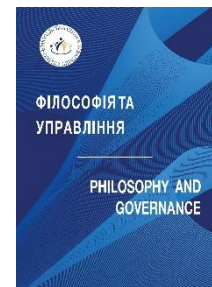




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## Gender as an Anthropological Perspective: Religious Studies and Theological Aspects

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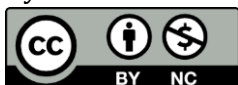
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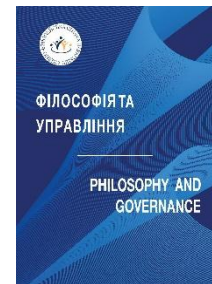


### ABSTRACT

The relevance of the problem under study is determined by the changing significance of religion in the life of modern man and the emergence of new forms of religiosity and spirituality. The problem of identity, the inner core of human essence, and its independence is one of the main issues of philosophical anthropology, which remains highly relevant at all times. Today, it is determined both by large-scale transformations of religious culture itself and by the tasks of understanding them in a contemporary theological context. The purpose of the study is to determine the perspective of gender in anthropological, religious studies, and theological concepts. Scientific and technological progress and religious culture, expanding the boundaries of control over the surrounding world, mark a point of no return to the traditional understanding of the foundations of human existence in the world. Urbanization, the active spread of new forms of religion and social transformation, the revision of internal moral imperatives, and, at the same time, the growing influence of the mass media and mass culture on people's consciousness are changing people's ideas about themselves as natural beings and as religious beings. Philosophy is also undergoing a revision of both methods and theoretical priorities against the backdrop of a general trend away from classical rationalism. This is linked to attempts by religion to solve the problem of human subjectivity, with the gender approach forming and proposing its own methodology for understanding subjectivity within the discourse of gender theory as a new direction in religious studies and theology.

### KEYWORDS

gender, religious anthropology, religious studies, spirituality, identity, social practices.



## Гендер як антропологічна перспектива: релігієзнавчо-богословські аспекти

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| СТАТТЯ                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | АНОТАЦІЯ                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| <p><b>Дослідницька</b></p> <p><b>DOI:</b><br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.70651/3041-248X/2026.1.02">10.70651/3041-248X/2026.1.02</a></p> <p><b>Отримана:</b><br/>27.11.2025 р.</p> <p><b>Прийнята:</b><br/>29.12.2025 р.</p> <p><b>Опублікована:</b><br/>06.01.2026 р.</p> <p><b>Авторське право</b><br/>© 2026 авторів</p> <p>Цей твір ліцензовано на умовах Ліцензії Creative Commons «Із Зазначенням Авторства – Некомерційна 4.0 Міжнародна» (CC BY-NC 4.0).</p> | <p>Актуальність досліджуваної проблеми обумовлена зміною значення релігії в житті сучасної людини, появою нових форм релігійності та духовності. Сьогодні вона обумовлена як масштабними трансформаціями самої релігійної культури, так і завданнями їх осмислення в сучасному богословському аспекті. Проблема ідентичності, внутрішнього остова людської сутності, його самостійності є одним з основних питань філософської антропології, яке в усі часи зберігає гостру актуальність. Мета дослідження – визначити перспективу гендеру в антропологічній релігієзнавчо-богословських уявлень. Науково-технічний прогрес і релігійна культура, розширюючи межі контролю над навколишнім світом, маркують точку неповернення до традиційного розуміння підстав існування людини в світі. Урбанізація, активне поширення нових форм релігії та соціальних перетворень, перегляд внутрішніх моральних імперативів і разом з тим зростання впливу мас-медіа та масової культури на свідомість людей, змінюють уявлення людини про саму себе і як природної істоти, і як істоти релігійної. У філософії також відбувається ревізія, як методів, так і теоретичних пріоритетів на тлі загальної тенденції відмови від класичного раціоналізму. З цим пов'язані і спроби релігії вирішити проблему людської суб'єктивності, гендерний підхід формує і пропонує свою методологію до розуміння суб'єктивності в рамках дискурсу гендерної теорії як нового напрямку в релігієзнавчо-богословському аспекті.</p> |



### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

гендер, антропологія, релігієзнавство, духовність, ідентичність, соціальні практики.

## 1. Introduction

Modern humanities are increasingly turning to the interdisciplinary analysis of gender as a complex anthropological phenomenon that is formed at the intersection of social, cultural, religious and ideological factors [6; 15]. In this context, religion and spirituality appear not only as spheres of personal experience, but also as powerful social institutions involved in the construction of gender norms, behavioral models and social hierarchies [2, 4]. Gender issues, considered through an anthropological perspective, allow us to identify the mechanisms of interaction between the individual, the community and systems of symbolic meaning, which include religious discourse [16].

In recent decades, gender has ceased to be considered exclusively as a biological characteristic or a set of social roles. In modern anthropology and religious studies, it is interpreted as a dynamic category that is formed in the process of social interaction, cultural interpretation and religious symbolization [15; 18]. That is why the analysis of gender in a religious context requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account both the institutional aspects of religion and the everyday practices of believers, their spiritual experience and social ties [8; 16].

The relevance of this approach is increasing in the context of global transformations of the modern world, which are increasingly understood in the categories of Anthropocene – an era in which human activity becomes a determining factor in changes in the natural and social environment [17]. In this context, the traditional dichotomies “culture – nature – supernatural” are insufficient to explain the complex relationships between gender, religion and anthropological ideas about man [11]. The gender perspective allows us to critically rethink these events and show that religious ideas about the body, morality and social order directly affect the formation of gender identities [10].

In a broad sense, gender is the social dimension of the article. Unlike the latter, which refers to physical, bodily differences between a man and a woman, the concept of “gender” sets psychological, social and cultural strategies and scenarios [12]. Gender is a set of characteristics and norms embodied in binary oppositions “male” and “female”, images of masculinity related to a certain individual subject [5]. Within the framework of gender theory, the study of gender identity is gaining strength. The internal coherence of the individual through the acquisition of a certain self-identity gender identity is maintained [1; 7].

At the same time, modern research emphasizes the need for a methodologically correct distinction to understand “religiosity” and “spirituality”, since these constructs have a multidimensional structure and manifest themselves differently in different social groups [3; 9]. Ignoring this multidimensionality can lead to simplistic conclusions about the impact of religion on gender perceptions and behavior [13].

## 2. Literature Review

The relevance of the problem under study is due to the change in the meaning of religion in the life of modern man, the emergence of new forms of religiosity and spirituality, in which women show interest, first of all [1; 11; 14]. The article is aimed at identifying the conceptual foundations of the ongoing changes, as well as the role of the theories and emerging concepts themselves in these changes. The leading theoretical assumption is the presence of social and conceptual prerequisites for changing the meaning of religion [13; 15].

Gender as an anthropological perspective in religious studies changes methodological techniques and principles, resulting in the idea of people as subjects involved in the functioning and transformation of religion as an institution [13; 15]. The existing barriers in the institutional forms of religion and the processes of secularization and privatization of religion are articulated as grounds for the emergence of alternative forms of spirituality [1; 14].

The religious understanding of man is based on the belief that life has an established order that is not random and is not formed only by man; in this sense, gender is perceived as a given through which a person learns responsibility, service and coexistence in society [5; 9]. That is why participation in religious life affects how a person sees social roles, power and the limits of what is permissible [4; 14]. Studies show that regular recourse to religious practice is associated with the adoption of an established idea of leadership as a form of vocation, and not only as a way of self-realization [4].

The actualization of discussions on the topic of gender among theologians is initiated not only by objective socio-cultural processes, but also by the development of theological and religious-

anthropological reflection as an independent direction [5; 9]. The volume of spiritual cooperation and participation of women in the affairs of church organization is increasing, as well as the number of women involved in theological discourse, which forms a new reality in religious communities [1; 14]. At the same time, modern polemics in the church environment are aimed not only at resolving socio-biological contradictions, but also at expanding anthropological perspectives of theology and searching for a holistic vision of man [5; 9]. In this regard, such studies bring to the fore onto-epistemological problems [9].

Summarizing the material of the discussions, it can be noted that the question of the fundamentality of the duality of human nature, which is manifested in the otherness of the male and female sexes, is in the center of the discussion [5; 9]. The source texts for such an analysis are traditionally biblical narratives[5].

Thus, modern research, even carried out within the secular sciences, indicates that religion continues to form a vision of man, the order of life and mutual responsibility [9; 13; 15].

A significant contribution to the understanding of the gender dimension of religion has been made within the psychology of religion and spirituality. Studies show a multidimensional structure of religiosity and spirituality, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components [11; 16; 17]. Similar results are confirmed by works using validated tools for measuring spirituality [10; 17]. This is of fundamental importance for gender studies, since different levels of religious experience are differently associated with gender attitudes and behavior patterns [14; 16].

### 3. Problem Statement

Modern studies of gender in anthropological and religious studies indicate the absence of a single coherent approach to the integration of religious, socio-cultural and psychological factors into a holistic analytical model of gender interaction. Despite a significant array of empirical and theoretical works, the available studies often focus either on individual social dimensions of religiosity or on the normative-political aspects of gender, which complicates a comprehensive anthropological understanding of this problems [4; 6; 15].

The methodological problem of operationalization of the concepts of “religiosity” and “spirituality” in gender studies also requires special attention. The multidimensional nature of these constructs, confirmed by modern psychometric research, complicates the comparative analysis of the results and requires a clear analytical distinction between the levels of influence of religion on gender attitudes and social behavior [10; 16; 17].

The purpose of the study is to determine the perspective of gender in anthropological religious and theological ideas.

Based on the above, it was necessary to find out in the work:

- to analyze modern data on gender as an anthropological approach in religious and theological aspects;
- to summarize the results of religious and theological practices in the formation of gender morality;
- to establish the main parameters on which gender norms are based in religious and theological aspects.

The hypothesis of the study was to establish how the worldview of gender as an anthropological perspective occurs and to determine its significance in religious and theological aspects.

### 4. Methods and Materials

The methodological basis of the study is an interdisciplinary anthropological approach that combines the methods of social anthropology, religious studies, psychology of religion and sociology. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of gender as a socially and culturally constructed category in the context of religious ideas, practices and discourses, as well as to identify the mechanisms of their influence on the formation of gender norms and identities [11; 15].

The study uses qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, which provide a multidimensional understanding of the subject of research. Theoretical and methodological analysis is used to systematize modern concepts of interaction between gender and religion, in particular

approaches that consider religiosity as a factor of social stratification and symbolic legitimation of gender roles [2; 4; 6]. The method of conceptual analysis made it possible to clarify the content of the key concepts of the study – “gender”, “religiosity”, “spirituality”, “anthropological perspective” and determine their analytical boundaries.

An important element of the methodology is comparative analysis, which is used to establish the results presented in scientific works, which allows to study the features of the role of gender as an anthropological perspective in religious and theological aspects [4; 18].

In order to analyze the individual dimension of religiosity and spirituality, the results of psychometric studies based on factor analysis and validation of tools for measuring religious and spiritual experience were used [10; 16; 17]. This allows us to take into account the multidimensional nature of spirituality and avoid simplistic interpretations of its influence on gender attitudes and behavioral patterns.

The analytical interpretation of the obtained data was carried out using the method of interpretive analysis, focused on identifying the semantic structures and symbolic meanings underlying religious and gender narratives. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of discursive practices, within which gender roles receive normative or moral justification [2; 15].

## 5. Results and Discussion

When gender is considered from an anthropological point of view, the focus is not on terminology, but on man as a whole being. It is about how a person lives in his own body, how he realizes himself, how he builds relationships with others, and how he finds meaning in his life [1; 13; 15].

The anthropological approach proceeds from the fact that gender cannot be reduced to biological sex alone, nor only to social roles. A person does not experience his gender in the form of an abstract scheme. He lives it every day – through bodily experience, behavior, restrictions, responsibility and interaction with the social environment [5; 9; 15].

In recent years, it has been emphasized that gender roles in the religious context are not fixed, but they are reproduced through a set of ritual practices, moral guidelines and social expectations [2; 6; 13]. This allows us to consider gender as a dynamic anthropological category that is constantly reconstructed in the process of interaction between the individual and the community [1, 13]. This approach is fundamentally different from normative interpretations of gender, since it focuses not on prescriptions, but on the mechanisms of reproduction of meanings [9].

Especially indicative are the results that demonstrate that religion can simultaneously perform two opposite functions: on the one hand, it can provide a sense of identity and social belonging, and on the other hand, it can consolidate hierarchical models of gender relations. It is this duality that is key for the anthropological analysis of gender in the religious dimension [4; 15].

The works emphasize that gender biases can influence the roles of women and men within religious communities, as well as the level of their symbolic and social capital [2; 6; 15]. Thus, religious participation does not automatically guarantee equal opportunities, but can reproduce latent forms of inequality that are not always realized by community members.

The anthropological value of these results lies in the fact that they allow us to move away from the idea of religion as an exclusively moral or spiritual phenomenon and consider it as a social mechanism within which gender structures receive everyday consolidation. This is especially important for the analysis of those societies where religion does not formally dominate, but continues to influence social interactions [4; 6].

At the same time, modern research shows that this process does not have a one-vector character. Individual spiritual experience can both support traditional gender ideas and contribute to their rethinking. Psychological and sociological data indicate a significant variability of forms of religious experience even within the same confessional tradition, which determines different ways of interpreting and living gender roles [10; 16].

From an anthropological perspective, this means that gender norms in a religious context cannot be seen as static. They are the result of a constant “negotiation process” between institutional prescriptions and the personal experience of believers, which opens up space for change and transformation [15].

However, the fact of a temporary gap in creation, leading to the manifestation of the masculine and feminine modes of human nature, continues to be debatable in theological constructions. The fact

that sexual dualism manifested itself at a certain stage of human history as an event of separation, separation of the feminine principle, which, among other things, receives a name and instruction for life from a “man”, speaks of a given difference in the ways of existence of the human race. But the question of the ontological difference of the sexes in modern theology develops not so much as a problem of otherness at the level of spirit/soul, but, first of all, as a problem of determining the forms of service.

However, the recognition of the unity of the nature of the male and female does not exclude the importance of pointing out the differences. If we talk about a single spiritual nature, then it is indeed beyond sexual duality. If we talk about a specific person, then it is impossible to avoid gender differences: the “average person” (asexual) is an abstraction used in scientific procedures. Gender is not only biology, it determines the specifics of the worldview, the status portrait of the individual, the very nature of the individual, his psychocultural appearance [18].

From a theological-anthropological point of view, such a difference does not imply the variability of faith itself, but rather indicates a change in the ways of its presence in society. Religion does not exist outside of history, so its voice in matters concerning the human being is perceived differently depending on political and cultural conditions.

In this regard, when considering an individual, it is impossible to take gender out of parentheses: “a person cannot reject individuality at all until he hypostasizes his nature, and only in a deified form is the individual transformed. In Orthodoxy, fundamental attention has always been paid to the internal, and the external, social has been interpreted as historically transient forms of life, depending on the level of development of consciousness. In this regard, the problem of gender duality, acquiring an existential sound, generally indirectly relates to the topic of social gender inequality. Hierarchical moments that take a woman out of the celebration of divine services, impose a ban on her uttering words in church, etc., go back to the epistemological aspect. To be a person, according to Orthodox thought, means to be in communion, to transcend in the process of knowing God. It is important to analyze the social role of a person in the formation of religious ideas. Scientists emphasize that education from childhood culture to religion passes with a person into adulthood, which forms stable moral aspects [8].

From an anthropological point of view, this emphasizes the need to analyze gender within the life path, and not only as a static characteristic. Gender identity is formed gradually, in the process of interaction with the family, religious community and the wider social environment (Table 1).

**Table 1. Key factors of the anthropological influence of religion on gender**

| Factor                  | Impact Level  | The nature of the impact on gender                                  |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Religious participation | Social        | Formation of support networks with existing gender asymmetries      |
| Religious discourses    | Cultural      | Normative consolidation of roles and behavior patterns              |
| Spiritual experience    | Psychological | Gender-driven differences in the experience of meaning and identity |
| Political context       | Institutional | Impact on the legal regulation of gender diversity                  |
| Socialization           | Biographical  | Long-term impact of early religious attitudes                       |

Source: Created by the authors based on [2; 4; 6; 10; 15; 16; 18].

One of the key contradictions is the tension between collective normativity and the personal experience of believers. Institutional forms of religion, as a rule, reinforce generalized models of “proper” gender behavior that perform a regulatory function within the community. At the same time, empirical evidence shows that individual spirituality often goes beyond these models, allowing the individual to construct his own meanings, which are not always consistent with the official discourse [10; 15; 16]. From an anthropological point of view, this indicates the existence of an internal dialogue between norm and experience, which is a potential source of gender transformations.

Another significant contradiction is the combination of integrative and exclusive functions of religion. Participation in religious communities contributes to the formation of social support networks, but these networks are often built on the principle of a symbolic hierarchy, in which gender plays the role of a marker of status and legitimacy [2; 4; 6]. Thus, religion simultaneously creates conditions for solidarity and reproduces mechanisms of social exclusion.

Gender in religious discourse is often used as a symbol of the “moral order”, which gives it special importance in political debates. In such conditions, religion can act as a tool both for the conservation of social models and for mobilization around alternative ideas about justice and equality (Table 2) [2; 18]. The integrative type of influence is associated with the role of religious communities in the formation of social support networks [6; 11; 14]. From an anthropological perspective, it is this dimension that explains why religion retains significance even in secularized societies: it provides a

space of solidarity, mutual assistance and a common experience of meaning [7; 13; 15]. However, integration does not always mean equality – gender asymmetries can be “embedded” in the structure of communities, which creates hidden forms of unequal access to symbolic and social capital [2; 6; 18].

**Table 2. Types of anthropological influence of religion on gender processes**

| Type of impact          | Main mechanism                | Gender effect                      | Anthropological significance      |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Stabilizing</b>      | Rituals, traditional norms    | Consolidation of established roles | Reproduction of social order      |
| <b>Integrative</b>      | Community participation       | Social support                     | Strengthening collective identity |
| <b>Regulatory</b>       | Moral narratives              | Behavior control                   | Normative legitimization          |
| <b>Transformational</b> | Individual spirituality       | Rethinking roles                   | Gender mobility                   |
| <b>Polarizing</b>       | Political instrumentalization | Conflict of identities             | Social fragmentation              |

Source: Created by the authors based on [6; 10; 11; 13; 14; 15; 18].

The regulatory type of influence reflects the normative function of religious narratives, through which ideas about acceptable and unacceptable gender behavior are formed [3; 4; 18]. Anthropologically, this is manifested in the translation of moral models internalized by individuals as part of their own identity [8; 14]. Such a mechanism is an effective tool of social control, but in modern conditions it is increasingly coming into conflict with individual experience and pluralism of values [2; 18].

The transformational type of influence is associated with the potential of individual spirituality to go beyond institutional prescriptions [1; 13; 15]. It is in this dimension that the possibility of rethinking gender roles without direct conflict with religious tradition opens up [1; 5]. Anthropologically, this indicates that religion can be not only a factor of conservation, but also a space of internal changes, where gender identity acquires more flexible forms [1; 13; 15].

Table 3 presents anthropological types and dimensions of the interaction of gender and religion, in the context of anthropological content, gender implication.

**Table 3. Anthropological types and dimensions of the interaction of gender and religion**

| Analytical dimension                       | Type / aspect of impact       | Key feature                                                            | Anthropological content                                                                                | Gender consequence                                               | Socio-cultural manifestations                                                                    | Analytical value for research                                               |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of religious influence</b>         | Transformational              | Transcendence of individual spirituality beyond institutional precepts | Religion functions as a space for the inner workings of the individual, not just as a normative system | Gender roles are redefined without a direct break with tradition | Individual practices of faith, private spirituality, non-conflicting forms of self-determination | Allows you to explain changes in gender identity without secular radicalism |
| <b>Type of religious influence</b>         | Polarizing                    | Turning gender into a marker of moral “normality”                      | Gender and religion become instruments of symbolic struggle                                            | Gender takes on ideological significance                         | Public conflicts, rhetoric of “values”, social tension                                           | Explains the persistence of conflicts and the complexity of compromises     |
| <b>Anthropological approach</b>            | Multidimensionality           | Interaction of experience, culture, religion                           | Gender is not reduced to biology or ideology                                                           | Gender as part of human existence                                | The crossroads of the bodily, spiritual and social                                               | Overcomes reductionism in gender studies                                    |
| <b>Bodily dimension</b>                    | Corporeality as an experience | Gender does not exist outside the body                                 | The body as a space of experience, not just a biological fact                                          | Gender is formed through bodily practices                        | Religious rituals, roles, daily actions                                                          | Explains the relationship of gender to ritual and body discipline           |
| <b>Religious-anthropological dimension</b> | A holistic image of a person  | Combining body, soul and spirituality                                  | Gender is included in the overall understanding of human nature                                        | Gender is related to vocation and responsibility                 | Theological anthropologies, ethical narratives                                                   | Gives grounds for intra-religious analysis                                  |



| Analytical dimension             | Type / aspect of impact   | Key feature                               | Anthropological content                | Gender consequence                 | Socio-cultural manifestations      | Analytical value for research                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Existential dimension</b>     | Lived experience          | Gender as a long process                  | Identity is formed over time           | Lack of a “final” gender status    | Relationships, family, life crises | Emphasizes identity dynamics                      |
| <b>Methodological conclusion</b> | Anthropological synthesis | Taking into account contextual dependency | Life trajectories as a key to analysis | Gender as a process of interaction | Everyday practices and symbols     | Forms the basis for balanced scientific decisions |

Source: Created by the authors based on [2; 3; 5; 6; 9; 15; 18].

A type of religious influence, such as polarizing, leads to the transformation of gender into a marker of “normal” morality; in this case, gender and religion become instruments of symbolic struggle [2; 6; 18]. These relationships explain the persistence of such a conflict and the difficulty of finding compromise solutions within public and religious discourse [2; 3].

In modern theology, there is a tendency to interpret gender as a divisive-unifying reality: male and female are two different ways of existence of a single humanity [5; 9]. Sexual difference, ordering social existence, is considered as the intention of spiritual work to transform and transform the body in asceticism, and this line remains relevant in the Orthodox tradition [5]. At the same time, at the present stage, the solution of the topic of gender in the aspect of dispassion gives way to the motives of sacrificial love and Christian family service [5; 9].

The results of the analysis indicate that religious practices perform an important function in the formation and reproduction of gender norms, as they combine bodily experience, symbolic meanings and social interaction. It is through rituals, ritual actions and moral guidelines that ideas about acceptable models of behavior of women and men are consolidated, which are eventually assimilated by the individual and become a component of his identity.

Modern theologians, carrying out the neopatristic synthesis, strive to give gender relations a transcendental dimension, within which the constituent elements of the relationship are in harmony, which ensures not only their ontological openness to each other, but also the orientation towards the divine in the vertical dimension of being [5; 9].

Therefore, if to generalize gender is not something once and for all defined, its changes occur with society. The main merit and task of gender anthropology and, more broadly, gender studies, is the development of scientific tools for analyzing and fixing the differences and hierarchies of being a woman and a man in the modern world. In addition, within the framework of gender studies, it is possible to develop changes in social practices of being and overcome the androcentrism of the modern world.

## 5. Conclusions

Thus, gender studies as a perspective of anthropological studies have expanded research opportunities in religion through new transformations, while leading to changes in which methodological procedures and techniques are reproduced. Gender as a category as a whole helps to carry out critical reflection within the framework of existing religious traditions.

Gender is formed through bodily experiences and life practices and is lived in everyday life. Religious traditions significantly influence the idea of gender, they form moral values and social attitudes.

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