



EMPOWERING WOMEN, HOW IS THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE AND LOCAL WISDOM?

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ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment has become a crucial issue in achieving sustainable development, particularly in Muslim communities where religious values and local cultural traditions strongly influence social and economic practices. This study aims to examine how Islamic perspectives and local wisdom contribute to women's empowerment in Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore women's experiences in economic, social, and community development activities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving Muslim women, religious leaders, community leaders, and local empowerment facilitators. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that women's empowerment in Bondowoso is strengthened by the integration of Islamic values, including *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), *ukhuwah* (solidarity), and *maslahah* (public welfare), with local wisdom characterized by kinship networks, mutual cooperation, indigenous knowledge, and community-based economic traditions. Women actively participate in agriculture, livestock management, small-scale enterprises, religious organizations, and social activities that contribute to household welfare and community resilience.

ABSTRAK

Pemberdayaan perempuan menjadi isu penting dalam mewujudkan pembangunan berkelanjutan, khususnya pada masyarakat Muslim yang kehidupan sosial dan ekonominya dipengaruhi oleh nilai-nilai agama dan tradisi budaya lokal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana perspektif Islam dan kearifan lokal berkontribusi dalam pemberdayaan perempuan di Kabupaten Bondowoso, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus untuk memahami pengalaman perempuan dalam aktivitas ekonomi, sosial, dan pembangunan masyarakat. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi yang melibatkan perempuan Muslim, tokoh agama, tokoh masyarakat, serta pendamping pemberdayaan. Keabsahan data dilakukan melalui triangulasi sumber, sedangkan analisis data menggunakan tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemberdayaan perempuan di Bondowoso diperkuat oleh integrasi nilai-nilai Islam seperti *amanah* (kepercayaan), *ta'awun* (tolong-menolong), *ukhuwah* (persaudaraan), dan *maslahah* (kemaslahatan umum) dengan kearifan lokal yang tercermin dalam jaringan kekerabatan, gotong royong, pengetahuan lokal, dan tradisi ekonomi berbasis komunitas. Perempuan berperan aktif dalam kegiatan pertanian, peternakan, usaha mikro, organisasi keagamaan, serta aktivitas sosial yang berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kesejahteraan keluarga dan ketahanan masyarakat.

INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment has become one of the most important agendas in sustainable development because women contribute significantly to economic growth, family welfare, social resilience, and poverty reduction. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) place gender equality as one of the primary objectives for achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Women's access to education, economic resources, leadership opportunities, and social participation has been associated with improved household welfare and community development outcomes [1]. Consequently, contemporary development approaches increasingly recognize women not only as beneficiaries of development programs but also as active agents of social and economic transformation.

Within Muslim societies, discussions concerning women's empowerment often involve the interaction between religious teachings, cultural traditions, and local socioeconomic conditions. Islamic teachings provide a normative foundation that supports women's participation in economic and social activities through principles such as amanah (trustworthiness), ta'awun (mutual assistance), adl (justice), and maslahah (public welfare). Islamic empowerment emphasizes human dignity, social justice, and collective welfare rather than merely individual economic achievement [2]. Therefore, empowerment within Muslim communities is often manifested through collective action, social solidarity, and community-based economic initiatives that are rooted in both religious and cultural values.

The relationship between Islam and local culture is particularly evident in East Java, where religious practices have historically adapted to local traditions without losing their Islamic foundations. Madurese communities represent one of the strongest examples of this cultural-religious integration. Research conducted by Humaidi [3] demonstrates that Madurese social life is closely linked to Islamic values, kinship structures, and local cosmological interpretations that shape everyday interactions. In this context, women's roles extend beyond domestic responsibilities to include participation in economic activities, social organizations, religious gatherings, and community development programs. Such realities challenge stereotypes that portray Muslim women as passive actors in social and economic life.

Bondowoso Regency provides a particularly relevant setting for examining women's empowerment because the majority of its population consists of Madurese Muslims whose social structure is strongly influenced by pesantren, religious leaders, and local traditions. Community life in Bondowoso is characterized by close social relationships, mutual cooperation, and collective economic practices. Pesantren institutions in Madurese communities function not only as centers of religious education but also as agents of social transformation that shape community norms, leadership patterns, and economic behavior [4], [5]. Consequently, women's empowerment initiatives in Bondowoso are often embedded within religious and community institutions rather than being implemented through purely formal development mechanisms.

Recent studies have increasingly highlighted the importance of culturally grounded empowerment models. Previous studies argue that empowerment programs are more sustainable when they are developed based on local cultural resources and existing social capital. Their study of Madurese Muslim communities introduced the TENGKA model, consisting of Trust, Effort, Networking, Keeping, and Active participation. The findings demonstrate that empowerment emerges from strong community relationships, cultural traditions, and collective values rather than solely from external development interventions [6]. Such findings are particularly relevant in understanding how women in Bondowoso build economic resilience through locally embedded social networks.

The significance of local wisdom in women's empowerment is further illustrated in the work of Arodha et al. [7] on Muslim women-led agriculture in Bondowoso. The study reveals how women utilize traditional knowledge to transform household organic waste and local agricultural resources into livestock feed, thereby reducing production costs, improving household income, and contributing to environmental sustainability. This practice illustrates that local wisdom is not merely a cultural heritage but also an adaptive resource that enables women to respond creatively to contemporary economic and environmental challenges. The integration of local knowledge and Islamic ethics creates a distinctive model of empowerment that is both culturally acceptable and economically productive.

Social capital also plays a crucial role in strengthening women's empowerment within rural Muslim communities. Social capital in Islamic societies is characterized by trust, reciprocity, social solidarity, and collective

responsibility. These elements facilitate cooperation and resource sharing among community members, thereby increasing their capacity to overcome economic challenges [8]. In Bondowoso, women's participation in religious gatherings, arisan groups, farmer associations, and pesantren-based activities contributes to the formation of social networks that support economic initiatives and collective resilience.

The role of pesantren in fostering women's empowerment deserves particular attention because these institutions provide not only religious education but also social and economic opportunities. Fauzi and Nurdin [9] found that pesantren increasingly engage in entrepreneurship education, community development programs, and economic empowerment initiatives that enhance local capacities. Through these activities, women gain access to knowledge, leadership experiences, and economic skills while maintaining their religious identity. This phenomenon demonstrates that Islamic educational institutions can function as strategic platforms for women's empowerment within culturally conservative communities.

Another important dimension of empowerment concerns environmental sustainability and family resilience. The increasing global emphasis on sustainable development requires empowerment programs to address environmental concerns alongside economic objectives. Arodha et al. [7] demonstrate that women in Bondowoso contribute significantly to climate resilience through environmentally friendly agricultural practices and resource management strategies. Their participation not only strengthens household economies but also supports broader sustainability goals. This finding reflects the Islamic principle of stewardship (khalifah), which emphasizes human responsibility for maintaining environmental balance and social welfare.

Considering these dynamics, women's empowerment in Bondowoso cannot be understood solely through economic indicators or gender equality frameworks. Rather, it emerges from the interaction between Islamic values, local wisdom, social capital, and community institutions. Existing studies have demonstrated the importance of pesantren, local traditions, and social networks in facilitating empowerment processes; however, limited research has specifically examined how these elements collectively shape women's agency within Madurese Muslim communities. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how Islamic perspectives and local wisdom interact in empowering women in Bondowoso, contributing to a deeper understanding of culturally grounded and faith-based empowerment models in contemporary Muslim societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore how Islamic values and local wisdom contribute to women's empowerment in Bondowoso Regency, East Java, Indonesia. A case study approach was selected because it enables researchers to investigate a contemporary social phenomenon within its real-life context and to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between culture, religion, and community empowerment (Yin, 2018). The study focused on women's empowerment practices that emerge from local traditions, Islamic teachings, and community-based economic activities among Muslim women in Bondowoso.

The research was conducted in several villages in Bondowoso Regency, East Java, where the majority of the population belongs to the Madurese ethnic community and actively practices Islamic cultural traditions. Bondowoso was selected because previous studies have identified the region as an example of successful community empowerment based on local wisdom, social capital, and Islamic values [6], [7]. Furthermore, women in Bondowoso play significant roles in agricultural activities, livestock management, community organizations, religious gatherings, and household economic development, making the region an appropriate setting for examining women's empowerment from an Islamic and cultural perspective.

The participants consisted of Muslim women involved in community economic activities, women farmer groups, local entrepreneurs, religious leaders (kiai), village leaders, and community empowerment facilitators. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding women's empowerment practices. The selection criteria included active participation in community-based economic programs, involvement in religious and social activities, and familiarity with local cultural traditions. Additional informants were identified through snowball sampling to enrich the data and obtain diverse perspectives on the empowerment process.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and understanding of

women's empowerment, Islamic values, and local wisdom. Participant observation was employed to observe daily economic activities, community gatherings, religious events, and women-led empowerment initiatives. Documentary sources, including village reports, community records, government documents, and previous research publications, were also examined to provide contextual information and support data triangulation.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts, field notes, and documentary evidence were systematically coded and categorized to identify recurring themes related to empowerment, local wisdom, Islamic values, social capital, and community participation. The analysis emphasized understanding the relationships between cultural practices and empowerment outcomes while identifying patterns that explain how women negotiate economic and social roles within their communities.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, including women, religious leaders, and community facilitators. Method triangulation involved comparing data derived from interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was undertaken by presenting preliminary findings to selected participants to verify the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations. These procedures enhanced the validity, reliability, and rigor of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Women's Empowerment from an Islamic Perspective

Women's empowerment in Bondowoso is closely associated with Islamic teachings that emphasize justice, responsibility, productivity, and social welfare. The findings indicate that women perceive economic participation not merely as a strategy to increase household income but also as a form of religious obligation aimed at supporting family wellbeing and contributing to society. Women actively engage in agriculture, livestock management, small-scale enterprises, community organizations, and religious activities while maintaining their responsibilities within the family structure. This understanding reflects the Islamic principle that productive work constitutes a form of worship (*ibadah*) when conducted in accordance with ethical and social responsibilities (Khan, 2019). Consequently, economic empowerment is not viewed as contradicting religious values but rather as a practical manifestation of Islamic teachings concerning human dignity and social justice.

Islamic teachings provide a normative framework that legitimizes women's involvement in economic activities. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes the principles of fairness, cooperation, and mutual benefit in economic transactions. Scholars of Islamic economics argue that economic participation by women contributes not only to family welfare but also to broader social development because Islam encourages all members of society to utilize their capabilities for communal benefit [10], [11]. In Bondowoso, women frequently describe their economic activities as efforts to support their families, finance children's education, and contribute to community welfare, illustrating the practical application of Islamic economic principles in everyday life.

The findings further reveal that religious institutions play a significant role in facilitating empowerment processes. Pesantren, majelis taklim, and community religious gatherings function as spaces where women acquire knowledge, strengthen social networks, and develop entrepreneurial capacities. Hannan and Syarif [4], [5] argue that pesantren in Madurese society serve as centers of social transformation that extend beyond religious education into economic and community development. Through these institutions, women gain access to information regarding entrepreneurship, family financial management, and social responsibilities. Similar findings were reported by Fauzi and Nurdin [9], who found that pesantren-based empowerment programs enhance economic capabilities while simultaneously strengthening religious values and social cohesion.

Another important finding concerns the role of Islamic social values in shaping collective empowerment. Women in Bondowoso often participate in cooperative economic activities motivated by principles such as *ukhuwah*

(brotherhood and sisterhood), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), and *amanah* (trustworthiness). These values encourage collective action and reduce individual economic vulnerability. Islamic social capital significantly contributes to community resilience because trust and reciprocity facilitate cooperation among community members [8]. Such conditions are clearly evident in Bondowoso, where women frequently collaborate in agricultural production, community savings groups, and social welfare initiatives.

The empowerment process also reflects the Islamic objective of achieving *maslahah* or public welfare. Rather than focusing exclusively on individual economic advancement, women often prioritize collective wellbeing and family resilience. This orientation is consistent with contemporary Islamic development theories that emphasize inclusive growth, ethical economic behavior, and social justice [12]. Therefore, women's empowerment in Bondowoso demonstrates how Islamic teachings function not only as spiritual guidance but also as a practical framework for community development and economic sustainability.

Women's Empowerment from the Perspective of Local Wisdom

The findings demonstrate that local wisdom constitutes a fundamental element in shaping women's empowerment within Bondowoso's Madurese community. Local wisdom refers to culturally embedded knowledge, values, practices, and institutions that guide community behavior and social interaction. In Bondowoso, women's empowerment is strongly influenced by traditions of mutual cooperation, kinship solidarity, collective responsibility, and respect for religious and community leaders. These cultural values create a supportive environment that enables women to participate actively in social and economic activities.

One of the most important expressions of local wisdom is the existence of community-based economic traditions such as *arisan*, collective farming, mutual labor exchange, and neighborhood support networks. These institutions function as informal mechanisms for resource mobilization, information exchange, and social protection. Community-based social networks strengthen economic resilience by facilitating access to resources, knowledge, and opportunities [13]. Women in Bondowoso utilize these networks to obtain capital, share business experiences, and overcome economic challenges through collective action.

The role of indigenous knowledge is equally significant. Women possess extensive practical knowledge regarding agricultural production, food processing, livestock management, and environmental conservation. Arodha et al. [6], [7] documented how women in Bondowoso utilize household organic waste to produce livestock feed through local practices known as *bhug-bhug*. This innovation demonstrates how local knowledge contributes simultaneously to economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, and household resilience. Such findings support the argument of Berkes [14] that traditional ecological knowledge remains highly relevant for addressing contemporary sustainability challenges.

Local wisdom also manifests through the strong kinship structures characteristic of Madurese society. Humaidi [3] explains that social relations among Madurese communities are structured around collective values, family solidarity, and communal obligations. These relationships create social safety nets that help women access labor, financial assistance, and emotional support during periods of economic hardship. Consequently, empowerment is not solely an individual achievement but a collective process sustained through community relationships and social obligations.

Moreover, local traditions provide opportunities for women to develop leadership capacities. Participation in social gatherings, community organizations, and cultural activities allows women to enhance communication skills, organizational abilities, and decision-making capacities. Such experiences strengthen women's confidence and increase their visibility within public spaces. As argued by Aminullah [15], local cultural institutions often function as informal educational environments that cultivate leadership and social competencies among community members. Therefore, local wisdom serves not only as a cultural heritage but also as a dynamic resource for empowerment.

The Relationship between Islamic Perspective and Local Wisdom in Women's Empowerment

The findings indicate that women's empowerment in Bondowoso emerges from a dynamic interaction between Islamic values and local wisdom. Rather than functioning as separate systems, religion and culture are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Islamic teachings provide ethical and normative foundations, while local wisdom offers practical mechanisms for implementing these values within everyday community life. This integration creates a distinctive empowerment model that is culturally accepted and socially sustainable.

One area where this interaction is particularly visible is in collective economic activities. Women's groups, savings associations, agricultural cooperatives, and social gatherings often combine economic objectives with religious activities such as Quran recitation, religious lectures, and collective prayers. Ismail and Asso [16] argue that Islamic communities frequently integrate religious teachings into local traditions, producing hybrid institutions that support both spiritual and material wellbeing. Such integration strengthens participation because community members perceive empowerment activities as consistent with both cultural expectations and religious obligations.

The relationship between Islam and local wisdom can also be understood through the concept of social capital. Islamic values encourage trust, honesty, and cooperation, while local traditions provide the social structures through which these values are practiced. Islamic social capital strengthens community resilience because religious ethics reinforce social trust and collective action [8]. In Bondowoso, women's participation in arisan groups, pesantren activities, and agricultural associations illustrates how social capital is simultaneously shaped by religious beliefs and cultural norms.

A particularly relevant framework for understanding this relationship is the TENGKA model developed by Arodha et al. [6], [7], consisting of Trust, Effort, Networking, Keeping, and Active participation. Trust reflects both the Islamic principle of *amanah* and the cultural importance of maintaining social credibility. Effort corresponds to Islamic teachings regarding hard work and self-improvement. Networking reflects the significance of social relationships within Madurese culture. Keeping emphasizes the maintenance of long-term social solidarity, while Active participation highlights community engagement in collective development initiatives. The model demonstrates that empowerment is most effective when religious values and local cultural practices operate synergistically.

The findings further reveal that women who participate actively in both religious and cultural institutions tend to exhibit higher levels of economic engagement, leadership, and social influence. Through involvement in religious gatherings, community organizations, and local economic initiatives, women gain access to information, social support, and opportunities for personal development. Similar findings were reported by Arodha et al. [6], [7], who observed that women-led empowerment initiatives in Bondowoso succeeded because they combined Islamic ethical values with locally embedded practices and social networks.

Overall, the interaction between Islamic perspectives and local wisdom produces a comprehensive empowerment framework that addresses economic, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. Women's empowerment in Bondowoso is therefore not merely an economic phenomenon but a culturally embedded process shaped by faith, social relationships, and indigenous knowledge. This finding suggests that future empowerment programs should prioritize culturally sensitive and religion-based approaches that build upon existing community strengths rather than relying exclusively on externally designed interventions.

Table 1. Relationship between Islamic Values, Local Wisdom, and Women's Empowerment in Bondowoso

Islamic Perspective	Local Wisdom Practices	Empowerment Outcomes
<i>Amanah</i> (trustworthiness)	Strong kinship relations and mutual trust among community members	Increased social trust, stronger cooperation, and sustainability of women's economic activities

<i>Ta'awun</i> (mutual assistance)	Collective work traditions, arisan groups, and mutual aid practices	Improved access to economic resources, reduced household vulnerability, and strengthened social solidarity
<i>Ukhuwah</i> (brotherhood/sisterhood)	Community gatherings, religious meetings, and women's associations	Expansion of social networks, knowledge sharing, and collective empowerment
<i>Maslahah</i> (public welfare)	Community-based economic initiatives and cooperative activities	Enhanced family welfare and broader community development
<i>Ijtihad</i> and productive work	Women's participation in agriculture, livestock management, and microenterprises	Increased household income and economic independence
<i>Khalifah</i> (environmental stewardship)	Utilization of local ecological knowledge such as <i>bhug-bhug</i> livestock feed production	Environmental sustainability and economic resilience
<i>Shura</i> (consultation)	Community deliberation and collective decision-making traditions	Greater participation of women in development processes
Islamic education through pesantren	Informal cultural learning and intergenerational knowledge transfer	Improved skills, leadership capacity, and entrepreneurial competence

Source: Adapted from Arodha et al. [6], [7], Hannan and Syarif [5], and Aziz and Taqiyuddin [8].

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that women's empowerment in Bondowoso is shaped by the dynamic interaction between Islamic values and local wisdom, which together create a sustainable and culturally relevant empowerment model. From an Islamic perspective, women's participation in economic activities is viewed not only as a means of improving household welfare but also as a form of social responsibility and worship that reflects the principles of *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), *ukhuwah* (solidarity), and *maslahah* (public welfare). Islamic institutions, particularly pesantren and religious gatherings, play a strategic role in strengthening women's capacities, expanding social networks, and legitimizing their involvement in economic and community development activities. Consequently, empowerment in the Bondowoso context extends beyond economic achievement to encompass social contribution, family resilience, and community wellbeing.

The findings further reveal that local wisdom serves as an essential foundation for women's empowerment through traditions of mutual cooperation, kinship solidarity, indigenous knowledge, and collective economic practices. These cultural resources provide women with opportunities to access information, develop leadership skills, strengthen social capital, and improve household livelihoods. The integration of Islamic values and local wisdom is clearly reflected in the TENGKA model—Trust, Effort, Networking, Keeping, and Active participation—which explains how empowerment emerges through the synergy of religious ethics, cultural traditions, and community engagement. Therefore, effective empowerment programs should not rely solely on external interventions but should incorporate local cultural resources and Islamic principles as complementary assets. Such an approach can strengthen women's agency, enhance family economic resilience, support environmental sustainability, and contribute to inclusive community development within Muslim societies.

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