with Aisyiyah's ideology, which advocates for women's access to the public sphere while acknowledging their domestic responsibilities. Aisyiyah underscores the right of women to assume leadership roles within the community, provided that such roles do not conflict with the principles of Sharia (Aeni, 2022).

In examining gender equality, both Wollstonecraft and Aisyiyah offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on gender equality. Wollstonecraft underscored the gender injustices prevalent in 18th-century Western society, advocating for equal rights for women in education and social life, free from the constraints of patriarchal norms (Salsabila & Rizkita, 2022). Her arguments are grounded in Enlightenment philosophy, which emphasizes rationality and universal human rights (Bangun, 2020). The strength of this approach lies in its provision of a robust theoretical foundation for liberal feminism, advocating for women's rights comprehensively (Azani & Harris, 2019). However, its limitation is its lack of consideration of cultural and religious factors, which poses challenges for its application in societies that continue to uphold traditional norms (Istiqomah, 2024).

Meanwhile, the Aisyiyah movement employs an Islam-based approach that harmonizes women's empowerment with Islamic values (Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020). The strength of this approach lies in its adaptability within Muslim societies, particularly because it aligns with prevailing social and religious norms. Nevertheless, a limitation of this approach is that it may be more accommodating than liberal feminism in certain respects, thereby imposing constraints on women's participation in the public sphere (Kholisatun et al., 2024).

Wollstonecraft's intellectual framework is notably expansive, advocating comprehensive equality across political, economic, and social domains (Mujahidin, 2021). Her ideas have consequently served as a foundational influence for numerous contemporary feminist movements that champion women's rights without the imposition of cultural or religious constraints. Nevertheless, this extensive scope may present challenges in practical application, particularly in societies that continue to adhere to traditional norms (Bangun, 2020). In contrast, Aisyiyah places greater emphasis on empowering women within an Islamic framework, underscoring the significance of education and social roles that remain consistent with religious values (Sofia, 2021). The advantage of this approach lies in its broader acceptance among Muslims, thereby facilitating more gradual and sustainable changes (Nurchahaya & Akbarizan, 2023). However, owing to its faith-based orientation, the scope of Aisyiyah's efforts may not be as transformative as the approach of liberal feminism in completely dismantling gender boundaries (Umar et al., 2021).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that, despite variations in cultural and religious contexts, both Western and Islamic teachings uphold a fundamental value of gender equality: the significance of education as a means of empowering women. Mary Wollstonecraft, emerging from the secular intellectual milieu of 18th-century Europe, advocated for the liberation of women from patriarchal constraints and underscored the necessity for women to have equal access to education and personal freedom, unencumbered by the traditional religious restrictions that evolved in the West. Her perspective was expansive and global, calling for comprehensive social and political reforms to eradicate gender inequalities entrenched in Western society. Conversely, the Aisyiyah Movement seeks to empower women within the framework of Islamic teachings, emphasizing a balance between domestic and public roles, wherein women's roles as mothers and family members are valued. The movement promotes equality in accordance with religious teachings, valuing women's contributions to social and familial harmony without advocating radical alterations to existing social structures. Although these two perspectives differ, they both make significant contributions to the discourse on gender equality and highlight education as a pivotal factor in achieving equality for women globally.

The theoretical implications of this study indicate that Islamic feminism and Western feminism share a

common emphasis on education as a catalyst for social transformation. This contribution enhances the study of Islamic feminism by demonstrating how the principles of gender equality can be contextualized within specific religious and cultural frameworks in Indonesia. Practically, this research affirms that initiatives aimed at empowering women in Muslim societies should incorporate a religious values-based approach to enhance their acceptability and effectiveness.

This study has several limitations. First, there is a scarcity of literature that thoroughly examines the comparison between Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas and the concept of gender equality within the Aisyiyah Movement. Second, the analysis employed is qualitative in nature, utilizing a literature-based approach, which does not adequately capture the actual impact of Aisyiyah's ideologies and strategies in contemporary Muslim society. For future research, it is recommended to conduct an empirical study that investigates the influence of Aisyiyah's empowerment strategies on Muslim women in the social, economic, and educational spheres. Additionally, further exploration of the adaptation of Western feminist thought within the context of modern Muslim societies presents an intriguing avenue for research.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Era Nur An-nisaa' Candra conducted the research, collected the data, and drafted the manuscript as part of her undergraduate final project. Mohammad Zakki Azani supervised the research process, provided academic guidance, and contributed to the critical revision and final approval of the manuscript.

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## INFORMED CONSENT

The authors declare that informed consent was not required as there were no human participants involved.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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