



Gender Equality for the Education of Sasak Muslim Women in Lombok, 1943-1987: Perspective of the Hierarchy of Human Needs

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Abstrak: Until the early 20th century, Sasak society regarded Muslim women as second class citizens unworthy of receiving education similar to their male counterparts. This perception changed in 1943 when a special educational institution for Muslimah was established. This study aims to explain the life of the Sasak community prior to the establishment of Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah, the development of Islamic education for Sasak women, and the implications of gender equality in education for the advancement of Sasak Muslim women from the perspective of the hierarchy of human needs. Methodologically, this study utilizes a historical approach, incorporating data analysis hierarchy of human needs theory. Results in this paper indicate that the Sasak society, prior to the inception of NBDI, can be categorized into three distinct phases: the initial phase marked by the dominance of animism and dynamism beliefs, the succeeding phase marked the era of Hindu-Buddhist influence, followed by the third phase distinguished by the impact of Islamic influence. The subsequent discussion focuses on the inception and development of education, initially concentrated on males. In 1943, a bright future for women's education found its momentum with the establishment of the first Islamic educational institution dedicated to women. Since that time, considerable advancements have been observed in the presence of Sasak women. Examining hierarchy of human needs, Sasak women after conducted advocacy for gender equality has been changed. This has led to an equitable standing between men and women, ultimately attaining self-actualization as the apex of their hierarchy of needs.

Keywords: gender equality; hierarchy of human needs; muslim women's education

Abstrak: Hingga awal abad XX masyarakat Sasak menempatkan perempuan Muslim (Muslimah) sebagai masyarakat kelas dua yang tidak layak memperoleh pendidikan layaknya kaum laki-laki. Persepsi ini kemudian berubah sejak 1943 M ketika lembaga pendidikan khusus Muslimah dibangun. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplanasikan kehidupan masyarakat Sasak sebelum didirikannya Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah, perkembangan pendidikan Islam untuk perempuan Sasak, dan implikasi kesetaraan gender dalam pendidikan terhadap pengembangan kaum perempuan (Muslimah) Sasak dari perspektif hierarki kebutuhan manusia. Secara metodis kajian ini menggunakan metode sejarah. Adapun analisis datanya yaitu hierarki kebutuhan manusia. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa masyarakat Sasak sebelum didirikannya NBDI dapat dipetakan menjadi tiga fase. Fase pertama yaitu merebaknya kepercayaan animisme dan dinamisme. Fase kedua adalah fase Hindu-Budha. Fase ketiga yaitu fase pengaruh Islam. Fokus bahasan selanjutnya menggambarkan awal mula eksisnya pendidikan serta perkembangannya namun masih terfokus pada kaum laki-laki. Pada tahun 1943, masa depan pendidikan yang cerah bagi perempuan menemukan momentumnya. Pada tahun itu didirikan lembaga pendidikan Islam pertama yang dikhususkan untuk kaum

perempuan. Ditinjau dari teori hierarki kebutuhan manusia, terjadi transformasi dalam posisi kaum perempuan Sasak setelah diungkapkannya kesetaraan gender. Hal tersebut menyebabkan kesamaan posisi antara lelaki dan perempuan, yaitu aktualisasi diri sebagai puncak dalam hierarki kebutuhannya.

Kata Kunci: hierarki kebutuhan manusia; kesetaraan gender; pendidikan kaum muslimah



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Introduction

Women have played a significant role in shaping the history of the world, both on a local and international scale. Their existence cannot be disregarded in social struggles. Jemali et al. (2017) assert that women are beings rich in potential. However, in reality, there are still perplexing phenomena where, in certain cases and cultural contexts, women experience alienation by men. Their presence is often viewed as that of second-class, weaker beings, inferior to men. In extreme cases, there are cultural phenomena that perceive women merely as objects for fulfilling the sexual desires of men. Women are perceived to live in only three places: the bed, the well, and the kitchen. The perception of women in bed implies that women are tasked with serving men biologically. Women in the well means that women are tasked with washing clothes. Meanwhile, women in the kitchen means that women are tasked with cooking, washing dishes, and other kitchen-related duties. At first glance, these three roles may seem commonplace, even in today's era. However, the problematic aspect arises when women's roles are confined to these three aspects, neglecting more fundamental aspects of their human actualization as beings endowed with reason to be sharpened.

Women are pillars of world civilization. The most essential aspect to be considered is their actualization in the field of education, as it can determine the quality of human resources in the next generation. Women play a crucial role in the education of human beings, especially in informal education (within the family). This informal education implies the role of women (in their capacity as mothers) as the first school for their children. Siregar (2018) emphasizes that, historically and culturally, women have faced discrimination reflected in differential treatment between men and women.

The reversal of gender meaning with sex becomes a problem in clarifying their differences (Rusydiyah, 2016). Women's Studies Encyclopedia reveals gender as a culture that then produces differentiation in various aspects, such as roles, behavior, thought patterns, and emotional characteristics of men and women that develop in a society (Mazaya, 2014). Suhra (2013) emphasizes the need to identify the fundamental differences between sex and gender because they have different concepts. Sex refers to the classification of two human genders based on biological factors. In contrast, gender includes attributes related to men and women. For example, a culture may depict women as individuals who are gentle and beautiful. Therefore, gender can be interpreted as a cultural interpretation of gender differences, with an emphasis on the masculinity or femininity of an individual in a specific cultural context.

The spirit imbued with gender equality has been echoed since ancient times. However, this equality permeates and internalizes in a particular society in different temporal dimensions. In the 20th century, Western societies reached a crucial moment in feminism. Turner (2012) stated that in the last two decades of the 20th century, there was significant intellectual development in feminism. For some, the growth and development of this rich feminist

intellectual tradition could be attributed to the increasing number of women pursuing higher education, made possible by reforms in the 1970s in higher education.

In the early 20th century, within the dynamics of Sasak society, men dominated all aspects of life, including politics, social affairs, and education. However, the currents of nationalism and the waves of national awakening provided a breath of fresh air that opened the floodgates of thought in the society, extending to the island of Lombok, part of present-day Indonesia. In the Sasak community, gender equality began to gain momentum in 1943. This is evidenced by the establishment of the first Islamic educational institution exclusively for women on the island of Lombok, namely Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (Hasbi, 2021). TGKH. Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid is a prominent figure who founded the Islamic educational institution (Masnun, 2007).

Before the establishment of Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (NBDI), the Nahdlatul Wathon Diniyah Islamiyah (NWDI) was established, specifically intended for males. The primary motive behind the establishment of NBDI was a deep concern for the distressing phenomenon at that time when women did not have access to optimal educational opportunities. Despite encountering initial controversy during its founding process, NBDI was eventually successfully established. Mashuri (2021) classifies both educational institutions, NWDI and NBDI, into the period of Islamic education growth (Mashuri, 2021).

Several previous studies related to this research have been identified. First, a scholarly article titled "Gender Equality Concept from the Perspective of Fatima Mernissi and its Implications in Islamic Education." This study focuses more on Fatima Mernissi's views on the urgency of education that includes gender equality (Afif et al., 2020). Second, a scholarly article titled "The Tradition of Khifad for Sasak Women from the Perspective of Islamic Law." The study in this scholarly article focuses on the implementation of the Khifad tradition, which is an obligation in Sasak society (Long Mesangat District), even though in Islamic teachings, the implementation of Khifad is a recommended practice (Masitoh & Muhaemin, 2021). Third, a scholarly article titled "Gender Equality Study in Primary Schools with PPL PGSD." The analysis in this article focuses on gender in primary school learning about gender understanding (Ampera, 2012). Fourth, a scholarly article titled "Thoughts of TGKH. Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid on Women's Education and its Relevance to the Concept of Gender-Informed Education." The study in this article focuses on emancipation efforts in the field of education (Atsani & Ulyan, 2021).

There are differences between this study and previous research, not only in terms of the material and formal object aspects but also in the perspectives used and the historical method positioned as the basic method. Nevertheless, this research still utilizes other disciplines as supporting sciences. This study offers a novel contribution by critically examining the phenomenon of gender equality within the Sasak community through the perspective of Abraham Maslow's theory of human needs. In addition, it highlights the extent to which education plays a role in advancing Sasak women toward equality with men.

This research holds significant importance for revealing the reality of religious education and its implications for the quality of human resources in Sasak society, especially for women (Muslimah). After analyzing literature that discusses these matters and being supported by direct observations in the field, the researcher assumes that gender equality for Sasak women (Muslimah) can create gender equality in various other areas of life. Thus, Sasak women (Muslimah) can achieve the highest level in the hierarchy of needs, going beyond the fulfillment of physiological, comfort, and love or esteem needs. Gender equality in education enables Sasak women (Muslimah) to reach the pinnacle of the hierarchy of needs.

Research Methods

The approach employed in this study is qualitative. This approach focuses on efforts to observe patterns and human behavior and understand the factors underlying such behavior (Harahap, 2020). Through a qualitative approach, this research is expected to comprehend and explain the complex reality of Sasak community life (Salim & Syahrums, 2012). To further refine the analysis, this study utilizes the assistance of psychological knowledge. Methodologically, the historical method is employed in this research, which systematically consists of several steps, from Heuristics to historiography (Herlina, 2020).

Operationally, the heuristic phase of this research was conducted through a comprehensive literature review (library research). The materials examined in this literature review were derived from a wide range of academic and scholarly sources, including conventional printed books, articles published in reputable and peer-reviewed academic journals that specifically address themes and issues relevant to the focus of this study. These sources were systematically collected and examined to ensure the adequacy and relevance of the data required for historical analysis. During the source criticism stage, two forms of critical evaluation were employed, namely external criticism and internal criticism. External criticism was applied to assess the authenticity, originality, and credibility of the sources, while internal criticism was used to evaluate the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the information contained within those sources. This dual approach was intended to ensure that the data used in the study were both trustworthy and academically defensible.

In this research, interpretation was carried out by systematically relating one historical fact to another, analyzing their interconnections, and placing them within an appropriate historical context. Through this process, individual facts were synthesized into a coherent and logical sequence, allowing for the construction of a clear, consistent, and meaningful historical narrative.

Research Result

This study identifies three key findings, with the results and discussion integrated within each respective section, as follows: (1) the life of the Sasak community prior to the establishment of *Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah* (NBDI); (2) the development of Islamic education for Sasak women; and (3) the implications of gender equality for Sasak Muslim women from the perspective of the hierarchy of human needs.

Life of the Sasak Community before the Establishment of NBDI

The Sasak community before the establishment of *Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah* (NBDI) can be mapped and analyzed socio-historically into three phases. First, the phase of widespread animism and dynamism beliefs. Second, the Hindu-Buddhist phase. Third, the phase of Islamic influence. The three phases are outlined as follows:

First, the animism and dynamism phase. Budiwanti in Mansyur (2019) explains that in ancient times, the Sasak community believed in ancestral spirits. Additionally, they believed in supernatural beings that inhabited certain objects, known as "penunggu" or guardians. Furthermore, Mansyur continues that, according to the beliefs of the Sasak ethnic community, the guardian spirits are not fundamentally different from the life system experienced by humans. The most distinguishing factor between humans and these spirits is their existence, which is imperceptible. These guardian spirits are referred to as "Baqiq Berak or Bake'," possessing both positive and negative attributes. The dichotomy between these two qualities—according to the claims of the Sasak community—is evaluated based on their tendency to disrupt human

activities or not. *Baqiq Berak*, deemed to have negative attributes, is believed to disturb human activities, while those perceived as positive do not disrupt human activities.

There are several entities that, in the early beliefs of the Sasak community, exerted influence on human life. Creatures like "*Baqiq*" or "*Bake*" are among various entities believed by the community. Afandi (2018) elaborates on six types of supernatural beings believed by the Sasak people, including: (1) *Batara Guru*, descended as the king of Lombok with the status of a deity; (2) *Bidedari*, a type of goddess; (3) *Babodo'*, a supernatural entity that manifests itself at dusk. Therefore, children are prohibited from playing outside when the evening approaches because *Babodo'* tends to hide children and offer them unusual foods like caterpillars and others; (4) *Bake'*, a malevolent ghost according to the traditions of the Sasak tribe's ancestors; (5) *Bebai*, a small supernatural being; and (6) *Sela'*, originally human but possessing magical knowledge, enabling shape-shifting according to its desires.

Second, the phase of Hindu-Buddhist influence. In contemporary times, the island of Lombok, predominantly inhabited by the Sasak ethnic group, is known as the "Island of a Thousand Mosques." This epithet serves as an indicator that the majority of the population on Lombok adheres to the Islamic faith. However, in its historical trajectory, long before the people of Lombok embraced Islam, the island was steeped in Hindu-Buddhist influences. This is evident in its historical kingdoms, and one such kingdom that held supremacy on Lombok was the Selaparang Kingdom. Mulyana in Jamaluddin (2021) explains that Selaparang was a prominent Islamic center in early Lombok. The *Babad Negarakertagama* mentions Selaparang as "*Selapawis*."

The influence of Buddhism in Lombok was also evident, with followers of the *Boda* teaching present around the 16th century. This belief was associated with the discovery of four bronze statues in Batu Pandang, Sepit, Pringgabaya District. The followers were known as "*Bodha Budhi*," and their version of Buddhism was referred to as "*Budha Budhi*" by the local population (Basarudin, 2019).

Before adopting Islam, the Selaparang Kingdom, now renowned as the Islamic Selaparang Kingdom, was initially Hindu. In the 14th century, the establishment of Selaparang, previously known as *Watu Parang*, marked a significant historical event. Raden Maspahit, a prince from Majapahit who could not return to his kingdom after marrying the daughter of the King of Lombok, played a crucial role in the formation of Selaparang. Despite the destruction of the Lombok Kingdom, Raden Maspahit survived and founded the Hindu-influenced Selaparang Kingdom, with its capital in Peresak, Selaparang (Jamaludin, 2012).

Third, the phase of Islamic influence. Basarudin (2019) mentions that the presence of *Tuan Guru* enlightened the Sasak community. The term "*Tuan*" is an honorific for someone who has performed the Hajj pilgrimage, while "*Guru*" is used for someone considered knowledgeable, especially in religious matters. Thus, "*Tuan Guru*" refers to someone who has performed the Hajj pilgrimage and, with their extensive religious knowledge, becomes a guide or role model in various aspects of life, including speech, actions, and spirituality. In the early 20th century, the Sasak community had already been touched by Islamic educational culture. However, the educational conditions at that time were basic and lacked organization. There was no specific institution to accommodate Sasak people for religious learning, making the education less effective and efficient.

Dinsos NTB in Nahdi et al. (2018) Regarding Islamic education that is male centered, in 1934, TGKH. Syaikh Zainuddin established a center for Islamic education on Lombok called *Al-Mujahidin*, located in east Lombok. Shortly after the founding of *Al-Mujahidin* in 1936, another educational institution for Islamic learning was established, named "*Nahdlatul Wathan*

Diniyah Islamiyah" (NWDI). This madrasah played a significant role in advancing Islamic education in Lombok, providing a more structured system than before.

Regarding its operational aspects, Adnan, as cited by Noor et al. (2014), explained that in its early phase, NWDI categorized its madrasah into three levels: Ilzamiyah, Tahdiriyah, and Ibtidaiyah. Ilzamiyah focused on preparing students with a one-year study duration, mainly for those unfamiliar with the Arabic language. Tahdiriyah, the next level, continued from Ilzamiyah, with a study duration of three years. The final level, Ibtidaiyah, had a four-year study duration, with an orientation toward yellow book studies.

Madrasah NWDI completed the education of its students for the first time in the academic year 1940/1941. Among the successful graduates of this first generation were Ustaz Mas'ud, Ustaz Abdul Manaf, Hasan, Ustaz Abu Syahuri, and Ustaz Abdul Hamid (Noor et al., 2014). However, until the completion of education for this first generation of students, Islamic education, both legally and formally, remained centered on males (Men Oriented).

From a socio-historical standpoint, the development of Sasak society has been profoundly shaped by three major historical phases, each of which contributed distinctively to the formation of its cultural, religious, and social characteristics. These phases include the period of animism and dynamism, the Hindu–Buddhist era, and the advent of Islam. Together, they constitute an interconnected continuum that has influenced the worldview, social structure, and collective identity of the Sasak people over time.

The earliest phase, characterized by animistic and dynamistic belief systems, laid the fundamental metaphysical framework through which the Sasak community interpreted the natural and supernatural worlds. During this period, spiritual beliefs were closely intertwined with everyday life, shaping perceptions of sacred spaces, ancestral spirits, and natural forces believed to possess supernatural power. These belief systems functioned not merely as religious expressions but also as mechanisms for social cohesion and moral regulation. As such, animism and dynamism represent the most ancient and foundational belief structures known within Sasak society, providing an essential basis for later religious and cultural developments.

Subsequently, the Hindu–Buddhist period introduced significant transformations, particularly within the socio-political organization of Sasak society. Contact with Hindu–Buddhist civilizations brought new political concepts, administrative structures, and symbolic forms of authority. Prior to this influence, governance among the Sasak people was relatively simple and communal in nature, led by tribal or customary leaders whose authority was rooted in tradition and kinship. With the incorporation of Hindu–Buddhist values, however, the political system underwent a substantial transformation, evolving into a monarchical form of governance. In this system, power became centralized in the figure of a king, whose authority was legitimized through religious and cosmological principles derived from Hindu–Buddhist ideology. This shift marked a critical change in the nature of leadership, social hierarchy, and state formation within Sasak society.

The arrival and subsequent spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago constituted another pivotal phase in the historical development of the Sasak people. Islam exerted a far-reaching influence across multiple domains, including politics, culture, language, education, and social relations. Islamic teachings were disseminated rapidly and were embraced by diverse segments of the population, facilitating the emergence of a shared religious identity that transcended social boundaries. In Lombok, an island predominantly inhabited by the Sasak ethnic group, Islam became deeply embedded in daily life and communal practices. This profound integration of Islamic values led to Lombok being widely recognized as the “*Island of a Thousand Mosques*” a designation that symbolizes not only the physical presence of Islamic institutions but also the strong socio-religious commitment of the Sasak people. The

title reflects the enduring role of Islam as a central element in shaping moral values, social norms, and collective consciousness within Sasak society.

In sum, the historical trajectory of Sasak society illustrates a dynamic process of cultural and religious interaction, adaptation, and continuity. Each historical phase—animistic-dynamistic, Hindu–Buddhist, and Islamic—has contributed essential elements to the complex identity of the Sasak people. Rather than replacing one another entirely, these phases have interacted in ways that continue to influence contemporary social and religious practices, highlighting the layered and pluralistic nature of Sasak socio-cultural history.

Development of Islamic Education for Sasak Women

Following the successful establishment of Al-Mujahidin and NWDI Islamic Boarding Schools, there was a progressive and continuous development in the field of education. An overview of the chronological development is as follows:¹

In 1943, gender equality in fundamental aspects such as education gained momentum with the establishment of the first Islamic education institution for women on Lombok Island. This institution was named Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (NBDI). Several factors led to the founding of this madrasah, with one of the primary motivations being the concern of TGKH. Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid for the neglected educational conditions of women. Nahdi et al. (2018) explained that the emergence of NBDI was a response to two conditions: the agenda and consequences of Dutch colonial ethical politics and the patriarchal culture of the time, which placed women as secondary in society. The contextual habituality of NBDI's founders subsequently gave rise to a futuristic idea that women also needed the opportunity to receive education. Additionally, Wahid & Finna (2022) stated that TGKH. Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid's motivation for establishing NBDI was based on the progressiveness of the NWDI institution.

An important momentum occurred in 1974, namely the establishment of Ma'had li al-Banat. Ma'had li al-Banat is an Islamic education institution specifically dedicated to women, founded in 1974. Before the establishment of Ma'had li al-Banat, in 1965 M, MDQH NW was founded, which was an educational institution exclusively for males. Upon closer examination, there is a repeating pattern similar to the establishment of NBDI. Like NBDI, the establishment of Ma'had li al-Banat represents the realization of gender equality in the education world. It is worth emphasizing that the Ma'had li al-Banat level is equivalent to university levels (both diploma and undergraduate). The normal study duration is four years.

In 1978, STKIP Hamzanwadi was established in East Lombok. STKIP Hamzanwadi is the first private university in the West Nusa Tenggara Province. In its early pioneering days, the physical structure of the university was simple, as were the available majors. Guidance and Counseling & History Education programs, among others, were the first several majors. Since 2016, STKIP Hamzanwadi has changed its name to Hamzanwadi University.

A decade after the establishment of STKIP Hamzanwadi, in 1987, the Nahdlatul Wathan (UNW) University was founded in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara. Despite differences in the location of the institutions, UNW and STKIP Hamzanwadi have institutional genealogical connections, as both are under the umbrella of the Nahdlatul Wathan (NW) organization.

The establishment of Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (NBDI) represents a pivotal socio-historical moment in the advancement of women's roles within the educational landscape

¹ The chronicle of the establishment of the institution (from the establishment of Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (NBDI) to the establishment of Hamzanwadi Islamic Religious Institute) is the result of an analysis adapted from the written work by Muslihun Muslim titled "*Kiprah Nahdlatul Wathan: Dinamika Pemikiran & Perjuangan Dari Generasi Pertama Hingga Generasi Ketiga*", 2014, p. 10-11.

of Lombok. Emerging in a context where women's access to formal and structured education remained limited, NBDI functioned not only as an educational institution but also as a transformative social movement that challenged prevailing gender norms. Its foundation signaled a conscious effort to reposition women as active subjects in the processes of knowledge production and social development.

From an empirical perspective, the presence of NBDI may be regarded as the starting point of broader educational innovation in Lombok, particularly in relation to female education. The institution introduced a new paradigm that emphasized the importance of providing women with systematic, organized, and sustainable educational opportunities. This paradigm subsequently inspired the establishment of a range of educational institutions that further institutionalized women's access to education. As previously outlined, the founding of institutions such as Ma'had li al-Banat, STKIP Hamzanwadi, and Universitas Nahdlatul Wathan (UNW) Mataram constituted concrete manifestations of this transformative process and reflected a growing commitment to the principles of gender equality within the region.

Historically, the emergence of these institutions marked a significant shift in the socio-educational structure of Lombok society. Education, which had previously been characterized by limited inclusivity, gradually evolved into a more accessible and diversified system. The availability of varied and innovative educational platforms enabled women to navigate multiple pathways of structured learning, thereby expanding their opportunities for intellectual development and social mobility. In this context, education became a strategic instrument through which women could negotiate their roles within both the private and public spheres.

The impact of these developments can be observed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, there was a notable increase in the number of female students enrolled in formal educational institutions, particularly within Islamic boarding schools and higher education establishments. Qualitatively, these educational advancements fostered a growing awareness among women of their rights, capacities, and equal standing in society. Women increasingly perceived themselves as possessing the same potential and legitimacy as men to occupy comparable social, educational, and professional positions.

In sum, the establishment of NBDI and the subsequent expansion of educational institutions for women illustrate a broader socio-historical transformation in Lombok. This transformation reflects an ongoing process in which education has served as a crucial medium for promoting gender equity and redefining women's roles within society. Rather than functioning as isolated developments, these institutions collectively represent a sustained effort to integrate women more fully into the educational and social fabric of the region, thereby contributing to long-term social change.

Implications of Gender Equality for Sasak Women (Muslimah) in the Perspective of the Hierarchy of Human Needs

In relation to the theory of the hierarchy of human needs, as explained by Muhibbin & Marfuatun (2020), Jerome states that, from the perspective of Abraham Maslow, individuals are driven to fulfill their life needs based on time, conditions, and personal experiences. One cannot achieve fulfillment of second-level needs before the first-level needs are met, or third-level needs before the second-level needs are satisfied, and so on. This principle continues. Furthermore, referring to Maslow's view as quoted by Ginting, Maslow separates human needs into five basic needs explained through a pyramid structure with different levels. The first need is physiological needs. Next, the need for safety becomes the second priority. The aspect of needing to love and feel loved occupies the third rank. In the fourth position, there is a need for esteem. Lastly, the need for self-actualization is the fifth level in that hierarchy.

Abraham Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of human needs, as employed in this study, presents certain conceptual and contextual limitations when applied to local cultural settings, particularly in relation to how communities interpret and prioritize what they perceive as their most essential needs. The theory fundamentally assumes a universal and linear progression, whereby higher-level needs can only be fulfilled once lower-level needs have been adequately satisfied. However, when examined from an operational and socio-cultural perspective, this assumption does not always fully correspond to the lived realities of diverse societies.

In practice, variations may emerge in the orientation and prioritization of needs across different regions and cultural contexts. Certain communities may assign greater importance to social and relational needs than to those positioned lower in Maslow's original hierarchy. For example, belongingness needs—such as social affiliation, communal acceptance, and collective identity—may be regarded as more fundamental than safety needs in specific cultural settings, particularly in societies where social cohesion and collective values play a central role in everyday life. This cultural variability suggests that the hierarchy of needs is not always rigidly sequential and may be interpreted differently depending on social, historical, and cultural circumstances.

Despite these limitations, the present study deliberately adopts Maslow's theory within its conventional and widely recognized hierarchical framework for analytical purposes. In examining the socio-historical phenomenon of gender equality within Sasak society, the theory is utilized as a conceptual tool rather than as an absolute explanatory model. Its application is therefore restricted to the standard sequential classification of human needs, progressing from the most basic to the highest level. These categories include physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization.

By employing this regularized framework, the study seeks to maintain analytical clarity while acknowledging the contextual nuances that may influence the interpretation of human needs in Sasak society. Consequently, Maslow's hierarchy functions as a heuristic device that facilitates systematic analysis, rather than as a culturally universal schema, allowing the research to explore gender equality within a structured yet critically informed theoretical perspective.

Here is a visualization of these five points.²

² The visualization of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is an adaptation and reinterpretation with citations from: Muhammad Ali Bagas, *Relevansi Teori Hierarki Kebutuhan Abraham Maslow Terhadap Motivasi Kerja Anggota Organisasi Penyuluhan Agama Islam*, 2020, p. 103.

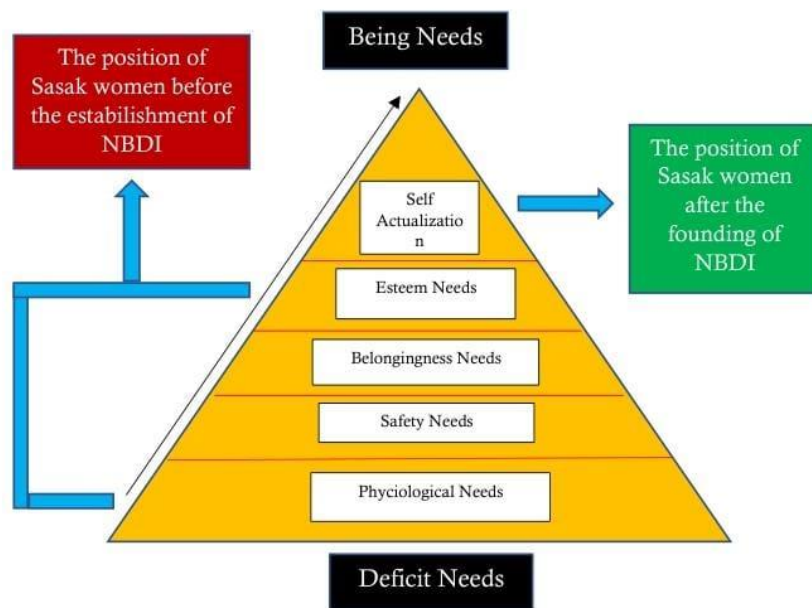


Figure 1. Analysis of the process of gender equality for Sasak Muslim women using Abraham Maslow's theory of gender equality as its basis.
Source: Bagas, 2020

The visualization of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory above is related to the research object in this study. The establishment of Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (NBDI) constituted a crucial historical milestone and served as a foundational point of departure for Sasak Muslim women in their efforts to enhance their position and agency in various spheres of life. Through this institution, Muslim women were provided with broader access to education and organizational experience, which in turn contributed to their growing roles in social, economic, political, and cultural domains. The founding of NBDI not only reflected an awareness of the importance of women's education within the Islamic framework but also marked a transformative moment in the collective consciousness of Sasak Muslim society.

Over time, the existence and institutional development of NBDI demonstrated significant progress, both in terms of organizational consolidation and its expanding influence within the community. This notable growth generated new dynamics within the broader Nahdlatul Wathan educational movement and highlighted the need for a more structured organizational framework capable of integrating and managing these developments in a unified manner.

In response to this situation, the founder of NBDI, Tuan Guru Kyai Haji Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, initiated the establishment of a broader platform of struggle and coordination. This initiative was intended to accommodate and harmonize the evolving dynamics of both Nahdlatul Wathan Diniyah Islamiyah (NWDI) and NBDI, which had developed as parallel yet interconnected educational institutions.

The outcome of this initiative was the founding of Nahdlatul Wathan (NW), an organization designed to serve as an umbrella institution capable of unifying educational, social, and religious movements within a single organizational structure. Through Nahdlatul Wathan, the diverse educational and social initiatives pioneered by NWDI and NBDI were institutionally consolidated, thereby strengthening their collective role in shaping Islamic education, social reform, and community development among the Sasak Muslim population.

Before the establishment of specialized educational institutions for women, there was evident gender imbalance. Men had already reached the pinnacle of the hierarchy (self-actualization). However, this was not the case for women because, before the orientation of gender equality, women were still constrained by the patriarchal system. All of this changed when the orientation of gender equality was emphasized. Negative stereotypes about women's education gradually eroded. As education found its momentum, both male and female Sasak Muslims reached equality at the peak of the hierarchy of human needs, which is self-actualization. Sasak women have the right to self-actualize according to their desires (as long as it does not contradict societal norms and legal aspects of the state). Sasak women have authority in determining the field or position they want to pursue, without intervention from men.

The socio-cultural impact of these developments can be observed in the increasing openness of Sasak society to provide both space and public platforms for women to become actively involved in social and communal life. Over time, women's participation in community affairs has expanded beyond symbolic presence to meaningful engagement. Women's voices, expressed in the form of suggestions, opinions, and even critical perspectives, have gradually come to be recognized as valuable contributions to public discourse. Rather than being assessed through traditional gender classifications, women are increasingly acknowledged for their intellectual capacity and their role as contributors of ideas within society.

In the economic sphere, a significant transformation has taken place with regard to women's rights and opportunities. Women have come to enjoy equal recognition as economic actors and have been granted the same rights as men to pursue professional and career-oriented paths. This shift reflects a broader redefinition of women's social existence, marked by greater autonomy and flexibility in determining the direction of their career development and professional competencies. As a result, women's participation in economic life is no longer confined to domestic or informal sectors but extends into a wide range of professional fields.

Similarly, in the political sphere, women's participation has undergone notable change. Women are now able to engage more fully in electoral processes and political competition, a development that has come to be viewed as socially acceptable and increasingly normative. Their political involvement is recognized not only in terms of exercising voting rights but also in assuming positions of political leadership and public office. This evolution signifies a fundamental transformation from a political culture that was historically dominated by male-centered power structures toward a more inclusive political system, one that recognizes and accommodates the participation of all members of society regardless of gender.

The transformation of Sasak Muslim women in Lombok, as elaborated in the preceding discussion, provides a significant historical insight into the relationship between culture, human resources, and the formation of civilization. This transformation demonstrates that the emergence of a developed and enduring civilization is rooted in the presence of a progressive culture. In turn, such a culture is not formed spontaneously, but rather emerges from the availability and cultivation of high-quality human resources who are equipped with knowledge, skills, and social awareness.

Within this historical context, the equal positioning of men and women in access to education constitutes a fundamental foundation for broader social transformation. The expansion of educational opportunities for women, alongside men, has generated far-reaching implications that extend into various dimensions of life, including social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. Importantly, this condition should not be interpreted as an effort to promote gender competition or to replace one group with another. Instead, it represents a

curative and corrective endeavor aimed at addressing long-standing cultural disparities and structural imbalances between men and women within Sasak society.

It is essential to emphasize that the establishment of Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (NBDI), along with the subsequent educational innovations that followed, should not be interpreted as the final achievement of gender equality. Rather, these developments constitute important stages within a broader and ongoing process aimed at advancing gender equality. This trajectory is neither instantaneous nor linear; instead, it unfolds progressively through gradual social, cultural, and institutional changes over time.

Within the analytical framework of this study, gender equality is not conceptualized in terms of an extreme liberal-modern paradigm that demands complete and uniform symmetry between men and women in all spheres of life. This condition is shaped by the social heterogeneity of the Sasak community, influenced by various factors, one of which is a misinterpretation of religious teachings. As a result, there are still groups who perceive gender equality between women and men as something unconventional or inappropriate. Such an approach tends to overlook the socio-cultural and historical particularities of local communities. Instead, the form of gender equality identified here is characterized by the recognition of women's and men's equal social standing, which serves as the foundation for expanding access to comparable opportunities. This recognition enables both women and men to participate more equitably in educational and social domains, while remaining embedded within the prevailing cultural and religious values of the society under study.

As these disparities gradually diminish, a new social dynamic emerges—one characterized by mutual recognition, cooperation, and shared responsibility between men and women. In this process, both groups contribute according to their respective capacities and competencies, fostering a positive and productive pattern of collaboration across multiple fields of social life. Consequently, the transformation of Sasak Muslim women in Lombok has helped create a collaborative social space in which men and women work together toward common goals, particularly in the pursuit of improved social welfare and a higher standard of living for the community as a whole.

Conclusion

The Sasak community, before the establishment of Nahdlatul Banat Diniyah Islamiyah (NBDI), can be mapped into three phases. First, the phase of the widespread belief in animism and dynamism. During this period, the religio-magical life of the Sasak community tended to believe that the spirits of ancestors and objects around them possessed magical powers that could influence their lives. This religio-magical pattern was manifested in the belief in creatures such as *sela'*, *bake'*, and objects like talismans. Second, the phase of the conception of Islamic education. In this phase, elements of Islamic education began to appear, as seen in the presence of *kak andi lamune wah* religious learning centers, albeit in a very simple form. Third, the phase of education centered on males. In this phase, the educational atmosphere remained classical and straightforward, but there was progress in the management of education. The education system became more organized than before, yet educational inequality was evident, with women not having legal-formal space to access religious education. Not long after the establishment of Islamic educational institutions dedicated to males, TGKH. Muhammad Zainuddin Abdul Madjid took the initiative to promote the spirit of gender equality, starting from the field of education. In the year 1943, a bright future for women's education found its momentum. In that year, the first Islamic educational institution specifically for women was founded. Since then, significant developments have occurred in the existence of Sasak women (*Muslimah*). Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory is closely related to this

study, serving as a lens to analyze the reality of the past. In connection with that, there are implications of the spirit of gender equality on the existence of Sasak women (Muslimah). Between male and female Sasak Muslims, there is equality at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of human needs, namely self-actualization. The culmination of all these efforts is the creation of equilibrium in intelligence and rights between Sasak men and women (Muslimah). Nevertheless, the heterogeneous social realities and religious patterns of the Sasak community in perceiving the concept of women's self-actualization continue to pose challenges to the realization of gender equality in the contemporary context.

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