Gender Perceptions in Southeast Asian Countries:
Findings from JICA-RI Value Surveys

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1. Introduction

It is increasingly clear that gender equality varies conceptually from one country to another, as shown by indicators developed in the 1990s by several international organizations. The UNDP Human Development Report, for example, introduced two indicators in 1995: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), both of which demonstrate that women's basic capabilities and the extent of their participation in political and economic decision-making processes are highly variable.[1]

While these and similar indicators are based on macro indices, some studies focus on the gender equality perceptions of individuals. The literature shows that attitudes toward gender equality are affected by respondents' own backgrounds, such as marital status and educational attainment, and that the effects can differ from one country to another.[2] This research allows policy makers to differentiate groups and thereby to consider what kinds of policies can have what kinds of impacts on whose gender perceptions. The main difficulty with these types of studies is that they require large amounts of survey data on people's perception.

Using data from a recently conducted value survey, the present paper looks at the gender perception of people in four Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. The main objective is to determine which socio-demographic factors have significant impacts on people's attitudes toward gender issues in this historically and culturally diverse region. As is described in detail below, the analysis shows that Muslim identity tends to be associated with acceptance of male authority.

It may seem a foregone conclusion that Muslims hold more conservative ideas about gender equality than others, given that Islamic countries are commonly regarded as having female-subordinating societies.[3] The present paper, however, does not stop

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[1] While UNDP (1995) derived one crucial conclusion that "no society treats its women as well as its men" (p. 75), it also shows the variety by country and/or by region of gender issues. Human Development Reports after 1995 continue to list updated GDI and GEM figures.

[2] See Davis and Robinson (1991) for example.

[3] For example, Fish (2002) compares Muslim countries and Catholic countries in terms of literacy gap

here, but goes on to shed light on the diversity of attitudes toward gender equality even among Muslim people. It is regrettable that so few studies have attempted to differentiate Muslim populations into subgroups with distinct characteristics and to investigate the impacts of different factors on perceptions of gender equality. Muslims have diverse opinions on gender equality for at least two reasons: First, quite simply, Muslims are diverse. The more than 1.5 billion in the world who are Muslim constitute many national, ethnic, and socio-demographically different peoples.[4] Some live in Muslim-dominant countries while others do not; some are urbanized while others are rural. Consequently it would be both inappropriate and inaccurate simply to assume without examining the data that Muslims around the world share one uniform concept of gender equality.

Second, as mentioned above, attitudes toward gender equality can be affected by such factors as educational level and marital status. Although most previous studies of this topic have focused on non-Muslim societies, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the findings of those surveys are also applicable, at least in part, to Muslim societies.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section introduces the data used in the analysis. Each of the four surveys was conducted in a different manner due to the different conditions in the four countries, a situation which poses certain constraints on the analysis. The third section describes the methodology used and the results of a "first-step" analysis demonstrating that peoples' perceptions on gender issues can vary across groups with diverse backgrounds. The fourth section, based on the result of the preceding analysis, explores the gender perceptions of Muslims. The objective of this section is to establish that ideas and attitudes on gender equality vary among Muslims, depending on socio-demographic background. The final section summarizes the findings.

2. Data

Attitude surveys were conducted in 2010 in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines by JICA Research Institute. An essentially similar questionnaire with more than one hundred questions was used covering respondents' perceptions of religion, globalization and democracy as well as gender equality.[5]   Table 1 shows the

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between the sexes, percentage of women in national government, and GEM, and to show that Muslim countries are more female-subordinating.

[4] Recent Muslim population data can be obtained from the Pew Research Center (2009).

[5] Questionnaires are slightly different in the four countries since some questions are applied to specific political or cultural conditions.

basic information in the datasets.

Table 1: Sample size and survey period of the four surveys

	Indonesia	Malaysia	Thailand	Philippines
Sample Size	2250 (nation-wide) 2007 Muslims 243 non-Muslims	1640 (nation-wide) 1157 Muslims 483 non-Muslims	3044 1409 in Bangkok 811 in Proximal prov. 824 in Patani region	1200 600 in Metro Manila 600 in ARMM
Period	January 2010	May 2010	May 2010	February 2010

Though the questionnaires were essentially the same, the method for conducting the surveys was different between the two Muslim-majority countries (Indonesia and Malaysia) and the two Muslim-minority countries (the Philippines and Thailand). In the former, the surveys were nation-wide. Samples were chosen from all the districts, and the total number of respondents and the percentage of Muslim respondents from each district are proportional to the number and distribution of the population across the nation and in the districts. In the latter two countries, specific districts were selected so that Muslim majority areas and Muslim minority areas could be compared, and surveys were not conducted elsewhere in the countries. In the Philippines, the National Capital Region (NCR), or Metro Manila, was chosen as the Muslim minority region, and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the representative area with a majority Muslim population. In Thailand, three regions were selected: Bangkok as the Muslim minority region, the "Patani region" composed of three Southern border provinces (Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat) as a Muslim majority conflict-prone region, and "Proximal provinces" (Songkhla and Satun neighboring the Southern provinces) as a Muslim majority non-conflict region. The numbers of Muslim and non-Muslim samples are largely the same in each region. The different sampling methods were adopted because the purpose of the surveys is not a cross-county comparison but a comparison of Muslim and non-Muslim populations in each country.

The following statements on the questionnaires were used to measure respondent attitudes toward gender equality:

a) It is proper for men to assert their authority over women.
b) Women's social positions should be equal to those of men.
c) Men and women should have equal rights.
d) Men and women should be educated equally.
e) Women should not work outside the home after marriage.

Respondents were asked whether they "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or

"strongly disagree" to these statements. Answers from each respondent were converted into scores 1 to 4. For statements a) and e), the "strongly agree" response scores 1, "agree" 2, "disagree" 3, and "strongly disagree" 4. For the other statements, the scoring is reversed. Since these statements can carry different nuances or values across countries, this paper uses each of the five statements separately as a dependent variable instead of constructing one synthetic variable (by, for example, computing first principle component). The higher the score, the more favorable the respondent is to the idea of gender equality.

3. Analysis of the impact of socio-demographic factors on gender perceptions

According to the existing literature, people's perceptions of the gender issue are affected by socio-demographic factors or circumstances. The present analysis first examines whether this finding is applicable to the four Southeast Asian countries, and if so, which are the factors that have significant impact. The independent variables here are sex, educational level, residential area (urban/rural), age, household income, marital status, and religion.

It is straightforward to expect women to have less supportive attitudes toward gender inequality than men. The so-called "underdog theorem" states that a group which is discriminated against or subordinated tends to be aware of the gap and to support efforts to eliminate it.[6] It is, therefore, anticipated that the difference between the sexes has a significant impact on people's gender perception in these four countries.

The impact of education, however, can be rather more complex. Education may enlighten people about the problems of inequality and make them receptive to the possibility of reducing the gender gap. On the other hand, it may also be that education reproduces inequality. According to Kane (1995), education "may actually legitimate rather than challenge inequality" by emphasizing the importance of individual talent or effort in social accomplishment. When this happens, education can have a negative impact on gender-equality perception. In this paper, educational attainment is categorized into five and treated as an independent variable. The five categories are: no formal education, primary school completed, secondary school completed, high school or other vocational training school completed, and university degree and above.

Urbanization is another explanatory variable. Urbanized people generally have more opportunity to interact with people from different backgrounds; thus they tend more to endorse the idea of equal treatment among them, including equal treatment of

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[6] Davis and Robinson (1991) survey this and other theorems and hypotheses.

men and women. A binary dummy was created so that the analysis can distinguish respondents who live in urban areas from those who live in rural ones.

The generation gap is also an explanatory variable. Elderly people may have more conservative attitudes about gender than the young. In the present analysis, respondents are divided into five age groups: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 and above.

The impact of household income on gender perception is difficult to define. Nonetheless, this factor very possibly does have an impact since low-income households may be more dependent on women's earnings. In the present analysis, respondents in each country are divided into four categories according to their level of household income.

Marital status can also have an effect on gender perception, but probably in a more complex way. Since the impact of marital status can differ between the sexes, our analysis divides married respondents into males and females.

The last factor dealt with here is religion: Muslim or non-Muslim. There are two reasons for the particular focus on Islam. First, as is mentioned above, Islamic countries are generally considered to have patriarchal societies. It is expected, therefore, that being a Muslim already has a significant impact on gender perception. Second, Islam is one of the most remarkable and outstanding identities in Southeast Asia. It is estimated that approximately two hundred and fifty million Muslims inhabit this region, some sixteen percent of the total world Muslim population.[7] Given the prominence of Islamic influence and culture, it is worthwhile to understand its impact on people's attitudes toward the gender issue.

In this paper, the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test are conducted to determine whether each socio-demographic factors makes a difference in people's perceptions of gender equality, which is measured by the ordinary scale. Analyses of Indonesia and Malaysia are conducted nationwide; those of Thailand and the Philippines, by region. The tests compare several sub-groups' mean ranks – for example, male's mean rank of response to statement a) and female's mean rank for the same statement – to see if the difference between the two mean ranks is significant. If it is significant, this means that the factor – in the example above, sex – has a significant impact on gender perceptions (either positive or negative). For the independent variables (such as educational attainment, household income and age) respondents are divided into more than two groups. As a result, even if the tests reveal statistically significant differences among groups, this does not necessarily mean that the impact on gender perception is linear. It is also possible that people come to have a more

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[7] Pew Research Center (2009).

supportive attitude to gender equality after they have gone to primary school, but have again a less positive attitude after graduating from university.

Table 2 shows the results.[8] Though they vary from country to country and from statement to statement, several interesting commonalities can be noted.

Table 2: Impact of Socio-Demographic Factors on Gender Perceptions

statement	Indonesia a	b	c	d	e	Malaysia a	b	c	d	e
Female	+	(+)	+		+	+	+	+		+
Muslim	−		(−)		−	−				−
Urban	+			(+)		+				
Married				(−)			(+)	(+)	(+)	
MarriedM								(+)	+	
MarriedF	(−)			(−)						
Education	+		+	+	+	−		(−)		+
Income	+			+	+	−		(−)		(±)
Age	±	(+)		(±)	±					(±)

statement	Philippines NCR a	b	c	d	e	Philippines ARMM a	b	c	d	e
Female	+		+	+	+	+	+	+		+
Muslim		(−)	(−)							
Married	(−)	−	−	−	(−)	(−)	+	+	+	(−)
MarriedM	−	−	−		(+)					(−)
MarriedF					−		+		(+)	
Education	±	±	±	±	±	±	±		±	±
Income	±	±	±	±	±	±	(±)			±
Age	±	−	−	±	±	±	±	±	±	±

statement	Thailand_Bangkok a	b	c	d	e	Thailand_Proximal a	b	c	d	e	Thailand_Deep_South a	b	c	d	e
Female	−	+	+	+		(+)	+	+				+			
Muslim	−				−		(−)			−					−
Married						(−)								(−)	
MarriedM						(−)	(+)								
MarriedF	(−)					(−)						(−)	(−)	−	
Education	+		(±)	±	+			±	(±)	±	+	(±)	±	(±)	(±)
Income	(±)		(±)	(±)	±	(±)		±	(±)	±	±	(±)	±	±	
Age	−	(±)	(±)	(±)		(±)	±				(±)				(±)

Statements a, b, c, d and e in this table correspond with statements on page 3

+/−: significant positive/negative impact (p < .01)
±: significant non-linear impact (p < .01)
+, − or ± in parentheses means significant impact (p < .1)

"female": female, male
"Muslim": Muslim, non-Muslim
"urban": living in urban area, living in rural area (for Indonesia and Malaysia only)
"married": married, not married
"marriedM": married male, non-married male
"marriedF": married female, non-married female
"education": no education, primary, secondary, high-school, university and above
"income": respondents' household income divided into four categories
"age": 18−29, 30−39, 40−49, 50−59, 60 and above

The sample size slightly varies due to the number of respondents who answered "don't know" or didn't answer. However, basically it is close to the total sample size below;
Indonesia: total 2250, female 1125, male 1125
Malaysia: total 1640, female 816, male 824
Philippines: total 1200, total in NCR 600 (female 299, male 301),
        total in ARMM 600 (female 300, male 300)
Thailand: total 3044, total in Bangkok 1409 (female 742, male 667),
        total in Proximal 811 (female 414, male 397),
        total in Deep South 824 (female 427, male 397),

The "underdog theorem" proves largely true in all four countries. Women are more supportive of the idea of gender equality, except for the residents of Bangkok.[9]

Due to the nature of the samples, the urban-rural distinction is irrelevant for Thailand and the Philippines. Observed from the Indonesian and Malaysian samples, however, it seems that this factor has only a limited impact on people's gender perceptions.

The analysis of marital status yields an interesting result. Although the frequency of significant impact is not high – except in the Philippines where marital status seems to be influential – the tendencies in the other three countries are clear: married men tend to be more supportive of gender equality than non-married men, while married women are less supportive than non-married women. One explanation is that married men become more aware of women's conditions and eventually come to support the concept

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[8] As described in the data section, the numbers of Muslim respondents and non-Muslim respondents in each region in the Philippines and Thailand are the same. Muslim samples and non-Muslims samples in each region are "weighted" by the population share in each region.
[9] The reason for this unexpected result is not immediately clear.

of reducing gender inequality. Another possible explanation is that non-married women are likely to work outside the home and be exposed to situations of severe gender-inequality, which would naturally produce a more supportive attitude toward gender equality.[10] What is intriguing is the way in which marital status affects gender perceptions in different regions (rather than between the two sexes) in the Philippines. Further study is necessary to explore reasons for this phenomenon.

The analysis of educational levels, household income, and age suggest several notable points. First, the impacts of these variables vary from one country to another. For example, household income has a significant positive impact in Indonesia, but a rather negative impact in Malaysia. Another example is education. In Malaysia, unlike in the other three countries, it tends to reproduce the inequality perception. Educated Malaysians tend to disagree with the statement "women's social position should be equal to that of men."

Second, the impacts of these variables on gender perceptions are not linear. For instance, except for Indonesia, where education has a persistently positive impact, the effects of educational attainment are complex and non-linear. It is impossible, therefore, to naively conclude that education has a straightforwardly positive or negative impact on gender perceptions.

These cross-country differences probably reflect divergent historical and cultural backgrounds, which is something worth exploring in future studies.

Apart from the highly positive impact of "being female," religion is the only factor that has a persistent impact across the four countries. In all four countries, Muslims have a significantly less favorable attitude toward the idea of gender equality than do non-Muslims. This outcome is unsurprising, since Islam emphasizes male authority.

However, we should not stop our exploration here; we need now to study how religion intersects with other factors and also how it affects the gender perceptions of different groups of Muslims. This may eventually disprove the stereotypical image of patriarchal Muslims.

4. Analysis of Muslim perceptions of gender equality

In exploring the impact of Islam, several independent variables are added to the ones used in the previous section. One of these is "religiosity," measured by how

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[10] Davis and Robinson (1991) describe this hypothesis well. They also explore spouse employment status in addition to marital status.

devoutly each Muslim respondent observes the following religious activities:

    1)   prays five times a day

    2)   fasts in the month of Ramadan

    3)   conducts non-obligatory prayers

    4)   attends communal prayers

    5)   attends religious activities, such as sermons or religious discussions

Respondents were asked if they "never," "seldom," "often," or "routinely" engage in these activities.[11] These questions were then converted into numerical scores from 1 to 4, so that the more religious people get the higher scores. Then the first principal component for these five factors was computed.[12] Samples were then divided into two groups so they can be analyzed by the Man-Whitney U test: a respondent is "more religious" if his/her first principal component score is higher than the mean, and "less religious" if it is lower.

Respondents' residential areas are also incorporated into the scope of this analysis. As mentioned in the data section, the surveys were conducted in specific regions in Thailand and the Philippines. In the present analysis, the samples are sub-divided by regions to clarify differences between Muslims living in the capital cities and those living in Muslim-majority areas (ARMM in the Philippines and Patani region and Proximal provinces in Thailand). For Malaysia, respondents in Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak districts) are differentiated to see if Muslims in this area perceive the issue of gender equality differently, since the area is not only physically distant from the Malay Peninsula, but also has a different historical background.

Again, we use the Mann-Whitney U test as well as the Kruskal-Wallis test. This time, however, male and female samples are treated separately to control for sex, since, as shown in the previous section, this factor persistently affects gender perceptions.

Table 3 shows the result of these tests. As in the case of Table 2, Table 3 shows whether the difference in the mean ranks is statistically significant between the sub-groups of Muslim populations, divided according to influencing factors.

Several interesting results are revealed. First and foremost, it is clear that Muslims from diverse backgrounds can have highly divergent attitudes toward gender equality. All the factors tested here have an impact on Muslim gender perceptions in at least one of the four countries. Muslims have diverse ideas about gender equality, just as

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[11] These questions were asked only of Muslim respondents.

[12] For the Thai and Filipino cases, the first principal component is extracted for each regional sub-group.

non-Muslims do.

Second, the way these factors affect gender perception varies from country to country. For example, age has a significant impact in Indonesia, where a male's attitude toward statements a) and b), and a female's attitude toward statements a), b), and e), show significant variation according to generation, while this is not shown in the Philippines. Another example is education, which seems to have a complex and non-linear impact in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, while its impact is mostly positive in Indonesia.

Religiosity also intricately influences people's gender perceptions, working differently in the four countries. In the Philippines, it has a positive impact on people's gender perceptions, while in Thailand its influence tends to be negative. This result simply suggests that it is naïve to assume that pious Muslims as a whole have negative attitudes toward gender equality.

It should be noted also that even within the same country, the impact of socio-demographic factors on gender perception can vary according to region. In Malaysia, Muslims living in Borneo show a more positive attitude toward gender equality compared with those living in the rest of the country.

In Thailand and the Philippines, as well, results differ depending on where the respondent lives. Marital status, for instance, impacts gender perception more negatively among Muslims living in NCR than among Muslims living in ARMM. The same trend is observed among married female Muslims living in the Thai provinces neighboring the conflict region. Education, age and religiosity, however, seem to have greater impacts in the capital city than in other regions. While little divergence is observed among various socio-demographic subgroups in the conflict-prone provinces of Thailand, Muslims in Muslim-minority Bangkok show a grater range of gender perceptions across different social-demographic groups.

Table 3: Impacts of Socio-Demographic Factors on Muslims' Gender Perceptions

Indonesia / Malaysia

statement	a M	a F	b M	b F	c M	c F	d M	d F	e M	e F	a M	a F	b M	b F	c M	c F	d M	d F	e M	e F
Education	+	+	(±)	(±)	+	+			+			(±)	±	±	±				(±)	+
Urban	+	+										(±)								(±)
Age	(±)	(±)							±											
Income	+	+	(±)		(±)	(±)	+		(+)	+		(-)	(±)							+
Married		(-)						(-)									(+)			
Religiosity			(+)	(-)													(-)		(-)	
Borneo											(-)	(+)	+	+	+	(+)	+			

Philippines

statement	a NCR M	a NCR F	a ARMM M	a ARMM F	b NCR M	b NCR F	b ARMM M	b ARMM F	c NCR M	c NCR F	c ARMM M	c ARMM F	d NCR M	d NCR F	d ARMM M	d ARMM F	e NCR M	e NCR F	e ARMM M	e ARMM F
Education			(±)								(±)									(±)
Age																				
Income							(±)								(±)					(±)
Married		(-)												(-)		(+)		(-)		
Religiosity	(-)						(+)		+		(+)		+	+				(-)		

Thailand

statement	a Bangkok M	a Bangkok F	a Proximal M	a Proximal F	a D_South M	a D_South F	b Bangkok M	b Bangkok F	b Proximal M	b Proximal F	b D_South M	b D_South F	c Bangkok M	c Bangkok F	c Proximal M	c Proximal F	c D_South M	c D_South F	d Bangkok M	d Bangkok F	d Proximal M	d Proximal F	d D_South M	d D_South F	e Bangkok M	e Bangkok F	e Proximal M	e Proximal F	e D_South M	e D_South F
Education		(±)		(±)									+	(±)		(+)		±		(±)					±		(+)			
Age									(±)				+	(±)																
Income	(±)								(+)			(±)	+		(-)		(±)								(+)		(-)			(±)
Married									(+)				+			(-)				-		(±)								
Religiosity		(-)												(-)			+				+				-	(-)	-	(-)		-

Notes:

Statements a, b, c, d and e in this table correspond with statements on page...

+/−: significant positive/negative impact (p < .01)
±: significant non-linear impact (p < .01)
+, − or ± in parentheses means significant impact (p < .1)

"religiosity": more religious than average, less religious than average
"Borneo": living in Borneo, living in other part of Malaysia

Sample size
Indonesia:
Muslim 2007 (female 1005, male 1002), non-Muslim 243 (female 120, male 12...
Malaysia:
Muslim 1157 (female 574, male 583), non-Muslim 483 (female 242, male 241)
Philippines:
NCR Muslim 300 (female 149, male 151), NCR non-Muslim 300 (female 150, ...
ARMM Muslim 300 (female 150, male 150), ARMM non-Muslim 300 (female 1...
Thailand:
Bangkok Muslim 706 (female 369, male 337), Bangkok non-Muslim 703 (fema...
Proximal Muslim 410 (female 211, male 199), Proximal non-Muslim 401 (fema...
Deep south Muslim 420 (female 217, male 203), Deep south non-Muslim 404 ...

Finally, Table 4 shows the result of an analysis similar to that in Table 3, but of non-Muslim respondents in each country. A comparison of the two tables demonstrates that impacts of socio-demographic factors on gender perceptions differ between Muslims and non-Muslims.[13]

Table 4: Impact of Socio-Demographic Factors on non-Muslims' Gender Perceptions

Indonesia / Malaysia

statement	a M	a F	b M	b F	c M	c F	d M	d F	e M	e F	a M	a F	b M	b F	c M	c F	d M	d F	e M	e F
Education		(+)			(±)	(±)					+				(-)		(-)		+	(+)
Urban									(-)											
Age					(-)						(±)	(±)								
Income	(±)				+		+				+		(±)				(+)			
Married												(-)				+				
Borneo													+		+		+			

Philippines

statement	a NCR M	a NCR F	a ARMM M	a ARMM F	b NCR M	b NCR F	b ARMM M	b ARMM F	c NCR M	c NCR F	c ARMM M	c ARMM F	d NCR M	d NCR F	d ARMM M	d ARMM F	e NCR M	e NCR F	e ARMM M	e ARMM F
Education	(±)						(±)	(±)	(±)	±	(±)		(±)							
Age	(±)				(-)			−		(±)	(±)									
Income			(±)					(+)												
Married							(-)											(-)		

Thailand

statement	a Bangkok M	a Bangkok F	a Proximal M	a Proximal F	a D_South M	a D_South F	b Bangkok M	b Bangkok F	b Proximal M	b Proximal F	b D_South M	b D_South F	c Bangkok M	c Bangkok F	c Proximal M	c Proximal F	c D_South M	c D_South F	d Bangkok M	d Bangkok F	d Proximal M	d Proximal F	d D_South M	d D_South F	e Bangkok M	e Bangkok F	e Proximal M	e Proximal F	e D_South M	e D_South F
Education	(+)	+										(±)		(±)		(±)	±						(±)		+	+	(±)			(±)
Age			(±)					(±)															(±)							
Income					(±)	±	±	(±)					±	±			(±)		±	±			(±)	(±)			(±)			
Married									(+)																					

For example, a generation gap does not seem to exist among Muslims in the Philippines, while it does exist among non-Muslims in the same country. Education has

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[13] Since the sample size of non-Muslims is very small in Indonesia and Malaysia, the results in Table 4 for these two countries may be irrelevant.

greater impact on non-Muslims than on Muslims, although the impact is complex and non-linear for both groups. In Thailand, marital status counts more for Muslims than for non-Muslims.

Conclusion

Analysis of causality is beyond the scope of this paper. We cannot show *how* each socio-demographic factor affects gender perceptions in these four countries. It is impossible to explain with certainty, for example, why education affects people's gender perception positively in Indonesia but adversely in Malaysia.

Nevertheless, the present paper shows that socio-demographic factors *do* work on the gender perceptions of Southeast Asian people, including Muslims.

In addition, people's attitudes toward gender equality can vary across countries, probably reflecting different historical and cultural contexts.

Religion (having Muslim identity) and sex are the sole factors that have persistent impacts across the four countries. Muslims have a significantly less favorable attitude toward the concept of gender equality. Although this may sound natural, given the standard characterization of Islamic countries as patriarchal, further exploration reveals that Muslims from different socio-demographic backgrounds have quite varied attitudes toward gender equality. This finding warns against an unquestioned assumption that Muslims in Southeast Asia uniformly view gender equality negatively. Further study is needed to clarify how religious and non-religious factors intersect to affect the Muslim view of gender.

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