



Feminism Capitalism and Gender Justice in an Islamic Perspective (Critical Analysis of Power Relations in the Global Economy)

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the relationship between feminism, capitalism, and gender justice in an Islamic perspective by highlighting the dynamics of power in the global economy. Global capitalism opens up access for women to enter the labor market, but at the same time reinforces structural injustices through the feminization of cheap labor, double workload, and the commodification of women's social roles. The feminism movement then comes as a critique of this inequality, despite the differences in positions between feminist schools towards capitalism. This study uses a qualitative approach through a literature study by combining a critical analysis of the global political economy and an Islamic normative approach that emphasizes the principles of justice ('adl), benefit (mashlahah), prohibition of exploitation (zulm), and protection of human dignity. The results of the study show that Islam offers an alternative ethical framework to gender injustice by appreciating the role of women in both the domestic and public spheres, rejecting the commodification of women's bodies, and promoting socio-economic balance. Qur'anic verses and hadith affirm spiritual equality, the glory of the role of motherhood, and the appreciation of domestic work. Thus, an Islamic perspective can be used to evaluate gender inequality in global capitalism while offering a balanced, ethical, and socially benefit-oriented model of gender justice.

Keywords: *Feminism, Capitalism, Gender Justice*

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INTRODUCTION

Economic globalization and the development of modern capitalism have led to structural changes in social relations, including gender relations and the division of roles between men and women. Capitalism functions not only as a system of production and distribution of goods, but also as a social system that shapes values, ideologies, and

power structures in society. Nancy Fraser (2013) calls capitalism an 'institutional order that integrates economic relations with social and cultural relations' so that it cannot be separated from the construction of gender in modern society. In this context, feminism exists as a critical response to patriarchal structures that place women in subordinate positions, both in the domestic and public spheres. The development of feminism itself took place in several historical waves, ranging from the struggle for educational rights and political rights to criticism of neoliberal capitalism that co-opted women's work and bodies as part of capital accumulation (Arruzza, Bhattacharya & Fraser, 2019). Thus, the relationship between feminism and capitalism shows complex and interconnected dynamics on both the material and ideological levels.

Although economic globalization expands women's space in public activities, empirical dynamics show that capitalism also produces new forms of gender injustice. Silvia Federici (2004) explains that modern capitalism creates the 'feminization of cheap labor' through the integration of women in low-wage and low-protection work sectors. This can be seen in the manufacturing, garment, labor migration, and informal sectors, where women fill vulnerable positions in global production chains. Eisenstein (2009) shows that women also experience a double burden because they continue to bear non-wage domestic responsibilities and are required to be productive in the market sector. In addition, the media sector and the beauty industry play a role in the commodification of women's bodies through the creation of identity and consumption standards that position women as market objects (Illouz, 2019). This phenomenon indicates that women's participation in the labor market does not automatically eliminate gender inequality, but rather often transforms it into more subtle forms legitimized by market-oriented discourse of empowerment.

However, academic discourse on feminism-capitalism relations is largely dominated by Western political economy perspectives and feminist theories. Literature that integrates feminist critique of capitalism with religious normative perspectives, especially Islam, is still relatively limited. Studies of gender justice in Islam often focus on issues of textual hermeneutics and social reform, but have not adequately examined how Islamic values can be used as an ethical framework to evaluate the structure of global capitalism that impacts women. In fact, in Islam, the concepts of justice ('adl), benefits (mashlahah), and prohibition of exploitation (zulm) are normative foundations in socio-economic relations. Chapra (1992) asserts that the Islamic economic system aims to 'realize human welfare through a fair distribution of wealth, protection of the weak, and the enforcement of social balance'. Meanwhile, Wadud (1999) and Badran (2009) emphasized that gender justice in Islam is oriented towards respect for human dignity, not on uniformity of roles. This research gap is important because it shows the absence of a synthesis between feminist criticism and the Islamic ethical framework in explaining the gender inequality produced by global capitalism.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the relationship between feminism, capitalism, and gender justice in an Islamic perspective through a qualitative approach based on literature studies. This research seeks to examine how the structure of the

capitalistic economy shapes gender relations in a global society, how feminism responds to and critiques these power relations, and how Islam offers an alternative ethical framework that affirms respect for women's domestic and public work, socio-economic balance, and the protection of human dignity. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution in expanding the discourse on gender justice through the synthesis between feminist criticism and Islamic ethics in the context of the global economy, while enriching the academic literature that is still fragmented between secular theoretical approaches and Islamic normative traditions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research with a library research approach. Literature studies are used to examine concepts, theories, and results of previous research through a search of relevant literature. According to Zed (2014), literature studies aim to obtain a conceptual and theoretical foundation through systematic mapping of the available academic literature. The research data is in the form of secondary data sourced from books, national and international journals, proceedings, and academic documents related to the topics of feminism, capitalism, and gender justice in Islam. The main literature used includes the works of Federici (2004), Fraser (2013), and Eisenstein (2009) on feminist critiques of capitalism, as well as Wadud (1999), Badran (2009), and Chapra (1992) on Islamic ethical perspectives on social and economic relations.

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively through an interpretive approach. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) explained that qualitative analysis is carried out through three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In this study, the reduction stage was carried out by grouping the literature into main themes such as feminism, capitalism, gender relations, and Islamic principles of justice. The interpretation stage is carried out through thematic analysis to assess the conceptual relationship between themes, while the synthesis stage is carried out to draw theoretical and argumentative conclusions about the relationship between feminism and capitalism in an Islamic perspective. Thus, the analytical techniques used are not only descriptive, but also analytical and critical.

In addition to the qualitative approach in general, this study also uses a critical analysis approach and a normative-Islamic approach. Critical analysis is used to examine the power relations between the capitalist system and women in the global economy, as affirmed by Fraser (2013) and Federici (2004) that capitalism does not operate in a neutral social space, but actively shapes social relations and gender structures. Meanwhile, the normative-Islamic approach is used to interpret Islamic values related to gender justice, such as the principles of 'adl (justice), mashlahah (benefit), and prohibition of exploitation (zulm). Chapra (1992) emphasized that Islamic economics aims to protect human welfare through a fair distribution of wealth and protection of vulnerable groups. This approach allows research to not only uncover gender inequality, but also offer an ethical alternative within the framework of Islamic teachings. This research is conceptual and does not collect field data, so the results are

more oriented towards the development of theoretical arguments than empirical generalizations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Relationship between Feminism and Capitalism in the Global Economy

The relationship between feminism and capitalism in the global economy is complex and ambivalent. On the one hand, capitalism opens up access for women to enter the labor market and public space through the provision of employment opportunities, education, and economic participation. The process of industrialization and globalization forced the economic system to integrate female labor as part of the economic production and reproduction mechanism. This causes women to gain social space that was previously difficult to access in a society based on traditional patriarchal structures. These developments are often understood as a form of progress for women, especially in the early wave of feminism that fought for civil rights and access to education.

However, on the other hand, capitalism cannot be understood as a gender-neutral system. Various studies show that the integration of women in the global market is not always accompanied by an improvement in their social or economic position. Federici (2004) argues that capitalism 'feminizes labor' by allocating women to low-wage, informal, and vulnerable sectors such as manufacturing, garments, domestic services, and labor migration. This shows that capitalism utilizes women's labor as an instrument of cost efficiency and production flexibility, rather than as a form of structural equality. In this context, women's involvement in the global market serves as part of the strategy of capital accumulation through labor exploitation and lack of social protection.

In addition to the material aspect, capitalism also plays an important role in shaping the social construction of women's roles and identities. Eisenstein (2009) shows that neoliberal capitalism integrates certain feminist values through the rhetoric of 'empowerment' oriented to market consumption and productivity. The discourse of independent women and career women that develop in the media and popular culture industries is a form of commodification of women's identities for marketing purposes. The narrative not only changes society's perception of women, but also shifts domestic values and social reproduction to be less valued in the economic system, because it does not generate exchange rates in the market.

At the theoretical level, the relationship between feminism and capitalism then became the subject of debate among feminists themselves. Liberal feminism sees capitalism as an instrument that can open up space for women's equality through policy reform and increased access. In contrast, critical, social, and radical feminism sees capitalism as a structure that sustains and reinforces gender inequality by instrumentalizing women's work for capital accumulation. Fraser (2013) even assesses that contemporary capitalism adopts the rhetoric of feminism as an ideological legitimacy to expand the labor market without removing the domestic workload of

women. This shows that capitalism not only creates new spaces for women, but also produces new forms of injustice that are not always realized in public discourse.

The Feminism Movement's Critique of the Capitalist Structure

The feminist movement's criticism of capitalism arises from the realization that the capitalist economic system does not only regulate the production and distribution process of goods, but also shapes the structure of social relations, including gender relations. Second-wave feminism began to identify that patriarchy and capitalism were intertwined in reinforcing women's subordinate positions. Social feminists and radicals consider that capitalism does not only utilize women's labor, but also relies on the social reproduction process carried out by women in the domestic sphere. Social reproduction, which includes nurturing, domestic work, and labor regeneration, is an important element in capital accumulation, but it is not economically recognized and is considered a 'natural woman's job.' This criticism is reinforced by Federici (2004) who shows that capitalism relies on unpaid domestic labor to maintain a cheap labor structure in the production sector.

In addition to criticizing domestic work that does not count as productive work, feminism also criticizes wage inequality and gender-based job market segmentation. Women are generally placed in low-wage, administrative, or service sectors, which do not offer significant economic mobility. Fraser (2013) highlights that neoliberal capitalism is able to absorb the demands of feminism related to access to work, but does not change the structure of the unequal distribution of economic value. In fact, the rhetoric of women's empowerment adopted by capitalism through the narrative of 'equal opportunity' actually further normalizes the double workload for women. This happens because women continue to bear the responsibility of social reproduction at home and are required to be productive in the public sphere, while this burden is not recognized in the capitalist reward system.

In the third and fourth waves, feminist critique of capitalism developed more intersectionally and multidimensionally. The feminist movement began to highlight that gender inequality is not only determined by patriarchy and capitalism, but is also influenced by other variables such as social class, race, ethnicity, and migration status. Working class and minority women tend to experience more intense forms of exploitation in the global economic structure, for example through the migration of women workers in the domestic or manufacturing sectors who work in vulnerable conditions without legal protection. Contemporary feminism also criticizes cultural capitalism that commodifies women's bodies, sexuality, and identities through the media and industry of consumerism. This critique expands the understanding that capitalism not only materially exploits women's labor, but also produces symbolic representations that reinforce gender stereotypes and make women objects of the market.

Islamic Perspectives on Gender Justice and Criticism of Capitalism

The Islamic perspective on gender justice departs from the principle of equality of human dignity (*karāmah al-insān*) and spiritual equality between men and women. The Qur'an emphasizes that the deeds of both men and women have an equal position with Allah (Q.S. Ali-Imran: 195), so that human value is not determined by gender, but by piety and its contribution to welfare. This principle of spiritual equality is the basis that gender justice in Islam is not understood as a competitive identity between men and women, but as a division of roles oriented towards social balance (*tawāzun*) and the protection of human dignity. Thus, Islam recognizes the existence of domestic and public roles without positioning one of them as low or less valuable.

In the socio-economic framework, Islam rejects exploitation of any kind, including the exploitation of labor and the commodification of women's bodies as often happens in the capitalist system. The concept of *zulm* in Islam is not only understood as moral tyranny, but also as a structural injustice that harms certain groups. Capitalism that assesses human values based on their economic productivity is contrary to the concept of Islamic welfare which includes material, spiritual, and social aspects. Chapra (1992) emphasized that the goal of Islamic economics is to realize human well-being through a fair distribution of wealth and protection for vulnerable groups. In this context, women are part of a vulnerable group that must be protected from economic exploitation, both in the domestic and public spheres.

Islam also appreciates domestic work as part of an important social contribution, not as an inferior activity as the construction of capitalism that only recognizes productive labor that generates exchange value. The hadith narrated by Bukhari shows that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH helped with household chores, which indicates that domestic work has moral and social value. In addition, the hadith about the triple priority of mothers over fathers in the respect of children (narrated by Bukhari and Muslim) shows that Islam glorifies the role of social reproduction and emotional work of women. This pattern is inversely proportional to capitalism which does not count domestic labor in the market structure, although it is the basis of labor reproduction and capital accumulation, as described by Federici (2004).

On the other hand, Islam does not close the space for women to play a role in the public sector. The public role of women in Islam is seen as a legitimate choice as long as it does not cause moral and social harm. In the history of Islam, women participated in economic, educational, and political activities, which shows that Islam is not a system that structurally marginalizes women. However, Islam does not require that a woman's moral value be determined by her involvement in the market. This perspective is different from the contemporary capitalist narrative that defines women's progress through labor participation alone. Thus, Islam offers an alternative perspective in which the value of domestic and public work has a balanced and complementary social position.

From the perspective of economic criticism, Islam rejects the logic of capitalism that makes human beings a commodity and measures the value of women based on

market productivity and purchasing power. Capitalism also tends to force women out of the domestic sphere without the provision of a fair distribution of workload, thus creating a double workload. Islam offers an approach to the distribution of social functions that is not based on exploitation, but on the principles of responsibility and justice. Here it can be seen that the Islamic perspective can complement feminist criticism of capitalism through an ethical-normative approach that rejects the commodification of the body, the exploitation of labor, and the reduction of women's values to mere economic entities. The model of gender justice in Islam is oriented towards the benefit (*mashlahah*), distribution of responsibilities, protection of dignity, and social balance, thus offering an alternative that is not only critical of capitalism, but also constructive in formulating a more just social order for women.

Disussion

The discussion of the relationship between feminism and capitalism in the global economy shows that capitalism cannot be seen only as an economic system that provides access to jobs for women, but also as a structure that shapes and regulates gender relations through market mechanisms. Capitalism has opened up opportunities for women to engage in the public sector and gain social recognition through work, but this integration is ambivalent. On the one hand, capitalism is able to meet some of the demands of liberal feminism regarding access and participation; But on the other hand, it creates new forms of injustice through the feminization of cheap labor, double workload, and the commodification of women's bodies. This condition indicates that women's involvement in capitalism is not just a form of emancipation, but part of the reproduction of power relations in the global market.

Feminism's critique of capitalism shows that capitalism not only exploits women's labor, but also depends on women's social reproduction in the domestic sphere. Federici (2004) and Fraser (2013) both emphasize that unpaid domestic work is an important component of capital accumulation, as it ensures the regeneration of labor at no cost to the system. Third and fourth wave critiques of feminism extend this analysis with an intersectional approach, explaining that gender injustice in capitalism is not evenly distributed, but is more heavily experienced by working-class women, migrants, and minority groups. This shows that capitalism not only marginalizes women economically, but also socially and symbolically through the construction of identity, empowerment discourse, and the normalization of the commodification of women's bodies.

The Islamic perspective offers a different ethical framework in looking at gender justice and criticism of capitalism. Islam rejects the reduction of women's value in market productivity and places human dignity at the center of social orientation. The principles of 'adl (justice) and the prohibition of zulm (exploitation) affirm that socio-economic relations must be free from domination and structural injustice. In this context, Islam recognizes domestic work as part of a contribution that has high moral and social value, not as inferior work. Islam also opens up space for women to play a

role in the public sector without positioning the public sphere as the only form of value. Thus, the Islamic perspective does not reject women's progress, but rejects the market logic that makes women's bodies, identities, and work as economic commodities.

The integration between feminist criticism and Islamic perspectives shows that both have common ground in rejecting the exploitation and gender injustice produced by capitalism. However, there are epistemological differences in the formulation of goals. Feminism is oriented towards the dismantling of patriarchal structures and equal access in the economic system, while Islam is oriented towards the benefit, balance, and protection of human dignity. Thus, an Islamic perspective can enrich the critique of feminism through an ethical-normative approach that not only evaluates capitalism as an economic system, but also offers a moral alternative in building gender relations that is not based on exploitation. At this stage, Islam serves not only as a critique, but also as a conceptual offering in formulating a model of gender justice that is not bogged down in market logic.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the relationship between feminism and capitalism in the global economy is complex and ambivalent. Capitalism opens up access for women to engage in economic activities and public spaces, but at the same time creates new forms of structural injustice through the feminization of cheap labor, the double workload, and the commodification of women's identities. Thus, women's involvement in the global market cannot be understood simply as a form of emancipation, but needs to be seen in the context of economic power relations.

The feminist movement provides an important critique of capitalist structures by highlighting how capitalism exploits women's social reproduction through unpaid domestic work, wage inequality, and gender-based labor market segmentation. Third and fourth wave feminism expands on this critique with an intersectional perspective that suggests that working-class women, migrants, and minority groups often experience the most intense forms of exploitation in the global economy. This confirms that capitalism does not only marginalize women materially, but also symbolically and socially.

The Islamic perspective offers an alternative ethical framework in interpreting gender justice by placing human dignity as the main orientation. Islam rejects the exploitation and commodification of women's bodies, and recognizes the value of domestic and public work as equal social contributions. Principles such as 'adl (justice), mashlahah (benefit), and prohibition of zulm (exploitation) provide a normative basis for evaluating gender inequality in capitalism and for building more balanced and humane gender relations.

Overall, this study shows that feminist critiques and Islamic ethical perspectives have common ground on rejection of exploitation and structural injustice, although they have different epistemological bases. The Islamic perspective not only serves as a critique, but also provides a conceptual offer in building gender justice that is not

oriented to market logic. Thus, this research reinforces the urgency of dialogue between feminist theory, political economy, and Islamic ethics to understand and respond to the dynamics of gender injustice in the context of contemporary global economics.

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