



Vulnerability and *Vulnerance*: Marginalization of Women in 1 Timothy 2:12-15

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ABSTRACT

Did 1 Timothy 2:12-15 serve to marginalize women? From a feminist and vulnerability standpoint, we suggest reinterpreting the text with using Leo G. Perdue Biblical Theology concept. In terms of *vulnerance*, Paul restricts the role of women for the sake of the salvation of the Christian community in Ephesus under the shepherding of Timothy. From a perspective of vulnerability, women's restriction can be attributed to the issue of inequality, the hierarchical structure of control and subjugation by the wealthy during that era, and the susceptibility of women to be misled by heretical beliefs at the time. The passage 1 Timothy 2:12-15 provides insight into the cultural marginalization of women during that era. Therefore, the present-day Christian community must actively advocate for gender equality by addressing the underlying factors that contribute to the marginalization of women.

Keywords: Feminist; Marginalization, Vulnerability; *Vulnerance*; Women

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INTRODUCTION

Once, our younger sister inquired about the precise stance of women as outlined in the Bible. What is the biblical rationale behind the assertion that women are the starting point of temptation and will find salvation via childbirth? She referenced the biblical passage 1 Timothy 2:12-15. Does the Bible indeed endorse the marginalization of women? A study conducted by Lifeway Research indicates that although women's ministry in the church has shown effectiveness, there is still potential for enhancement. Notably, the research reveals that only 1 out of every 6 women ministry leaders hold salaried positions, with 8% in full-time and 9% in part-time (Sullivan, 2024). Furthermore, as reported by the Christianity Today page, June 6, 2024, the title of female pastor became a much-discussed issue ahead of the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2024, when about 11,000 participants will vote to amend the constitution to state that only men can serve as 'any kind of pastor' (Shellnutt, 2024).

BPS-Statistics Indonesia has provided data that shows marginalization in many sectors throughout the country. Male workers are 1.5 times more than female workers in the labor sector (Sahara et al., 2023, p. 25). Interestingly, the percentage of women among part-time workers is more significant than that of men (Sahara et al., 2023, p. 26). Furthermore, the statistics indicate that the unemployment rate among female college graduates is higher than their male counterparts (Sahara et al., 2023, p. 28). This reality is supported by the gender inequality index of 0.459 points in 2022. Despite a drop in the gender inequality index from 2018 to 2022, a significant disparity exists in the labor force participation rate between women and men when examined quantitatively (Indonesia, 2023). In Indonesia, employers prioritize women less. If connected, the marginalization of women occurs in Indonesia; likewise, 1 Timothy 2:12-15 also indicates the marginalization of women. In her research, Evelyn Yvette Green highlights that some church groups prohibit the ordination of women, citing this particular text as the basis for their stance (Green, 2023, pp. iv, 2). Upon further examination, it appears that the Bible correlates with the marginalization of women in society. However, to empathize with women's experiences, we must critically analyze the content of 1 Timothy 2:12-15 and the expectations placed upon women. Does 1 Timothy 2:12-15 truly marginalize women within the Christian community?

The text 1 Timothy 2:12-15 poses a contentious challenge to women's freedom within the Christian community. The text gives two prescriptions, specifically prohibiting teaching and ruling men. Regrettably, in order to reinforce this prescription, Paul employs two theological reasons, specifically that women are the source of sin and are redeemed through childbirth. Upon initial examination, the text conspicuously diminishes the significance of women in the Christian community. Does Christianity promote gender inequality? In order to get a fresh outlook and prevent the inclination to marginalize

women, it is necessary to reexamine this passage from a biblical and perspective-oriented standpoint.

We conducted a thorough investigation on the subject matter of this article and discovered multiple sources that mention it. In her analysis of 1 Timothy 2:12-15, Linda L. Belleville argues that the term 'rule' is downplayed to avoid contradicting men. However, a more accurate term would be 'kill,' which implies the removal of men power (Belleville, 2019). Peter-Ben Smit further asserts that these regulations were employed to regulate social behavior, ensuring that the religious practices of that era maintained a hierarchical structure and strict control, ultimately leading to the emergence of the issue at hand (Smith, 2022, p. 238). Some research on this text needs to be revised, as it tends to marginalize the position of women. According to other sources, like Lyn M. Kidson, the directive in 1 Timothy 2:12-15 can be understood as a type of 'other instruction' employed by the Church during that period to protect its community (Kidson, 2022, p. 182). Additionally, specific studies suggest that the instruction in 1 Timothy 2:12-15 protected women, upheld moral standards, and preserved the Christian community during that period (Bunga, 2021; Elmayanti & Christnanda, 2022; Hasibuan, 2023; Makanata, 2018). Certain writers attempt to construct and provide a more comprehensive viewpoint of the Text, but is this true? With a feminist lens of suspicion and openness to vulnerability, we aim to present an alternative viewpoint that certain earlier writers have overlooked.

Both perspectives serve as the limits of debate in this study. Vulnerability, as defined by Thomas E. Reynold, is the notion that humanity should emulate the vulnerability displayed by Christ in his efforts to save humanity (Reynolds, 2008, p. 197). The feminist approach seeks to free patterns of interpretation constrained by the era's cultural influences, particularly within the patriarchal nuances of the biblical text (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994, p. 84).

Through a feminist perspective and vulnerability, we prove that the marginalization of women is not due to the cause of sin and the necessity of childbirth (1 Timothy 2:12-15), so women should have a place in the ministry of the Christian community equally. The patriarchal cultural system and social inequality (wealth citizens) caused Paul to deliver the verse to Timothy in the context of the Ephesian church, so the problem is the concept of *vulnerance* that arises because of Paul's vulnerability to the cultural context at that time. Looking at the work of Christ and his liberation, we argue that women are not the cause of sin and the necessity of childbirth, precisely because of *vulnerance*, Paul perpetuated the tradition in the context at that time. The right vulnerability is not a *vulnerance* to cover up mistakes but a mutual awareness to realize each other's weaknesses and live in the gift of Christ. The gift of Christ is the liberation of women from various debilitating stereotypes, including women as the cause of sin.

METHOD

To strengthen the argument, we employ the biblical theology approach developed by Leo G. Perdue. Perdue's primary focus is on the Old Testament, but he also offers a comprehensive viewpoint that allows for several interpretations of the text. Perdue's thesis posits that a book can be interpreted from various perspectives, resulting in a multi-perspective biblical theology (Perdue, 2005, p. 342). Perdue's approach is categorically divided into four distinct steps. First, a theological interpretation is proposed that effectively conveys the text's more persuasive significance while acknowledging its cultural and historical contexts. Second, this process leads to the formation of mental representations of visual pictures, concepts, and motifs. Third, this involves systematically examining biblical texts and the theological concepts derived from them throughout interpretive history. Furthermore, the fourth stage involves critical reflection by examining the correlation between the research findings and current societal challenges (Perdue, 2005, pp. 348–349). In the initial and subsequent stages, we expounded upon the background of 1 Timothy and concentrated on the issue of the position of women. During the third phase, we examined many interpretations, including feminist interpretations, that are relevant to the text of 1 Timothy 2:12-15. Lastly, we conducted a thorough analysis from a vulnerability perspective. This research recognizes the vulnerability perspective as both a limitation and an opportunity to reinterpret 1 Timothy 2:12-15. Viewing women's equality through the lens of vulnerability provides a creative approach to advocating for it.

This article is divided into four parts. First, we outline the commentary of 1 Timothy 2:12-15, which includes the text's historical context and commentaries. Second, we outline the Feminist commentaries of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Sarah G. Harding. Third, we reconstruct the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-15 using the vulnerability perspective. Fourth, we present the theological implications of our reconstructed interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-15

Historical Context Text 1 Timothy 2:12-15

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are letters written by the apostle Paul, specifically addressing pastoral matters. In the New Testament, they are consistently grouped together due to their shared interests and debates. Specific keywords and ideas permeate them, connect them, and unify what, at first glance, appears to be a collection of ethical commands and doctrinal statements. The letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus share significant similarities in their character, ethical exhortation, and focus on

teaching related to church order. The authorship of these epistles is attributed to Paul or his disciples, who continued to propagate his beliefs. These letters can be viewed as written materials addressed to a community that sought to adhere firmly to what they perceived as the authentic teachings of Paul despite facing persecution or criticism from various Christian instructors (Barton & Muddiman, 2001, p. 1220). Although 1 Timothy seems to have doubtful authorship, in this section, we position Paul as the author of the letter.

Assuming Paul as the author, these pastoral letters were composed during the final years of his life, approximately between AD 62-64. Paul's release from captivity, as mentioned in Acts 28:30-31, marked the completion of his journeys chronicled in the Pastoral Letters by early Christian tradition (Keener, 2014, p. 601). This correspondence aims to articulate some of the writer's concerns. The topics addressed in the pastoral letters primarily revolve around the importance of adhering to correct teachings and exhibiting virtuous behavior. The letters are problematic and include theological ideas and doctrines that result in conflict within the community (e.g., 1 Timothy 6:3-10). Furthermore, the author counters his adversaries by urging them to concentrate on the early Christian tradition. Furthermore, the directions about church organization and ethical teaching consist of concise and revered declarations concerning God's scheme for redemption. Furthermore, the church's structure and the interconnections among its members are established based on the Greco-Roman household model. Furthermore, the pastoral letters expound upon the principles of virtuous living, drawing inspiration from the teachings of Greek, Christian, and Jewish philosophers (Barton & Muddiman, 2001, p. 121).

David Platt et al. argue that the situational background of 1 Timothy is Timothy's role as a preacher at Ephesus. Ephesus was a populous and prosperous city at that period, characterized by its diversity, religious complexity, and growing commercial activity. Due to its location in Ephesus, the temple of Artemis held significant sway on the religious practices and beliefs in the capital of the Empire. This cult significantly impacted commercial activity and appears to have absorbed various other cultic techniques, including magic, sorcery, and divination (Platt et al., 2013, p. 10). Upon seeing the circumstances in Ephesus, Paul, with the assistance of Timothy, who acted as his representative, saw the intricate nature of the rise of numerous erroneous doctrines that originated inside the Christian community itself. The diverse erroneous doctrines were shaped by the circumstances of the city of Ephesus, the impact of Hellenism, and the customs of Judaism.

The interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-15

This section delves into the analysis of the meaning behind 1 Timothy 2:12-15. This analysis will examine 1 Timothy 2:12-15 and consider its historical and contextual aspects. Moreover, the commentary will present the interpreters' perspectives,

introducing intricacies associated with this text. The inquiry to be examined arises from the query, what is the reason for the limited role of women (v. 12)? What is the reason behind Paul's utilization of the theological argument that women are the cause of sin (verse 14), (we use the term cause of sin even though the text says 'but it was the woman who was tempted and fell into sin' which corresponds to various interpretations of this passage) and will be saved by bearing children (v. 15)?

Through this text, women were restricted in their service in the Church. The context of history reveals that several women at Ephesus were engaging in behavior that was deemed sinful according to the teachings of other Christians, who were predominantly men (Hübner, 2015, p. 20). Despite the early Church's conflicting stance on the subordination of women to men due to their perceived role in the first sin, women are regarded as an embodiment of holiness and serve as the most significant source of inspiration for men. Eve is seen as the initiator of human sin. However, she is sometimes referred to as *ezer* or 'helper' (Viscichini, 2014, pp. 20–21). Even this interpretation is quite problematic because it creates a paradox. Regardless of whether they are belittled or praised, this interpretation fails to adequately clarify their point of view. The subsequent impact is that soteriologically, women are saved because they bear (τεκνογονίας-*teknogonias*) children (v. 15). This verse appears to present a significant issue as it suggests that people who are unable to conceive have infertility, or perish due to difficult childbirth have no prospects for improvement or success. If women do not support procreation, are they not saved? Andreas Köstenberger concisely states that the prevailing viewpoint among conservative evangelical interpreters is that women will finally attain spiritual salvation by faithfully adhering to their divinely assigned position focused around the household (Köstenberger, 1997, p. 1). Nevertheless, this offer remains problematic as it diminishes the significance of women, confining them to the only purpose of procreation and domestic responsibilities. Linda L. Belleville says that Paul proposed the idea of marriage and the responsibilities associated with managing a household as a means to counter the teachings of deceitful instructors who forbade marriage (Belleville, 2003, p. 3).

W. Hulitt Gloer and Perry L. Stepp offer an analysis of women's role in sin based on the specific circumstances of Paul's letter to Timothy and his ministry in Ephesus. Examining the circumstances surrounding women at Ephesus, Paul underlined the importance of women behaving appropriately when receiving gifts, not to hinder others (1 Timothy 2:9-11)—the message aimed to discourage the stereotype of women being lascivious and defiant towards their spouses. Paul's decision to prohibit women in Ephesus, who were under Timothy's guidance, from teaching was based on his recognition of the impact of incorrect teachings on women's perspectives. The women at Ephesus had succumbed to the sway of erroneous doctrines that advocated unconventional principles, undermined the importance of marriage, and discouraged

childbearing. Paul emphasizes the word *ἡπατηθη* (*ēpatēthē*) which means to be deceived. Although Paul seems to be in line with the Judaic thought of women as the cause of sin, Gloer and Stepp, in their commentary, emphasize the danger of women whom false teachings have deceived in the context of the Ephesians (Gloer & Stepp, 2008, pp. 187–192). Gloer and Stepp utilize the term ‘deceived’ as a recurring theme. Paul urgently desired women who were misled by erroneous doctrines to reject traditional principles that undermine the institution of marriage and refrain from propagating these teachings within the community. Paul unequivocally condemns any thought that contradicts the concept of procreation.

Gloer and Stepp provide further analysis regarding the understanding of the imperative of childbearing as mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:15. Gloer and Stepp reject the view that the necessity of childbearing is related to God's protection in Genesis 3:16 and Mary being saved by giving birth to Jesus. Gloer and Stepp propose that childbirth serves as a metaphor for virtue and provides an occasion to embrace redemption by adhering to the traditional role of women, particularly in light of the influence of Roman women in that era. Paul counters the influence and incorrect teachings of Roman women in Ephesus by presenting a theological argument that asserts that women's salvation is connected to childbearing (Gloer & Stepp, 2008, pp. 192–194). Peter-Ben Smit mentions that, instead of being seen as deliverance from pain and punishment (referring to Genesis 3:15), childbearing (*τεκνογονία*) is presented as a means of salvation (*σωζω*), a moment in which virtue, especially in terms of faith, love, holiness, and modesty can be exercised (Smit, 2022, p. 249). Based on Gloer and Stepp's interpretation, we see Paul's urgency to expand the Christian community at that time through quality and quantity. In terms of quality, Paul did not allow women the opportunity to teach ‘at that time,’ and in terms of quantity, Paul emphasized that Christian women bear children. For Paul, this strategy was the best for the Christian community at that time, although we disagree.

According to Ben Witherington's commentary, Paul did not allow women to teach ‘at that time.’ It is essential to highlight that Paul should not have said he would never allow women to teach. The word used is *ἐπιτρέπω* (*epitrepō*), which shows a first-person present indicative form (Witherington, 2006, p. 284). Paul emphasized that his instructions to Timothy should not be a general reference but a specific reference to the pastoral context in Ephesus. It is as if Paul is warning about the potential for misdirection because of women who are allowed to teach. Regarding women as the cause of sin (v. 14), Witherington agrees with Gloer and Stepp regarding the context of the Ephesians when false teachings easily misled women at that time. As for the necessity of bearing children (v. 15), Witherington interpreted it as Mary having faith in Christ and being saved. However, Witherington doubts his interpretation because the word ‘woman’ cannot be attached to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Witherington, 2006, pp. 286–288). To us, Witherington's interpretation of verse 15 is quite problematic. Verse 14 explains that

women cause sin, while verse 15 can be interpreted through the redeeming woman being born. However, the word ‘childbirth,’ being a necessity and a condition for women to be saved, cannot be taken for granted. In this case, although traditionally, childbirth is often interpreted as a battlefield (αγων), the emphasis in this arena is emphasized on the implementation of virtue (Smit, 2022, p. 250).

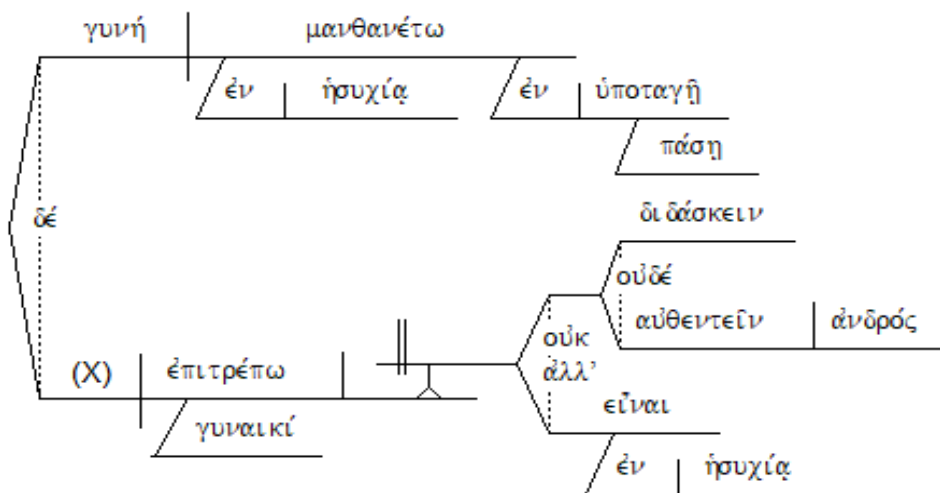


Figure 1. Verse diagram of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (*BibleWorks for Windows*, 2009).

We compare the various interpretations with a verse diagram analysis of 1 Timothy 2:11-12. The imperative verb form appears in the word *μανθανέτω* (*manthanetō*); it is flanked by two dative nouns (which use the preposition *έν-en* to emphasize their function). The use of the word ‘with’ (KJV, RSV: ‘with’) indicates that the dative is an instrumental form that serves to explain *μανθανέτω*. In this case, the act of receiving the teaching is done with silence (*έν ήσυχία-en hēsukhia*) and obedience (*έν ύποταγή-en hupotagē*). *Ησυχία* comes from the adjective *ήσυχιος* (*hēsukhios*) which means ‘calm; serene,’ and is allegedly derived from the adjective *έδραιοσ* (*hydrates*), which refers to resilience and steadfastness (SABDA, 2013, Sub verbo ήσυχιος; έδραιοσ). Meanwhile, *ύποταγή* comes from the word *ύποτασσω* (*hupotassō*), which is a combination of the prepositions *ύπο*, meaning ‘under,’ and *τασσω*, ‘to rule’ which shows a sense of being set or determined (SABDA, 2013, Sub verbo ύποταγή; ύποτασσω). Therefore, women's acceptance of the teachings is accompanied by resilience and resolve, considering their perceived inferiority to men.

The pattern in verse 11 is connected by the conjunction *δε-de*, which the KJV translates as ‘but.’ This coordinating conjunction, besides showing that verses 11 and 12 are supposed to be a unified idea that should not be separated by a full stop (.) in translation, also emphasizes the close connection of the command *μανθανέτω* with the verb negation *ούκ έπιτρέπω* (*uk epitrepō* - I do not allow). This negation is followed by

three present infinitive forms, *διδασκεῖν* (*didaskein*), *ἀνθεντεῖν* (*authentein*), and *εἶναι* (*ἐν ἡσυχία*)-*einai*. The infinitive form in the union of these two verses emphasizes the purpose of the main verb, *οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω* in verse 12, and *μανθανέτω* in its union with verse 11. The present tense indicates the ongoing aspect of the action, which is simultaneous with the main verb. Thus, the three infinitives in this verse, namely, the disallowing of women to teach, the commanding of men, and the affirmation of women's silence, are mandates that take place simultaneously with *μανθανέτω* and *οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω*. This also means that the disallowance of women to teach, rule over men, and keep silent is only imposed in the context of the command of the time, which is for women to receive the teaching with calmness and steadfastness. Although *ἐπιτρέπω* (*epitrepō*) signifies only the moment, the imperative form demands silence from women. Similarly, although some interpreters try to prove that the verse is not being used as an excuse to marginalize women, nevertheless, based on the imperative form, the verse unequivocally contains a command for women to keep silent and receive teachings.

In addition to the teaching prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12 regarding the context of false teaching that influenced the context at the time, George T. Montague explained that women in that context were also in a secondary position. Men were more dominant then and had power in the public sphere, while women took care of home affairs. The reason Paul gave this advice was for the sake of community order. If women's roles were not restricted, it would be difficult for Jews or Gentiles to accept the gospel and disrupt the order of the household and society as it was understood at that time. Paul said that all Christians, including enslaved people, should remain in their civil condition when they are called (Montague, 2008). Philip Graham Ryken puts a different spin on the text. Paul gives women the opportunity to learn (v. 11) but needs to be careful in teaching, so Paul does not give them the opportunity at that time (v. 12) (Ryken, 2007, pp. 120–125). Although not entirely comprehensive, this commentary supports the view that Paul gave women a chance, but not fully. Looking at the previous commentary in the context of the Ephesians, we see that Paul has not fully endorsed women's freedom, but he has provided a basis for women's liberation. Nonetheless, we see that this interpretation is problematic, as it leaves women limited. Is Paul really patriarchal in his letters? What makes Paul patriarchal besides his Jewish background? So, why did Paul choose to make the decision to marginalize women in this verse? To answer these questions, we look at various feminist figures in interpreting the verse.

Feminist Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-15

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza critiqued the Bible, arguing that it was composed deliberately to promote the ideology of men dominance and authority. She asserted that Christianity was socially and historically imperative throughout that period. The church was established not upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles but rather on the

principle of 'patriarchal love' (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994, pp. 79–80). In light of this context, Fiorenza suggests employing a critical approach to delve further into patriarchal texts that negatively impact the status of women.

Such a feminist critical evaluation of the patriarchalizing dynamics in early Christian history is made even more complex by the realization that early Christian history cannot a priori be equated with the dominant patriarchal culture, but rather is that of an emerging group not yet recognized by the dominant society and religion. A theoretical model for the reconstruction of women's early Christian history, therefore, must do justice to the fact that early Christian women as women were part of a submerged group, and as Christians they were part of an emergent group that was not yet recognized by the dominant patriarchal society and culture (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994, p. 84).

Essentially, the understanding of early Christianity in history must emancipate itself from patriarchal forces. Acknowledging the inclusion of women in the evolving community will enhance the fairness of interpretation.

Consistent with Fiorenza's perspective, Sandra G. Harding stresses a scholarly examination of the Bible that centers explicitly on women's experiences. Based on women's experiences, an interpretation can be called into doubt. Some questions that arise in feminist interpretation include: How can it be changed? How did the prevailing circumstances of the world during that period influence the global context? How can one overcome, achieve victory, or render the forces resisting emancipation ineffective (Harding, 1987, p. 8)? Considering Harding's perspective, it becomes evident that in 1 Timothy 2:12-15, an external influence prompted Paul to compose the pastoral letter. Fiorenza has verified the existence of this external influence.

Fiorenza's interpretation of the prohibition on women teaching and not resisting men is because there is 'something' behind patriarchy. The cause is attributed to the integration of the concept of leadership derived from wealth. The early church saw the flourishing of patriarchy and seniority due to the concept of wealth. Implementing the establishment concept resulted in the erosion of the democratic principle and the introduction of a patriarchal culture within the early church structure. The Jewish patriarchal type of organization provided support for its development. Women and enslaved people in Greco-Roman culture were subject to limitations and expectations set by patriarchal norms. The reality was done to ensure that the behavior of the Christian community did not upset outsiders (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994, pp. 290–291). Was Paul an extremely patriarchal figure, according to the verse?

According to Fiorenza, early Christianity was unequivocally patriarchal. Nevertheless, she maintains that delving deeper into the progressive characteristics of the early Christian patriarchy is worthwhile. The patriarchal structure of early Christianity is not an inherent requirement for theological accuracy, but a feminist viewpoint might provide a theological assessment that offers an alternative perspective on theology

(Schüssler Fiorenza, 1994, p. 84). Shifting focus from the feminist analysis of early Christianity, the content of 1 Timothy 2:12-15 might be examined to reveal an alternative theological perspective. From this perspective, we empathize with women in every location and era. We must adopt a viewpoint that promotes gender equality and reduces the occurrence of prejudice against women. The passage of 1 Timothy 2:12-15 presents difficulties; however, by examining several interpretations and engaging with feminist criticism, we can develop an interpretation that resolves these difficulties. We employ the Christological notion of Vulnerability as a connection to conduct a theological assessment of the passage 1 Timothy 2:12-15.

1 Timothy 2:12-15 from a Vulnerability Perspective

In this section, we hold a position in viewing the Bible definitively in its relation to the Trinitarian perspective, as presented by Joas Adiprasetya. By employing this approach, we bestow the highest possible reverence upon the Bible while acknowledging that this reverence does not surpass the divinity of God, who has shown himself through The Word in the Power of the Holy Spirit (Adiprasetya, 2023, p. 56). This position presents a possibility of seeing the Bible from a Trinitarian perspective, which tends to offer an original perspective on a biblical text. From this position, we examine the text 1 Timothy 2:12-15 through the lens of vulnerability. This perspective is based on Christ's 'self-sacrifice' to save humanity. The fragility undermines all forms of dominance and subordination. The concept of vulnerability will complement feminist criticism of the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-15. Before interpreting 1 Timothy 2:12-15 from the vulnerability perspective, we must elucidate the complexities surrounding vulnerability.

We employ the concept of vulnerability as defined by Thomas E. Reynold.

Jesus is the exemplar of the fully human life because he embodies God's loving regard for, and gratuitous solidarity with, humanity precisely in its incapacity, vulnerability, and indeed its brokenness. Rather than shunning weakness, Jesus embraces it as a means of becoming available to others. Rather than displaying power, as he was tempted to by the devil, Jesus remains open to God and identifies the redemptive work of God in him with that of the stranger, the weak, and the destitute, suggesting that by welcoming such persons one welcomes him (Matt. 25:35, 40). This identification affirms humanity to the core by embracing it at its most vulnerable points. It disrupts the human tendency to secure itself by strength, power, domination, wealth, status, and even religious association. Blessed are the meek, the needy, the vulnerable, for God is especially present to them (Matt. 5:3-5) (Reynolds, 2008, p. 197).

The concept implies broadly that humans need to be reminded of their vulnerability. Jesus is the perfect example of redeeming humanity's sin. Through the vulnerability of Jesus, humans should emulate that no power, domination, or personal prosperity should be used to oppress others. Reynold submits his thesis as a critique of the church's neglect of disabled people. However, we see that the concept of vulnerability can be utilized to avoid

all forms of domination, including men domination over women. Vulnerability becomes a unique strength when both men and women acknowledge their vulnerability. However, this vulnerability does not necessarily serve as a potent remedy for the issue of domination. Vulnerability can be an excuse to conceal mistakes, violence, or domination. This type of vulnerability is referred to as ‘vulnerance.’

According to Hildegund Keul, *vulnerance* is a term that refers to the power that might cause harm because someone relies on the nature of vulnerability. *Vulnerance* justifies a person or institution to conceal their mistakes as self-defence or institutional defense. Keul states that the concept of individuals or institutions tending to become *vulnerance* is a Vulnerability Paradox (Keul, 2022, pp. 2–4). Indeed, vulnerability can manifest as a systematic abuse that institutions may engage in when providing pastoral care (Leimgruber, 2022).

We conclude that Paul's advice to Timothy to restrict women's role in teaching and their relationship with men is a Vulnerability Paradox. The advice is supported by the theological argument that women are the cause of sin and will be saved when they bear children. Given the context of the Ephesians, the theological argument needs to pay attention to the emphasis of the words ‘ἡπατηθη’ (*ēpatēthē* - being deceived) and ‘τεκνογονίας’ (*teknogonias* - giving birth). Both theological arguments are a form of *vulnerance*. Similarly, the use of ἐπιτρεπω (*epitrepō*), which shows the present indicative form, is why Paul only limits the role of women at that time. Was there something more significant that Paul wanted to fight for that would compromise the role of women? These keywords lead us to an interpretation that reinforces Paul's form of *vulnerance*.

We outline Paul's theological argument with two motives. First, we see Paul's concern for the Christian community in Ephesus, for the risk of women being ‘deceived’ (the context of false teaching), hence Paul's theological argument against women as the cause of sin. Secondly, regarding the necessity of childbirth, we see that Paul wanted the Christian community in Ephesus to continue to grow in quantity. Although some commentaries claim that women's ‘childbearing’ is a form of virtue and a process to embrace salvation, we see Paul's motive to maintain the community in quantity. We see σωθησεται (*sōthēsetai*), not as the saving of bodies or souls but as an attempt to save the community in the future. Indeed, this concept is Paul's motive to counteract the false teachings in Ephesus that disregarded the traditional role of women and the value of childbearing. However, we see that this motive is a *vulnerance* or excuse—the motive of *vulnerance* caused by the pressure of the Greco-Roman culture at the time. Also, the patriarchal order was supported by the hierarchy of the wealthy at that time. This order was also supported by the culture of Judaism, which minimized the role of women.

With all the complexities of the time, Paul needed to make a pastoral decision in the context of Ephesus. Paul had to decide for the church entrusted to Timothy (1 Tim 2:12-15). As the leader and counselor of the church, Paul was also a fragile person who

could influence his decisions. Teleologically (goal-oriented), Paul was right to limit the role of women, not to teach with the theological argument that women are the cause of sin and will be saved when bearing children for the context in the Ephesian Church. The words *ἡπατηθη* (*ēpatēthē* - deceived) and *τεκνογονίας* (*teknogonias*) became the keywords of Paul's theological argument for *vulnerance*. The role of women is limited because, according to Paul, women are easily deceived and should have the necessity to bear children. In this section, we regret the form of argument that Paul wrote to limit women's role. However, if imaginatively, we were Timothy, then we would reply to Paul's letter to criticize, and make a constructive dialogue regarding women's opportunities in teaching. Our thesis (if we were Timothy) is that if women are vulnerable to being deceived, then men are responsible for providing the proper understanding and education (the context of women who at that time did not get the priority of education like men). Is not increasing the quantity of the church not only by giving birth? If so, we believe that Christianity will be known as a community that emulates Christ, who freed women from the shackles of deception ('foolishness'), the obligation to produce, and equal opportunities in service. Wasn't Christianity (*ecclesia*) called out? Was not Christianity revolutionary and liberating amid Roman colonialism (nation, culture, ideology) at that time?

From the vulnerability perspective, Paul and his mission team (Timothy) had limitations. In addition to the limitations, the Christian community, as a result of Paul, experienced different challenges. Paul was also limited in prison, so he could not accompany and foster the church in real time. 1 Timothy 2:12-15 is the right advice for Timothy so that the community can survive and multiply. However, we do not condone Paul's *vulnerance*. Instead, the main problem is the vulnerability of women due to the dominance of men at that time. If Paul had not been limited by his imprisonment and extensive ministry, he would have given equal opportunities to men and women, like his praise for Priscilla, Euodia, and Syntyche. However, if we argue that 1 Timothy 2:12-15 is unjustified because it is Paul's *vulnerance*, then does that mean the Bible is wrong? Instead, we commend the Bible as an authoritative and transparent, forward-thinking, progressive, and Christ-centered book. The transparency of the Bible shows Paul's *vulnerance* for the sake of the best decision for Timothy, who pastors the Ephesian church, and 1 Timothy 2:12-15 is not applied literally today. Instead, if factors create inequality between men and women, such as educational, service, and recreational opportunities, they must be fought for. Through this perspective, we emphasize the shared vulnerability of men and women, thus avoiding domination. The concept of *vulnerance*, which looks good because it protects women, as in the context of 1 Timothy 2:12-15 needs to be avoided. We propose to investigate the root causes of any excuses that marginalize women. The real problem should be addressed; the root of the problem needs to be resolved. The basic idea is that as fragile beings, we need to emulate Christ, who,

in His vulnerability, liberated us. Similarly, women need to be liberated from the stereotype of causing sin and childbearing.

Theological Implication

Drawing on a Christocentric interpretive perspective, we claim a rejection of domination in the Christian community, especially men's domination over women. We propose a constructive interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-15 to affirm the use of the verse in the present context. The transparency of the Bible, which presents Paul's choice to limit the role of women at that time, does not justify limiting the role of women today. Vulnerability is not an excuse to choose a better goal without considering the process. In this position, we reject the concept of utilitarianism (referring to results). Instead, through the concept of vulnerability, the Christian community is now invited to solve the problem to the root of the problem. When the Christian community sees the marginalized position of women, instead of limiting their role in the church because of their weakness, the Christian community needs to lift them (assumed) as fellow 'vulnerable.' Finally, there is no longer any reason to reject women's role as teachers or authorities equal to men because they are uneducated, gullible, stupid, or lack capacity. Looking at Christ, who was vulnerable to save (assume up) sinful humans, the Christian community needs to lift women's struggle to be equal—friends who share the same vulnerability.

Equality is the central concept within the framework of vulnerability. The Christian community must have the courage to not conform to forms of discrimination, yet the awareness of vulnerability makes the supporting Christian community advocate for equality. 1 Timothy 2:12-15 is no longer a problematic text for women; instead, it highlights the importance of acknowledging vulnerability in achieving equality. Imagining historically, the ideal early church dared to be different from the patriarchal context of the time. The church's lack of boldness at that period can be seen as a failure, justified by the need for community safety or the church's resilience. Would the church now display cowardice by repeating the same failing of vulnerably restricting the role of women? No, the answer is a resounding no. The contemporary church is a church that emulates the qualities of Christ, has actively dismantled barriers, and has advocated for equality in several aspects.

In evangelical theology, the existence of the church, as those who are baptized in Christ, no longer emphasizes the distinction between men and women but rather unity in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Karl Barth's series of introductory lectures on theology based on the Gospel asserts that everybody possesses the theological capacity to comprehend, evaluate, and articulate (intellect) (Barth, 2019, pp. 7–8). The royal priesthood (1Pet. 2:9) certainly does not discriminate based on gender. On the other hand, humans are referred to as homo vulnerabilities, emphasizing that vulnerability is essentially a fundamental condition of human existence, an inherent and intrinsic part of what it means to be human

(Adiprasetya, 2024, p. 14). This means, as Reynolds mentioned earlier, both men and women should emulate the vulnerability of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the question posed in this text, does Christianity promote inequality between men and women through 1 Timothy 2:12-15? The answer is no. 1 Timotius 2:12-15 demonstrates Paul's *vulnerance* in order to save the Christian community in Ephesus by limiting the role of women. The theological arguments supporting the limitation of women's roles are a motif employed by Paul in order to ensure the survival of the Christian community in Ephesus from a *vulnerance* perspective. Considering the current context, the text in question cannot be used to restrict the role of women. Upon examining the text, the Christian community must investigate the root causes of women marginalization and elevate them to an equal status. This perspective represents a Christocentric view of vulnerability as a struggle for equality.

Ultimately, with the understanding that humans, both men and women, are homo vulnerabilities, it is only fitting for Christian theology to advocate for gender egalitarianism. This research can serve as a stimulus for efforts to reconstruct other biblical texts that convey a sense of gender discrimination, while also examining the vulnerance within the historicity of these biblical texts.

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