Challenges of Women and Socio-Cultural Under islamic Law in Aceh

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ABSTRACT: *Acehnese cultural values are deeply rooted in Islam, which emphasizes the importance of balance between society and Islamic Law in Aceh. In the dominant discourse on women's political participation, which often combines conservative cultural views on gender in decision-making in development. Strong culture and social demands often limit women's access to public spaces and decision-making processes. Although there is potential for women in Aceh, there are still few women who become leaders in politics. In the challenges of women in Aceh, this study uses observation, interview, and secondary methods to highlight the importance of religious and cultural values in shaping the decision-making process in Aceh. Women face structural, socio-cultural, and religious challenges in entering the public world, including the control of local elites and the need for education and political involvement in the community environment. Women, as the largest population in Aceh, should be able to contribute to social, cultural, and economic development as sustainable development. As a region that implements Islamic Law, women still have to struggle to be part of policymakers in public and domestic. Social culture in Islamic Law can sometimes lead to the marginalization of women because of the implementation of customs that may not be in line with the principles of gender equality. The implementation of Islamic Law in Aceh shapes and is formed by socio-cultural practices, which can lead to the construction of gender ideologies that often limit women's agency.*

KEYWORDS -*Women, decision making, Islamic Law, socio-cultural, government.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Islamic law in Aceh is regulated by various Qanuns and regulations, such as Aceh Qanun Number 11 of 2002 concerning the Implementation of Islamic Law. The implementation of Islamic Law in Aceh has an important social dimension in shaping the behavior and norms of society (Yuridis, 2015). The perspective of the sociology of religion comprehensive understanding of Islamic Law refers to the historical context in understanding the dynamics of the implementation of religion in a society.

In the life of a society that continues to be influenced by culture in acting both in the context of communication, culture, and unequal behavior between women and men. The concrete form of customs and culture in the life of the Acehnese people is not only applied in the social, economic, and political fields but also in the legal field (Nurdin, 2013). Especially for women, so that women become victims of various policies. Coupled with a socio-cultural environment that does not support and participate in politics at various levels and national decision makers, and the existence of institutions that continue to limit women to marginal power. Women are largely known to be responsible for nurturing positive cultural practices, and they offer nonviolence and strife.

The concrete form of customs and culture in the life of the Acehnese people is not only applied in the social, economic, and political fields but also in the legal field (Nurdin, 2013). These informal norms will not disappear and will remain in the future. Some people agree that the social system, culture, political barriers, stigma, and prejudice will continue to provide obstacles for women to reach the top position (Ikromatoun, 2017). However, women's participation in various fields continues to be carried out, and women who continue to push for women's injustice in various solutions and protections.

In the implementation of Islamic Law, women's rights limited by dominant cultural norms, thus limiting their autonomy and freedom both in the domestic and public spheres (Akbar, 2015; Othman, 2006). In Indonesian society, whose Islam is embraced by fanaticism of its teachings or figures, it will always uphold its sharia and creed (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014). In the development of the implementation of Islamic Law, it is very difficult to implement women's participation at the decision-making level in government (Akbar, 2015; Hasni, 2020; Ningrum, 2005). The decision-making level of Acehnese society in the government and village environments experiences structured challenges.According to Fakih (2012), in the environment where gender injustice occurs, it is a system and structure in which men and women become victims of the existing system in which they exist.

In the representation of women in policy makers, politics and government in Aceh still face obstacles in the economy, socio-culture, and religion. Although Aceh is an area that enforces Islamic Law. Aceh affects women's lives by often having to submit to the policy decisions of the majority of men or community leaders in traditional practices that have been passed down from generation to generation. In the role of gender, the traditional perspective in Aceh emphasizes the importance of women having responsibilities to the family and household. To that extent, this habit causes conditions and behaviors in society that ignore recognition of women's contributions to the role of women in the public sphere.

Furthermore, significant gender leadership gaps have yet to be addressed properly. Barriers to women's participation in public leadership vary across levels of political systems, organizational structures, and cultures (Lay, 2017). Women in empowerment and leadership activities to achieve balance targets are hampered by the ever-existing stigma, discrimination against women, and barriers in the social, political, and cultural systems (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The struggle of Indonesian women to achieve dominant success in the public will continue to be a challenge for society itself, as long as there are still differences between the domestic and public spheres (Tjandraningsih, 2018; Tuwu, 2018). With limited of support from various sources and information, women's struggles will move slowly and not be on target.

The low participation of women in development is caused by the dichotomy of masculine and feminine human roles due to biological determination, public and domestic roles that originate from the "role of women at home," the concept of double workload, or women who act as housewives tend to experience the actualization of women's potential, as well as the syndrome of subordination and marginal roles of women to maintain insight into the role and function of women in society, which is secondary. However, the level of women's involvement in Indonesia continues to be pursued to achieve equality in various fields.

## II. WOMENANDSocio-Cultural in the Modern Period

Women in culture have different roles and challenges in various contexts. Women have played various roles in traditional cultures, such as protectors of local wisdom, leaders of indigenous communities, and forest conservationists (MR, 2021). This is proof that women's abilities must be prioritized. However, women are only

tools to complement any activity, and cultural reality does not accommodate equality and balance in women (Lan, 2015). In fact, women as cultural agents play a major role in creating, maintaining, and preserving cultural products in society (Kistanto, 2018). Modernization appears in various forms, both real and in forms that are not realized by humans in the world, so it can be said that almost no humans are not victims of modernization (Muzzaki, 2023; Salim Alatas, 2019). Society becomes more open to new experiences, values opinions, and is future-oriented, including increased trust in science.

By understanding the role of women in culture, women not only contribute to its preservation but also play a major role in creating and developing culture. In reality, women often face obstacles and discrimination, so efforts are needed to encourage strengthening the role of women in various fields (Bayumi, 2022; Habsari, 2015). Socio-cultural barriers in Aceh refer to barriers that are rooted in a combination of social and cultural factors. These barriers have a significant impact on various aspects of life, education, health, and social interaction. This can also be influenced by community norms, cultural traditions, and how individuals view themselves and their roles in the community. In Aceh, the role of women is more dominant in domestic work, but women still have work outside. While men spend all their time working outside the home. If we look at the reality in modern times when the economy is increasing, many women are required to work to increase family income. Therefore, the burden on women has increased at home and outside in meeting their needs.

The sociocultural of Aceh after the conflict has undergone significant changes with the openness of the Acehnese people in socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects. This can be seen in the development of public thought and discourse of the Acehnese people, shifts in social behavior, disorientation of local values, political democratization, and the development of young people's lifestyles in following globalization (Pakarena et al., 2024). Increased exposure to global culture and economic opportunities has led to an increasing trend of modernization and a shift from traditional practices in Aceh.

In the post-tsunami period, the increasing burden on women's participation in public spaces also increased, with the women taking roles outside the home. Supported by women's empowerment programs from the government and non-governmental organizations. In 2004, there was a change in women's participation in public spaces, with a shift in women becoming more daring in their lives. So that it results in a high burden on women, this is triggered by the increasing number of divorce cases initiated by women and calling for equal rights and opportunities.
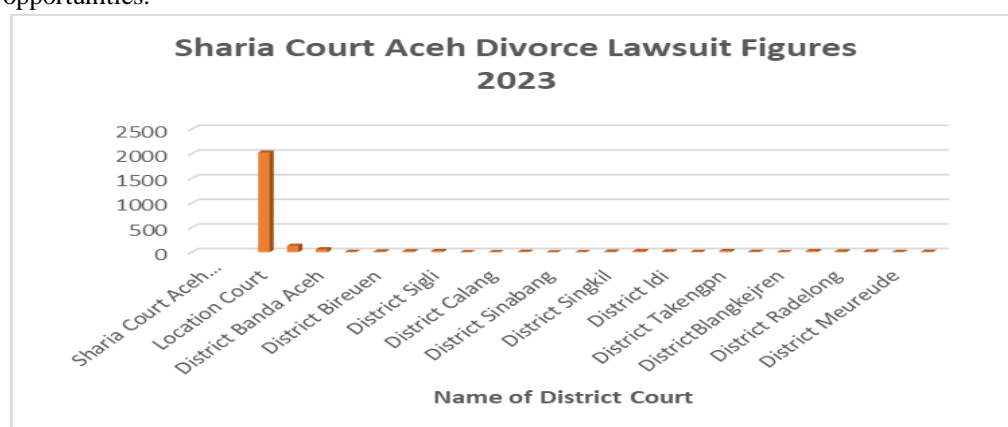
Graphic 1. Number of divorces in Aceh

The Aceh Province Sharia Court recorded that the divorce rate in Aceh reached 3704 cases from January to June 2023. The divorce cases were dominated by divorce lawsuits by wives against their husbands. In this social condition, it occurs due to economic factors, not providing for the wife, infidelity, biological defects, unhealthy polygamy, jealousy, forced marriage, economic, underage marriage, political, and lack of harmony. This condition grows because there is courage and desire for women to change their lives to a better position. In Indonesia, the government's policy to realize gender equality and justice has been stipulated through Law Number 25 of 2000 concerning the National Development Program (Propenas 2000-2004) and is emphasized in Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2000 concerning Gender Mainstreaming (PUG). The role concept supports

a focus on this process of normative accountability, where the accumulation of meanings and expectations associated with specific forms of action is captured as well as contested. As agents interpret roles, norms gain and lose authority, becoming more or less relevant to mutual accountability. Some people and groups still do not understand the concept and importance of PUG. This hinders effective implementation because, without a good understanding, support for gender policies cannot be maximized.

III.   SOCIAL BARRIERS OF WOMAN

Social status and role in society are interrelated concepts in sociology that describe a person's position in society and behavior. Social status refers to the relative rank or position a person has in a social hierarchy, while social role is the expected pattern of behavior for a social position (Iskandar, 2022; Wulan, 2019). Socio-cultural barriers in Aceh refer to barriers that are rooted in a combination of social and cultural factors. These barriers have a significant impact on various aspects of life, education, health, and social interaction. This can be influenced by societal norms, cultural traditions, and how individuals view themselves and the role of people in the community. The socio-culture of Aceh after the conflict has undergone significant changes. The post-conflict and tsunami social conditions in Aceh marked the openness of the Acehnese people in socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects. So far, the development of public thought and discourse of the Acehnese people, shifts in social behavior, disorientation of local values, political democratization (Abidin et al., 2023). the development of young people's lifestyles in following globalization.

However, entering the period of implementing Islamic law in Aceh has raised several significant social and cultural problems. One of the problems faced is the lack of awareness and legal culture of the Acehnese people, which results in a lack of public understanding of the substance of Islamic law implemented by the government. Limited budget for the implementation of Islamic Law is also one of the challenges faced. In addition, differences in views and interests between the government and the community are a source of conflict and problems in the implementation of Islamic Law in Aceh. The involvement of women in social activities is limited to party committee events, and women's meals always have the opportunity after men. However, when compared to the time of the conflict, women's involvement in Aceh has an important role in the struggle of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). In the process of political change, women in Aceh are often considered as creatures who have a lower position (Mhd. Latip Kahpi, 2024; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). At the community level participation in village meetings, women are not a priority to be involved in every village meeting, except in Family Empowerment and Welfare (Pemberdayaan dan KesejahtraanKeluarga or PKK) and Pos Yandu[1] activities.

Therefore, the issue of violence against women in Aceh is a long-standing phenomenon that cannot be protected specifically in the protection of women, there still experience more pressure than men. So, it is necessary to build new knowledge about violence against women and encourage better policies to protect women's rights. This is also influenced by the strong politicization of religion in Aceh, which has made advocacy work for women's empowerment difficult.

With the influence of *ulama*(religious leader)in the implementation of Islamic Sharia, Aceh can become a region that can maintain the sustainability of culture and religion, so that continuous efforts are needed to maintain the integrity of Aceh's culture and religion. The status and social role of society have a major impact on individual behavior in society (Wee, 2001). The status of a man or woman can influence norms and expectations. The dynamics of Acehnese society are very important for understanding how individuals interact in groups and society in their respective roles and responsibilities. Social status in Aceh plays an important role in determining the role of men and women in society.

3.1 Gender Communication in Society

Differences in language and communication styles can have a significant impact on how people interact and respond to each other. Communication in society is also influenced by the different social structures

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[1]A public health program initiated by the Indonesian government to improve maternal and child health in urban and rural areas

and strata between one society and another (Fakhruroji & Rojiati, 2017). The cultural differences that the two sexes have can affect the complexity of society and make the social processes that can be carried out more complicated (Legate et al., 2020; Saripudin, Diah Ernawati, 2023) Therefore, communication between women and men in Acehnese social culture is also important so that women can be recognized as equal in the environment in which they carry out activities.

In reality, gender communication in Acehnese acts as a social construction tool with the aim of equalizing men and women in society (Handayani, 2023). In current conditions, women are more courageous in making decisions, so the number of single mothers is increasing. In feminist theory, social and gender structures influence the decision-making process (Astuti, 2016). In this context, women face social and gender pressures in making decisions that are in accordance with the values and goals of each woman (Lay, 2017; Srimulyani, 2010). The scope of interpersonal communication between men and women can be a source of communication gaps ranging from unwanted communication actions to violence that has the potential to damage relationships (Handayani, 2023). Therefore, it is important for both parties to understand and appreciate these differences in order to communicate more effectively and build better relationships.

Gender communication in the family and community environment includes the elimination of discrimination and structural injustice for every individual to have equality. In the context of communication, gender can be studied as a social process that influences the way men and women communicate. The Genderlect Style Theory proposed by Deborah Tannen (1990), which has been used for a long time, shows that women and men use different language styles and have different dialects, so this situation is called genderlects.

Gender communication in society plays an important role in equalizing men and women and reducing gender discrimination and injustice. Aceh is an area that still does not have a good gender communication culture in society, it's possibility of conflict between men and women. In Acehnese culture, the presence of women in the structure is very minimal so that the delivery of information, ideas, or messages related to public policy to various related parties, including the general public, stakeholders, or other stakeholders, does not fulfill equality. Communication should be a tool for conveying the hidden thoughts of the community to the government to facilitate the socialization process for all problems that occur in government policies by communicating well without discrimination against the government.

Communication in society is also influenced by the different social structures and strata between society. The cultural differences they have can affect the complexity of society and make the social processes that can be carried out more complicated (Kumar & Ansari, 2023). Therefore, good communication is needed to facilitate the process of socialization in the community environment. In the context of policy decisions, communication plays a key role in connecting the government and society, as well as between individuals in society who have an important role in the history and social status in Aceh. They have played an important role in realizing peace and social welfare, and in various fields, Acehnese women still experience inequality in relation to justice, especially in terms of social, economic, and development. The stigma of society that considers women only to have responsibilities in household chores and very few women are involved in national development still persists, such as in education, trade, and politics.

IV. TRADITION AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Acehnese culture also influences the way Acehnese people accept and implement Islamic law in their lives. Acehnese culture, which is very strong and integral to Islam, has influenced the way Acehnese people accept Islamic law. In some cases, Acehnese culture can contribute to the difficulties in implementing Islamic law effectively in Aceh, which can also influence the way other regions of Indonesia accept and implement Islamic Law in some aspects of life related to religion and culture.

Custom and religion are not separate, and custom is different from qanun and *reusam*[2]. changes in a more modern context. The power of custom in maintaining material bases such as customary land in Aceh has

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[2]A custom in society that is not binding and not bound by legal sanctions.

gradually eroded, not so thick in its time. Currently in Aceh, custom is still part of people's lives but has been more in line with local traditions influenced by various cultures and the development of traditions (Mardhiah, 2018; Srimulyani, 2010). Islam and customary traditions in Aceh cannot be separated from each other. Religion and culture are integrated into the lives of the Acehnese people, and customary traditions are often influenced by Islam. Religious traditions and beliefs have a significant impact on the social and cultural order of a community, influencing values, norms, and behavior (Kumar & Ansari, 2023; Wahid, 2010). This shapes traditions, provides moral guidance, and regulates communities, which ultimately contributes to the development of positive social values and individual well-being (Fikri, 2018; Husna Amin, 2012). Tradition can be enriched by religious teachings; in a broader context, this understanding is important to create tolerance and mutual respect in a diverse society.

The concrete form of customs and culture in the lives of the Acehnese people is not only applied in the social, economic, and political fields but also in the legal field (Davie, 2022). That is why this local wisdom is able to survive in society because it is in line with Islamic values. Some villages in Aceh are still strong with a culture that can still be maintained. However, some urban areas that are relatively immigrants do not follow the entire Acehnese culture that is more modern. Efforts to revitalize local wisdom continue to be carried out, as evidenced by the enactment of Qanun Number 5 of 2003 concerning Village Government, which strengthens and perfects the previous qanun. The qanun states that the village is the lowest government organization under the settlement in the organizational structure of the Aceh Provincial government.

V.   POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Public communication must be carried out professionally to influence the government and ensure effective public services. Communicators must have the ability to convey public aspirations and complaints in an effective and credible manner. The form of communication used by the public can vary depending on local culture and customs. In Aceh, communication has influenced the social life of the community. The public can access information and communicate more quickly and effectively, which affects the way they interact and participate in society.

Aceh, under the implementation of Islamic Law, has a close relationship with the use of Islamic political communication, including building the image of Islamic politics, forming the public opinion of Muslims, and optimizing political participation for the benefit of Muslims (Abubakar, 2011; Surbakti, 2010; Yuridis, 2015). In this context, Islamic political communication focuses on Islamic messages that influence political patterns and behavior. In this case, Islamic political communication also involves political management and marketing, understanding the political agenda of the mass media, and political propaganda and lobbying (Darwin, 2016). Unfortunately, political communication has not yet reached equality in a policy between men and women. In Aceh, there are still men in the highest decision-making positions.

Islamic political communication is in a complex context, where political communication uses politics and influences political patterns and behavior (Zinira, 2017). This can increase the political participation of Muslims through Islamic political communication strategies used in Indonesia in influencing constituents in legislative elections, including embracing young people or millennials. Interpersonal communication with figures, religious institutions, and also patrons in society is used by Islamic political parties to increase electability and gain support from voters.

In greater participation of women in public life, including in leadership positions. The role of women in Acehnese society is often influenced by cultural and religious norms. Women in Aceh are known for their participatory and democratic leadership style. They tend to involve others in the decision-making process and prioritize development and society. The decision-making style of female leaders in Aceh is shaped by a combination of cultural, social, and environmental factors. Although there is variation in their approaches, many female leaders in Aceh demonstrate participatory and democratic leadership styles, supported by the priority of

community development and empowerment. However, women's representation in political capacity in Aceh has not been able to become a change in women's democracy in development.

This is proven in 2019-2024, when the number of women involved in the Aceh People's Representative Council (DPRA) was around 9 people, and in 2014-2019 around 12 people. The level of women's representation in political institutions in Aceh has still not reached the quota in accordance with election regulations. The political process faced by Acehnese women in politics is caused by the Acehnese people's understanding of politics and the social stigma that considers women weak in the world of politics. Women's representation in legislative institutions for the 2014-2019 period has decreased slightly compared to the number of women's representation in the previous period (Salfa, 2024).

The Beijing Platform, a strategic document resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women, recognizes that women's equal participation in political decision-making is essential for women's progress. Women's situation is not equal in decision-making, but the situation of men, who have long dominated the public sphere and who have different needs, priorities, and concerns. from women. The Beijing action conference affirmation includes a strong statement to ensure women's equal access and full participation in power structures and decision-making for women's representation and participation in decision-making and leadership.

VI. CONCLUSION

Acehnese women have participated in various political and social movements, and there is increasing openness to opportunities in society. Despite progress in various fields, women still face limitations and challenges in achieving gender equality. Coupled with discrimination and social norms that limit women's roles and aspirations. In Aceh, women also play an important role in traditional culture, acting as protectors of local wisdom, leaders of indigenous communities, and preservers of cultural traditions. However, women still face obstacles in accessing resources and gaining proper recognition.

Women in the modern era have experienced significant changes in various aspects, but there are still challenges that need to be overcome to achieve greater gender equality. Gender mainstreaming strategies are integrated into development programs to increase women's involvement in politics and overcome women's subordination in power structures. Political communication plays a central role in increasing women's awareness, participation, and involvement in Acehnese politics. Effective communication strategies, such as face-to-face and social media, as well as complex social and political dynamics, help strengthen women's roles in the construction and deconstruction of Acehnese nationalism.

The implementation of Islamic Law in a socio-political context, such as in Aceh, is complex and influenced by various social, cultural, and political variables. Aceh should implement Islamic Law through a policy-making process that takes into account gender equality. Strategies and programs that aim to improve the role and rights of women in various aspects of life. Policies in gender equality in Aceh include gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment, implementation of international policies, policies in the fields of economics and politics, implementation in the private sector, and policies in the field of education in every sector.

VII.   Acknowledgements

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